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CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN POPULAR FILM

BY

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Sociology, B.A., University of Maine 2014

THESIS

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Approval signatures are on file with the University of New Hampshire Graduate School

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To my Gary and Janet for their never-ending support and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN POPULAR FILM

by

Linda M. Fogg

University of New Hampshire, September 2018

Studies on media content have been focused for decades on the frequency of violence, types of aggression, and sex roles. These studies have largely focused on children's media, especially Disney, with few investigating the presence of violence in adult media as it is perceived as less harmful. Although these are all important topics of research, they have failed to incorporate the larger picture of media's portrayal of conflict resolution. This study aims to answer the questions: *how is conflict resolution portrayed in popular films* and *does it change based on the MPAA rating?* using popular movies from 2016. The ratings are based on the Motion Picture Association of America's rating system which is applied to all major production companies. The ratings studied, PG and PG-13, are proxies for age as the target audience changes as PG-13 rated films are not recommended for children under the age of 13 and suggests parental guidance or supervision for those youth. Results indicate that the resolution to conflicts does differ between PG and PG-13 movies, as PG movies are more likely to use verbally aggressive methods and PG-13 are more likely to use physically aggressive methods of conflict resolution. Following this, PG-13 movies are more likely to result in total control over, or the death of, the opposing member of the conflict. PG conflicts are more likely to result in toleration by one of the actors. Both PG and PG-13 movies largely follow traditional gender roles. Even as female characters engaged in violence and aggression similarly to the male characters, they also were more likely to be presented as "bad" characters when doing so and less likely to attain their goals.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

An article by film reviewer ReBecca Theodore-Vachon in the *New York Times* argued that American values are rooted in violence which makes it no surprise that it is so prevalent in American films, especially PG-13 films targeted towards youth. Theodore-Vachon's comments came in the wake of the Orlando, FL shooting, at the time one of the worst mass shootings in American history. She also arguedthat perhaps, the violence in films is related to the violence on American streets. Theordore-Vachon is not the first to propose this, or to question whether the relationship is causal or correlational. In the 1990s there were congressional hearings about media violence and many studies were conducted to explore the relationship between violence on screen and children's attitudes and behaviors (Dill 2009). Although the debate about causation is ongoing, with many experts on both sides of the argument, the concern over violence in film remains (Gunter 2008).

This study aims to expand prior research that has examined specific types of conflict, violence, and aggression. While many researchers have studied social aggression, violence, gender dynamics and stereotypes, and sexuality there has been limited focus on the full scope of a conflict (Lauzen 2017; Wismera 2001; Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund, and Tanner 2003; Ellen Descartes, and Collier-Meek 2011; Coyne and and Whitehead 2008). Studies have been particularly concerned with the films and television directed at children. There has been limited exploration of the differences between media targeted at children and media created for

teens and adults. R and G rated movies were eliminated as they are not nearly as popular as PG and PG-13 films. The majority of the top grossing films of 2016 were PG and PG-13 indicating they were the most popular and reached the broadest audience.

In what follows I will outline a study that examines the differences between conflict management styles and the resulting conclusions of conflicts that are presented in PG and PG-13 movies. PG movies are written, created, and advertised for children while PG-13 movies are intended for audiences 13 years and older. Understanding the differences and similarities will illuminate what society thinks is acceptable for people of various ages. The following study will explore conflicts as presented across popular PG and PG-13 films from the initial grievance to the resolution, paying attention to the gender presentation of the characters, whether or not violence was used to attain their goal, and the perceived morality of the character.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2009 the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) put out a policy statement about media violence warning parents of the potentially significant risks to children's health that exposure to media violence can have. Such risks include aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed. It is not surprising, given this kind of publication and official warning, that many researchers and medical professionals write about the dangers of media exposure, warning parents and the larger community about any potential negative effects. Karen Dill, a social psychologist, is one such example. In her 2009 book *How Fantasy Becomes Reality* she identifies many studies that support the AAP's conclusions that media violence can have negative effects on children, but also the rest of the population, through imitation and social learning.

Research into media is frequently accompanied by explanations of Social Learning and Social Cognitive theories as a means of providing real world context to the research. Media studies argue that people, especially children, adopt behaviors they are exposed to in day to day life, including the media (Bandura 1978). Since publication, many researchers have used Bandura's theories (1965; 1978; 1989; 2002) on the social learning of behaviors, especially aggression, to argue that media representation matters because it has real world consequences. A number of researchers have found support for this theory by studying how children behave after viewing different forms of media. Studies have found children more afraid of situations loosely connected to ones viewed on films (Cantor 2001) and that sixty-two percent of parents reported their children had been scared that something in the media would happen to them (Gentile and Walsh 1999). These studies, among many others (Christakis and Zimmerman 2004; Christakis and Zimmerman 2006; Greenfield and Yan 2006) provide a practical framework and rational for investigating other media related questions. Media research has largely been focused on mass media effect on real world conflicts and crime in the media. There is an additional portion devoted to violence and gender in film. However, these studies focus primarily on gender and violence in individual incidents instead of taking the context of the behavior, the larger conflict, into account. Barrie Gunter (2008) examines the debate between those researchers who have found support for the media influence on youth and adults and those who dispute such claims. He argues that it appears that media has varying effects on people of varying ages and backgrounds. Additionally, as people age they learn to think critically and make judgements about films that they may have learned from previously or that they had merely enjoyed. Ultimately, Gunter argues that there is no conclusive evidence of causation even when

correlation can be found as there are many questions of the validity of the experiments used to prove a relationship between media violence and resulting behaviors.

The study proposed and carried out here will engage the overall context of the conflicts in order to examine patterns in child and young adult oriented films. Many of the studies discussed in the following pages analyze patterns of violence and gendered behavior in films targeted towards children (12 and under). One of the major questions that comes from reviewing prior studies in media research on violence is how violence and conflict is managed in teen and adult oriented films in comparison to child films.

Studying the Media

Media use, both television and social, as measured through screen time has increased dramatically in recent years. Screen use, including television viewing and internet use which includes streaming sites, reached a daily average of approximately 10 and a half hours of per day in 2016, up from nine and a half hours only two years previously. Meanwhile social media use has increased from seven-percent of all adults in 2005 to 65-percent in 2015 (Neilson 2016; BLS 2016). As media increases in exposure, the number of companies that own media outlets has been decreasing. Six major corporations, one of which is Walt Disney, now control the majority of mainstream media which arguably means the messaging they produce will be similar across the outlets each company owns (Campbell 2009).

Henry Giroux and Grace Pollock, in their 2010 edition of *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence,* argue that Disney has far reaching, global influence that "shapes public consciousness through its enormous economic holdings and cultural power" (206). Through perpetuation of "wholesome" entertainment, Disney presents and reinforces conservative ideologies, racial and gender divisions and stereotypes, and the idea that democracy

is the preferred form of government (2010). The authors further argue that children are the first

casualties of Disney's dominance in world culture as the primary viewers of its, as they put it,

harmful ideology. Giroux and Pollock argue that while perpetuating this harmful ideology,

Disney also presents a world far from reality where conflicts or struggles occur (2010: 209).

Media and popular film is an important area of research as popular culture, some argue, is

the primary method in which youth learn about themselves and how to engage with the world at

large. Media is, to Giroux and others, a primary site for education and socialization of young

people in our society. Many studies explore gendered behaviors in film as a means of

understanding one of the realms in which gender socialization can occur.

Gender in Media

Masculinity and femininity play an important role in all types of relationships and,

conflicts that occur within those relationships. The theory of hegemonic masculinity, the patterns

of behavior that allow for men's dominance over women, as first fully outlined by R.W. Connell

in her 1987 book *Gender and Power*, argues that visual icons play a major role in how

masculinity is constructed, maintained, and further represented. Reexamined in 2005, Connell

and Messerschmidt address masculinity in terms of local, regional, and global tensions resulting

in many versions of masculinity and subordinated groups resulting from gender dynamics. Their

analysis emphasizes that representations of masculinity in media play a role in forming more

concrete conceptions of a universal masculinity from uncertain and often more ambiguous local

definitions (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In this way, masculinity becomes transhistorical

and transnational. Psychologist Erica Scharrer uses the terms hyper-masculinity and hyper-

femininity to explain the exaggeration of characteristics associated with each gender

representation. Hyper-masculinity refers to hardened sexual attitudes, desire for action, danger,

and physical violence while hyper-femininity exaggerates dependence, submissiveness, and sexuality in subordination to men (Scharrer 2004). Such theories of masculinity provide an important framework to understanding conflict and the portrayal of it in the media.

Studies have found support for these theories, specifically, that video game and media icons in youth media portray traditional ideas about males and females and embody hyper-masculinity and female subordination, thereby reinforcing hegemonic masculinity. One content analysis of video games has found that male characters are portrayed as powerful aggressors over 80% of the time and hyper-masculine based on Scharrer's (2004) definition approximately one third of the time. Female characters were portrayed as aggressive approximately 60% of the time which initially indicates a more egalitarian presentation, except that 40% of these aggressive characters are so in relation to sexual activities. In general, over 80% of female characters were presented as sexualized, scantily clad, and/or visions of beauty (Dill and Thill 2007). These findings support theories of hyper-masculinity and hegemonic masculinity by providing media icons that emphasize traditionally masculine and feminine traits while supporting the idea that men are hyper-aggressive and dominating over their female counterparts.

While all of this may still be true in 2016, a study by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film found that females were twenty-nine percent of all protagonists in the top 100 domestic grossing films of 2016, twenty of which were used also in this study. The study also found that female comprised thirty-seven percent of all major characters which increased three percent from 2015. While the study did not examine sexual attitudes, submissiveness, or physical violence by the characters, it did report that male characters were more likely than females to have work-related goals while female characters were more likely to have goals that involved their personal lives which indicates a more domestic representation than for males

(Lauzen 2017). This kind of female representation could mean that gender roles and the stereotypes based on hypermasculinity and hyperfeminity are in decline in more recent films even if there remains some ground to be gained in equality of representation. One question I will attempt to answer is how characters presenting as male or female behave regarding the types of conflicts they engage in, the means they use to resolve their conflicts, and whether or not they engage in violence. Resulting patterns will either lend support for Connell's hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity theories or argue that films are moving away from such stereotypes.

The Walt Disney Company

Some of the most common studies involving media representation involve Disney movies. Disney is a prime target for media researchers because Disney movies are extremely popular with young children. Additionally, it is highly likely that the same movie will be viewed multiple times by children (Dreier 2007). It is also likely that many parents watch these movies at least once with their children over the course of multiple viewings. Although the current study analyzes films from many different production companies, nine out of the twenty films were produced by or in conjunction with Walt Disney Studios.

Studies involving Disney films have come to similar conclusions as Dill and Thill (2007). One study found that Disney presents gender images that are not in line with current changes in gender equity on a societal level and in fact, have not changed much at all since *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* which came out in 1937 (Wiserma 2001). Wismera's study in 2001 is fifteen years older than the films used in this study. It is possible that gender roles have made more progress since the advent of social media and the increased use of phones, computers, and the internet.

Another content analysis of twenty-six Disney films found that males are presented as primarily using physical means to express emotions, not being in control of their sexuality, naturally strong, and having non-domestic jobs while females are presented as being valued more for their appearance than their intellect, helpless and in need of protection, and are domestic, married workers (Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund and Tanner 2003). Towbin et al. (2003) noticed that even when female characters behave in an independent manner it is often followed by a twist in the story that places the female in a subordinate position to the male character once more. Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) study arguing how femininity and masculinity are defined in often ambiguous ways is especially relevant here. While the female character may be defined as independent, throughout the course of the story becoming subordinate to a male character, her definition of feminity is conforming to the ideas of hyperfeminity, of submissiveness and domination by males.

A later analysis of nine princess movies found similarly to Towbin et al. (2003) and Wismera (2001) that although some Disney films have more egalitarian roles between male and female characters, the majority conform to traditional displays of gender roles. Females in their study were portrayed as domestic workers who are submissive to male characters. Meanwhile, males were portrayed as aggressive, assertive, and physically strong compared to females and were typically stoic in demeanor. The researchers also noticed that while female characters have begun embodying female traits as well as displaying certain masculine traits like assertiveness, the male characters are less likely to display feminine traits (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek 2011). This research supports Towbin et al.'s (2003) findings that female characters have increased in assertive characteristics over time.

In contrast to this body of work regarding gender in Disney films, studies of Disney characters' aggression have found mostly positive things. In 2008 a study of indirect aggression in Disney films found that incidents of indirect aggression occurred almost ten times per hour, which is lower than violence in children's television and that such behavior was typically portrayed as unjustified and committed by "bad" characters (Coyne and Whitehead). This effectively informs the viewer that indirect aggression, things like gossiping, spreading rumors, and social exclusion, are not acceptable behaviors. In addition, a study out of Brigham University found that incidents of prosocial behavior (e.g. complimenting, helping, sharing) in Disney films occurred once per minute and did not occur in relation to aggression which differs positively from other children's programming cited in the study. However, the study found that attractive characters were more likely to give and receive help than "average" characters and males were more likely to display public motivation for such behaviors (Padilla-Walker, Coyne, Fraser, and Stockdale 2013). Such research promotes Disney as a safer option for children than other youth programs regarding aggressive behaviors even while perpetuating masculinity and beauty stereotypes.

Aggression in Fictional Media

Studies in popular media of course go beyond Disney and one study of video games, but overwhelmingly, studies of gender representation and violence have ignored the overall process of how gender and violence are portrayed as part of a conflict or as a factor in the resolution of a larger conflict. Such research identifies certain behaviors but not necessarily the reaction to those behaviors, a conflict that may result from them, or the resolution to such conflicts and behaviors. The studies described below, for example, address the frequency of aggression and how different types of aggression are displayed in children's programing.

Research of other types of animated films found that in films targeted at youth and rated for a general audience, violence is frequently used by "good" characters to resolve a conflict between themselves and a "bad" character despite verbal messages that violence is not the answer (Yokota and Thompson 2000). This research runs counter to Coyne and Whitehead who found that "bad" characters were more likely to engage in indirect aggression, as defined by them as "any behavior that is intended to hurt another person by using psychological or social means" (2008:386). This included social exclusion, malicious humor, guilt induction, and indirect physical aggression. Many of these are operationalized into various categories of behavior and conflict management in this study. The inconsistencies in aggressive behaviors, social or physical, indicate that further research into the behavior of different types of characters is needed.

Other studies of popular children's programs, have found that the more socially aggressive characters are a blend of good and bad instead of being clearly one or the other. One study of social aggression (i.e. gossiping, mocking, etc) across 50 programs popular with children 2-11 found that characters that displayed a blend of good and bad characters were most likely to portray socially aggressive incidents. The study also found that, similarly to Coyne and Whitehead (2008), the majority of socially aggressive incidents portrayed were not morally justified but also were rarely punished or showed the negative consequences of the behavior (Martins and Wilson 2012). By not showing punishments or consequences for social aggression, Martins and Wilson (2012) argue that it is more likely the behaviors will be imitated by youth. This potential problem becomes compounded with increased television viewership and monopolization of programming.

Why Media Matters

Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, learning from others and learning from an individual's social environment at large respectively, provide theoretical frameworks through which to explore why media studies matter. These two theories provide a basis for the conditions of "affect control theory" to provide important information and framework to the media we consume. Steven M. Nelson, from the University of Arizona, wrote an award-winning article in 2006 using data to describe how people redefine a situation that they find uncomfortable. Affect Control Theory proposes that people construct their lives to avoid situations in which the meanings we ascribe to people and acts can be challenged (Nelson 2006).

Nelson argues that we are so determined to do so that we will reframe an event that we find disturbing in such a way that it no longer is. Nelson provided research subjects with a news story and then asked the student to interpret what might be the real facts behind the story. He found that subjects were much more likely to reinterpret the behavior of the actors involved than the identities of the actors. Nelson argues that identities are quite stable but when confronted with an uncomfortable situation, individuals will reframe the behavior the actor engaged in. For example, he hypothesizes that if presented with an American soldier engaging in torture, individuals are most likely to dismiss "torture" for "abuse" or "interrogate than to believe badly of the soldier (2006). Using Nelson's study, another experiment looked at how individuals convey information. The study found that individuals convey information in a way that increases cultural consistency and cultural meanings and will deflect information that does not fit with their cultural meanings (Hunzaker 2016). These studies provide a basis for understanding how messages may not change in media over time, if individuals involved in their creation are using previous media as their culture. According to Hunzaker, they would be unlikely to alter the

previous message because it is inconsistent with the cultural message they are familiar with. Even if the messages being presented to viewers are not consistent with viewers idea of their culture, for example as female characters are still presented similarly to the 1930s (Wismera 2001), Nelson's study argues the viewer would be likely to reframe it in a manner that *is* consistent with their idea of how things should be.

These ideas are sharply contested by critics of media studies. Markey, French and Markey (2015) analyzed annual rates of movie and gun violence in comparison to homicide and aggravated assault rates between 1960 and 2012. They found that violent films and the two violent crimes were negatively, but non-significantly, related. Markey et al. argue that although violent media is frequently blamed for violent acts, the nonsignificant relationship cautions against this claim despite a slight negative correlation.

Whether or not media violence causes individuals to behave more violently is interesting and provides a framework for future studies. However, it is most interesting to explore media as a cultural phenomenon and an important method of conveying these messages. How violence is used, not just its presence, is additionally important. Based on Social Cognitive Theory, the context of the violence is as important as the violence occurring. The context provides a framework for imitation in the real world as well as a way of analyzing messages about social structure and behavior. Research is needed to explore conflict in film media and how that conflict resolution may differ based on the gender presentation and violent behaviors of the actors.

This study will expand on the previous work in media studies by doing just that – the study in this paper explores conflict management and resolution across different movie ratings, as they are targeted at different populations based on age while keeping gender presentation,

relationship between actors, and the type of conflict in mind. Prior studies have not paid as much attention to the whole picture, focusing instead on one piece of the conflict. Although valuable to sociology and the understanding of conflict, gender presentation, and social dynamics presented in film, there is also value in understanding the context. Context of conflicts provides an understanding of the societal structures which bring about certain conflicts, conflict management styles, and the resulting resolutions. If media behaviors, including violence, are imitated or absorbed into the viewer's opinions and beliefs about conflict management, the understanding of the social structure and context of the behaviors emerging is extremely important in understanding how they might be utilized in the real world.

Donald Black, a sociological conflict theorist, argues that conflicts result from certain types of social structures. For example, rebellion occurs when there is a vertical, and therefore hierarchical, social stratification and the inferior in the social structure reacts in a punitive and often criminal manner to resolve their grievance with those at the top of the hierarchical structure. Because of the vertical social organization, there is little for the inferior group to do to resolve the issue without criminal behavior (Black 1993). Black's contribution to sociology broadens the concept of conflict to include what is available to the actors in the situation. The theory allows sociologists to look at the structure of the conflicts and understand how that functions to constrain the options of those involved. This study takes the idea of Black's social structure to examine how the pieces of a conflict, including how they start, who is involved, and their relationship, leads to patterned types of conflict management and resulting resolutions. Before beginning a study in conflict, a definition of conflict must be constructed or obtained from prior studies and colloquial use.

Conflict

As Kenneth A. Thomas points out in his review of the literature regarding conflict within organizations, there is no generally accepted definition of conflict. He outlines a broad definition of conflict in which one party has perceived another to have somehow impeded or will impede a concern of theirs in the future (1992). In Sociology, one name consistent with conflict is Donald Black. Over the past 40 years, Black has developed a theoretical approach that he and others to analyze conflict and conflict resolution. Black defines conflict as occurring when someone provokes or expresses a grievance, when someone behaves in a manner that another considers deviant, or when someone subjects another to social control (1993:xiii). In his newest book, *Moral Time* (2011), he argues that conflict occurs because of a movement in social time. Social time, according to Black, is "the dynamic dimension of social space" that is continuously fluctuating (xii). These movements in social time result in social conflict and become defined as right or wrong, moral or immoral, depending on the degree and speed of social time, which provides context for the behavior.

Black argues there are three major dimensions of social space: relational time (intimacy), vertical time (inequality), and cultural time (diversity). According to Black, an increase or decrease in any of these three dimensions results in conflict - specifically, overintimacy or underintimacy, overstratification or understratification, and overdiversity or underdiversity. Conflict management and punishments therefore correspond to the movement in social time that has occurred, as well as being movements in social time themselves (Black 2011). Social time is always moving and conflict is therefore always occurring. The challenge is to determine if the presentation of conflict management and resolution is also always moving or if there is a more

unified message being displayed. Black argues that "like cases are treated in like fashion only when the cases entail the same movements of social time" (2011:13). If we take Black's theory as truth, the conflicts that we observe in everyday life and popular media, should have similar forms of conflict management for similar conflicts, or movements in social time. Films present stories that result in movements in social time and all include conflict, to which Black's theoretical perspective lends useful insight.

Using Black's definition of conflict occurring "whenever anyone provokes or expresses a grievance…when someone engages in conduct that someone else defines as deviant or whenever someone subjects someone else to social control" (1993:xiii) I have defined conflict as *whenever anyone provokes or expresses a grievance against another, and it is reacted to by the other actor.* By including the piece about the grievance being reacted to, it eliminates the need for assumptions and guesswork about the motivations or internal reactions that may be implied by films. The definition presented here allows the content analysis to focus entirely on the actions and overt behaviors of the characters in the films. Using Black's philosophy, about how context, such as social structure and changes alter the conflicts and behaviors of those involved, this study will examine the nature of the conflict, the type of characters involved, the relationship between them, and the means of resolution.

Movie Ratings

One area of context important in this, and other media studies, is the audience targeted by the media. Research into film media must take the intended audience of the film into consideration. One way of doing this is through the film ratings created by the Movie Picture Association of America (MPAA). Established in 1968, the MPAA uses a film rating system to provide parents and other viewers with information that allows them to make informed decisions

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about the content of the films they might view or let their children be exposed to. The ratings are as follows: G for general audiences in which there is "nothing that would offend parents for viewing by children"; PG for parental guidance suggested in which there could be some content that is not suitable for children; PG-13 which stands for "parents strongly cautioned" and is based on content that may not be appropriate for pre-teenaged youth; R for restricted which contains adult material and parents are cautioned to learn more before allowing their children to view it – anyone under 17 is required to have an adult accompanying them to see the film; finally, NC-17 in which no one under 17 is permitted as the content is adult. These ratings are ascribed to films by the Classification and Rating Administration (CARA) which is composed of an independent panel of parents in the United States (MPAA 2018). Although originally this study planned to look at G-rated movies as the films targeted at children, the top domestic grossing films were primarily PG and PG-13 films. The first G-rated movie on the list is number 155, titled *A Beautiful Planet* which grossed $7,895,708. *Finding Dory*, which came in at number one, grossed $486,295,561. *Finding Dory* and the other PG movies that are near the top of the list for 2016 reached far more people in the United States than the G movies, which debuted at 155th. Therefore, this study is built around PG and PG-13 movies, as a proxy for age. PG-13 movies are targeted towards teens and adults while PG movies are targeted at children. The differences and similarities between the entertainment directed at these two different age groups will provide information on how we communicate social norms to people as they age.

R-movies were eliminated from this study because they were also less prevalent in the top grossing films. The films that were ultimately used for this study were all found in the top 21 domestic grossing films for 2016. There were only two R-rated films that were in the top 20. That, and the inability for youth to view these movies without an adult present, eliminates them

from the study. This study is concerned with the films that reach the widest audience. Movies that require a chaperone are less likely to be viewed by children and teens than those that do not.

Sociological Perspectives

Sociology provides an alternative to the psychological approaches put forth by Bandura and others by allowing the content to be taken at face value. Although the impact on the people who partake in the entertainment provided by the film industry, sociology allows for the researcher to explore the content as it is, to examine the messages as they are, and analyze them separately from how they might cause people to behave. The products of the society, such as film, are important cultural components and operate to bind the society together. What these products are and how they portray people, ideas, and activities are invaluable to understanding the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the society and those in it.

One method of analyzing media research, cultural messaging, and social structure through media is through a Foucauldian perspective. Michel Foucault argued that discourse is multiplicative and transmits, produces, undermines, and exposes power. He also argues that discourse through media frequently reinforces existing power dynamics. He argues we must construct the distribution of voices in a discourse to understand the function of each (Foucault 1976). Although his argument is framed by political discourse around sex, it can easily be understood in terms of media and cultural messages. How different groups are represented in the media provides one voice in the discourse about society. In Foucault's discussion of knowledge and how knowledge is created, he argues that knowledge should be examined through its formation in discourse. He proposes that knowledge is created through the formation of elements in a regular manner in a discourse and in the practices that give rise to discourse (1972:79/182). Knowledge, therefore, is created through regular use of an idea or concept in discourses. What is

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presented in various discourses, in this case various films by various media outlets, will become

part of a "totality" of thinking and knowing with which individuals and society engages

(Foucault 1972:55). For the purpose of this study, the discourse and knowledge examined is what

is worth starting a conflict over and how those conflicts should be resolved. The similarities in

how these films present conflict and conflict resolution will be the discursive repetition that

generally leads to knowledge. Additionally, because the audience cannot actively argue with the

discourse being observed by them, making it more likely for the observers to absorb the ideas

being presented, than to engage with them by taking a position.

Myra Macdonald uses a Foucauldian lens in her book *Exploring Media Discourse* (2003)

in which she examines media's focus on risk. She explains that collective images, provided by

the media, cannot be separated from prior discourse and historical meanings. These images

contribute to networks of ideas and patterns of individual behavior thereby integrating into, and

enforcing, social and institutional practices (Macdonald 2003). Foucault argues that these ideas

and patterns are considered to be the "true" way of doing things but in reality, there are regimes

of truth in different periods of time in which certain discourses become dominant and certain

ideas govern behavior (Foucault 1984: 54). Studying media representation of groups and

interpersonal interaction can illuminate discourses and the truths being communicated to

viewers.

Dorothy Smith writes about discourse as it is mediated by texts that are created by

institutions and organizations (1990: 71). Smith argues that textual realities, like popular films,

are one sided versions of reality by presenting the information that the institution values and uses

for its own functioning. These ruling texts are therefore known from the perspective of those in

power. Over time, these practices become standardized which can account for the findings such

as Wismera's 2001 study in which gender roles in Disney movies have not changed much in 80 years (1990: 83-87). As Henry Giroux puts it, film

"offers up subject positions, mobilizes desires, influences us
unconsciously, and helps to construct the landscape of American
culture. Deeply imbricated within material and symbolic relations of
power, film produces and incorporates ideologies that represent the
outcome of struggles marked by the historical realities of power and
the deep anxieties of the time; it also deploys power through the
important role it plays in connecting the production of pressure and
meaning to the mechanisms and practice of powerful teaching
machines" (2001: 585).

Giroux emphasizes that movies entertain but also educate us in the ruling ideologies and historical contexts in which they were created. Because films present ideologies through sequences of events over time periods of over an hour, they provide a deeper registration of the message being presented than shorter media images and videos. Film, according to Giroux, provides support for ideological framing that structures issues, assumptions, values, and social relations that people interact with every day (2001:592). Although not text, movies are cultural messages created in ways similar to Smith's ruling texts. They operate in the same way, providing a one-sided version of reality and a transmission mechanism for ruling ideologies to pass from those in power down.

The research discussed so far revolves around discourses about gender representation in conflicts and otherwise. The discourse about conflict in media research has been geared towards crime or specific behaviors, like indirect social aggression, without taking the larger context into

consideration. The discourses communicated by films are many and complex. Exploring what the discourses are involved in film media conflict and resolution adds to a rich body of research that has previously examined pieces, however in-depth, of conflict.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following the review of the literature, I have formulated the following research questions. My primary research question is: *how is conflict managed and resolved in popular film?* Given the variety of prior research focusing on pieces of conflict resolution, this study will examine the patterns that emerge from the nature of conflicts, the management of conflicts, and the resolution of those conflicts while also paying attention to the social context regarding gender, relationship between individuals, and use of violence. Following from the first question my second primary area of interest is: *how does conflict management and resolution differ between PG (children) and PG-13 (teen/adult) films?* While many studies focus their samples on either PG or PG-13 rated media, this study explores the conflicts within both and how management styles and resolution changes from one to the other. The gender component of previous studies was initially a minor theme in my own research with the question *does the gender of the character alter the conflict management and resolution presented?* However, the gender differences became more extreme and apparent during the preliminary analysis.

In reviewing the prior research, there is a large focus on violence in media and film studies. Therefore, it would be careless to not examine how violence plays into the conflicts in the films analyzed in this study. I recorded whether or not violence was used in a conflict to answer the following question: *how is violence used to manage conflicts and how does that differ from PG to PG-13 rated films?* An additional topic came up while watching the first film. I noticed that there was a lot of violence and pain caused in the film for purely comedic purposes

20

and was added to my research interests in these films. The question, *is violence/pain used for comedy more frequently in PG or PG-13 films?* emerged as what seemed like an important piece of the violence discussion. I then recorded how many instances of violence and/or pain occurred throughout the film strictly for comedic purposes.

Contextual questions that follow from the primary research question are firstly, *does the gender of the individuals involved in the conflicts alter the patterns of conflict management and resolution in a significant way?* Secondly, *does conflict management differ across different relationships between the actors in the conflict? If so, how?* How I operationalized and answered these questions is laid out in the following sections.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

SAMPLE

Using the-numbers.com, a Nash Information Services, LLC website, I created two lists based on the top domestic grossing movies released in 2016. The first was the top ten grossing movies rated PG, and the other based on the top ten grossing movies rated PG-13. The lists are as follows:

PG Movies	PG-13 Movies
1. Finding Dory	1. Rogue One: A Star Wars Story
2. Secret Life of Pets	2. Captain America: Civil War
3. Jungle Book	3. Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice
4. Zootopia	4. Suicide Squad
5. Moana	5. Doctor Strange
6. Sing!	6. Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them
7. Trolls	7. Jason Bourne
8. Kung Fu Panda	8. Star Trek: Beyond
9. Angry Birds Movie	9. X-Men Apocalypse
10. Alice Through the Looking Glass	10. Ghostbusters

Nash Information Services, LLC provides the information freely on their website and is an independent consulting company for the movie industry. They control OpusData which allows individuals and companies to explore movie based data on their own. That data is used to create The Numbers.com. The list compiled was checked against other online movie industry sources (boxofficemojo.com 2018; IMDb 2018; Statista 2018; MPAA 2018). Each film was viewed from the first second to the moment that credits began rolling. If there were any after credit scenes they were not included in the analysis.

An initial analysis of all 20 movies was conducted in the summer of 2017. From the first analysis and prior research, a list of codes for the type of conflict, the method of resolution, and the resolution to the conflict were created and two films were coded at that time. Approximately 4 months after viewing the last film, a second viewing of the 20 films was completed and coded for final analysis. A comparison of the first viewing and second was used as one measure of inter-coder reliability, (have numbers, need to enter). A second, more reliable measure is two graduate students who both coded the PG movie *Moana* and compared them to the original coder. The inter-coder reliability measure averaged to .815 agreement.

MEASUREMENT

The first round of coding involved taking notes on the particular behaviors and actions taken by the characters that resulted in a conflict. These notes were qualitative and allowed for me to review the content of the conflicts without re-watching the films. From this initial viewing, coded categories were created by separating the conflicts into similar types by the behavior that initiated the conflict, the behavior that was taken in response that ultimately resulted in a resolution, and a final category by the type of resolution. While watching the films, I took notes on the kinds of obvious conflicts, like one character reacting to an insult voiced by another character or one character stealing from another, which helped begin the category creation process.

Conflict, as stated previously, is defined through an adaptation of Donald Black's definition of conflict, as occurring when *a grievance is expressed or provoked and is then reacted to by another individual involved.* A conflict is considered resolved in this study when the immediate grievance and the conflict management behavior has concluded or been set aside by those involved. If there is no resolution apparent and the conflict has been ignored or set aside

after some form of conflict management, it is considered to have no resolution unless it is picked up again later in the film, without an additional antagonism following the initial conflict.

Many smaller categories were first created following the initial viewing to account for the varying types of behaviors in each conflict which were then organized under the umbrella of a smaller number of master categories which were created to be mutually exclusive, to the extent possible. For example, insults were separated from threats because insults do not imply damage to a physical holding or person's body. Insults may inflict damage to a reputation or psychology but unless there was an implication of violence to a group or person, were not considered a threat. In one conflict, a large squid chases after three other characters trying to eat them. This was written as "big squid tries to eat them" in the initial round of film viewing and was later coded to "threat of violence". Using the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the observed conflicts, definitions were created that allowed for the complexity of the situations (i.e. both intentional and unintentional behaviors which resulted in a similar style conflict) observed for each of the master categories.

Nature of Conflict

The nature of each conflict was coded for major categories and for specific causes. The categories were constructed after watching all 20 films for the first time and open coding the content that was recorded. The final coding of the films was completed 3 months later, when much of the specifics of the initial viewing had been forgotten. The first of these categories is "Insult", defined as *disrespectful remarks or actions causing damage to an individual's reputation or emotional state* (adapted from Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The specific categories of this master category are personal insults, being blamed for an action the character did not commit, and an embarrassment.

The second master category is a form of what Donald Black calls overintimacy, in which one character invades the space of another. The first subcategory occurs when one actor breaks into an area controlled by another, like a home or business, and the second when one character is too physically close to the other character's body. The third master category is vengeance, defined as *punishment or retribution for prior intended or unintended injury or wrong* (adapted from Merriam-Webster Dictionary). There were four categories of vengeance created: vengeance for murder, for accidental death, for jealousy in which a character believes they were wronged for not having something another character does, and for a loss, generally of property destroyed during another conflict. Vengeance for a loss does not include intentional theft.

A fourth master category of conflict is subjugation in which one actor of the conflict has brought or is keeping another character, or group, under their control. Subcategories under subjugation are the imprisonment of one character by another, for the imprisonment/subjugation of another, and for subordination of an inferior within ranked systems like employers to employees or the military. The fifth master category is theft, or intentionally taking another character's property without permission. Both actual theft and attempted theft are included in this category. The sixth master category is political disagreements — *an exchange of divergent or opposite views on codified arrangements*. This definition was created based on the first round of analysis of the films and using an adapted form of the definition for argument, as set forth by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. There are two subcategories: policy or political disagreements and actions within a business setting.

Perceived deceit, whether the audience knows that the deceit was unintentional or a trick, is the seventh master category of conflict types. This is defined as *undermining of an individual's or an institution's power or authority by concealing information*. This category encompasses

betrayal through action, treason (indicated a political affiliation), trickery, lies, and withholding information from another character whether they are entitled to it or not. Threats are the seventh master category and include a threat of violence, a threat of loss (not including life), a threat of failure, and a threat of subjugation. Threat in this category is defined as *hostile verbal statements or physical actions intending to cause pain, injury, or damage to another individual or group*.

The final master category of conflicts is "irritants", or *something or someone that is continually annoying or distracting*. These include four subcategories: personality conflicts in which one character's behaviors unintentionally irritate another, irritating behaviors in which one character purposely engages in behavior another finds irritating, not fulfilling the expectations laid out by another, and behaviors considered immoral or socially deviant.

Conflict Management

There are five master categories for types of conflict management. Major categories were created loosely from Black's *Social Structure of Right and Wrong* in which he outlines nine major types of conflict management: aggression, avoidance, negotiation, reconciliation, restitution, retribution, gossip, apology, and confession (1993:xiv). Aggression was split into two categories as verbal aggression, including gossip, and physical aggression present different severities of conflict management. Negotiation is the major category with includes types of compromise (reconciliation) and apology. Restitution, retribution, and confession behaved as types of resolutions, not management styles, in the films studied and were wrapped into the categories for that. All categories of coding were created following the first viewing and based on the qualitative coding of the 20 films, prior to a second viewing of each film three months later.

The first is verbal aggression, or *spoken assault on another's beliefs, self-concept, or social status* (adapted from Galen and Underwood 1997). The specific types of verbal aggression a character could use are: arguing, guilt induction (including lecturing), sarcasm, threats, mockery, and insults. The second master category is physical aggression, defined as "overt depictions of credible threat or actual use of physical force or violence intended to harm an animate… individual or group" (adapted from Galen and Underwood 1997). Galen and Underwood (1997) originally included inanimate individuals or groups as well as animate. For the purpose of this study, reactions to inanimate objects were eliminated from analysis because the internal motivations of characters were unavailable, making researcher bias a requirement for determining the nature of the conflict. Additionally, there were very few animate to inanimate incidents. Physical aggression was coded as: small scale property destruction, large scale property destruction, one-on-one violence, large scale/group violence, posturing, and mockery without using words.

Negotiation is the third form of conflict management and is defined, using Donald Black's definition, as the "handling of a grievance through join decision" (1990:83) either mutually or individually initiated. Subcategories of negotiation are discussions, apologies, begging for help, and emotional pleas. Black's work also inspired the fourth category, avoidance, defined as "inaction or curtailment of action when conflict might otherwise be handled" (1990:79). Specific methods of avoidance coded in 2016 movies are ignoring, toleration, and running away/fleeing. Toleration occurs when character continues to engage with the person who began the conflict but does not avoid them. Ignoring occurs when the character avoids not only the conflict, but further interpersonal contact with the other member of the conflict but remains in the same group or physical space. Running away/fleeing is coded for when characters make a

physical retreat from the other member of the conflict. The final master category for conflict management is "other" which includes seeking legal action and "self-help" in which the character unilaterally solves the conflict for themselves. Although Donald Black includes aggression as a form of self-help, self-help in this study involves theft of an object previously kept from, moving forward with a plan another disagreed with without consultation, or generally circumventing the grievance of the other. The category has been titled "self-help" because there were a variety of means used to accomplish the goal of one of the characters that did not fit into other categories. However, the frequency of self-help actions is low enough that making separate categories for them did not make analytical sense. Often, self-help in these films results in another conflict later.

Conflict Resolutions

The resolutions to conflicts in this study are coded for whether the result satisfied one member of the conflict, both members of the conflict, or neither. Conflict resolutions that satisfied one member of the conflict were coded as: subjugation of another, dominance of another, removal of an irritant, undermining the plan of another, or death. Subjugation occurs when a character ends up with full control over another, including knocking them unconscious. Dominance occurs when a character is able to do what they wanted to do in spite of resistance from the other member of the conflict, but does not end up controlling the other. Undermining the plan of another occurs when one member of a conflict subverts the actions of the other, unusually unbeknownst to the other. Removal of an irritant occurs when one actor displaces the other without gaining superiority over them.

Resolutions that result in the satisfaction of both parties are coded as 1) a compromise or 2) an agreement to work together for mutual ends. When neither party is satisfied by the

resolution of the conflict it is coded as none. This includes when one member of a conflict engages in toleration or avoidance as well as when another incident causes the conflict to be set aside, resulting in no resolution for either member.

These categorizations emerged from a qualitative description of the end result of each conflict during the first round of coding. Notes like "stranger left out of fear", "large fights leading to death of murderer", "gives up information", "is forced into cooperating", and "kills workers" revealed that there were nuances to, but nevertheless, an overarching pattern of conflicts that were resolved where only one of the actors achieved their goal. Additionally, situations that resulted in resolutions such as "make a deal", "become friends", "apologizes", and "gives in and they talk it out" indicated another major pattern of compromise and negotiation in which the resolution results in both sides achieving something that they wanted or needed. Finally, there were instances of "argument ended – distracted," "forgets incident because another character arrived," and "none," in which something else happened and there was no resulting resolution. This revealed that frequently, no party gained an upper-hand and there were frequently situations in which the conflict occurred, there was a disagreement, fight, or other form of conflict management that was initiated yet never resulted in a conclusion to the conflict.
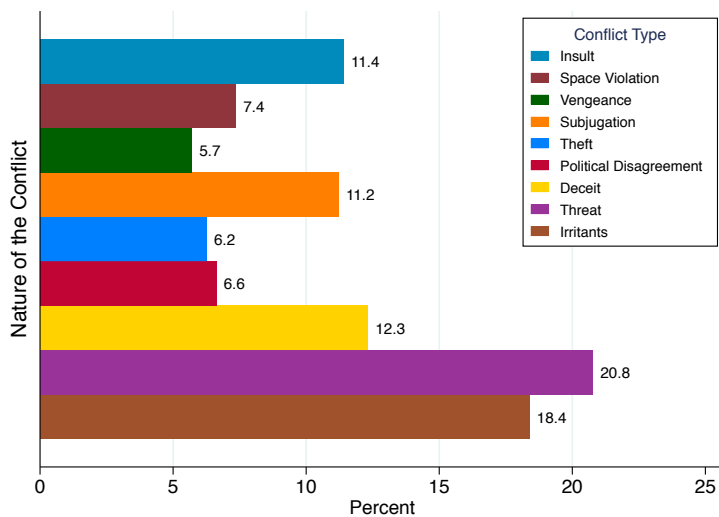
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

NATURE OF CONFLICTS

Out of 544 conflicts recorded during analysis of 20 films, 223 occurred in PG movies and 321 occurred in PG-13 movies.

Figure 1: Percent Major Types of Conflicts

Out of the total, 113 were in reaction to a perceived threat, 65.4-percent of which were a threat of violence and 20.4-percent which were a result of a threat of subjugation, like arrest. Another 100 of the conflicts were in response to an irritating or annoying behavior on the part of another character. The majority, 52-percent, were one of the characters not living up to the expectations of the other, such as a child not behaving or following the path the parent set out for them or an employee struggling to complete certain aspects of their job. Following that, 12.3-percent of the conflicts were a reaction to deceit, 11.4-percent to insults, and 11.2-percent following a subjugation of the actor or another person. The rest of the conflicts were 7.4-percent in reaction to violating their space, 6.6-percent in reaction to political or policy disagreements, 6.3-percent following a theft or attempted theft, and 5.7-percent seeking vengeance.

Once separated by movie type, PG or PG-13, threat of some kind becomes the most common form of conflict only for PG-13 movies. Figure 2 shows that PG conflicts are most likely to be a result of an irritant. Specifically, 49 percent of those irritants were for not living up to expectations, 24.6 percent are a response to a personality conflict where one actor reacted negatively to the general demeanor of another, and 18 percent of which were for irritating behaviors which indicated purposely irritating someone or behaving outside

Figure 2: Percent Major Types of Conflicts by Move Type
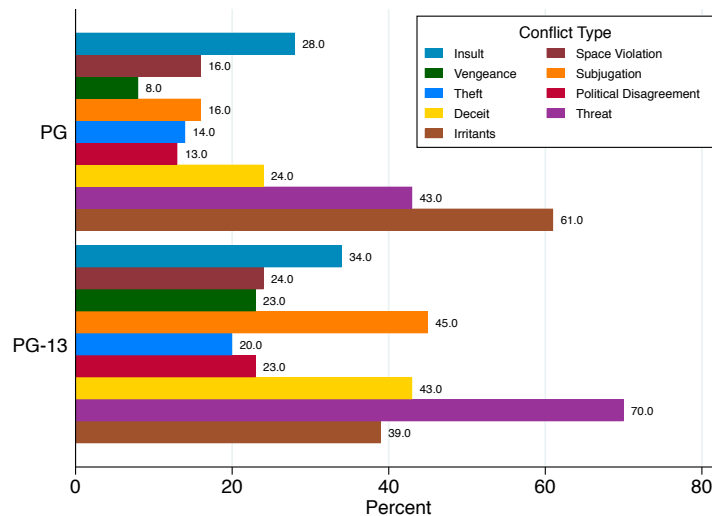
of their typical demeanor in a manner which irritated others. The remaining 8.2 percent were conflicts over socially stigmatized behaviors, for example, bringing their own food to a restaurant. Responses to threats were the second most likely cause of a conflict for PG movies.

PG-13 movies most common type of conflict was a reaction to the threat of violence followed by subjugation, of the actor or someone they know. Threats made up 21.8 percent of all PG-13 movie conflicts while subjugation accounted for 14 percent of the conflicts. Of the threat conflicts, the majority were in response to a threat of violence (56.3%), threat of subjugation (20%), and the minority were a response to the threat of a failure (7.5%) and the threat of loss (3.8%). Of conflicts resulting from subjugation, 52.3 percent were because the character acting against the subjugation was themselves imprisoned or being personally controlled and 47.7 percent were the character acting against the subjugation of another person in the movie.

PG and PG-13 movies differ the most in how much vengeance is the motivation behind a conflict. In PG-13 movies vengeance is 7.2 percent of the total conflicts while it is only 3.6 percent of the conflicts in PG movies. Vengeance is coded into four categories, half of which are for the death of another, either accidental or intentional. The PG movies only had one total instance of vengeance for murder and one total conflict over an accidental death. Meanwhile, the PG-13 movies had conflicts initiated by vengeance over murder 10 times and by accidental death 8 times.

By breaking down the master categories, conflicts in PG and PG-13 movies look similar. There are specific types of conflicts that are most common, like personal insults, invasions of personal space, imprisonment, theft, betrayal, threat of violence, personality conflicts, and one of the individuals not fulfilling expectations. The major difference in prevalence of certain types of conflicts is that PG-13 movies had 17 (5.29%) politics or policy based conflicts while PG movies only had 2 (0.89%).
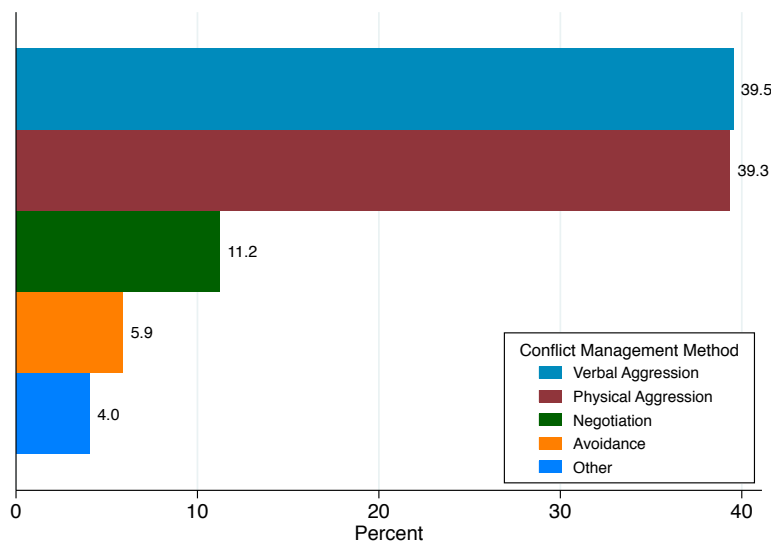
Figure 3: Percent Specific Conflict Types by PG and PG-13 Movies
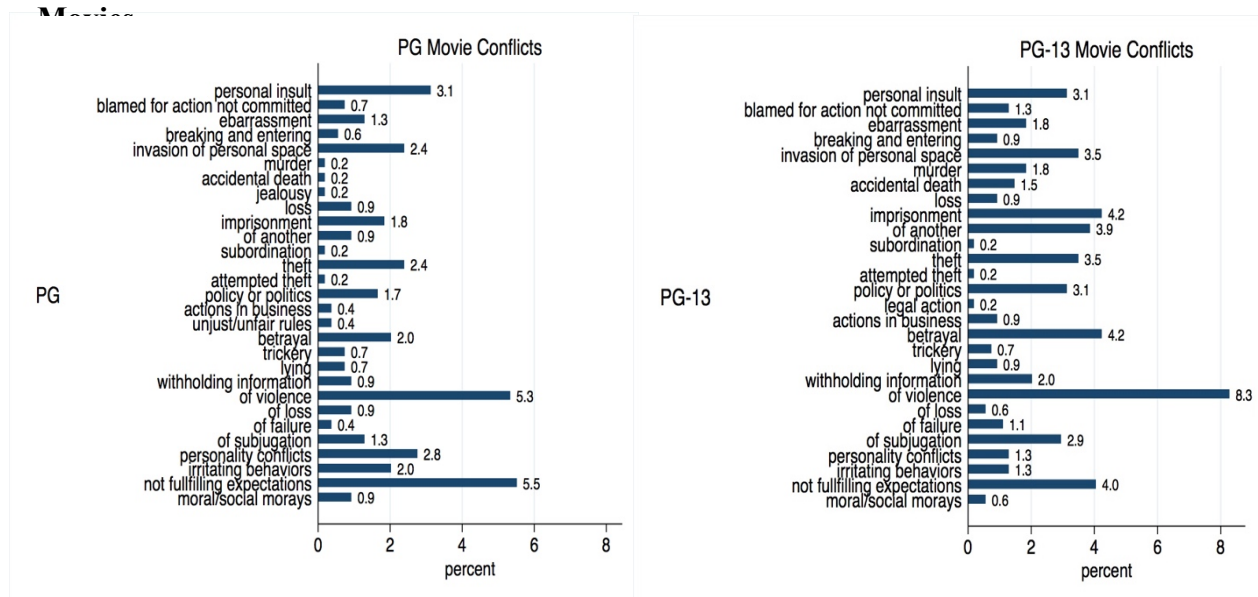
METHODS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Overall, the majority of conflicts presented in top grossing 2016 films are managed through verbal (39%) and physical aggression (39%), totaling 80-percent of the total methods used. Physical and verbal aggression are the most common conflict management techniques across all types of major conflict categories. Verbal aggression is most commonly presented as a method of resolving insults, space violations, political disagreements, deceit (perceived or real), and general irritants. Physical aggression is most commonly used as a form of

Figure 4: Percent Major Types of Conflict Management

conflict management when the conflict is vengeance, subjugation, theft, and when faced with a threat.

PG movies are more often managed through verbal aggression (43.9%) than physical aggression (32.7%) while PG-13 movies are more often managed through physical aggression (63.2%) than verbal aggression (36.4%). Negotiation, avoidance, and other, typically a form of self-help, total 23.3 percent of the conflict management in PG movies and only 19.6 percent of the conflict management in PG-13 movies.

Verbal aggression differs between PG and PG-13 movies. The most common type of verbal aggression in PG movies is guilt induction, including chastising/lecturing, which makes up 30.6-percent of the verbal aggression used to manage conflicts. In PG-13 movies guilt induction makes up 23.9 percent of the verbal aggression while threats make up the majority, at 27.4 percent, of the verbal aggression used to manage conflicts. The rest of verbally aggressive conflict managements in PG-13 movies are arguments (20.5%), insults (17.9%), and sarcasm (3.4%). For PG movies, verbal aggression, following guilt, is arguments (34.2%), threats (28.8%), insults (17.8%),

Figure 5: Percent Conflict Management by Movie

and sarcasm (5.5%). PG and PG-13 movies both used mockery as a conflict management style 6.8 percent of the time there was verbal aggression.
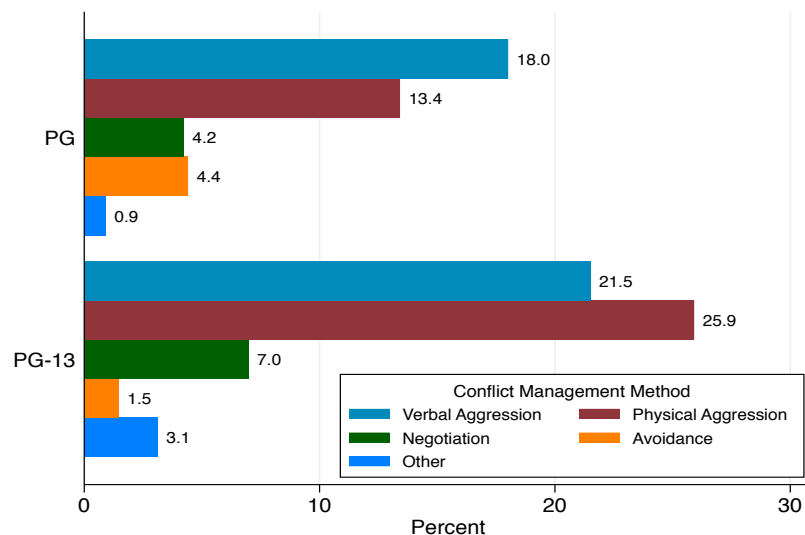
The type of violence most often used in films remains constant across PG and PG-13 movies. One-on-one violence makes up 68.5 percent of the physically aggressive conflict management types in PG movies and 77.3 percent in PG-13 movies, which is the majority for both. For PG movies, 12.3 percent of the conflicts managed through physical aggression are managed through posturing, a form of physical intimidation, 8.2 percent through large scale violence, 5.5 percent through a small amount of property destruction, and 2.7% through both a large amount of property destruction and mocking without using words. PG-13 violence,

following one-on-one violence, is 17.7 percent large scale violence like group violence, 2.1 percent posturing and small-scale property destruction, and .7 percent large scale property destruction. There were no instances of mockery without using words. It is worth noting that although property destruction was not the method of resolution or getting the character's way, there was frequently property destruction as an aspect of violence, singular or group.

Negotiation was used 15 more times in PG-13 movies than in PG movies, a 1.5 percent difference. However, avoidance was used 16 fewer times in PG-13 than PG movies, an 8.3 percent difference. Out of the total times negotiations was used in PG movies, discussions and apologies were each used 17.4 percent of the time and emotional pleas were used the most — for 65.2 percent of the conflicts managed through negotiation. For PG-13 movies, emotional pleas were also the majority at 47.4 percent of the negotiations used while discussions were utilized 31.6 percent of the time. The remaining 15.8 percent of negotiations used in PG-13 movies was apologies.

Avoidance differed substantially between PG and PG-13 movies. The majority of avoidance behaviors to manage conflicts in PG movies were fleeing or running away (62.5%) while ignoring the grievance was used more in PG-13 movies, 50 percent of the time. Ignoring the actor causing the grievance as the primary method of conflict management was used 12.5 percent of all the avoidance in PG movies and toleration of the actor causing the grievance was used 25 percent of the time. PG-13 movies used toleration 12.5 percent out of all avoidance methods and fleeing or running away 37.5 percent of the time.
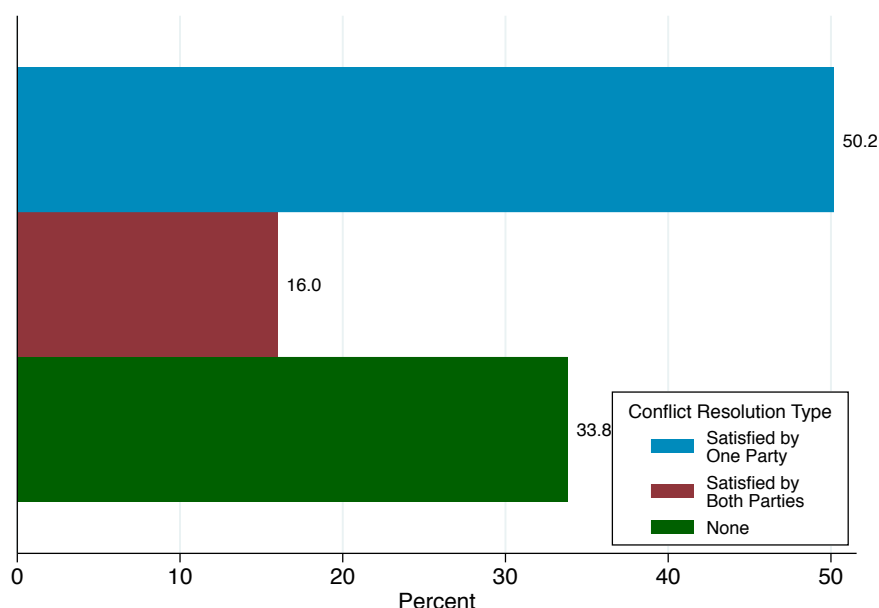
The other category, encompassing legal action and self-help in which the character found a way to achieve their methods outside of direct confrontation, was used 2.2 percent of the time in PG movies and 5.3 percent of the time in PG-13 movies. For PG movies, legal action was

utilized 80-percent and self-help was utilized 20 percent of the time that an "other" form of conflict management was used. In PG-13 movies, the "other" category was more evenly split — legal action was used 52.9 percent of the time and self-help was used 47.1 percent of the time.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Over the sample 20 movies, the majority of conflicts were resolved so that one party was satisfied over another. The five major categories of resolution coded for satisfaction by one party are subjugation of the other actor, dominance over another, removal of the irritant (either by ignoring it or physically displacing it), undermining the plans of the other, or through the death of the other actor in the conflict. 50.2 percent of all of the conflicts in all 20 movies resulted in the satisfaction by one member of the conflict. 33.8 percent of all conflicts were not resolved by either party involved in the conflict

Figure 6: Percent Major Types of Conflict Resolution

such as through toleration of the grievance, avoidance of the other party, or through both parties ceasing to engage in the conflict, sometimes because of actions taken by a third party that interrupt the conflict management being utilized to resolve it.

The smallest number of conflicts, resulting in 16 percent of all conflicts, were resolved in a manner so that both parties were satisfied. When both parties were satisfied by a resolution it

was because of a compromise between the two members of the conflict, an agreement to work together for mutual ends, or because one character acted in self-sacrifice to end the conflict, thereby giving both parties what they want.

PG movies and PG-13 movies differ in the major type of conflict resolution is used more often. PG movies were just as likely to have a conflict resolved so that it satisfies one party as to be resolved so that neither party is satisfied. Both types of conflict resolution are 39.9 percent of the conflicts, resulting in 59.8 percent of the total conflict resolutions in PG movies. Conflicts resolved through satisfaction by both parties was 20.2 percent of conflict resolution.

PG-13 movies follow the overall movie trend in which the majority of the conflicts are resolved through satisfaction by one party in the conflict (57.3%), there was no resolution for either member of the conflict 29.6 percent of the time, and satisfaction by both parties occurred 13.1 percent of the time.

Of the conflicts that were resolved through satisfaction by one party in PG-13 movies 39.7 percent occurred when one member of the conflict subjugated the other, i.e. brought the other member under their control. This was closely followed by the death of one member of the conflict at 34.8 percent of the time. Obtaining dominance over the other member of the conflict occurred 14.1 percent and undermining the other occurred 12 percent of the time conflicts were resolved

Figure 7: Percent Conflict Resolution by Movie Type
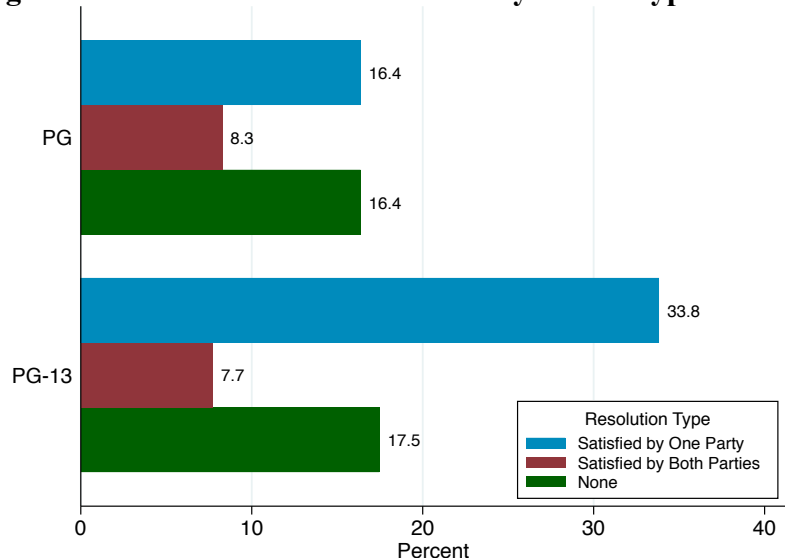
to the satisfaction of a single party. The remaining .5 percent of the resolutions were through

removal of an irritant.

Figure 8: Percent All Conflict Resolutions by Movie Rating

In PG movies, resolutions that satisfied a single party were 34.8 percent subjugation, 28.1 percent dominance over another, 24.7 percent through undermining another, 6.7 percent through the death of the other, and 5.6-percent through removing the irritant. Resolutions that satisfied neither party were 55.1-percent toleration, 31.5 percent avoidance, and 13.5 percent a ceasing in conflict management.[1]
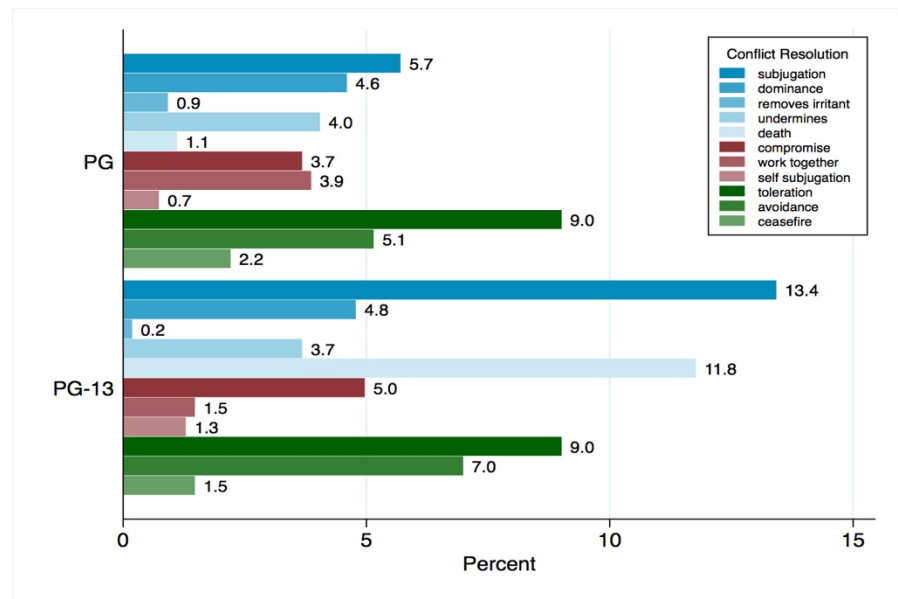
CONFLICT TYPE AND MANAGEMENT

Table 2 displays the percentages of each type of conflict management used in each type of conflict. The bolded numbers are the majority of the management style in each category of conflict. A chi-squared test was conducted to determine if the categories are independent from one another or if the differences in how much each conflict management style across the categories are random differences. The p-value of less than 0.000 in Table 2 indicates the differences across categories are not random. Because there are some thin cells, a chi-squared test could be considered unreliable. However, the majority of the cells had an acceptable number

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[1] Totals may exceed 100-percent due to rounding.

of observations, there were 544 overall observations, and the chi-squared test is highly

significant.[2]

Overall, the majority of conflicts

presented in top grossing 2016 films are

managed through verbal and physical

aggression, both totaling approximately

39 percent of the total methods used.

Physical and verbal aggression are the

most common method of resolving all

types of major conflict categories. The

results of testing which type of

resolution method was used most often

Table 1: Master Category of Conflict and Method of Resolution

	Category of Resolution Method					
Nature of Conflict	Verbal Aggression	Physical Aggression	Negotiation	Avoidance	Other	Total
Insult	**53.2**	16.1	16.1	9.7	4.8	100% n=62
Space Violation	**42.5**	25.0	20.0	7.5	5.0	100% n=40
Vengeance	19.4	**58.1**	0.0	3.2	19.4	100% n=31
Subjugation	14.8	**60.7**	11.5	11.5	1.6	100% n=61
Theft	29.4	**52.9**	2.9	8.8	5.9	100% n=34
Political Disagreement	**66.7**	13.9	13.9	0.0	5.7	100% n=36
Deceit	**49.3**	37.3	9.0	0.0	4.5	100% n=67
Threat	14.2	**63.7**	12.4	8.9	0.9	100% n=113
Irritants	**67.0**	19.0	10.0	2.0	2.0	100% n=100
Total	39.5 n=215	39.3 n=214	11.2 n=61	5.9 n=32	4.1 n=22	100% n=544

p<0.000

for each type of conflict can be found in Table 1. Verbal aggression is most commonly presented

as a method of resolving insults (53.2%), space violations (42.5%), political disagreements

(66.7%), deceit (perceived or real) (49.3%), and general irritants (67%). Physical aggression is

most commonly used as a form of conflict management when the conflict is vengeance (58.1%),

subjugation (60.7%), theft (52.9%), and when faced with a threat (63.7%). Negotiation,

avoidance, or another type of method were not a used in a majority for any type of conflict.

Table 2 compares the nature of the conflicts and the methods used for resolution

show verbal aggression and physical aggression are used to solve all types of conflicts.

Avoidance, negotiation, and other are not the most common method of resolution for any type of

conflict. Verbal aggression is used most commonly to solve conflicts over insults (52.2%), space

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[2] A Fischer's Exact test was run but could not be completed due to memory constraints.

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violations (42.5%), political disagreements (66.7%), deceit (49.3%), and irritants (67%). Physical aggression is used to resolve conflicts motivated by vengeance (58.1%), subjugation (60.7%), theft (52.9%), and threats (63.7%).

Table 3 displays the same comparison of the types of conflicts with the types of conflict management used, separated by PG and PG-13 films. A separate chi-squared test was conducted for the PG and PG-13 films and combined into a single table. Negotiation and Avoidance and Other categories were eliminated from the display to simplify the results as there no majority in any of the three categories. It was once again concluded that the majority of the conflicts were resolved through either verbal or physical aggression at a p>0.000. For purposes of display, the categories of negotiation, avoidance, and other were removed from the table.

Table 2: Conflict Resolution by Movie Rating

Most Common Conflict Resolution Method by Movie Rating				
Nature of Conflict	**PG**		**PG-13**	
	Verbal	**Physical**	**Verbal**	**Physical**
Insult	**53.6**	14.3	**52.9**	17.7
Space Violation	**43.8**	12.5	**41.7**	33.3
Vengeance	25.0	**50.0**	17.4	**60.9**
Subjugation	0.0	**68.8**	20.0	**57.8**
Theft	35.7	**42.9**	25.0	**60.0**
Political Disagreement	**84.6**	7.7	**56.5**	17.4
Deceit	**62.5**	29.2	**41.9**	41.9
Threat	18.6	**48.8**	11.4	**72.9**
Irritants	**57.4**	27.9	**82.1**	5.1

p<0.000

This pattern found in Table 2 remains stable when separating the method of resolution by movie type. After being separated by PG and PG-13, the most common method of conflict resolution is verbal and physical aggression. Table 3 shows the percentages of the resolution methods used per conflict type. For both PG and PG-13 movies, verbal aggression is most often used to resolve conflicts based on insults, space violations, political disagreements, deceitful actions, and irritants. Physical aggression is used to resolve conflicts based on vengeance, subjugation, theft, and threats. The difference between the films overall and when separated by

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type is that PG-13 movies conflicts based on deceit are just as likely to be resolved through

physical aggression as verbal aggression. Both are used in 41.9-percent of the conflicts, or 83.8-

percent of all threat based conflicts in PG-13 movies.

CONFLICT TYPE AND RESOLUTION

When looking at the type of conflict and the resolution resulting from it, resolutions that

satisfy one member of the conflict are the

majority: 71 percent of vengeance style

conflicts, 75.4 percent of conflicts resulting

from subjugation, 70.6 percent of thefts, 49.3

percent of deceitful conflicts, and 69 percent

of threats. Irritants (59%), space violations

(55%), and insults (41.9%) are more likely

to be satisfied by neither party than by one

or through a resolution that satisfies both.

Results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Conflict and Resolution

Nature of Conflict	Category of Resolution			
	Satisfied by One Party	Satisfied by Both Parties	Satisfied by None	Total
Insult	38.7	19.4	41.9	100% n=62
Space Violation	30.0	15.0	55.0	100% n=40
Vengeance	71.0	9.7	19.4	100% n=31
Subjugation	75.4	11.5	13.1	100% n=61
Theft	70.6	14.7	14.7	100% n=34
Political Disagreement	38.9	22.2	38.9	100% n=36
Deceit	49.3	14.9	35.8	100% n=67
Threat	69.0	13.3	17.7	100% n=113
Irritants	20.0	21.0	59.0	100% n=100
Total	50.2 n=215	16.0 n=214	33.8 n=61	100% n=544

p<0.000

Conflicts over political disagreements are equally as likely, 38.9 percent each, across the

20 movies analyzed to be resolved to the satisfaction of one member of the conflict as to be

satisfied by neither member. PG and PG-13 movies differ by how political disagreements are

resolved where 46.2 percent of the conflicts are resolved for neither party while 47.8 percent of the conflicts in PG-13 movies are resolved to the satisfaction of one member of the conflict.

The distribution of conflict resolutions for all movies holds for PG-13 movies with only one exception, seen in Table 4. In the PG-13 movies, insults were most likely to be resolved to the satisfaction of one member of the conflict instead of going unsatisfied for both members. The pattern changes regarding PG movies. Political disagreements and deceitful conflicts are most likely to be

Table 4: Conflict and Resolution by Movie Rating

Most Common Conflict Resolution by Movie Rating and Conflict						
Nature of Conflict	**PG**			**PG-13**		
	One	**Both**	**None**	**One**	**Both**	**None**
Insult	28.6	21.4	**50.0**	**47.1**	17.7	35.3
Space Violation	25.0	18.8	**56.3**	33.3	12.5	**54.2**
Vengeance	**62.5**	12.5	25.0	**73.9**	8.7	17.4
Subjugation	**81.3**	18.8	0.0	**73.3**	8.9	17.8
Theft	**57.1**	21.4	21.4	**80.0**	10.0	10.0
Political Disagreement	23.1	30.8	**46.2**	**47.8**	17.4	34.2
Deceit	41.7	12.5	**45.8**	**53.5**	16.3	30.2
Threat	**62.8**	18.6	18.6	**72.9**	10.0	17.1
Irritants	18.0	23.0	**59.0**	23.1	17.9	**59.0**

p<0.000

resolved for neither member of the conflict, instead of for one. PG-13 political conflicts are most likely to be resolved to the satisfaction of one member of the conflict (47.8%) and PG movies are most likely to not be resolved to the satisfaction of either member of the conflict (46.8%).

GENDER

There were additional categories coded for during the viewing process. These included the gender presentation of the primary actors involved in the conflict, the type of character who ultimately resolved the conflict - either good, neutral or bad, the use of violence, it's justification, the type of character who first used violence, and the gender presentation of the character. Gender was coded based on the presentation provided by the film and coded male and female based on current, American societal standards for gender. Ambiguous gender presentation was

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coded for as well, resulting in two violent situations commenced by characters of unknown

gender, less than 1 percent of the total.

Table 5: Additional Variables

Character Characteristics
Conflict between Genders (as presented[3]) of Primary Actors
        Two Males (coded 1, 47.77%)
        Male and Female (coded 2, 40.33%)
        Two Females (coded 3. 5.02%)
        Male and a Crowd/Mixed Group (coded 4, 3.72%)
        Female and Crowd/Mixed Group (coded 5, 1.86%)
        Crowd/Crowd (coded 7, 1.30%)
Resolver Character Type
        None (coded 0, 0.18%)
        Good (coded 1, 70.04%)
        Neutral (coded 2, 13.97%)
        Bad (coded 3, 15.81%)
Violence
Violence Used?
        No (coded 0, 56.62%)
        Yes (coded 1, 43.38%)
Violence Presented as Justified?
        Yes (coded 1, 48.51%)
        No (coded 2, 52.49%)
Violent Character Type
        Good (coded 1, 48.51%)
        Neutral (coded 2, 11.49%)
        Bad (coded 3, 40.00%)
Violent Aggressor
        Male (coded 1, 76.17%)
        Female (coded 2, 20.00%)
        Crowd/Many (coded 3, 2.98%)
        Unknown (coded 4, 0.85%)
Violence or Pain Used as Comedic Device per Movie?
        Total (228), Range (0-36), Mean (11.4), Median (5.5)

The majority of the conflicts, 47.77 percent, occurred between two males and closely followed

by conflicts between a male and a female which represented 40.33 percent. Conflicts involving

two female characters represented only 5.02 percent of all conflicts and female conflicts with a

crowd represented 1.86 percent. Conflicts involving females resulted in 47.21 percent of all

conflicts. Overall, 91.82 percent of the conflicts in the 20 popular films involved a male

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[3] Male and Female were gender presentations in films. Only 2 conflicts occurred with ambiguous gender presentations and dropped from gender analysis.

character as 3.72 percent of the conflicts involved a male character and a crowd of mixed genders. Conflicts between two crowds or mixed gender groups represented only 1.3 percent of the total conflicts.

The type of character to resolve a conflict was overwhelming represented as a "good" character (70.04%) in each film. Good characters were shown through a variety of methods, such as involving themselves for the sake of justice or protecting another person. In those conflicts that were satisfied by one party, for the resolver, 58.24 percent were resolved by a good character and 28.57 percent were resolved by "bad" characters, indicated by being on the opposing side of the conflict from those who had been identified as good or behaving in a morally corrupt way, typically by irritating or hurting others without cause. Characters who toe the moral line, engaging in both good and bad character traits, were coded as neutral and resolved 13.19 percent of the conflicts for themselves. Violence was used in 43.38 percent of the conflicts and presented as justified in its use 48.51 percent of the time it was used.

Good characters overwhelmingly resolved conflicts to the satisfaction by both parties, at 87.76 percent compared to 1.15 percent resolved by bad characters and 16.09 percent resolved by neutral characters. For conflicts that did not result in either party's satisfaction, 81.52 percent were resolved by good characters, 14.13 percent by neutral characters, and 3.80-percent were resolved by bad characters. Only one conflict (0.54%) resolved for neither party had no actor engaging in a resolution. The conflict never continued and never truly ended.

The type of character that engaged in the first act of violence in the conflict, regardless of who ended it, was closely split between good and bad characters. Good characters commenced violence 48.51 percent of the time and bad characters began using violence in a conflict 40.00 percent of the time. This presents an interesting message as good characters were slightly more

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likely to begin a violent engagement. Neutral characters engaged in violence first 11.49 percent of the time that violence was used. In terms of gender, the violent actor was most likely to be a male (76.17% of the time) followed by female characters (20.0%) and groups of mixed genders (2.98%). There were 2 conflicts in which the violent aggressor was unknown, equating to 0.85-percent of the total.

COMEDIC VIOLENCE

Violence was used as a comedic device frequently across the 20 movies. PG movies used violence and pain primarily as a form of comedy more frequently than PG-13 movies. Coded separately from the primary data, whenever a form of violence or pain was inflicted on a character for the clear purpose of inciting a laugh or amusement from the viewer, it was counted. These instances are part of overall violence used in all films but are not just violence. Comedic purpose must be involved.

PG movies averaged 19.9 incidents of violence as comedy over 10 films, with a median of 22, and PG-13 movies averaged 2.9 incidents, with a median of 3. Additionally, PG movies had a much more dispersion than PG-13 movies with a standard deviation of 10.14 incidents versus PG-13 movies' 2.28 incident standard deviation. Not only do PG movies use comedy more often as a comedic device, they also have a much more variation in how much is used. All PG movies used at least 3 violence or painful incidents as a form of comedy. Two PG-13 movies, *Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice* and *Jason Bourne* had zero incidents of violence or pain specifically for amusement, although had a high number of conflicts overall, 29 and 17 respectively. The violence used in these two films, as was common in the other PG-13 rated movies as well, is much more serious than the violence used in PG movies, more often resulting

Figure 9: Comparison of the Number of Comedic Violent/Painful Incidents and Overall Conflicts
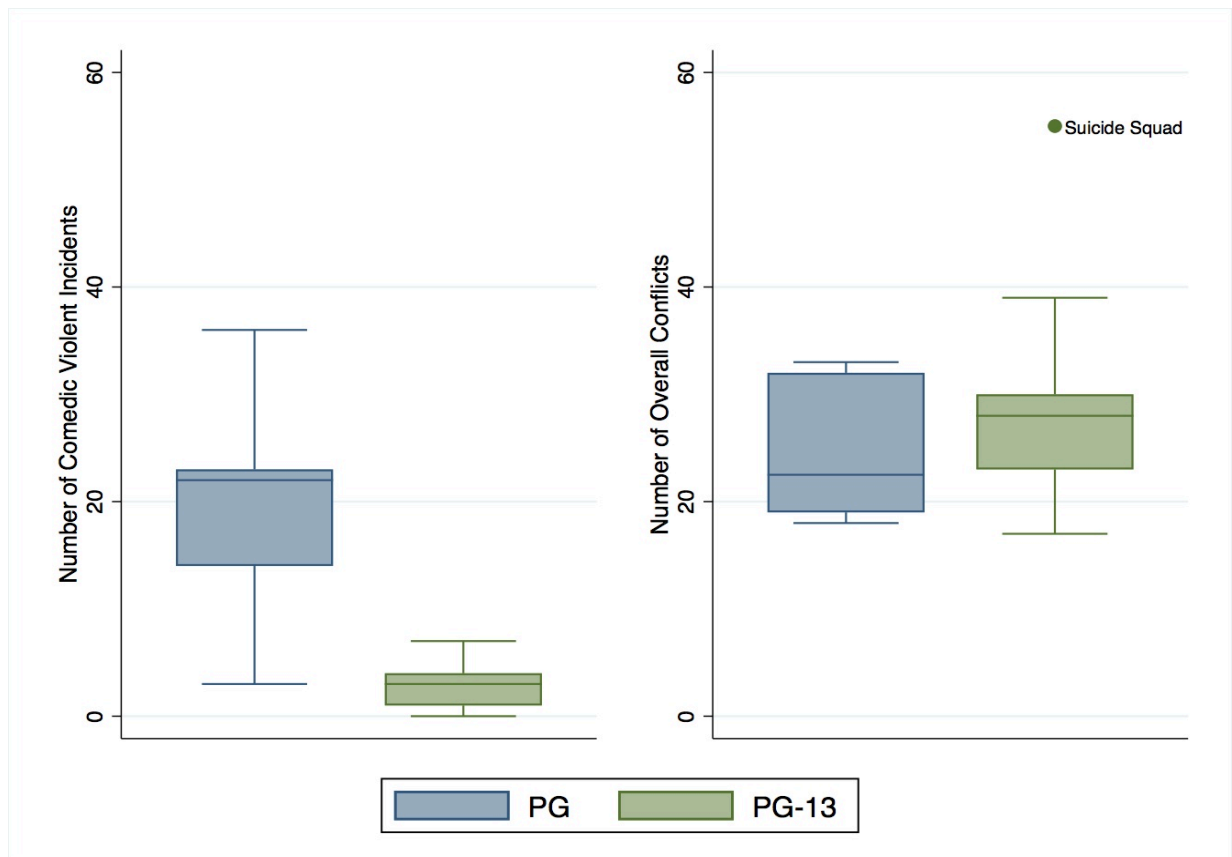
in subjugation and death. Figure 9 presents the number of violent and painful incidents for amusement and the number of conflicts separated by movie rating using box plots. The number of conflicts and incidents have been given the same y-scale so comparisons can be more easily made and viewed. There was only one outlier for the number of conflicts, *Suicide Squad,* with 55 conflicts overall, which is 16 conflicts higher than the next highest, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* with 39 conflicts. For comparison, *Fantastic Beasts* had 5 incidents of violence/pain for amusement and *Suicide Squad* had 4. Although both films used violence and pain in similar ways, one had significantly more conflict than the other. Conflict management in *Suicide Squad* was 41.82 percent verbal aggression and 49.09-percent physical aggression compared to 30.77 percent verbal and 41.03 percent physical in *Fantastic Beasts.* Negotiation

was used 13.34 percent more in *Fantastic Beasts* (20.51%) than in *Suicide Squad* (7.27%). This information provides an idea of how variable each film is individually. However, the overall patterns of violence and conflict among PG and PG-13 films are of more interest to the research question.

The results point to four major findings. First, a threat, but not actual action, is enough to begin a conflict. Although nothing in the literature previously reviewed led me to expect this finding, it is unsurprising when looking back at how much there were violent and aggressive incidents across all types of characters. Secondly, that conflict is perfectly justified in being physically violent or verbally aggressive.

Thirdly, resolving a conflict means that there is only one person involved who gets their way, especially if they are morally "good" or on the "right" side of the conflict. Given the review of Yokota and Thompson's (2000) study, this result is not unexpected. In their study, "good" characters frequently used violence to resolve conflicts between themselves and a "bad" character. This study supports these findings as characters presented as morally good frequently used violence and aggression to resolve their conflicts with other characters, presented as morally neutral or bad. Nelson's study of the ways in which people reframe actions by those they consider to be the "good guy", the findings in this study beg the question: do individuals take the side of the person they consider the "good" one as part of a psychological "in-group/out-group" identity loyalty or are they socialized to believe that the people they believe are morally right in other situations will always engage in morally just behaviors? Perhaps Nelson's study reveals the ways in which individuals have learned to justify the morally ambiguous behaviors of others based on their perception of their prior morality or goodness.

Fourth and finally, when presented to children, violence and pain are funny. Given the controversy over the amount that children learn from television and other forms of media, it is unknown how much this matters to the development of young minds. The pervasiveness of comedic violence and pain in children's films might serve as a form of socialization into violence as entertainment even if there is no imitation of the behaviors by children in their daily lives. Although instances of comedic violence are rare and occasionally non-existent in PG-13 movies, serious violence is more prevalent.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Although conflicts are initiated through a variety of methods, from personal insults to threats and irritants, patterns of conflict management and conflict resolution are more apparent. Almost eighty-percent of all conflicts in the 20 films are managed through aggression, equally split between verbal and physical aggression. Following conflict management, conflict resolution also presents strong patterns of individualism, domination, and, in contrast, a fairly high frequency of instances in which characters engage in toleration (in which the conflict is largely ignored). Just over half of all the conflicts are resolved to the satisfaction of one party involved. Together, these patterns create a strong cultural message about how conflicts should be handled and what it means for one to be resolved.

Despite the variety of conflict types, the management and resolution style presented is fairly consistent. Wismera's (2001) study, which found gender roles in Disney movies had not changed much in 80 years, supports the idea that ruling texts become standardized so that texts, present a textual reality based on institutional values formed by those in power (Smith 1990). The way conflict management is presented in these 20 ruling texts, overwhelming managed through aggression, presents one perspective on conflict in society. However, it is a strong and consistent message, as it has had decades to standardize and with little reason to not to — these films together made billions at the box office in 2016 using what appears to be the current format of conflict management and resolution. The strength of the message and reach of these 20 films means that millions of people in the United States, and around the world, are being exposed to

the idea that conflict should be managed through individual aggression and resolved for an individual, not for mutual ends.

Violence in Entertainment

The prevalence of violence in all forms of entertainment, including live theater which is arguably the precursor to today's movie industry, makes these findings unsurprising even if the extent of their use is. There has always been conflict in theatre which is often accompanied by violence. Early Greek tragedies were highly philosophical and did not display much violence even when violence occurred. It would be taken offstage or a death would be mentioned. However, when the Romans began writing plays and adapting those of the Greeks, they included the addition of violence on-stage. The dramas of Seneca, one of the most well-known playwrights we know of from that time, are characterized by many violent actions including ripping open abdomens, moving pieces of dead bodies, and cannibalism (Brockett 1974: 111). The Romans were particularly adept at including violence in their entertainment, as evidenced by the emergence of gladiator fights. Tragedy, death, and the illusion of violence, if not violence itself, has therefore been a part of theater and entertainment since its beginning.

Things did not change much as time moved forward and theater evolved. In medieval times theater became marked by religious, particularly, Christian values. Often this meant the portrayal of God, the Devil, and a battle over man's immortal soul. With the decline of government funding and support at the end of the medieval period, the following centuries saw increased secularization in theater and the resurgence of Greek and Roman plays, and therefore tragic entertainment (Brockett 1974). Many of Shakespeare's plays portray significant acts of violence such as murder, suicide, execution, and violent combat depicted onstage as well as implied offstage (Mabillard 2008). During the Neoclassical period of theater (early 1600s

through the 18th century) there was less violence onstage as it was difficult to make it realistic, but violence was still an integral part of dramas. Neoclassicism emphasized punishment of wickedness and the rewards of goodness, building on the basis of the Christian plays centuries previously. Horrible results ensued in tragedies to make examples of those who engaged in morally wrong behavior (Brockett 1974: 195). These underlying themes remained in the romantic era of theater while expanding from realism to the supernatural as reason gave way to faith. Psychological manipulation and moral parables worked their way in to the American Broadway theater during the 1900s, never losing the desire for dramatic, conflictual theater developed from the Greek period onward (Brocket 1974).

Theater, therefore, has been tragic, conflictual, and violent since its beginning. Those themes carried forward from the original Greek plays to the entertainment and film industry we pay to see on screen today. While it is therefore fitting with the norm for the sample studied here to have a pattern of violent conflict resolution, perhaps even in the nature of theater overall, we should perhaps be asking why it is the norm for human entertainment to be so violent. Why is it that conflict, something that is inherently distancing between people, is what brings us together? Although we are considered a post-modern society and we promote peace between people, we are seemingly obsessed with violent conflict. While this study cannot answer why violence is so common, it can pose the question.

Children and Teen/Adult Films

However, the message of conflict management being presented does change depending on the movie rating. PG and PG-13 movies resolve conflicts through aggressive management styles, either verbally or physically, 76.68 and 80.37-percent of the time, respectively. Although there are differences in type of aggression, it is worth noting that there are similar amounts of

aggression in general across the movie ratings. This indicates a certain consistency in the cultural message surrounding conflict management.

In PG-13 movies, conflicts are 30.5-percent more likely to be managed through physical aggression than conflicts in PG movies. Across all types of conflicts, except for subjugation and irritants, physical aggression is more likely to be used to manage conflicts in PG-13 movies than in PG movies, even when physical aggression is the primary conflict management style in both movie ratings. It then follows that verbal aggression is more likely to be used to manage conflicts in PG movies, except for conflicts based on subjugation (in which PG movies did not manage any through verbal violence) and irritants than PG-13 movies.

This result matters, culturally if not sociologically, because PG movies are created for and viewed by children. They are specifically created with young people in mind. As a culture, we are showing children that violence is amusing. According to one study on children's comprehension of television, children generally take what is on screen as trustworthy information and incorporate it into their conception of the world around them (Flavell, Flavell, Green, and Korfmacher 1990). Although there is a lot of controversy about the amount children learn from television and film media, there is a lot of support for their acceptance, imitation, and learning from it as well. Therefore, it is possible that we are actively teaching our young people that violence is a large part of entertainment. Knowing how much is being presented is the first step in understanding how it might be affecting them or how much they might be internalizing the actions of those on screen. This study cannot answer such a question but it does allow for the beginning of understanding the use of violence and the pervasiveness of it in our culture.

The violence is treated more seriously in PG-13 films; thus, violence is considered serious for teens and adults, but not for children. This is particularly apparent considering that

the average number of violent incidents specifically for comedy is 19.9 across the ten PG movies. The average for the ten PG-13 movies is 2.9. Six of the ten PG-13 movies are classified as action films, three are classified as adventure, and one is comedy. All had incidents of conflicts that involved violence. Nine of the PG-13 movies are classified as adventure with the tenth, Moana, classified as a musical (the-numbers.com). Although action is not used to categorize any of the PG movies, all of them use violence and pain for comedic purposes and all of the films had conflicts that involved violence for any means – similarly to the PG-13 movies classified as actions films. This invites at least one question this paper cannot answer: Is it possible that adults find violent, action packed movies so entertaining because they are groomed to think so from childhood? And, are we creating a society in which violence is desensitized, comedic, and entertaining, rather than harmful? Understanding what we are ingesting through our entertainment is important to understanding what our culture believes and how our society behaves. Learning that our entertainment industry is run by violent stories and conflict management may not be surprising, but the extent that it saturates both adult and children films appears to be less understood.

Overall, the messages being presented to young teens and adults about conflict are more physically violent and aggressive than the messages presented to children under 13. The PG movies - created, implemented, and advertised for children - do not manage or resolve conflicts any less aggressively, but present somewhat less violent conflict management techniques than movies created for teens and adults. A discourses perspective would argue that these movie ratings act as two sides of a societal conversation, one that people engage with at different parts of their lives. In their childhood, one voice in the discourse of conflict management transmits ideas of verbal strength, aggression, and limited physical means. This discourse shifts as they

age, becoming more physically aggressive and violent, relying on verbal management techniques less. Conflicts over political disagreements make the biggest switch dropping 28.1-percent in verbal aggression and raising 9.3-percent in physical aggression when the movie rating changes from PG to PG-13. Similar, yet less dramatic changes occur in almost all categories of conflict, as shown in Table 3.

The access of that children have to violence as entertainment has arguably increased since the early 1900s. Although theater and the portrayal of violence and conflict has been around for centuries, the audiences were primarily adults (Brocket 1974). Over time, plays written specifically for children emerged but children were still able to view dramas such as Shakespeare's. The growth of the film industry and technology has made such entertainment easier to access and children are more readily exposed to violence and conflict yet there has been little consensus on the effects of such exposure. Children's theatre is thought to have begun sometime in the early 1800s when companies toured around Europe acting out fairy tales. Over time, children's theater has become more widespread as is considered to be educational and philosophical for young minds. One of the major components of theater for children is that "children believe everything they see is real" and suspends the need to allow the audience to make judgements as theater for adults does (Eluyefa 2017). If modern theater for children argues that children believe what they see on stage, does the modern film industry? Given the violent nature of the sample in this study, either the film industry does not and assumes children know what is real and what is imaginary, or they have not thought about their product as potentially influencing of the young people it is targeted to.

However, one constant is the comedic use of pain. Dennis Eluyefa writes that "falling down or throwing things over funnily and dramatically, tripping, slipping, and big

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reactions…slapstick sets a scene" for humor and entertainment for children (2017:90). The humor and laughter of children is used to create a more vibrant environment which can help keep children engaged in the moral argument or educational value of the play. If that is the purpose of the films in this study also, what is their educational goal? PG films did display less violence in conflict resolution than the PG-13 films, but there were still many conflicts managed through aggressive, if not violent means. Does the comedic violence reinforce a message of aggression in conflict resolution? This study cannot answer these questions as it does not explore the mission statements of big film companies nor was an experiment with children conducted to examine their absorption of the material. This study can argue that films targeted at children are significantly less violent than PG-13 films, although the violence in children's films is treated significantly more comically and might be reinforcing, given the values of children's theater and psychological theories posed previously, the aggressive conflict resolution style portrayed.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolutions follow a similar pattern to management styles. Just over half of all conflicts in the sample 20 film were resolved to the satisfaction of one member of the conflict but changes by movie rating. PG movies were just as likely to resolve for one member of the conflict than for neither while PG-13 movies had a higher percentage of resolutions for one member of the conflict (57.3%) than either of the other two styles. For both PG and PG-13 movies, resolutions that resulted in outcomes that were beneficial to both parties in the conflict were the least likely at 16-percent of the total sample, 20.2-percent for PG movies, and 13.1-percent for PG-13 movies. These patterns represent a textual reality that conflicts are only finished when one party wins or, if one party can't win, neither does. Mutual destruction or

dominance are presented as the overarching reality of conflict, as the acceptable means of conflict resolution.

The majority of conflicts throughout the 20 films involved male characters, almost 50-percent were between two males, with another 40.33-percent between a male and a female. Of the conflicts between two male characters, 58.47-percent were resolved to the satisfaction of one party and 50.19-percent were resolved through physical aggression, followed by 33.85-percent by verbal aggression. Male and female conflicts were most commonly resolved through verbal aggression (47.47%) followed by physical aggression (25.35%) and negotiation (17.05%). In contrast, conflicts between two females is most commonly managed through verbal aggression, at 59.26-percent, followed by physical aggression (25.93%) and avoidance (14.81%). Conflict between two females had no incidents of negotiation or other types of conflict management.

These numbers support claims of hypermasculinity and gender roles in the media as claimed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Scharrer (2004). Males are the most likely to engage in physical aggression to manage a conflict. Physical violence is a key component of hypermasculinity in the media (Scharrer 2004). However, this is complicated by this sample. In the conflicts between a male and a female character, female characters initiated the physical aggression in 30 of the 50 conflicts managed through physical aggression, or 60-percent of the time. This contradicts the hyperfeminity theory in media of women behaving in exaggerated forms of submissiveness and subordination to males. This finding is not entirely new and is supported by Karen E. Dill and Kathryn P. Thill's (2007) finding that female characters were aggressive only 20-percent less than male characters in video games.

Women in historical theater were rarely violent, and if they were, they were considered morally bankrupt (Dusinberre 2003). Recent films display a divergence from this traditional line

of thought as female characters in this study, both those presented as morally good and bad, engage in aggressive and violent behaviors. Power, both physical and political was long considered the domain of male characters. Women were often kept from political positions and weaponry. Female characters who gained political power on the odd occasion could "only perform it by becoming a man, and thus a monster" (Dusinberre 2003:275). The film media of today has made steps forward in equality, allowing women to engage in similar behaviors as their male counterparts with becoming "monsters". Seneca, a Roman playwright, often wrote female characters who engaged in violence similarly without becoming condemned simply for the violence which, according to Juliet Dusinberre, allowed Shakespeare to write similar characters. It is perhaps, then, to Seneca and Shakespeare that some female characters in today's film industry engage in behaviors typically associated with masculine stereotypes. While women can take on masculine behaviors and have become more assertive over time, as supported by England et al. (2011) and Towbin et al. (2003), there remains a significant inequality between the sexes and their ability to get away with it.

Comparing the gender of the character and the resolver, it appears that good female characters are more likely to engage in aggression successfully than any other characters. Across 63 conflicts between males and females, a good female character was the initial actor in a violent situation and was likely to resolve the action — 36.51-percent compared to 25.39-percent for good male characters. However, when bad female characters initiate violence they only resolve the conflict 9.52-percent while bad male characters who initiate violence resolve the conflict successfully 17.46-percent of the time. Neutral male characters are also more likely to resolve their conflicts when they initiate violence than when neutral female characters do, 7.94 and 3.18-percent respectively. The message appears to be: violent females only succeed in getting their

way if they are morally unambiguous. Meanwhile male characters succeed more often than females all other times. The message being that male characters can vary more in their behaviors and morality than females and still achieve their goals. Females are more constricted in their acceptable behaviors which supports prior findings by Wismera (2001) who argued that the stereotypes embodied by female character have not changed much since the early 1900s.

Aggression does not only change across gender presentation but by character type. Characters that present as good and initiated violence were also the characters that resolved the conflict in 92.11-percent of the conflicts. In comparison, bad characters that initiated violence resolved the conflict only 59.57-percent of the time and good characters resolved the conflict the bad characters began violently 32.98-percent of the time. When no violence was used in the conflict, good characters resolved the conflict 77.35-percent of the time and bad characters only resolved the conflict 7.44-percent of the time. This supports Yokota and Thompson's 2000 claim that violence is used by good characters to resolve a conflict between themselves and a bad character frequently in media. In the current study, good characters overwhelmingly used violence and aggression to manage their conflicts with other characters, almost always being the one to resolve the conflict. When good characters initiated violence, the conflict was resolved by them, for them (one member of the conflict), 77.14-percent of the time. In comparison, bad characters that initiated violence resolved those conflicts for themselves alone 92.86-percent of the time.

Although bad characters engage in conflicts that are resolved for their own satisfaction more frequently than good characters, it occurs 52 times in the 235 conflicts involving violence, representing 22.13-percent of the whole. Meanwhile good characters resolving conflicts through violence for their own satisfaction 81 times, 34.47-percent of the whole. This shows that good

characters are using violent means more often than bad characters, even though bad characters use violence more when they are the primary actor in a conflict.

One of the biggest themes throughout the 20 films, both PG and PG-13, is the prevalence of independent, one-sided resolutions to conflicts. Just over 50-percent of all the conflicts were resolved to the satisfaction of one party, with a large number resulting in subjugation or death. On the other hand, the other most common type of resolution is none, typically through toleration, in which neither party is satisfied with the resolution. This paints an image of conflict resolution as an all or nothing end game. Either one party has complete control and "wins", achieving their ends while foiling the goals of the other, or no one achieves their goals. Resolutions in which both parties achieve something they wanted or needed account for only 16-percent of all conflicts. Compromise and working together are both uncommon and therefore seemingly undesirable in popular film, consistently putting out the message to viewers such resolutions are not valuable. Certainly, that kind of resolution is not valuable to the filmmakers. The presence of violence and one-sided resolutions of conflict in the top 10 grossing PG and PG-13 films of 2016 is an indicator that the American audience responds to, and pays well for, the violence and type of conflict being depicted in these films. Whether American society is imbued with violence in all areas or if media socializes youth young therefore leading to violence in other areas, we do not yet know.

According to media research into viewer behavior and the impact of fiction and non-fiction on media consumers, this message being transmitted is affecting the actions of the people watching these films in their everyday lives. Social Learning Theory in particular argues that people learn through observation and imitation (Bandura 1978), first through watching the films and then through modeling the displayed behavior. The argument is not that the violence in films

directly causes violence, but the pattern that emerges of one-sided aggressive, if not violent, resolutions could be impacting the real-life conflicts of viewers through the acceptance of violence in conflict resolutions. Additionally, the emphasis on one person, generally the character determined to be morally good, winning the conflict through obtaining all of their goals while denying any success to the other member involved. Compromise and working together are undesirable in these films and, according to Bandura and theories following from his, undesirable to viewers. The stronger the pattern of aggressive one-sided resolutions and the less compromise is portrayed, the more the viewer buys in to the aggressive style of conflict resolution and is less open to compromises.

Conclusion

The top 10 grossing PG films presented conflicts as acceptable reaction to irritating behaviors, managed through verbal aggression and physical posturing, and resolved equally for one member of the conflict or none. Top grossing PG-13 films had conflicts initiated primarily by a threat from another character, managed through physical aggression, often violence, and resolved for one individual over another. The presence of one-sided resolutions highlights the individual nature of conflict resolution which is potentially reflective of the individualism and self-prioritization of American society. Although there is much debate about how these patterns affect media audiences, the cultural message of violence and one-sided resolution tells viewers that achievement of personal gains exceeds that of the other person.

Children's movies, rated PG, are less physically aggressive and violent in their conflict management but have a much higher frequency of comedic violent incidents. While possibly used to keep children engaged, as posed by Eluyefa (2017), it also could work to socialize young people to believe violence and conflict is necessary and valuable in their entertainment. This

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violence in PG films therefore leads to a large amount of violent and aggressive conflict management styles in PG-13, teen and adult, films.

There have been more female characters in modern film and they have seemingly been constrained less by the stereotypes of hyperfemininity, the gender roles occupied by male and female characters remain largely stagnant. Male and female characters in this study engage in aggressive conflict management styles at similar rates males are more likely to attain their goals through violence than females are which seems to play in somewhat to the traditional thought of historical theater in which violent females are seen as monstrous, immoral, and ultimately weak.

The question we must ask ourselves, given this study's exploration of conflict in popular film, is how much do we care? Do we believe that conflict representation in film should be changed? Should we encourage media companies to explore non-violent and compromise in future film conflicts? If we believe that we should, there will be a difficult battle ahead as the films in this study made billions for the companies involved in their creation. Clearly, conflict resolved through aggressive and violent means for the satisfaction of a single party involved sells.

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