

***Simba's Leadership – A Socio-Symbolic Content Analysis and its
Empirical Examination among Children and Students***

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ABSTRACT This study examines the attitudes of children and students towards *The Lion King*. Its first part comprises a content analysis of Simba's leadership figure according to the socio-symbolic leadership model. Findings show that those who create change are deceitful and undermine social order, and therefore it is better to follow the accepted rules, obey the leader, and avoid adopting a critical standpoint since those who did are presented as negative characters. Following these findings, several questions were composed as a preliminary examination of the validity of the content analysis, while focusing on two principal subjects: (1) Attitude towards change – is change perceived negatively, and how is the initiator of change regarded? (2) Passivity – should the directives of leaders be accepted across-the-board? And can only a leader effect a positive change and lead? The film was screened before twenty (20) 10-year-olds (in five groups of four), and after viewing the film individual interviews were conducted. The film was also screened before an audience of 50 students. After viewing the film, they were given questions (similar to those presented to the children), requested to answer in writing, and a discussion followed. Findings show that in the group of children change was perceived negatively and their majority did not support it. Findings also show that there is an unmistakable tendency to accept the leader's attitudes without question. Similar findings were also found among the students. They also indicated the positive characteristics of Simba's behavior, but stated that we are also subject to the Circle of Life, and therefore it is wrong to initiate change. In light of these findings, due to the evolving influence of the media in our time, parents, educators and other people in influential positions are asked to introduce a more balanced perspective and dialogue to cultural texts.