MISTEROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD:
An Historical And Descriptive Analysis.

DISSEDITION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A lot of people have complained about the zap!-bang!-pow! school of children's programming, but at least one man has done something about it. His name is Fred Rogers. Fifteen years ago in Pittsburgh he put on, on a budget of $30.00, his first children's program. Now his Neighborhood is one of the biggest shows on educational TV.¹

The first network television program specifically for children, Small Fry Club, began in March 1947, on the Dumont Television Network. Aired daily from 6:00 to 6:30 P.M. the program featured animated cartoons, snapshots, slides, silent films and a puppet called "Pirro." Small Fry Club was the extent of network programming for children in 1947.² Over two decades have passed since Small Fry Club with tremendous increases in the television audience and little increase in the programming designed specifically for children. Perhaps the most disadvantaged of all as far as television programming is concerned is the preschooler.

Television has been a favorite leisure time activity of children from its beginning. As early as 1950, Professor

²"TV for the Kids," Newsweek, November 22, 1948, p. 54.
Paul Witty of Northwestern University, found elementary school children in Chicago viewing television twenty-one hours a week. Ten years later another study produced the same result: children were still spending twenty-one hours a week with television. Of greater importance, however, was the fact that the ten year time lapse had put television into the homes of 99 per cent of Professor Witty's subjects. 3

The first network television program intended for preschoolers, aged two to five, was Ding Dong School which first appeared on N.B.C. November 24, 1952. It was designed to offer simple training, guidance, and entertainment. Dr. Frances R. Horwich, former Chairman of the Department of Education at Chicago's Roosevelt College, created the program which was fed to the network from Chicago for one-half hour Monday through Friday mornings at 10:00 A.M. Bowing to apparent commercial pressures the series ended December 28, 1956.

The only program on network commercial television today designed primarily for preschool children, Captain Kangaroo, now in its fifteenth year on C.B.S., and the nationally syndicated Romper Room will be discussed in Chapter III.

It has remained for National Educational Television to attempt to fill this programming void left by the commercial networks. In addition to *Misterogers' Neighborhood*, N.E.T.'s children's "package" for preschoolers includes *The Friendly Giant* and the highly publicized and widely acclaimed *Sesame Street*. Immediate speculation might result in the belief that television specifically designed for preschool children might be better left to educational television which can afford to cater to minority audiences. Research, however, seems to indicate that the preschool audience is sizable by daytime network standards.

Nearly twelve million young people between the ages of three and five do not attend any form of school. Yet, according to the Nielsen Television Index, the preschoolers look at television 54.1 hours a week. What they perceive few people really know and it is all the more alarming to realize that no effort has ever been made in this country to find out.4

The preschool audience is not only large, but also highly receptive to the new information on their world that television offers. Writing on the subject "Television as a Teacher," Edith Efron says:

If there is any type of child in America who profits wholeheartedly from the home screen, it's the toddler — that wide-eyed little illiterate who is overwhelming curious about the world. He usually starts exploring the screen at age 2, at

first captivated, according to Dr. Louise Ames of Gesell Institute, by "the light and bright and motion."

By age 3 he understands a good deal of what he is looking at and has distinct preferences. Says Dr. Ames: "From 3 on, they're exposed to all kinds of things they wouldn't have seen a generation ago. Their knowledge is tremendously wide."5

While television for children seems to have captured little attention and time from network programmers the opposite has been true from the other side of the set. The concern of educators, parents, and legislators with the content of television has resulted in two full-scale Senatorial investigations, the Kefauver hearings in 1954-55, and the Dodd Hearings in 1961-62. Both concluded with a call for more basic research in the realm of human behavior. In 1969, the Surgeon General's office began what was scheduled as a one-year, one-million-dollar study of the possible relationship between scenes of sex and violence on television and antisocial behavior among young people.

In their final reports the two major recognized research studies dealing with children and television tended to minimize the harmful effects of television while suggesting that positive effects could be greatly enhanced by a better product.

Dr. Hilde Himmelweit and her associates in Great Britain thought that the focus of public concern has been misplaced. While the public had been concerned chiefly with the effects of children spending so much time in viewing, their research suggested that the amount of time spent is a less important cause of concern than the nature of the programs the children see. Noting the public anxiety about such supposed consequences of long hours spent in viewing as a strain on the eyes, insufficient sleep and fresh air, neglect of school work, reduced club attendance, and the development of a generally passive attitude to recreation, Dr. Himmelweit went on:

These anxieties we have found to be largely unfounded -- they were based on an insufficient appreciation of children's resilience and flexibility. More important questions are: what determines the kinds of interests or activities the child will give up in favour of viewing and what are the programmes giving him in compensation?6

Dr. Himmelweit further concluded that the influence of television on children's leisure, interests, knowledge, outlook, and values is far less colorful and dramatic than popular opinion is inclined to suppose. Effects did occur

in each of the various areas the researchers studied, but not to such a degree that the children would have been fundamentally changed.

Television, then, is not as black as it is painted, but neither is it the great harbinger of culture and enlightenment which its enthusiasts tend to claim for it. If television is a window on the world, it gives a view not very different from that provided in books, comics, films, and radio programmes. Similarly, its capacity for broadening a child's horizons is not spectacularly different from that of any of the mass media.7

In her final chapter on Future Research Dr. Himmelweit supports the plea of Dr. Paul F. Lazarsfeld made before the Kefauver Committee in 1955, for research into "the life-history of programs: how they are commissioned, how they are written, why they are finally put on the air."8

Our study has shown that the notion of producers as slaves of public taste is an imaginary one: producers are in large measure the creators of taste and outlook. It is important, therefore, to study how far programmes are produced which are in advance of the prevalent values of the community, or how far they lag behind.9

In a section of Questions to Broadcasters the authors of Television In The Lives Of Our Children begin by noting

7Ibid., p. 40.


9Himmelweit, p. 410.
that in their book they have been careful not to push the panic button on television.

We have pointed out that whenever television is connected with delinquency or other violent or asocial behavior on the part of children, there are causes in addition to, and more influential than, television. We have admitted that research has not gone far enough to understand completely the effects of television, particularly the long-range effects. We have duly noted that children like television as it is.\textsuperscript{10}

They add, however, that granted all these things, and granted that a secure and happy home life will insulate a child against many of the ills that might possibly result from television, the charge that television harms otherwise undisturbed children still must be considered not proved rather than disproved.

We have suggested some of the implications of exposing children, year after year for several hours a day, to material which, after the first few years, carries little intellectual stimulation for them.\textsuperscript{11}

The authors, Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin B. Parker go on to pose three questions to the responsible men and women of television, "both as fathers and mothers and as custodians of one-sixth of children's waking lives."


\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}
1. Cannot programs be produced that will be attractive to children without such large doses of violence and excitement?

They point out that they don't want to overemphasize the possible effects of television experience. "We believe that most children will accept it and dispose of it routinely. And yet, is the risk worth taking?" One of their suggestions along this line is for broadcasters to look hard at those of today's programs which "without offering a diet of violence, still earn high ratings among children. These programs might suggest some new and promising avenues in programming."12

2. Can television not offer more challenge to bright children?

Although this question concerns itself primarily with the findings that bright children, after an initial beneficial experience with television, begin to derive less intellectual stimulation as time goes on, there is inherent in the question a feeling that reality plays a minor role in the medium.

It seems to us a disappointment, and a waste of potential, that television should thus have its influence with children so overwhelmingly as a fantasy medium rather than as a source of reality experience. No one doubts that it might be a matter of pride with television people to do a little more toward making it a great reality

12Schramm, pp. 176-177.
medium. Is our skill only with fantasy? Do we consider our children so slight a resource that we can afford to bring them up on an intellectual diet of such a kind? Do we really believe that this is the way to make leaders and thinkers.\textsuperscript{13}

3. Can the picture of adult life now offered on commercial television be made more adequate to the needs of children?

What concerns the researchers is the fact that television has done away with the old slow timetable for informing children about the adult world. They are also impressed with certain aspects of the picture of the adult world which is offered children at an early age -- "the high percentage of adults involved in conflict, the high percentage of crimes that are settled extralegally, the general inadequacy of fathers and the sorrows of mothers, and the stupidity of law enforcement officers in comparison to crooks."

They go on to suggest that the picture might be filled in with a few attractive examples of other kinds.

For example, how about showing children the excitement of fighting modern problems other than murder -- such problems as disease, scientific discovery and development, social problems, international relations, artistic success, and so forth.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Schramm, p. 178.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 179.
In conclusion they take up the basic remaining question: Are these things really the responsibility of the television industry?

We think they are, and that they are a particularly potent responsibility of an industry that controls so much of a child's life and such a valuable public resource as the electronic spectrum of television.

Adding that they are not impressed with the excuses for not accepting such responsibility they take up and refute three of them.

1. Television gives children what they want.

2. The responsibility is really with the parents. They should keep children from seeing programs too old for them, and they should ensure the children's mental health by providing a happy, secure home life.

3. Television has to offer these kinds of programs for children because advertising sponsors demand large audiences.15

The implication is clear that those who exercise control over programming for children have not yet performed in a manner which seems to be dictated by the enormous burden of the task.

It appears as if some of the most noted researchers in the area of television and children are not willing to make sweeping denunciations of television as it exists. Many, however, are more concerned about what is not on television.

15Ibid.
While the bulk of research and writing, both academic and popular, has been devoted to the effects of television on children, far less time and energy has been devoted to the area of programming. Only three doctoral dissertations in the last ten years have related to children and television. Two of these were audience studies of the A.B.C. Network Discovery series. The third, by Anthony Michael Maltese, is "A Descriptive Study of Children's Programming on Major American Television Networks from 1950 through 1964." In his introduction Maltese points out that the sociological aspects of children's exposure to the medium have been studied extensively. He adds:

The nature of the stimulus itself, oddly enough, has not been studied in as much depth. This study has been built, therefore, upon the premise that knowledge of the substance of children's programming on network television is needed.\(^{16}\)

Mr. Maltese's dissertation was completed in 1967. The study is limited to the three, major, commercial networks and includes only a brief description of each program.

Writing on "What TV Is Doing To Our Children," Wilbur Schramm directed his thoughts on future studies needed in

the area of children and television to the field of pro-
gramming.

Perhaps we should study how to make the non-
tertainment, nonfictional programs on television
more interesting so they will attract more viewers
and contribute more to learning. Perhaps we need
to study how taste is formed. Then, instead of
narrowing children's taste we can broaden their
television interest and encourage them to use
television when possible as a window on the
world rather than as a momentary escape from the
stresses of growing up.17

There can be little doubt that there are many un-
answered questions about children and television viewing.
Many of these will be discussed in greater detail in chap-
ter II. The particular interest of this study is program-
ing for preschool children with the focus being placed on
a single program which has received generally favorable re-
cognition from a large segment of the population concerned
with the problem of television programs for children in
this age group.

Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a history and
descriptive analysis of Misterogers' Neighborhood, one of
the few nationally distributed television programs designed

17Wilbur Schramm, "What TV Is Doing To Our Child-
specifically for preschool children. *Misterogers' Neighborhood* is the winner of a 1969 George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Award for excellence in children's programming as well as many other awards and has received the general critical acclaim of laymen and experts alike. Through a careful study of this successful and unique children's program it is possible that something can be learned about making "the nonentertainment, nonfictional programs on television more interesting so they will attract more viewers and contribute more to learning," as Wilbur Schramm has suggested.18

**Sources And Methods**

The method of research employed in this study is related to the "case" study set forth by Jeffery Auer in his book *An Introduction To Research In Speech*. In contrast to the experimental method, which Auer says usually attempts to isolate elements in the subject's present status, the case study is a more comprehensive method and is intended to reveal the interactions of many elements.

The "case" is a compilation of all available data regarding the life history of the subject, the combinations and interrelations of factors that have affected it, and an evolving picture of its

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present status. Thus, while the case study is
descriptive in purpose, it has elements of the
historical method in it, and is sometimes re-
ferred to as historical-genetic research.19

While a thorough investigation has been made of all
written material, films, and recordings concerning the sub-
ject, in a study such as this an author has to rely heavily
upon primary materials from the subject being studied.
Over the past year extensive interviews have been conducted
with people currently engaged in the creation, production,
and management of the **Misterogers** series as well as with
many who were previously associated with the program and its
predecessors. In addition to the tape recorded interviews
the author has been privileged to observe the program in
production. Unpublished promotion materials, speeches,
letters, memorandums to stations, and the like have provided
further insights.

**Organization**

Background information on television and children in-
cluding studies and investigations on effects follows in
Chapter II. Programs presently on the air nationally which
are designed for preschool children are reviewed in Chapter
III. An early history of what became the **Misterogers**

19Jeffrey Auer, *An Introduction To Research In
Neighborhood program and pertinent biographical material on program's creator, Fred M. Rogers, comprise Chapter IV. Chapter V deals with the production aspects of the program while Chapter VI is devoted to the content. Audience reactions are dealt with in Chapter VII. Chapter VIII is a summary and conclusions.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Fred M. Rogers for agreeing to cooperate on this study. A special debt of gratitude goes to the Misterogers' staff including Hedda Sharapan, David Chen, Diana Dean, George Hill, and David Newell for their kindness and willingness to help. Dr. Margaret McFarland provided needed insights into the psychological aspects of the program. Historical material was enhanced by the information provided by Josie Carey and Ted Neilsen among others.
CHAPTER II

TELEVISION AND CHILDREN

Three primary questions stand out in a consideration of children and their behavior in regard to television:

1. How much time do they watch?
2. Why do they watch?
3. What are the effects of watching?

Numerous other questions lend themselves to categorization under one of these other headings. How does the amount of time spent viewing affect other activities such as learning, health, socialization, and family life? What needs and desires are at work in the determination of what is viewed as well as the amount of time given over to this activity? Who selects the particular program to be seen -- a parent or the child? What factors are at work in the establishment of a selection pattern?

Needless to say, a considerable amount of material has been written about children and television over the past two decades. Indeed, Subcommittees of the United States Senate in 1954-55, and 1961-62, concerned themselves directly with the effects of television violence on children, as have the President’s Commission on the Causes and Preventions of
Violence established by President Lyndon B. Johnson in June 1968, and the investigation into whether television poses a hazard to the mental health of children announced by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in March 1969.

That the same questions return again and again surely indicates that they remain largely unanswered. Neil Hickey noted in the first of a seven part TV Guide series, "What Is TV Doing To Them?" that "the literature on children vis-a-vis television (especially as regards the medium's effects) is voluminous, complex, inconclusive and frequently inconsistent."\textsuperscript{1}

How Much They View

At this writing 179,830,000 Americans (about 96 percent of the total U.S. population) have TV in their homes. Children in the 2 - 5 age group account for 16,070,000 of that figure, and the 6 - 11 group now totals 24,130,000.\textsuperscript{2}

Studies of viewing by preschool children, as one might suspect, are extremely limited because of the problems inherent in sampling such a population. It is much easier for researchers to confine themselves to children who can be reached with relative ease in the classroom. Most of what has been written about television viewing by preschool children is


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
based on an extremely limited sample, reliance on the reports of parents and older siblings, and conjecture determined by studies of older children.

Norman S. Morris begins his discussion of "What's Good About Children's TV," by noting that nearly twelve million young people between the ages of three and five do not attend any form of school. "Yet, according to the Nielsen Television Index, the preschoolers look at television 54.1 hours a week."3

The Himmelweit studies in Great Britain concentrated on children in the 10 to 11 and 13 to 14 age groups. Also focusing on older children, the 1961 American study, Television In The Lives Of Our Children reported:

One-sixth of all the child's waking hours, from the age of three on, is now typically given over to the magic picture tube.4

A child who has begun to use television by age three typically uses it about 45 minutes a weekday (Monday through Friday). By age five, his viewing has increased until, on the average it is a little over two hours a day.5

As early as 1951-52, Eleanor E. Maccoby of Harvard discovered that the median daily length of time which

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5Ibid., p. 30.
children of about five and a half years old spend watching television, according to mother's reports, was one and a half hours.6

Sociologist Wilbur Schramm points out that the most extensive measurements of viewing by children of different ages have been made in the United States where average viewing time increases from about forty-five minutes a day at age three to two hours at age five or six. A peak is reached at age twelve or thirteen when the average child is viewing about three hours a day.7

In TV Guide Neil Hickey speculated, "At about the age of two, a child takes his first serious look at the home TV set. By the time he's three he has some favorite programs, knows how to ask for them, and is spending about an hour a day watching them."8

While there is no absolute unanimity on average daily television viewing by preschool children there does seem to be agreement that the forty-five minutes to one-hour devoted by the two year old doubles by age five or six and continues to increase until a child enters his teens.


8Hickey, p. 6.
In a study of electronic media behavior by children, Irving R. Merrill reports that of all children aged two to three, three-fourths were regular viewers sometime during the average weekday. He accounts for this as the appeal of the medium, rather than any particular content.

It was probably the medium itself which attracted, in competition with radio, an average of more than 2 hours viewing per weekday in 1956. In 1940, before television, radio could attract only an average of 1.5 hours of listening per weekday. The presence of a novelty effect, which persisted for as long as two years, is further evidence of the appeal of the medium of television itself.9

The absence of completely reliable data on the television viewing habits of children, especially preschoolers, has not deterred those who are concerned with the effects of television viewing. The time devoted to television viewing, regardless of the content, raises serious questions in the minds of many researchers, parents, and educators.

The child who watches television for four hours daily between the ages of 3 and 18 spends something like 22,000 hours in passive contemplation of the screen -- hours stolen from the time needed to learn to relate to siblings, playmates, parents, grandparents, or strangers.10


Why They Watch

First and foremost speculation about why children watch television comes to center on the fact that it is available and that it is entertaining.

There is first, the obvious reason: the passive pleasure of being entertained, living a fantasy, taking part vicariously in thrill play, identifying with exciting and attractive people, getting away from real-life boredom -- in other words, all the gratifications that come from having a superlative means of entertainment in one's living room, at one's command.\(^{11}\)

Children don't care whether television enriches their lives; they want to be amused. The key word, according to Neil Hickey, is entertainment.

Children's taste in television programs has that especial catholicity one observes in a hungry man confronted by a bountiful smorgasbord -- it is a taste that encompasses cartoons, puppets, singalongs, live animals, simple science, adventure, history and drama, and a healthy appetite for many of the so-called adult series.\(^{12}\)

Maccoby suggests that the answer to why children watch television may not be the obvious: Children like TV because the material presented on the TV screen is intrinsically interesting or exciting.

To say that a television program is "interesting" is to make a statement not only about the


program but about the viewer. If it is interesting, it strikes a responsive chord in him — satisfies a particular need, provides wanted information, or perhaps offers release from general tension.13

When we attempt to understand the relationship of the child to his favorite TV programs, we are face-to-face, according to Maccoby, with the larger question which is of great importance to present day psychology: What are the functions of fantasy for the individual? She goes on to discuss three primary motives for this active fantasy life:

1. Fantasy provides a child with experience which is free from real-life controls so that, in attempting to find solutions to a problem, he can try out various modes of action without risking the injury or punishment which might ensue if he experimented overtly.

2. Fantasy is a distractor. If the environment imposes strain, we may assume the child will be motivated to "get away from it all" by immersing himself in fantasy.

3. Fantasy can function as wish-fulfillment. It provides an outlet for impulses which are not allowed free expression in real life.

The hypothesis tested by Maccoby was: Children will

13Maccoby, p. 239.
spend more time watching television if they are highly frustrated in real life than if they are not. The findings were:

1. In the upper-middle class, the children who are highly frustrated in their current home life (subject to many restrictions and not treated permissively or warmly) spend the most time viewing television programs.

2. In the upper-lower class, there is little or no relationship between frustration and TV-viewing in children.

Dr. Maccoby interprets the differences between the classes as meaning that in the upper-lower class, where the parents themselves spend a good deal of time watching TV, there is more positive motivation for a child to watch television, so that a child will be drawn to it even in the absence of frustration because it is a dominant activity of the family circle. In the upper-middle class, the effects of frustration may be seen more clearly. Because in the absence of frustration, the child is drawn away from television.\textsuperscript{14}

The personality of the child, the quality of his relationships with his friends and family, and the general home atmosphere are all factors, cited by Dr. Himmelweit, which

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 244.
determine the amount of time a child watches television and the importance viewing assumes for him.

The active child, socially at ease and with a happy home background, is the least likely to become preoccupied by television. On the other hand, children who view a great deal do so (particularly the intelligent ones) because they have difficulties in making friends or problems in their family relationships. They retreat into viewing or into ready-made entertainment of other types. A vicious circle is then set up whereby the ready access to television aggravates those problems of the children which led them to view heavily in the first instance.

The child's personality also affects his reactions to the content of television programmes; the extent to which these frighten and disturb him and the extent to which he identifies himself with characters on the screen.15

Television, then, serves a primary function of providing entertainment which for some children often means escape. A child may, in addition, derive a great deal of information from television. Both Schramm and Himmelweit suggest that TV is teaching, but not providing much that the children are not learning elsewhere. Because of limited contacts with the outside world and with other media the information function of television may be of most importance for preschool children.

If there is any type of child in America who profits wholeheartedly from the home screen, it's the toddler — that wide-eyed little illiterate who is overwhelmingly curious about the world. He usually starts exploring the screen at age 2, at first captivated, according to Dr. Louise Ames of the Gesell Institute, by "the light and bright and motion." 16

Much of what young children take from television is information which is of social utility to them. Dr. Schramm and his colleagues noted that television is probably the greatest source of common experience in the lives of children, and, "along with the home and the school, it has come to play a major part in socializing the child." 17

Himmelweit is more specific in this area reporting that television influences the way children think about jobs, job values, success, and social surroundings.

It stresses the prestige of upper-middle-class occupations: the professions and big business. It makes essentially middle-class value judgments about jobs and success in life. It stresses initiative and good appearance, and suggests that success in life depends not only on moral qualities but on brains, confidence, and courage. 18

It is evident that answers to, "Why do children watch television?" can range all the way from the simple fact it is there, to the speculation that some children watch primarily


17 Schramm, Television In The Lives Of Our Children, p. 12.

18 Himmelweit, p. 258.
for information that can be derived about themselves and their world. A more useful question, perhaps, is "Why do they watch what they watch?"

Effects Of Watching

By far the most publicized and controversial aspect of children and television is the question of the effects of watching. This question has centered primarily on the effects of viewing violence and sex as presented on the television screen.

Two full-scale Senatorial investigations, one headed by Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee in 1954-55, and the other by Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut in 1961-62, were followed in 1969, with a study by the Surgeon General's office to gauge the impact of televised sex and violence on the nation's youth proposed by Senator John O. Pastore, Chairman of the Senate Communications Subcommittee, and endorsed by President Richard M. Nixon.

The division of opinion on the question of the effects of television has been great with two major camps developing. Members of the investigation committees, "concerned" parents and youth leaders, and most writers for the popular press, have been generally more concerned about the effects of violence than have "average" parents, network programming executives and social scientists.
Senator Dodd is quoted as commenting in 1964 on his investigation:

Glued to TV from the time they can walk, our children are getting an intensive training in all phases of crime from the ever-increasing array of Westerns and crime-detective programs available to them. The past decade has seen TV come of age. The same decade has witnessed the violence content in programs skyrocket and delinquency in real life grow almost 200 percent.19

That the various governmental investigations have been unable to determine a clear-cut relationship between real violence and televised violence has been a source of considerable frustration.

Congressman Hale Boggs tried in a roundabout way to get CBS President Frank Stanton to admit before the National Committee on the Causes and Prevention of Violence that TV mayhem affects the minds of susceptible viewers.

Boggs: How much did the sponsors of President Nixon spend at CBS in the last campaign? Would you say it was a substantial sum?

Stanton: I would.

Boggs: Why do you think they spend that money?

Stanton: Because it's an effective medium to reach people.

Boggs: Well now, why is television effective in reaching people and advertising political campaigns and is not effective when it shows sadism, masochism, murder, mayhem and rape?

19Eve Merriam, "We're Teaching Our Children That Violence Is Fun," Reader's Digest, February 1965, pp. 41-42.
But the CBS President, a Ph.D. in Psychology, insisted that this proposition was unproved, and required further study. He added, "We don't yet have the methodology with which to make the study." Boggs quickly recollected congressional committee investigations that have been going on since 1954. His voice rose. "This is the study-est thing that has ever happened with no results. How long Mr. Chairman? How long?"  

At the Dodd hearings on TV violence in 1961, Sociologist Carl Perian is quoted as pointing out that: "All fields of study involving human behavior are equally in the dark concerning the motives and drives that make men behave the way they do."  

Wilbur Schramm, Stanford University sociologist, explains that experiments on such a subject as the effects of television are extremely hard to design and conduct.

"...not only because of the difficulty of unraveling the skein of a life to find the sources of complex behavior, but also because of the moral impossibility of experimenting on a child as one could upon an inanimate object or a laboratory animal."  

22Ibid., p. 35.
Typical of the critical comment aimed at television for children in the popular press is the *Look* article "Is TV Brutalizing Your Child?" The question is answered in the affirmative by the author, Eliot A. Daley.

Through television, our children's lives are inundated with death and disaster one moment, trivia and banality the next, cemented together with the 60-second mortar of manipulation and materialism. Their experience is very different from ours. In the matter of violence alone, their formative years are bathed in blood of which we have only recently taken notice. Other writers have amply documented the depressing statistics:

The TV station in one city carried, in one week, 7,857 acts of violence.

One episode of a Western series garnished Christmas night with 13 homicides.

Between the ages of 5 and 14, your children and mine may, if they are average viewers, witness the annihilation of 12,000 human beings.

Consequences are observable, from weekly callousness about Vietnam casualty lists, to riots by and against police, to subtly increased agitation among youngsters viewing a violent TV film.23

*Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins in an editorial entitled "The Taming Of Individuals And The State," expressed concern over the shortness of temper of teen-agers and young adults.

Contempt for rational process tends to set the stage for noisiness, abusiveness, and violent life-style. Teachers, properly fear that the young

people's propensity to over-react is the stuff of which nihilism is made --- and explosive nihilism at that.24

He went on to place much of the blame for this conduct on television:

The greatest single arena of learning for a child, for example, is not the school but the television screen. This is where saturation courses on life-at-gunpoint are to be found. The child learns very little from TV about the fragility and preciousness of life. Examples of basic decency and compassion are heavily outweighed by numberless instances of people inflicting and exploiting pain. The child's mind is jarred by disconnections and jangled by jingles. Public television, especially now that Sesame Street is being shown, offers a miraculous antidote, but its share of TV programming is still very small.25

Some groups of concerned individuals have formed organizations the purpose of which is to bring about better children's programming through publicity and social action.

Frank Orme, Executive Vice President of the National Association for Better Broadcasting, has written periodic articles on television for Parent's Magazine. In a January 1969, article entitled "The TV World Of Violence," he said:

Though it is probably impossible to determine if such a cause and effect relationship exists (in fact, it may be the other way around, that violence in the real world increases the amount of violence shown on television), in any case it is unquestionably true that the brutality characteristic of many TV programs is extremely objectionable. Young people are frightened and confused by scenes of

25Ibid.
murder and mayhem, and the constant exposure to make-believe killings and maimings diminishes the ability of both young and old to understand and sympathize with real suffering. Moreover, it establishes a climate of ready acceptance for violent solutions.  

The American Council for Better Broadcasts formed in 1953, recognizes in their preamble the value of working with rather than against those responsible for the selection and production of radio and television programs in order to encourage educational and cultural programs on all radio and television stations. Typical of the activities of this organization is the viewing and rating of programs for children. For several Saturday mornings in October and November of 1968, more than one hundred parents, mostly mothers, who were members of the Wisconsin Association of the American Council for Better Broadcasts, watched three or four cartoons. They had voted to give these programs ratings and to set down their opinions in writing. The opinions were scattered over some twenty-five programs, but there was considerable consensus about the programs. The results were then shared with the managers of the three network-affiliated stations which served the Madison area.

The January 1, 1969 issue of the American Council for Better Broadcasts newsletter reports, "According to the

written opinions, excessive violence seemed to be the most offensive characteristic of shows disliked. 27

One of the recommendations of the American Council shared by similar organizations is that the law requiring stations to apply for renewal of license every three years be retained with quality of programming to be reviewed at renewal time.

Another group with primary interest in programming for children, Action For Children's Television, was described by Mrs. Evelyn Sarson before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications as:

...an organization of parents, educators, doctors, and many others who are concerned with children and television. We have several hundred members in New England, and several thousand supporters in that area and across the country. 28

Testifying before Senator Pastore and his committee in opposition to the proposed amendment to the Communications Act of 1934 to establish orderly procedures for the consideration of applications for renewal of broadcast licenses, Mrs. Sarson said:


We know what is available on television for children and our knowledge has made us most concerned with the quality and variety of programs for children. Commercial television has had virtually unchallenged freedom for the past 20 years. We can see today that this system has not served the public well in the area of children's programs.29

Later in the hearing Mrs. Sarson commented on specific programming in her area:

The 4 to 6 o'clock hours used to be programmed with an understanding that large numbers of children watch television during the late afternoon. Today in Boston one commercial station has just started running Peyton Place at 4 p.m., followed by Perry Mason at 5 p.m., another runs Dark Shadows, a horror serial at 4 p.m. I would like to insert into the record a schedule of the Boston commercial VHF 4 to 6 p.m. programming for this week.30

When parents beliefs and attitudes toward television and children were explored by Psychologist Gary A. Steiner, a generally affirmative attitude was found. Asked specifically, "Can you think of an actual example where some child you know or have heard of has been harmed or has done something harmful as a result of television?" eighty-one per cent of the male parents with children under fifteen did not give an example. Seventy-one per cent of the mothers also replied in the negative.

Steiner concluded that overall the vote is affirmative for television.

29Ibid., p. 582.

30Ibid., pp. 583-585.
What is more, the closer people are to having young children in the home, the more apt they are to conclude that TV's virtues outweigh its vices. Similarly, personal knowledge of benefits increases faster with parenthood than does experience with harmful effects.\textsuperscript{31}

Steiner goes so far as to dismiss some of the critical comment as "undoubtedly playback of the TV violence issue in the press."\textsuperscript{32} He further points to the generally confused attitude of parents in regard to television for children.

So all in all, so far as adult judgments are concerned, television helps to educate the child, but watching it interferes with his education. It helps keep him busy and out of mischief, but it also keeps him too busy to do his chores. It keeps the kids in when you want them in -- which is good, except for some of the bad things they see. And it keeps them in when you want them out -- which is bad even if they see good things. Ideally, then, TV should provide interesting, educational programs that intrigue children when parents don't want to be bothered with them -- but not when they ought to be outside or doing something else.\textsuperscript{33}

The prevailing attitude among those who make decisions about television programming has been to express concern while minimizing effects. In testimony prepared for delivery December 20, 1968, before The President's Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence, CBS President Frank Station pointed out that violence often is an essential ingredient of entertainment programs and is frequently a built-


\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 92.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 95.
in element of news programs. He stressed that while TV "must not pander to a taste for violence," it must reflect "the often violent and disjointed character of the contemporary world" if it is to serve as a medium of popular culture and of news and information.

Discussing entertainment programming, Dr. Stanton told the commission that some people claim there is too much violence on television and some say there should be none at all. He said he could not agree with either of these viewpoints, and added:

Throughout history, violence has had a prominent place in art, drama, and literature. Within the broad limits of good taste, we want to be realistic, dramatic and interesting -- and we should not arbitrarily exclude any legitimate theatrical device. But we draw the line on scripts which use violence for its own sake and not for reasons of dramatic unity or value.34

In an earlier hearing of the commission Dr. Joseph Klapper, director of the C.B.S. Office of Social Research, stressed that early surveys showed that aggressive children like aggressive programs. But, he warned, a predisposition to violence doesn't mean that children will commit such an act.

He also discussed a number of laboratory experiments

with pre-schoolers indicating that a child exposed to an act of aggression in a movie will act aggressively when put into a similar actual situation. These experiments, however, had to do with the handling of dolls. They were not real-life situations. And in none of the experiments, he stressed, did a child attempt violence against another person.

He noted that other research has demonstrated that mass media effects cannot be determined by the contents of a program or story alone; they can be intensified, weakened or even nullified by a host of other factors. In some studies, Dr. Klapper reminded the commission, it was found that seeing or reading about violence had a beneficial "cathartic" effect on a child.35

At the same commission hearing Robert D. Kasmire of N.B.C. stressed the heterogeneity of TV audiences, with some praising, other criticizing the same TV program. Public notions about conflict and violence in entertainment are far from uniform, he observed. Furthermore, he said, a viewer's personality influences what he chooses to read or watch on TV or the movies; not the other way around.36

To a large extent the researchers tend to enforce the


36 Ibid.
opinions expressed by television programmers. The most exhaustive study made of the effects of American television on children points out that in order to understand television's impact and effect on children we first have "to get away from the unrealistic concept of what television 'does to children' and substitute the concept of what children do with television." 37 The concept is more fully stated earlier in the book:

In a sense the term "effect" is misleading because it suggests that television "does something" to children. The connotation is that television is the actor; the children are acted upon. Children are thus made to seem relatively inert; television, relatively active. Children are sitting victims; television bites them.

Nothing can be further from fact.

It is the children who are most active in this relationship. It is they who use television, rather than television that uses them. 38

An often quoted statement of conclusion from this study says that "No informed person can say simply that television is bad or that it is good for children." It goes on:

For some children, under some conditions, some television is harmful. For other children under the same conditions, or for the same children under other conditions, it may be beneficial.


38 Ibid., p. 1.
For most children under most conditions, most television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial.\textsuperscript{39}

Stated briefly, according to Psychiatrist Lawrence Zelic Freedman, we cannot evaluate the effect of television on a child unless we know something of his personality and environment.

The child's task of developing into an adult human being is psychologically far too complex to make it likely that any single stimulus pattern will predictably produce a particular behavioral response.\textsuperscript{40}

In, perhaps, the best known study of children and television, undertaken in 1955 by Dr. Hilde T. Himmelweit and her associates in Great Britian, it is noted that there is a strong temptation to see in television the cause of symptoms that, in fact, derive from other sources. The researchers suggested "that it may be more profitable for the purposes of diagnosis to assume that television itself is unlikely to be the primary cause and that at the most it acts as a catalyst."\textsuperscript{41}

At best, television can implant information, stimulate interests, improve tastes, and widen the range of the child's experience so that he gains some understanding of people in other walks of life;

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., pp. 190-191.
\textsuperscript{41}Himmelweit, p. 49.
this can make him less prejudiced and more tolerant. It can make him less susceptible to oversimplified value judgements; it can raise the level of his aspirations. At best, viewing can reduce the child's less worthwhile activities (such as comic reading), whilst leaving the more worthwhile ones intact.

At worst, on the other hand, viewing can lead to reduction in knowledge (in that it takes up time which could be spent more profitably), keep children from relatively worth-while activities (like outdoor play and book-reading), and implant or accentuate one-sided, stereotyped value judgement -- if the content of television is such as to convey this kind of attitude. Depending on content, television can frighten and disturb, particularly those who are emotionally insecure or those who are preoccupied with a particular problem.42

Even before it became popular to enumerate the number of violent incidents which took place during a specified period of television viewing, Dr. Himmelweit noted that some of the common stereotyped ideas about what frightens children have little foundation in fact.

The number of injured and the number of shots are less important than the manner in which the injury occurs. Shooting is not very disturbing, nor fighting on the ground, but injury by knife or dagger is far more so; swords and other weapons occupy an immediate position.43

Dr. Himmelweit found that children differ from adults in what they perceive as disturbing. Adults are more inclined to react to aggressive incidents in terms of damage

42Ibid., p. 41.
done or vividness of presentation. Children are more inclined to react in terms of self-identification with the situation portrayed. 44

The great majority of social scientists concerned with the effects of television on children are quick to point out the two basic problems confronting investigators: (1) It is probably impossible to design studies which could isolate the effects of television from other forces in the environment, and (2) the studies which have been undertaken have been too limited in scope and time.

In the spring of 1955, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Columbia University, in his testimony before the Kefauver Committee which was investigating juvenile delinquency, discussed the state of knowledge in the field, the kind of research needed, and some of the limitations of research in "solving" the problem. He first reviewed the isolated studies being conducted by individual scholars commenting that "it seems apparent that everything has militated against a coordinated and relatively quick build-up of knowledge of the sort which is necessary to deal with topics of social concern." 45

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44Ibid., p. 204.

In addition to the collaboration of groups on the research, Lazarsfeld suggested that the real problem was the cumulative effect of television, "what it does to children six years, not six minutes, later." Universities with limited research funds can only do short-term studies. Children are exposed to programs and then questioned about what they think or feel a few minutes later.

What I am trying to argue is that we will probably have to follow up all sorts of children for a period of 4 to 8 years to get a real picture of what role television plays in the development of personality. This has been recognized in other fields. For example, at the time when progressive education was a matter of great concern an 8-year study was organized to investigate what kind of elementary school education makes for greater success in college and on the first job. I submit that only such long-term studies would give us a realistic picture of the role of television in a child's personality development.46

An area of research which Lazarsfeld suggests has been largely neglected has to do with how questionable programs get on the air in the first place.

We definitely need studies on the life-history of programs: how they are commissioned, how they are written, why they are finally put on the air. Only very skilled people, who would have to be paid well, could provide this picture. Incidentally, I don't think even the telecasters themselves have such a picture.47

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46Ibid., p. 246.
With more creative research, better coordination of research in progress, and better financing, what Lasarsfeld calls a "psychological theory of television" might be brought about. He believes that the value of more knowledge lies in two areas: (1) Television writers and executive offices of the broadcasting industry if provided with concrete suggestions would be greatly influenced. (2) Constructive substitutes could be found for programs which children seem to like and parents disapprove of.

Dr. Lasarsfeld concluded his remarks to the Kefauver Committee by calling on the foundations to spend part of their funds on matters which are controversial, adding:

The effect of television on children is controversial not because some people are against crime and others for it; it is controversial because so little is known that anyone can inject his prejudices or his views into the debate without being proven wrong. If the foundations were encouraged to sponsor research on this kind of controversy, the results might well be a shift from empty debate to well-directed action.\(^{48}\)

Dr. Himmelweit placed responsibility on the broadcasting companies, commenting that there is a great deal of talk about the need for research into the effects of showing so much violence on television and that this need is used too readily as an excuse.

\(^{48}\text{Ibid.}, p. 251.\)
There is no need to prove that such programmes do harm; it is the responsibility of the companies which show a large number of them to prove that they are worth the time given to them, particularly in the children's hour: i.e. that they are not merely entertaining but that they are also broadly educative, intellectually and emotionally.⁴⁹

Many critics agree with Robert Lewis Shayon that the primary goal of the commercial broadcasting industry is to be instant crowd-catchers who deliver their catch to the advertisers and inoculate them with consumer messages. According to Shayon the essence of the art of catching crowds is conflict -- "the most contagious of all human experiences, the universal language."⁵⁰ He recognizes that there are many varieties of conflict, ranging from parliamentary debates and elections to strikes, games, and fights, and that television does occasionally present conflicts of ideas.

...but you can't run a crowd-catching business at this level. Instant crowds require simple phenomena, quickly grasped. Furthermore, ideas are controversial, dangerous; people have convictions, they take sides, are easily offended, Crowd-catchers want only happy consumers.⁵¹

Shayon suggests that the type of conflict that will

⁴⁹Himmelweit, p. 56.


⁵¹Ibid.
deliver instant crowds most efficiently is physical violence.

Consider what would happen if a crowd had three viewing choices on a street; watching a clown, a nude woman, or a no-holds-barred fight--which do you think would attract the biggest crowd? Physical violence grows in mesmeric power, while sex and humor diminish relatively. Violence, internal and external, is the young generation's hang-up, not sex. This is the way our world is; TV tells us so--TV is the true curriculum of our society. We fear violence and enjoy it with guilt, because it calls to our own deeply latent potential for violence in response to a violent world. With such a sure-fire, instant crowd-catcher providing the essential energy which runs our industries, our networks, our advertising agencies--in short, our style of life, to call for the voluntary or involuntary regulation of violence on TV is to call for instant self-destruction of the system. By "system," I mean TV based on advertiser-support.\(^{52}\)

Shayon feels that any talk of regulating and minimizing physical violence on TV, while retaining the present advertiser-supported, crowd-catching system contributes to the "instant self-delusion" of the American citizen who he believes ought to, at least, be accorded the dignity of being told what his real choices are.

With regard to the question of more and/or better television programming for children on the commercial networks, Mr. Shayon's assessment is quite probably right. In spite of the concern; the number of articles, books, studies, and hearings, little has changed. The next chapter examines

\(^{52}\)Ibid.
television programming for preschool children on both the commercial and the educational networks.
CHAPTER III

PROGRAMS FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Pointing out that before a child reaches school, from the ages of two through five, he spends an estimated one-fourth to one-half of his waking hours in front of a television set, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew delivered a challenge to the television industry: "You have our children almost from the time they are able to sit in front of a TV set. Help us to make them good citizens."¹ The Vice President added that while the government has spent tens of millions of dollars to bring poor children into preschool learning programs, television has had the same children as a captive audience for thousands of hours.

It is relevant to ask how much of the time television has to amuse, entertain and divert the child; how much it has to plant within him the seeds of knowledge, a desire to learn and an enthusiasm for the schooling he is about to undertake. And what is it doing with this time?²

Prior to Sesame Street and Misteroegers' Neighborhood on the National Educational Television Network, Captain

²Ibid., p. 7.
Kangaroo on C.B.S. was singled out, time and again, as an example of perhaps the most successful television program for preschool children. Captain Kangaroo has survived all others to become the oldest program designed for preschool children having a continuous, regularly scheduled run on a commercial network. A mimeographed C.B.S. press release, September 1, 1955, described and set goals for the program.

You might call us babysitters for youngsters from two to eight at a time when mother is very busy. We talk the same language as children. We meet them in a never-never land where they find reality. We give them education -- learning about things in the world that they're growing up in, but all as a part of a simple wonderful hour of entertainment that happens to carry with it simple lessons in manners, safety, and bits of knowledge children are curious about. There'll be no slapstick, no terror, no horror, no matter how innocently such things can appear. These are gentle adventures for children. We can't think of any better words to describe what we're doing.\(^3\)

Eleven years later Bob Keenan wrote an article for Parents Magazine in which he pointed out that in too many American homes, television is employed as a kind of babysitter. "A woman is usually pretty careful when she engages a babysitter of the ordinary, human sort; she makes it her business to acquaint herself with the background and character of the person who will care for her child." Why, he

asked, did some women fail to check on the programs their children watch? 4 He went on to talk about his own program.

Frankly, those of us on the Captain Kangaroo staff have a reputation for being difficult. We impose strict standards on writers and performers; we accept nothing in a script which is cruel or derisive. We believe that noise and violence aren't good for children and are to be avoided. We do not excite children to an hysterical pitch, but try to offer quiet and gentle humor. Although our first obligation is to entertain, we also recognize our responsibility to educate and inform.

But we're lucky, we can have our cake and eat it, too. As creative entertainers, if we trigger the imagination of a child, interest him in a new subject, develop his taste, we feel rewarded.

Actually, we don't think of Captain Kangaroo as a show but as a visit, between the Treasure House people and their small friends outside.

In the person of the Captain, himself, we maintain that note of gentleness and whimsy. I consider it a tragedy that in bringing up children to-day, too many people associate gentleness with weakness. Children should learn that it takes true strength and courage to be gentle -- to be a gentle man. It is the weakening who falls back on violence.

We believe that no subject is beyond the reach of a child's mind if it is presented in an appropriate way. We respect the children in our audience and so we try never to talk down to them or to oversimplify. 5

With an audience estimated at between three and ten million children fixed to the set each weekday morning, the

5 Ibid., p. 107.
program is generally singled out for praise by those writing about programming for children. Captain Kangaroo, however, has come in for some adult criticism. "It seemed to me," wrote M. J. Arlen in The New Yorker, "that 'Captain Kangaroo' is really a terrible show -- vapid, pointless, silly, about as interesting an experience for a child as stubbing his toe."

Admitting that his age and background influenced his opinion, Arlen went on:

Kangaroo himself is played by a fellow called Bob Keeshan, whom one would normally describe as "pleasant enough" -- and he probably is pleasant enough as Bob Keeshan. As Captain Kangaroo, he seemed half asleep and totally uninterested in what he was doing. Small wonder, too, since what he was doing was padding about onstage in what looked like a doorman's uniform, stopping occasionally while a member of the cast sang a bland little children's song, stopping very often to deliver commercials, and, in general, giving every indication of trying to fake his way through a sixty-minute program on five minutes of decidedly skimpy material. May Allah believe me, I don't think children's programs should always be true, beautiful, inspirational, or spiritually enlarging.

I'm a great advocate of trash for young and old -- good, honest, forthright trash. But this empty, empty, prissy, bumbling, singsongy stuff is something else, and I can't see that it adds up to much of anything. Grown men ought to speak in their own voices when they speak to children, and they ought to pretend to be awake. That doesn't seem a lot to ask.6

Some of the criticism of Captain Kangaroo has come in

a milder form. Writing in Look, Eliot A. Daley notes that few programs on television try to relate the child viewer to the on-screen activity. In his opinion the least successful of those that attempt this relationship is Romper Room because:

    It manages to convey to the child at home the sense of his being isolated in some nether region of the set, on a glass-enclosed dunce stool, occasionally fielding requests to mimic the rest of the children who are all part of the real action.

Daley feels Captain Kangaroo relates more directly to its viewers, but still lapses frequently into an implied reference to "all you millions of boys and girls out there in television land." He goes on:

    Captain Kangaroo, in many respects a superb program, further continues the tradition of the well-intended but easily befuddled adult male whose penchant for being pelted by Ping Pong balls is exceeded only by his capacity to be outfoxed by a rabbit.7

In his Atlantic article, "What's Good About Children's TV," Norman S. Morris singles out The Friendly Giant, Misterogers' Neighborhood, and Captain Kangaroo. Morris recognizes that an impatient adult, unfamiliar with the program, may glance at the Captain's costume, conclude at once that he is a buffoon, and switch channels. In his description of the program which follows he refutes this. "Anything but a

buffoon, Keeshan is a quiet-spoken man, bursting with energy and a complete sense of dedication to youngsters.\textsuperscript{8}

The fact that it is a vehicle for commercial messages does not escape those who might otherwise praise Captain Kangaroo. In a 1959, evaluation of programs for children National Parent Teacher magazine labeled it a "first-rate show heartily recommended for preschool and school-age children and for all who are not exiles from the world of childhood." They did point out, however, "The only adverse winds are the too, too frequent commercials and the almost equally intrusive cartoon segment."\textsuperscript{9}

In her testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications hearing to establish orderly procedures for the consideration of applications for renewal of broadcast licenses, Mrs. Evelyn Sarson of Action for Children's Television, Newton Center, Massachusetts turned the discussion to this point.

The good captain sells bread, cookies, and cereals. No truly concerned person who really cares about children and wants to work with them, and we have talked with many of them, wants to be involved in the pressures of selling.

No person who really cares about children can face them every morning and sell them things at the same time as they are working with them showering

\textsuperscript{8}Norman S. Morris, "What's Good About Children's TV?" \textit{Atlantic}, August, 1969, p. 68.

them with ideas, presenting them with things they can trust. This is the crux of why there are no good -- few, because Captain Kangaroo is quite a good program -- few good children's programs are on television.\textsuperscript{10}

Mrs. Sarson went on to explain that her group believes it is morally unfair to sell to children, to exploit them.

When a teacher comes on television on a program which is \textit{Romper Room} which is syndicated and urges the children to buy \textit{Romper Room} commodities, they are not aware that this is a commercial.\textsuperscript{11}

Late in her testimony she asked to have some standards and guidelines her group had prepared for children's programs inserted into the record.

\textbf{Proposed Guidelines for Children's Television Programming}

\textbf{Whereas:} The interests of the public are best served when children are considered as a special audience and not as potential consumers.

\textbf{Therefore:} the following rules should govern all programming for children.

\begin{enumerate}
\item There shall be no sponsorship and no commercials on children's programs.
\item No performer shall be permitted to use or mention products, services, or stores by brand name during children's programs, nor shall such names be included in any way during children's programs.
\end{enumerate}

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\textsuperscript{10}U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Commerce, \textit{To Amend the Communications Act of 1934 to Establish Orderly Procedures for the Consideration of Applications for Renewal of Broadcast Licenses}, Hearings, before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, Senate, on S. 2004, 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1969, p. 586.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushright}
3. Each station shall provide a minimum of 14 hours of programming per week for children as part of its public service requirement. Provision shall be made for programming in each of the following areas within the times specified:

A. Preschool: Ages 2-5; 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
   daily: 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. weekends.
B. Primary: Ages 6-9; 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
   daily: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. weekends.
C. Elementary: Ages 10-12; 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily; 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. weekends.

These rules shall be enforced by the Federal Communications Commission. Infraction shall be grounds for revocation of license.\textsuperscript{12}

A United Press International radio wire release on February 13, 1970, announced that the Federal Communications Commission had agreed to decide on a petition from the Action for Children's Television group which asked that their Proposed Guidelines for Children's Television Programming be adopted by the Commission. The release further stated that the FCC gave interested parties 30 days to submit comments on the petition. Richard K. Doan of \textit{TV Guide} reported that "Howls of pain went up from the TV sanctums."\textsuperscript{13} The broadcasters cried that all programming, adult as well as children's, would suffer; that some stations would be driven out of business. The FCC also heard from hundreds of citizens, most of them parents and educators, who supported the groups ideas.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 587.

Since the FCC often has avoided interference in broadcast programming in order not to violate the constitutional guarantee of free speech, Doan indicated that the very fact that FCC would consider such directives, "at once heartened parent-educator forces and struck fear in the power centers of broadcasting."\textsuperscript{14}

Since it would go beyond any regulations the FCC has yet ventured, the likelihood of actually implementing rules growing out of the Action for Children's Television group are remote. FCC Chairman Dean Burch, however, told \textit{TV Guide} that he sensed "a lot of support" for the general idea among his colleagues, and that he himself, as a father of small children, is sympathetic.

I just can't be an advocate for my own children and I'm not sure of the constitutionality of such rules. It's a very difficult case. There's a statement in this to the effect that we just don't like commercials. And yet a lot of what we expect out of TV is paid for by the commercials.\textsuperscript{15}

Riding high as the undisputed revenue-producers on the national networks in the field of children's programming are the cartoons which nearly monopolize programming on Saturday and to a great extent on Sunday mornings. According to \textit{TV Guide}, gross annual revenues for Saturday morning programs

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 16.
\end{itemize}
on the three networks are mounting toward the $90 million mark with no end in sight.

With those kind of stakes, the three men who sit in their skyscraper headquarters (only a few hundred yards apart along Manhattan's Avenue of the Americas) are engaged in a serious struggle for the attentions of the Nation's 40 million preschoolers and grade schoolers.\(^{16}\)

There can be little doubt that, as with nighttime television, the success or failure of these programmers is gauged not by the effects, good or bad, upon their target audience, but by the size of the audience that they are able to deliver to advertisers.

A cynic might conclude that those millions of young minds are thus pawns in the profit game and are perhaps not being well served -- or at least not as well as they might be given television's creative potential.

And that is a premise -- many parents, psychologists and sociologists believe -- which is deserving of the most careful and fastidious scrutiny.\(^{17}\)

The amount of comment critical of children's television and the degree of harshness which through the years has been somewhat spродic reached a peak of sorts in the fall of 1969. Jack Gould wrote in the New York Times:

It is disgraceful that the commercial TV networks have callously neglected the wants of the


\(^{17}\)Ibid.
young, that their standards have been dictated by what would attract advertising support, and that no top policymaking executive is expressly charged with the design of programs for the young. And what goes for young people is also applicable to adults.18

As network children's programming came under increasing criticism from many groups during 1969, all three networks altered their cartoon fare in an attempt to eliminate some of the violence. Broadcasting magazine, February 9, 1970, reported that children's programming had suddenly attained a new status with all three commercial networks appointing executives with specific responsibilities in the area of children's television.19

With the issue of violence somewhat silenced, other criticism of cartoons seems to center around their lack of intellectual and cultural stimulation, and the overriding commercial intent behind their inclusion in the network schedules.

Testifying before the United State Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Mrs. Evelyn Sarson of Action for Children's Television, commented that the much publicized "new" television season for children on Saturday mornings wasn't new at all.

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We have had members monitoring them. It is the same cartoons in a different package without the superheroes. TV critic Jack Gould has described them as an "unrelenting barrage of basically cheap cartoons -- junk bereft of style, professional competence, touches of humor, or any of the evidence of an inclination to raise standards." 20

Mrs. Sarson completed her argument by pointing out that if economic security does produce quality children's programs, she and her colleagues had not seen them.

What we have noticed is that the two really creative and outstanding programs for young children, Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and Sesame Street, are both on non-commercial television. Both were produced by nonprofit organizations whose finances are far from secure. 21

In an article which was very critical of the majority of television for children, Sonny Fox, children's program host and creator, called attention to the fact that he had not "hit out" at cartoons.

Except for the fact they train our young addicts early in life to the habit of over-viewing, I do consider most cartoons nothing worse than a waste of time. Young children waste a vast amount of time anyway, so if they choose to do it watching cartoons I cannot get upset. Certainly there is violence and noise in cartoons -- that's what attracts them. But this is not realistic violence. When a cat chases a mouse no one frets. Everyone knows the mouse will not be caught. 22

20U.S. Congress, p. 583.
21Ibid., p. 584.
The time consumed in viewing cartoons was also a concern of Paul Taff, former Director of Children's Programming at N.E.T., when he expressed his feelings about Saturday morning network television to TV Guide.

Most, if not all of it, is a complete waste of time. There's not enough of real value in any of the presentations. Much of it could be detrimental to the viewers. I can't back that view up with research. Such research doesn't exist. It's my opinion that it will have a detrimental effect; it's my opinion that a constant barrage of worthless programming does have an ill effect. This is a sad use of television and a sad use of the precious time of young people.23

Since the great bulk of children's television fare consists of cartoon shows, Norman S. Morris, in his assessment of television for preschool children feels they should be considered in terms of child development. Morris points out that one way happiness can be found is in the process of resolving conflict. Noting that within the dramatic form it is a recognized principle that following the denouement of the plot we find the resolution of conflict and ensuing gratification, he says that one trouble with most cartoons is that they present rapid-action sequences every few seconds.

Whatever impossible conflict is established is quickly resolved, usually without a time delay that permits gratification. For example, a mouse is seen slicing a cat in half or throwing him over a cliff. In the next sequence the cat is again whole, and the miniature conflict is resolved. But

what is missing is the element of reasonableness. Moreover, a child has insufficient time to submerge the situation into fantasy. Are these harmful to the child? Child-guidance people, by and large, do not regard them as detrimental to children, but they do not find them useful from a developmental standpoint. The cartoons also raise the question of violence, and we are left to wonder if violence has an effect on very young children.24

In all that has been written about the cartoons, whether critical or questioning, nowhere does one find truly complementary statements. There can be little doubt that cartoons on television are there basically because they draw an audience.

With Captain Kangaroo and cartoons the only commercial network programs regularly scheduled for preschool children a Baltimore couple, Bert and Nancy Claster, have become financially successful by partially filling the gap with their syndicated Romper Room program.

The program which originated as a local show in 1953, with Mrs. Claster as the teacher was seen on more than 80 United States stations, 10 in Canada, and 6 in Australia in 1965. Romper Room Incorporated was a five-million dollar a year business with revenue from sponsor fees and toy sales.25

While the format and ideas are formulated in Baltimore,

24 Morris, p. 70.

the actual production and talent are local. *Romper Room* teachers receive lesson plans, props, pictures, films, slides, and books three weeks in advance.

During their two-week training in Baltimore, the teachers, all with college degrees and experience working with children, are taught to speak and move more slowly, to ignore no child, and to treat the "friends at home" as the most important.26 The program is, nevertheless, criticized because the home viewers are ignored at times by the teacher who must of necessity devote attention to the children in the studio. The commercial content and the fact that the television "teacher" often delivers the advertising message do not escape the critics.

The program has been largely overlooked by the national press, however, the simplified content and format have generated some comment. Recognizing that the show is built around a standardized framework that is filled out with local talent a *National Parent Teacher* review went on:

Such a plan necessarily means that the action must be extremely simple so that the little amateur actors may acquit themselves without disaster. Nevertheless there is an artless if sometimes tedi-our charm about the way in which the unpracticed performers falter through the simple games and offer their childish comments to the teacher, Trite but trustworthy are the staples of the entertain-ment; there are even some lapses into learning.

26Ibid.
At least it's harmless.27

In his summary of television programs for preschoolers, Norman S. Morris, was considerably more harsh in his assessment of Romper Room.

Discussions on children's television frequently cite a program entitled Romper Room as exemplary of excellent children's fare. This program in fact violates every principle I have so far outlined as being standard equipment for a successful show. The philosophy seems to be that kids are little creatures who must be taught their ABC's. Everything takes place in a formal classroom setting, and creativity is hiding somewhere under the teacher's desk or perhaps in a broom closet. The prevailing attitude is one of condescension, and humor is hiding somewhere, too, perhaps keeping creativity company.28

With only one program on a commercial network and one nationally syndicated program, in addition to hundreds of cartoons, making up the bulk of the programming effort for preschool children, it remained for the National Educational Television Network to step into the void.

In February 1967, Frank Orme, Executive Vice President of the National Association for Better Broadcasting, was writing in Parents Magazine:

Those fortunate enough to live within a signal range of the more than one hundred non-commercial educational stations can see a growing number of children's programs; many of them are excellent.

27"Evaluations of TV Programs," National Parent Teacher, September, 1959, p. 27.

28Morris, p. 71.
National Educational Television is making commendable progress in this area.29

Neil Hickey was writing in TV Guide in this same vein, in 1969:

Children living near TV stations serviced by the National Educational Television network (N.E.T.) have access to a few additional programs: the highly successful Misteroegrs' Neighborhood (TV Guide, September 21, 1965) and The Friendly Giant, both aimed at preschool children; and What's New, a cultural mixed bag of history, travel, nature, science studies, and story dramatizations.30

The Friendly Giant is Robert Homme, who is in his tenth year of originating the program for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. For five years, prior to going to Canada, the fifteen-minute weekday programs originated at the University of Wisconsin's television station, WHA, in Madison. Most of this time the program has been distributed in the United States by N.E.T. Very little has been written about The Friendly Giant, although Norman S. Morris includes it as one of the best three programs available for preschool children.

In the realm of young children's television three men have been the pioneers: Robert Homme, Robert Keesha, and Fred Rogers. Children know Homme as the Friendly Giant, an easygoing, gentle giant who would not recognize a beanstalk if he


tripped over one. Friendly stands about five feet, eleven inches tall, but to tiny children, whose eyesight is often superior, he is probably eight feet tall.\footnote{Morris, p. 67.}

One theme explored through a book or through music, or both, runs the length of the program. Subjects may range from poetry to beavers. Robert Homme, who conceives and writes his own program, does not expect preschoolers to come away with specific ideas on any subject, "What is important, is for them to see that we adults enjoy knowledge, that we keep our eyes and ears open because the world is filled with things that can make life a little happier."\footnote{Ibid., p. 69.}

On November 10, 1969, the most highly publicized program for preschool children in history premiered on Public Television Stations affiliated with the National Educational Network, as well as on a few commercial stations.

In New York, the hour-long show is seen on five channels, six times a day in all, and the latest Nielsen ratings estimate that almost half of the 12 million preschoolers in the nation watch it on 200 public and commercial stations from coast to coast. In Chicago, showing on a public TV station, it topped such formidable competition for daytime viewing as the Beverly Hillbillies, Concentration, a movie and an exercise show -- as Variety said: "Probably the first time anywhere that an educational television station has topped the commercial competition.\footnote{John Culhane, "Report Card on Sesame Street," \textit{New York Times Magazine}, May 24, 1970, p. 34.}
The one-hour, five-day-a-week *Sesame Street* had a budget of approximately eight-million dollars for 26-weeks of programs, supplied by the Ford, Carnegie and Markle Foundations as well as the U.S. Office of Education and the Office of Economic Opportunity. In its program proposal, the Workshop described as its objective the development of a television series that will:

...promote the intellectual and cultural growth of preschoolers, particularly disadvantaged preschoolers. Not only will it attempt to teach specific information, such as language and mathematical skills, but it will strive for the broader aim of getting children to learn how to think for themselves.34

In order to reach the special audience in the slums and ghettos who need preschool preparation more than most, in addition to as many other preschool children as possible, what must have been one of the most thorough publicity drives in history was undertaken.

Major promotion campaigns were launched by CTW and by local ETV stations, using not only major newspapers and national magazines, but also "soul" radio stations, Negro publications, comic book syndicates, neighborhood associations, mother's groups, church and welfare organizations, Head Start centers, and nursery schools.35

In an effort to achieve the stated objective, as well as attract their target audience, the program drew upon the

34Morris, p. 70.

skills of leading educators, child-development specialists, psychologists, school teachers, film-makers, writers, and artists.

Mrs. Joan Ganz Cooney, who heads the Children’s Television Workshop which produced the program, explained the use of commercial production techniques and the fast-paced variety format used on the program this way:

Before we can teach anything, the children’s program must first hold its audience — one that is accustomed to slick action-packed television fare. We believe both the content and pace of the show must be lively, entertaining and varied.\textsuperscript{36}

While feeling that the utilization of commercial techniques is necessary in order to garner and keep a preschool audience, Mrs. Cooney does not espouse commercialism on children’s programs as such:

I can’t endorse the selling of products to children. It is exploiting. They’re planting all kinds of needs for material objects which many of the children can’t afford. Companies should underwrite children’s shows and simply have announcements to that effect at the beginning and end.

I feel that commercial television is 'blowing' a great opportunity. We know that all these children are at their sets, but society hasn’t yet worked out what do do about it.\textsuperscript{37}

Critical comment on \textit{Sesame Street} was numerous and highly complimentary. Jack Gould of the \textit{New York Times}\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36}Morris, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{37}Hickey, "The Key Word Is Entertainment," p. 12.
hailed the program as the undisputed hit of the new season. Speaking specifically of Mrs. Cooney and head producer David Connell, he said:

In a four week period, under all the handicaps of noncommercial TV they have come up with a success. The show's charm is that no secrets last too long and the best techniques are used for constructive rather than sales ends. Parents of youngsters anywhere from 2 to 5 need not worry about the conduct of the omnipotent box; the element of condescension is avoided.

With engaging puppets, self-effacing adults leading group activities and adroit use of spots to get across to the listener the appearance and sound of letters and numbers, Sesame Street is a genuine accomplishment of 1969-70.

Sesame Street, for untold children, is something to look for on the dial, not a random excuse to see what is being broadcast.38

Another illustrative example of the praise received by the program is provided by Clayton Riley in his article, "A Black Father on Sesame Street."

And if the show is compared to virtually the whole range of current children's video programming, a definite glimmer, frequent gleam is regularly poking through. Which is another way of saying that my two daughters, Hagar 5, and Grayson 3, are caught up with Sesame Street, checking it out Monday through Friday, and I'm not unhappy about its effect on them. The show doesn't do it all, but it does much more than practically all the others combined. And I'll take a part in doing the rest for my two terrors.39


In April 1970, the program was honored with the coveted Peabody award for "imaginative use in adapting television methods to teaching preschoolers numbers, letters, and basic values." Numerous lesser awards came before and were to follow. By June, Jack Gould was calling the advent of the program, "By all odds the most significant event of a generally desultory television season..."

_Sesame Street_ has become almost a video religion in some quarters and has generated extensive discussion among sociologists and educators. But more pragmatically the program adds up to one thing: After heaven knows how many years, public broadcasting has finally come up with a hit all its own.41

Richard K. Doan in _TV Guide_ points out that measuring the achievements of _Sesame Street_ is impossible at this moment, not only does new evidence of its impact emerge daily, but its ultimate effect on American education may not be fully known for years. "For instance, it is widely suspected in education circles that the series has so schooled the preschoolers that kindergarten may never be the same again."42


In his "Report Card on Sesame Street," John Culhane notes that probably the principal objection to the use of television for preschool education is that while the middle-class child will learn the things TV can teach anyway, from a rich environment of books, records, vacations, and parental conversations overheard, the ghetto child needs much more than its smattering of cognitive learning.\textsuperscript{43} In this regard he quotes Sister Mary Mel O'Dowd who drew up the curriculum for Chicago's Archdiocesan Head Start Program and who now directs the curriculum of Capitol Head Start in Washington, D.C.

\textbf{If Sesame Street is the only thing ghetto kids have, I don't think it's going to do much good. It never hurts a child to be able to count to 10 or recognize the letters of the alphabet, but without the guidance of a teacher, he'll be like one of our preschoolers who was able to write 'CAUTION' on the blackboard after seeing it on the back of so many busses and told me 'that says 'STOP,'"}\textsuperscript{44}

The absence of a one-to-one relationship of teacher and pupil and a concern over the hardsell of abstract knowledge are major factors considered by Jeanette Veatch, Professor of Elementary Education at Arizona State University, in a review of Sesame Street for the Educational Broadcasting Review. Professor Veatch feels that it is the best

\textsuperscript{43}Culhane, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 70.
program ever made for preschoolers on television and that it probably will never be bested, "But to say, as have some reviewers and viewers, that his is The Best Way to teach is plain, unadulterated hog wash." She thinks that to criticize the content is really "nit-picking," and that the techniques used effectively achieve the goals, however, she is not content to see the adaptation of the techniques used in regular classroom situations.

No teacher can sell knowledge as does Sesame Street. It is the rare one who can sell it so beautifully, charmingly, and hold their child audience mesmerized. The developers of the program learned well from their conferees in the advertising world. All the tricks of sight and sound that gain fast attention and hold it, are used, day in and day out. It is the epitome of television programming. But, as a model for the daily operations of real classrooms it will only bring us to the disaster creeping up over the horizon.46

Speaking at the American Management Association's sixth annual conference and exposition on education and training in New York, author-columnist-educational consultant Arnold Arnold carried Professor Veatch's views one step further.

Children will probably survive the nonsense and the hysteria that spew forth from the TV Workshop and from its minions. But public policy in day-care, nursery school, kindergarten and other early education have already been detrimentally affected.

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46Ibid., p. 60.
Further, parental judgments about their children's educational needs have also been harmed by this program.47

Television critic Robert Lewis Shayon has taken a somewhat different tack, allowing that the acquisition of cognitive skills is important, but hardly the answer to our society's social and personal ills.

A mechanistic, technological system has brought us to the brink of self-destruction. It is our emotional life that needs therapy. A feeling of cognitive competence can contribute to a preschooler's self-esteem, but it never gets to the roots of his attitudes and values and his relationship with others.48

Shayon goes on to suggest that the series has borrowed too heavily from the high-pressure patterns of commercial television.

The guiding faces and voices that make for child growth require articulate, open, expressive love -- and space -- for a child's response to flow back. Fantasy and reality are often threateningly mixed up to a preschooler. In the present format orality is recurrent; animals in cartoons eat up letters and numbers. Two adult clowns, in the style of Abbott and Costello, play the smart-dumb duo, releasing a form of aggression against adults.

No doubt the child psychologists of the series know the pitfalls and have counted the costs, betting on the benefits of harmless play and fantasy. The child's world is still a mystery, even to those who study it carefully. A child watching TV laughs with


glee -- who really knows what is going on inside his mind? We are told that Oedipal anxieties usually become latent once the child enters school, but that they are reinvoked when adolescence begins. Perhaps Sesame Street ought to be aimed at children from eight to thirteen; they know the difference between fantasy and reality, enjoy a laugh at adults, and are hungry for cognitive and mechanical skills.\textsuperscript{49}

The suggestions Shayon makes in his final paragraph would seem to be pointing Sesame Street more in the direction of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood where primary importance is given to learning about one's personal feelings.

The preschooler needs assurance. In establishing a more loving, supportive, adult relationship with a preschool audience, the series would cut its own Oedipal ties to commercial TV and find a richer, more useful maturity.\textsuperscript{50}

There seems to be general agreement that most preschool children spend a considerable amount of time watching television. There is far less agreement on why they watch what they watch, and on what the effects of watching may be. Programming specifically for very young children has been extremely limited on commercial television networks. At the present time only Captain Kangaroo, on C.B.S. is planned primarily for preschoolers. Many claim, not without justification, that even very young viewers are considered by commercial network programmers first and foremost for their

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
influence on the market place.

While not responsible for their creation, National Educational Television has supported and distributed three programs for preschool children. In succeeding chapters one of these programs, *Misterogers' Neighborhood*, will be explored in detail.
CHAPTER IV

CHILDREN'S CORNER AND FRED. M. ROGERS

Misterogers' Neighborhood has not achieved its excellence by accident. It is the result of Rogers' fifteen years of eighty-hour weeks of often obscure toil in understaffed and underbudgeted television studios, eight years of lunch-hour studies at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and uncounted hours of study and consultation with the staff of the Arsenal Child Study Center, a facility of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine.¹

As is often the case, what appears to be an overnight success is in reality the culmination of many years of serious application and hard work. For Fred Rogers thousands of hours of television programs for children preceded the creation of the present Misterogers' Neighborhood series in 1966.

The first children's program for Rogers began to take shape in the Fall of 1953, when a staff was being assembled and construction and planning were underway for the opening of WQED, Pittsburgh's Community Television Station. Fred Rogers returned to his native area in November after two years as an assistant producer and floor director with N.B.C. in New York to work in programming at WQED.


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Earlier that fall Josephine Vecari, who was later given the stage name Josie Carey by Dorothy Daniel, was appearing in a review at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. In one big production number she was a little girl called Teeter Totter Tessie. Dorothy Daniel who was assistant to Leland Hazard, the president of WQED, saw the show and thought Josie would be a good hostess for a children's television program. Mrs. Daniel sent a book and a note to Josie and asked if she'd be interested in doing a program for children on educational television. Josie went to work at WQED October 23, 1953, at first primarily as a secretary.

Everyone on the staff was encouraged to develop any program ideas that came to them. Josie was working on children's programs. Fred knew she had an idea for a game show and brought the rules to a game he had found and left them with a note on her desk. When she went to thank him they started talking about children's programs and found they shared many ideas.

Although the major effort by everyone at the time was toward a fund raising campaign for the station, Fred and Josie found time each afternoon to work on a children's program. They decided it would be fun if furniture came to life in an attic set.

We started to develop the people in the attic. We had Lydia Lamp, who was engaged to Lawrence Light for years and years and years. We had Gramophone who was the broadcaster and the gossip for the whole place. We had Philodendron and Rhododendron, the two plants in the family, and we had a bookworm who lived
in an encyclopedia. We had a plastic fish whose name was Poo Poo Chanel who talked with a French accent and who was in love with Bill Bookworm.²

They would go to Mrs. Daniel with their ideas and she would always say, "That's the best thing I've ever heard in my life. Now you write it all down." By the time they had worked out the attic idea they had fifty-four pages. When the first edition of the station magazine came out Children's Corner was the name given the program by Mrs. Daniel. Fred and Josie called the attic segment "It's A Small World."

Although it had never occured to Mrs. Daniel that Josie wouldn't be the hostess on the program, when William A. Wood became the WQED manager he insisted on auditions. For the audition Fred wrote the music and Josie wrote the lyrics to, "Why Hi, Don't I Know You," and they worked out a story and some other little things. They were the best prepared and it was decided they would do the children's program.

The first set was a plain grey background painted with a clock, a globe, and a mailbox. The furniture that came to life in the attic segment was purchased from Goodwill.

Various segments of the hour long program were loosely tied together by Josie. The format was written on a yellow pad the day of the program and very little rehearsal time was

available. A man from the Pittsburgh Zoo with a lady assistant did an animal segment. A fifteen-minute German Lesson prepared at The Ohio State University is easily recalled by the hostess because of the frequency with which something would go wrong with the kinescope recording. When something went wrong or a segment was shorter than planned for, it was Josie and Fred who filled the time.

I'd only have maybe enough material for five minutes. So I'd just start talking about something or Fred would see that we were in panic time and he'd put the little Tiger out and I'd talk to Fred about anything, anything at all. Fred also played the organ, but you just couldn't believe the handicaps we suffered under. First of all, there were high school kids running the cameras so they were just playing games. The set was in one end of the studio and the organ in the opposite end. Fred wore sneakers all the time and he'd run the whole length of the studio to play or work the puppet.3

Neither the performers nor the studio crew had had any television experience so everyone learned by doing. Josie feels that there is no way one could get that kind of television experience today.

It was the stock company for young actors and actresses. It was the barn theatre of television. It got so we could cover almost anything that went wrong. I remember one day there was a toucan loose in the studio and it flew all over the place.4

An early crises came after the program had been on the air only two or three weeks, when the manager announced that

3Carey interview.

4Ibid.
the station's budget would have to be cut. While admitting that Children's Corner was successful, he felt that there were too many people on the station staff. He proposed letting Fred go. Fred happened to go into Mrs. Daniel's office when she was fighting for him and overheard this. As Josie Carey described it:

It didn't really matter whether they fired him or not. I don't know whether you're aware of the fact, but Fred is very wealthy and I think that Mr. Wood felt that he'd continue to work and they'd be able to save the sixty-dollars they paid him. Whatever they paid him, they paid me less. They paid me forty-five. He figured that they could get along without having to pay him. They'd still have him around doing the work, but Mrs. Daniel wouldn't hear of that and I said if they fired Fred I'd go too.5

The proposed firing was never carried out.

One segment in the early Children's Corner programs was called "the Noisy Party." While a lady played piano, children sang songs and banged on pots and pans for twenty-minutes.

It's a wonder we survived -- that people continued to watch us what with the German lessons breaking down all the time, and the Noisy Party, and the zoo man who would take as much time as he pleased. Some days it would be ten-minutes, and some days it would be twenty-five or thirty, and he'd drone on. He loved snakes. We had more snakes on our program that first year. So it's a wonder people continued to watch. But they watched and they liked us. And they put up with these other segments until finally through the mail we started to see that -- mothers would write, "Gee, we wish you were on longer and we'd have a little less of the snakes or we'd have a little

5Ibid.
less of the Noisy Party. We don't see what the point is for these kids sitting around banging on things."

Junior League members did a segment called the "Doll's House," where they manipulated dolls to go with stories read by one of the members. Invariably some League member would walk in front of a camera or the dolls would fall down. When it seemed that just about everything that could go wrong was going wrong, Mrs. Daniel provided the needed encouragement.

We'd go to Mrs. Daniel and say we'd like to buy a new puppet. We don't have any budget. We had no budget whatsoever. What we could beg, borrow, or steal we'd use. Or Fred can't do anymore voices. He can do a falsetto and he can do his own voice for Grandpere, and we meowed for Henretta. And she would say to us, "You know, in the early days of radio in Chicago I sat in this office and there were two men at the next desk. And those two men had problems just like yours. In fact, they were named Sam and Henry and their problems got to be so great they decided they were going to give it all up." They were going to do this and that, but they stuck with it. They'd manage to solve that little problem. And, you know, who they turned out to be? Amos and Andy. Well, those two men turned out to be every team that ever was. Every time we'd go in with a problem she'd tell us about these two men and they turned out to be somebody else in early radio. And, you'd come out of there thinking, "Well, if they can do it so can we." According to her there wasn't a thing we couldn't do.

During this time Dr. Spock was on the faculty at the University of Pittsburgh. He was doing a television conversation with three or four mothers about child care and the

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6Ibid.
7Ibid.
Public Affairs Director and a producer from N.B.C. came to see the program. While at WQED they saw the Children's Corner and asked for a kinescope recording. In early August of 1955, Fred and Josie were invited to come to New York and asked if they would replace Paul Winchell for four Saturday mornings beginning August 20th. They, of course, accepted and for the first time had a substantial budget for their program. A Variety review noted the influence of Fran Allison and Burr Tillstrom:

It's a good influence, although the Carey-Rogers team lacks some of the humor and imagination of the Kukla, Fran, and Ollie creators. The latter series had considerable adult appeal, whereas Children's Corner is slanted strictly for the tots.8

Mail response to the program was so great that when an opening came in the schedule they were invited back beginning December 24th.

When four of the Children's Corner programs appeared as a replacement on N.E.C. during the late summer of 1955, 54,000 letters were received from children asking for "Tame Tiger Trganization" memberships, and the following January, when Children's Corner ran for twenty-six Saturday mornings on N.E.C. the series averaged 6,000 letters each program.9

Josie and Fred continued to do their daily program at WQED and would fly to New York every Friday afternoon, do the

8Variety, August 24, 1955, p. 27.

9"Misterogers' Biography," p. 2. (Mimeographed.)
Saturday morning program at N.B.C. live, and fly back to Pittsburgh Saturday afternoon.

Finally that got to be too much so we produced the Friday program and we let another girl take over. We got her more guests, but we were still responsible for that program.  

Children's Corner was produced by the N.B.C. Public Affairs Department and remained sustaining. The limited time Josie and Fred were able to spend in New York made personal promotion almost impossible and a sponsor was never found. The final program on the network aired April 28, 1956.

That summer Fred took the summer off and went to Nantucket. In the Fall Children's Corner returned to WQED. Several commercial opportunities at this time were rejected by Fred because of the studies he had begun at Western Theological and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Josie accepted an offer from KDKA in Pittsburgh to do a morning program, Josie's Story Land, which was syndicated to Baltimore and Cleveland.

The minute I took the thing at KDKA, they, WQED, cut my salary. You know, it wasn't a case where you got raises every year. They had so much money to work with and they tried to get anybody to do anything for nothing.  

When Ted Neilsen, now Assistant Professor of Speech at the University of Massachusetts, joined the WQED directing

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10 Carey interview.

11 ibid.
staff in 1956, he was assigned Children's Corner live, five-
days-a-week from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The first director of
the program had been John Ziegler. He was followed by Carl
Freebourn. Neilsen replaced Bob Fotts who in addition to
directing had sung on the program. Any available talent was
pressed into service. Neilsen appeared as Director Neilsen,
Mr. Chemistry, and as Mr. Camera in a segment where he
taught photography.

At about this time Fred began to appear on camera as
Prince Charming dressed in formal attire and would sing and
talk. In addition to Children's Corner for awhile he did a
noontime Prince Charming program.

During the 1956 - 1958 period when Neilsen directed,
the program continued to depend primarily on volunteer help
both on and off camera. There was little pre-program plan-
ning and nearly all of the dialogue was ad-libbed. Since
there was no script or format prepared, Neilsen made his own
outline of the various segments.12

Fred, in addition to manipulating the puppets and
doing the voices, played the theme and incidental music as
well as accompanying Josie on the organ.

After nearly nine years on WQED, Children's Corner
left the air. Following his ordination as a minister of the

12 Ted Neilsen, Personal interview, Amherst,
Massachusetts, July 15, 1970.
United Presbyterian Church in 1963, Fred accepted an opportunity to go to Toronto and produce a children's program for The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The first *Misterogers* shows appeared as a fifteen-minute daily program for a year on the C.B.C. These programs were similar to the present "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments and were the following year incorporated into a daily, half-hour format on WTAE-TV, the A.B.C. affiliate in Pittsburgh. The same segments provided a nucleus for the first one-hundred *Misterogers' Neighborhood* programs when production began at WQED in the Fall of 1966.

Fred asked Josie to come to Canada during her vacation and do five programs with him. "I did and they were five lovely programs. By then he was working with scripts, really weighing every word, which is something that I never did."13 In all the years they had done *Children's Corner* together, including the time on N.B.C., they had never worked with a script. This spontaneity often provided great pleasure for the performers and crew.

I remember one time at N.B.C. when he broke up the whole studio. King Friday handed me the dictionary. He was giving me a royal test to see if I measured up to something or other, and he said if I passed this test that meant that I had royal blood or something. So he said, "This is the test," and he handed me this enormous dictionary. And he said, "Tell me the word that I'm thinking of.

13 Carey interview.
Find the word I'm thinking of in this dictionary." The king since he was a hand puppet could hardly get this enormous book up. And he tells me to find the word he's thinking of and, of course, I cracked up.14

Following her appearance on the Canadian Misterogers series, Josie only worked with Fred on a few programs in the beginning of Misterogers' Neighborhood. On these she appeared as Emily Brontosaurus in a dinosaur costume.

New attention was focused on Fred Rogers when he stepped from behind the scenes to become the program host. A news release from National Educational Television suggested that parents across the country were asking:

"Who is this Fred Rogers that the children call their friend? What is he really like?"

Everyone who has met him says, "He's for real. He treats children with respect because he genuinely, honestly respects them."

The story of childhood's favorite TV personality and his daily half-hour series Misterogers' Neighborhood is that of a young man who instinctively understands the special world of childhood.15

Fred Rogers was born to James Hillis and Nancy (McFeeley) Rogers March 20, 1928, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. His father was a successful manufacturer. He briefly attended Dartmouth College majoring in languages, but went on to earn

14Ibid.

15"News from N.E.T. .." National Educational Educational Television, New York. (Mimeographed.)
a Bachelor of Music degree from Florida's Rollins College in 1951. It was here he met his future wife, Joanne Byrd. They were married July 9, 1952. Their two sons James Byrd and John Frederick are now age eleven and nine.

Following graduation from Rollins, Fred spent over two years with N.B.C.-TV in New York City. He served as assistant producer of The Voice of Firestone and the N.B.C. Television Opera Theater; and was later promoted to network floor director, supervising The Lucky Strike Hit Parade, and The Kate Smith Hour, among others.

Writer Eliot A. Daley tells of how an experience at this time contributed to Rogers' later work with children.

At one point in Rogers' early career in television, he served as floor manager for the former western movie personality Gabby Hayes who was at the time the host on a program of film reruns. Awed by Hayes' aplomb at performing before the television cameras and the millions of youngsters who would be watching a show, Rogers once asked how Hayes avoided feeling intimidated by such a massive audience. "Freddie," replied the veteran star, "when I look into that television camera I just think of one little buckaroo a settin' out there."16

Back in Pittsburgh in the Fall of 1953, Fred worked in setting up the program schedule for WQED. As one of a dedicated group of young people responsible for getting the station on the air he gained knowledge of television production that could only come from a local station situation.

16Daley, p. 38.
During the next few years while producing *Children's Corner*, Fred furthered his education with eight years of classes at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and many courses in child development at the Arsenal Family and Children's Center. When he was ordained a minister in the United Presbyterian Church in 1963, the charge delivered by Dr. William Barker in summary called for him to go and find new modes of Christian communication. In his continuing work with children he has sought to carry out this charge. Eliot Daley quotes him on this subject:

> Jesus had a very special feeling for children and I think he really learned from them, from their unfettered approach to things. When he said to the men, "Please don't send the children away. Let them come to me," I think he really wanted to be with them. I think there was an important kind of kinship he felt with them.17

Rogers looks at himself as a minister and teacher, not as an entertainer or actor. He told Christopher Wren:

> I want to help children become autonomous. There is so much wasted energy in schools where conformity is the highest value. My great joy is to see what comes forth from a child who isn't shackled. The joy should not have been pounded out of learning.18

In remarks made April 16, 1969, accepting the George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Award for distinguished achievement and meritorious public service for *Misterogers'*

17Ibid.

Neighborhood, Rogers outlined his work.

We believe that man hasn't begun to realize his own great potential for good. It is only by encouraging a child to find value within himself that our world can be changed for good -- only when we can stop mad bombardment of children under the guise of entertainment (even educational entertainment) with no regard for morally developmental implications.

Yes, growing comes from within AND SO DOES DRAMA. The real drama for children is their own growth, phase by phase ... their very real concerns about being small, and dogs that bite, and water that goes down drains, and brothers and sisters, and whether anybody thinks a little child is worth while.

I, who have chosen to work with children, am committed to the task of understanding their inner needs and building a helpful relationship to deal in a healthy way with these needs.

I'm grateful to N.E.T. and The Sears-Roebuck Foundation and N.E.T.'s participating stations, and to my home television station WQED (Pittsburgh) for their long term support and to the George Foster Peabody awards committee for this encouragement.19

One of the most dramatic points of Fred Rogers' career in television came a few weeks later when he was asked to testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications in support of the Magnuson bill (S. 1242), which would authorize $20 million for 1970 for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. According to Robert Lewis Shayon, Rogers had to

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19"Misterogers' Peabody Award," National Educational Television, New York, April 17, 1969. (Mimeographed.)
exhibit the "stubbornness of innocence" in order to be granted ten minutes in which to touch Senator Pastore from Rhode Island with his gentle spirit.

It was getting near lunch in the fifth-floor hearing room of the Senate Office Building; the Senator was unambiguously in a hurry to wind up the day-and-a-half session. By this time it had become clear to observers that a rather transparent game was being played.20

The purpose of the hearings was to build up a record of Public Television's achievements, needs, and promises, which Senator Pastore could use to persuade his busy colleagues to vote "yes" on the money authorization. The chairman suggested that they "syncopate" their testimony, and "just give us the highlights -- you can be sure we'll read it."21

Mr. Rogers noted to Senator Pastore that his was a philosophical statement and would take about ten minutes to read.

So I will not do that.

One of the first things that a child learns in a healthy family is trust, and I trust what you have said, that you will read this. It is important to me. I care deeply about children.22

21Ibid.
Somehow aggrivated, Senator Pastore asked him if he would like to read it. Rogers replied, "I would just like to talk about it."

When he was through Senator Pastore asked a few questions and then said, "I am supposed to be a pretty tough guy and this is the first time I have had goose bumps for the last few days." Mr. Rogers said, "I am grateful not only for your goose bumps but for your interest in our kind of communication. "Could I tell you the words of one of the songs which I feel is very important?"

Rogers spoke the words to "What Do You Do With The Mad That You Feel." When he was finished Senator Pastore said, "I think it is wonderful. It looks like you just earned the $20 million."\(^{23}\)

The incident was, of course, gleefully reported in the press and did a great deal to promote Misterogers' Neighborhood as well as Public Television.

There is a singular dedication in the life of Fred Rogers that is not often found. The narrator in the film Creative Person: Fred Rogers points out that many qualities are brought to bear upon Fred Rogers' work.

Qualities which crowd each other as the books and scripts, records, notes, and mementoes which fill his study.

\(^{23}\text{Ibid.}, p. 143.\)
Faith, a wry sense of humor, showmanship, a keen mind, and music -- much music. All of it, the obvious and the hidden, the agreeable and the contradictory are bent to the same purpose.\textsuperscript{24}

CHAPTER V

MISTEROGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD: THE PRODUCTION

Production of the first Misterogers' Neighborhood series began at WQED in Pittsburgh in October 1966. The Joseph Hone Department Store in Pittsburgh provided a grant to help with the production costs. These first one-hundred programs in black and white were aired beginning January 2, 1967 on eight stations which made up the Eastern Educational Network and in addition to Pittsburgh included New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Schenectady, N.Y., and the Maine Educational Television Network.1 In a special service memo, dated February 10, 1967, these programs were offered to other educational stations by the Educational Television Service, headquarterd in Bloomington, Indiana. The regular E.T.S. program rate at this time was $5.00 per half-hour. The Misterogers series was priced at the higher rate of $15.00 per program, $1,500 for the series.

In April 1967, Mr. Rogers made a very successful personal appearance at the WGBH-TV studios in Boston. This event drew a crowd estimated by the Boston newspapers at 5,000 to 6,000 youngsters and parents, along with considerable publicity for the series.

Rogers normally produces his program in Pittsburgh. He was in Boston yesterday to greet youngsters at WGBH in person for the first time and more than 5,000 showed up at the studios; at one time the line outside stretched for a quarter of a mile.

Trouble is, educational television being what it is, Rogers may not be able to continue after May because of lack of funds to produce the program, about $1,000 a show, substantially modest compared to commercial TV costs. (Another reason for some form of federally aided "Public Television." )

On May 19, 1967 the series ended in Boston. The press, however, continued to aid in the quest for financial support.

The overriding topic in last week's pile of mail was the subject of Misterogers departure from the airlines. If you don't think children watch Ch. 2, or that parents are up in arms, this will be an eye-opener. The letters poured in from all sides, and one was signed by 49 names.

There followed excerpts from nine letters protesting discontinuance of the program. A reply with the suggestion that they write directly to the National Educational Television Network was sent to all letters received both in Boston and Pittsburgh.

The Patriot Ledger in Quincy, Massachusetts concluded an editorial entitled "Worthwhile Television," by noting

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that citizens in the area had formed a South Shore "Friends of Misterogers" group seeking financial and moral support for the program.

Such support has not been solicited by Channel 2, but is welcomed by the station, which is also trying to help the Pittsburgh station, WQED, to find some way of continuing Misterogers.

We hope the success of this program will encourage the granting of foundation funds to continue it and that the friends of the program can obtain enough nationwide support to prove their point.5

Various foundations and companies were approached for support, among them the Cambridge, Massachusetts based Polaroid Corporation. Helen Peters, former Boston Globe newswoman, now Director of Publicity at WGBH, continued to provide fuel for the radio-television writers in the area.

A note from the industry underground. Three offers from commercial TV operations have been made to the children's program Misterogers' Neighborhood, unable to get funds from educational television for another season. Fred Rogers makes no secret that he prefers to work in educational television. What a shame if educational TV, which is supposed to stand for the good things of TV life, will not shell out some financial aid to keep him. I am not among those who believe that ETV is THAT poor.

Fact is ETV can ill afford NOT to keep his talent. ETV, too, must have its home-grown "stars" to pace programming. French Chef Julia Child is ETV's first "star" and look at the amount of good will and number of viewers she has brought to it. And

Misterogers is clearly its second "star." 6 Late in June 1967, Variety quoted a WQED spokesman as reporting that National Educational Television was interested, but that considerable money was still needed from a generous underwriter. "Costs come to $4,000 a half hour in black and white, $6,000 in color." 7

On July 11, 1967, John F. White, then President of N.E.T., and William F. McCurdy, President of the Sears, Roebuck Foundation, jointly announced a grant of $150,000 from the Foundation to N.E.T. for production and national distribution of Misterogers' Neighborhood.

Mr. White said the half-hour daily series, aimed at children from three to eight, will be released to N.E.T. affiliates that have participated in the Network's Children's Project by contributing production funds. An N.E.T. spokesman said yesterday that about 40 stations, including Channel 13 here, had contributed $150,000 to the project. That sum was matched by the foundation grant.

Misterogers' Neighborhood will be produced at WQED by Paul K. Taff, director of children's programming for N.E.T. The new programs will be available for distribution in February, 1968. However, negotiations are underway to distribute previously taped programs to N.E.T. affiliates. 8

The N.E.T. stations which participated in the Children's Program Project each contributed $5,200 yearly. For this N.E.T. offered them:

1. The half-hour videotape series *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, five per week for 52 weeks.

2. The videotape programs of the *Friendly Giant*, quarter-hour series on a five per week basis for 52 weeks.

3. Any specials which are produced or obtained with any remaining funds from this mutual project.

By mid-summer 1968, 130 new black and white, videotaped programs were finished and N.E.T. announced that production would begin in November of a new series of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, to be comprised of 65 programs (13 weeks) in color. This series would be distributed beginning in the Spring of 1969, following the re-run of the first 130 programs.

Again there will be no charge for tape, tape duplication, or distribution in connection with this project, and the payment of the $5,200 permits the feed of the programs to any multiple stations of a single licensee.9

The second color series of 65 programs was begun in October 1969, and completed in May 1970. This series, the first produced in the new $5.5 million dollar WQED studio-office complex, was hampered from the start by the necessity of working around crews completing the building construction. The last few programs were delayed and rescheduled more than once because of a case of the mumps which caused the producer-host to miss his first tapings since the series began.

9Paul K. Taff, Director of Children's Programs N.E.T., Memorandum to station managers, May 13, 1968. (Mimeographed.)
By January 1970, 133 educational stations were broadcast- 
casting the *Mister Rogers'* series and contributing the $5,200 
each a year toward its production and distribution. The 
Sears, Roebuck Foundation was in its third year of matching 
the monies provided by the stations. On January 9, 1970, 
John W. Macy, Jr., President of the Corporation for Public 
Broadcasting, wrote station managers to announce new support 
in the area of children's programming:

At the NAEB convention in November, the Corporation indicated it would make every effort to assist 
stations in acquiring children's programs. I am 
happy to report that a way has been found.

Beginning next October 1, the total cost to 
all stations of producing and distributing 
*Mister Rogers'* Neighborhood will be assumed by the 
Corporation. We were hopeful that this support 
might take effect earlier, but regrettably our di-
verse budget commitments prevent this. Meanwhile, 
beginning February 15, the Fred Rogers series will 
be made available by the Corporation to the 64 
stations which have not been carrying *Mister Rogers'* 
Neighborhood on a daily basis.

In total, this project represents a commit-
ment by the Corporation of approximately $500,000. 
I am sure that you and your colleagues who have 
supported this fine N.E.T. series up to this time 
agree that this is a bargain. We are happy to be 
able to free you of the cost of these programs, 
beginning in the fall.

I will be announcing this support project on 
January 16 and am enclosing a copy of the proposed 
press release.

With best wishes for the New Year.10

10 John W. Macy, Jr., President of the Corporation 
for Public Broadcasting, Letter to station managers, 
January 9, 1970.
The New York Times announced that the $500,000 from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting would cover broadcasts through September 1971. They also recognized the Sears, Roebuck Foundation as a heavy contributor to the program. "This year it is giving $180,000; and John W. Macy, Jr., president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and James Day, president of N.E.T., said they hope this support would continue."11

The latest series scheduled for production in the Fall of 1970, would now be available without cost to 197 Public Television Stations. In the preceding four years of Misterogers programs many changes had taken place.

When David Fu-Yin Chen joined WQED as a director in 1966, there was some talk of a children's series. He was asked if he would be interested in directing the program if it materialized. While admitting he was not particularly experienced, he said he would. Some months later he was called in by the Program Manager and given a kinescope recording to view of the program Fred Rogers had done on WTAE-TV, Channel 4, in Pittsburgh. Chen looked at it, made some suggestions, and soon began work on Misterogers' Neighborhood.

Prior to his association with WQED, Chen was employed for one year as a television producer-director at the Wayne

State University Mass Communications Center in Detroit, Michigan. The year before that he studied for an M.S. degree in radio and television which was awarded by Syracuse University in 1965. He had received his bachelor's degree in Music Education at Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan in 1957, and worked in music programming for the P.B.N. Radio Network in Taipei from 1959 to 1963. When he first came to the United States in 1963, he worked in Seattle, Washington as a radio announcer, producer, and TV representative for Overseas Radio and TV, Inc.

Chen believes that their common background in and love of music is one of the reasons he and Fred Rogers were able to work well together. Although they might differ on specifics concerning the production of the program, their basic thinking is very close. "People who love music tend to be more emotional, sentimental, and in this again we are alike."

During the four year period when he was directing some 350 Mister Rogers' programs, Chen went back to staff directing assignments at WQED during the five or six months each year that the Rogers' program was not in production.

In the first year he had only one paid assistant who helped out in various areas, but whose basic responsibility

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12 Chen interview.
was in collecting properties. This first year Chen did his own film work, shooting brief silent sequences with a Bolex camera. The WQED film editing facilities were so tied up with other station projects that it was necessary to spend between three and four hundred dollars to set-up a basic silent film editing table in Fred Rogers' basement.

Hedda B. Sharapan, who later became the Assistant Producer for the 1968-69, 1969-70 color series, worked from the beginning as a volunteer. From January 1967, she was on a regular part-time paid basis. Tapings the first season were scheduled three nights a week from 6:30 to 11:00 and this fit ideally into her schedule as a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh. Her primary responsibility was to assist Chen with timing the program. The "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments used in the first 100 programs were kinescope recordings from the programs which Mr. Rogers had done in Toronto for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Since electronic video-tape editing equipment was not available it was necessary to run smoothly through the entire twenty-nine minutes. While mechanical editing would have been possible it was not financially practical to do anything which might harm the tapes.

During the 1967-68, season with a larger budget available from N.E.T. and the Sears, Roebuck Foundation support, staff additions were proposed. Diana Dean was hired as Assistant Producer with the idea that her interest in film
would be utilized. It soon became evident that she could not function as Assistant Producer, assist Chen in the control room during production, and produce films. Within a month Hedda Sharapan was called back; this time on salary full-time.

As Film Producer for the series, Miss Dean produces, directs, and supervises the editing and transfer to videotape of short, usually silent films that are a part of the daily half-hour television programs. Miss Dean, who holds an A.B. degree in Speech from De Pauw University, Green castle, Indiana, and an M.A. degree in Theatre from Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, had a varied background in educational film making, theatre, and college teaching.13

A full-time artist was also added to the series at this time with a second full-time artist added for the 1968-69 season. During the first year all art work and props had been prepared by the WQED Art Department.

Growth and change in the production of the series has been directly linked to the capabilities of the available equipment. During the second year of the series WQED added two video-tape recorders equipped with electronic editors. This made possible on-the-spot corrections in case of

13 Diana Dean, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 11, 1969.
technical or talent errors. In order to conserve time and money, however, every effort was made to go straight through the half-hour.

The third year, 1968-69, brought the change to color and production emphasis was in this area. David Cehn sought information prior to beginning the series on what problems might be encountered with the switch. He found that the available knowledge was largely based on R.C.A. cameras while the cameras they would be working with would be Marconi. He was pleasantly surprised when so few problems arose. "First of all, the color is not as bright, not as colorful. Number two, they're very true color. Providing the cameras were set-up correctly, we didn't have any problems."14

The first year in color a part-time girl was hired to do make-up, however, she was dropped for the 1969-70 series. It was found that satisfactory results could be obtained with women wearing ordinary street make-up, and men applying a medium shade of pancake make-up.

Chen works with side-by-side color and black and white monitors in the control room. "The only thing I keep my eyes on is that anything we use for the show will be good both on color and black and white in light of the fact that seventy percent of the viewers still watch on black and white sets."15

14Chen interview.
15Ibid.
Others connected with the production, such as production assistant David Newell, were aware of changes that would be brought about in their areas with the advent of color taping.

We did a fashion show once that was in black and white. We got clothes through the ages, men's fancy clothes and so forth, and we didn't have to worry about the color coordination. Because everything came out in shades of grey you could have dark blue pants and a red top and it wouldn't make much difference. But now in color, you've got to think about all that -- how the person might blend into the background. A lady in a blue dress might blend into the cyc and so forth,16

With considerable experience and much more sophisticated equipment to call on a segmented shooting and editing method, similar to motion picture technique, was instituted by David Chen in 1969-70. In terms of work load, basically three programs are completed a week in three days of production. One day each week is set aside for editing. All program inserts such as films, and including the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments are taped first. Timing is totaled for all program inserts and the segments with Mr. Rogers at home are timed accordingly.

In the shooting plan, designed by Chen, there may be from three to eleven or twelve scenes per program. The taped segments and plan including reel number, length of segment, and video and audio cues are turned over to the

video tape editor. It is not necessary for the director to be present since a final check is made by the Assistant Producer Hedda Sharapan who views each completed program with a script as a guide. Rogers as producer decides which is better when there are two or three takes taped of a segment, however, he does not see the segments when they are spliced together into the total program. Chen admits that Rogers was at first concerned about this new technique for two reasons: (1) It would be difficult from a performer's standpoint to keep continuity and flow, (2) As producer he was taking a chance in not seeing the completed program. In practice it has worked out well. The disadvantages have been greatly outweighed by the obvious advantages in scheduling studios, crew, talent, and guests to the best advantage of all.

Transitions from segment to segment are achieved by simple visual devices employed by the director. The technique of dropping focus is used, for instance, along with dissolves and matching shots. Various wipes created with a special effects generator are used to go from matching shot to matching shot.

The weekly production schedule during the 1969-70 series called for taping on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. A production meeting on Tuesday afternoons provided the opportunity to discuss needs in art work, film, props, sets, and guests usually two weeks in advance.
The schedule on production days began at 7:00 A.M. when two engineers arrived to begin setting up the color cameras. The register and alignment were set by 9:00 A.M. and the next hour was used to set lights and color balance, dress and touch-up the sets as needed, and to do the audio set-up. Rehearsal would begin at 10:00 A.M. With from one-half to one hour off for lunch, the planned segments were usually completed by 5:00 P.M. In the early months this schedule could not always be adhered to because of the noise and confusion associated with the unfinished construction of the building.

A crew of seven engineers and four floormen are utilized. Many of these people have worked on the series all four years and as one would expect the team work is superb.

You've got to have a team. Everybody on the team counts. We have four guys on floor--floor managers, and they're running trolley, picture-picture and everything has got to be right on cue. I mean the doorbells, telephone, sound effects and so on and so forth.17

The calm tone set by the producer-host and the director is a factor which affects the smoothness of the taping sessions.

One of the floormen is primarily concerned with camera and time cues while another has the responsibility of the cue cards. The "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments are fully

17 Chen interview.
scripted since Mr. Rogers must do the voices for and work several puppets. With the exception of the Platypus family, Dr. Duckbill and his wife Elsie Jean, who are done by Bill Barker, Fred Rogers provides all the puppet voices.

Fred doesn't memorize the scripts because it's just too many scripts to memorize. We take a script and we tape it on the back of the tree or the castle or the clock. He reads it. I have to circle each -- for a king's voice he does a square block. To tell what voice he's going to use just by instantly looking at it it's a square for a male voice and for a female voice like Henrietta, it would be a circle.18

With this arrangement it is somewhat easier for Fred to see and adjust to his script as he continually looks back and forth at the monitor. Looking at the monitor is similar to looking at a mirror in that everything is backwards to the puppetier. The entire process becomes more complicated when a number of puppets are in a scene at the same time.

We had the marriage scene. There were five or six of the characters all at one time. Of course, other people were manipulating them, but he was doing all the voices.19

Production Assistant David Newell points out that the process becomes so automatic that sometimes Rogers forgets he talks for the puppets and expects them to talk for themselves. "Once he did that. He put both the King and the Queen out and just sat them there and didn't say anything.

18Newell interview.
19Ibid.
He forgot that he did the voices."20

When Mr. Rogers is on camera alone or with a guest the talk is ad-libbed with only a general outline prepared. He studies his script the night before production and cue cards are prepared by a floorman in the morning before rehearsal begins.

The crew of seven engineers is comprised of a crew chief, video operator, audio operator, video-tape machine operator, and either three cameramen without a boom microphone or two cameras with a boom operator.

The editors of a 1962 book on television programming for children at the local level, For The Young Viewer, in their discussion of staging pointed to the size of the television screen as one of television's special characteristics.

The traditional comment that the small size of the television screen contracts space and makes it difficult to present many kinds of material is perhaps less significant than the fact that the small screen may help the young viewer to feel himself its master. The small size of the screen can also stimulate the young viewer's imagination rather than confine it, if the program is staged for the eye and ear and imagination of the child. A child's program can be "spectacular," not in the sense of a swirling and large canvas, but in the intelligent use of the kinds of things that children enjoy.21

20Ibid.

Davis Chen has taken advantage of this characteristic and created a simple intimacy which compliments the content of the program in his choice and composition of shots. Extreme close-ups do not become overwhelming and are used only when it is necessary to show detail. On the other hand, seldom is depth and a feeling of space an objective. Although the sets are in reality quite large they are shot in such a way as to not create "bigness." Part of this is a deliberate attempt by the director to do nothing that would cause the disadvantaged child difficulty in identifying with the program. For this reason also, set dressings, such as the refrigerator, are not the newest, largest model.²²

Norman S. Morris in his complimentary article about Captain Kangaroo, The Friendly Giant, and Mister Rogers' Neighborhood points out that all three programs are calm and slow-paced yet millions of children are sitting still and viewing them. "The trigger-happy jolt that is experienced every few seconds in a typical cartoon show is missing."²³ While much of the pace on the Rogers' show is set by the host, a conscious effort on the part the director is also evident in the frequency he changes shots, the places where he chooses to change, and the method of change employed. The dissolve,

²²Chen interview.

for instance, is common on *Misterogers' Neighborhood*, while fast-cuts are extremely rare.

David Newell has been closely associated with the production aspects of *Misterogers' Neighborhood* in his assignment as Production Assistant and as a frequent performer as well. He is also the only staff member who was hired while in Europe. Newell, who has been with the series since the 1967-68 season, had worked as a part-time floorman at WQED prior to going to Europe on a vacation trip. When a replacement was needed for the original prop man David Chen and Don Brockett thought of Newell and he received a telegram in London.

During his first year with the series they completed 130 programs in black and white, starting in September 1967, and finishing in mid-July 1968.

Newell tries to have the necessary props made, bought, or borrowed two weeks in advance of the scheduled taping in order that they can be either approved at the weekly production meeting or replaced.

*Captain Kangaroo* is coming and Fred wants to give him a small stuffed, toy kangaroo. Try and find one of those when you want to. You know you can't. So I finally found one and I haven't had a chance to show it to Fred yet. If it doesn't work I have to go out and find five. I usually buy in fives because Fred can't go out to the department stores. We keep them in stock or take them back. Sometimes it's not worth taking things back. You waste more time. It's better to spend
five-dollars more than lose it in time later on. 24

Time, of course, is the most expensive commodity in producing the program. It is important to have everything set as much as possible in order not to waste studio time involving production staff, technical crew, talent, and guests.

Mr. Rogers likes to have unusual props and they are always related and interrelated to achieve the desired effect.

The prop always ties in with the program. It's always related—like the three bears. The three bears related to the puppets doing the three bears play. Then he had three Teddy bears that were also related. He showed the Teddy bears, real bears and the play. And everything is so related it can't just be anything. It has to be the right one. 25

The biggest problem Newell has encountered in his search for program material is getting animals. When the live bears were needed it happened to be the hibernation season. The only bears up and around were those associated with show business.

I called a local booking agency. Yes, they had a bear act that was playing in Florida right then, but he'd be playing up around Pittsburgh, and can play your date. So he came with a huge big trailer truck with all types of animals— even leopards in it. He brought out these three huge bears and brought them into the studio. We decided we might as well make the best of it while

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24 Newell interview.

25 Ibid.
we had them. We just needed them for one program. The puppets were putting on a play, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." So we did a special tape of them performing, rolling on barrels, etc.\textsuperscript{26}

In the 1969-70 series a raccoon was needed at a time that turned out to be the mating season. Since they are quite mean at this time the script had to be altered to keep the animal caged during his performance.

David Newell is the only member of the production staff other than the producer who appears as a "regular" on the program. In his role of Mr. McFeely with his "Speedy Delivery" service he provides a counterpoint to the relatively slow-paced style of Mr. Rogers. He thinks of the part as a "cartoon" character not a realistic old man. When he first joined the series Fred told him about the character and asked if he'd like to play it suggesting that he'd be fine for the part since he talked so fast in real life. He was never auditioned and appeared the first day he was in the scripts as his interpretation of Mr. McFeely. Fred liked the way it was done and has written him into the program with greater frequency.

As Assistant Producer on the 1968-69 and 1969-70 color series Hedda Sharapan has been responsible for a smooth behind-the-scenes operation. As a child she was an ardent fan

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
of Fred Rogers' early program *Children's Corner* on WQED. In college at Carnegie-Mellon University she majored in Biology and English before receiving a B.S. in Psychology in 1965. It was her interest in child psychology that brought her to *Misterogers' Neighborhood*. While waiting to hear from graduate schools she went to WQED to inquire about work in children's television programming and was referred to Fred Rogers. He, in turn, suggested that if she wanted to do something meaningful in children's television he would advise getting a Master's degree in child development and he highly recommended the program at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine. Although Rogers wasn't doing any children's program at the time he did call her when they started the first *Misterogers'* series in October 1966, and her volunteer, part-time work as assistant to the director developed into the full-time Assistant Producer's role in the Fall of 1968.

The original script written by Fred Rogers is turned over to the Assistant Producer who reads it carefully making note of anything that will be needed for the production such as art work, properties, guests, and special music. At the weekly production meetings she calls these items to the attention of the appropriate staff member and generally coordinates acquisitions. Her specific assignment in this area is to find the desired guests. For instance, if the script calls for a leather worker, sculptor, or a watchmaker it is up to her to find them. The search usually begins with
one's own acquaintances and here station personnel at WQED as well as those who work directly with the program have been helpful.

But you can lose on those kinds of things. I know Diana had an awful experience with Indian dancers. It happened to be a Boy Scout Troop that did Indian dancing. There was one fellow in the group who was an Indian and he taught the dances to the others. Well, what happened was they came to the studio and it really wasn't much of a dance and Fred had to choreograph an Indian dance.27

A basic difficulty which arises in looking for guests centers around problems encountered in using non-professional performers. Often those people who are very gregarious and effective in normal conversation become very nervous and tongue-tied when in front of a television camera. The problem becomes even more crucial when race or color is involved.

Should we bring in an actor? Say we needed a black florist. Does it make the black person look inadequate when you bring in a black florist and he's uncomfortable being on television? Should you rather bring in an actor and teach him some of the basic fundamentals of florist work?28

Technicalities inherent in the medium bring about other problems. An amateur doesn't know how to relate to the camera as an unseen audience.

Mr. Rogers will say to him, "I'd like you to meet my friends," and turn to the television camera and look right in the lens...and what does the fellow


28 Ibid.
do? He looks at the floor manager and the boom man, etc., and when he looks off like that it's distracting because the children at home don't know what he's looking at and they might think that something's going on out there that they are missing. 29

The question so far has been resolved in favor of the "real" person. There is general feeling among those associated with the production that children can sense that these are real people representing their true roles in the community and that something good comes out of that in terms of socialization.

He's had themes about giving shots and the man that gave the shots on the program is a real doctor so that the children are able to see the person who uses the inoculation needle as a real person who does that. And the barber, that's not trumped up at all, this is a man who can do that because that's who he really is. They're not actors. Recently there's been one about a research physician and it has to do with the inner workings of two rats. That's a real doctor and those are real rats he's working with in his studies. 30

A function of the Assistant Producer no less important than finding guests is that of production scheduling and coordinating guests and talent. It is essential that the scheduling be worked out with the director in such a way that the three days in the studio each week are utilized in the fullest manner. There must be enough work planned in the way of segments, but not too much to get finished.

29Ibid.

30Dr. Margaret B. McFarland, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.
Although the regular performers are paid the American Federation of Radio and Television Artists rate which is a day rate, most of them have other work and Mrs. Sharapan tried to work around their other commitments. This accommodation is a two-way affair, however, since most of the "regulars" are close friends of Fred Rogers and put work on the program high on their priority list.

As much as possible the talent and guest schedule is arranged a month ahead of production. A telephone call is made the night before as a reminder. When problems develop the number of calls multiplies. Sometimes the sixth or seventh telephone call can disrupt the entire chain and dictate beginning again.

Other duties of the Assistant Producer have included making travel and lodging arrangements for program personnel and out-of-town guests, keeping budget for talent and sidemen musicians, speechmaking, and reading and arranging replies to the fan mail.

Most of the music used on the program has been written by Fred Rogers or Johnny Costa and is owned by Small World Enterprises, Incorporated. It is, therefore, provided for in the contract with National Educational Television. Incidental music played by Johnny Costa on the piano as background is improvised according to the mood of the action.

Occasionally when other music is used clearance is arranged for by N.E.T. and a per needle drop fee is paid out
of the program budget. In these cases a complete record of the composition title, composer, length used, and exact notation of the time it occurred in the program is sent to N.E.T.

Additional musicians have been used from time to time to supplement the piano such as the four used for the 1969-70 opera production, and the same number on the Nighttime in Misterogers' Neighborhood special. David Chen has promoted the use of at least a trio because he feels that people are accustomed to hearing a simple orchestra rather than a solo piano. Joe Negri, who has appeared as "Handyman Negri" and in the 1969-70 series also as the owner of a music shop, is an accomplished guitarist who sometimes performs on the program.

The budget of approximately $6,000.00 per program for the Misterogers' series, while not high by commercial standards, is a considerable increase over the $30.00 per program Fred Rogers had to work with on Children's Corner.

Fifteen years ago, I helped launch this country's first community television station in Pittsburgh. My first children's program had a budget of $30.00. With the help of scores of volunteers, and some large but many small contributions, we have been able to keep our station serving as the community facility for which it was intended. Now, with the support of National Educational Television and the Sears, Roebuck Foundation as well as all the affiliated stations who carry our series, our daily program is seen by millions of children and now has a budget of close to $6,000. From $30 to $6,000 per program. But in a industry in which $6,000 buys less than 2 minutes of cartoons and $156,000 is
budgeted for one Saturday morning show, audience expectations are high. It is still by the good graces of many gifted people who care, that our programs attain the kind of quality which affords them a Peabody Prize as well as the highest rating in a test city such as Boston (all commercial programs included). 31

David Connell, executive producer of Sesame Street, was quoted by Richard K. Doan in TV Guide as reporting actual costs for that program at about $27,000 per hour in its first year. This was contrasted with $55,000 which the author said was the usual costs to a commercial network for a half-hour cartoon. 32 In 1964, Variety reported the weekday budget per quarter hour for Captain Kangaroo at $7,500. 33

The $6,000 figure for the Mister Rogers' Neighborhood programs covers all costs including staff salaries. Fred Rogers is the president and majority stockholder of Small World Enterprises, Incorporated which owns all of the creative elements on the program including the music. Fred Rogers works for Small World which in turn has the contract


33 Variety, July 29, 1964, p. 66.
with National Educational Television for the program.

Monies in the budget which involve WQED personnel, engineers, and facilities are paid directly to WQED along with a certain administrative overhead. Regular Misterogers' staff members including the Director - Associate Producer, Assistant Producer, Film Producer, Production Assistant, and artists are paid by WQED, but assigned full-time to the Misterogers' project. George Hill, Fred Rogers' Business Manager, feels that the project will go in the direction more and more of being a Small World project and less a WQED project. So far, the arrangement has worked out well.

Because it is a special project and by the very nature of it being a special project it gets certain special consideration at the station, lets say that, the regular on-the-air programming would not get. And for that reason, I think there are always certain jealousies which come up in WQED as a result of it. I'm sure that some of the regular employees of WQED feel that the people on the Misterogers' project are a privileged group although we have tried to live within the code of the station.34

Another factor which has facilitated the working arrangement between the project and WQED is the fact that Fred was one of the original people at the station. George Hill points this out: "Some of the people who first worked with him are still there, so I'd say his influence was felt strongly around the station, and I think Fred has a very

34George Hill, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.
personal feeling about the station."\textsuperscript{35}

George Hill, President of the George Hill Advertising Company in Pittsburgh, first became acquainted with Fred Rogers when his client The Joseph Horne Department Store was looking for a Christmas Television program. Hill and Lillian Daniels, the special events director at Horne's, invited Fred to lunch. During the preliminary telephone conversation Hill had told Rogers about what they wanted and later Fred said he had made up his mind to turn them down. When he heard the proposal, a series of 10-minute shows on commercial television at Christmas time in which there would be no commercials and he could do anything he wanted to, he agreed. They resurrected the old set which had been used at WQED from Fred's basement and he did twenty-seven programs the first season and repeated this a second season. It was during the first season that Fred asked Hill if he would like to manage him. At this point neither of them were sure what this would mean, however, Rogers felt that his performing work was beginning to grow and that it would make some sense for somebody to represent him in his business affairs.

The arrangement has become much more than that of a personal manager. Since Rogers writes all of his own music they are in the music publishing business and this had led to starting a record company. "I guess I'm the Sales Manager

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid.
of the record company. RCA manufactures and we sell it ourselves. As the program increases in outlets, audience, and recognition, merchandising possibilities cannot be overlooked.

This is what his regular series has done for us. It's made him, I guess you'd say, a household word so that when you go to market a phonograph record -- or whether it be educational materials or whatever it might be -- if it has his name on it now its pretty well guaranteed of success.

Because of the nature of the men and women involved the kind of contribution that can be made is as important as the financial possibilities. Future projects are planned which will involve educational materials, video tapes, films, and books.

The story of putting together the Misterogers' Neighborhood programs and other associated endeavors is one of a small group of totally dedicated and involved individuals doing the best they can with the resources at hand. Hedda Sharapan, the assistant producer, has summed up this commitment:

Another interesting thing about the way we operate this organization aside from Fred Rogers is that we all are responsible in carrying out the philosophy of the program in our own basic areas, in our business contacts, and in our social contacts.

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
The minute you say Mister Rogers you're identified with the program and what you say and how you act even in other situations reflects on what the Mister Rogers' philosophy is about. The sincerity, the care, and the trust has to penetrate through us and become interpreted in our own way and carried out in our contacts. 38

38Sharapan interview.
CHAPTER VI

MISTEROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD: THE CONTENT

Writing in *Presbyterian Life*, Eliot A. Daley observes that to all outward appearances *Misterogers' Neighborhood* is not substantially different from what one might expect a children's program to be:

...a combination of puppets, songs, interesting objects, all presided over by a genial host. But what Fred Rogers gently does through his puppetry, music, and conversation sets this program apart from anything else on television.¹

It is the purpose of this chapter to focus on the content of *Misterogers' Neighborhood*. In doing this attention will be placed on the formulation of ideas and writing process, the format, themes, and characters -- both live and puppets.

Formulation of Ideas and Writing Process

The quiet times when the actual mechanics of creating the *Misterogers' Neighborhood* scripts begins, come for Fred Rogers at a crooked house weathered by the salt winds of a

century on a far tip of Nantucket Island off the Massachusetts coast. It is here after supper and sunset that the programs take shape. "The hours through midnight are the times he likes best for shaping the lyrics, the settings, and the patterns of talk for the scripts of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." 2

During his vacation weeks in July and August he blocks out the next season's sixty-five scripts in an old garage across the road from his gray-shingled summer home. The number of completed scripts brought back to Pittsburgh for the beginning of production has varied, but runs about thirty.

He finishes them later in his weekend cottage near Pittsburgh, and talks them over with Dr. Margaret McFarland at the University of Pittsburgh's Arsenal Family and Children's Center. Eventually he hopes to accumulate 780 color shows, enough for three straight seasons. 3

The narrator on the Creative Person film about Fred Rogers, prepared by WQED in Pittsburgh for National Educational Television, speaks of the many needs of childhood:

Not the least of them is the need to talk and to be talked to. The need for meaningful dialogue. The need to find in such dialogue comfort, reinforcement, help in gaining control of the seemingly uncontrollable. It is this need to communicate with children about childhood which is

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Fred Rogers' main concern.\textsuperscript{4}

It is difficult for most adults to bring real understanding to childhood. Indeed, for many it is a time to be passed as swiftly and smoothly as possible. This can't be the case for a man who not only does a television program for children, but who has also dedicated his adult life to the task of communicating with them.

Out of a feeling for childhood ... an enchanted knowing of childhood. Out of memories personal, collected, he shapes songs, thoughts, dialogue which communicate the very essence of childhood.

Childhood not in a commercial sense. Not picture book childhood, funny and cute, but childhood that is growth and growing pains, wonder and disappointment -- as yet unfaced emotions which cause more sorrow than they cause joy.

Childhood -- archaic loneliness.
Childhood -- sanctuary and total peril.
Childhood -- selflessness and utter selfishness.
Childhood -- moody withdrawal and reckless abandon.\textsuperscript{5}

On this same film Fred Rogers speaks of his song, "I Like You As You are," as an example of work he did before his studies in child development, noting that it came out of a feeling for childhood.

...it's turned out to be one of the most important ones, I think, that we've written now.


\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
"I like you as you are,
Exactly and precisely,
I think you've turned out nicely,
And I like you as you are."

And children need to hear that. I don't think that anybody can grow unless he really is accepted exactly as he is. Cause if somebody's always saying to a child, "You're going to grow up and you're going to be fine," -- so much of that in this country anyway. That a child is appreciated for what he will be, not for what he is. He will be a great consumer someday. And so the quicker we can get them to grow up, and the quicker we can get them out of the nest so they will go out and buy...you know, set up their own home at twelve, maybe, then the better.6

Care is a key-word used by many in their evaluation of Fred Rogers. A New York Times article entitled "Misterogers Is A Caring Man," quoted him on this subject:

I talk about the stuff that dreams are made of. And I'm not in this as a stepping-stone to anything else -- this is what I want to do. There are parents and kids who are depending on me, and I've got some things I feel have got to be said. So many people think a kids' program is just a lot of clowns, balloons and that sort of thing, but I think of it as a direct offering of care. 'Misterogers' is a caring man.7

It is an awareness of this care that allows children to invest complete trust in Mr. Rogers, and promotes the feeling of "oneness" associated with him. One child, for example, told Dr. Margaret McFarland that Sesame Street was

6Ibid.

for all the kids. "Misterogers is just for me." An important contributing factor to this relationship is associated with the manner of presentation.

For a child of three, four, or five, who often has many persons with whom he is learning to share his family adults, the visual contact Mr. Rogers makes with the viewing child, by looking directly into the television screen while making some explanation or inviting the child's participation, may provide a longed-for experience in one-to-one relationship with an adult. This seems especially important to children who almost never have an adult to themselves and may not even have had such specific one-to-oneness with their mothers in infancy.

This means, according to Dr. McFarland, that the educational experiences on the program take place in a consistent, emotionally meaningful relationship between Mr. Rogers and the watching child. The younger the child, the more essential is such a relationship to the child's capacity to learn.

Dr. McFarland feels that the relationship is even more significant for children from impoverished environments. The focus on the learning problems of such children has indicated that they have difficulties in learning not because they have been deprived of experience with material things, but

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8 Dr. Margaret B. McFarland, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.

9 Dr. Margaret B. McFarland, "The Educational Significance of Misterogers' Neighborhood," p. 4. (Mimeographed.)
rather because they have been deprived of consistent one-to-one relationships with other persons "through which their experience could be regulated and invested with confidence in the goodness of what one can see or hear or feel by concentrating on sensory impressions."\textsuperscript{10}

Some children have well developed foundations for the use of the program, but for those less well prepared, the affective quality of the communication of Mr. Rogers is even more significant. The basis for the significance of \textit{Misterogers' Neighborhood} as an educational program, according to Dr. McFarland, is the relationship that Mr. Rogers is able to establish with the individual watching child.

Because Mr. Rogers has become to them a meaningful adult, who is clearly invested in the development of the child counterpart of his adult self, the children watch and listen to him with intense concentration.\textsuperscript{11}

On a more simple level he has become a "significant other" for children brought up in an age of expanding environment and diminishing close relationships. Rogers told Christopher Wren, "Before we got so mobile in this country, there was always a grandparent or an uncle who could give a child undivided attention. I think that I'm this adult male friend who stops in."\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{12}Wren, p. 105.
Some aspects of what a creator-writer brings to a work are not easily distinguished in the multitude of factors and experiences which go to make up the man. The sincerity and sensitivity were probably already present, but the insight Fred Rogers brings to his work relates directly to his background and continuing work in child development.

If somebody without child development experience would try to write a television program for the preschool child he would try to dip back into his own childhood and think of the kinds of things that he laughed at, things that he liked. Unless you really have worked with preschool children you don't really know what their world is like. As far back as you can remember is maybe six, seven, eight years old, but Fred Rogers has worked so intensively with young children and he has such insight and sensitivity about their world that's based on this care and great interest to be able to pull out the meat and the basic issues of childhood, that he's been able to understand what a two, three, and four year old is going through.\textsuperscript{13}

During Fred Rogers' first visit with Dr. Margaret McFarland at the Arsenal Family and Children's Center, a child came to the door and asked if Dr. McFarland could come down for juice-time since one of the children was having a birthday. Discovering someone else there, she went back to tell her teacher that Dr. McFarland's "boyfriend" was in the office and she wanted to know if she could invite him for juice too.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Hedda B. Sharapan, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 24, 1970.

\textsuperscript{14}McFarland interview.
At the Children's Center he worked in a sustained way observing the children. The Fall following his graduation from seminary he began to take formal classes. Thereafter he took all of the basic courses offered from preschool to early adolescence including the practicum.

The name, "Arsenal Family and Children's Center," indicates a point of view that pervades the work done there: that children grow in families. The center is operated jointly by the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine and the Allegheny County Health Department. According to Dr. McFarland its' threefold purpose is:

1. For professional education of many persons who will work with children in differing roles. Some of these might be the child psychiatrist, child analyst, pediatric nurse, the pediatrician, the psychologist, and many of the people who work with children in specialized ways like working with handicaps of one kind or another get training here. And we should mention the educators.

2. Research and consultation to child caring agencies.

3. Direct service to children and families.15

While Fred Rogers was working at the Center, Dr. McFarland found that the children became unusually interested in music and puppet play. The puppets were used for their own purposes and not merely in imitation of Mr. Rogers. Changes in Fred Rogers also seemed to occur at this time with

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15Ibid.
the axis of his professional work shifting even further from music and television which became subordinate to his work with children. His whole purpose became focused on fostering the growth of children. It is here, in the depth of his investment, that Dr. McFarland feels he differs most from a program like Captain Kangaroo.

This investment continues to grow in his consultation with Albert V. Corrado, M.D., psychoanalyst; his participation in a bi-monthly continuing case child analytic seminar with members of the Pittsburgh Psychoanalytic Institute; and in his regular meetings with Dr. McFarland. A grant to the Center pays for two hours weekly of Dr. McFarland's time. As Dr. McFarland explains these meetings, a lot of the time they simply talk about kids. "Months later what we have discussed appears on the program."

There was a long time in which he and I were talking about family themes and how important the family is to children and later on. And our children had often asked where King Friday's wife was. They asked in a childlike way, "where's his mother?" meaning where's his wife, because to a little child mother and father are the names for a husband and wife. So he developed that theme of Sara Saturday. You know, Sara is the name he gives his wife. His wife is Joanne to most people. I think her name is Sara Joanne or Joanne Sara, but he always calls her Sara. So when he gave King Friday a wife the name is Sara Saturday.16

16 Ibid.
Dr. McFarland's investment in ideas that eventually become a television program is considerable. Her work is recognized in the majority of material written about the series. While she has a strong influence on the basic concepts, she told Elliott H. McCleary the way in which they find creative life and are expressed on the program is often a surprise to her.

We talk about children and the dynamics of their development. Subsequently, Fred Rogers uses these themes we have discussed as raw materials for this creative work. When I see the program as he has developed it, I am delighted by the freshness of the outcome. I am often surprised by the creative form it has taken. It seems to me that it is this creative quality communicated to the children that gives this program its' greatest significance for healthy development.17

Because of her unique relationship to the content of the program, Dr. McFarland is able to view the reactions of others with a measure of objectivity and with great interest.

I've spent many hours observing his interactions with the children of this center, and am deeply impressed with the support he is able to give them in working with the task of growing up or in coping with the problems that confront them. I've also observed children's responses to the program and have talked with many parents. Their responses to this program are different than to the usual television entertainment for children. Children tend to talk to Misterogers during the program; their faces are mobile, reflecting varied feelings; they are prone to get up and respond actively to suggestions. Children seem to react to Misterogers' leaving the television screen as though they have

been separated from a meaningful adult. 18

Dr. McFarland and Fred Rogers share a strong contention that children feel that their parents condone television programs because they have brought the set into the home and allow it to remain there. The Mister Rogers program is founded upon the premise that parents are the primary educators and that education of the young takes place in an interpersonal relationship between the educator and the child. The family is the primary educational institution and a television program, watched by children in their home, is incorporated into the family culture.

Many young children feel that the television set belongs to the parents, so that what the child sees there seems part of what they provide for him. In this sense, the creator of television programs becomes a family participant. In the positive sense, the television can extend family education through presenting adults other than the parents who have as a basic part of their identity that of the responsible adult in relation to children. 19

Dr. McFarland contends that a television program which the parents share with a child becomes much more useful to him. By watching, the parents not only give their consent, but also their intellectual support.

She is used to looking to you for the regulation of all kinds of experience. Her fears aren't that hard to handle because you and your wife don't

18Daley, p. 37.

always share her fears. You understand them, but your strength is available to her so that they don't overwhelm her. If you left her to sink or swim they might. So any television program in which the primary adults are investors is more useful to a child than a program where the child watches it in isolation because the parent's ego strength is not insignificant.\textsuperscript{20}

Commenting to McCleary about adult-child relationships, Rogers noted: "We've all been bombarded with books on how to raise children. Everybody says, 'in such and such a situation, this is what you say.'" This, he says, overlooks the fact that no two people in a relationship are the same as any other two people, therefore, the words are not nearly as important as the wanting.

I'm very much afraid of formulas. So many of us want short cuts. What is really important is the basic relationship, and that we must work on all the time. The 'Neighborhood' show tries to give simple interpretations to help families realize a deeper sense of what's going on in their own relationships; that's not so easy for some parents who by necessity in becoming adults have had to close certain doors on childhood.\textsuperscript{21}

Fred Rogers has an awareness of parent-child-television relationships and what is known about the dynamics of learning. These insights complement the care, creativity, and knowledge of child development which go into what McCleary has called, "...the first and only program on American television which consciously aims to foster the mental and

\textsuperscript{20}McFarland interview.

\textsuperscript{21}McCleary, p. 20.
emotional health of children."22

Acknowledging that the program often deals with letters and numbers, weights and measures, poetry and science, opera and machines, all part of the world about which children are so naturally curious, Rogers explains that the child's real triumphs are reflected in his abilities to cope with his own feelings -- to make the most of his own unique endowment.

Every week day I make a television visit to millions of children throughout the United States. The object of these visits is to remind children that each one of them is unique and that each one has something special to bring to any relationship. I help them to discover that people's feelings are mentionable as well as manageable and that each one of us has endowments of which we can be proud. I let them know in very certain terms that I need them in order to be who I am. In fact the very beginning of a new recording entitled "You Are Special" which I just made goes like this:

"You really are special to me. Do you know why? Well, you see, I'm a man who likes to talk and sing with children so I need someone like you who likes to listen to a man like me. After all, it's you who make your Dad a father and it's you who make your Mom a mother and it's really you who make me your special friend. I need you. See why you're so special to me?"

and then we go on to talk and sing about such things as the assets of being small, and age-appropriate worries like just what does the barber cut off with his scissors and just what does go down the bathtub drain and just what is it like to have an injection and just what is the difference between thinking of

22Ibid.
something and doing it.23

One source of ideas for the *Misterogers* series developed almost by accident. At the close of the 1968-69 production schedule Assistant Producer Hedda Sharapan, Film Producer Diana Dean, and Betty Aberlin, a regular cast member, were discussing the program during lunch and discovered that they all had ideas for the program about which they felt strongly. In searching for a method of presenting their ideas to Fred Rogers they came up with a device which they called "growth meetings."

Four of these meetings were held. The participants, in addition to the three originators, were Carol Clemmens, wife of the program's "Officer" Clemmens and then secretary for the staff, Business Manager George Hill, the Director-Associate Producer David Chen, two mothers from the community, and black psychologist Grady Roberts. This group discussed and made notes about the kinds of things they would like to see added to the program.

A primary impetus for the meetings was a letter from one of the mothers, who was later invited to attend the sessions, stating she felt strongly about the impact that women

23Fred M. Rogers, Speech to the Harvard Graduate School Conference on Educational Administration, July 18, 1969, p. 7. (Mimeographed.)
can have on the working world. What about the mother who wants to, or has to work outside the home? This woman isn't being presented on the series and it should be made clear that she isn't losing her motherhood or femininity by working.

The first problem, then, was to devise a way to tell Fred how they felt about the role in society of the working woman and to suggest ways to help this come across on the program. This later developed into working on ideas for stronger male roles. Another subject area dealt with ways to increase the program's usefulness for ghetto children.

The ideas produced by the growth meetings were presented as suggestions to Rogers. The participants recognized that Rogers as a creative individual was not without personal biases that might take away from the universality of the program.

We weren't saying to him you should make all your women independent, strong, working women. But, we were saying to him that there is this kind of woman that can be appreciated and you can't close this out from the child's mind and say that you know there's only one kind of way that a mother can be. 24

The producers of Sesame Street were reported to have altered their program in response to criticism from feminists. "They protested the 'menial' role played by Loretta Long as Susan, the young housewife. Next fall, to make

24 Sharapan interview.
everybody happy, Susan will have a job as a nurse."25

Notes from the growth meetings were given to Fred Rogers as a Father's Day gift. The participants were pleased to see how many of the ideas they discussed came through in the 1969-70 scripts.

It's interesting that one of the things we talked about in our growth meetings is that the world isn't made up of people that you like. There are some people you like to a lesser extent -- some people you just don't like at all. But they're there and you have to cope with them. I think it's interesting that this Bob Dog is that kind of character and has represented that force to a lot of children.

Fred has the strong feeling that the basic reason the children are upset with Bob Dog -- now, you see, that worries me more because I understand that there are children who go out of the room when Bob Dog's on because they're frightened of him -- a lot of that has to do with oral aggressive needs of two-year-olds, two-and-one-half year olds.

What happens is, Bob Dog becomes much more tame and gentle and can cope with situations much better than just stealing or barking. He gains control in this series and, hopefully, that kind of thing will help the children come back.26

In the interest of improving the program, Fred Rogers has been willing not only to listen to the ideas of others, and to make a continuing study of child development, but also to actively seek advice and information from those who


26Sharapan interview.
make up his primary audience. He told Rudy Cernkovic:

We try to learn from children. We don't superimpose our own ideas upon them. We treat them with respect, because they are individuals growing up. We try to give them on our program an environment in which they can feel accepted as they are. Once accepted they can begin to grow. We are serious about communicating with children, it's a real mission with us.27

Rogers feels that in most cases television programming for children suffers from a lack of trained personnel. He has gone as far as suggesting to Elliott McCleary that people who produce and perform on programs for children should have as a prerequisite some sort of course to help them understand their audience.

You wouldn't put a newsman on the air who didn't know how to pronounce Viet Nam. But we give millions of dollars to these people who are producing cartoons and they have no earthly idea of what they're doing to a kid.28

In April, 1970, on the recommendation of David Chen and George Hill, a full-time writer was added to the staff to do sixty-five programs. In late May it was announced that Sam Silberman who had been director of programming at WQED in Pittsburgh would become Vice-President of production for Small World Enterprises and producer-director of the Misterogers' Neighborhood series. "He will also be responsible for


28McCleary, p. 60.
development of a new series designed for parents.\textsuperscript{29}

George Hill had expressed hope that with the addition of a writer and a producer a point could be reached where Fred Rogers' main job in television would be performing. "In this way a whole area of expansion will open for Small World Enterprises."\textsuperscript{30}

In the first four years of the series, the scripts were the total responsibility of Fred Rogers and were developed in three stages: First, a basic story outline was prepared. Second, a detailed outline including everything but the actual dialogue was completed. Third, the dialogue was written.

The second stage was the most difficult and time-consuming one. It was here that the films, props, guests, story line, and direction of the program had to be detailed. In the future, the plan is for the writer to take the programs up through this stage.

The writing of the dialogue will remain the task of Fred Rogers. Since his own material is not fully scripted, the primary effort here will be in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments with the puppets.

Hedda Sharapan summed up her feelings, as well as those of George Hill and David Chen, that the addition of a writer will be a good influence on the program.


\textsuperscript{30}George Hill, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.
First of all, I think it's hard for someone to carry on as many roles as Fred Rogers has. Secondly, it's too tiring for Fred to have to come up with ideas. I know that when he's in production and has more scripts to write and he knows he's got a deadline and they ask him to write a special script for a show and he's two programs behind, it weighs on his mind and then he starts pulling for ideas and sometimes it's obvious to us because we work so closely with him. You can see that he's just doing things because he's run out of ideas. I mean the man only has so much creative energy.31

It remains to be seen whether the direction and style taken by Fred Rogers in his role as creator-writer over the past four years will be fostered and developed by this major change in the creative process leading to Misterogers' Neighborhood.

Format

For thirty-seconds at the beginning of each program the camera pans a model of the "neighborhood" and the Misterogers' livingroom as the credits are superimposed. Mr. Rogers then enters the door at the left of the set singing "Won't You Be My Neighbor," and moves to the closet at the right. The direction of the movement is planned, according to Dr. McFarland, so that the viewers by following Mr. Rogers as he moves from place to place in the set are exercising the left to right eye movements that are an essential component of

31Sharapan interview.
At the closet he trades his suit jacket for a sweater and changes from shoes to sneakers. As he laces up, he starts talking about the day's theme. The daily changing into "play" clothes suggests habits of neatness to the children, as well as serving to inform them that here is a man who is about to devote his complete attention to them.

What holds their rapt attention is neither mayhem nor mad merriment. At this moment it is the sight of a man washing and polishing a floor. The camera, at child-eye-level, zooms in on water splashing into a pail, on a scrub brush in motion, on a spinning electric floor buffer. The man on TV makes brief remarks to the children watching, and sometimes they answer. Sometimes he sings. It's just about like following Dad around at his chores on Saturday morning, which beats watching Batman any day.

Dr. McFarland observes that the program may evoke special interests for some children because their contacts with father persons are limited by the father's vocational activities or by his total absence from the family. "Some young children seem to regard the father as a pilot to the world beyond the home, and thus to be introduced to new experiences by a man seems natural to them."

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33 McCleary, p. 20.

One of the important things many see about the presentation is that the host is always an adult in relation to the child. Rogers told McCleary:

I am not a clown. I'm myself, a man, and I deal with things that I think are important to the child's growing. There's this idea of part and counterpart. Without relationship we don't grow.

There have been too many people on TV who have shown parents how to be popular with their children. You know, get dressed up in some clown outfit. The kids know that these are big people putting on.35

It is not without design that Misterogers' Neighborhood is staged in a set which includes living room, kitchen, and porch. Rogers points out that it's the homey things with which children can best identify. "What does a kid see more of during a day than either cooking or cleaning up a kitchen?"36 He also sees having food on the program as more than a mere prop.

I think it's important to have food for children because this is one of the main things in their lives -- in all of our lives. The very first way that a child has of knowing what the world is like is through his mouth.37

A basic ingredient of the Misterogers' format is repetition. The program always begins and ends the same way both visually and aurally. The method of presenting film

35McCleary, p. 23.

36Creative Person: Fred Rogers, a film.

37Ibid.
inserts through "picture-picture," a frame on the wall, as well as the trip to the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" by way of the trolley remain constant. Adults are likely to be bored by something that is repetitive. The child, however, enjoys the security of repetition and finds it comforting. "Repetition reinforces what the child knows. He derives very real pleasure from encountering something recognizable by its repetition and likes to stay with it." 38

A more complex form of repetition can be found in the development of an idea or theme within a program, through several programs, and over an entire series.

Dr. McFarland uses an example of wind instruments to illustrate the complexity of the educational experiences which Rogers is able to present within a single program.

...the understanding of wind instruments is worked on little by little as Mr. Rogers, himself, handles whistles of different forms and sizes, blows into them, demonstrating differences in tone. This is not just an exercise in visual and auditory perception, Mr. Rogers invites the participation of the watching child using his own mouth and lips to whistle, thus the control of breath and the whole human sound mechanism becomes an integral part of the experience.

Mr. Rogers introduces the children to other persons, who can use the breath to create sounds, for example, another man who plays the bag pipes or the French horn. He brings up the issue of volume of sound relative to the openness or closedness of space. He also develops the theme of the

intrusion of sound that becomes painful or evokes discomfort through the attitude of his puppet, King Friday XIII, about the loud sound of the bag pipes, which the King then sends out of the neighborhood.

In this way, Mr. Rogers introduces the attitude of parents who insist that the child not make so much noise in the house -- and, then he dramatizes the search for a place to blow the bag pipes where they will not be so loud as to be unpleasant, but rather give pleasure.39

Some ideas are drawn out over a week of programs and help build interest and anticipation. In one such series on the Monday program, Lady Elaine suggests a carnival for Friday where they will utilize a moving picture frame given to the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" by the King and Queen as one of the rides. On Tuesday, Mr. McFeeley after delivering a package to Mr. Rogers, leaves to help decorate for the carnival. Mr. Rogers talks about carnivals and asks "picture-picture" to show a film of one. The ten-minute segment in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" is devoted to Mr. McFeeley, Lady Aberlin and various puppets planning their contributions to the carnival.

On Wednesday the idea of food for the carnival is introduced. Chef Brockett brings a cotton candy machine and demonstrates it for Mr. Rogers. In Make-Believe Edgar Cook and the Queen discuss cooking for the carnival. In the

"Neighborhood of Make-Believe" on Thursday a juggler, marionettes, dancers, and others are having a rehearsal. King Friday becomes upset because a carnival is too noisy and rowdy and decrees it will not be held. He is finally won over when it is pointed out that important people have an important place in carnival parades. At the end of the program Mr. Rogers talks about carnivals and parades and "picture-picture" shows a film of a parade.

On the final day "picture-picture" presents a film of a man who makes familiar objects with balloons. Mr. Rogers uses a tank of helium to demonstrate how some balloons float while others don't. In the nine-minute Make-Believe segment the long awaited carnival takes place.

Unity has been achieved through repetition and the carnival device has served also as a framework for presenting new experiences. More importantly, however, through the puppets and the people involved in the carnival, many personal feelings have been explored. For example, Henrietta Pussycat was afraid to ride the moving frame and Handyman Negri discussed with her the fact that "new things are scary sometimes." Another day Lady Aberlin observed; "It's good to look at yourself in the mirror when you feel pretty," after Henrietta said she was going to be a pretty balloon lady at the carnival.

Some ideas or themes are developed and recur throughout a whole production year.
This year there is a theme that they're going to have an heir. He talks about having to wait a long time. Oh, there are some beautiful things on that -- how sometimes it's hard to wait for thing you want to happen right now. But, during this series of programs Elsie Jean Platypus hatches an egg, too, and the King threatens them that they'll have to leave the neighborhood because he's not about to have somebody else, a child, born in the neighborhood before his.

Then, the neighborhood's all angry with him. And, finally, they intercede with him and help him to think his child will need a playmate. So, then, he accedes to the hatching of the Platypus egg. The progression of family themes is something we've talked about a great deal.40

The strong emphasis on repetition usually means that ideas and themes used on the program are discussed, amplified, and worked out in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe," as well as in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. The division between the real and the make-believe neighborhoods, however, has been carefully drawn. The editors of For The Young Viewer point out that the boundary between reality and fantasy is less distinct for the young viewer.

What the programmer intends to be reality may be perceived by the young viewer as fantasy, and vice versa. Even a program that has a considerable fantasy content will become a part of the child's reality system if it is watched regularly over a long period of time.41

In the book Television In The Lives Of Our Children, the authors observe that we introduce children to television

40 McFarland interview.

41 Garry, Rainsberry, and Winick, p. 146.
as fantasy. Programs billed for children typically have animal heroes or animated cartoon figures, and a high proportion of fantasy and broad action.

It is interesting to speculate what might be the influence on their later uses of television, if we let them see the medium very early as a window on the real rather than the fantasy world.\textsuperscript{42}

Fred Rogers believes that there is a place for both the real and the make-believe and works to create a balance that will be beneficial to the child. Although visits to the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" comprise an average of one-third of the daily \textit{Misterogers} programs, Mr. Rogers has never been there himself, and a clear distinction is made in an effort to develop and discipline the viewers' sense of make-believe.

By carefully framing a visit to "the land of make-believe" during each half-hour program, Rogers provides for the world of fantasy in which anything is possible, but which also provides clear transitions back to the world of reality.\textsuperscript{43}

Mr. Rogers and his young friends look in on Make-Believe and even have some communication with its populace; however, they never actually go there. Commenting to Eliot Daley on the lack of transitions and interpretations on the


\textsuperscript{43}Daley, p. 9.
children's cartoon shows, Fred Rogers noted that the inter-
locutor should have an extremely important role.

In most local television stations they just
grab an announcer and say, "Take these cartoons
out and string them together." Well, after a
cartoon is over the announcer usually just plays
the flute, interviews a local Boy Scout, goes
into a commercial, and then the next cartoon
comes on. And I can't blame him for that, they
haven't had what is necessary. They don't know
about children's programming.\textsuperscript{44}

The differentiation between reality and fantasy on the
program is, to Dr. McFarland, another important educational
contribution. She notes that the clear separation of the
dramatic fantasies acted out by puppets and people other
than Mr. Rogers himself, from the segments of the program in
which Mr. Rogers talks to the children and engages in real
activities that the children can watch, is a daily expres-
sion of the differences between fantasy and reality.

Only little by little does the child develop
an understanding that objects and people in his
environment have durability apart from his experi-
encing of them, and that by repeated sensory atten-
tion to them, he can identify stable qualities and
master his contacts with them through cognitive
identification of the laws governing them.\textsuperscript{45}

The clarity of the distinction between the real and
make-believe segments on the program is handled in such a

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45}McFarland, "The Educational Significance of
Misterogers' Neighborhood," pp. 9-10.
way as to support the worth of fantasy and imaginative thought, essential components of all creative and scientific achievement.

Mr. Rogers' repeated turning to the child viewer and saying "Let's pretend" or inviting the children to the make-believe segment of the program is the expression of a creative person's awareness of the worth of fantasy, but also his capacity to distinguish between wishes and fantasies, and real events and objects.46

A close examination of a week of programs selected at random from the 1968-69 production series compared with a week from the 1969-70 series reveals little change in format or style of presentation.

In the more recent week, six songs were offered in addition to the opening, "Won't You Be My Neighbor," and closing, "Tommorrow," contrasted with five songs in the earlier series. Each week featured one live animal guest -- a ground hog and a racoon. Four film inserts were introduced by "picture"Picture in the earlier week, three in the later series. The addition of more expensive animation techniques in two of the latter films offered a minor technical change. The time devoted to the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments averaged some three minutes less in the 1969-70 series.

While little in the way of basic format change is

46Ibid., p. 11.
evident, supporting the need and desire of children for a base of familiarity, one must remember that the format, characters, and various presentational devices serve their primary function as aids in the presentation of ideas.

**Themes**

It is in the themes expressed and developed on the program that the underlying care, concern, and understanding are most evident. Perhaps the most important thing Fred Rogers communicates to children is the sheer delight in being exactly who they are, without any implicit suggestion that they will somehow or other be better when they get bigger. He comments that he's not there to tell children, "I want you to become an adult as quickly as possible so you can buy the stuff I sell."47 He talks about things in a natural way, prepares them for new experiences, and encourages them to mature at their own pace.

Each person in the world is a unique human being, and each has unique human potential. One of the important tasks of growing up is the discovery of this uniqueness: the discovery of "who I am" in each of us - of "who I am" in relationship to all those whom I meet. It is the people who first feed us, hold us, play with us, and talk with us who help us to begin to understand who we are and who we may become. A child's very birth cries out for acceptance and care. Without these,

47Daley, p. 7.
he cannot survive. 48

The basic theme song of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* expresses to the child that he is totally accepted by Mr. Rogers right now, not as he will be when he grows up.

I like you as you are.
Exactly and precisely.
I think you've turned out nicely.
And I like you as you are.

Each program concludes with Mr. Rogers expressing this same thought. "You've made this a special day for me. You know how? Just by being you." As noted earlier, Rogers develops this relationship by stressing to the children that he needs them in order to be who he is.

His love for and training in music have given Fred Rogers an incomparable tool for his work. The variety and scope of the songs are unique features of the program. The editors of *For The Young Viewer* point to music as "almost a universal language for children."

Its rhythm encourages clapping, whistling, and humming. Music stimulates individualized associations and its enjoyment is not necessarily dependent on any knowledge of words and language. The young child easily learns things set to music;

Some children can only recall the alphabet as they sing it to the melody of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." 49

The songs on Misterogers’ Neighborhood are obviously "Message" oriented. On the Creative Person program which featured him, Rogers told the story of the creation of one of the songs.

Before we went away last summer one of the last places I went to visit was a new nursery school. I had never met these children before and I walked in at the request of the teacher and just sat down during rest time. I didn't say a word. And the children had seen some of our work on television and so they knew who I was, but they didn't just rush toward me. They started to come one-by-one.

I sat down on one of the small chairs. It's very easy for me to sit on small chairs, you know, cause I'm so used to it. But, they came one-by-one into my particular area from their rest room. And, then, they just looked at me. And there was a long stare for most of them and one little boy by the name of Thatcher spoke first. And all he said was, "My doggie's ear came off in the automatic washer." And there was silence.

It was just as if this is your test, Mr. Rogers. "Are you still in touch with childhood?" And so, I said, "Sometimes that happens to toys, doesn't it? Their ears come off or their legs come off, but that never happens to us. Our ears don't come off. And our legs don't come off." And, I said, "No they don't." And I didn't have to go any further you see. I didn't have to say, "Our penises don't come off." I didn't have to say this because the children knew that I was in tune.

And immediately all of the other children started asking questions, and poignant questions... questions about death. One child talked about her cat dying. And it was just as if, you know, we

49Garry, Rainsberry, and Winick, p. 147.
shall now open the door you have passed the test, you may come in and we will communicate with you. But if I had said, I'm convinced of this... if I had said to reply to Thatcher's questions, "Uh, what happened, Thatcher? Did your mother sew the ear on again?" Then I know they would have very politely sat there and said nothing more.

But, in response to this, and I'm sure that it worked around a long time because it was about the third week of vacation that it came to me that we needed to have a song about body integrity -- that everybody was whole and everybody was just like the way he was born, and so, that's when the song came, "Everybody's Fancy."50

Some are fancy on the outside,
Some are fancy on the inside,
Everybody's fancy.
Everybody's fine.
Your body's fancy and so is mine.

Boys are boys from the beginning,
Girls are girls right from the start.
Everybody's fancy.
Everybody's fine.
Your body's fancy and so is mine.

Only girls can be the mummies.
Only boys can be the daddies.
Everybody's fancy.
Everybody's fine.
Your body's fancy and so is mine.

I think you're a special person
And I like your ins and outsides.
Everybody's fancy.
Everybody's fine.
Your body's fancy and so - is mine.

The growing, developing child is confronted with a multitude of feelings and impulses, at once baffling and foreign. Mr. Rogers, through conversation, drama, and song,

50Creative Person: Fred Rogers, a film.
helps the child recognize that anger is a human thing, but
emphasizes that a good feeling can come from control.

What do you do with the mad that you feel
When you feel so mad you could bite?
When the whole wide world seems oh so wrong
And nothing you do seems very right?
What do you do?
Do you punch a bag?
Do you pound some clay or some dough?
Do you round up friends for a game of tag
Or see how fast you go?

It's great to be able to stop
When you've planned a thing that's wrong
And be able to do something else instead
And think this song:

I can stop when I want to
Can stop when I wish
Can stop, stop, stop any time
And what a good feeling to feel like this
And know that the feeling is really mine
Know that there is something deep inside
That helps us become what we can
For a girl can be some day a lady
And a boy can be some day a man.

In his testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on
Communications, seeking support for the Corporation for Pub-
lic Broadcasting, Fred Rogers recited this song. Immediately
preceeding the song he had spoken of his chief iden-
tity as that of a man who has chosen to work with children.
He set forth his aim in programming to establish an atmos-
phere in which children can grow in a healthy way.

Through original songs, clearly defined fan-
tasy and very straightforward age-appropriate
dialogue, I encourage the discovery that feelings
about yourself and others are mentionable as well
as manageable.\footnote{U.S. Congress, p. 140.}
He feels that one of the most helpful things for his own boys has been his encouragement of their expressions of feelings. Rather than stopping what they're trying to communicate or putting words in their mouths, he tries to help them get out what they really do feel. The same effort applies to the program.

One day when we were taping a program, one of the characters said, "I'm sad," and the other character departed from the script and said, "Oh, don't be sad." I stopped the taping immediately, because such a statement is against our philosophy. We don't deny people's feelings, but welcome and respond to them.52

Mental growth on the way to maturity is recognized and fostered on Misterogers' Neighborhood as on no other television program.

Each one of us develops from one phase of growing to another: from lying still to turning over, from crawling and toddling, to walking and talking. Our emotional phases are just as well defined. These phases of human growth and development are lawful processes no one of which can be skipped over. It is my understanding of the importance of these processes joined with my belief that man can begin to realize his own potential for constructive living which governs the creation and production of my children's programming for public television.53

At each stage of the child's development, according to Dr. McFarland, his interests in the world around him are related to his inner experiencing of growth.

52McCleary, p. 23.
53U.S. Congress, p. 139.
As each new facet of development is emergent, the child tends to concentrate on objects and phenomena in the environment that give outer expression to his own growth. Of this concentration comes not only cognitive mastery of reality, but progressive realization of the child's potentialities for personality and intellectual development. 54

While mental growth is emphasized, Mr. Rogers does not overlook the young child's preoccupation with physical growth. One of his songs is about growing -- in and out.

Someday you'll be a grownup, too, and have some children grow up, too. Then you can love them in and out, and tell them stories all about the times when you were their size, the times when you found great surprise in growing up...And they will sing it's fun, that's all. You're growing, you're growing. You're growing in and out. You're growing, you're growing. You're growing all about.

On the Creative Person film, as he braids a rope, he sings this song and talks about the growth of control. "You can feel yourself growing when you're refused something if you can stand the frustration. In fact, every frustration that you go through you've been able to grow a bit." 55 Many of the messages such as this one about maturity are for adults as well as children.

And that's not just for children. No sir, that's for parents, too. You know, "someday you'll be a grownup, too, and have some children grow up, too. Then you can love them in and out, and tell them stories all about the times when you were their...


55Creative Person: Fred Rogers, a film.
size." That's a little hint to you know who. 56

Frequently themes expressed on the program have strong adult orientation. Dr. McFarland found that some fathers feel that the program threatens their sense of fatherhood. During the discussion period following a speech in Princeton, New Jersey she discovered that many fathers don't feel that they can be as perfect an image of fatherhood as Mr. Rogers. In response to this, a theme was introduced on the program about the development of King Friday's fatherhood: that he has to learn to be a father.

He does inappropriate things at first. Fred is developing that theme that father's have to grow to be fathers. And I think this is a very helpful theme for families because it is the truth that a man who has his first child grows in response. It's helpful to families and it's good for the kids; the theme that fatherhood grows or develops just the way a child has to develop. 57

For the child as well as the adult apprehension and fear of the unknown is common. For the young child the unknown is everywhere. The fears all children share are one of the things Fred Rogers cares about most and they become the basis for much of what happens in Misterogers' Neighborhood. The design is to answer questions children have, to explain things they wonder about, and most important in Rogers' view, to offer reassurance.

56 Ibid.

57 McFarland interview.
We have to try not to close the door on childhood fears. I try to translate the things children are afraid of into non-threatening terms, so that they -- and their parents -- can use experience effectively. I try to prepare youngsters for the things they may encounter -- frightening things such as separation, loss, anger and loneliness -- to help them relate to the everyday world.58

Noting that adults have their blues singers and balladeers to illuminate the triumphs and tragedies of love and life, Elliott A. McCleary in Today's Health points out that the "little folks" have Misterogers, who has composed for his show and for records the words and music of dozens of songs, "songs that speak to small children (and eavesdropping parents) about the problems and crises and joys of growing up."

**Baby-Sitting.** "...I like to be told/When you're going away/When you're going to come back/And how long you will stay..."

**Controlling Anger.** "...What do you do with the mad that you feel/When you feel so mad you could bite?..."

**Bedwetting.** "...Sometimes people get wet/And their parents get upset..."

**Maturing.** "...Some day you'll be a grownup too/And have some children grow up too/Then you can love them in and out/And tell them stories about/The times when you were their size..."

**Sex differences.** "...Some are fancy on the outside/Some are fancy on the inside..."

There's a song about the new baby in the house and even a song about a little boy's desire to

58Berkvist, p. 21.
marry his mother.\(^{59}\)

The songs are an integral part of the theme development. On one program the idea of moving was introduced with Rogers in his kitchen transplanting a vine. Uprooting the plant he remarked, "It's not easy for a plant to move from one place to another. It's not easy for people to move either." Then he sang:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Please don't think it's funny} \\
\text{When you want the ones you miss.} \\
\text{There are lots and lots of people.} \\
\text{Who sometimes feel like this...}
\end{align*}
\]

In the "Land of Make-Believe" a housewarming party was held for Donkey Hodie, whose moving day had been turned into a joyous occasion by warm-hearted new neighbors. The show concluded back at Mister Rogers' house where he finished transplanting the vine. "It doesn't matter where you move," he concluded. "You'll always find somebody to like you."\(^{60}\)

The presentation of various themes varies within individual programs as well as throughout the continuing series. Dr. McFarland feels that the approach is very modulated.

\[59\text{McCleary, pp. 22-23.}\]
\[60\text{Ibid., pp. 20-22.}\]
be willing then to go and get his own hair cut. It just begins the work—well maybe it isn't so frightening after all. And if you get a good barber who has good control of his scissors the child can watch intently while Mr. Rogers gets a hair cut, but can also perceive that the barber doesn't cut Mr. Rogers.\textsuperscript{61}

Themes dealing with health are common and are dealt with in a positive fashion. Rogers described a television program to McCleary where a little girl went to the dentist who was telling her off because she hadn't been to see him for five years.

Kids watch that and get the idea that if you go to the dentist he's going to bawl you out. "Oh, you've got a lot of damage in there," he said. "How many times do you brush your teeth?" Such a program tends not to be in accord with the image of the dentist as a caring adult.\textsuperscript{62}

Fears associated with nighttime were the subject of a one-hour special, \textit{Nighttime in Misterogers' Neighborhood}, funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and presented initially on National Educational Television November 24, 1969 at 7:00 PM. On the program Misterogers and his Neighborhood friends explored some of the feelings, the beauties, the animals, and the fantasies of nighttime in an effort to make it more comprehensible for children. Both the positive and frightening meaning of nighttime were discussed.

\textsuperscript{61}McFarland interview.

\textsuperscript{62}McCleary, p. 60.
One mother reported that her nine-year-old daughter, who generally tries to cope with problems by herself, confessed after the program that she had been having trouble falling asleep at night. When questioned about how long this had been going on she answered, "Since you got me the electric blanket for my birthday. I know it's got this control on it. I can hear it click on and off and I'm afraid it won't click off and will get too hot."

And she never expressed this to her mother... held this within herself. And can you imagine the torture she must have gone through for two weeks. But Fred Rogers could provide an impetus for saying, "If you have a problem talk about it."\(^{63}\)

In this case there was nothing specific on the program dealing with electric blankets, however, the message that it's acceptable to have fears at night was conveyed to this girl.

Many children, according to Dr. McFarland, are frightened that if they wish something bad will happen that, by a kind of magic, it will happen. Rogers has a song which points out that wishes don't make things happen. Being mad at Daddy and really feeling mad at him, for example, is different than going and biting him.

If you're mad when you're little there's a kind of magic about being mad that hurts daddy and all children have to work progressively on that discrimination -- that you can think things to yourself and it doesn't hurt anybody at all. Many of the themes that he is talking about are the

\(^{63}\) Sharapan interview.
common growth tasks of childhood. 64
Following the assassination of Robert Kennedy, Rogers and his staff worked through the night to prepare a program that would speak eloquently to children and parents about death and loss. The overall plea of the program, according to Rogers, was to include the children in their family's own ways of coping with grief. "Whether parents handle grief by walking in the woods, or staying at home and watching TV, children should be included, not sent off to play as if everything were normal." 65

Many themes occur and reoccur. Mr. McFeely's almost daily portrayal of the constantly rushing adult is counteracted by Mister Rogers' gentle pace. "Someplace Else," a playground for the puppets, came into existence when Rogers realized that busy parents often tell children to play "someplace else." Children's fears about their environment are not overlooked. To reassure them that they would not go down the bathtub drain he wrote the song, "You Can Never Go Down -- You Can Never Go Down." The introduction of a new baby into the household is a traumatic childhood experience which has been treated in many ways. The birth of the royal baby in the 1969-70 series gave primary focus to this theme.

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64 McFarland interview.
65 McCleary, p. 60.
No theme is dealt with over a long period of time. It's recurrent, according to Dr. McFarland, because that's the way children work on things. "You can work on it now and then many things intervene and you work on it further. If you were working on fears it might be much too frightening to children and they wouldn't be able to watch it at all."66

Among the positive themes stressed is that the limitations of childhood are not necessarily liabilities. One of the songs Rogers has written affirms the child's capabilities.

Who can crawl under a table?
Who can sit under a chair?
Who can fit their feet in little shoes.
And sleep most anywhere they choose?

Who can play very much longer.
Play much harder than grown-ups ever dare?
You're a child so you can do it.
There are children everywhere.

The encouragement of creativity is a fundamental theme and goal of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Fred Rogers has observed that there is a vast difference between the nursery school child, "building highways and skyscrapers with wooden blocks, trying on big hats and shoes and making pies out of mud and deciding which song to sing when his turn comes," -- and the same child twelve years later. Rogers feels that somewhere along the way everything that was important to that alert, curious preschooler somehow becomes labeled extra-

66McFarland interview.
curricular. Growth tasks, inner ways of coping with environment, feelings, all become labeled unimportant and the business of memorizing somebody else's book and doing what he's told become the only way to "pass."

It is my conviction that the Youth who are in revolt today are being revolted by our failure to know who they really are. They are tired of being enrolled, assigned, programmed, graded and molded from without. They are weary of the passive verbs of education and they want to work at their own developmental level of becoming who they really are.67

In a speech presented at the Harvard Graduate School Conference on Educational Administration in 1969, Rogers presented the thesis that creative work is absolutely essential to the healthy growth and development of the human personality. "It is the mode by which new solutions for every field evolve, and therefore, the opportunities for creative work must be greatly expanded in our country's educational system."68

Toward the end of encouraging creative expression in young people creative adults of all kinds, designers, dancers, writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, mechanics, printers, carpenters, actors, basket-makers, dress-makers, shoemakers, cooks, -- anyone who uses his craft as a creative mode of expression and finds deep satisfaction in it -- are invited to be guests in Misterogers' Neighborhood.

67Rogers, Harvard speech, p. 2.
68Ibid., p. 4.
A basic assumption on the program is that just as growing comes from within, so does drama. If the choice of theme is sound the drama will happen for the individual child. Hedda Sharapan quotes Rogers on this subject.

I don't have to work at creating drama on the program. The drama is within the child. All I do is present the issue and act as almost a catalyst and interpreter and try to integrate this kind of thing, but the child has the climax, the build-up to the climax, etcetera. It's all right in his personal life.\(^6\)

Rogers feels that his program disproves the hypothesis that children must have loud, negative, violent reinforcements to be interested. Many children are obviously interested and even engrossed with the drama based on their own human growth tasks.

There are so many important things in this world to try to understand when you're little -- your own smallness, and dogs that bite, and water that goes down drains, and brothers and sisters, and whether anybody thinks a little child is worthwhile. As in everything, the drama comes from within. We need to know how to evoke that drama and work with it in the most positive, entertainingly helpful way.\(^7\)

**Characters**

The regular cast of characters -- both puppet and human -- who populate *Misterogers' Neighborhood* are seen by writer

\(^6\)Sharapan interview.

\(^7\)McCleary, p. 23.
Eliot A. Daley as:

...a diverse company comprised of distinctly different characters, and such diversity is presented as a richness to be understood and valued, rather than a problem to be overcome.\textsuperscript{71}

The program's central figures are Mr. Rogers and the puppets who populate the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe."

The editors of \textit{For The Young Viewer} point to many values of puppetry on programs for children. The repetitive and, therefore, predictable nature of puppet behavior permits the young viewer to anticipate what will happen and to enjoy it just before it does happen as well as when it happens.

Puppets may be used in preference to child performers as actors and are less threatening than child actors might be. The unusual voices of both puppets and marionettes are likely to have a special appeal to young people. The obviously "fake" qualities of the voices may be stimulating to the child who can enjoy imitating them. Puppets are ideal vehicles to carry fantasy material; they represent much that is comparable to the life of the young child.\textsuperscript{72}

Animals, birds, as well as various shades of human roles from a king to a cook are represented by the puppet characters in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe." Dr. McFarland observes that the behavior of the puppets varies only within limits and is predictable.

\textsuperscript{71}Daley, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{72}Garry, Rainsberry, and Winick, p. 171.
Henrietta Pussycat is a personality that is palpable and real, but doesn't exceed or divert beyond the range of what is usually communicated. King Friday XIII is always in his mellowist mood authoritarian.73

Another child development expert, Janet Weaver, Assistant Professor at the University of Delaware, notes that diversity is presented on the program as a richness to be treasured.

The human diversity of each man in embodied in the individual puppets, whose inner selves are often quite different from their outward appearances. Daniel Striped Tiger is not a fierce animal, as his exterior would suggest, but a gentle one. The owl, "X", is an eager learner, not a "wise old owl". Even King Friday sometimes belies his majestic appearance with a touch of petty behavior! Children, who are struggling with the conflicting demands of their world, find it a great relief to know that a great diversity of behavior and feeling within each person is allowable.74

The acquisition and personality development of each puppet is an individual story. Daniel Striped Tiger was the first of what has grown to be over a dozen puppets. Fred Rogers and Josie Carey had decided to have as one element of the first Children's Corner a clock with a hole in it. From this opening at various intervals would appear a cuckoo who would give the time and some little fact such as, "It's five-oh-three and Columbus discovered American in 1492."

73Mcfarland interview.

74Janet Weaver, Letter to Fred Rogers, June 22, 1967.
The weekend before WQED and the program went on-the-air, April 4, 1954, a dinner was given at the Pittsburgh Playhouse for the younger people who had worked so hard on setting up the station. At each person's place was a little gift. Josie found the Tiger puppet. It was later learned that the dinner had been given by Mrs. Daniel who had been a leading force behind the development of the station as well as the program. Daniel, of course, was named in her honor.

On Monday night at five when the first Children's Corner program went on the air a cuckoo had not yet been purchased and Fred used the tiger puppet giving Daniel the distinction of being the first puppet in the history of the program.

Josie feels that the puppets in the beginning were all parts of Fred's personality.

The part of Fred that was gentle and kind and sweet and nice was Daniel. Daniel was incapable of doing anything that wasn't just as good as he could do it. I remember the nicest thing Daniel ever said was...he was all excited this one day and he said, "Josie, I saw a flower today and I didn't pick it."

It was early Spring and Fred and I had been walking back from lunch and we saw the same flower and we both stopped to admire it and went on to do the program. And that was Daniel saying that it was very tempting. "I would like to have had that flower. It was a beautiful thing. I saw a flower today and I didn't pick it." 75

Dr. McFarland believes that a person who can use puppets as an extension of self-expression as Rogers does can

interpret many facets of human nature with these puppets. 76

A second puppet was added when the station management suggested that they teach Spanish on the program. This became the cause of some disagreement since Fred had spent a great deal of time in France and spoke French well while neither of them knew Spanish. When French was agreed upon they went out and bought another tiger puppet.

We dressed him up with a little mustache and a barret. He became Grandpere. He came from France in a box marked third-class mail and he arrived as a present from Daniel's pen pal in France. We built an Eiffel Tower for him. We just painted it on the set. We used to decorate our own sets. 77

As the puppets were acquired in the early days of the Children's Corner Fred and Josie shared in the creation of their original and developing personalities.

King Friday was a puppet Fred had. He bought him in Europe, and he had Lady Elaine Fairchilde. I named King Friday XIII and he named Lady Elaine after his sister, Elaine. We had Cornflake S. Pecially. I named him and we developed their personalities together. I'd say wouldn't it be funny if Lady Elaine doesn't know she's so ugly. Lady Elaine started out being a professional bridesmaid and she'd say, "Isn't it strange when I'm in a wedding nobody looks at the bride," and she'd give her beauty tips -- how to grow a wart on the end of your nose and things like that. 78

76McFarland interview.
77Carey interview.
78Ibid.
When *Children’s Corner* became a Saturday morning feature on N.B.C. the network paid for new, expensive puppets to replace the original models. The settlement of a lawsuit which developed at this time cut quite deeply into potential profits.

Fred named "X" and he sent away for him. He’s the one we got sued over. He sent away for him to this puppet company and they kept a record of his letter. They sent him a letter saying if we could ever do anything else for you, if you need anymore puppets let us know. And we lost our copy of that letter, but they saved the one he sent buying "X" and saying we were going to use him on television. While we were at WQED they never bothered us because we were just educational -- we couldn’t be making that much money. But, the minute we went to N.B.C. they sued us.79

Skill and sophistication in the manipulation of the puppets and their voices has developed over the years to a point where many of the people who talk with the puppets swear that their expressions change even though their mouths don’t work. Referring to kinescope recordings of early *Children’s Corner* programs, Josie Carey said:

If you see the puppets and hear them they have very scratchy voices. They talk very fast and they bobbed all the time. With every syllable a hand or a head moved. Because unless you’ve worked with it you don’t know the movements of a puppet are very important; and if you don’t know how to gesture with one finger or a slight nod of the head for an accent, you’re inclined to just wiggle your hand and just move it around which is the way they all worked in the beginning. But as Fred did more and more of it and as he played more and more with his

79Ibid.
voice he became more and more accomplished. 80

New puppet characters have been added as the program developed. Sara Saturday appeared early in the Misterogers' series and became the wife of King Friday XIII on the 145th program. Dr. Duckbill Platypus and his wife, Elsie Jean, whose voices are supplied by theologian Bill Barker arrived in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" on the 147th program after the Frogg family moved to the "Westwood Children's Zoo." Dr. McFarland recalls inquiring about Elsie Jean Platypus, "Fred, what made you think up that name?" He replied, "Well, that's really Mrs. Barker's name." 81

The puppets and the roles they play in the current series have developed over a period of sixteen years. In the 1969-70 series they included:

**KING FRIDAY XIII**

king of the neighborhood; egocentric and domineering, yet underneath his overbearing exterior he is a lonely ruler who continually uses his power to make himself feel important.

**QUEEN SARA SATURDAY**

recently married to King Friday; benevolent and diplomatic; she understand the King.

**CORNFLAKE S. PECEALLY**

known as "Corney"; manufactures "Rockits" (Rocking chairs that you sit in and "rock it"); lives in the Rockit Factory.

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80 Ibid.

81 McFarland interview.
HENRIETTA PUSSYCAT
shy, very feminine (loves fancy dresses and pretty hats); lives in a house in the tree; very loveable.

X THE OWL
naive but very eager to learn; Ben Franklin is his hero; lives in the tree.

LADY ELAINE FAIRCHILD
mischievous character who recently moved into the Museum-Go-Round who delights in coping with the King's arrogance by turning him upside-down.

DR. DUCKBILL PLATYPUS
referred to also as "Dr. Bill"; Scotch veterinarian who recently moved to the neighborhood; loves to play the bagpipes; lives in a hole.

MRS. ELsie JEAN PLATYPUS
wife of Dr. Bill.

DANIEL STRIPED TIGER
humanitarian, child-like and loveable, very sensitive; lives in the clock.

DONKEY HODIE
lives in a windmill at Some Place Else; loves visitors, used to bite people but has learned to use his mouth for eating and talking.

GRANDPERE
French tiger who lives in the Eiffel Tower; speaks French; likes to take baths.

EDGAR COCK
chef at the Castle and King Friday's butler; sings his messages in a minor key when sad, and major and staccato when happy.

The "real" people who appear in Misterogers' Neighborhood include both "regulars" and guests. Dr. McFarland comments that a real social organism has developed including the cameramen, manager, staff, and all of the people who are ever participants on the program which is intensively poised for the collaboration.
I see the special people brought in-- somehow or other when they come they get involved in that social collaboration. And, he has some pretty high powered people on it, you know, Jack Reardon and Van Cliburn. 82

The regulars are somewhat larger than life characters who in addition to serving the necessary function of talking to the puppets provide a bridge between the real world of Mr. Rogers and the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe." They include:

- **LADY ABERLIN**
  - Betty Aberlin
  - King Friday's pretend niece.

- **HANDYMAN NEGRI**
  - Joe Negri
  - King Friday's handyman; also accomplished guitarist.

- **MR. McPEELY**
  - David Newell
  - "Grandfather-type" character who runs a Speedy Delivery messenger service; always in a hurry.

- **CHEF BROCKETT**
  - Don Brockett
  - Cooks and bakes simple things that children could make, as well as elaborate cakes for special occasions; insists on quiet when he is in the kitchen, so he pantomimes his recipes.

- **ROBERT TROW**
  - Appears as himself, Bob Dog, and Robert Troll who has been tamed by Sara Saturday; he is originally from her land of Westwood; speaks gibberish except for proper names.

- **OFFICER CLEMMONS**
  - Francois Clemmons
  - Plays the part of a black policeman; beautiful tenor singing voice.

82 Ibid.
MISS EMILIE

Emilie Jacobson (deceased)
poetry lady with a British accent;
composed original poems and re-
cited others; grandmother.

The regulars have either been discovered by Fred or brought in by others on the program.

Bob Trow worked with Betty Aberlin in a show one summer and Betty was extremely impressed with him not only his great characterizations, but his marvelous personality. And that developed into Robert Troll, and now Bob Dog, and Bob Trow—he's on as himself.83

Many parents were very upset with the Robert Troll character because of the gibberish he spoke and because children liked it and started to mimic it.

You know children love to make up nonsense syllables and it's almost the inception of poetry. A child can make poetic sequences by his own play with language and that's really who Bob Troll was. Robert Trow was very talented in doing that, but so are kids. Parents, however, thought that Fred was teaching them to talk babytalk. Oh, he had all the language purists writing about that.84

The parents were saying to Fred, "Why don't you have Robert Troll learn how to speak correctly," which, according to Hedda Sharapan, would have really defeated the purpose.

Fred has such great creative imagination that he could take this Robert Troll character and keep him absolutely only make-believe...that it's a fun kind of thing to do...that Bob Trow when he wants to communicate with Fred Rogers on an adult level talks with words and makes sense.85

83Sharapan interview.
84McFarland interview.
85Sharapan interview.
The theme that we can pretend anything we want was carried to an extreme on a program taped late in the 1969-70 series. On this program Bob Trow, as himself, and Mr. Rogers make paperweights from plastic containers in the real world and later pretend that Bob Dog and Robert Troll are both in Make-Believe at the same time. There is no attempt to deceive the children. Anything is possible in make-believe.

Various viewers have commented about different aspects of the program's characters. Dr. Joae Graham Selzer, mother of two young children and practicing child psychiatrist, in a letter to Mr. Rogers makes note of the courtesy with which the characters in the program treat each other. "They are friendly, pleasant to each other, helpful and considerate. King Friday's gracious manners are also a fine example of behavior for the children to observe."

In his review of the program for TV Guide Cleveland Amory observes that the guests, puppets and visitors are not particularly unusual. "What is unusual is the way he talks to them."

Dr. McFarland feels that Fred is other person oriented and because of this he perceives the available talent for

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what they really are. "Are they people that are simply actors on a stage, and what would it mean to children to see this kind of person?" 88

Mr. Roger's gentle and caring attitude is evident in the total mood and manner of the program and becomes reflected in guests as well as in the regular performers and the puppets. These guests range from John Reardon, Metropolitan Opera Company baritone, who produces an opera in Make-Believe when he visits; and concert pianists Van Cliburn, to telephone repairman, weavers, gymnasts, florists, barbers, dancers, chair-caners, glass-blowers, and television reporters. The list of guests is long because Rogers feels that children should be exposed to creative adults of all kinds, "anyone who uses his craft as a creative mode of expression and finds deep satisfaction in it." 89 The dominant theme of his speech in 1969 to the Harvard Graduate School Conference on Educational Administration was a plea to woo these people into the educational fiber of our country so that children have as many contacts as possible with creative adults.

...our children will be exposed daily to images of constructive change in the adult world -- they will be in touch with the adults who actually

88 McFarland interview.
89 Rogers, Harvard Speech, p. 9.
design the highways and build the skyscrapers, adults who sew the clothes and make the shoes, adults who cook the pies and write the songs and make the decisions because they've found their way of expressing who they are. And then the children will find their way, too -- along the route of life-long learning with the magnificent sense of being truly worthwhile. 90

In the use of a diversity of guests from various ethnic groups, various part of the world, and various areas of human endeavor, Rogers works not only to present an understanding of the world but also to create a desire in the child to become a useful, creative part of it for his own sake as well as for the sake of others.

90Ibid., p. 10.
CHAPTER VII

MISTEROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD: THE AUDIENCE

Before the era of costly audience research studies, fan mail was the primary link between the electronic media performer and his audience. Audience surveys, primarily because of cost, have not to this day been a practical tool for the educational broadcaster.

Letters from viewers have been an important source of information during the Misterogers' series as they were from the beginning of Children's Corner. Josie Carey recalls the WQED station manager coming to Fred and her after their first week or so on the air to inform them that he didn't know why, since he didn't think either of them were very talented, but they had received 68 letters that day, "which impressed them because none of the other programs had gotten any mail."¹

By November of 1954, after some six months on-the-air, the daily mail count had risen considerably.

One of the daily shows originating from the station's studio, which is near the University of Pittsburgh, is Children's Corner. It brings an


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average of 300 letters a day from young viewers. In August of 1955, when the program became a four week Saturday morning replacement for Paul Winchell on N.B.C. the mail pull surprised everyone.

I think the first day after the program they got 13,000 letters and by the time the first week was up they had 54,000 letters. They said it was the most mail they'd ever gotten for anything that hadn't been highly touted and had big name stars and that kind of thing. So they promised us the minute they got an opening in their schedule they'd put us back on.

The program returned to N.B.C. the following December.

...when Children's Corner ran for twenty-six Saturday mornings on N.B.C., the series averaged 6,000 letters each program.

Fan mail became a primary factor when, after the first few months on the air, the Misterogers' Neighborhood program won a reprieve from cancellation.

Credit must go to the Sears Roebuck Foundation for furnishing the funds to make this possible, but that is not the point. It is that mothers of this area, having with their children watched the program on Ch. 2, thought so much of it and of its superiority over other children's programs that they literally flooded WGBH and the press with their letters of protest, as the Globe's Percy Shain and the editor of this page can attest.


3Carey interview.

4"Misterogers' Biography," p. 2. (Mimeographed.)
It shows the value of speaking out. May the public's voice always have such a happy result.  

Paul Taff, then Director of Children's Programming for N.E.T., was quoted in TV Guide, October 18, 1969, as saying that children deserve entertainment, but left to their own superficial desires they will choose little else.

Given a choice between Bugs Bunny and Mister Rogers', children will watch Bugs Bunny. They don't yet have the critical ability to make judgments about which shows are better.

This statement resulted in two letters of refutation to the editor and more national publicity for the program.

My preschooler does indeed prefer Mister Rogers' to Bugs Bunny. Children can be fascinated by programs about the world around them, about themselves, about music, drama and science. My child has been a fan of N.E.T. since before she could talk. She has been entertained, and I think she has been educated, in the most pleasant way. Much of commercial TV is an insult to our children's intelligence, but we cannot place the blame entirely on either the industry or society. We as parents must, for our small children, be keepers of the dial.

Florence Humeston
Copiague, New York

Mine doesn't prefer Bugs Bunny. My 4-year-old loves to watch Mister Rogers so much that she


dislikes weekends because he is not on.\textsuperscript{8}

Patrice Daves
Westminster, California

Viewer mail response was directly solicited on the
Children's Corner series with, for instance, memberships
offered in the Tame Tiger Trganization. Direct appeals for
mail have never been a part of the Misterogers' format. In
spite of this, Hedda Sharapan estimates that an average of
thirty letters arrive daily.

But it's fascinating. It's incredible because
this is our basic feedback from the public.

The ones that tell you this program they liked
the best or a child wrote in last week and said,
"Misterogers, why do you make King Friday so...?"
did she say snoopy or uppity or something like that,
"Can you do something about that?"

Another aspect of it that just fascinates me
is the way the children don't always start out by
saying, "My name is Marie, and I'm four years old,"
because they assume that Mr. Rogers is their friend
and he knows that.

There are just so many different aspects of
the mail. Now the answers that take quite a bit of
extra work -- like the Robert Troll letters or
mothers that say the program is obviously geared
toward two parent families, "Can you help us par-
exts whose husbands have died," etc., or "I'd sug-
gest a program on adoption," etc.\textsuperscript{9}

The responsibility of reading through the letters has
fallen to the Assistant Producer Hedda Sharapan. She sorts

\textsuperscript{8}ibid.

\textsuperscript{9}Hedda Sharapan, Personal interview, Pittsburgh,
and then channels the mail to the proper place. Letters that might be of special interest to him are pulled out for Mr. Rogers.

Children who write and say, "I like your program, I watch it everyday," receive a specific post card. If they send in things such as pictures or drawings there is another form.

Some of the ones where you see the child has obviously struggled to write the letter in his own handwriting is another form. Questions the children ask about, "Can I come to see the program," or children who send photographs receive a basic form because we get these everyday. The letters are sent out very personalized though. If a child talks about what he does at school and his school friends, it's something like, "I'm very interested to hear about your school friends." 10

Personal appearances have provided a much more dramatic and personal form of audience feedback. Near the opening of the *Creative Person* film about Fred Rogers long lines of children and parents are seen. The narrator says:

Children around the country standing for hours, regardless of cold rain. Patient beyond the patience of childhood -- to see him. They do it because they love him, because he is Fred Rogers, minister, educator, television producer, and, above all, Mr. Rogers of *Misterogers' Neighborhood.* 11

The first personal appearance came only a few months after *Children's Corner* had gone on the air at WQED. Josie

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10 Ibid.

and Fred decided July 9, 1954, would be Daniel's birthday party. They had started the Tame Tiger Trganization and in order for a child to attend the party he was supposed to have earned four stripes. The fourth stripe was earned by knowing a rather complicated little French song Fred had written.

The children were invited to the party on the program. Refreshments had been solicited from an ice cream company, a bakery, and a soda pop company.

I think we had a hundred of each of these things. By one-o'clock the entire studio was filled with kids sitting on the floor as close to each other as they could. All around the block, they sat in the back yard, they sat in the gallery. You never saw so many kids in your life. We had to cut each ice cream into four, each cupcake into four, and if a kid got a piece of the cupcake he didn't get a piece of the ice cream.12

The most exciting part of the afternoon for the performers was when Josie walked out and said, "All right, you're all four strippers. You've got four stripes in the Tame Tiger Trganization. Let's hear the club song," and the kids of all sizes and shapes sang out loud and clear.13

The first personal appearance of the Misterogers series again produced far more than the expected turnout. After the first one-hundred programs were taped, a decision was made to

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12 Carey interview.
13 Ibid.
visit some of the stations. Fred, one of his sons, and George Hill first went to KQED in San Francisco where they met the local press. When they decided to go to Boston, Helen Peters, Director of Publicity at WGBH, suggested that it might be nice to invite some of the viewers. George Hill recalls it was a cold, bitter day in April, 1967.

The line stretched from the station clear to the Harvard Stadium. We were doing everything in our power to handle all of these people but, of course, a lot of them had to wait in line for long periods of time, but they didn't seem to mind. It finally got to the point where they actually put somebody on the end of the line and shut the line off because they were concerned that, first of all, Rogers wasn't going to last, and, secondly, that some of these people would stand in line too long and then not get to see him. It would be really a disaster.14

They started with the idea of a walk-through where the children would shake Mr. Roger's hand. Each child had something to say to him and he had something to say to each child. By the end of the first half-hour when approximately only one-hundred children had gone by they realized that wasn't going to work.

So then we went to the format which is the one we've used ever since. Two-hundred children at a time come into a big studio and sit down on the floor and the parents stand around the outside. Fred comes out and does a ten-minute visit with the children. They sing the "Tomorrow" song and the children feel like they have seen Mr. Rogers and they leave

14George Hill, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.
An eleven page "Bible" for a Misterogers' Day was prepared by Helen Peters of WGBH after this initial experience which has been used for all subsequent personal appearances. A general invitation is promoted on the air, through newspaper columnists, and so forth, starting about three weeks before the day. Tickets are free but a sense of urgency that tickets are limited by time and space in the studio is to be created.

Start with a time span of 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. As requests for invitations come in, issue tickets on the basis of 200 children per 15-minute segment. Allow 15 minutes free time for Rogers to rest between 3:15 and 3:30 (No tickets during this period). As requests grow and time between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. is filled, open it up to 1 p.m. and 5:30. Next, expand back into the morning hours, allowing half-hour for lunch for Rogers. Try not to shut down on invitations - tickets. The larger crowd you have, the more you demonstrate to your community how important your station is, and the more people will jump on the bandwagon and watch public television. Therefore, if you get swamped, and need to fit in more people, reduce the segments to 10 minutes each, instead of 15 minutes and insert new groups of 200.

The manual next goes into a detailed section of suggestions for arrangements for local press coverage.

We have found that it works quite well if you allow two days for interviews, luncheons, broadcasts (Thursday and Friday) and devote the third

15Ibid.

day to the day (Saturday.)\textsuperscript{17}

Central to this section is the idea that it is of "utmost importance" that the press have a chance to see Fred Rogers' personal relationship with the children.

The next section is labeled "General Caution" and deals with how to treat Mr. Rogers.

As hospitable as I know people will want to be to Fred, it actually is tough on him if any fancy dinner or social obligation is set up. The night before, he likes to have a good dinner, preferable at his hotel, and be in his room by 9 p.m. After the performance, he is exhausted. (When you see how much of himself he gives to the children you will understand.) If a few people from the station would like to have dinner with him one evening, that would be fine, but it should be early, and it should be anywhere but in a private home. (This enables Fred to excuse himself and retire when he wishes.) If you would like to plan a cocktail party or reception for the faculties of university education, psychology or child development departments to meet Fred Rogers, I am sure he would be pleased. Fred, himself, might have a little chilled wine, or plain ginger ale or coke.\textsuperscript{18}

Under "Expenses" it is noted that Small World Enterprises Inc. (using Sears and N.E.T. grants), will pay all travel expenses and hotel for Rogers' company and staff, including a visit by Helen Peters a couple of months in advance to look at the layout, and help with any special problems. "Mrs. Peters and George Hill, Mr Rogers' manager, will be on hand

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 3-4.
during the three day period of Misterogers' visit." The station is responsible for all studio, promotion, and publicity costs.19

The remaining seven pages of the Misterogers' Day manual are devoted to the logistics of the personal appearance day: parking, availability of toilets, set-up and props, movement of visitors, and utilization of station personnel.

A larger studio is used as a holding studio for the groups of two-hundred waiting to see Mr. Rogers. Here it is suggested that the line of people be accommodated around the walls and that an animal or bird exhibit occupy the center of the room.

Note: For entertainment in the holding studio, please do NOT have a clown, or magician clown, or folk singer. It's been our experience that these performers, understandably, tire after three or four hours of doing a show every fifteen minutes, and the children go from the holding studio to the Rogers studio quite excited and keyed up.20

The smaller studio is used for Mr. Rogers and his company which includes Johnny Costa at the piano, and two or three other "regulars" such as David Newell and Betty Aberlin. The children sit on the floor with adults standing in the back. Of utmost importance is that when a show finishes in the Rogers' studio a new group enters as the old group leaves, "The audience change should be accomplished quickly - less

19Ibid., p. 4.
20Ibid., p. 6.
than a minute, as any more cuts severely into show time."\textsuperscript{21}

This manual in its original and revised forms has been used successfully since the Misterogers' personal appearances in Boston. In September of 1967, a second appearance was scheduled at WGBH to accommodate the children who didn't get a chance to see him the first time. Harford Gunn, then Manager of WGBH, spoke of the first Boston appearance in his testimony on the Public Broadcast Bill before the Massachusetts Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee.

This program has developed a very loyal following, such that after a couple of notices one week in April on the air that Misterogers was coming to Boston, over 6,000 children and parents showed up to see and meet Mr. Rogers, and another 4,000 had to be turned away. We have never had a demonstration like this on behalf of any program that we have ever put on.\textsuperscript{22}

The third personal appearance was in Chicago where the newly developed format was really used for the first time.

Announcements were aired for four days before and after Misterogers' Neighborhood prior to a scheduled appearance in March of 1969, at KCET in Los Angeles. Given the facts that KCET is on a UHF channel and that the promotion was confined to only a few announcements on the station, all concerned were somewhat amazed when six-thousand tickets were issued.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 10.

\textsuperscript{22}Harford Gunn, "Testimony before the Massachusetts Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee on the Public Broadcasting Bill," Boston, Massachusetts, July 19, 1967.
His presence at all of the personal appearances has made a strong impression on George Hill.

It's unbelievable. It's a different kind of relationship with these children. You know, I've seen children react to a famous star and they react to a famous star in a sense of awe. With these children what happens is that he's the only person they see. They don't see anybody else but him. This completely unrehersed, unafraid attitude they have about him, this tremendous trust they have in him, it's somewhat scary in some ways—the trust they have in this guy.23

Writer Eliot A. Daley has observed that the rapport Rogers establishes with his followers is phenomenal.

During personal appearances it is not unusual for a four-year-old to open conversation with him by volunteering, "Mister Rogers, I only wet my bed some of the time now." The trust and intimacy of this kind of relationship doesn't just happen. The creation of it is the fruit of close attention to the world of children.24

Other opportunities for communication with the audience such as discussions following speeches and telephone calls provide the Misterogers' staff with essential feedback. One woman called Hedda Sharapan last year to say that her children understood reruns on every other program, but when she told them about reruns on Misterogers' Neighborhood they said, "He would have told me. He would have told me."25

23Hill interview.


25Sharapan interview.
Another mother who came in with her daughter said that her child thought that when the station aired the program twice in one day that Mr. Rogers did it again the second time. She would watch the rerun very carefully to see that he did everything the same way.  

A favorite illustration of Fred Rogers' is quoted by Eliot A. Daley in *Presbyterian Life*.

A mother called me one night and said, "Just wanted you to know -- you just saved my kid a lickin'," I stammered, "That's nice," or something like that. She said, "You are the one that's on TV, aren't you?" I said, "Yes," and she said, "I just finished cleaning the kitchen floor when he came in with his muddy feet. Oh, I could have killed him! And he came in the door and walked across, and you know what I thought? I remembered that song, "Sometimes people get wet and their parents get upset, but the very same people that are wet sometimes are the very same people that are dry sometimes." So I didn't give him a lickin'. I just told him to go clean his feet off." And with that she hung up. Now there's a family that really uses the program.

Child development experts such as Dr. Hilde Himmelweit are quick to point out the value of parents viewing television programs with their children.

The young child has a small store of experience, as yet little detachment or ability to differentiate between reality and fiction; his response is to incidents, he cannot yet comprehend the broader theme. This is why it is so useful if parents can find the time to watch with

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26 Ibid.

27 Daley, p. 37.
the younger children or failing that, encourage them to talk to them about the program afterwards. In this way one can see if there is anything that disturbs the child, and use the opportunity for building on the new impressions he has gained.28

The central people in the child's experience, according to Dr. McFarland, are not the television artists, but the real parents. A basic reason some children enjoy the program so much is because the parents watch it some and the child has their image available to support his relationship to the program.

I know, for example, a girl who has four kids and her husband is in Viet Nam. She's just terribly lonely for adult companionship. She is the only parent available to her kids right now and you should see how those four little boys are attached to Mr. Rogers' program. You see, she watches it every day with them. I think she enjoys it because he is an adult man and she is lonely for the companionship of her husband. The regular watching has become meaningful to her and, therefore, her kids get more out of it. And I think in a way that program is very helpful to those little boys who are now deprived of their father for these months. But I think it is much less likely to be fundamentally useful if she didn't watch with them.29

Although Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is comprehensible to preschool children, and often communicated as though to them, Dr. McFarland observes that it has sophisticated, symbolic


29Dr. Margaret McFarland, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.
meanings and cultural richness that bring to it a wide and varied audience. "Misterogers' Neighborhood is a family program that adults and children can enjoy together, each person responding at his own level." The adult audience is not, as one might imagine, restricted to parents of young children.

An unexpected segment of the audience of this program has come to my attention through my contacts with elderly people who, because of poor health, are restricted in relationships that stimulate their thoughts and feelings. Some of these persons have deep longings for contacts with persons who share their interests in music, or religion or literature, or other forms of cultural expression.30

Very little scientifically-gathered audience size or profile information has been amassed on the program. Occasionally some survey or poll information becomes available.

Christopher S. Wren reported in Look that WGBH in Boston, the only public television affiliate that troubled with an audit, "found Misterogers' Neighborhood went into one out of three homes, wiping out the time-slot competition." Rogers alluded to his survey in his statement to the Senate Hearings on Public Broadcasting.

It is still by the good graces of many gifted people who care, that our program attain the kind


of quality which affords them a Peabody Prize as well as the highest rating in a test city such as Boston (all commercial programs included). 32

In the seventeenth annual Look-Listen Poll, conducted by the American Council for Better Broadcasts -- a national, non-profit, educational organization, Misterogers' Neighborhood ranked in fifth place behind Walter Cronkite, Family Affair, Wonderful World of Disney, and Room 222. Final scores were based on numerical values place on each rating: Excellent 2; Good 1; Fair -1; Poor -2.

During October and November of 1969, over 6364 people living in 45 states returned 35,856 gradings of television and radio programs. The monitors were 4109 adults and 2255 young people from high school classes or youth groups. Each monitor was asked to give thoughtful attention to eight programs aired Saturdays, Sundays, or late afternoon and evening of other days.

Misterogers' Neighborhood received a total score of 591, the highest among children's programs. (Excellent 288; Good 18; Fair 3; Poor 0.) A total score of 494 was received by the second place children's program Captain Kangaroo, Sesame Street, which went on the air late in the

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monitoring period, scored 436. Several brief comments by monitors about the program were included in the report.

"It is tranquil and very friendly." (Hightstown, N.J.) "Presents real life circumstances with explanations -- slow and concise -- as to why they happen. Has a great talent to share children's anxieties and yet guide and instruct parents." (San Diego) "He has a gentle way which the children respect." (Magnolia, N.J.) "It deals with things that adults take for granted like buttons, zippers, shoelaces, or kinds of sweaters." (Brookfield, Wis.) "It arouses the children's curiosity and leaves them with answers." (Keene, N.H.) "He leaves the child relaxed after viewing." (Superior, Wis.) "He gets across the importance of the individual child." (Oconomowoc, Wis.) "One program was going to the dentist -- relieved this fear in my daughter." (Erie, Pa.) "He helps them see that they do as fun ties into what they will do as adults." (Pittsburgh, Pa.) "He deepens sensitivity to diverse characters." (Madison, Wis.)

At all levels, according to writer Eliot A. Daley, Misterogers' Neighborhood has acquired a constituency ferociously dedicated to preserving the program.

When a local N.E.T. station in a large Midwestern city announced on the air that it would have to cancel the program for lack of funds, the response was overwhelming. The station was deluged with letters, many from the poorest area of the city, containing pennies, nickels, pressed flowers, and even a hank of dog's hair. Several groups set up block parties, and the youngsters went from door to door soliciting funds to keep Misterogers' Neighborhood coming over their channel. In all, they raised sixty-three hundred dollars -- eleven hundred dollars more than the annual cost of the program to local N.E.T. stations.

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34Daley, p. 38.
Daley goes on to give other examples of audience loyalty which has been manifested in audience action. In addition to the story of how the Boston audience saved the series after its initial one-hundred programs, he tells of a group of women in Texas who were so infected by the enthusiasm of their friends in communities which received the program that they raised the money to have it shown locally on the strength of their friends' recommendation.35

Demonstrations of audience interest and approval manifested in fund raising efforts, attendance at personal appearances, and fan mail have, to a large extent, been instrumental in the growing success of Misterogers' Neighborhood. The favorable press coverage given to these actions has been important in the quest for production funds.

Fred Rogers and his staff have expressed a strong desire to have a greater knowledge of the program's audience and the effects of the program on that audience. The limitations of time and money, however, have so far made it necessary to place primary emphasis both in time and money on the production of the program.

35Ibid.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the first network television program specifically for children, Small Fry Club, which began in 1947, on the Dumont Network, there has been a tremendous increase in both the potential and actual audience for children's programs. There has been, however, little increase in the programming for children. The preschool viewer has been the most disadvantaged. Although there are over sixteen-million young people in the two-to-five age group, there is only one commercial network program designed for them -- Captain Kangaroo on C.B.S.

Other nationally distributed programs for the preschool age audience include the syndicated Romper Room and three programs on Public Television: The Friendly Giant, Sesame Street, and Misterogers' Neighborhood.

While children's television in specific has not been a primary concern of the commercial network programmers, all television programming and its impact on children has attracted widespread public interest. Attention, however, has centered mainly on effects of viewing rather than on programs. As early as the mid-1950's such authorities as
Dr. Hilde Himmelweit in Great Britain and Dr. Paul F. Lazarsfeld in the United States were suggesting research into "The life-history of programs: how they are commissioned, how they are written, why they are finally put on the air."¹

In their widely recognized work on *Television In The Lives Of Our Children*, Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin B. Parker posed three questions to the responsible men and women of television:

1. Cannot programs be produced that will be attractive to children without such large doses of violence and excitement?

2. Can television not offer more challenge to bright children?

3. Can the picture of adult life now offered on commercial television be made more adequate to the needs of children?²

In a later article on "What TV Is Doing To Our Children," Wilbur Schramm, directing his thoughts to future studies needed in the area of children and television, again suggested:

Perhaps we should study how to make the non-entertainment, nonfictional programs on television more interesting so they will attract more viewers.


and contribute more to learning.\textsuperscript{3}

Nevertheless, almost the total bulk of research and writing, both academic and popular, has been devoted to the effects of television on children.

The three basic questions about children and television which have attracted the attention of researchers, writers, educators, parents, and even the congress are: (1) How much time do they watch? (2) Why do they watch? and, (3) What are the effects of watching?

Since preschool children are not readily accessible, a basic problem is encountered in sampling. The research available indicates that two-year-olds watch about one hour a day and that this amount of time doubles by the age of five or six. Viewing time continues to increase until a child enters his teens.

Speculation into the reasons for watching centers around the fact that television is available, entertaining, and provides escape from boredom.

The question of the effects of viewing is, of course, the most discussed and controversial. While "concerned" parents, youth leaders, and most writers for the popular press express strong concern about the effect of television

programming on children; "average" parents, network programmers, and social scientists generally see less reason for great fear. Many social scientists concerned with the effects of television on children point out the two basic problems which they encounter: (1) It is probably impossible to design studies which could isolate the effects of television from other forces in the environment, and (2) the studies which have been undertaken have been too limited in scope and time.

The lack of concrete research findings has meant that much of the critical attack on television programming for children goes unheeded. Commercial network response has been promises, but little substantial action.

At the time of this writing, the only regularly scheduled commercial network program designed specifically for preschool children is Captain Kangaroo on C.B.S. It is often criticized as a vehicle for commercial messages frequently with direct involvement by the Captain. The nationally syndicated Romper Room is often cited for its lack of creativity as well as its' commercialism.

National Educational Television began to fill the void in preschool children's programming in 1967, with the distribution of Misterogers' Neighborhood and the Friendly Giant. Sesame Street which premiered on Public Television
in late 1969, has been the subject of more publicity and comment than any program for preschool children in history. While most of the comment has been highly complimentary some educators have questioned the use of commercial television advertising techniques as a method of teaching. Educational consultant Arnold Arnold noted that children would probably survive the "nonsense and hysteria" employed on Sesame Street. He expressed great concern, however, that "public policy in day-care, nursery school, kindergarten and other early education have already been detrimentally affected."4

Allowing that the acquisition of cognitive skills is important, television critic Robert Lewis Shayon feels that it is hardly the answer to society's social and personal ills. "It is our emotional life that needs therapy."5 The primary focus on the child's emotional life of Misterogers' Neighborhood is a direction that has developed over the period of sixteen years that Fred Rogers has been engaged in the creation of television for children.

In the beginning there was a need for a children's program on WQED which would begin operation as Pittsburgh's

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community station in April, 1954. In response to this need Fred Rogers and Josie Carey created the Children's Corner. Audience response was favorable and for a time in 1955-56, the program was carried Saturday mornings on N.B.C. as well as daily on WQED. Children's Corner was the laboratory and proving ground where many of the creative elements on Misterogers' Neighborhood were developed.

For the most part Fred was not seen on Children's Corner. He created material, manipulated and voiced the puppets, and played the organ. The Misterogers' format, where Fred Rogers appears as himself, was first used in 1963, on a series produced for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto. It was further developed at WQED when production started on Misterogers' Neighborhood in the Fall of 1966.

The first one-hundred programs were produced with a minimum amount of money and utilized kinescope recordings from the C.B.C. series for the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" segments. Continued production of the program was made possible when National Educational Television secured a grant of $150,000 from the Sears, Roebuck Foundation in the Summer of 1967. This fund, together with a major portion of the $5,200 yearly from each N.E.T. affiliate participating in a special Children's Program Project, provided
a $6,000 per program budget.

In January, 1970, it was announced that beginning in the Fall the Corporation for Public Broadcasting would assume the total cost to all stations of production and distribution for *Misterogers' Neighborhood*. This meant that stations which had not been financially able to contribute to the Children's Program Project could begin receiving the program. Some 197 Public Television Stations would now be eligible to receive the program at no cost.

While a certain amount of money was essential for production, prudent and creative use of the funds available contributed in no small way to the success of the series. A small staff of dedicated and talented people strove to make the best use of the available money and resources. Basic support for the creator-producer-host was provided by an Assistant Producer, Associate Producer-Director, Film Producer, Production Assistant, Art Director, and Business Manager. Most of these individuals handled varied duties not necessarily compatible with their job description. Several of the staff participated in "growth meetings" which contributed content ideas for the program.

The director, David Chen, devised a segmented shooting plan designed to make the most efficient use of talent, facilities, and crew. That many of the crew of seven
engineers and four floormen have worked on the program since the beginning of the Misterogers' series is evident in the teamwork and professionalism.

The actual mechanics of creating scripts for Misterogers' Neighborhood begins at Fred Rogers' vacation home on Nantucket Island. Here during July and August he blocks out the next season's sixty-five scripts. After the basic story outline, a completely detailed outline including everything but the actual dialogue is prepared. In the third and final step the dialogue is written. In order to free Fred from some of the writing burden a writer was hired in the Spring of 1970 to take the scripts up to the final dialogue writing stage. How the introduction of a new individual into the creative process will affect the program remains to be seen.

Since all available funds have been sorely needed for program production very little information of an empirical nature has been gathered about the audience for Misterogers' Neighborhood. Feedback derived from fan mail has been dramatically supplemented by the response to personal appearances. Such events in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh have consistently attracted crowds of around five-thousand. To insure order and avoid disappointment a Misterogers' Day manual prepared by Helen Peters of WGBH in Boston has been used since 1967, by stations scheduling
personal appearances.

Other sources of audience information have included telephone calls, discussions following speeches, as well as frequent visits by Fred Rogers and other staff members with preschool children. Dr. McFarland, among others, has found some evidence that there may be a considerable adult audience for the program even among the elderly.

Demonstrations of audience interest and approval in fan mail, attendance at personal appearances, and in fund raising efforts have been favorably covered by the press. This local and national publicity has aided in increasing the audience as well as in attracting grants needed for production and distribution.

Although Fred Rogers and his staff have expressed a strong interest in audience research, to date it has been necessary that all available funds be used for program production.

The purpose of this study was to provide a history and descriptive analysis of *Misterogers' Neighborhood*, winner of a 1969 George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Award for excellence in children's programming as well as numerous other awards. It was hoped that through an examination of this program, which has received the critical acclaim of laymen and experts alike, something could be learned about making "the nonentertainment, nonfictional programs on television
more interesting so they will attract more viewers and contribute more to learning," as suggested by Wilbur Schramm.6

More than anything else, it is Fred Rogers, creator-producer-host; his background, training, and depth of investment in children that contribute to the uniqueness of Misterogers' Neighborhood. Dr. McFarland has observed that in contrast to many people who tend to be narcissistic in their dealings with other people, Fred Rogers is "other people oriented." His first and foremost interest is in the talents, feelings, and desires of the other person. This is manifested on the program in the care and understanding communicated.

He's a very complex man, you know. He's a musician. He's a poet. He's a dramatist. He's a clergymen. Yet the axis is the adult professional invested in the growth of children.7

Fortunate personal financial circumstances have allowed Fred Rogers to freely devote himself to the task he set forth. Over the period of sixteen years he has worked in television programming for children his growth as a creator has been enhanced by the acquisition of knowledge in the field of child development. He has taken all of the basic courses offered from preschool to early adolescense


7Dr. Margaret B. McFarland, Personal interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1970.
offered at Pittsburgh's Arsenal Family and Children's Center. Continuous input of this nature is provided for by weekly consultation sessions with Dr. Margaret B. McFarland at the Center and with child psychoanalyst Dr. Albert V. Corrado. On Sundays he works with children in the University and Cities Ministry.

In their 1962 book, *For The Young Viewer*, the editors considered the problem faced by the adult programmer of trying to see children's needs and desires through adult eyes. They point out that like the early writers of children's books, many American film makers and television producers have had little background in designing their products for children.

...there has thus far been little occasion to integrate the findings of child development and child psychology into the creation of either films or television programs.\(^8\)

In addition to making use of child development knowledge in his own work, Fred Rogers has become an apostle to others involved in creating material for children. In a television interview following the White House Conference on Children he noted that there are many valuable insights about the growth and development of the human personality which people who produce for the mass media can use greatly.

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I was talking at lunch with Ezra Jack Keats and told him how meaningful it had been for me to have the weekly consulting times that I've had with Dr. McFarland and Dr. Corrado. It has enriched what I've been able to produce for children greatly. Our hope as a committee is that we really will be able to establish some sort of an institute, some sort of a means by which those who understand the growing needs of children can come together with those who make things for them to read and see, and that we can grow together. 9

Rogers went on to observe that he thought some of the people at the conference felt that what they were doing was intruding or suggesting that they intrude in their creative work. "...but that's not it at all. My consulting time is used to talk about children and then I go off and write the scripts and the music and do the program." 10

Fred Rogers' knowledge of children and dedication to them is felt, in no small way, by everyone who becomes associated with the program. They, too, in their work on the program reflect the goals set by Rogers.

A second major factor, after the attributes of the creator-producer-host, that distinguishes Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood from other programs for preschool children is the underlying content. Each program communicates to the

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9"How Mass Media Affects Children: A Special Report On Fred Rogers' Committee," Public Television Network, September 22, 1970, 10:00 P.M.

10Ibid.
child a sheer delight in being exactly who he is. Daily attention is given to letting the child know that he is totally accepted right now -- not as he will be when he grows up. Rogers concludes each program with the same thought. "You've made this a special day for me. You know how? Just by being you." In the same vein, a positive theme offered is that the limitations of childhood are not necessarily liabilities. There are things that children can do much better than adults and Mr. Rogers reminds children of them. The worth of each person, then, as an individual in his present state, is the primary theme.

Although a great deal of information is offered and learning takes place, the emphasis is on feelings. Children are encouraged to express their feelings. Anger is recognized as a human thing, but the focus is on the good feeling that can come from control. Light is shed on such commonplace occurrences as getting a haircut and going to the doctor or dentist in hopes that knowledge of the unknown will help dispel fear.

Fred Rogers feels that the educational system in America does little to foster, in fact, probably discourages creativity. He believes that creative work is absolutely essential to the healthy growth and development of the human personality. Through the introduction of creative young people and adults in all areas from carpenters to composers,
and through a controlled use of fantasy in the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" every effort is made to encourage creativity on the program. Support is given to the worth of fantasy and imaginative thought as essential components of all creative and scientific achievement.

Various aspects of the format and method of presentation are worthy of special note. Mr. Rogers appears as himself. He is an adult in relationship to the child. To be sure he is minimally authoritarian, kind, gentle, and interested, but he is an adult. The visual contact he makes with the viewing child fosters a one-to-one relationship. Mr. Rogers does not visit children; he visits the individual. The setting of the program, a livingroom, kitchen, and porch, is familiar and promotes identification. Themes and ideas are developed over a period of time not in a sustained way. Themes are often worked on in various ways within a single program, through several programs, and even over an entire series.

The factors which can be singled out as making the greatest contribution to the uniqueness of Misterogers' Neighborhood are:

1. The depth of background and dedication of the creator-producer-host.

2. The focus on the individual, recognition of his feelings, and encouragement of his creativity in the content of the program.
3. The methods of presentation utilized to maximize communication of the basic content.

There are over sixteen-million American young people in the two-to-five age group. In spite of research evidence that two-year-olds watch television about one hour a day and that by age five or six this amount of time doubles, there is only one program on a national, commercial network specifically directed to this audience. Although no definitive research exists proving detrimental effects on preschool children from television viewing, there are strong indications that the medium does have effects -- both good and bad.

A renewed interest in and awareness of television in the lives of our children has occurred in recent years. National Educational Television has sought to present programs of positive value. Pressure groups such as Action for Children’s Television are continuing to press the Federal Communications Commission for new rules and regulations. The White House Conference on Children in the Fall of 1970, chaired by Fred Rogers, saw the beginning of an effort by creators of all types of mass communication for children to seek out and share knowledge of child development and child psychology.

The need for the creator to know his audience is taking on a vital new meaning as we come to realize that
millions of young lives are potentially involved everyday.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

No doubt can exist that thoughtful examination of successful television programs for children will yield basic information of value to those engaged in creating programming for children. The absence of such programs in national distribution suggests a systematic survey and evaluation of locally produced programs for preschool children.

A great need exists for audience research to accompany historical and descriptive material about successful programs. What audience is attracted, for example, to what program elements, and why? Research must be conducted over a period of years in order to investigate age difference and cumulative effects. The accelerated rate of both physical and mental growth in the preschool child suggests that attention should be given to the needs and desires of children of various age levels as well as those of various socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, research is vitally needed to explore and develop the relationship of knowledge in the fields of child development and psychology to children's programming. Knowledge must be available to and cooperation must be sought from creators of television for preschool children in an
effort to promote more effective use of the medium in ameliorating the growing process.
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