Examining Trends in LGBTQ+ Character Representation for Popular US Animated Media

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Date: 05/25/2023

Project Overview

Representation of characters within popular media has the power to influence how people perceive themselves and others. This is particularly true for beloved cartoon characters or heroes who inspire audiences through their stories and relatable struggles. For this reason, authentic diversity and inclusion becomes a way for audience members to see themselves reflected in the characters and their stories. By including diverse representation, especially for the LGBTQ+ community, creators are able to promote values such as empathy, social awareness, self-esteem and pride among viewers, while also promoting visibility for historically-underrepresented groups.

This research evaluates LGBTQ+ representation trends in US animated media over a 30-year time frame. It is comprised of cartoon television series characters, produced chiefly by US creators and platforms. Positive character representation is an important component for self-esteem of viewers who are questioning their identities, or who identify as members of the queer community. This study aims to demonstrate how the social climate has improved over time, in terms of the diversity of character representation in popular animated media. This demonstration may provide insight into how, over time, opportunities have expanded for creators to tell queer stories. To enable conclusions to be drawn, the data will be explored and visually demonstrated through data visualization using histograms, tree modeling, as well as linear regression. Guiding questions will include how LGBTQ+ representation has evolved over time in US animated media, whether tree modeling and clustering can better visualize the data, what increased frequency of representation implies about diversity commitment in animated media, and analysis of the evolution of diversity in character roles over time.

Data and Resources Used

The data sources used in this research comprise two distinct data sets authored by Bradd Carey and A. Wilson, which were sourced from Kaggle.com. It is acknowledged that the observations collected in these combined datasets do not represent the entirety of character creation for all animated shows in the United States during the thirty-year time period. It is possible that some characters who belong to the LGBTQ+ community culture may not have been observed or recorded by the researchers. The Carey data

set, entitled "Trans Characters in Youth Cartoons," encompasses 259 observations of 10 variables. The Wilson data set, entitled "LGBTQ Representation in Animated Shows in the US," was derived from Carey's original research and comprises 417 observations of 21 variables spread across two files. Certain TV ratings values were missing, however these were imputed via IMDb web-scraping, supplemented with references (Arthamevia). These files were amalgamated and merged using various techniques to yield a final data set consisting of 484 observations of 8 variables described as follows:

**final.df$show: **
This variable provides the name of the character's cartoon series in which they appeared.
Data Type: character
Range: 1-145
Minor adjustments to this attribute were necessary to ensure consistency in the merged data frames. These modifications addressed naming discrepancies, in cases where the show name appeared differently across data sets (e.g., "Victor & Valentino" vs. "Victor and Valentino"), or when a program was not accurately identified as its reboot (e.g., "DuckTales (2017)" was mislabeled as "DuckTales"). These changes improved the overall quality and reliability of our analysis. Miniseries epilogues were also combined into their parent show titles for accurate counts (e.g. "Steven Universe Future" was combined into "Steven Universe" and "Adventure Time: Distant Lands" was combined into "Adventure Time").

**final.df$character: **
This variable provides the name of the character that the observation is based upon.
Data Type: character
Range: 1-463
Some of the character observations were manually consolidated. Three characters had duplicate observations due to the two dataframes specifying their nicknames in different formats (e.g., "Takashi 'Shiro' Shirogane" and "Takashi Shirogane", "Isabella Alvarado/Stacks" and "Stacks", "Puck/Owen Burnett" and "Puck").

**final.df$gender: **
This variable represents the character's gender expression ("Cis Man", "Cis Woman", "Trans Man", "Trans Woman", "Genderqueer", "Undetermined", "Man (Unspecified)", "Woman (Unspecified)").
Data Type: character
Range: 1-8
The gender category within the data set encompasses both gender expression and gender identity, with a total of twelve categories. The presence of numerous categories

within the data set impedes comprehension as well as comparisons and modeling. For instance, "gender nonconforming" includes only one observation, Steven Universe, from the eponymous series. In order to better facilitate comprehension and analysis of the data, consolidation of certain categories was deemed necessary. The term genderqueer is defined as "denoting or relating to a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders" (Cal Poly Pomona). This category has been imputed as an umbrella term to include the genders "nonbinary", "genderfluid", "gender nonconforming", and "agender." Man (Unspecified) and Woman (Unspecified) refer to characters where their gender identity of man or woman is clear, but whether they are cis or trans is unknown. Additionally, the Steven Universe character Stevonnie's gender was manually changed from intersex to genderqueer, in order to represent their gender identity, rather than their biological sex. Within the animated series and related media, the character uses they/them pronouns, and during an official collaboration commercial with Dove, self-identifies as non-binary and posts the non-binary pride flag (four alternating gold, white, purple and black stripes) on their social media account.
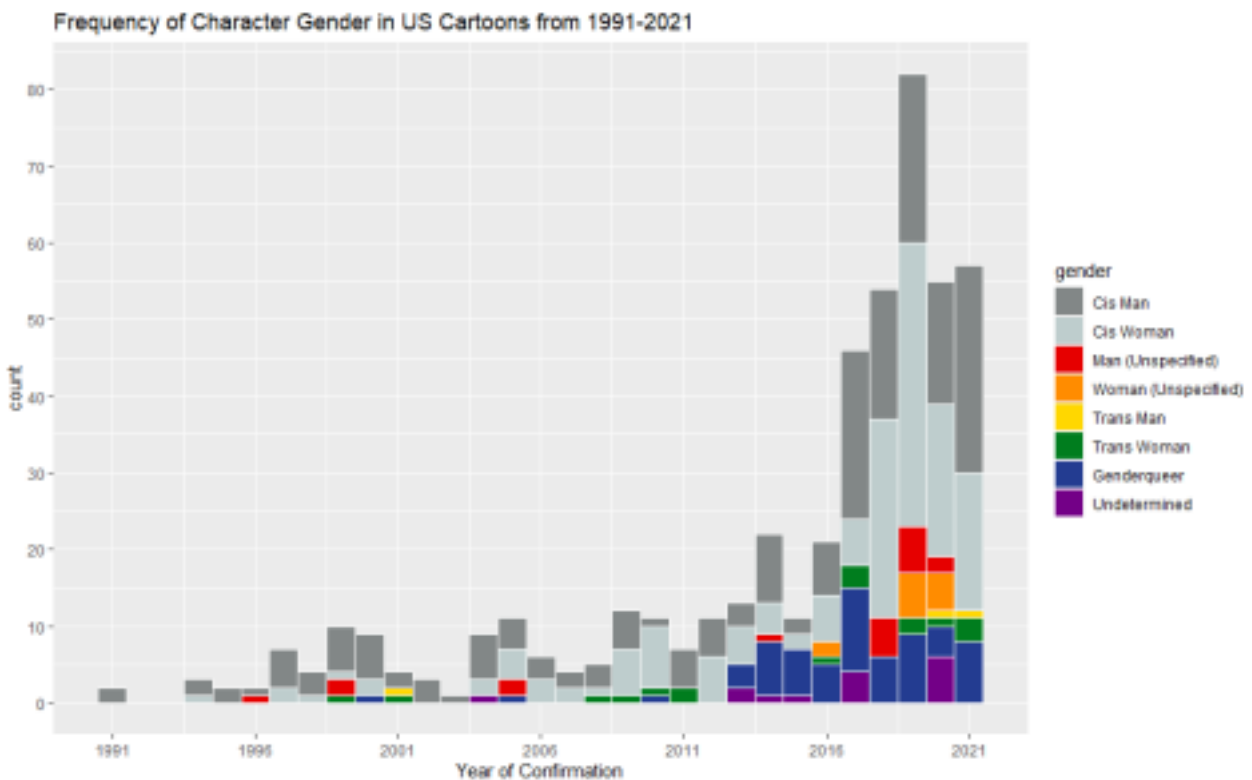

Figure 1 depicts gender representation for the full span of the data. The cisgender characters are shown in two different gray tones to more effectively emphasize the

minority groups. Here we can see there is a steady increase of character representation

in gender over time, however in very stark contrast there is a relatively low number of minority characters, in terms of gender, as compared to the cisgendered characters. There are no female characters which exist unattached to a designated label of 'cis' or 'trans' until 2016, and beyond that point there are very few in general. This phenomenon could be attributed to the persistent and rigid tradition of gender roles for women in United States culture, and due to this factor, creators may not have felt freely capable of introducing storylines for such characters. The increase in diversity for the subset of characters that are female in expression, without definitive declaration of gender, indicates an increased willingness among platforms to produce stories that include expanded gender representation for women.
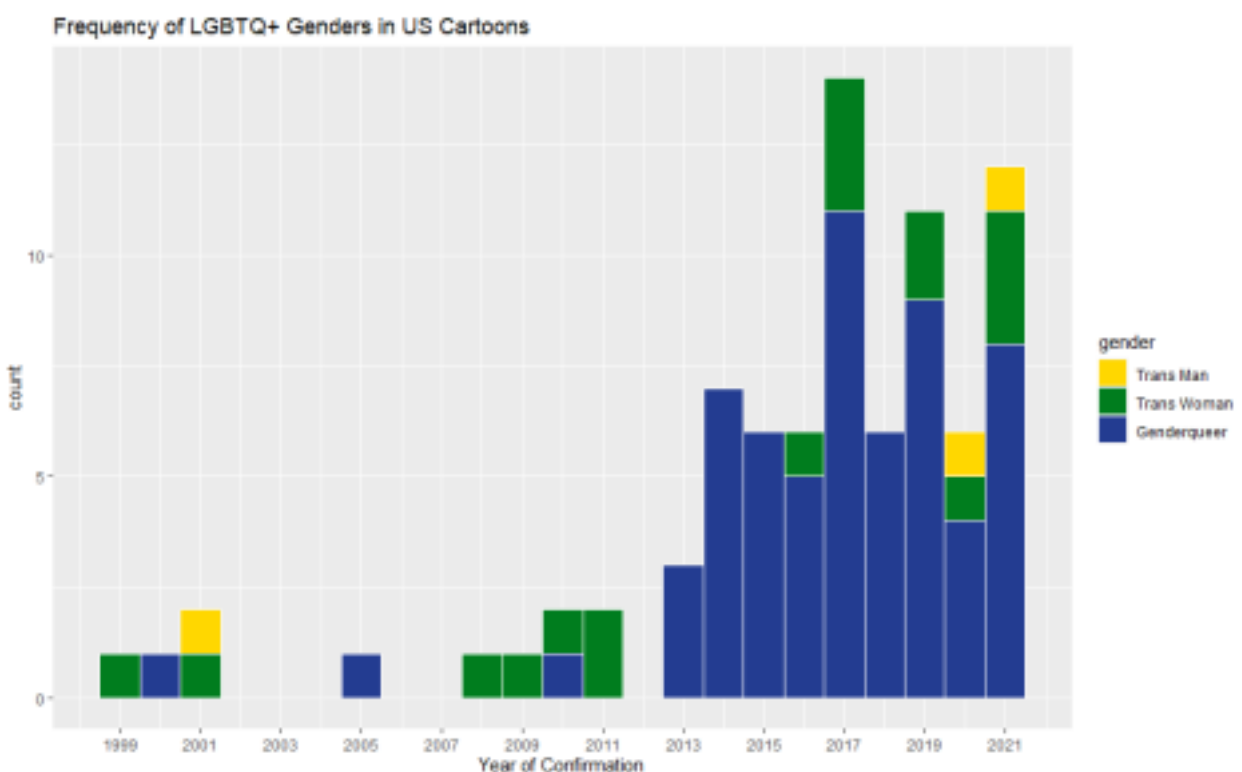

Figure 2 is a magnified view of observations in the subset of 'invisible' gender minorities that include transgender male and female characters, as well as genderqueer characters. 'Invisible' gender minorities are so termed because these gender identities, which defy gender norms, are "perceived as non-prototypical" and individuals within these identity groups may "struggle to belong to the social group…which may hinder their needs to be met" (Dumazert et al.). An enhanced view of the observation subset indicates a marked increase in representation for the community of 'invisible' gender minorities. It should be noted, however, that transgender characters, especially trans males, fall within the extreme minority, which may indicate a need for increased representation in animated media.

**final.df$orientation: **

This variable represents the character's sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, undetermined, queer, polysexual, asexual, straight). It is important to note that sexual orientation is determined by attraction and self-identification rather than one's partner's gender or orientation.

Data Type: character

Range: 1-8

During the data management and cleaning process, it was deemed necessary to merge certain orientation categories. This decision was reached due to the presence of unique character values that were not replicated in significant numbers within the data set. For instance, "Lesbian/Bisexual" became "Lesbian" as the only character with the orientation label, Luna Loud from *The Loud House*, had no declared orientation however appeared within the series as romantically linked to another female character named Lori and had never shown interest in non-women (Fandom). The orientation "Fluid" was merged with "Queer" as the only character with this orientation label, Radicles of *OK K.O.,* is only described by the show's supervising director as being "fluid in his understanding about his sexuality" and was intended to have a relationship with another man prior to the show's cancellation (Fandom). In order to enhance the coherence of the data trends, it was determined that this was a logical consolidation of the categories. Three separate labels, "Bisexual/Pansexual/Polysexual", "Bisexual", and "Pansexual" were merged into the single category "Polysexual", as this is defined as an umbrella term for the other categories (Medium). Similarly, the categories "Unknown" and "Ambiguous" have been merged with a larger group, "Undetermined." These consolidations were determined necessary to allow for more cohesive modeling and to gain a reflection in trends. Beyond this, two entries were labeled as polyamorous, which is not a sexual orientation. One of the two, Kaldur'ahm, was switched to polysexual, as his creator stated this in a tweet (Weisman). Another entry, a joint grouping of 8 members of a gay polyamorous relationship entitled "Hollyhock's fathers," were separated into individual listings under the label gay.

The initial orientation subset (1991-2014) demonstrates the prevalence of binary sexual orientations, with dominant categories being limited to 'gay' and 'lesbian'. Gradually, expansion in inclusivity encompasses additional concepts beyond these two categories. The first observations in the data set are the characters Ren and Stimpy from their eponymous series, and although these observations are classified as 'queer', the creator John Kricfalusi indicated these characters *"would qualify as a consistently gay couple since they share a bed, live as partners, discuss a planned wedding, and had a 'child', with the child being flatulence"* (Animation World Network).

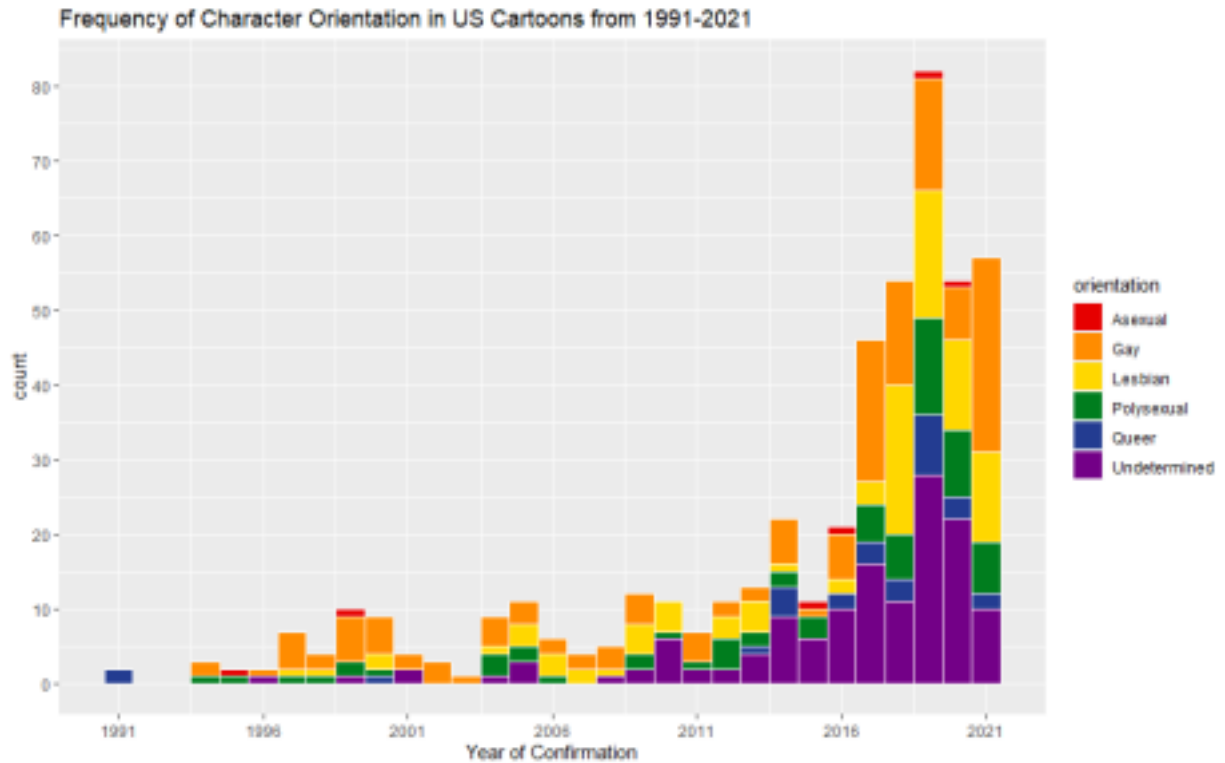Frequency of Character Orientation in US Cartoons from 1991-2021

Figure 3 shows the frequency of sexual orientation in characters from 1991 to 2021. The categories in this data include asexual, gay, lesbian, polysexual, queer, and undetermined. From this broad overview, it is evident that overall there has been a substantial increase in character representation over thirty years.

Frequency of Character Orientation in US Cartoons from 1991-2014
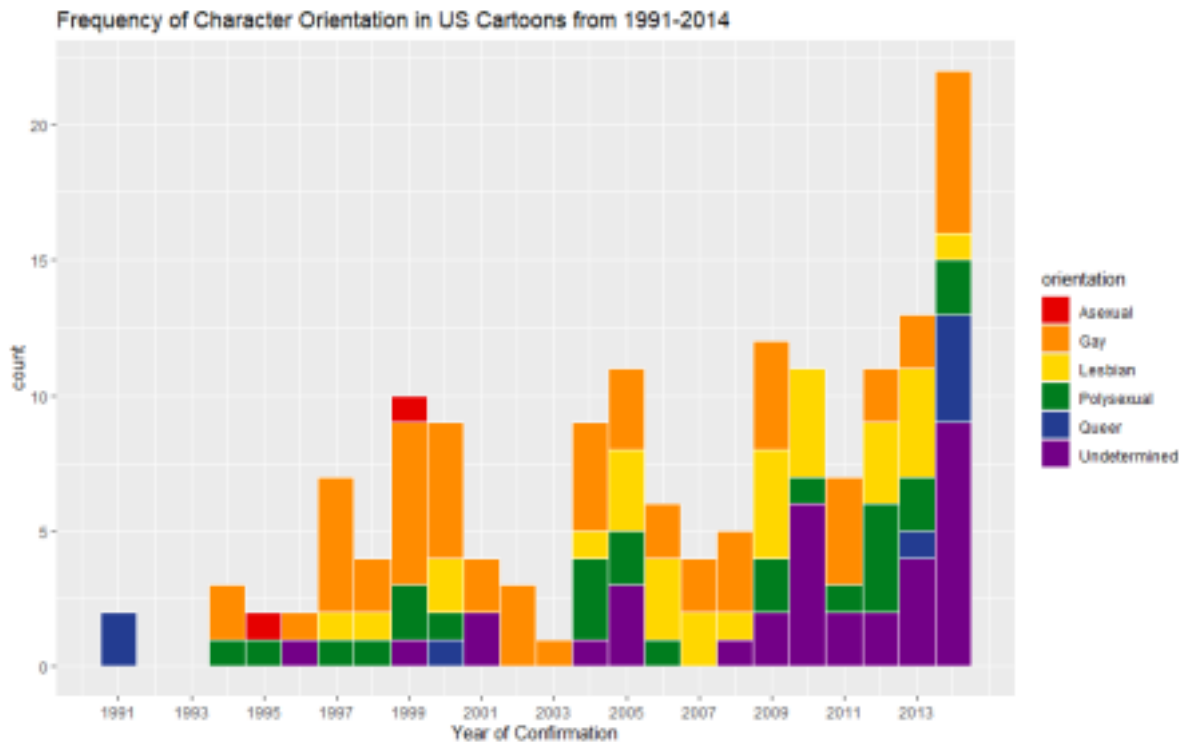
An improved, more granular examination of trends over time can be demonstrated in Figure 4. This inset view of the earliest observations shows a steady increase in representation, as well as diversity within representation. Earlier observations show the majority as 'gay' and 'lesbian'. This could be due to a number of factors, including: Lack of awareness and understanding of sexual orientation outside of gay and lesbian identities, as these identities were not as widely discussed; fear of discrimination, as many people who identified as belonging outside of what was already marginally accepted may have felt fear of prejudice; as well as lack of community, as in the early 1990s the lack of support, resources, and widespread rights and acceptance may have constrained the willingness of creators to tell stories about characters outside the mainstream. Outside of this inset view, the most recent observations which span 2015-2021 reflect observable parity within orientation representation. Overall, it should be noted that the representation of asexual characters is very low. One reason for this phenomenon could be a reflection of audience population; for instance, the percentage of people in the United States who identify as asexual is estimated as ranging from 1% to 2% (Williams Institute).

**final.df$role: **
This variable represents the function assumed or part played in a particular series (Recurring, Main, Supporting, or Guest). Main and Supporting characters make up the
primary cast of any given show, whereas Recurring and Guest characters may appear only very occasionally, or other times only once.
Data Type: character
Range: 1-4
To reduce visual redundancy and improve readability of the rendered tree plots, the original data set terminology was amended to remove the suffix term "character" from the scalar values ("Recurring Character" became "Recurring", and so forth).

**final.df$representation: **
This variable represents the character's sexual orientation as expressed in the storyline or profile (Implicit or Explicit). This variable designates whether the respective character has an implicit or explicit LGBTQ+ representation within their character's canonical profile, storyline, or associated copyrighted merchandise.
Data Type: character
Range: 1-2

**final.df$TV_rating: **
This variable measures the designated range of age-appropriateness of a given show to which the character in the observation belongs, as determined by broadcast and cable

television networks, or program producers (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, TV-MA, Unrated). IMDb scraping was used to fill in missing values. Those listed as TV-Y7-FV, which refers to shows falling within TV-Y7, but featuring increased fantasy violence, were combined into TV-Y7 for simplicity. See also: TV Ratings System Glossary. Data Type: character
Range: 1-7

**final.df$year: **
This variable represents the year that any given character's LGBTQ+ identity was confirmed, either within the context of a show, or by one of the show's creators.
Data Type: character
Range: 1-29

Columns which appeared in the original data set have been omitted from the final.df data frame, including the following: IMDB_total_votes, IMDB_rating, seasons, total_episodes, start_date, end_date, duration, network, genre, race, and disability. Although this data may be valuable for other studies, they did not contribute substantially to our research on LGBTQ+ identities and storytelling in queer culture.

Analysis

Various forms of regression were considered to obtain a better understanding of our data. We were particularly interested in how categorical variables impacted the year in which a character is confirmed LGBTQ+ in US animated media. We decided to narrow this down to focus on youth television, and created the subset TVchild.df, which did not contain shows with the rating TV-MA or Unrated. The category 'Trans Man', containing only one entry, was omitted to prevent a leverage one error. Inclusion of the variable 'show' caused extreme overfitting (adjusted R-squared of 90%), warnings regarding NaNs being produced and observations not being plotted due to leverage one errors, and rank-deficient fits. This caused later efforts to model predictions to be misleading. The inclusion of the variable 'character' introduced NA errors; therefore, the selected linear regression formula contains the dependent variable year and independent variables TV_rating, role, representation, gender, and orientation. We also performed ANOVA tests on various potential interaction terms in order to gauge which, if any, should be included in our regression analysis. We found some interaction terms that were significant at 90% confidence, such as TV_rating and representation, but these were below the 95% threshold we were looking for. As such, they were abandoned in favor of a simpler model.

This regression model's intercept showed a rating of TV-Y, role of Guest, representation of Explicit, gender of Cis Man, and orientation of Asexual. With these characteristics in

mind, the expected year of confirmation of an LGBTQ+ character identity is 2004. The most significant terms (with significance at 99% confidence) were TV_ratingTV-14, genderGenderqueer, and orientationGay, with TV-14 decreasing year of confirmation and Genderqueer and Gay increasing year of confirmation. These factors indicate shows intended for viewers 14 and up contain LGBTQ+ characters earlier in the observations, and stories that include gender diversity appear later in the timeframe.

Residuals on TV Ratings Groups and Year of Character Confirmation
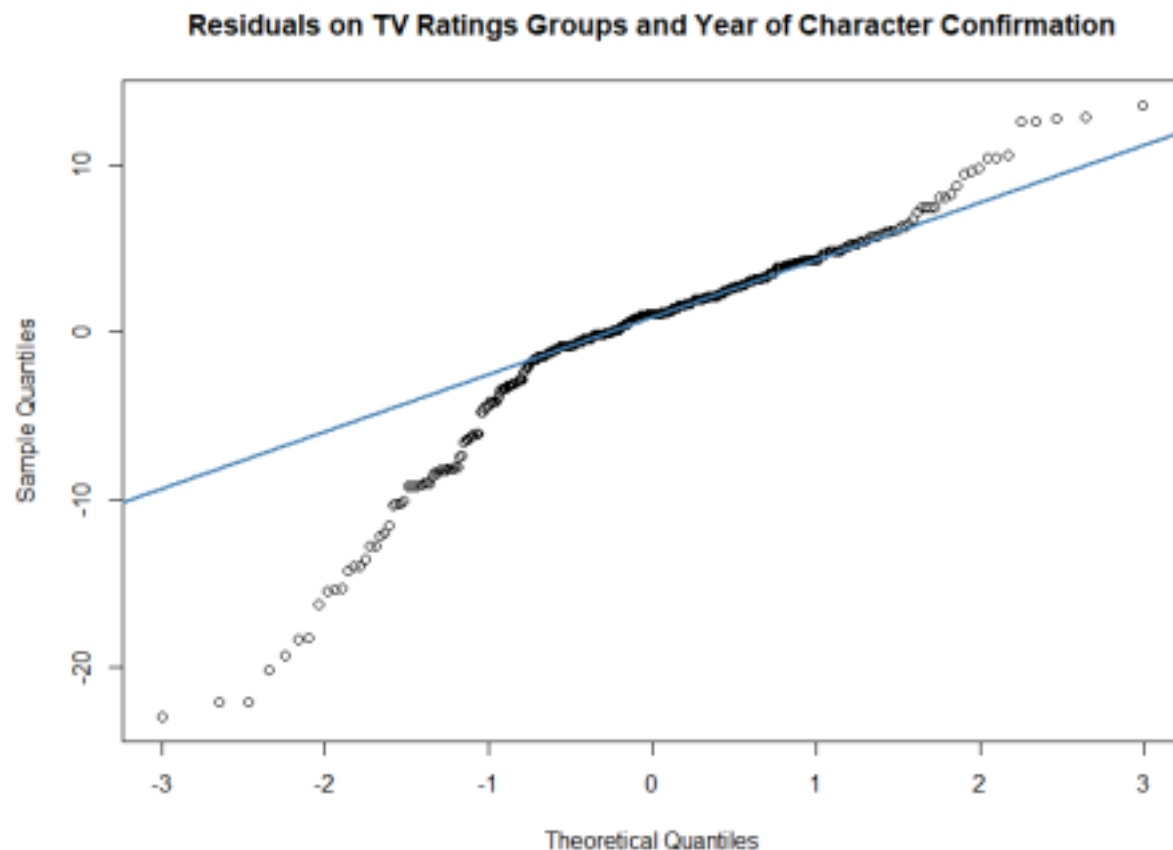

Figure 5 summarizes the outcome of the residuals for this regression formula, in the form of a Q-Q plot. Given the challenges in mitigating overfit, the model created by this formula produced satisfactory results (adjusted R-squared: 0.2224). This plot reflects a normal distribution in a portion of the data, with indicators of outliers. This could be explained by the sharp increase of representation after 2014, followed by greater diversity in representation in more recent observations. Potentially, the distribution would benefit from an increase in data points. Following this, a closer look at the relationship between TV_rating and year of confirmation was possible.
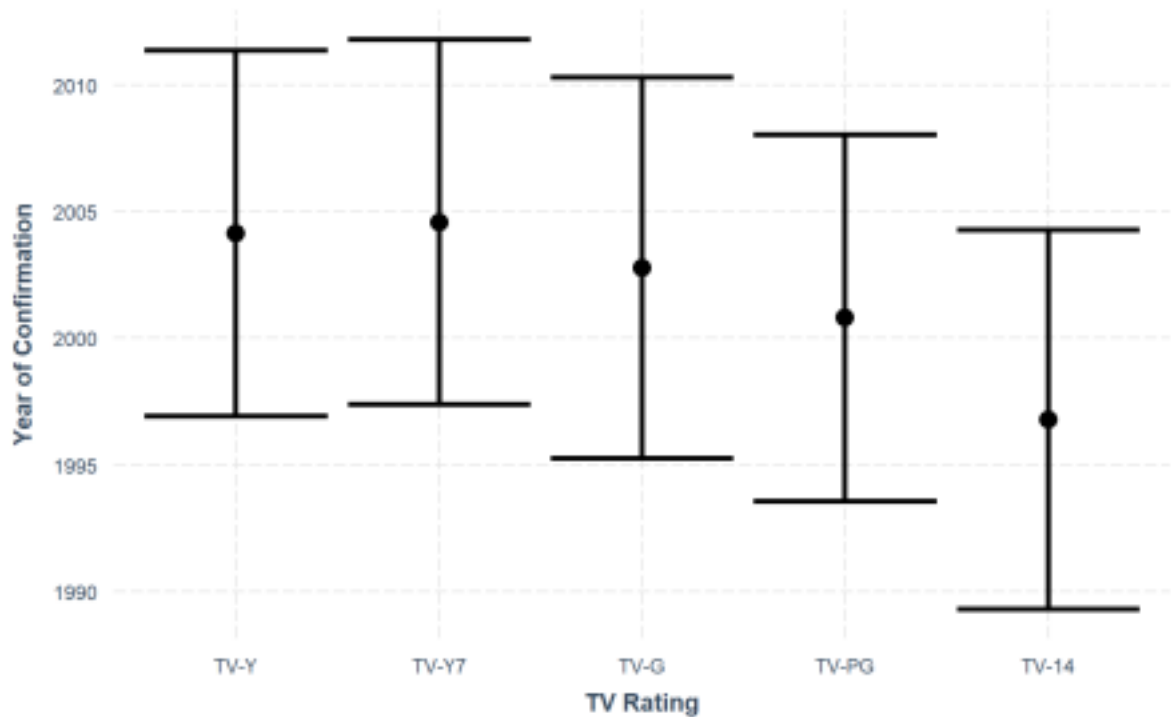
Figure 6, created from the previous regression formula, shows the prediction for the year of confirmation of LGBTQ+ identity, given TV rating. For this model, the dependent variable is TV_rating and the independent variable is year of character confirmation. We hypothesized that the intended age for programming may impact the year of confirmation, due to the notion held in some global circles that LGBTQ+ content is dangerous or corruptive for children (United Nations). We therefore focused on children's TV programming in order to gauge this. Figure 6 shows that the predicted year of confirmation for LGBTQ+ characters in TV-Y content is much later (approximately 2003) than TV-14 (approximately 1995). There is an overall trend showing that as shows are made for an older audience, they have an earlier year of confirmation. We believe this indicates that the platforms developing US cartoons feel more hesitant at showing LGBTQ+ content to younger audiences. Based on the available data, it may be inferred that producers or creators had greater latitude to include queer characters or storylines for older audiences in earlier periods, but that viewers of all ages may have access to these storylines going forward. We will now explore the hypothesis that this trend is undergoing a shift, and increased representation for younger audiences may allow children to build a better understanding of LGBTQ+ identities.

Figure 7 shows a classification tree model using a formula with dependent variable 'role' and independent variables TV_rating, orientation, gender, and year. This tree model terminates in character roles including Main, Supporting, Recurring, and Guest. This classification tree model, containing 5 levels of 19 nodes, splits the data on TV_rating between shows intended for children, and shows intended for teenagers and older audiences (See TV Rating System Glossary). For shows intended for children (left subtree), the attribute of orientation is more influential in determining a character's role. In contrast, gender is more influential followed by orientation for older audiences (right subtree). Finally, the year for a given character's identity expression confirmation is also a determinant as the final outcomes appear in the nine leaf nodes.

From this modeling analysis, some conclusions can be inferred. It appears that creators or producers of shows aimed at younger audiences are less willing to invest in LGBTQ-diverse characters who are part of the primary cast, since Recurring and Guest characters have greater prevalence. This suggests that while there does appear to be space within youth entertainment for LGBTQ+ sexual orientations, these characters are still relegated to the sidelines and may be more easily omitted from the show if they do not receive adequate public approval. At the same time, it may be inferred that creators and producers for shows for older audiences are more willing to include increased LGBTQ+ diversity in Main and Supporting characters. The presence of character orientation in shows for younger audiences (left subtree) indicates that the subject of sexual orientation is not wholly taboo in children's media, and this may reflect the increasing support for diverse sexual orientations in the United States. The conversation surrounding sexual orientation in the United States is many decades in the making, with

the first incidence of legalized gay marriage, on the State level, occurring in 2004 (Wikipedia).

In contrast, the predominance of character gender identity in shows for older audiences (right subtree) implies that the concept of gender identity may still be considered inappropriate for younger audiences by producers or creators. Protection against violence based on gender identity was not added as a United Nations Bill of Human Rights provision until 2016, reflecting the idea that the global conversation around gender identity is still in its infancy (Human Rights Watch). The presence of this provision within the UN Bill of Human Rights reflects the global expectation for the United States to follow suit. However, the US Human Rights Council challenged more than 210 legislative motions that targeted the transgender community in 2023 alone (Fields). Although previous modeling (Figure 1) reflects a dramatic increase in representation of gender identity for characters, over time, this tree model (Figure 7) illustrates the majority of these characters are within shows intended for adult audiences.

Although the tree accurately reflects the distribution of the observations on role, the misclassification rate is high (~47%). This suggests that more data may be needed to form any further, definitive conclusions on role trends, however the initial split on TV_rating and the appearance of year near the terminal nodes invited opportunities for further analyses on these factors.
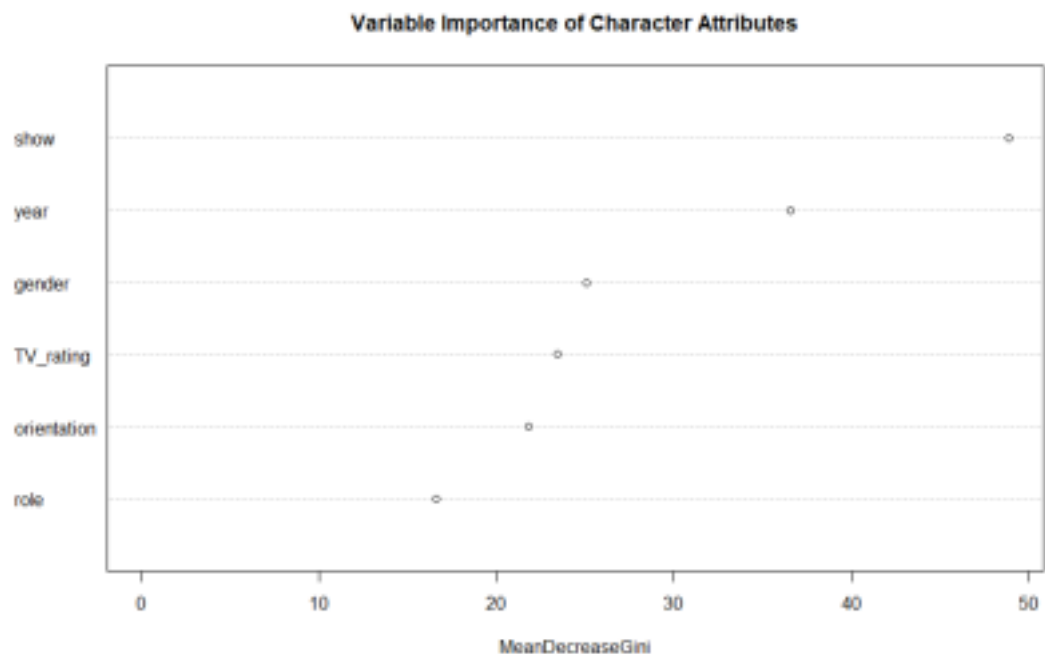

Figure 8 represents the results of a random forest tree model with dependent variable 'character' (Implicit vs. Explicit), and independent variables show, year, gender,

TV_rating, orientation, and role. This model indicates that the show itself, along with the year of character identity expression confirmation, bear the most influence over character representation in the data set observations. With this in mind, a frequency table was created to explore the most influential shows, and the years the characters were created.

show	count	year
Steven Universe	39	2016
She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	24	2019
BoJack Horseman	14	2017
Craig of the Creek	13	2019
OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes	13	2018
Danger & Eggs	12	2018
South Park	10	1998

Table 1 reflects the shows that include the most observations ("count") in the data set. "Year" is the average of the years that the respective show's characters were confirmed in identity or orientation. The majority of these shows are very modern, with most having their average year of confirmation in 2016 or later. As such, South Park stands out from this. The shows with the highest number of observations in the data set indicate their prevalence and potential impact on audience perceptions of queer characters. While South Park appears in the top seven cartoon series featuring a significant number of LGBTQ+ characters, a deeper examination of the show's overarching purpose to lampoon political correctness through shock humor raises important questions about how these characters are represented. This is particularly relevant when considering the historical context of these representations, as these observations date to the late 1990s, a time when LGBTQ+ representation in media was often stereotypical and one-dimensional (SAGE Publications). The South Park observations include characters that are chiefly created to be unlikable, and which primarily serve to subvert inclusion of positive LGBTQ+ representation.

An episode that particularly stands out is "Mr. Garrison's Fancy New Vagina," which aired in 2005. The episode features the character Garrison getting a vaginoplasty (the construction or reconstruction of a vagina) in order to medically transition from a man into a woman. However, this procedure does not result in the ability to become pregnant or ovulate, which causes Garrison to say, "This would mean I'm not really a woman. I'm just a guy with a mutilated penis. [The Doctor] made me into a freak." As seen in our

dataset, Garrison reverts to being a gay man, which delegitimizes the transgender experience as a flippant decision that can be made and unmade within the span of a single episode. Moreover, the episode features multiple characters getting their own surgeries to become dolphins or change races, implying that gender transition is equally as absurd (IndieWire).

More recently, other South Park characters with LGBTQ+ identities include Tweek and Craig, a gay couple who experience discrimination from the main cast (Wikipedia). Although the episode featuring the relationship between the characters ("Tweek x Craig") includes a perfunctory concept of consent in relationships, it also includes racist tropes and mockery of crimes perpetrated against the people of Nanking, China. The portrayal of this gay couple is largely repulsive, with orientation expression leading to altercations, alcoholism, familial strife, and corporate exploitation. Various characters in the episode cite that Japanese girls are able to determine who is gay and pair people together, and that these determinations are reality. This is, of course, a racist caricature, and disregards the importance of one determining their own identity through introspection. As Tweek and Craig are paired romantically by the Japanese girls in town, their friendship is strained (which leads to multiple altercations), and they ultimately decide to be a gay couple in order to avoid the scrutiny of those around them. This "couple" remain together in subsequent episodes, but whether they truly have feelings for each other, or even any interest in men, is unclear. Far from being role models or pillars in their communities, the characters serve as a vehicle for lampooning the LGBTQ+ movement, perpetuating their purpose as comedic relief for more straight and gender-normative principal characters who serve as voices of reason within the narrative.

In contrast, many more recent observations (2014 and later), include main and hero characters whose purpose is to represent personalities that can be emulated or admired. This implies a need for a critical consideration of the complexities in representing marginalized identities within popular media, as well as the potential consequences for audiences who consume such representations uncritically.

The contrast between these observations provides support for the hypothesis that increased representation creates better opportunities for queer storytelling. Creators who identify as queer may be encouraged or empowered to create content reflective of their own experiences and culture, thereby promoting validating experiences for audiences and challenging negative stereotypes about the queer community. While looking more deeply into some of the other top seven shows, multiple examples were discovered which support this hypothesis.
The show with the most observations, Steven Universe, was first released in 2013 and

has 39 observations. A large chunk of these LGBTQ+ characters are members of an alien race called Gems. According to supervising director of Steven Universe, Ian Jones-Quartey, "In the world of the show, Gems are an alien species that don't have a gender binary. They are all the same" (Jones-Quartey). By this token, one could argue that the Gems are cisgender, as they never transition from one gender to another. However, in an interview with NPR, creator Rebecca Sugar stated, "One of the things that's really important to me about the show is that the Gems are all non-binary women. I was really excited because I felt like I had not seen this…and I am also a non-binary woman which has been really great to express myself through these characters because it's very much how I have felt throughout my life." This hits on the topic of reality versus impact, because regardless of the technicalities of the Gems' gender identities, this representation remains an important reflection of a member of the LGBTQ+ community's experiences. Sugar is also bisexual, and has featured multiple same-sex romances within the show, including a ground-breaking lesbian wedding between recurring characters Sapphire and Ruby (Pride).

The second most prevalent observations are from She-Ra and the Princesses of Power, first released in 2018 and created by Noelle Stevenson, a queer woman. Stevenson is quoted as saying "It's a responsibility in my eyes [to] create media for children, for all ages, that shows [LGBTQ+] issues as normal" (IndieWire). Stevenson has also discussed how the lesbian relationship between main characters Adora and Catra is based on her and her wife's relationship (Entertainment Weekly). Her goal when unfolding this romance throughout the show's seasons was to represent how a relationship is not always healthy and viable at the beginning, and instead takes hard work, but through a queer lens. This is another modern-times example of a creator being able to take their own experiences and turn them into LGBTQ+ animated media.

Finally, the sixth most prevalent show is Danger & Eggs, first released in 2017. Creator Shadi Petosky is a trans woman. In October of 2017, she wrote as a guest columnist in The Hollywood Reporter. In her article, she wrote, "I didn't realize writing LGBTQ+ kids - our show includes trans youth along with gay dads and other queer characters (many voiced by LGBTQ+ actors) - and their freedoms of tomorrow would begin to heal my own more traumatic childhood…I've seen so many incredible responses and one theme stands out. I wish I had something like this when I was a kid, my life would be different. Better in some way. Cycles broken." This quote explains how this creator feels their life could be if they'd had the kind of representation we have now. Petosky goes on to talk about the role of nostalgia in animation, and how so many go on to create their own cartoons because of the nostalgia they feel for the ones they grew up with. This leads into how she believes making shows like hers will one day create nostalgia within LGBTQ+ children who may grow up to be animators and tell their own stories

(Hollywood Reporter).

Summary and Conclusions

After conducting a thorough analysis of the data, it is clear that there have been significant changes in the representation and portrayal of queer characters in media over the past 30 years. Although thorough data cleaning was necessary to render the observations in a form that would translate to coherent analysis, our findings suggest a substantial increase in representation as well as an evolution in character depth beyond comedic relief or unappealing stereotypes. This shift towards more nuanced and diverse representations of queer characters reflects broader social and cultural changes related to LGBTQ+ rights and visibility. As such, these findings have important implications for both media producers and consumers seeking to promote greater equity and inclusion within popular culture. Initially, our research had aimed to study the categories of "Undetermined" and "Unspecified" for sexual orientation, however upon closer examination of this data, it became apparent that there was limited information that could be gained from studying these category designations alone. Consequently, the decision was made to shift focus toward exploring the areas of the data that offered more compelling insights. This pivot in our methodology underscores the importance of a willingness to adapt during the research process. In spite of the limitations presented by a small data set, prioritizing our guiding questions enabled us to effectively meet our research objectives, and generate meaningful analytical insights. The evolving landscape of queer storytelling within popular animated US media reflects enhanced authentic and inclusive representations that accurately reflect the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, while also promoting greater understanding and empathy across all communities. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of continued efforts aimed at advancing positive, validating inclusivity for 'invisible' minority groups, to better promote an environment where all people can feel both seen and celebrated.

Glossary

The following term definitions are adapted from the LGBTQ+ Glossary curated by PFLAG, the largest US-based LGBTQ+ organization whose purpose is for education, advocacy, and support for the LGBTQ+ community (PFLAG).

Agender: Refers to a person who does not identify with or experience any gender, distinct from nonbinary individuals who may still experience some degree of gender identity.
Bisexual: Describes individuals who acknowledge the potential for attraction (romantically, emotionally and/or sexually) to people of more than one gender (Charmoli et al.). This can include attraction to genders similar or different from one's own, with no

requirement for equal experience or levels of attraction across genders. Commonly referred to as bi or bi+.

Cisgender: Commonly referred to as 'cis' (Latin: 'on the same side as'); a term used to describe individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. 'Cis' is not considered a slur. Individuals who are both cisgender and heterosexual can be referred to as cishet (pronounced "sis-het").

Gay: A term used to describe individuals who are attracted (emotionally, romantically, and/or physically) to people of the same gender. While lesbian is often preferred for women, many choose to use gay as an umbrella term, however 'gay' should not be used as an umbrella term for LGBTQ+ people because it excludes other orientations and genders. Additionally, using "gay" in a derogatory manner (such as "that's so gay") is inappropriate and perpetuates harmful stereotypes.

Gender: Broadly, gender is a set of socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate.

Gender Expression: The manner in which individuals communicate their gender to others through external means, such as clothing or mannerisms. While often associated with masculinity and femininity, gender expressions can incorporate both or neither, and gender expression does not necessarily reflect a person's gender identity or sexual orientation.

Gender Identity: A person's deeply held sense of self in relation to gender, which may not correspond with their biological sex. People become aware of their gender identity at different stages of life, and it can be separate from sexuality and expression. The average age for self-realization as transgender or non-binary is 7.9 years old, but disclosure typically occurs later in adolescence (Gender Spectrum).

Genderfluid: Describes a person who does not consistently adhere to one fixed gender and who may move among genders.

Genderqueer: Individuals who challenge traditional notions of the gender binary and may reject static gender identities.

Intersex: Individuals who have a biological sex that falls between the medically expected definitions of male and female due to variations in hormones, chromosomes, and/or internal or external genitalia. Intersex is a biological condition distinct from gender identity and sexual orientation. While some intersex individuals are identified at birth, many aren't. An intersex individual may identify as any gender and have any

sexual or romantic orientation. The outdated terms hermaphrodite and pseudohermaphrodite should be avoided since they're neither acceptable nor scientifically accurate.

Lesbian: Refers to a woman who is attracted (emotionally, romantically, and/or physically) to other women.

LGBTQ+: An acronym referring to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (Q can also stand for 'questioning'). The "+" represents those who are part of the community but don't identify with the aforementioned terms.

Nonbinary: Refers to individuals who do not conform to the gender binary of man or woman. Some use the term exclusively, while others interchange it with other terms such as genderqueer, genderfluid, and more. Commonly also known as gender nonconforming, NB, and Enby.

Pansexual: Refers to a person whose emotional, romantic and/or physical attraction is to people inclusive of all genders. Although pansexuality and bisexuality are different, pansexuality includes all genders equally and is at times used as an umbrella term.

Polyamorous: Describes people who have the desire for multiple consenting intimate relationships simultaneously. Consent and transparency are key components of polyamorous relationships. Polyamory is not an orientation. Also referred to as "ethically non-monogamous."

Pronouns: Words used to refer to a person other than their name. Commonly they/them, he/him, and she/her. Neopronouns (xe/xem, ze/zir, fae/faer) have been created specifically for gender-neutral use.

Queer: A term used by some people within the LGBTQ+ community to describe themselves or the community as a whole, reclaimed from earlier negative use, and valued by some for its defiance. However, some people within the community dislike the term.

Queerbaiting: A marketing technique in which media creators or executives allude to the presence of LGBTQ+ characters or relationships within their content, but fail to include actual representation so as not to lose viewers who do not support the community.

Questioning: Individuals who are exploring sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. It's a process that can happen at any age and is profoundly personal.

Sexual orientation: A part of the human condition, referring to an individual's sexual attraction towards other people or none.

Transgender: Often shortened to trans (Latin: "on a different side as."); an umbrella term that includes people who transcend conventional expectations of gender expression or identity. Describes an individual's gender identity that doesn't match their assigned sex at birth. Some may choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. The term trans is considered more inclusive since it encompasses several groups such as transsexual, transmasc, transfem, and those who use the word trans for themselves. Other common terms include FTM (female-to-male), MTF (male-to-female), AMAB (assigned male at birth), AFAB (assigned female at birth), nonbinary, and gender-expansive.

TV Rating System Glossary

TV ratings are determined by individual producers or media companies. The following term definitions are provided for general understanding, and are adapted from Charter Communications, a mass media company (Spectrum.Net).

TV-Y: Television content that is intended for children ages 2-6.

TV-Y7: Television content that is intended for children age 7 and older, and may contain mild levels of violence. Becomes TV-Y7-FV if the amount of fantasy violence is considerably increased from standard TV-Y7 programming.

TV-G: Television content that is safe/intended for all people of all ages, as they contain little to no sexual or coarse language.

TV-PG: Television content that is safe for children under 14 to watch, but where parental guidance is recommended, due to the reasonable potential for sexual or coarse language.
TV-14: Television content that is safe for children age 14 and over, but where parental guidance is recommended, due to the strong potential for coarse language, sexual scenes, and intense violence.

TV-MA: Television content that is intended for people age 18 and over, and may contain explicit content.

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