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Hillary Ann Harris April 15, 2013

From the ‘Street’ to the ‘Neighborhood’: A Historical Comparison and Analysis of Prosocial Public Television Edutainment

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Abstract

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By Hillary Ann Harris

School shootings and bullying have become systemic problems within the United States. As a possible means of reducing these issues, I will be arguing for the perpetuation and betterment of preschool children's programming on American public television as a means to aid young children in learning prosocial behaviors. After supplying childhood psychology and education research in addition to historical analyses of prior and current prosocial edutainment TV shows such as *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, I will then offer a prescription towards the creation of public television legislation and funding for prosocial programming for preschoolers. I will conclude with a conceptual framework of an optimal program paradigm that contains the most learning-effective formal features and narrative content that are best suited for today's diverse young American children.

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During the last decade in the United States, bullying incidents have increased (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011) and school shootings have produced a tragic shockwave of pain, suffering, and disappointment throughout the country. Many have claimed that these problems are not isolated cases, but, instead, may suggest an underlying systemic problem with what children are being taught (or not being taught) in school and by their parents. Moreover, comparative anthropological studies have demonstrated that American youth exhibit significantly lower levels of prosocial behavior and development than children from other parts of the world. Young American children display less behaviors of helping, sharing, and offering support and comfort than youth in African, Asian, and other Western cultures (Whiting & Whiting, 1975). American preschoolers, for example, are also more likely to engage in petty theft and argue with their friends than others. Whiting and Whiting's study emphasizes America's pervasive, long-term antisocial problems. If Americans were already less prosocial in the 1970s, perhaps the seemingly ubiquitous antisocial modeling from today's screen culture has isolated viewers by limiting opportunities to witness and create genuine, strong human connections while also hindering the ability for audiences to learn prosocial behaviors and their implications.

Whether or not the influx of media contributes to this harm within American society, I believe that screen media can benefit and be a part of counteracting these antisocial problems. Studies have even shown that preschoolers learn prosocial behaviors more readily than antisocial behaviors (Wilson, 2008). As more Americans are watching more and more television a day, a good solution seems naturally to utilize the television medium for the teaching of prosocial skills

and thought-processes for children and to avoid antisocial behavioral displays. Director of Research for *Sesame Street* Edward Palmer (1988) states the five main unique aspects of television that can help educate America's children: "its ubiquity; its nonthreatening, nonpunitive quality as a teaching medium; its ability to organize and present information in clear and memorable ways through animated graphics; its ability to depict live role models; and its nondependence on reading skill or ability." Adhering to a psychodynamic approach to this social and individual problem, I believe that if television networks, stations, producers, and creators can teach children prosocial behaviors through quality television programming, then our antisocial, isolated society may be transformed for the better.

I have chosen the developmental age-range of preschool because of its importance in determining the direction and outcomes of an individual's life. Within the United States, preschool has been defined as the education a child receives before his or her compulsory education begins in primary school (usually beginning with kindergarten and ending when the student reaches the age of sixteen). Infants (ages zero to twelve months) and toddlers (ages one to three years) are excluded from this category. Unfortunately, most preschools are not subsidized by the government which often makes preschool too expensive for lower and middle class families. Because of this, many children do not receive institutional preschool education. In the 1960s, a mere 10% of children ages three and four attended any form of preschooling. Although, as of 2005, 69% of preschool-aged children attend preschool, there still remains a large percentage of children who do not attend preschool. Because of this, education via television may become the second-best educational option, following traditional classroom education, as 96.7% of American households own a television set (Nielsen, 2011).

Television "edutainment" (a portmanteau of "education" and "entertainment"), consists of television programming that is both educational and entertaining. Although some may think that anything entertaining is inherently frivolous and contaminates the purity of education, the idea of making educational topics and information amusing is not new and its benefits are well-supported in research. Psychological and educational scholars find that appealing educational material (in content, presentation, or both) is learned more effectively than more traditional material. Although a televised program of a teacher in a classroom traditionally teaching material on a blackboard or a whiteboard in front of a desk seems sufficient for a television program, these primitive television shows offer no more added benefits than those that a child receives from simply being taught the same lessons by his or her own teacher.

Education *vis* à *vis* the televisual medium, a type of "edutainment," is not a new concept. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, many pedagogical television programs, like *Watch Mr. Wizard* (1951-1965), were produced for implementation and display in schools and classrooms. However, many of these early programs simply portrayed a teacher instructing in his or her specialized subject (e.g. chemistry, health, English) who was recorded from the perspective of a student sitting in a desk; these television programs offered no features that differed from a traditional classroom environment except that they even exclude teacher-student interactions. The only "entertainment" was the fact that these lessons were recorded and played back on a television—a common medium of entertainment—but the content itself was not more entertaining than standard classroom-taught lessons.

On the other extreme, other children's television programs, like *The Jetsons*, *The Flintstones*, and *Yogi Bear*, provided few opportunities for teaching children, as they were made with the focus of amusing and entertaining them. These shows focused so minimally on

education that the FCC, during a 1996 tightening of "edutainment" regulations, explicitly forbade stations that aired these programs from labeling them as "educational." The optimal form of "edutainment" should be entertaining enough for children to want to watch yet educational enough so that the viewers do, in fact, make large learning gains. Beginning in the mid- to late-1960s, public television networks and producers became aware of, and consequently produced, programming within this optimal middle ground. Ever since then, many television networks, both public and commercial, have tried to capitalize on children's edutainment. As a result, there are currently many networks (e.g. PBSKids, Nick, Jr., Sprout, Playhouse Disney) and hundreds of edutainment programs dedicated to young children.

With time, technology and media have become stronger and more prevalent in the lives of American citizens. Media have especially affected children, as more of their free time has become devoted to consuming media. Among all current media, television is the most frequently consumed. According to a 2011 research study distributed by the Sesame Workshop, preschoolers now watch television an average of 3.5 hours every day, the highest the Sesame Workshop has recorded in its eight years of analyzing viewing hours. With this dedication to watching television, the importance of creating programs that are beneficial to children is even greater. I have chosen specifically to focus this paper within the realm of public television because of its long relationship with children's programming and because of its unrivaled accessibility. However, in today's American economy with budget cuts being made in departments throughout the country, the issue of continuing or changing funds for public broadcasting television is a hotly contested debate. In this thesis, I argue for the support and development of educational, publicly-broadcasted prosocial television for children from funding to legislative action. I will show that the benefits of these shows are dramatic, appropriate, and

useful at a time when both adults and children consume an unprecedented amount of media, especially television, every single day.

To decipher the mentalities and reasons leading to the foundation and evolution of children's educational television, I will examine interviews from creators, producers, psychologists, and educators who have been involved in the creation and betterment of educational programming. I will also address relevant social movements, changes, and policies in order to give a larger context to the movement that started the idea of children's edutainment within the United States. A significant portion of this historical context will be related to the ideology and history of *Sesame Street* and the Children's Television Workshop (now Sesame Workshop), which were simultaneously created to launch the first educational programming for children with strong academic research to direct the format and content of the show's frameworks.

From *Sesame Street*, I will then discuss later influential prosocial educational programming that became popular among children viewers from multiple income levels and ethnicities. However, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood,* first airing six years before *Sesame Street*'s premiere, will be the most important program specifically geared for the creation and growth of prosocial interpersonal skills and emotional development, although other shows such as *Blue's Clues* will be briefly discussed for their merits on positively influencing childhood cognitive skills.

As logical and evidentiary support, I reference studies and findings from academic journals (e.g. *The Journal of Children and Media*) and books that verify the networks' claims of educational value. To give governmental context, I will discuss watershed legislation and political actions that impacted the amount and content of children's educational programming.

Action for Children's TV, the Children's TV Act, commercialization and deregulation issues, and current FCC guidelines are examples that I will posit and expand upon regarding the broadening of the potential viewership of public children's educational programming.

After analyzing the psychological impacts of children's public television programming aimed at prosocial development, I will discuss more recent and current public television shows such as *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, *Barney and Friends*, *Arthur* and current *Sesame Street* episodes and will assess whether children's educational programming has improved, worsened, or remained the same. From this analysis, I will determine if public broadcasting stations like PBS should simply continue their progress, if they should revert back to the styles and content of their older programming (or just simply syndicate the older programming instead of creating new content), or if they should create hybrid programming that contains elements from both older and newer shows, in order to ensure that children today will receive the best public educational television programming possible.

Prosocial Behaviors: What they are and why they are important

Prosocial behaviors are voluntary actions intended to benefit another or society as a whole without any perceived direct benefit for the individual displaying the behavior. These behaviors are important in creating and continuing the stability and well-being of social groups and cultures. These behaviors result in increased social cohesion and a focus on creating positive relationships. In their meta-analysis on the positive effects on television on children's behaviors, Mares and Woodard (2005) posited four categories of prosocial behavior, based upon physical outcomes instead of psychological intention. The four categories are (1) positive interactions (e.g. cordial communication or conflict resolution), (2) aggression reduction (encompassing all forms of aggression such as physical, verbal, and relational), (3) altruistic actions (e.g. consoling,

giving, helping), and (4) stereotype reduction (in terms of attitudes, beliefs, and resulting behaviors). Other examples of prosocial behavior include cooperation, sharing, turn taking, giving praise, and displaying affection.

In a study by Rigby (1993) using a sample size of over 800 middle schoolers with a similar amount of boys and girls surveyed, the research showed that students who were identified to exhibit prosocial behaviors were the only group to have significantly positive correlations with three aspects of psychological well-being: happiness, self-esteem, and liking of school (compared to bullies and those who, more neutrally, do not strongly fit into either of the prior categories). This study demonstrates that prosocial behavior is not only beneficial for groups and society, but for the individual as well. Although this study does not investigate causal means, or suggest many mediating or moderating factors between the correlations of prosocial behavior and psychological well-being, it highlights the immense psychological and emotional importance of the benefits of engaging in prosocial behavior.

Erik Erikson, a developmental psychologist, is most notable for his lifespan-ranging theory of psychosocial development. He describes early childhood as “vigorous unfolding” and that the main conflict they must deal with is “initiative versus guilt ” (1959). A child developing positively during this stage will embrace his or her new sense of purpose and contribute to the world around them. During this stage, he or she will also develop self-esteem, self-regulation, social skills, and moral consciousness. At the age of four, awareness of self-esteem, defined as “our self- judgments about our own worth and the feelings associated with those judgments” (Berk, 1999), can lead to a child’s assessment of their own specific abilities, strengths, and weaknesses in various skills and aspects of their lives: relationships with parents and friends, making friends, how well they learn in the classroom, and how they treat others (Marsh, Ellis, &

Craven, 2002). Children who have high self-esteem are more likely to put initiative into succeeding in those skills, contributing to a greater likelihood of prosocial skills.

Children between ages two and six learn socioemotional skills and abilities that are referred to as emotional competence, or affective social competence (Halberstadt, 2001). The first developmental stage consists of the ability of preschoolers to understand and discuss their own emotions, and to also understand and respond to others' emotions. Once aware of different emotions, they then master self-regulation of their negative emotions and the ability to deal with them in constructive ways. The last stage occurs when children can engage in self-determined emotions, such as empathy, that are not caused by external forces but are purposefully created by the children themselves. Denham et al. (2003) showed that high levels of emotional competence contribute to greater social competence, such as having a higher quantity and quality of peer relationships.

Around the age of four, preschoolers can have several self-concepts and self-judgments in different aspects of their personalities, intelligences, and behaviors such as academic proficiency, sociability, kindness, and agreeability with parents (Marsh, Ellis, & Craven, 2002). These self-concepts reflect self-esteem. High levels of self-esteem contribute to an increased level of initiative to develop the skills and knowledge they will gain in their futures.

In addition to a greater likelihood of friendships, cooperation, and tolerance—all of which contribute to social harmony—the broadening and deepening of socioemotive abilities can increase academic and cognitive performances. Piaget acknowledged this when he wrote, "affectivity constitutes the energetics of behavior patterns, whose structures correspond to cognitive function…neither one can function without the other" (1969, p. 114). In a study by Ladd, Bisch, and Buhs (1999), kindergarteners who had more friends and advanced prosocial

skills had more ambition to complete and excel at class assignments. As a result, the more prosocial kindergarteners had the highest academic gains at the end of the school year. This suggests that appreciating school and its opportunities for prosociality through friendships made these students more likely to enjoy the cognitive aspects (i.e. learning and doing well) that may very well be related to the emotional spillover of their social happiness to academic happiness.

Similarly, in a study of over 900 four-year-olds by Konold and Pianta (2005), the researchers found that the children of better-than-average social skills and only average intelligence excelled better in school than those who had better-than-average intelligence and only average social skills. More specifically, Dobbs et al. (2006) found that Head Start children whose teachers rated them as having more prosocial skills predicted better mathematics achievement for these more prosocial children than children who had fewer prosocial skills. Although it is doubtful that prosocial skills alone are more important than intellectual capabilities in leading to academic achievement, these findings suggest that prosocial skills may be more important in school than previously thought. Some researchers even advocate that social skills (including prosocial behavior) should be considered an important aspect of "school readiness," in addition to cognitive abilities and academic accomplishments (Ladd, Herald, Kochel, 2006).

If a child effectively learns to display prosocial behaviors, this ability can increase intelligence, improve relationships, and offer better, happier, and more satisfying futures for these children as adults. This notion, combined with the ubiquity of televisions in modern American lifestyles, makes it clear that prosocial television programming for children, if done in ways I will describe throughout this paper, would effectively instill, or at least model, these positive behaviors into their development. Furthermore, as Calvert and Kotler (2003) have

stated, “many children, including boys, [like] prosocial programs, even when they could choose strictly entertainment-based programs” (p. 378).

Why Public Television?

Although commercial broadcasting stations and cable networks can produce quality children’s programming, they cannot be trusted to always do so. According to Palmer (1988), commercial broadcasters and cable networks, because of their money-making priorities, are not expected to “(1) invest in educational innovation, (2) identify and respond to our children’s and our nation’s most urgent educational needs, or (3) stand accountable to the public to produce measurable educational gains” (p. 130). Similarly, as will be discussed shortly, commercial broadcasters originally began with the intention of airing seemingly educational programming, such as the *Ding Dong School* (1952-1956), but would cancel them a few years later in favor of more profitable programs that would attract a larger audience once televisions were present in most homes.

Moreover, and more simply, commercial and cable programming costs more money to consumers than public television. The consumer market research film NBD found that “the monthly rate for pay TV has been rising at an average of 6 percent annually… at a time when consumer household income has hardly budged” and that consumers can expect to pay $123 and $200 a month for the future years of 2015 and 2020, respectively (2012, Tahmincioglu). This price difference automatically reduces the potential number of viewers to commercial and cable programming. Considering the huge positive impacts that children’s edutainment television can have, public television provides the best platform upon which quality children’s programming can have the greatest potential audience.

Public television, unlike commercial programs, can directly gain more power as an educational medium as a result of government political decisions. Congress alone can determine television regulation, tax incentives for public television contributions, and can appropriate funds to be given directly to public television (Bryant, 2007). If the government can come together to finally understand the value of creating the best programming for children, they could create legislation in any of the three aforementioned ways which could increase the opportunities, incentives, and likelihood for more, better children's televisual edutainment to be produced.

PBS has been proved to be a highly trusted network as a whole. In a recent Harris survey (2012), more people trust PBS (76%) than any other institution, even more than the second place courts of law. The same poll stated that 64% of people surveyed also thought that PBS was an "excellent" or "good" use of their tax dollars. The survey also noted that PBS was deemed the "most fair" network over ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, MSNBC, and FOX News. Besides FOX News, every other above network was thought to be more liberal, and therefore more politically biased, than PBS. FOX News was thought to be the most conservative and therefore also ideologically biased.

PBS has also proved to be widely valued for its high-quality children's programming. In the aforementioned Harris poll (2012), 62% of those surveyed rated PBS KIDS as the most educational TV/media brand, with the second-most highly rated network, Disney, only considered the most education by 13% of those surveyed. The same poll stated that 80% of those surveyed agreed "strongly" or "somewhat strongly" that "PBS helps prepare children for success in school and life." Only 34% and 37% of those surveyed thought the same of commercial broadcast and cable television, respectively. Moreover, 88% agreed "strongly" or "somewhat

strongly" that PBS is "a trusted and safe place for children to watch television," compared to 36% and 34% believing the same for commercial and cable television, respectively.

In addition, it has been proven that PBS attracts large quantities of viewers. A 2012 Harris Poll awarded PBS Kids Sprout—PBS' programming block specifically geared to the preschool demographic— top honors for the second year in a row in the kids' TV programming category as a result of a viewership ratings score of 63.21 compared to the national average of 57.29.With an overall viewership ratings score of 67.06, PBS came in second place in ratings of the same Harris Poll for the category of "TV Network Brand of the Year," behind first-place network CBS with a ratings score of 68.27 and well above the national average rating score of 64.83 (Harris Poll Equitrend, 2012). Before the vast skyrocketing of children's networks and programs (including PBS' own expansion of the number of its children's television shows) beginning in the mid-1990s, the 1993 National Household Education Survey found that over 7.6 million preschoolers (88%) watched at least one of the four children's programs on PBS at the time: *Sesame Street*, *Barney and Friends*, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and *Reading Rainbow* (Fisch & Truglio, 2001).

Public Television History

During their heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, commercial broadcasting networks' main priority was profitability. Initially, the networks created programming for children that immediately appealed to them. According to Palmer (1988), during television's infancy, television broadcasters "eagerly put children's programs on the air" for three main reasons: to appeal to young families flocking to suburbia; to fill empty morning and afternoon timeslots with cheap programming; and to appear to be aligned with the FCC, the government in general, and the American people. However, advertisers recognized that, although American children were

avid television viewers, they themselves had little money to spend on advertised goods. As the commercial networks, as businesses, had the main objective of increasing profits, they decided to significantly decrease the amount of children's programming throughout the 1950s in order to make room for shows that would be more lucrative, such as *The Price is* Right which premiered in 1956 and replaced the *Ding Dong School*. From its peak of being aired 48.75 hours a week in 1950-1951, children's programming broadcasting times fell to 24.25 hours by the 1958-1959 television season (Turow, 1981, p. 23). Saturday morning cartoons became the main source of televisual content for children throughout the late 1950s and 1960s (Palmer, 1988). They were full of action, violence, and fast-paced mindless plots that were always stimulating to the senses but rarely to the mind.

Responding to the decreasing of both quantity and quality of children's television programming, Newton Minow, President Kennedy's appointed Federal Communications Commission chairman, widely and publicly attacked the lack of meaningful and educational programming on television during an address to the National Association of Broadcasters in May of 1961. He vehemently condemned television's lack of cultural, educational, and news programming and the "massive doses of cartoons, violence, and more violence" that were filling the heads of young viewers. He famously summarized television at that time as being "a vast wasteland" (Minow, 1961).

This speech, in addition to the Civil Rights movement and the recognition of large levels of violence in society, helped to initiate a growing movement to improve American society and culture in order to create a better future. This concept is most succinctly described in President Lyndon B. Johnson's commencement to the University of Michigan's 1964 graduating class: "We are going to assemble the best thought and broadest knowledge from all over the world to

find these answers. I intend to establish working groups to prepare a series of conferences and meetings—on the cities, on natural beauty, on the quality of education, and on other emerging challenges. From these studies, we will begin to set our course toward the Great Society."

The War on Poverty was a subtenet of the Great Society. One of its major focuses was on increasing the government's role in improving education and closing gaps for lower classes by laying solid preschooling educational foundations. In 1964, psychologists Benjamin Bloom and J. McVicker Hunt published their *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* survey, a meta-analysis of over one thousand studies on human development. They found, "in terms of intelligence measured at age 17, about 50% of development takes place between conception and age 4, about 30% between ages 4 and 8, and about 20% between ages 8 and 17" (Bloom & McVicker, 1964). From this data, they called for the importance of the nation to give much needed attention to early childhood education in order for people to have the cognitive, social, and behavioral building blocks to maximize their potential.

In 1961, the National Education Association created the Educational Policies Commission for the purpose of filling "the gap between thought and action in American education." The Educational Policies Commission thus advocated more and better "early education at public expense," believing that the government had a majority of the responsibility in creating an educational framework to increase the vitality of America's future citizens and economy. The Office of Economic Opportunity started this preschool movement by passing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which initiated, among other programs, Head Start. The program's goal was to promote "school preparation by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services" (National Head Start Association, 1965). Head Start's oversight and effective

implementation was done mostly by local groups who had to obtain federal grants in order to create their own regional Head Start affiliate programs. The program immediately became popular because of its seemingly pure (and less politically-mixed) intentions of helping impoverished children.

Around the same time, in 1963, America's biggest public educational television network, National Educational Television (NET), began airing documentaries on poverty and racism, issues at the core of the Great Society and the Civil Rights movement. To continue NET's funding, the government founded the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In September of 1966, Lloyd Morrisett, the vice president of the Carnegie Corporation foundation, a major financial contributor to NET, wrote an editorial which stated that preschool programs like Head Start helped children of low socioeconomic status "to break out of the cycle of inadequate education, low occupational skill, and low pay" (Davis, 2008). More importantly, he concluded with the prescription that "television is an untapped resource, and its potential for early education should be fully tested." The network decided to capitalize on the growing preschool movement by creating educational programming for young children.

Responding to the increased political activism for better television programs, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The Act mandated that part of the broadcast spectrum had to be for "non-commercial, educational use" (Bryant, 2007). The Act also founded the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help fund and encourage the creation of quality programming. In 1970, NET became PBS, the more commonly used acronym for the "Public Broadcasting Service." PBS gave its affiliated member stations educational programming for all ages that was created by independent producers, many from the local stations. Before PBS' nascence, local public television stations were the main source of

children's programming, but the lack of political and financial power of these stations led to these shows being "under-funded, poorly produced, and dull" (Palmer, 1988).

The clearest indication of the political relevance of children's television in the United States is the extent of public activism. In 1968, Peggy Charren and Judy Chalfen founded the Action for Children's Television (ACT). Although this grassroots organization focused its efforts on advertising regulation during children's television programming, ACT argued that "addressing children's programming needs was part of a television station's responsibility to serve the public interest" (Charren, 1968). ACT became a media watchdog that advocated for a greater quality and quantity of children's programming; advertising limits on children's programming; and increased press coverage, financial support, and public discussions of public broadcasting stations in general.

Riding on the coattails of the Civil Rights movement, the Great Society, and the increased vocalization for children's educational television programming policy reform, an innovative program called *Sesame Street* began its early stages of development. But even before the widespread sociological movements of the 1960s, mass media sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld addressed a 1955 Senate committee designed to address new television policy initiatives by saying, "The aridity and the negativism of much of the discussion which takes place today can be overcome only if it is shown that there is something like a good [television] program, that there are people who can be trained to write and produce them, and that children are willing to listen to them" (Morrow, 2006, p. 28).

Although NET began airing educational television programming for children during the 1960s, none of it was deemed memorable and very educational until 1968. That year, a child psychologist named Fred Rogers presented his program, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, a

television program meant to teach socioemotional skills for children, to the NET network. In a 1969 Senate hearing overseen by Senator Pastore (D), chairman of the United States Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Rogers, advocating for the importance of social and emotional education on public television, told the committee, "We don't have to bop somebody over the head to make drama on the screen. We deal with such things as getting a haircut, or the feelings about brothers and sister, and the kind of anger that arises in simple family situations. And we speak to it constructively…I give an expression of care every day to each child. I end the program by saying 'you've made this day a special day by just your being you.' I feel that if we in public television can only make it clear that feelings are mentionable and manageable we will have done a great service for mental health." From his short speech of less than seven minutes, Rogers helped win the hearing that allowed the U.S. Government to give PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting a $20 million grant initially proposed by the then-Former-President Lyndon Johnson. As PBS' funding strategy relied heavily on viewer pledges in addition to corporate and philanthropic sponsorships, the network was able to broaden and secure its educational mission with this multi-million dollar government grant. The televised hearing containing Roger's speech and the increased congressional appropriation gave more power to PBS as a network which increased its potential to make positive educational impacts on children.

But more than a year before the Pastore Senate committee hearing, Joan Ganz Cooney was devising an educational television program of her own, one whose creation had developmental precedents. A report by Cooney in 1966 entitled "Television for Preschool Education" presented to the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, and the US Department of Education (then called the U.S. Office of Education), the idea of a new version of children's programming that would combine the expertise of educational experts (educators, psychologists,

pediatricians, etc.), empirical research on education and developmental psychology, and film and television creators and producers of high-standard programming. Together, this convergence would create both entertaining and educational television programming that children would actually want to watch and, consequently, learn from. As a media synthesis of the Great Society, Cooney's overall goal was to decrease the education and social gap between the lower and upper classes by focusing the show's reception towards inner-city and lower class children who may not have the best learning environments and reinforcers (Fisch & Truglio, 2001).

Although initially skeptical of creating a television show that would be both educational and entertaining, the Carnegie Corporation, and eventually the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Office of Education, agreed to give Cooney funds for a pre-production phase of her nascent program. This show became *Sesame Street*. Although later programs such as *Arthur*, *Barney and Friends*, *Blue's Clues*, etc. would prove widely successful, the theoretical process of *Sesame Street* was the first of its kind and became prototypical for the creation and implementation of the future of children's educational programming on public television.

Cooney along with Lloyd Morrisett, the Vice President of both the Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, created the Children's Television Workshop (CTW, which was renamed the "Sesame Workshop" in 2000) at a cost of $8 million. According to Davis (2008), Morrisett and Cooney stated that, had they not acquired the entire $8 million in funding from the start, they would have stopped production of the show. They did not want to compromise the integrity and quality of the potential program. The complete funding was obtained by the combinations of philanthropic contributions such as the Carnegie Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Arthur Vinings Foundation; U.S. government agencies like the U.S. Office of Education; and corporate sponsorships. This diversified funding

meant that *Sesame Street* never acquired consistent sponsorship, which meant a lack of funding certainty for future seasons. However, these scattered contributions "protect [CTW] from the economic pressures experienced by commercial broadcast television networks" (Lesser, 1974, p. 17). The CTW economic model for *Sesame Street* has proven remarkably cost-effective, as the price of viewing the show for each of the preschoolers targeted by *Sesame Street* amounts to around one penny per child (Palmer, 1988).

Cooney and Morrisett's first goal was to gather experts in preschool education and to perform and find empirical studies in order to have the most educational scripts for each episode. After each episode's script had been written and each segment within that script was produced, the CTW employed what Michael Scriven coined as "formative research" (1967). This unique research method refers to the "pre-testing of work while it's still in its formative stages, so that the feedback can be used to improve the product"—in this case, *Sesame Street* programming (Morrow, 2006). This allowed for constant revisions and improvements during *Sesame Street*'s pre-production and production stages, with the goals of making episodes and segments understandable, engaging, educational, and developmentally appropriate for their target preschool viewers. Altogether, the CTW model consisted of gathering academic researchers, early childhood educators, and a creative team that consisted of professional screenwriters, producers, and technicians, among others.

Education and Child Psychology Research

The researchers' part of *Sesame Street*'s creation was to use classic developmental psychology theories and contemporary academic journal findings to make *Sesame Street* the best educational and far-reaching program for children on television. All creators and advocates of children's educational programming essentially believe in the general argument of "attachment

theory" posited by the British psychologist John Bowlby. From their attachment figures, children create an "internal working model" that organizes the way the child views him/herself, others, and the world itself. This model governs children's expectations, experiences, and responses. Secure attachment as a result of unconditional love, responsive and readily-available nurturing, and dependability from caregivers creates a positive "internal working models." An example of a positive internal working model would be, "I deserve to be loved. I want to love others and make them feel special. People can earn and deserve my trust. I will do great things in the future. I really like who I am." Since its inception in the 1960s, "attachment theory" has become "the dominant approach to understanding early social development, and has given rise to a great surge of empirical research into the formation of children's close relationships" (Schaffer, 2007).

At its core, attachment theory posits that relationship bonds between children and caregivers early in life can have profound effects on the children's life afterwards; that attachment bonds form the stable foundation upon which a person's life can be positively built. Studies have shown that those who were securely attached had higher self-esteem and satisfying romantic relationships (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). Clearly, secure attachment has lifelong socio-emotional benefits. In contrast, lacking secure attachment has its consequences. Several studies have also found that children diagnosed with conduct disorder and oppositional-defiant disorder, disorders characterized by an obvious lack of prosocial behaviors, often did not have secure attachments (Guttmann-Steinmetz & Crowell, 2006).

Educational programming for young children assumes these basic tenets of attachment theory, despite the theory mainly focusing on the importance of infant and toddler attachment to caregivers (the earliest stages of development after birth). Edutainment creators believe that if they can create characters that young spectators can attach themselves to, their appreciation and

care of the characters will consequently make children care about what the characters are saying. By paying more attention to what the characters are teaching and telling them, the children should then learn the lessons and information better than learning from those with whom they have very little bonding and attachment.

Jean Piaget's developmental psychology theories heavily influenced educational programming as well. He argues, in his four-stage theory of cognitive development, that children's abilities and actions are based on commensurate socioemotional and mental skills from their corresponding age and developmental milestones. The stage that is most relevant to preschool education is the "preoperational stage," which occurs in children from ages two to seven years of age. Piaget argued that in the "preoperational stage," children do not have logical reasoning and that their socialization is mainly involved in and developed through symbolic play. Having acquired basic language comprehension skills, children in this stage can utilize both pictorial and written symbols as a means of representing objects. Egocentric thinking also permeates throughout this stage, as Piaget and Inhelder (1967) concluded from their "Three Mountain" experiment. This classic experiment had children view a three-dimensional model of a mountain that contained different objects such as a cross, snow, and a house. The experiments placed a doll with a different visual perspective from where they placed the child. When asked to choose pictures that represented the doll's perspective, most four-year-old children selected the picture that represented their own perspective instead of the doll's. Their results suggested that children do not yet have a fully developed theory of mind by which they can understand the viewpoints of others. Because of this, many developmental psychologists who strictly adhere to Piaget's stages believe that all children within the "preoperational stage" are too egocentric to

recognize and comprehend the fact that others may view and understand the world and experiences differently from themselves.

However, some studies have questioned preschoolers' supposed egocentric thinking by qualifying Piaget and Inhelder's implications from their "mountain scene" data. Borke (1975) simplified the complexity of the perspective-taking task given to three- and four-year-olds. In addition, the children were asked to give the perspective specifically of Grover, a *Sesame Street* character many were most likely familiar with. As a result of these tasks containing "discrete, easily differentiated objects" and pictorial perspectives to choose from, 79% of three-year-olds and 93% of four-year-olds successfully understood Grover's different visual perspective. When the same children completed "the mountain scene" task, only 42% of three-year-olds and 67% of four-year-olds correctly were able to predict the doll's perspective. This newer data refutes Piaget and Inhelder's claims by supporting the notion that children may already have incipient theory-of-mind abilities; therefore, repetitive practice of perspective-taking would still be beneficial to them. Because of this, good strategies by which a teacher or other prosocial character on the program could develop perspective taking would be to ask questions such as "How do you think Timmy feels when no one wanted to play with him?" or "How do you think Tina felt when she helped her friend clean up the classroom?"

In addition, preschoolers are very open to acquiring as much knowledge as possible (frequently asking "why?" and "how come?"). However, they are far from being able to think in abstract terms, so philosophical and other similar reasoning should be avoided. Similarly, Goldman, Reyes, and Varnhagen (1984) found that children learn best when information is conveyed to them in a way that relates with their experiences, memories, and prior knowledge of stories (as cited in Singer & Singer, 2000). "Preoperational" children can also count, group items

into categories by similarity, and understand temporal states like the past and future, but most often focus on the present and the concrete.

Piaget theorizes that preschoolers should be able to think about and discuss the program outside of the shows' airtime. Throughout the "preoperational" stage, children learn to comprehend basic narratives, identify with characters, and begin to understand the underlying systems and methods of the televisual audio-visual language (Lemish, 2006). This leads to the notion that the young children are, indeed, "active viewers" instead of passive ones. Their minds actively engage with and learn from the screen material. Thus, they have the ability to apply their gained knowledge and observations to their own real worlds. This is, in essence, why edutainment exists. Creators and producers of edutainment programming hope that the combined efforts of educators and television developers will enable children to learn from television and, more importantly, apply their learning to their experiences and relationships.

Another important process to consider when creating an optimal television program for children is that young children often identify with characters on the screen. By identifying with a character, the child incorporates that character's "goals, values, and attitudes" into the child's own cognitions and emotions (Caughney, 1986, as cited in Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986). These incorporated concepts can change a child's behavior, for better or worse. Indeed, the famous behavioral psychologist Alfred Bandura, as a result of his famous "Bobo Doll" experiment, contends that children who are shown a model engaging in anti-social behavior will internalize that same anti-social behavior and will repeat those actions later on their own. This was demonstrated in his first Bobo Doll study (1961) in which he divided children into three groups: one group would watch an aggressive adult verbally and physically assault the Bobo Doll, the second group would watch an adult amicably talk to the Bobo Doll, and a final control group

would watch the Bobo Doll without an adult. After this observational learning, the children were given the opportunity themselves to play with the Bobo Doll without an adult. The results showed that the group that had been exposed to the aggressive adult models displayed significantly more aggressive behavior than the other two groups. In his "social learning theory," Bandura claimed learning could be acquired through social contexts and observations. The theory suggests that children learn from nonverbal cues and actions even if those modeling cues did not have the intention or motivation to teach or even be copied at all.

Bandura's social learning theory can be applied to prosocial behaviors. Eisenberg and McNally (1993) have shown that parents who display sensitivity and empathy for their preschoolers' thoughts and emotions increase the likelihood that their preschool children would respond in warm and empathetic ways when others are in distress, and that these behaviors remain through young adulthood and beyond. Similarly, parents who discuss and model positive behaviors and self-regulation in response to negative emotional experiences, such as frustration and anger, can offer their children effective coping strategies in dealing with these difficult experiences. Gilliom et al. (2002) found that preschoolers who self-regulate their frustration by inhibiting impulses and distracting themselves are more likely to cooperate with school peers and have fewer behavioral problems. On the other hand, the lack of a positive role model has been shown to significantly decrease the likelihood of children displaying care and concern over another's distress and unhappiness (Klimes-Dougan & Kistner, 1990).

Throughout their preschool years, children frequently engage in sociodramatic play, in which they act out age-appropriate scripts that function as models for children to use in real-life situations. Research has found that these sociodramatic scripts enhance cognitive and socio-emotional functioning (Goncu, Patt, & Kouba, 2004). The children perform prosocial roles from

the scripts either as themselves or via characters such as dolls, figures, and puppets. This provides more perspective-taking learning opportunities. Within the realm of children's televisual edutainment, this fluidity of character and perspective suggests that children who watch programs that utilize puppets will vicariously engage in sociodramatic play through the programs' protagonists and incorporate their perspective, just as children watching the Bobo Doll incorporated the attitude of the adult models they watched.

Many researchers believe that conscience formation is developed and strengthened by a discipline that Hoffman (2000) calls "induction." This occurs when a behavioral model, such as a parent or teacher, demonstrates the negative effects of a child's bad behavior (e.g. another child's distress) by emphasizing that the child's antisocial behavior caused the undesirable effect. Induction's primary goal as a form of punishment (in behavioral psychology terms, an action designed to decrease another behavior) is to try to get the child to empathize with the other child in distress; that is, once the child understands and feels the other upset child's distress, the child will improve his or her behavior because he or she has learned to relate to that same distress. This empathy and concern leads to more prosocial behaviors (Krevants & Gibbs, 1996). The demonstration of the negative effects of antisocial behavior effectively reduces antisocial behavior because preschoolers learn better by induction than by moral reasoning and sermonism (Mares & Woodard, 2005). This reinforces the importance of edutainment because it shows rather than tells and is also more attuned with the organic processes of children's learning.

An example of an "edutainment" program that utilizes this concept is *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* (1993-1996). The program shows the negative effects of ecological misbehaviors like polluting and littering. After the earth-friendly superheroes called the "planeteers" clean up, the show concludes with clips of real children helping out in their communities with relatable

and replicable acts of services like recycling bottles, making birdhouses, and picking up trash in their local parks. This offers behavioral scripts that the young viewers are aware of and can do themselves. This relatability contributes to the increased likelihood that the audience will engage in environmentalist actions.

In a follow-up study to the original Bobo Doll research, Bandura (1963) had one group of children watch a live-action adult assault a Bobo Doll, another group watch a video of an aggressive adult assault a Bobo Doll, another group watch a cartoon cat assault a Bobo Doll, and a control group in which the children did not view aggressive behaviors. All the children in the first three groups exhibited more aggressive behaviors than those from the control group that lacked an aggressive model. This study demonstrates the power that media (including animated media) can have on influencing the behavior of children; that they can have the same negative (or potentially positive) effects as real, live human models can. The study gives more evidence that children do not watch media passively. They can internalize the images and actions they see on a screen and will change their future behavior based off of what they view. Thomas (2005) proposes specific factors that strengthen Bandura's "social learning theory" that include realistic characters, characters similar to the child (i.e. in gender, age, and race), positive reinforcement given to the modeled behavior, and behaviors within the child's physical capabilities.

According to Vygotsky's theory of social development (1978), problem-solving processes, cultural knowledge, and socially accepted behaviors are taught to children by means of a shared experience or interaction with a "More Knowledgeable Other": a teacher with superior abilities, experiences, and information. Once a child has entered the "Zone of Proximal Development"—a level of learning in which skills are too difficult to master on his or her own, but that can be done with guidance and encouragement—the teacher serves as a psychological

and educational scaffold for the child to model prosocial behaviors through turn-taking and contingent replies that build on previous exchanges. Considering this, one can acknowledge that educational television hosts, protagonists, and other characters can also justly and appropriately serve as a "More Knowledgeable Other" if they demonstrate superior knowledge and encourage children to acquire and develop prosocial behaviors.

Although Bandura's research signals the dangers of children's observational learning from aggressive, antisocial actions models, his research did not examine the inverse: can children learn to engage in prosocial behaviors from viewing models demonstrating prosocial behaviors? Fortunately, much research has been done to answer this question and will be discussed later in this paper as the research studies become relevant to the specific "edutainment" programs. However, in one of the first experiments analyzing the effects of television on prosocial behavior, Poulos, Rubinstein, and Liebert (1975) found that when young children who watched a 30-minute episode of *Lassie*, in which the boy Jeff risks his life in order to rescue a puppy, they were more likely to display helping behaviors even if it caused them to receive less of an external reward than if they refrained.

Because of this, creators and producers of children's programming must be very careful and cautious when formulating their shows. Educational television programming must ensure that no negative role modeling will occur within their shows because young children readily acquire and adopt behaviors from role models. Liss, Reinhardt, and Fredriksen (1983) supported this notion with an experiment that linked the greatest increase of prosocial behavior to the influence of characters that consistently displayed prosociality and never contradicted it with aggression. Similarly, some research suggests that children may misunderstand narratives that begin with an "initial moral error" (Mares & Acosta, 2008). An initial moral error is an initial

conflict followed by eventual compromise and peaceful resolution. Mares and Woodard (2001) explicitly state, “The combination of aggression and a prosocial theme is particularly pernicious.”

A study by Silverman and Sprafkin (1980) produced similar findings. Preschoolers watched a sixteen-minute episode of *Sesame Street* that fell into one of three modeling categories: “prosocial, conflict-free interactions,” “conflicts between child actors that were resolved peacefully,” and “content with no social lessons.” The results showed that those in the conflict-then-resolution group cooperated less than the control and conflict-free group. Mares and Woodard (2005) even stated that prosocial teachings demonstrated in the conflict-then-resolution model actually were associated with more future antisocial behaviors in children than those who saw content that only was antisocial, without any prosocial intent or framing.

Nuanced characters who display both prosocial and antisocial behaviors should be excluded from young children’s programming, as children may internalize the characters’ antisocial behaviors along with the prosocial ones. They do not have a thorough-enough understanding of the difference between reality and fantasy to filter which behaviors are imitated (Taylor & Howell, 1973). This can lead to children believing that the characters they are watching on the screen actually exist in reality. This is one of the reasons why *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* is good for children to view, because the show’s star, Fred Rogers, is the same person off-screen as he is on-screen.

Although consistent prosocial role models are necessary for the development of prosocial behavior and skills, there are other ways that can strengthen positive behavior. Perhaps the most critical factor is the ability of a program’s content to be relevant and relatable to the life, imagination, and world of the preschooler. Information is best encoded when the learner can

relate the information to his or her life's experiences. Huston-Stein and Friedrich (1975) discovered that the more similar a viewer is to a character, the more likely the viewer will identify with and mimic that character's behavior, perhaps because this greater connection reinforces the generalizability of that character's experiences to our own. From this, we know that children learn better when they are watching children on a screen or characters who think about and explain things the way a child would. Berkowitz and Rogers (1986) discovered that children learn better when they have participated in the events they have watched because they can apply the modeling to their own, everyday lives.

Formal Aspects of Children's Programming

In addition to the educational and psychological content created by television programs, their formal features and style must consider its preschool audience appropriately for preschoolers to learn the material most effectively. Cinematography, visual appeal, sound and music, and other televisual and cinematic elements must be carefully composed and manipulated to make the program both entertaining enough to hold the viewers' attention but simple enough to be intelligible. It was with this new academic and creative merging in mind that *Sesame Street* was pioneered and developed.

Formal features consist of "the auditory and visual production and editing techniques characterizing the [televisual] medium" (Wright & Huston, 1983). Visual formal elements include pans, tilts, special effects, fades, superimpositions, and dissolves, among others. Auditory elements include sound effects (e.g. mickey-mousing, auditory, sound effects-like matches on visual action), dialogue, theme songs, and soundtrack or score, among others. Editing techniques include shot/scene-duration, pacing (e.g. number of scene or character changes)

cross-cutting to imply a narratological or thematic relationship, and how different segments are cut together (Wright & Huston, 1983).

Often the goal of formal features is to better organize the narrative content. They can delineate changes in plot, time, location, or theme to "bridge gaps and suggest local connections between one bit of memorable content and another" (Wright & Huston, 1983). These particular features can signal to preschoolers that these programs are, in fact, designed specifically for them; that is, preschoolers can expect the program to be developmentally appropriate for their age level but will also be humorous, amusing, and engaging (Huston & Wright, 1983). Animation, character voices, child dialogue, and sound effects are some elements frequently associated with children's programming. Similarly, Calvert (1982) found the most "perceptually salient" features that best capture a young child's attention include character action and movement, vocalizations, sound effects, pans, visual special effects, child dialogue, music, and zooms. Because of this "made-for-me" notion, children are more likely to especially attend to scenes and segments that have these features (Anderson, Alwitt, Lorch, & Levin, 1979).

Calvert's same (1982) study of "preoperational" children viewing different formats of a *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* episode demonstrated that children who viewed the episode that had "preplay" sequences (segments that described the upcoming content and themes) were able to recall more about the content of the episode after a post-viewing assessment than children who saw the episode without "preplay" sequences. This suggests that these initial narrative roadmaps function as an organizer for "plot comprehension and selective attention to plot-relevant material" that give children expectations of what to expect to see and to learn in the actual programming content.

Wright et al. (1984) conducted a study designed to determine the effectiveness at different levels of continuity and pacing had on young children's recall of the 15-minute length television programs. The researchers defined high-continuity programs as "stories requiring temporal integration of successive scenes for full comprehension" and low-continuity programs as magazine-like formats where segments are independent of one another. They defined pace as the "rate of scene and character change in stories (high-continuity) and rate of bit change in magazine shows (low-continuity)." The study revealed that young children could recall more information from high-continuity (i.e. stories) and low-paced (i.e. slower) programs, than low-continuity and high-paced programs, respectively. Perhaps these findings suggest that young children are cognitively unable to connect, relate, and infer information without an integrative, highly continuous narrative structure, or, at least, that they perform less well than children who viewed programs with these features. Quick editing was found to hinder learning as it eliminates the opportunity for children to think about and try to truly comprehend the lessons just taught. Because of this, some scholars have criticized *Sesame Street*'s fast-paced educational format (Singer, 1980). Oppositely, one of the many elements that scholars praise about *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is the program's slow-pacing, often using long takes of multiple minute lengths and the explanatory nature of its transitions from one segment to the next.

This lack of understanding then contributes to a decrease in attention, which perpetuates the lack of understanding, and continues in a downward comprehension-attention spiral. Oppositely, a program with high-continuity gives children a chance to exert their pre-existing logical schemas of the world of cause-and-effect when trying to understand, anticipate, predict, and organize the continuous narrative into a meaningful, sensible story.

Repetition of information is absolutely critical to the understanding of material (Cornell, Sénéchal, & Broda, 1988). This actually is advantageous to the pre-production and production processes because the repetition of learning segments allows for the recycling of didactic content to reduce production costs. The repetition could take the forms of repeated stories and narrative structures, characters, themes, phrases, music, and songs. Repetition and its predictability aid the preschoolers' learning processes.

The helpfulness of repetition in children's televisual medium became widely apparent in one of the first segments in *Sesame Street*. A young actor named James Earl Jones slowly recited all twenty-six letters of the English alphabet that would be shown in individual animated letters on the top of the screen adjacent to Jones' face prior to Jones' pronunciation. Upon their initial viewing, children say each letter after Jones' names it. After viewing the segment more times, the children would say the letter before Jones. Later, after even more repeated viewings of the segment, the children would correctly say the next letter before the letter even visually appeared on the screen. Edward Palmer, Gerald Lesser, and *Sesame Street* producer Samuel Y. Gibbon, Jr. declared this pedagogical phenomenon "the James Earl Jones effect" (Lesser, 1974; Morrow, 2006; Gladwell, 2001). This finding also validates the notion that children can indeed be active viewers and retain information learned from programming while emphasizing the viability of edutainment.

Once an effective learning segment had been created and produced, the format would be recycled to help children learn similar information later and reduce planning time and costs. Moreover, evaluative research on the show has revealed that children had the highest learning increases from the learning segments that were reiterated and emphasized (Ball & Bogartz, 1970).

Similarly, communications scholars have created what they call “script theory” (Van Evra, 1990). This theory agrees that repetition is absolutely necessary for more effective learning, but, more importantly and more centrally, “script theory” argues that context and framing of information must also ultimately be considered. Advocates of script theory believe that the viewing of cooperation, for example, as a means of solving a dispute or problem (instead of prosocial behaviors that seem to lack obvious motivations) would strengthen a child’s ability to learn cooperation or sharing. This gives children relatable models that they can understand and may have previously experienced, or may likely experience in the future. This does not only have to occur within the child’s “real-world” life. Fictional stories can also be a means of this demonstration. Simply seeing someone share will not encode the importance of sharing as thoroughly as seeing sharing stop an excluded child from crying—that sharing reduces sadness and makes others happy. This parallels the importance of “induction” and perspective taking discussed earlier. This emergence of positive emotions (or avoidance of negative emotions) reinforces “script” behavior. The more a child sees these prosocial “scripts”, the more he or she will internalize them and incorporate prosocial behaviors into his or her life.

As an extension of this, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1986) created a concept called “the cultivation theory (or hypothesis)” which can predict perceptions, assumptions, and level of optimism after a long-term, repeated exposure to certain television content and themes. They write, “As with religion, the social function of television lies in the continual repetition of stories (myths, "facts," lessons, and so on) that serve to define the world and legitimize a particular social order.” In other words, television can change how viewers feel about the world. The researchers, headed by Gerbner, were concerned with the general pessimism and fear perpetuated by cumulative exposures to television violence. After surveying thousands of

participants, Gerbner et al. discovered that those who watched violent television the most had ideas and perceptions that mirrored those portrayed on the television programming: they believed that they had a much greater chance than the actual reality of being a victim of a crime (1 out of 10 risk as opposed to the actual 1 out of 10,000) and an overall mistrust of people and society that Gerbner calls the "mean world syndrome" that includes having beliefs such as "most people are just looking out for themselves" and "people would take advantage of you if they got the chance" (Gerber, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986).

Although these researchers focused on the negative implications of repeatedly watching television programs with violent actions and pessimistic themes, what about internalizing prosocial themes? Gerbner's research suggests that if viewers are repeatedly exposed to prosocial behaviors and lessons, then they will incorporate a mindful, cooperative disposition and will trust and appreciate the people and the world around them. This "nice world syndrome" functions similarly to Melvin Lerner's "just world hypothesis": a cognitive misassumption when one believes that good behavior is always rewarded and bad behavior is always punished (1980). There is much research to suggest that those with a generally optimistic, trusting view of the world are more likely to have higher levels of subjective well-being than those who view the world most pessimistically and distrustingly (Quevedo & Abella, 2011; Augusto-Landa, Pulido-Martos, & Lopez-Zafra, 2010). Although the extreme of this may lead to naiveté by easily being manipulated by those in the world who do take advantage of others and so this should be carefully considered, people who view the world as friendly are more likely to display more prosocial behaviors.

The creators of *Sesame Street* acknowledged this as well. Gerald Lesser writes:

> We knew we would be criticized for sugar-coating and distorting the unpleasant realities, and for abdicating the responsibility to show conditions that children must learn to change rather than tolerate passively. Our judgment, however, was that in order to depict reality, *Sesame Street* should not add more stridency and bitterness to the harshness already present in the child's environment. The drift toward showing the warmth and kindness that might exist continued…We wanted to show the child what the world is like when people treat each other with decency and consideration. (Lesser, p. 95)

Thus, children who frequently watch prosocial television programming will undergo a two-fold increase of prosocial behavior from both the observational learning and the cognitive and emotional perspective change. However, the research of Hawkins and Pingree (1980) suggests that the cultivation effect may not occur in children, even the heaviest television viewing children, if they do not truly understand the characters' intentions and seriousness of the effects of their actions. Again, this reinforces the importance of programs to offer opportunities for children to empathize which characters by perspective taking and cause-and-effect relationships. "Preoperational" children according to Piaget and children who successfully progress through Erikson's "initiative vs. guilt" stage are eager for knowledge and to understand the world. Perspective taking and causal reasoning, in concrete terms, allows them to understand the positive feelings caused by prosocial behavior and the negative ones caused by antisocial behavior.

Although the utilization of some aesthetic forms can be beneficial, it was also important to *Sesame Street*'s creators to avoid using other technical and aesthetic elements. Cinematographic choices like panning and tilting can leave out narrative information as a result

of demanding too much for the mental capacity of preschoolers to process. When children become confused or do not understand what they are watching, they are more prone to distractions that can limit their learning (Gladwell, 2000).

Similarly, Salomon (1974) demonstrated that young children do not understand that a cut-to-closeup shot, what Salomon calls a "short-circuiting" editing style, gives more detail, or emotional meaning, to the object that has been zoomed in on; that is, they do not comprehend the synecdochal relationship between the object in the close-up and the larger whole from the long/medium shot of which it is a part. However, children did understand the narrative meaning when they watched the same object slowly zoom from a wide shot to a close-up because of the smoother, more obvious transition. Cinematographers and camera operators learned to utilize wide shots that show objects and characters referenced during the events and sequences unfolding. As an extension to this, every important narrative event should occur on screen so that the viewers can recognize and comprehend the basic logic of cause and effect to create a better understanding of the story, characters, and lessons being taught (Lemish, 2007).

As a result of this creative and academic synthesis, *Sesame Street* became a popular yet instructional show that offered unique aspects from previous public and commercial children's programming. The program was the first to utilize educational and psychological scholarship and research specifically intended to improve children's cognitive and socio-emotional abilities instead of just to entertain. *Sesame Street*'s lack of condescension and a firm embrace of the preschooler's imagination allowed the show's research and production team to create a world that appealed to young children and actively invited them to interact with the program. This combination strengthened children's abilities to learn and master the program's intended educational concepts, discussed shortly. The program stressed active viewership and repetition,

gave positive role models for identification, focused on the development of both children's intellectual and socio-emotional abilities, while having both specific learning goals and appealing production values. These became hallmark techniques used in children's edutainment programming.

Given the research on the speed and nondiscrimination with which children adopt the behaviors of those they see whether on screen or in person, in the following section we will see how producers and educations collaborated to implement these experimental deductions to stunning success.

'Sesame Street' and the Children's Television Workshop

By combining these academic and aesthetic findings, the CTW team conducted five seminars during *Sesame Street*'s planning phase in 1968 to pinpoint the areas the program needed to stress. They created specific goals, instructional objectives, and skills that the show would emphasize within its learning segments. They envisioned that the television medium could most effectively communicate these learning segments. The overall framing of these seminars was to find the learning goals and skills that would be most beneficial for decreasing achievement gaps for the intended target audience of inner-city and minority children and to emphasize aesthetic content that the medium of television could accentuate. The five categories of focus that the show creators decided upon were "social, moral, and emotional development," "language and reading," "counting and arithmetic skills," "logic and problem solving," and "perception" (Morrow, 2006). For this paper's purposes, the category of "social, moral, and emotional development" is the most pertinent. This category was identified as being composed of the following: social units, self, social roles, social groups and institutions, social interactions, differences in perspectives, cooperation, and rules for justice and fair play (Morrow, 2006).

Thus, the creators of the program believed that prosocial skills and experiences were also important to teach children to become successful students and adults.

The CTW model consists of four parts: "the interaction of receptive television producers and child science experts, the creation of a specific and age-appropriate curriculum, research to shape the program directly, and independent measurement of viewers' learning" (Morrow, 2006, p. 68). Malcolm Gladwell succinctly summarized the intention of the program, "*Sesame Street* was built around a single, breakthrough insight: that if you can hold the attention of children, you can educate them" (2001, p. 100). Instead of having teachers and academics learn to write comedic sequences for the program, Cooney and *Sesame Street*'s producers decided that it would be better to have professional entertainment screenwriters learn to incorporate and interpret curriculum into their scripts (Gikow, 2009, p. 178).

Sesame Street's creators implemented five three-day seminars to establish, in addition to narrative content and curriculum, the most effective content formal strategies to aid in helping preschool children learn (Lesser, 1974; Fisch & Truglio, 2001; Morrow, 2006). As David Connell, the first Executive Producer for *Sesame Street*, wisely said, "You've got to get them to church before you preach to them" (Lesser, 1974). During the program's premiere, many researchers thought that preschoolers lacked that ability to sustain a long attention span (Lesser, 1974). Therefore, *Sesame Street*'s producers opted for a faster paced, magazine-like format. The creators drew from many entertainment sources such as vaudeville, puppeteering, cartoons, *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*, and quiz shows in order to keep children's attention. The format of *Sesame Street* was simple, combining "a strong visual style, fast-moving action, humor, and music" with short animated segments and live-action street sequence narratives (O'Dell, 1997, p. 70). Each episode had "sponsors" of numbers and letters, mirroring advertisements from

commercial television, that would be begin with short clips stating, for example, “This episode was brought to you by the letter J.” These “sponsors” would usually be one of the subjects taught within many of the short didactic clips. For added layers of auditory appeal, the show incorporated music in its catchy theme song and its soundtrack rhyming while vivid colors and simplistic forms and characters created appealing visual aesthetics.

The program’s narrative framing device was the “street scenes.” They consisted of curriculum-based interactions between Muppets like Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, and Grover and real adults and children that were interspersed with relevant segments of cartoons, puppet sketches, and other short clips that expanded on the questions, concepts, and lessons introduced in the street scenes. Each *Sesame Street* episode contained around ten to twenty of these short clips. However, some of these short segments were narratively, instead of didactically, driven. These plot-focused, higher-continuity clips often helped teach affective lessons, like prosocial behaviors.

The creators and producers of *Sesame Street* strategized that, if the program appealed to adults, parents would be more likely to turn the show on to co-view with their children, which would increase the exposure of *Sesame Street* to preschoolers. The program had celebrities such as Carol Burnett, Bill Cosby, Stevie Wonder guest star in the program’s early years (and celebrities such as Michelle Obama and Sofia Vergara in more recent seasons) while also including and spoofing pop culture references, such as Cookie Monster’s “Monsterpiece Theater” and musical acts referencing popular songs, such as when a muppet band called “The Beetles” taught children about the second letter of the alphabet by singing the aptly-named song “Letter B.”

Interestingly, the Muppets were originally separated in time and space from the adults who resided in the actual Sesame St. The Muppets also lacked any differentiated forefronted characters. But Edward Palmer, the first Director of Research for *Sesame Street*, found that during his "Distractor" formative research design children attended the most to cartoons, Muppets, clips of real animals, and musical skits (Lesser, 1974). They stopped attending to the program whenever the street scenes with real people were played. The adults were simply not entertaining enough to keep the children watching (Gladwell, 2001). This realization was a "turning point in the history of *Sesame Street*" (Lesser, 1974). Because of Palmer's findings, the Muppets were then incorporated into the street scenes to interact with the real people. The writers then created Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch, characters that became worldwide icons for the program.

Although *Sesame Street* began with a greater focus on cognitive skills, the program began emphasizing prosocial behaviors and diversity appreciation during season three from years 1971 to 1972 to reflect America's diverse cultural and racial constitution. In season three, the program included segments on Latin-American culture, Spanish words, race relations, and information about Native Americans, Pueblo Indians, and Asian Americans (Fisch & Truglio, 2001; Morrow, 2006). As a result of the increasing popularity of the feminist third wave movement that emphasizes the lack of any single definition of femininity, the program also included more females in the program and had segments on recognizing and reducing stereotypes of gender. Later seasons would have overall themes and psychological goals specifically focused on prosocial behavior. Some of these themes included motivation, valuing friendships, sharing, learning patience via turn-taking, understanding the importance of motivation, dealing with rejection and failure, and trying to reduce anti-social behaviors (Fisch & Truglio, 2001).

As a result of feedback from critics, the producers and creators of *Sesame Street* began to incorporate and emphasize the learning of socio-emotional aspects, such as peaceful conflict resolution, appreciation of diversity, and emotional competence. Interpersonal problems and questions posed by the adults, children, and Muppets in the street scenes were the platform from which these social aspects were discussed and taught (Huston et al., 2001). Major life-events of dying, relationships, and birth were addressed throughout the show's narrative during the 1980s: the death of Mr. Hooper (the popular neighborhood grocery store owner), the marriage of Maria and Luis, and Maria's consequential pregnancy. In more recent years, *Sesame Street*'s stories and characters dealt with the effects of Hurricane Katrina, the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the deployment of father-soldiers to the Middle East. From this, *Sesame Street* has wisely chosen to actively confront life's celebrations but also, more importantly, its tragedies. This realism prepares children for the inevitable disappointing and painful events in their future adult lives and provides positive, appropriate developmental strategies to deal with them.

Sesame Street's characters alone, without even considering the program's content, help teach tolerance and cultivate the appreciation of diversity to its preschool viewers. The now-classic Muppet characters of Big Bird, Grover, Elmo, and others, and the different shapes, sizes, and shades of the unnamed "Anything Muppets," and the diversity of the human cast (which includes Hispanics, African-Americans, those who are disabled, among others) demonstrates that individuals can live peacefully together despite their physical and mental differences.

The multitude of Muppets on *Sesame Street* exposed children to different perspectives, personalities, and behaviors that would be representative of the diversity in the children-viewers' lives. The Muppets were the "glue that pulled the show together" (Gladwell, p. 106). Big Bird is naïve, easily confused, frequently makes mistakes but always strives to learn from them and

remains happy despite his intellectual deficits. Big Bird was the first Muppet created for *Sesame Street*, and is, perhaps, the most important character on the program because his impressionable curiosity most accurately represents his preschool viewers. Oscar the Grouch is Big Bird's antithesis, as he is frequently grumpy; he loves messes, privacy, and arguing with his neighbors; and dislikes kindness, consideration, and friendliness. Although Oscar is essentially the furthest away from being a prosocial model, the denizens of *Sesame Street* still accept him despite his anti-prosocial tendencies; that is, Oscar portrays a realism of the inevitable presence of non-prosocial individuals in life. Despite this tolerance, Bandura's aforementioned research suggests that preschoolers may internalize Oscar's antisocial behavior. From this, I believe that he is a problematic character that should be excluded from the program. A more neutral character that is neither prosocial nor antisocial would be a better substitute, like Eeyore from the *Winnie the Pooh* series.

Kermit the Frog tries to understand others' points of view and sometimes displays anxiety about his responsibilities and the unpredictable nature of the world. In contract, Grover is always happy and ready for life's challenges, as he always is glad to help his neighbors. Bert is neurotic and is fascinated by seemingly trivial objects in life, like pigeons and oatmeal. His best friend Ernie is frequently smiling and easygoing. Again, their *Odd Couple*-esque friendship and ability to live amicably together despite their opposite personalities suggests that great relationships can be formed even among two people who seem vastly different from one another. Of course, there is also Elmo, a three-year-old who frequently speaks of himself in the third person and who sees the world as a place full of adventures. Elmo is meant to mirror many preschoolers' self-concepts, as children in this developmental age frequently refer to themselves by their name in third person instead of "I" or "me." Finally, Zoe and muppet-fairy Abby

Cadabby, more recently, joined the cast in 1993 and 2006, respectively, to add a greater female presence to the program.

Four adults comprised most of the human cast on *Sesame Street*. Mr. Hooper (Will Lee) was *Sesame Street*'s resident shopowner, Bob (Bob McGrath) was the music teacher, and husband and wife team Gordon (Matt Robinson) and Susan (Loretta Long) often served as role models and life-teachers for the Muppets and preschool viewers at home. As the show progressed, more adults, teenagers, children were added to *Sesame Street*'s regular cast. Maria (Sonia Manzano) and her husband Luis (Emilio Delgado), whom she married in season 19, have operated their "Fix-It Shop" since 1971 and provide powerful Hispanic presence on the program. Linda was television's first deaf character by being on the program from 1972 to 2003. Alan (Alan Muraoka), a current cast member, became the new proprietor of Mr. Hooper's Store in 1998 and the first major Asian American character on *Sesame Street*.

Because of the magazine format of the program that includes various curricular subjects that are irrelevant to socio-emotional learning (e.g. arithmetic, literacy, and perception), I will summarize and analyze one episode from season two and one episode from season three of *Sesame Street* by focusing on only the prosocial segments.

Premiering on April 2, 1971, Episode #0235 contains four instances of prosocial modeling. The first involves two Muppet-hands, similar to sock puppets, arguing over a piece of cake before finally deciding to share it. Then, Bob the music teacher and a group of children decide to build a soapbox racer car for Big Bird to show their appreciation and love for him. A few segments later, an animated cartoon entitled "Baseball Bully" plays. The cartoon shows a little league outfielder going deep in the field to retrieve a ball when he finds an intimidating bully sternly standing on it. The outfielder politely asks, "Can I have the ball?" to which the

bully instantly replies, “No!” The boy thinks of several ways to handle the situation via images expressed through thought bubbles. His initial two thoughts that he rejects are to physically retaliate with a sling-shot or to give the bully an ice cream cone (which he then foresees the bully eating but then afterwards he kicks the boy). The boy ultimately decides to get his dog to growl at the bully. Intimidated and showing his true cowardness, the bully finally runs away in time for the boy to pick up the ball, throw it to home plate to get the opponent team’s runner out. The final prosocial behavior occurs when “Grover the Assistant” helps his muppet friend Herbert Birdsfoot count to twenty.

The segment of Bob and the kids making a soapbox car for Big Bird advocates an active engagement of prosocial behavior—that one should voluntarily display prosocial behaviors for the sheer reason of making someone else happy. The Grover segment simply serves as another example of helping behavior. However, the hand puppet and “Baseball Bully” segments are problematic. The hand puppet segment displays an initial moral error when the puppets display antisocial arguing behavior before they agree to share the cake. The viewers may internalize the arguing behavior in addition to (or instead of) the prosocial behavior of sharing. The “Baseball Bully” clip may include narrative elements above the comprehension abilities of preschoolers. The clip shows the thought-bubble of the boy outfielder thinking about options of attacking the bully back with a slingshot and giving him ice cream as examples of how he could respond to the bully’s antisocial behavior. “Preoperational” preschoolers may not understand the televisual semiotics of the thought-bubble; that is, they may not comprehend that the boy is merely thinking about the aforementioned thoughts instead of remembering them or that these visuals within the thought-bubble are not just small examples of him actually performing them in midair. In addition, the first slingshot option may encourage the use of slingshots (and violence in

general) and the boy's eventual choice of using a growing dog to scare away the bully both contradict the clip's prosocial intentions. However, the use of the thought-bubble is an interesting educational narrative strategy that the televisual medium, and not traditional classroom teaching, can provide.

Premiering in *Sesame Street*'s third season on February 4, 1972, Episode #0340 contains two examples of prosocial behavior and one example of the disapproval of antisocial behavior. The episode begins with Big Bird voluntarily trying to help fix Susan's leaky kitchen faucet. After several clever but ineffective attempts, Susan fixes it herself. However, both characters appreciate the aid of the other. Susan's gratitude for Big Bird's aid, despite its failure, demonstrates to children that, even if they do not succeed in their prosocial endeavors, their kind thoughts and intentions are still worthy of praise; that the possibility of failure should not deter them from wanting to engage in prosocial behaviors. The second modeling of prosocial behavior occurs at the end of the episode. After a boy finishes shopping at Mr. Hooper's Store he realizes that his groceries are too heavy for him to lift alone. Although the boy discusses options of making two trips from the store to his house or acquiring a wagon to put the groceries in, Mr. Hooper suggests "the perfect solution": the boy should find a friend to help him. After he summons his friend over, they both carry the groceries to the boy's house in one trip. Mr. Hooper summarizes, "Sometimes two people working together can get a job done more easily than one person working alone."

Within the middle of the live-action episode, two boys named Seth and Boomer walk along Sesame Street. When Boomer shows Seth a rock, Seth simply wants to throw it, but Boomer will only allow Seth to throw it if Seth uses it to break a window while saying that Seth will "be cool" if he throws it but a "chicken and a scaredy-cat" if he chooses not the break a

window. Despite this peer pressure, Seth does not throw the rock or break a window. Soon, the adult Antonio (Jose Enrique Camache) arrives and tells the boys he saw and overhead their conversation. He tells Seth, "I am very proud of you for not breaking the window. If anyone is chicken, it is Boomer." Antonio and Seth both walk away from Boomer, leaving him alone to contemplate his actions, thoughts, and feelings.

Like the soapbox car example in the prior episode, Big Bird's helping of Susan models an active participation in wanting to help, as he was not asked by Susan herself to help her with her faucet. Although Big Bird was unable to successfully fix Susan's faucet, Susan still showed appreciation for his prosocial thoughts and attempts which still encourages children to want to help because it shows that others will still appreciate their efforts and kind thoughts. The grocery cooperation segment is an excellent example of prosocial behavior as it shows cooperation is more practical and beneficial than performing activities alone. Moreover, the clip can easily be relevant to preschoolers' lives as the behavior it demonstrates can easily spillover into the child's own life with the opportunity of helping their own parents carry or unload groceries. The Seth and Boomer segment seem to be a more effective anti-bullying clip than the baseball cartoon. The clip does not show either character engaging in bullying or antisocial behavior despite the fact that Boomer wants Seth to throw a rock into somebody's window. Antonio's praise of Seth for not breaking the window reinforces Seth's behavior, and the example of Antonio and Seth walking away from the bully is a better method of dealing with Seth instead of the intimidation tactics that the boy outfielder uses in the cartoon.

Supporting the show's desire to include perceptually salient formal features, both episodes utilize sound effects, bright colors, and visual effects known to capture the attention of preschoolers. The repetition of prosocial segments throughout each episode initially appears

helpful, but the juxtaposition of these prosocial segments with non-prosocial curriculum may lessen their influence and ability to be fully appreciated and understood. Similarly, the episode's magazine format lacks the high continuity and slow pacing combination that is the most effective narrative presentation for young children to learn.

'Sesame Street' Criticisms

Despite the discussed influential milestones and innovative teaching methods, *Sesame Street* has still received criticism in a few important areas. Perhaps the most criticized aspect of the program is its magazine-like, fast-paced format. Critics claim to focus on appealing to children caused the creators to devalue the importance of the actual encoding and storage processes of information. Television critic Robert Lewis Shayon wrote in 1970 that the series was influenced "too heavily from the high-pressure patterns of commercial television" (Morrow, 2006). Education and media scholars condemn the use of magazine formatted programs for children, because it reduces the ability to see cause and effect relationships by relying too much on inferences, and it can also lead to short attention spans which interfere with optimal learning of concepts and information (Wright et al., 1984).

Another flaw was *Sesame Street'*s failure to completely utilize television's capabilities that distinguish it from traditional instruction and storytelling. Like Alexander Astruc in "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo" (1948) who advocated for the expression of "contemporary ideas and philosophies of life…that only cinema can do justice," critics were unhappy with *Sesame Street*'s lack of exploration and innovation with the expressive potential of the television medium. However, perhaps *Sesame Street's* largest criticism was the fact that the program never succeeded in closing educational gaps between the urban lower class and the wealthier middle/upper classes. Although a greater percentage of people in lower socioeconomic

status watched *Sesame Street* more than many other programs on television in the late 1960s and the 1970s, large spectatorship discrepancies still existed because children of higher socioeconomic status were also watching the program. However, this failure to achieve the goal of leveling socio-economic educational differences may simply have been due to an unreasonable, unattainable objective and not the fault of the program itself.

'Sesame Street' Research Findings

The *Sesame Street* creators and production team enlisted the Educational Testing Service to implement the summative research into the program. This research would test the show's ability to teach the five educational tenets to preschoolers and to see whether the larger goal of bridging the educational gap would be viable. Despite the criticism that the program received, there is ample evidence to suggest that *Sesame Street* has done children more good than harm

From *Sesame Street*'s summative research, Ball and Bogatz (1970) made two major discoveries that supported the intended educational benefits of the program. The first finding revealed the children who watched *Sesame Street* (and who watched it the most) outperformed children who watched fewer episodes or did not watch the program at all. The second finding provided an undeniable positive correlation between performance gains and segments and subjects viewed most often. In another follow-up study by Ball and Bogatz (1972), teachers rated their students who viewed *Sesame Street* most often as the most enthusiastic about going to school and towards learning in general. Furthermore, Anderson et al. (2001) found that teenagers who viewed *Sesame Street* as preschoolers made higher grades in high school, read a greater number of books for pleasure, and cared more about academic success than teenagers who did not view the program as a child.

In addition, viewers of *Sesame Street* had better social skills and appreciated diversity more than children who did not watch the program (Bogatz & Ball, 1971). The first study of *Sesame Street* to focus specifically on prosocial learning found a deeper comprehension and practice of cooperation in those who watched for as little as an hour a day compared to those who did not watch *Sesame Street* (Paulson, 1974). In addition, Bankart and Anderson (1979) found that children who viewed *Sesame Street* displayed fewer aggressive behaviors than those who did not watch the program.

As a result of *Sesame Street*'s financial and educational successes, the program's producers decided to license toy, clothing, and other product manufacturers; home video and publishing sales; and international profits and spinoffs as a means to finance *Sesame Street* after learning that the $8 million initial "seed money" would not be continued in following seasons. Although this commercial venture seemed to directly contradict the public tradition and inspiration of the program, the Sesame Workshop chairman Gary Knell stated:

> The Workshop has really tried to be consistent with its original mission-uphold the trust we've built with parents over the years…. We've walked a fine line [by] having product licensing support some of what we do, but that revenue gets plowed back into the educational research and production of the shows. That's been much of our economic base over the last few years. (Worldscreen, 2003)

Despite the fact that some may claim the program has been overcommercialized, the profiting strategy created from the merchandizing, licensing, and publishing was a simple way to keep the show on the air. This compromise offers a self-sustaining way of preserving the integrity of the show by providing support for the creation of future seasons to continuing to integrate the most up-to-date educational knowledge within the show's curriculum.

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood

Sesame Street was important in initiating the idea that developmental psychology and education research should be combined with the knowledge of media professions. Although *Sesame Street* did have prosocial segments, the show was overall still more focused in cognitive education like arithmetic, reading, and perception. However, another program was more important in its ability to specifically provide socio-emotional content and education. This was *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

Beginning as *The Children's Corner* for WQED and temporarily airing as *Misterogers* when it moved in 1963 to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* finally became a permanent name during its network debut on NET (becoming PBS in 1971) in 1968, a year before *Sesame Street* would premiere its first episode. Preschoolers from ages two to five were the target demographic for the program; however, the series was deemed "appropriate for all ages." The Sears-Roebuck Foundation and NET were the original sponsors for the program, with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Johnson & Johnson, the Ford Foundation, and various local public television stations later becoming long-term sponsors as well.

Fred Rogers, starring as himself, helped to create all 895 episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* until the final show's airing on August 31, 2001. Like Newton Minow, he was also disappointed with educational children's television and decided to try working in children's television with the goal of making it more wholesome and beneficial to children. Rogers has stated, "Two things that our society longs for and is not served all that well are those things that are deep and simple, and by simple I mean not complicated" (*Pittsburgh*, 2001). Beginning in the program's tenth season in 1979, each week dealt with a certain topic that all five weekday

episodes would discuss and apply. Some of these themes included “Mad Feelings,” “Helping,” “Sharing,” “Love,” “Volunteering,” and “Everybody’s Special.”

The program had the same structure for every episode. At the beginning of each episode, Mister Rogers enters his home and begins to sing the theme song “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” as he changes into tennis shoes and cardigan sweaters (all of which were knitted by his mother). With the ending of the song, Rogers introduces the topic of the day or week by posing a related question to his viewers. Sometimes a live guest appears, other times Rogers himself visits local businesses or entertainment outlets, and often Mr. McFeeley, the mailman, would present a video tape explaining how different objects are created and used, to Rogers to be played in his home television. Then, Mr. Rogers would talk to his little toy trolley (aptly named “Trolley”) about the socio-emotional situations and problems of that episode. Trolley acts as the physical transition between Mr. Rogers’ home and the Neighborhood of Make-Believe in which puppet inhabitants, such as King Friday XIII and Daniel Striped Tiger, and live-action humans deal with the topical problems addressed in Rogers’ Neighborhood. This second fantasy world of more emotionally realistic, nuanced characters reinforces and further develops the themes in the real neighborhood. After Trolley rides back to Mr. Rogers’ house, Rogers summarizes that day’s or week’s lessons and concludes the episode with the song of “It’s Such a Good Feeling” and changes back into his original shoes and coat.

The most profound aspect of the program was the warmth, gentleness, and intimacy that Rogers’ created with children viewers at home. He wanted to create the feeling that he and his audience were close friends—that he was going to be there for them each day and would understand their problems. He frequently directly addresses the camera to directly communicate with the children. Coupled with the leisurely pacing and meditative pauses, this is meant to

mirror a normal, age-appropriate dialogue between the child's real family and friends. By establishing the notion that he cares about the viewer, the viewer then cares about him and is more willing to learn from him. Rogers' openness, honesty, and insistence upon socio-emotional development is exemplified in a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's "The Little Prince," which Rogers had on his office wall next to drawings from children who watched his show from around the nation: "*Il est très simple: on ne voit bien qu'avec le coeur*. *L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux*" (It is very simple: We only see well with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eyes.) (Collins & Kimmel, 1996). In addition, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*'s formal focus is on simplicity and reality, as opposed to animation or a fast-paced magazine-like format similar to *Sesame Street*. Rogers called this type of television program format a "bombardment" to the mind (U.S. Senate Hearing, 1969).

Music is an important component to the program. Rogers composes and sings all of the show's music. Gentle, whimsical jazz-piano music played by Johnny Costa underscores almost the entire program. Rogers even had the world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma visit the Neighborhood multiple times. Music, an aspect of perceptual salience, captures children's attentions. The simple yet pleasant songs and jazz soundtrack help associate the prosocial learning with pleasant, entertaining experiences.

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood has been the hallmark of emotional and prosocial education, fostering the development of skills such as determination, helpfulness, emotional regulation since its inception. Even in 1969, the *Chicago Daily News* praised the show, publishing interviews of parents of child viewers who said the program was "like coming upon an oasis amid the desert of the usual children's programs." From this oasis, it appears as though Newton Minow's call for better children's television program had been answered. Above all, the

program promotes high self-esteem and self-worth. Often, Mister Rogers ends the program by telling the audience, "You've made this day a special day just by being you. You are the only person like you in this whole world. And people can like you just because you're you. And I like you." In an interview about his program, Rogers stated, "One of the greatest gifts you can give anybody is the gift of your honest self. I…believe that kids can spot a phony a mile away" (Owen, 2000).

I have chosen episode #1701 for my analysis, as it greatly exemplifies prosocial messages. First appearing on PBS on July 22, 1996, this episode was the first of five segments during the theme week of "Helping." The episode begins with Mr. Rogers singing "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" and then vacuuming. While doing so, he finds a little stuffed animal tiger hidden in the couch. After answering the doorbell, his neighbor Chuck Aber enters and tells Rogers that he plans to help many people throughout the day. Aber asks Rogers if he could borrow the vacuum to help others, to which the trusting Rogers instantly agrees.

As the scene switches from Rogers' house to the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, Prince Tuesday is having difficulty writing a poem for class. He asks his father, King Friday, for help. But King Friday declares, "A Prince should never need help," to his son's disappointment. As the camera pans to the Museum-Go-Around, Chuck Aber tries to vacuum Lady Elaine's house. Upon seeing Mr. Aber and hearing the loud vacuum noise, however, Lady Elaine tells Aber to stop vacuuming and go away. Confused and disappointed, Aber goes to Daniel Striped Tiger's abode to clean Daniel's clock, to which Daniel happily replies, "I could use *so* much help, outside and inside!" Upon hearing the loud noise of the vacuum cleaner, Daniel cries. But after realizing that the vacuum will not harm Daniel, the Tiger relaxes. Then Daniel thinks about Lady Elaine's disapproval of Mr. Aber vacuuming her house and asks Chuck, "Does Lady Elaine

know that [the vacuum] won't hurt anybody?" to which Aber replies, "I think you're on to something Daniel!" Daniel then thanks Mr. Aber and gives him an "ugga mugga" (he rubs his nose against Chuck, Daniel's version of a hug), while Chuck goes to clean Trolley's tracks.

Mr. Rogers, regarding Prince Tuesday's situation, asks the viewers, "Would you ask somebody for help if you think they needed something? I would." Then Mr. Rogers says that he is going to the McFeeley's to help Mrs. McFeeley puppy watch (the canine form of babysitting). While sixteen very young puppies sleep, the mom cleans them by licking them. Mr. McFeeley enters the yard and praises his wife, "Betsy always likes helping," to which Mrs. McFeeley replies, "Well, if people ask for help, I like to try and do it. And boy is this fun!"

Back at his house, Mr. Rogers asks the viewers, "Do you have some favorite neighbors where you live, with whom you can talk, and play, and ask for help if you need it? I hope so. I like to think of all kinds of helpers in our world." After this, a several-minute long montage of real helpers in the world helping is shown, underscored by a gentle, mellow jazz soundtrack. The clip shows a woman helping children cross the street, a doctor taking a child's heartbeat, a dad helping his son ride a bike, a seeing-eye dog leading a woman home, a child helping take out the laundry, a little girl spoon-feeding a baby, a teacher, a boy helping an elderly woman, a father helping his daughter count, and a boy grooming a dog. After the video ends, Rogers again asks the audience, "What kinds of things are you good at helping with? A little girl once told me, "I'm only four-years-old but I can do some pretty kind things." Finally, as always, Rogers ends the episode by singing "It's Such a Good Feeling"

Considering the psychological and educational research discussed earlier in this paper, this single episode effectively functions as both an entertaining and educational experience for children. Within both the diegeses of the "real" Neighborhood and the fantasy Neighborhood-of-

Make-Believe, there are five examples of prosocial behavioral modeling: Rogers cleaning and lending his vacuum to Chuck Aber, Chuck Aber cleaning parts of the Neighborhood-of-Make-Believe, the mother dog cleaning her sixteen puppies, Mrs. McFeeley and Mr. Rogers puppy watching the puppies while their owners are gone, and Mr. McFeeley praising his wife's prosocial behavior. Within the video montage of real children, adults, families, and even animals, there are ten examples of prosocial behaviors, for an overall total of fifteen examples of prosocial modeling within the entire episode. The variety of helping behaviors and the diversity of people (or animals) engaging in those behaviors provides many developmentally appropriate examples of prosocial behaviors for children to perform and appreciate.

Furthermore, Aber's voluntary desire of helping in addition to Rogers' discussion of Prince Tuesday compels viewers to actively search for opportunities to help others, instead of just waiting for others to ask them for help. This creates a proactive approach to helping and prepares our future adolescents and adults to actively desire a better community and stronger relationships. The episode corroborates this when Mrs. McFeeley says how fun it is to help her neighbor. This demonstrates the simple intrinsic emotional reward (i.e. joy) from helping others. This reveals that helping does not just benefit others; it can benefit yourself as well. However, as an extrinsic motivation, Daniel Striped Tiger's "ugga mugga" to Aber and Mr. McFeeley's appreciation of his wife's help highlight the gratitude that others will feel towards those who help others and the community. The episode reveals the many rewards and the satisfaction preschoolers will receive if they learn to display prosocial behaviors.

The formal features of the episode effectively aid in both capturing young children's attention and the understanding of the prosocial messages. The animals appearing in the episode—the stuffed tiger hidden in the couch, Daniel Striped Tiger, and the dog and her sixteen

puppies—and the ubiquity of both the jazz piano music and Roger's songs are perceptually salient features that encourage the continuation of the preschooler's viewing of the program. The highly-continuous narrative with Trolley's smooth transitions connecting both real and make-believe "Neighborhoods," coupled with the long shot-length duration, offer an optimal presentation of the program's prosocial helping messages.

The positive effects that *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* inspired in his viewers have been monumental, from those who grew up with the show in the late 1960s to those who watched decades later. The large number of critics who have praised the program throughout the years summarized the magnanimous impact that Fred Rogers and his Neighborhood have had. The National Academy of Arts and Sciences wrote, "*Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* remains the gold standard of how television can be used to enlighten, educate, and increase social consciousness and understanding." Joyce Millman from the *New York Times* wrote, "Fred Rogers is the wisest man on television…the way Rogers saw it, a secure and happy childhood was of the greatest importance not because we stay children forever, but because we don't." Finally, *TV Guide* wrote, "Mister Rogers is about appreciating what you already have, about caring for others, and seeing the best in them…If ever a show was equipped to thrive in the realm of reruns, it's this timeless classic…a quiet, dependable oasis for young viewers." *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* won four Emmys during its run and Fred Rogers was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award during the 1997 Daytime Emmy's ceremony.

Indeed, scientific studies have demonstrated that both *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* are effective at teaching children prosocial behaviors. In a study by Friedrich and Stein (1973), sometimes informally called "The Mister Rogers Study," the post-test changes in the behavior of preschool children of ages three to five were compared among groups that

watched one of three programs: superhero cartoons (i.e. *Batman* and *Superman*), *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, or nature documentaries ("neutral" programming). Their results found that children who had a high aggressive baseline displayed even more aggressive behaviors after viewing the superhero cartoons. However, the children who watched *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* did not become more aggressive, but rather displayed more prosocial behavior (e.g. cooperation, verbal praise, and affection) and were more likely to delay gratification and persist longer in assignments compared to their pre-test scores.

Similarly, a study by Coates, Pusser, and Goodman (1976) expanded the findings of Friedrich and Stein. Looking at both *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, they wanted to see the effects of both programs on the learning and displayed behaviors of positive reinforcement (e.g verbal praise, affection, cooperation, similar to the prior study), punishment, and social contact amongst preschool children after watching 10 hours of either series. Their results suggest that children with low baseline scores of prosocial behavior who watched *Sesame Street* increased both in displays of positive reinforcement and punishment, but not social contact after watching *Sesame Street*. Children who had high baseline scores of prosocial behavior did not benefit from viewing *Sesame Street*, as they did not display any significantly increased levels of either prosocial behavior or social contact. Regardless of their baseline prosocial behavior scores, every child on average who watched *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* showed significant increases in positive reinforcement and social contact. Although the researchers did not state which specific episodes the children watched, the study did state that observers found 740 instances of positive reinforcement modeling and 213 instances of punishment within the *Sesame Street* programming and 1,224 instances of positive reinforcement and only 67 instances of punishment within the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* programming. Thinking about Bandura's

"social learning theory"—which states that children incorporate modeled behavior into their own behavioral regimen—the vastly larger ratio of positive reinforcement-to-punishment may contribute to better prosocial gains in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* than those in *Sesame Street*. However, as I have demonstrated, these positive gains of prosocial learning may very well be due to the formal and curriculum-based factors I have discussed above: choices of educational content, narrative presentation, and formal presentation.

In addition to *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, PBS created other programming that focused on specific academic subjects targeted towards older children. *The Electric Company* (1971-1977) was a sketch comedy show whose intention was to teach literary, grammatical, and reading skills for elementary schoolers: previous consumers of *Sesame Street* who had become too old for *Sesame Street*'s preschool curriculum. *The Electric Company* extensively utilized computer graphics, and current celebrities to add visual appeal to its sequences. From 1980 to 1988, the Children's Television Workshop created *3-2-1 Contact*, the aim of which was to teach scientific principles and to compel children to apply them to their everyday lives. Unfortunately, both programs were cancelled, in part, because of a lack of a clearly identifiable character that could create a "high-concept" profitable selling brand. *Square One TV* (1987-1994) was also a magazine-formatted sketch program that taught math skills and applications to eight- to twelve-year-olds, as a result of a declared mathematics education crisis pervading American youth during the 1980s. *Reading Rainbow*, like *The Electric Company*, encouraged young children to read by foregrounding the joy and imaginative exploration of books. Each episode focused on a specific theme that was shown through the narration and through multiple books that real kids on the program would praise. Airing from June 6, 1983 to November 10, 2006, the program remains the third-longest running program for children, behind

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and *Sesame Street*, the second-longest and longest, respectively.

Modern Public Television Policy, Problems, and Future Directions

Since the original airplay of *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, legislation pertaining to children's television programming both regressed and progressed. In 1974, the Federal Communications Commission began to condemn the amount of advertising that could be shown during children's television programming, as the FCC, parents, and others became worried about the juxtaposition of the purity of the education of young children with commercial-enmeshed consumerism, marketing tricks, and toys. In their statement entitled "Children's Television Policy Statement and Report," the FCC declared that children and their developing minds needed programming specifically geared towards them that differed from shows directed towards a larger, adult audience. For advertisements, the FCC advised that prime-time shows should have a maximum amount of 9.5 minutes per hour for commercials and non-prime-time programming should have up to 12 minutes per hour dedicated to commercials. These guidelines also dictated that broadcasters should offer a clear delineation between a program and a commercial. Unfortunately, the FCC only issued a mere policy statement instead of actual legislation, as they had no legal means to force station compliance.

Corporations, free-speech campaigners, and constitutional traditionalists vehemently opposed the FCCs proposed policy guidelines. They argued that the FCC's statements about the regulation of children's television was a violation of free-speech, and therefore against the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, because it limited the marketing power and freedom of commercial broadcasters. As a result, deregulation of television became the trend during the conservative Reagan era of the 1980s. In 1984 the FCC retracted many of the policy statements and guidelines intended for the betterment of children's public television

programming. This corporation-friendly action led to an explosion of children's animated television programming, sponsored by toy manufacturers, which were more similar to program-length advertisements than actual programming. Shows like *Strawberry Shortcake*, *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, *ThunderCats*, *Hot Wheels*, and *Care Bears* operated under the guise of prosociality, but were actually marketing plots by toy company producer-creators to use children to get their parents to buy the toy company's merchandise.

These show-advertisement hybrids engendered Action for Children's Television (ACT) to take their beliefs and agendas to the courtrooms and ultimately to Congress. In a 1987 Congressional Hearing, Peggy Charen declared, "This country's broadcasters and the Federal Communications Commission should be ashamed of themselves for exploiting children in this fashion." The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Coalition on Television Violence, coupled with an appeal from the malcontents of the ACT, led to the 1990 passage of the Children's Television Act (CTA).

The 1990 Children's Television Act required that broadcasters in the United States had to air educational and informative ("E/I") programming. This legislation was supposed to ensure that all stations would benefit children at certain times of the day. However, many broadcasters benefitted from the vague definition of the FCC's "educational programming" by claiming educational value that was dubious at best. The FCC and Congress noticed these liberal interpretations from broadcasters so they amended the CTA in 1996 to ensure the broadcasting of genuinely educational programming.

This new amendment now provided a specific definition of "E/I" programming: "any television programming that furthers educational and information needs of children 16 years of age and under in any respect, including children's cognitive/intellectual or emotional/social

needs" (FCC, 1991, p. 2114). Programs described by the Annenberg Public Policy Center as "minimally educational"—programs "unlikely to provide substantive lessons for the audience"—decreased from 36% "E/I" claims in 1998 to 26% in 1999 to 23% in 2000 (Jordan, 2000). Clearly, the narrower definition has had a positive impact on the quality of broadcasting television.

In addition, the CTA also demanded that broadcasters air three hours of "E/I" programming per week with clearly identifiable educational goals, motivations, and intentions during watershed ("safe harbor") hours from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Each program had to be at least 30 minutes long, scheduled weekly, and identified with an "E/I" label within the show itself. The amendment also re-established advertisement limits that had been removed during the Reagan years. The FCC deemed that the maximum amount of time given to broadcasters would be 12 minutes per hour-long programming during the week, and 10.5 minutes of advertising per hour during the weekends.

Expanding their reforms, Congress passed the "Ready to Learn" Act in 1992 with the focus of helping "children entering school who are not ready to learn" (Congressional Record, 1994). One major advocate of the "Ready to Learn" Act, Ernest Boyer, acknowledged the vast power and importance of television by stating, "Next to parents, television is, perhaps, a child's most influential teacher." The Act contributed to finance the production of educational programming intended for preschool children. The Act also provided supplementary workbooks for parents and teachers to help them better utilize televisual edutainment. In addition, it also expanded network broadcasting to many isolated and impoverished communities within the United States.

Two major problems that still exist within the current post-CTA Amendment political sphere are stations' accountability and, inversely, the FCC's lack of enforcement of stations not adhering to the children's programming legislation. As earlier discussed, people already trust and watch public television stations like PBS. These stations should always continue to give reasons to warrant this trust. The Annenberg Public Policy Center found that 23% of programming that stations claim to be educational/informational were, in fact, "minimally" educational—they earned a low score on at least once of six quality criteria (clarity, integration, involvement, applicability, importance, and positive reinforcement) and never had more than one high score (Jordan, 2000). The same results were replicated when Children Now performed a similar study in 2008 in order to "assess broadcasters' compliance with the CTA and to evaluate the industry's overall performance in serving the needs of their child audience" (Kunkel & Wilson, 2008): 23% of "E/I" programs were only "minimally" educational with only 63% being "moderately" educational. Timothy E. Wirth's (D-CO) proposed "Children's Television Education Act of 1983" could serve as a possible example for future legislation in this regard. This Act proposed that the FCC, or any other group or person, could posit a "petition to deny" claim to a broadcaster's license for renewal as a result of noncompliance with the FCC legislation of children's television. Although the Act failed to be passed, it would have increased broadcaster accountability and heightened the power of the FCC for ensuring that its regulations are obeyed. Consequently, if stations were kept more accountable for adhering to the quality children's programming ideals via self-regulation or from the FCC itself gaining more power to regulate stations, then the number of "highly" educational programs should vastly increase and the number of "minimally" educational programs should decrease, ideally to none at all.

Funding is also an issue in today's televisual realm. One solution is syndication because of its low cost compared to the production of new programs (Bryant, 2007). Syndicating older, tried-and-true programs like *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is, indeed, a good idea but it does not allow the airing of shows that are more tailored to current American society and trends. A hybrid that includes syndication and new programming should be the best financial option. In addition, Edward Palmer (1988) has stated, "If we could find the formula that would allow other children's series to match *Sesame Street*'s success in spawning revenue-generating products as a dependable mechanism of self-support, much of our funding problem would be solved" (p. 75). Although *Sesame Street* has endured criticism for this commercial funding strategy, the show's producers have argued that the profits obtained from *Sesame Street* products are put back into the program's research and production departments (Gary Knell, 2003). Perhaps if a program has an overall high-concept look, story, and characters that are marketable (or, in Malcolm Gladwell's terms, "sticky") enough to sell well to children, this merchandizing technique may also be a potential option for self-generated funding (as long as, again, the profits are put back into the show instead of being made merely for profit). However, as Palmer states, that economic paradigm may just luckily work with *Sesame Street* and not be replicable to other programs.

Government funding can also be a helpful contributor to the quality children's edutainment agenda. Palmer writes, "in earmarked government funding…lies the greatest hope—indeed, perhaps the only hope—for a substantially expanded children's offering for play on public television" (1989, p. 76). In the past, there has been at least one Congressional proposal for the creation of children's television edutainment funds that failed, yet is still worth examining. Senator John Heinz (R-PA) in 1977 and 1979 introduced bills advocating for the creation of a National Endowment for Children's Television, the aim of which was to provide

financing for the production of children's education programs and also for professional training and research on the benefits of television in the lives of children. Perhaps if a similar Act were introduced again today, its potential of passing may increase due to the ubiquity (and therefore heighted power) of television today.

Prosocial "Edutainment" from the 1990s until Today

The current socio-emotional educational entertainment programs on PBS that I will compare and analyze include *Barney and Friends*, *Arthur*, and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*. I will also briefly examine *Teletubbies*, a preschool program produced for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC); *Blue's Clues*, a Nickelodeon program that aired from 1996 to 2006; and *Dora the Explorer*, another Nickelodeon program that debuted in 2000 and just finished airing its seventh season. Although not broadcasted on American public television networks, these foreign and commercial programs were innovative in their pedagogical approaches to children's learning, making the shows worthy of examining and exploring.

First aired on April 6, 1992 and continued over two decades, *Barney and Friends* became a huge success for PBS. During the program's apex in the 1996-1997 season, *Barney and Friends* was the number one rated children's show on PBS as a result of its 2.08 million preschool followers (Laurio, 2002). Each episode of the series has Barney, a purple dinosaur, tell elementary school children about the importance of prosocial behaviors through songs and stories from magical guests like Mother Goose and Stella the Storyteller.

Although children's media scholars Dorothy and Jerome Singer proclaimed *Barney and Friends* "nearly a model of what preschool television should be," (PBSKids) others criticized the show for its failure to recognize the full spectrum of human emotions, as the program only emphasized positive emotional experiences and feelings while ignoring the reality of negative

emotions like anger, fear, and sadness. One critic in *Parents Magazine* wrote, "What's so dangerous about Barney? In a word, denial: the refusal to recognize the existence of unpleasant realities…Barney offers our children a one-dimensional world where everyone must be happy and everything must be resolved right away" (Chava Willig Levy, 1994). The same article also quoted child psychiatrist Dr. Lisa Korman as saying, "Using denial as a primary coping strategy means that, in stark contrast to PBS luminaries like *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers*, *Barney and Friends* does not help children learn to tolerate sorrow, pain, frustration and failure."

When considering Gerbner's "cultivation hypothesis," one can discern the harmful effects of such a seemingly perfect world. If all these preschoolers see is a universe in which everyone is happy, or in which mistakes can be solved with magic, imagination, and giggles, these children will be unprepared for the problems that they will inevitably encounter as they grow up and enter the reality of adults. They may become confused over their negative emotions and fail to understand their importance (e.g. civil arguments that lead to compromise and/or broadened perspectives). *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, on the other hand, often contains segments in which a character experiences anxiety, melancholy, and anger. But Rogers acknowledges this and tells children that these emotions are a part of normal life. Once these emotions are acknowledged, Rogers teaches self-regulation by suggesting positive outlets with which children can vent their negative emotions. In his song "What do you do with the mad you feel?" he suggests pounding clay, punching a bag, and running as options to eradicate one's mad feeling. Because *Barney and Friends* denies the existence of these emotions, the show loses the opportunity to teach children the valuable lesson of emotional regulation.

As another program beginning in the 1990s, *Arthur* is a 30-minute animated show inspired by the books of the same name by Marc Brown that revolves around the life of an eight-

year-old aardvark named Arthur Read. First aired on PBS in September 1996, *Arthur* is currently in its 16th season and follows a narrative format of two mini-episodes with different characters and stories that share the same educational theme. Between these mini-episodes is a short interstitial entitled "A Word from Us Kids" that consists of live-action clips of elementary-schoolers learning about and applying the ideals expressed in the overall episode's theme. *Arthur* is designed to foster an appreciation of reading as well as relationships with friends and family. Many of the episodes taught socio-emotional messages of collaboration, conflict resolution, volunteering, empathy and reducing abuse. Acknowledging the magnanimity of Fred Rogers' work in his own prosocial program, the first episode of the second season of *Arthur* even has "Mister Rogers" visit Arthur and his friends to teach Arthur lessons of friendship and growing up.

For my analysis, I have chosen "Fern Fern and the Secret of Moose Mountain," from Season 8 episode 2, for its strong prosocial message that encourages cooperation. The episode begins with Fern reading a "Zut Zut and the Temple of the Condor" comic book, reminiscent of Georges Remi's famous Tin Tin series. After Fern finishes reading the story, the show cuts to Fern's friends gathering at an outdoor lodge in preparation for a hike up Moose Mountain. Francine's father, the chaperone of Fern and her classmates, decides that the best way to navigate the mountain is to group the students into hiking buddy-pairs. He then declares that Fern and Francine shall partner up. Francine's pragmatism and Fern's thirst for fantastical adventure initially clash. After the frustrated Francine yells to Fern "Keep up, or get lost! We're losing time!" an image of a staunch pirate captain, most likely from Fern's avid Zut Zut readings, is superimposed upon Francine's face, representing Fern's subjective feelings of unwanted inferiority and resentment towards Francine.

During lunch with the other classmates, a gust of wind blows away Francine's map. However, Fern and Francine continue hiking, as they still remain feeling confident in their exploration and navigation skills. As they go deeper into the forests, swamps, and mountains, the girls soon discover that they are lost. Upon this realization, Francine is frustrated and worried, whereas Fern exclaims, "Yay! An adventure!" and tells Francine about how their current dilemma mirrors one of Zut Zut's adventures in a comic she read. Upset at her friend's lack of empathy with her anxiety and anger, Francine yells, "Who cares what ZutZut said? He's not even a real person!" Fern's enthusiasm is short-lived, however, as her blind, adventurous fervor gets her stuck in a swamp. Seeing Fern's helplessness and fear, Francine pulls Fern out of the mud with great effort. Recognizing the benefits of working together and the danger of separation, the two declare, "Whatever happens, we have to stick together!" A montage of Fern and Francine hiking together depicts their new appreciation for teamwork and in the end they reach the summit before their classmates and savor the beautiful vista.

The "F's" at the beginning of the two protagonists' names interestingly suggest a narrative foil between the girls. Despite Fern and Francine having two distinct outlooks and problem solving strategies, their synergistic friendship helps them achieve a height (perhaps a metaphor for their socio-emotional progress and satisfaction) that neither of them could have reached on their own. This provides the viewers some of the benefits of cooperation, as both the girls avoid becoming lost and witness a sublime visual experience that they would not have been able to see if they had not worked together. Also, many aspects work to keep the viewer interested in both the narrative and characters. The highly-continuous adventure narrative offers an exciting and effective framework from which the prosocial lessons can be taught. The subjective shot of Fern's association of Francine with an overbearing pirate is a clever addition

that adds a second layer of fantasy within the imaginative program and enables the viewer's identification with the character which, according to Caughney (1986), should increase children's attention to and learning from the program.

However, some problems with this episode and the program of *Arthur* itself exist. The girls' initial moral error of disliking the other and verbally displaying their frustration at being partnered together may still register as a model of conflict instead of (or in addition to) harmony, perhaps because of the primacy effects of first impressions. The writers of the program had the potential to offer more perspective-taking instances in the story that could lead to Francine better understanding Fern's thirst for adventure and Fern could understand Francine's pragmatism and stubbornness. This would have provided more character development and could have made the girls become better friends from their increased awareness of the other's pasts and personalities. Similarly, the program lacks a thorough repetition of prosocial behaviors, as the episode only shows Francine helping Fern out of the mud as the only example of prosocial behavior. In addition, the episode may encourage young viewers to go hiking without an adult which would be very dangerous for children.

Briefly moving away from American public edutainment television, there are some foreign and commercial children's television programming that utilizes narratological and formal techniques that are worth considering for future American public edutainment programming. Premiering on the BBC on March 31, 1997 and syndicated to PBS on April 6, 1998, *Teletubbies* follows the adventures of four, multi-colored alien-like toddlers who have televisions lodged in their abdomens. As they adventure throughout their idyllic, grassy "Teletubbyland", the Teletubbies pause their escapades once per episode to have one of the four Teletubbies show a short film of live-action children playing, helping, or learning from their television-abdomens.

After the clip of several minutes plays, the short-film is then played again from the same Teletubby's abdomen. There are no changes or differences from the second viewing of the clip from the first; it is simply repeated. This back-to-back intra-episode repetition allows children to notice and understand more of the story and messages, prosocial or not, that these clips express.

Another important program that premiered in 1996 on the commercial Nickelodeon network was *Blue's Clues*. The program's premise involves the preschool viewers assisting the live-action human Steve decipher clues (items marked with blue paw prints) that his puppy "Blue" has left in order to figure out what Blue wants to do or what she has been curious about (e.g. throwing a birthday party for her friends). Although *Blue's Clues* is not a public television program, the show employed innovative educational forms and practices that have been shown to be successful learning techniques for children. Daniel Anderson, the advising psychologist for *Blue's Clues*, designed five tenets to increase attention and comprehension of the program's themes and lessons which include a minimal number of transitions to prevent distraction or confusion; an engaging narrative that would keep the children's interest; and audience participation in which Steve would directly address the audience, pose a question, and give the audience time to think and respond.

Perhaps the most important and innovative formal aspect of *Blue's Clues* to preschool television programming was scheduling each episode to air five times a week, premiering on Monday, and then repeated every following weekday until the next Monday when a new episode would be broadcasted. Anderson wonderfully summarizes the importance of repetition for *Blue's Clues* young viewers:

> The driving force for a preschooler is not a search for novelty, like it is with older kids, it's a search for understanding and predictability. For younger kids,

> repetition is really valuable. They demand it. When they see a show over and over again, they not only are understanding it better, which is a form of power, but just by predicting what is going to happen, I think they feel a real sense of affirmation and self-worth. And *Blue's Clues* doubled that feeling, because they also feel like they are participating in something. They feel like they are helping Steve. (Gladwell, p. 126)

Indeed, Anderson's claims have been supported by research. In general, Bryan et al. (1999), found that regular viewers of *Blue's Clues* performed better on problem solving and flexible thinking tasks than viewers who did not watch the program, highlighting *Blue's Clues* effectiveness at developing cognitive abilities. More specifically, and, perhaps, more importantly, Crawley, Anderson, Wilder, Williams, and Santomero (1999) found that children who watched the same episode of *Blue's Clues* for five consecutive days (the normal weekly scheduling of the program) displayed better recall of the content, comprehension of lessons, and utilized more problem-solving strategies than both those who did not watch the episode and those who only watched the episode once.

Dora the Explorer uses a similar structural and pedagogical system. During most episodes, Dora, a Latina preschooler, goes on quests that have three puzzles and problems that Dora and her anthropomorphic friends must solve in order to reach their ultimate destination. Dora consistently asks the audience questions, pauses for a few seconds to give the viewers time to think and respond, and then enthusiastically states the correct answer, similar to Steve in *Blue's Clues*. This ask-wait-think-respond pattern seems very effective at increasing comprehension among viewers. Calvert, Strong, Jacobs, and Conger (2007) found that the preschoolers who verbally responded more to Dora's audience-directed questions did, in fact,

display greater understanding of the episode's "central, plot-relevant program material." Taken together, *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer* demonstrate that active participation through interactivity encourages comprehension.

The newest addition to PBS line-up by first appearing on PBS in the fall of 2012*, Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* is an animated spin-off of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. PBS creative and business executives valued the large socio-emotional emphasis, approach, and learning gains from Fred Rogers' show and hoped to modernize it for a newer generation. *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* was created in response to a 2008 analysis by the PBS Kids Next Generation Media Advisory Board showing that socio-emotional development was the largest curriculum missing. The PBS senior vice president for children's media, Lesli Rotenberg, stated, "We hadn't taken that on as a curriculum in many years. We thought, 'Bingo, the Fred Rogers Company.' They really invented that curriculum" (PBSKids, 2008). As a result, the show includes many narrative, musical, and visual references to *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, highlighting the creators' appreciation of Rogers' work while also appealing to the parent viewers who likely grew up with Fred Rogers' program.

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood pays homage to *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* by incorporating as many elements from the original show as possible while still adding a modern animated twist and a protagonist specifically targeted to a narrower two- to four-year-old demographic. One aspect is that Daniel Tiger and his friends all have physical similarities or familial relationships with characters on the original "Neighborhood." The new program's protagonist, Daniel Tiger, is the son of the same-named shy feline that lived in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" in *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*. Daniel notably wears a red sweater similar to those that Fred Rogers wore everyday on his program, and the furry, friendly

protagonist also takes off his shoes at the beginning of each episode and subsequently puts them back on at the end, as Rogers also did. Daniel's friends who live in "The Tree," O the Owl and Katerina Kittycat, are X the Owl's and Henrietta Pussycat's nephew and daughter, respectively. Prince Wednesday is King Friday's son and Miss Elaina is Lady Elaine Fairchild's daughter. Mr. McFeeley, a prominent character on the original Rogers program, also continues his presence as the same inquisitive, friendly neighborhood mailman to the residents of Jungle Beach.

Each episode of *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* begins with the same theme song of "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" that Fred Rogers sang on his show, except the lyrics have been slightly changed for the inclusion of Daniel and his family and friends living in Jungle Beach. Like *Arthur*, each episode consists of two half-episodes that have different narratives and events, but share the same overall theme of that episode. Several episode themes include gratitude, helping, cooperation, friendship, and dealing with mad feelings.

Music is as vital an element to *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* as it was to the original "Neighborhood." Similarly, gentle yet warm jazz piano music permeates throughout the show like in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. Both half-episodes contain the same "strategy song", a short and catchy jingle that summarizes that episode's themes. Also, each mini-episode ends with real children engaging themselves in situations similar to the ones in Daniel's "Neighborhood." The animated segments of the second mini-episode conclude with "It's Such a Good Feeling" by mirroring the original Rogers song. Finally, Daniel Tiger ends this song by warmly addressing the audience with "…because it's you I like!" to reference another *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* song: "It's You I Like."

Yet, *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* differs from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* in many ways. The most obvious difference is that *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* is mostly animated,

though there are short videos of actual children applying each half-episode's lessons and songs. Daniel's targeted demographic is two-to-four-year-olds, a smaller range compared to the broader scope of the intended viewers of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. This decreased range limits the show's potential narrative stories, language level, and topics. However, the program's creators have compensated for this narrowing by making a character to which the two-to-four-year-olds can better relate by having the tiny tiger and his friends much closer to the young audience's age, cognitive ability, and socio-emotional skill level compared to the elderly Rogers. Daniel endures similar problems, emotions, and thought processes that the child viewers also encounter themselves; that is, Daniel is more like a friend and peer than the avuncular mentor that Fred serves in his show. I will now examine one full 30-minute length episode of *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* and will then provide an analysis of the program's ability to teach and reinforce prosocial messages to its young audience.

Episode 110, "Daniel Shares his Tigertastic Car/Katerina Shares her Tutu," focuses on the goal of helping children learn about and encouraging them to participate in sharing by means of modeling children playing peacefully with others and taking turns. During the "Daniel Shares his Tigertastic Car" segment, Daniel and his friends O the Owl, Miss Elaina, and Prince Wednesday play together at the park. When they all decide to play with their cars, Prince Wednesday sadly declares that he forgot to bring his car, so he asks Daniel if he could play with Daniel's new toy car. Upset and not sure how to deal with the situation, Daniel calls his father over for guidance. His father says that Daniel can let Prince Wednesday take a turn with the car and that Prince Wednesday will give the car back to Daniel when he finishes playing with it. From this, Daniel sings the strategy song, "You can take a turn and then I'll get it back."

Importantly, Daniel's father asks Daniel, "How do you think Prince Wednesday feels right now?" Then Daniel asks the audience, "What would YOU do?" in order to encourage audience participation. After a few seconds of thinking, Daniel gives his car to Prince Wednesday to play with. Praising him, Daniel's father tells Daniel, "You're being a good friend to Prince Wednesday" in order to show that Daniel is doing a good deed that is making his friend happy and to reinforce Daniel's decision. After about thirty seconds of air-time of playing with the cars (most likely a few minutes within the show's diegesis), Prince Wednesday gives the car back to Daniel and says, "Thanks for letting me play with your car."

Soon after, O the Owl declares that the friends should have a car race by using their paws and hands to push the cars to the opposite side of the sandbox. Daniel shares his car again with Prince Wednesday singing, "You can take a turn and then I'll get it back." Following their example, Miss Elaina gives Daniel her truck when also singing, "You can take a turn and then I'll get it back" while saying that she can use her pretend car in her pocket for the race. Then, a music video of the tune of "you can take a turn and then I'll get it back" is inserted of the four children singing about sharing and repeating the strategy song. In the montage, O the Owl gives Miss Elaina a turn with his book by saying that "her smile was all it took" and Prince Wednesday shares his toy helicopter with Daniel after Wednesday declaring, "It's mine! It's not fair [I don't want to share]! But Daniel was sad. [Sharing] made him happy and that made me happy." At the end of the song, all four harmonize that "Friends can share to show they care. The happiness you give them will be everywhere!"

The half-episode concludes with a clip of two girls, one African-American girl and one Caucasian girl, applying the turn-taking prosocial lessons. The African-American girl goes down into basement and wants to play with the Caucasian girl's blocks. She considerately asks if she

could use the Caucasian girl's blocks, to which she simply replies, "Okay." To the tune of "you can take a turn and then I'll get it back," the girls are shown smiling and enjoying their time building together as a result of the act of sharing.

The second half-episode, "Katerina Shares her Tutu," explores the same theme of sharing except among a different member of Daniel Tiger's friends: Katerina Pussycat. The segment begins with Daniel and Katerina "jungle dancing" together in Katerina's room. Shortly afterwards, they decide to put on a "jungle dancing" play in which Daniel and Katerina decide to dress up as a lion and flower, respectively. When rummaging through Katerina's chest of costumes and props, both friends simultaneously choose Katerina's tutu to use for their outfits, with Daniel wanting to use it as a lion's mane and Katerina as flower petals. Katerina calls her mother, Henrietta Pussycat, into the playroom room for adult guidance in order to help solve the problem. Her mother first asks Daniel, "Why don't you tell me why you want the tutu?" and then asks Katerina the same question. Then, Henrietta Pussycat wisely suggests that the two children can take turns using the tutu. This leads Katerina to sing to Daniel, "You can take a turn and then I'll get it back." When Daniel is performing his "jungle dance", Katerina declares, "I can play music for the dance for Daniel." This shows Katerina using the time that she has without the tutu to help Daniel and contribute to a more exciting performance. She not only avoids being jealous, but also is able to join in Daniel's happiness. After Daniel finishes, as promised, he gives the tutu back to Katerina for her to use.

Katerina's mother and Daniel's blue stuffed animal tiger, "Tigey," watch the duo perform their own interpretive jungle dances. After the performances, Henrietta claps with amusement and Daniel proclaims to Katerina, "You were a beautiful dancing flower, even Tigey liked it!" to which Katerina asks, "Can I use Tigey for my dance?" Daniel initially appears reluctant, but then

he remembers the sharing lesson he has been learning and sings to himself, “You can take a turn and then I’ll get it back!” Then both Katerina and Daniel dance and laugh together with Tigey in Katerina’s arm. At the end of the duet, Daniel honestly declares, “Taking turns was hard,” but then sincerely states, “I’m glad we took turns.” Finally, the animated segment concludes with Daniel asking the audience, “Do you take turns? I would take turns with you.” This establishes a friendship that tells the viewer he or she deserves Daniel’s trust and is a worthy playmate.

This half-episode is ended by a live-shot video of a boy and a girl on a hillside. The boy is playing with a ball and the girl politely asks, “Excuse me, can I play with you?” The boy appears uncooperative but after hearing the song “You can take a turn and then I’ll get it back” played in the background, the boy agrees. The girl then plays with the ball alone for about twenty seconds but then afterwards they happily play catch together with the song “you can take a turn and then I’ll get it back” playing again until the scene fades out.

Overall, the episode’s content alone provides an excellent lesson in teaching preschool children about the importance of sharing and taking turns. The episode’s format of containing two different yet similar mini-episodes offers repetition that shows young children different instances and opportunities to display prosocial behavior. Similarly, the repetition of the strategy song of “You can take a turn and then I’ll get it back” gives children many chances to hear, understand, and learn its pro-sharing messages.

The episode’s story also provides many relatable, replicable examples to reiterate the importance of taking turns while also showing the positive effects of sharing in order to encourage the reinforcement of prosocial behaviors in the preschool viewers’ own lives. The musical montage that shows Owl sharing his book with Miss Elaina and Prince Wednesday sharing his toy helicopter with Daniel provides additional examples of how children can share.

More importantly, Owls comment of "her smile was all it took" and Prince Wednesday's statement of "[Sharing] made him happy and that made me happy" highlight some reasons for voluntarily sharing: making the person with whom you are sharing feel happy, but also from your own happiness vicariously derived from the other's happiness. Similarly, the clips of the two live-action girls playing with blocks and the live-action boy and girl sharing a ball give real-world examples of how preschool children can initiate their own sharing skills with others. The action of Prince Wednesday, as he promised, returning Daniel's car that he borrowed build Daniel's trust with his royal friend, which will lead to Daniel sharing again and portray to the audience a trustworthy "Other." Prince Wednesday's sincere appreciation will most likely lead to him sharing his own toys with his friends since he will know it will make them happy. Interestingly, Daniel's statement of "Taking turns was hard, but I'm glad we took turns!" provides a sense of realism that corroborates the association the entirety of the episode tries to implant: though not always easy, sharing is satisfying and leads to others' and your own happiness. This trains the preschool viewers to understand that sometimes they must perform actions that they do not want to do at the beginning, but which will bring them joy in the long term, introducing them to the delaying of gratification.

The episode provides positive adult models that use "induction" and encourage their children and their friends to practice empathy by taking someone else's perspective, as when Daniel's father asks Daniel, "How do you think Prince Wednesday feels?" and when Katerina Pussycat's mother demonstrates the importance of examining both sides of an issue by when she asks both Katerina and Daniel why they each ought to use the tutu for their own individual jungle dances.

The program also incorporates many perceptually salient features. The strategy song, sound effects, musical scoring, child dialogue, animal characters, and dancing are all ways proven to keep children attending to the television screen. Like that of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, both mini-episodes' narratives in *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* are highly-continuous and moderately paced in order to give preschoolers enough time and temporal relationships to best understand and integrate the whole episode's pro-sharing and turn taking messages.

The episodes of more recent *Sesame Street* programs, like those of *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, also are influenced by earlier programming but also offer formal changes that may be more beneficial to preschool viewers. During its 42nd season on October 17, 2011, the same year in which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared the increase of bullying, *Sesame Street* premiered its episode "The Good Birds Club", perhaps as its own way of combatting the youth social problem. The episode begins with Big Bird receiving an invitation to join "The Good Birds Club." Ecstatic with the invitation to such a seemingly good club, Big Bird sings the lyrics, "I'm glad to be the way I am, so happy to be me!" while priding himself on his idiosyncratic long break, great smile, long legs, and bright feathers. However, upon arriving at the club's meeting place, Big Bird overhears the leader of the club giving an anecdote that ends with "…and I'll bop you in the beak!" Condemning the antisocial behavior, Big Bird says, "You shouldn't bop anyone in the beak. That's not what a good bird would do." The upset antagonist ridicules Big Bird's large feet and declares, "Good birds don't have huge feet, so you can't be in the Good Bird's Club. So long, Big Foot!"

Overhearing the conversation, Elmo encourages Big Bird by saying, "Elmo doesn't think they're too big. Elmo thinks they're just right!" But this does not help and Big Bird asks Abby,

who has magic powers, to make his feet smaller. After initial hesitation, Abby complies with Big Bird's wishes. Happier, Big Bird returns to the Good Bird's Club establishment asking to become a member now that he no longer has big feet. The leader, again, rejects Big Bird, "No. You have large eyes, a gigantic beak, and are way too big, so you can't be included." Again, Big Bird gets Abby to shrink him after she disagrees by proclaiming, "I don't think it's a good idea. I don't think this club has very 'good birds' in it at all." But the club still rejects Big Bird, now for the reason that he is "Too yellow." Sadly, Big Bird sings, "I'm a sad fellow, too yellow. I'm not happy to be me." Again, Elmo praises, "Your feathers are a beautiful color. They're perfect!" However, predictably, Abby changes Big Bird to comply with the requirements of the "Good Bird's Club" and, yet again, he gets rejected."

Elmo and Abby decide to summon Chris, an adult who works at Mr. Hooper's store, to be the "grown-up" to help them. He tells Big Bird, "Who cares what they [the birds in the club] think? They're just bullying you! They're treating you as if you're not good enough…Forget their club. We can start a new club! Our club is going to be even better. It'll be a club that includes everyone and you don't have to change in order to join. It's a club that will accept you exactly as you are!" As Big Bird begins to understand the importance of self-esteem and the appreciation of diversity, he says, "That sounds like a nice club. Let's call it the "I'm-Happy-To-Be-Me Club!" After overhearing Big Bird refrain, "I'm glad to be the way I am, so happy to be me," two birds from the original Good Bird's Club realize that "No one gets yelled at or made fun of in their club," they ask to join Big Bird's new club. Big Bird happily replies, "Certainly! Everyone is welcome." After this, a musical montage begins of Chris singing "My skin is brown!"; Elmo singing, "Elmo's fur is red!"; Big Bird singing, "My feathers are yellow!"; Abby singing, "I'm pink from toe to head!"; with all four ending in unison with, "I'm happy!"

This sixteen-minute story is bookended by two clips repeating the anti-bullying and pro-inclusion themes. The first clip is a one minute and six second cartoon that consists of a boy giving a voiceover while the stick-figure-like animation mirrors the boy's experience with bullying. The bullies told him, "You're not cool enough," to which he replies in thought, "Being left out all the time made me feel sad and lonely." His friend Kate tells him, "That's not okay the way those guys are treating you. You need to tell a grown up. Going to a grown-up isn't tattling—it's reporting." After the boy tells Mr. Kramer about the bullies, he proclaims, "Mr. Kramer made sure that everyone got a chance to play. And I finally got a chance to show off my sweet soccer skills. And that felt pretty good."

The second clip exemplifies the Word on the Street (*Sesame Street*'s word of the day): Inclusion. Mila defines inclusion as "to let someone into a group." On her right are two dancing sheep and on her left is Elmo, who sadly says, "…Elmo feels sad that he's not included." After hearing this, the sheep immediately stop and tell him, "We don't want Elmo to feel sad. We want him to be happy. Come and join us, Elmo!" Elmo happily shouts, "Oh boy! Elmo's included!" But then stops and tells Mila, "We want to include…YOU!" The clip ends with all four characters smiling and dancing while they all together reiterate the Word on the Street, "Include!"

The "Good Birds" club's condemnation of bullying and advocation of good self-esteem are noble and important messages, especially nowadays. However, "preoperational" children may not understand the story's metaphor—that feathers, beak sizes, and fur extend to the real-world equivalents of human skin colors, cultures, and ethnicity. The inclusion of adult human Chris (Chris Knowings) and the use of the real-world concept of "bullying," though, may help in the understanding of this symbolic tale. Abby Cadabby's action of changing Big Bird's

appearance contradicts the actions of what a true friend would do, which would be to not change him and to encourage Big Bird to love himself instead. Fortunately, Elmo embodies the nature of a good friend. His persistent encouragement of Big Bird to love his big, yellow self just the way he is may provide a significant amount of prosocial modeling which may offset any potential antisocial internalization Abby may have caused. In addition, the sixteen minute-length episode with minimal scene cutting, an improvement from earlier *Sesame Street* episodes, provides a highly continuous, slowly-paced form that benefits children's understanding of the prosocial material.

The anti-bullying cartoon may be effective in eliciting anti-bullying behavior. The proclamation of the protagonist's sad and lonely feelings caused by bullying allows preschoolers to empathize with him and see the negative emotional consequences of bullying that they would most likely not want to experience themselves. Kate demonstrates how one should try to help a friend who is being bullied. Finally, going to Mr. Kramer is a non-violent, logical way of dealing with a bully, in addition to any other socio-emotional problems. The "Include" video includes perceptually salient features like movement (i.e. dancing, like in *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*), music, and vocalizations (i.e. Elmo's voice). As many preschoolers enjoy dancing, the clip's utilization of dance as a framing device to teach inclusion makes the content relevant and easily understandable to the young audience.

For a holistic comparative analysis, *Sesame Street* specifically is paced much faster than the slower, long-take cinematography of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. As mentioned, slow pacing is crucial for children's ability to learn concepts because this allows children to process and think about the lessons presented to them. The characters should speak more slowly and the lengths of the shots should be much longer (many of the shot lengths in *Mister Rogers'*

Neighborhood lasted several minutes). Perhaps the most obvious difference between *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and the more modern PBS socio-emotional edutainment programming is that the newer series are animated. The creators and producers of *Arthur* and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* may have utilized cartoons for their aesthetic medium because of both a cartoon program's lower production costs and the increasing development and dependence on technology and screen media in United States' culture today.

Final Analyses, Prescription, & Conclusion

Television is a powerful teacher. The research presented throughout this paper reveals how children can most effectively learn from the televisual medium. Preschoolers watch between three to four hours of television a day (Nielsen, 2009). In today's televisual realm, children will have seen over 8,000 murders by the end of elementary school and over 200,000 violent acts by age 18 (Nielsen, 2009). Bandura's "social learning theory" posits that individuals will internalize and copy behaviors they see others display. The overwhelming volume of antisocial modeling means we must consider television's influence on the sharp rise in bullying as well as mass murdering of innocent victims. Because of this, it is necessary for television producers and creators to fully utilize the medium for educational and psychological good instead of mindless babysitting or antisocial depravity.

I have analyzed the effectiveness of many public, prosocial edutainment programs' educational missions by using psychological and educational research findings as exemplars of optimal learning practices. My concluding prescriptions for edutainment creators and producers synthesize these analyses into a rubric designed to maximally benefit modern America's children and society. Before this, though, some information about the current demographics of children and language use in the United States must be considered in order for children's television

producers to create the best programming that is most effectively tailored to their modern viewers.

Regarding socioeconomic status, U.S. Census Data reports that 5.4 million children under five years of age are below the poverty line, making this age cohort the highest percentage of those classified as living in poverty. The second highest group is that of 5 to 9 year olds (22.8%), and the third highest group is that of 20 to 24 year olds (22.5%). This percentage is significantly greater than the national poverty rate of 15.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Furthermore, the number of preschoolers in non-relative childcare suggests a deficit in daily education and social experiences among young children. According to the latest Census childcare statistics, 46.0% of children ages three to five and 23.7% of children ages zero to three receive non-relative childcare (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Clearly, the children who lack these resources and opportunities for socialization from childcare could benefit immensely from prosocial television programming.

Similarly, just under half of the 17 million children in low-income families under age six live in urban areas (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2013). Moreover, 81% of children live in urban and metropolitan areas (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). The large amount of preschool children living in or near cities reveals that children's edutainment television developers should, like the founders of *Sesame Street*, create programs that take place in, or at least include, urban environments that could include landmarks, or signifiers of landmarks, typical of large cities (e.g. skyscrapers, suspension bridges, and public transportation).

Today's America is exceedingly diverse and becoming more and more of a cultural melting pot. As of 2011, there were 15.69 million and 1.22 million "Asian alone or in combination" individuals and children under five years, respectively; 41.57 million and 3.82

million "Black alone or in combination" individuals and children under five years, respectively; and 49.97 million and 5.54 million "Hispanic" individuals and children under five years, respectively, living in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011). Similarly, the number of Americans who speak foreign languages has risen throughout recent decades. As of 2007, 19.7% and over 55 million of those living in the United States speak "a language other than English at home," revealing a 140% increase from the 23 million foreign language speakers in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Cense, 2007). Over 34 million (62.3% of foreign language speakers) Americans speak Spanish or Spanish Creole. However, the number of Asian and Pacific Islander speakers has increased dramatically, with 2.4 current Chinese speakers (up 290% from 1980), 1.1 million Korean speakers (up 299% from 1980), 1 million Vietnamese speakers (up 510% from 1980), and 1 million Tagalog speakers (up 212% from 1980) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The number of Indo-European speakers as a whole has remained relatively stable, with 1.98 million current French speakers (up 28% from 1980); 798,000 Italian speakers (down 50% from 1980); 687,000 Portuguese speakers (up 95% from 1980); and 1.1 million German speakers (down 30% from 1980) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Because of this, America's racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity should also be foregrounded. Although *Arthur* and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* incorporated diversity by having various species of animals as main characters, perhaps it would be more beneficial to include diverse human characters instead of, or in addition to, animals so that the preschool viewers do not have to understand the metaphorical nature of the animals to humans. For example, a program that has Asian, African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian characters, like *Sesame Street*, who each speak and teach words and phrases of a second language to demonstrate tolerance and the appreciation of others' differences may be an effective prosocial

program. Such a program should lack a single, individual protagonist, as the secondary nature of supporting characters may suggest a cultural inferiority, which may lead the preschool viewer to believe that the physical appearance and culture of the protagonist is superior and more desirable than those of the others.

Although children's edutainment is not limited to any certain stories or visual styles, there are specific forms that an ideal preschool edutainment program should implement. Necessary cinematic and televisual formal features, as I have shown, include wide-angle shots, highly continuous narratives with minimal editing (like the formal structure of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*), and slow zooms. Rapid pacing, scenes that contain off-screen action, and cutting from longer shots to close-ups should be avoided. These features, or the lack of them, best complement the "preoperational" preschooler's cognitive capacities that can understand concrete information but that lack the ability to comprehend abstract concepts.

Important narrative character qualities include a protagonist that children can identify with. Like Big Bird and Elmo from *Sesame Street*, and Daniel Tiger from *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, these protagonists are cognitively similar to preschoolers and seem to genuinely care about the child and his or her thoughts and feelings. They can also serve as a positive attachment figure that the children will care about and listen to, like Mr. Rogers from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. This will increase the effectiveness of the protagonist or narrator's ability to be a "More Knowledgeable Other."

Interactivity and a relatable narrative are necessary curricular elements for the best educational television programs. Interactivity—a character asking the audience questions while providing time to think and respond—keeps the children attentive and engaged with the material. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, *Blue's Clues*, *Dora the Explorer*, and *Daniel Tiger's*

Neighborhood all effectively implement interactivity. A relatable narrative enables the children to build off their previous experiences, memories, or thoughts to facilitate comprehension through familiarity. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood's "*helping" montage, *Captain Planet*'s how-you-can-help-clean-up-your-own-environment" montage, *Arthur*'s "A Word From Us Kids" interstitial, and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood'*s live-action clips of children effectively show how children can apply the lessons learned in each episode to their own realities and lives.

Repetition also provides multiple opportunities for children to view and learn segments, scenes, and episodes. This strengthens the information encoding and storage processes, offers preschoolers predictability, and allows the children to learn different details that they may have missed from their first viewing experience. Repetition can occur in multiple ways, such as *Blue's Clues* five-time airing strategy of the same episode per week, or *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*'s paradigm of having "theme weeks" in which that week's daily episodes contain different but similar stories with the same underlying prosocial message. Programs can also utilize intra-episode repetition such as the repeating of live-action clips in *Teletubbies* or *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*'s structure of having two half-episodes within one 30-minute program relating to the same lesson (e.g. turn taking).

A theoretical framework of such a great prosocial program could easily provide understandable narratives while also utilizing many perceptually salient formal features that would keep children watching in order to increase their comprehension. The program could begin with a warm and friendly adult (most likely a parent), in a room specifically only for them (e.g. a study), framing the episode's plot and prosocial message (e.g. "Lesson of the Day/Week") to establish of roadmap to show children what to expect and predict throughout the episode. This opening, explanatory session would end with a question directly addressed to the audience to

engage the minds of the preschool viewers and prepare them for the episode's upcoming content, like Fred Rogers did at the beginning of *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*. Similar to the adults in *Sesame Street* and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, this parent would function as a behavioral model, "More Knowledgeable Other," and attachment figure that could demonstrate examples of prosocial behavior, provide a means of empathetic "induction," and promote opportunities for perspective-taking to promote empathy and the internalizing of prosocial behaviors within the children. The majority of the narrative and lessons would be demonstrated and applied by the framing parent's (or parents') preschool children. The cohesive nature of a family structure alone would emphasize prosocial behavior of living peacefully and civilly with others. The parent (or parents) and their children could come from different cultural backgrounds such as being able to speak different languages. This presence and awareness of diversity should instill tolerance and appreciation for others.

As a transitioning device between the adult's knowledgeable personality and perspective, a friendly pet, perhaps, could be in the initial room containing the parent and then walk to another part of the house where the children would be, similar to Trolley in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The children would function as characters for the young viewers to identify with, as they would have similar thought processes, experiences, and emotional reactions from various narrative stimuli. They could also pose directly-addressed questions to the audience for increased viewer participation and thought processing. Like *Arthur* and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, these children would have a group of diverse friends of different ethnicities and perspectives who would be frequently featured in the show while perhaps even having some episodes focused specifically on them for even more diversity exposure.

This program would contain perceptually salient features that would capture the attention of its preschool audience. The children characters could sing prosocial songs, like *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood's* strategy songs, which provide the audience with child dialogue, music, and vocalizations, all features demonstrated to engage a preschooler's attention. Like the newer *Sesame Street* format, each episode could provide one highly-continuous, slowly-paced narrative which gives children more time and more connected examples to understand prosocial concepts. The different rooms in the house would be shown in a long shot, and all dialogue and action for the scene would take place within that one room so that young viewers can see, hear, and understand all the content and messages the characters are displaying, in order to best suit the preschooler's "preoperational" mind.

As repetition is one of the most important aspects of effective learning, the program could be 30 minutes in length, air for the first time on the hour (e.g. 4 pm), and then be repeated a second time on the mid-hour time slot (e.g. 4:30pm), as research on *Blue's Clues* whole episode repetition has revealed that preschoolers learn more from repeated viewings of each episode. The back-to-back repetition would provide better opportunities for children to see and learn new information as the lack of time between broadcasts prevents them from forgetting much information from the first airing. Another strategy could mirror that of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* in which each week could have a prosocial theme (i.e. cooperation). Four distinct yet similar episodes emphasizing cooperation could be shown each week from Monday through Thursday. A Friday episode ending the week could have the parent repeat and discuss important, central clips from each of the prior days' episodes to summarize and integrate that week's cooperation theme. The Friday episode could end with the parent encouraging the preschool viewers to apply the cooperation messages over the weekend by providing a montage of real kids

engaging in cooperation in order to provide relatable examples for the preschool audience to choose from.

Within this ever-increasing technological age, it may also be advantageous and practical for the program offer internet supplementation. PBS already cogently utilizes this media cross-over for PBSKids, so it is worthwhile to continue in this digital direction. The network provides a captivating internet website that administers supplementary lesson-learning plans complementing individual episodes and provides ways to apply each of its show's themes and messages to a child's own life. Perhaps at the end of each episode of this newly proposed program, one of the characters could delightedly inform the audience and their parents of the show's corresponding website for more information, fun activities, and applications of the material from each episode in order to provide more learning platforms and ways to make the program more engaging and interactive.

Despite the demonstrated effectiveness of public television programming to influence a child's prosociality, I must emphasize that televisual edutainment should not be the sole or most significant source of prosocial learning. It should be a supplement to classroom learning and parental teachings. Moreover, these beneficial "edutainment" programs should be watched in moderation. Studies have shown that "heavy" viewing of television can actually harm the quality and quantity of children's social behaviors because viewing large amounts of television limits the opportunities that children have to spend time with their actual friends, family, and community (Lyle &Hoffman, 1971). These real-life experiences provide better modeling capabilities as they can demonstrate prosocial behaviors in situations that are more relatable and pertinent to the preschooler's life.

Nevertheless, as the aforementioned research has shown, television can still be an effective teacher of prosocial behavior that provides benefits that can outweigh the potential costs and risks. It is up to children's televisual edutainment producers and creators to implement the best formal features and narrative strategies in order to optimize learning. As *Sesame Street* co-founder Joan Ganz Cooney declared, "We don't pretend that media or a television show can solve the problems of our world, but we do believe it would be a terrible mistake not to use these most influential tools to contribute to the solutions." Every public television children's edutainment program discussed throughout this paper utilizes some of the aforementioned formal or narrative (or both) elements that are beneficial for preschool children to see, learn, internalize, and display prosocial behaviors. The synthesis of the best-used elements from each of the above programs and the demographics of children in today's American society allows for a theoretical prescription of public edutainment television that is best suited to create the greatest opportunity for a more peaceful, helpful, tolerant society in the future.

Bullying, violence, hate, and other antisocial behaviors may drastically diminish, as children who learn to be prosocial eventually develop into prosocial adults. Prosocial educational television for children can turn a seemingly unattainable "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" into an amicable American "Neighborhood of Reality." Maybe it will not be able to make everyone greet each other with a sincere smile, and maybe the best edutainment in the world cannot eradicate crime; but maybe it will make one confused and estranged soul feel a little more connected to the rest of the world—connected enough that, in his confusion, he will not feel the need to be the aggressor in the school hallways, or the need to find a gun and displace his despair onto the innocent. If television is used to promote and encourage as best we can, perhaps our society can feel a little more cared for and can become, in return, a little more caring.

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