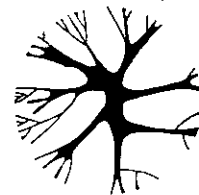


COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS



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Improving Children's Television

Few areas of television programming have provoked such strong public concern and protest as children's programmes. Parents and educators fear that television may be disrupting the balanced development of children's personalities or implanting harmful values. Most of the early research on children's television was an attempt to determine more accurately whether content was truly violent or manipulative and whether violence, advertising or other content was having destructive effects.

This public reaction also sparked moves in the late 1960s to carefully design programmes such as *Sesame Street* which would be entertaining, instructive and contribute to the intellectual-emotional growth of the child.

In many cases the creators of these programmes asked child psychologists and researchers on children's media to help in the planning of the content and methods. This opened up new directions in the research on children and media: formative research to design programmes; summative research to determine whether programme objectives were really being realised; and research on the potential of television for constructive, 'prosocial' programmes. Since many of the programmes were aimed at specific age groups — preschoolers, preadolescents, adolescents — this demanded research on the stages of child development and the growth of cognitive capacity.

This issue reviews some of the current debate regarding the design of programmes for child development.

REVIEW ARTICLE

France: Children's Identification With Media Heroes

Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe/Claude Bellan. *Enfants de L'Image* (Children of the Image). Paris: Payot — 106, Boulevard Saint Germain, 1979.

Books or other media designed specifically for children are a relatively new phenomenon in history, first appearing in France only at the end of the 18th century. These authors suggest that over the last 100 years children's media have taken over many of the functions of the family and school in the socialisation of the child.

The years from seven to fourteen are of critical importance in the formation of personal identities and adult role models because it is the age when children are leaving infant dependency and beginning to deal with the tensions, frustrations and problems of a larger social reality. Yet in more urbanised contexts, the child has little direct contact with the social and economic activities of the world. Increasingly, both parents are involved in professional careers away from the home. The school often remains secondary in the formation of personal ideals and life goals. Children shape their identities during free-time activities when they are able to fantasise, explore and test on their own. The children's media industry is aimed at the free-time of this 7-14 age group, and, with products as varied as films, clothing and toys, the media often provide the child's principle experience of the larger world.

Children's media often tend to centre around the action of heroes and other personages that invite a vicarious participation in the action and an identification with the protagonists. A basic premise in the research of Chombart de Lauwe and Bellan is that children do not simply copy what they see on the television screen. Rather, children construct their own version of a hero in their imagination and give this a personal meaning according to their identifications

from earlier infancy, current interests, personal tensions, and social context of the family. However, children select their heroes out a limited pool of images offered to them by parents, secondary institutions such as the school and the role models which the mass media design to entertain and inspire. In turn, the creators of children's books, magazines, comics and television are very much influenced by the social, political and cultural ideals or restraints of their time. Thus, in order to understand the social and psychological processes of how children select heroes from the media and identify with these heroes, the authors designed a three-staged programme of research. Firstly, to show how the socio-cultural context influences the hero images both of the creators and of the children, they examine the evolution of children's media in the press, magazines, comics, radio and television across the different socio-political periods of French history. Secondly, they use content analysis of children's media to show the changing characteristics of heroes from about 1880 to the 1970s. Thirdly, they gathered data on the way children today perceive their popular heroes and the factors which influence different patterns of identification.

Different Ideologies, Different Children's Heroes

The first stage of the research shows how closely the characteristic themes of children's media are linked to the dominant political and cultural currents of an age. During the *ancien regime* before the French Revolution, the existing children's literature served to inculcate in the children of the nobility the moral principles of their class and service to 'God and King'. The children's books between

1870 and 1914 exalt colonialistic campaigns, the magnificent French empire, the captains of industry, the conquering armies and the fatherland. Throughout the 19th century children's books are of a moralising type explicitly encouraging conformity with the social class structure. Poverty is surmounted thanks to the 'beneficence' of the rich and the virtuous hard work of the poor.

Between the wars (1918-1939), with the international expansion of the American media empire and the American idea of the comic strip, media heroes became the phantasms of American society — Tarzan, Buck Rogers and invincible detectives. The themes often presented a white Western figure overcoming the Indians, the savages of the forest or weak Asiatics. The violence, sadism and racism brought the first strong reactions against the dangers of children's media.

In the post-war period, with the rapid advance of a scientific, technological culture, there has been a great increase in superhuman, mythical characters who are outside of any real social or historical context. They solve problems not by any human courage, endurance or physical strength — certainly not with any concern for real social problems — but by a show of super-scientific powers and technical gadgets which are an end in themselves. Young media heroes are much more independent of adults and provide a mythical image of freedom to young people in a longer period of education and minority. The moralising tone is gone, but always child-heroes are of middle-and upper-class background — detectives, reporters, free adventurers — who are controlling the possible threats to this romanticised orderly society.

One Hundred Years of Children's Heroes

The detailed content analysis of children's novels, inspirational literature and visual materials (including television) from 1870 to the present shows two major trends in the characteristics of children's heroes. Firstly, heroes of an adolescent age are increasingly portrayed as much more autonomous and free of domination by family and society. Most are half children and half adult, having the features of a child but engaging in activities possible only for super adults. However, the authors doubt whether this autonomy image may increase the ability of children to think and act in the real world of French society because the actions of

young heroes are moved to a purely mythical plane.

Secondly, the equality of girls with boys is accepted as much more natural. However, this image of equality is ambiguous because young female heroes are presented simply as 'sweetened' copies of boys. If formerly the model of young female heroes was that of conformity and submission, now there is no distinct female identity at all.

Why Children Identify With Certain Heroes

In the third stage of the study the authors asked a sample of 1,121 pre-adolescent children (9-12) to write essays selecting media heroes less than 16 years old, describing their perception of their heroes and explaining why they want to be like these heroes. The subjective explanations were a kind of projective test revealing the influence of culturally defined sex roles, social class and personal tensions of children.

Almost half of the girls selected boy heroes, but in both their male and female heroes they highlight characteristics of beauty, gentleness, submission and devotedness. Boys identify with daring, adventurous initiative, autonomy from family, adult characteristics and success. Children from a working-class background give more importance to good example, being pleasing and other characteristics which imply subordination to the group. Children from more favoured classes emphasise success and initiative. Working-class children also choose more fantastic, mythical heroes of television which suggests that they find compensation in the make-believe world of the mass popular media.

In general, the media tend to mask the fundamental oppositions of child/adult, male/female and social class. However, the children, living in the realities of French culture, are more conformist. They make their female heroes more female and the male heroes more male, etc. At the same time the contradictions between the media world and the real world leave children with ambiguous feelings about their identifications, especially those children in a less powerful social status. Girls more often than boys refuse to state any identification. In the face of media children who are rich, successful and like adults, children admit the impossibility of becoming like their heroes and are satisfied to bask in their comforting presence.

U.S.A.: The Economics of Children's Television

Joseph Turow. *Entertainment, Education and the Hard Sell: Three Decades of Network Children's Television*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981.

Turow shows that the content and format of children's television in the U.S. commercial networks have been determined largely by economic factors, especially the unrelenting drive to deliver ever bigger audiences to advertisers. At the same time, no aspect of U.S. television has brought more public outrage against broadcasters than the content of children's TV. Turow traces the thirty-year running battle of parents, consumer associations, researchers, government regulators and creative people against the financial executives of the networks. He concludes that in the end the networks continue to win the battle.

1948-1959: Selling Television to America

To convince families that buying a television set would be useful for children, networks initially made a special effort in children's programming. At the very beginning of television, many children's programmes were on sustaining time (as it had been for radio) in part because advertisers did not consider children a potential market. The Hollywood producers were still not willing to rent animated cartoons to TV, and the networks found outdoor adventure productions too costly. Most programmes were produced live in studios and were built around entertaining displays of human talent, puppet shows, and various hosted shows with a softer, slower pace that invited participation by children. By default there was less concentration on action-adventure and a high level of diversity.

1960-69: The Making of the Saturday Kidvid Ghetto

By the mid-1950s there began to be more action-adventure programmes, and public outcries against TV violence brought on the first of a series of government investigations, this one in the form of hearings by Senator Kefauver. The network reaction was not to revise children's TV but to desert it for 'family' programmes in prime time which were more attractive to advertisers. In the late 1950s networks released to local affiliate stations the after-school children's hour which was considered 'useless' from a profit point of view.

In the early 1960s the networks realised that advertisers (especially food and toy companies) were interested in children's audiences and that they were going to the local affiliates to get at the late afternoon children's hour. The networks' competitive move was to replace the lost afternoon slot with the underutilised Saturday morning and to offer large discounts to advertisers for that time.

The networks also developed the action-adventure format that would glue children to sets for three or four hours, and assure advertisers a large, consistent audience. Outdoor action programmes were expensive to produce, but advertisers were happy to spread their slots over many programmes to get at more children. Children offer a rapidly changing audience permitting frequent repeats and lower prices to advertisers.

A new assembly-line technology for producing animated cartoons that eliminated the need for hundreds of drawings also reduced production costs. Many professional animators were bitterly disappointed with the dramatic quality of the new technology, but it ensured a plentiful supply of cheap children's programming.

By the late 1960s the diversity of children's network programming had declined dramatically, especially programmes involving performing activities and non-fiction. In 1969, fiction based on police and adventurous fast action made up 92% of all children's programming and 100% of Saturday morning programmes. Animated cartoons crowded out hosted shows or human talent. Major characters were fantasy men and women with magic, superhuman powers: Superman, Batman, Birdman, etc. There were few programmes which spoke to children about their real world environment, and programmes which invited participation by the child disappeared. Only one programme had a minority ethnic orientation, the hero with few exceptions was an adult male, female hosts declined and children rarely appeared. The Saturday morning programme was designed as an uninterrupted flow which discouraged children from other activity in the home or playground.

Public Reaction and Token Concessions from Networks
Action for Children's Television, formed in 1968, together with

Formative Research to Design Children's Programming

One of the reactions in the U.S. to the late 1960s wasteland of children's TV was the studied attempt to design better programmes such as *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The planning, evaluation and debate on theories of child development surrounding these programmes started a new trend in research on children's television. Before, research had been concerned largely with the use and effects of children's programmes after the fact, and much research was a reactive focus on the perceived negative, antisocial effects of violence or advertising. The producers of *Sesame Street* established procedures for inviting researchers to contribute their knowledge of how to prepare 'good' children's TV (formative research). This directed interest toward the criteria and methods

many other parent and consumer organisations, brought pressure on government regulatory agencies to reduce the blatant advertising aimed at children and improve the quality of children's programming. This started the flow of government and privately supported research which dominated studies of children's TV in the 1970s and demonstrated many harmful effects. For constitutional reasons, government agencies refused to specify content, but networks did make some improvements.

All networks introduced children's news and information spots. Realistic and entertaining problem drama, such as black comedian Bill Cosby's series about the escapades of lower class urban city life, added variety. More plots came from children's books and there was a move away from superhuman fantasy toward plot lines stressing man and nature. In general there was a calmer pace and a broader variety of human actors. However, the networks developed 90-minute umbrella programmes, spliced together by quick spots on health or safety, and extended the Saturday morning programme.

Turow concludes with the advice that the new cable and satellite technologies offer the opportunity for greater diversity, but warns that efforts will fail if the realities of economic power in commercial broadcasting are not considered.

of instructional and 'prosocial' programmes. *Sesame Street* also set explicit goals and stated explicitly the theories of children's perception, comprehension, learning and personality development upon which the programme was based. Researchers could thus evaluate or cross-evaluate the effectiveness of these programme ideas, compare this with other programmes and test the theories about television and child development. Finally, *Sesame Street* was marketed in about 40 countries, and the formative adaptation and evaluation in other cultural contexts involved discussion among people from very different research traditions, national broadcast policies and cultural traditions.

Sesame Street: A Critical Reassessment

Harvey Lesser. *Television and the Preschool Child*. New York: The Academic Press, 1977

Sesame Street proposed to use all of the techniques of popular children's entertainment but with the following instructional goals in mind:

1. Prepare four-year-olds for primary school by teaching them the alphabet, numbers and other elementary skills. A special aim was to help disadvantaged children of the inner city to get a 'head start' for better competition with middle class children.
2. Develop the capacity to think through cognitive problems more systematically by inculcating perceptual discrimination, relationships, classification and ordering.
3. Portray ideal social relationships which children could model: cooperative interaction, a variety of ethnic and racial minorities and female roles in positions of success and leadership, active and participating children, and the search for solutions of real-life social problems.

The methods of the programme were based largely on the theory that preschool children can learn from television by modeling. However, the producers felt that the major problem was to get and hold the child's attention — away from commercial TV — and toward the learning objectives. Consequently, the programme was centred around attention-getting devices: *music*, especially memorable tunes, alliteration and rhyming; *surprise* and *incongruity*,

using camera and sound techniques to pose puzzles and provoke expectation; *repetition*; loud, slapstick *humor*; and *rapid change of subject matter*.

Sesame Street soon became one of the most popular children's programmes in the U.S. The early evaluations concluded that all children, advantaged and disadvantaged, learned from the programme and that the heavier viewers learned more.

The Doubts About Sesame Street

Although *Sesame Street* is entertaining and may have accelerated learning of some concrete skills in letters and numbers, there is increasing evidence that the educational strategies have not helped children develop the deeper cognitive and personality capacities needed to cope with a school environment. H. Lesser suggests that too much was expected from the tricks of the television medium itself. The evaluations show that the heavy viewers who learn the most were already more advanced in the pre-tests. A comparison of the performance of viewers of *Sesame Street* on standard Readiness for School tests given to all children entering first grade concludes that only viewers from more advantaged backgrounds had higher scores. It seems likely that the home environment and subtle forms of parental encouragement provided the preconditions for getting

more out of the programme, motivated children to watch more consistently and then helped them make the transition to school.

Another study shows that preschool children who participated in educational activities in a group format, four children to a group, 15-30 minutes a day with a teacher, had far higher school entrance scores than children of similar background who were heavy viewers of *Sesame Street*.

H. Lesser also thinks that it is a delusion to believe that a television programme such as *Sesame Street* can contribute to reducing the U.S. 'achievement gap'. Proportionally, far more children from advantaged homes watched the programme and profited much more from it. The major factors influencing the disadvantaged child are the social and economic contexts which define the rhythm of life and aspirations in a family or neighbourhood.

Other observers have questioned *Sesame Street* as an authoritarian, manipulative indoctrination in a particular set of rather materialistic American middle-class values. It gives children a few techniques, but does not prepare them for life and does not provide four-year-olds with the deeper personality integration that may be more important than winning school competitions.

The Educational Fallacies of *Sesame Street*

H. Lesser suggests that the methods of *Sesame Street* were not based on an adequate understanding of the stages of a child's cognitive development and how children grow from one stage to another. *Sesame Street* depended too much on a four-year-old child's ability

to model in a relatively rote, passive fashion what is seen on the television screen. Lesser, drawing on the theories of Piaget and others regarding the stages of cognitive development, argues that voluntary attention and the ability to select out and organise aspects of a visual field develop from direct exploratory interaction with a world of objects and persons. Usually it is only at the age of five or six that a child has enough problem-solving experience to be able to approach the television screen with voluntary attention and follow the cause-effect and other relationships portrayed there. The attention-getting devices of *Sesame Street* may capture the involuntary attention of the four-year-old, but this does not ensure comprehension. Lesser considers television to be too much of a passive, one-way medium to stimulate the exploratory problem-solving stage in four-year-olds, but if a television programme is to help, then it must base its methods on more active participatory problem-solving, not just modeling.

Duck and Noble, in a comparison of *Sesame Street* with the BBC programme, *Play School*, note that the creators of *Play School* started with the premise that children will learn when adults engage them directly and provide immediate feedback. *Play School* emphasised much more than *Sesame Street* a participatory, two-way relationship between the presenter and the child, — singing with the programme, cut-and-paste activities, asking the opinion of the child, etc. Underlying *Play School* is general philosophical premise regarding respect for the freedom and spontaneity of the child.¹

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood

Michael J.A. Howe. *Television and Children*. London: New University Education, 1977.

Like *Sesame Street* this programme is aimed at four-year-olds and has been highly popular with children in the U.S., but it employs a creative design strongly contrasting with that of *Sesame Street*. Fred Rogers enters the room talking to children about themselves, their likes and dislikes, or their feelings regarding their families home and neighbourhood. Another part of the program takes the children into a make-believe land of King Friday the Thirteenth inhabited by puppets who dramatise some of the same emotional conflicts and problems of children in the real world.

Learning to Be Persons

Whereas *Sesame Street* stresses cognitive preparation for competitive success in the school, Fred Rogers focusses on the balanced emotional and social development of the child. *Sesame Street* attempts to accelerate intellectual growth. Rogers believes that children have a right to be children and integrate their personalities on their own terms before we superimpose on them

the task of memorising the adult world and its systems. *Mister Rogers'* has a deliberately quiet, slow pace that allows children time to reflect during the programme.

A major objective of the programme is to encourage children to be aware of their feelings of anger, fear, jealousy and to accept these as both mentionable and manageable. Many action-adventure programmes suggest that by knocking someone flat or with some form of powerful superhuman intervention problems will go away. Rogers argues that two men struggling hard to work out their anger with each other may be far more dramatic than gunfire. At the same time human life is shown to have great value.

Rogers believes that the adult child relationship is vital because children will only express their feelings when they trust that a caring adult will treat them with respect. The programme aims to communicate to children a sense of the dignity they desire and an awareness of their unique worth and creativity. This, Rogers feels, is the true calling of the teacher, not to cram their heads full of facts.

Programmes to Help Children's Imagination.

Jerome L. Singer and Dorothy G. Singer. *Television, Imagination and Aggression: A Study of Preschoolers*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1981.

Recent research of the Singers supports the approach of *Mister Rogers*. Studies in development psychology show that 'imaginative rehearsal' is an important part of children's growth in the ability to cope with the environment. At the three to four-year-old stage, children need to pre-establish socio-dramatic schema by talking out loud with imaginary companions, try out routines with parents or feed a plastic 'horsey' imaginary milk. High fantasy children develop more sophisticated interpretations of life situations indicated by better vocabulary, quicker remote association, greater control of affect in conflictual or frightening situations, greater emotional empathy for victims of aggression and more cooperative attitudes toward peers and adults.

Does Television Foster Imaginative Play?

One might argue that television brings children into contact with visual fantasy, a richer vocabulary or knowledge about the world not easily available. However, heavy, indiscriminate TV viewing may preempt time from spontaneous play or reading (in the case of school age children), and intense programming that commands long, unbroken concentration may leave little time for spontaneous play and imagination.

To test the relationship of TV viewing and development of

¹Julie Maree Duck, Grant Noble. 'Sesame Street and Play School: a comparison'. *Media Information Australia*. No. 13 August 1979. pp. 15-23.

imaginative play, the Singers carried out systematic observation of preschool children and correlated this with children's TV viewing habits and family life styles. Their studies showed that children with heavy viewing of TV, especially action-adventure programmes, showed less imaginative play in nursery school settings and a less rich vocabulary. However, this seems to be related to a general family life style that spends large amounts of time watching TV and little time doing things together. Specially,

children watching programmes such as *Mister Rogers* tended to be less aggressive and conflictual.

The Singers conclude that there is great need for children's programmes that have 'somewhat slower formats, more repetition, considerable positive reinforcement, more emphasis on helping, sharing and befriending, more clear-cut emphasis on reality-fantasy distinctions ... and (invite) a more active stance in relation to the program'.

Designing Programmes for Levels of Child Development

Ellen Wartella, ed. *Children Communicating: Media and Development of Thought, Speech, Understanding*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1979.

Jennings Bryant and Daniel R. Anderson, eds. *Children's Understanding of Television: Research on Attention and Comprehension*. New York & London: Academic Press, 1983.

If one compares the research reported in these recent books to some of the early classics such as *Television in the Lives of Our Children* by Schramm et al. and *Television and the Child* by Himmelweit et al., several major trends are evident.²

First, children are no longer taken as a global, static unit, but are seen in *developmental perspective*. Children are rapidly growing cognitively and emotionally so that age groups 3-4, 6-7 or 9-11 comprehend and use television in very different ways. The focus is on how television fits into the growth of the child from one stage to the other. Research is increasingly being based on theories of cognitive development derived from Piaget, Jerome Bruner and others who attempt to explain factors in developmental change. As Wartella notes, the developmental perspective takes into account the growth of children's communicative behaviour both in their interaction with the media and the communication of children with parents and peers. These aspects of growth are seen as closely related.

Byron Reeves suggests in the collection of Wartella that producers of television should take into consideration five dimensions of children's cognitive development: 1) the growing ability to differentiate experiences of the world through the selective, often fictional world of a *medium* from other experiences in real life; 2) developing understanding of *television drama* in terms of story lines, narrative plots and actors' impersonations; 3) increasing understanding of the *economics of television*, i.e., that it is costly or that it is presented to make money; 4) changing patterns of *use and gratifications*; and 5) increasing ability to understand the

visual grammar of TV — camera angles, zooms, etc. In following the stages of development the key underlying questions are the growth in capacity for cognitive logic, personal role-taking and moral reasoning.

Children Actively Construct Meanings

A second trend is away from a concern with the powerful effects of television and away from passive modeling theories of learning from television. Rather, the focus is on the act of television viewing itself. Researchers are examining more closely the cognitive capacities that children bring to the experience of television and how children *actively construct personal meanings* in viewing television. Anderson and Lorch, in the collection of Bryant and Anderson, provide evidence that even children as young as two and a half years approach television with a mental structure that poses questions and stimulates attentive exploration. Children do not passively absorb all, but organise material according to previous experiences and understanding. In their view attention follows on comprehension, not vice versa.

A third trend is a greater concern for the social context of children's television viewing in the family, peer group and neighbourhood. The communication within the family influences very much how the child perceives television content. And often the content of television may not be the only factor but the whole life style of the family which includes a particular pattern of using and interpreting television.

Future Directions of Research

In the review of the current research on children's programming, it is striking that there is so little information or understanding of the central questions: Where do the ideas for children's programmes come from? What is the creative process? What are the organisational and technical contexts that influence the pattern of content and format?

The shift of the research focus away from children as passive receptacles of effects to a better understanding of the action of children in seeking entertainment and exploring the world about them is a wholesome one. An understanding of this suggests ways to better serve children and families. The new emphasis on formative research is one of the few examples of a healthy cooperative dialogue between communication research and the creative-policy sectors of the media industry. Yet children remain the objects to be researched and the research intentions do sometimes lend themselves to suspicion of unwarranted manipulation.

The analysis by Chombart de Lauwe and Bellan on the different

styles of children's media in different political-cultural eras of French history reveals how much the creative community is influenced by its own cultural context. But we understand very little about the imaginative process of the people who make children's programmes. On what basis do they form their notions of how to bridge the worlds of adults and small children? Do they go by experiences with their own or other children? From recollections of childhood? From the theories and research of child psychologists? A combination of all these? What is their sense of obligation to parents and to the children themselves?

We also have relatively little understanding of how the constraints of the production process limit and shape the content of children's programmes. The sizeable body of research on the production of news and news organisations, the demands of deadlines and filling space, the influence of editorial policy decisions, etc. has been a valuable contribution toward better news services. The account of Mielke, in the collection of Bryant and Anderson, of how formative research had to fit the demands of production in the creation of a new science programme for the Children's Television Workshop in New York suggests realities that must be taken into account.

Much of the current research on the role of television viewing

²Wilber Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin B. Parker, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961).

Hilde T. Himmelweit, A.N. Oppenheim, Pamela Vince, *Television and the Child: An Empirical Study of the Effect of Television on the Young*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958, reprinted 1962.)

in the cognitive development of the child still touches mainly on the *form* of children's programming. A better understanding of the creative process would bring us closer to the heart of the matter, which is the question of content, and the world of meanings that

are being proposed to children. We then have a clearer understanding of the contribution of television to the kind of children's culture we are creating and the factors which enter into that creation.

Current Research on Children and Television

AUSTRALIA

Australian Children's Television Foundation (22-24 Blackwood St., N Melbourne, Victoria 3051) acts as a catalyst in the development of children's programmes of quality, researches and evaluates productions, and helps market such programmes.

Mary C. Nixon (Faculty of Education, Monash Univ., Clayton 3168) directs the research project, "TV and Children" funded by HSV-7, a Melbourne commercial station. The project examines relationships between developmental characteristics of children and specific features of actual TV programmes. A psychologist, she works in cognitive development and in children's rights.

Grant Noble (Dept. of Psychology, The Univ of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351). Some of his research includes: children's identification with superheroes as part of personality development; pre-schoolers' perception of TV show reality; reshaping nature shows with a local TV station for increased child viewer appreciation.

BANGLADESH

Quazi Abdul Quyum (Exec. Prod., Bangladesh TV, Rampura, Dhaka) is researching children's TV programmes in Bangladesh under the National Broadcasting Academy.

CANADA

Lois J. Baron (Dept. of Education, Concordia Univ., 1455 de Maisonneuve W., Montreal H3G 1M8) investigates children's grasp of common TV features (special effects, fantasy/reality), their assessment of TV as a learning source, and their willingness to become involved in community-oriented cable after a course on media literacy.

Children's Broadcast Institute (160 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 207, Toronto, Ont. M4P 1G3) concerns itself with every aspect of broadcasting affecting Canadian children: workshops for producers and parents; awards; quarterly newsletter; and briefs to governmental agencies on behalf of children.

CHINA

Wu Xiao-mei (International Liaison Dept, Radio & TV of People's Republic of China, PO Box 4501, Beijing) reported on his production of a series of dramatized educational programmes teaching pre-school children to speak English, to the Kuala Lumpur Workshop for Producers of TV programmes for Young Children.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Hilda Holina (Inst. for Journalism Research, Oktobrové nám. 7, 800 00 Bratislava) has recently published *TV and the Child*.

DENMARK

Lennard Højbjerg (Inst. for filmvidenskab, Kobenhavns Universitet Amager, Njalsgade 78, 2300 Copenhagen S) probes what intentions public TV companies seek to realize through their programmes and why certain programme themes (e.g., child-adult conflicts) fascinate children.

The 1983 PRIX JEUNESSE Seminar on Fantasy and Reality in Television Programmes for Children

After a long period of programmes about real-life situations, the trend now is towards more fantasy. The 1983 PRIX JEUNESSE Seminar was the chance for 120 producers, directors, researchers, journalists and writers from several dozen broadcasting organizations to come to grips with this trend. Each day one aspect was focused on — fantasy and fiction, adventure series, and everyday-life series. Brief excerpts introduced the day's topic, which researchers then gave a talk on.

Dr. Dorothy Singer of Yale University spoke on "Children's Imaginative Development: Possible Relationship to Television Viewing". She cautioned producers to be aware that children process time very differently from adults. Flashbacks may confuse children since they can remember only random ideas. She also noted children pay more attention if during is a pause in the action they are asked to imagine what will happen next.

Dr. Singer is in favor of interactive participation. For example, in Ohio children can phone in possible endings for a radio drama to employ right on the air. She also stressed that children can easily misread such special effects as extreme slow motion.

To prevent TV from overshadowing their development by creative play, it would be good for TV to present examples of children using their hands or playing imaginatively. Their imaginations could also be stimulated by TV characters inviting viewers to imagine something for themselves, such as a solution to a puzzle. Questions involve children in the action.

FINLAND

Pirkko Liikanen (Univ. of Jyväskylä, Seminaarinkatu 15, 40100 Jyväskylä 10) is interested in the difference between children's developmental and educational levels and has studied the use of TV programmes in day care centres.

FRANCE

Centre National du Film pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse (109-11 rue Notre-Dame des Champs, F-75006 Paris) reports on worldwide production of films for youth, organizes study seminars, and teaches audio-visual techniques for working with children.

Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe (Centre d'Enthnologie Sociale et de Psychosociologie, 1, rue du Onze-novembre, 92120 Montrouge) is researching children's direct confrontation with social models conveyed by the media, and wrote 'Personnage et personnalité', in *Les amis de Sèvres* No. 2 (1981), p 24-37, Special Number: Les héros de la jeunesse.

GERMANY

Ernst Emrich, Sec. Gen., Stiftung PRIX JEUNESSE im Bayerischen Rundfunk (Rundfunkplatz 1, D-8000 Munich 2) with **Ursula von Zallinger** directs the PRIX JEUNESSE Foundation towards its goals: to emphasize the significance of TV children's and young people's TV programmes, to improve the international exchange of programmes and to intensify international understanding. Every other year since 1964 PRIX JEUNESSE has held an international contest for the best programme in story-telling, information, and music/light entertainment. On the odd years, PRIX JEUNESSE Seminars deal with topical issues: Fantasy and reality in children's TV (1983), Understanding and prejudice (1981), Emotion as a means of dramaturgy (1979), etc.

Internationales Zentralinstitut für das Jugend- und Bildungsfernsehen (...for Youth and Educational Television — Rundfunkplatz 1, D-8000 Munich 2) documents the state of the art of broadcasting research and the international developments in programme production, organizes seminars, conducts studies, maintains the PRIX JEUNESSE video library, and publishes its research. **Hertha Sturm** and **Sabine Jörg** have written *Information Processing by Young Children: Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development Applied to Radio and Television* (Munich: K G Saur Verlag KG 1981). Sabine Jörg researched *Television Programmes for Children and Young People in 44 Countries: Topics, Aims, Organization* (IZI, 1980). The IZI circulates the results of its work in the English language series "Communication Research and Broadcasting"; in German publications; and in the international review of media psychology and practice, *Fernsehen und Bildung* (*Television and Education*). Special publications are also in French and Spanish.

GREAT BRITAIN

British Broadcasting Corporation (Television Ctr, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ). Children's television programming in the BBC celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. In December 1922 a studio engineer in Birmingham told the local BBC Director, "I think we should be doing something for the kiddies." Soon *Children's Hour* began on radio. Now the Children's Programming

Since young children are just learning to read and write, she notes, words fascinate them. TV can help their language development with tongue-twisters and jokes. TV could also nurture early reading habits by showing children reading and enjoying it.

Dr. Laurene Meringoff of Harvard University spoke on the meaning to children of TV reality and fantasy. She stressed children's perception of fantasy is very different from adults'. Children are more credulous, granting stories more reality even when they know the blood is just ketchup and that Superman is "just holded up with giant ropes with invisible glue". Since children rely on a story's realistic appearance, *Superman* seems more real to them than *Charlies Brown* in the comic strip. So it is up to producers to use for children's advantage their blurring of the fantasy/reality line.

Per Lysander, a Swedish dramatist, situated stories for children in the history of culture. Fairy tales, especially, have been turned into moralizing, didactic stories which adults scorn as childish. With the Industrial Revolution, folk tales became 'children's stories'. Children and adults are the losers as the stories are so sanitized for children that they lose their richness and appeal for adults. Thus fictional stories, which could help children accommodate to reality, have become a rationalized source of moral education. Children need the help in naming their inner experiences that integral stories could give. Producers should respect both the stories' integrity and children's needs.

Although some participants from the developing countries considered the discussion too European, most approved and benefited. Seminar proceedings will be printed in late 1983 in several languages. Consult Current Research section for the address.

Department offers a wide variety of programmes for children of various ages. **Cynthia Felgate**, Executive Producer of *Playschool*, notes that it has been imitated throughout the world; the BBC sends a *Playschool* kit which local producers adapt to their culture.

J M Wober (Deputy Head of Research, Independent Broadcasting Authority, 70 Brompton Rd, London SW3 1EY) has six reports a year on children's appreciation of programmes from independent and BBC TV. Adults are also surveyed about various aspects of a situation that might affect children, e.g., how the newly introduced breakfast TV might affect school attendance. **Barrie Gunter**, Research Officer, researches how adult personality characteristics affect programme preference of adults and children.

JAPAN

Takashi Akiyama (Radio & Television Culture Research Inst., Japan Broadcasting Corp., 2-1-1 Atago, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105) with Toshiko Miyazaki (Waseda Univ.), Takashi Sakamoto (Tokyo Kogyo Univ), and Kelko Osawa (Tokyo Univ) is developing new educational TV programmes for 2 to 3-year-olds, and has researched their attention to Television.

Midori F Suzuki, Forum for Children's Television (FCT, Nagae 1601-27, Hayama-Machi, Hanagawa-Ken) published *TV programs and Commercial Messages that Children Watch*, an analysis of children's programmes, their heroes and heroines. English summary available.

MALAYSIA

Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (Roku Ito, Sec Gen, P O Box 1164, Pejabat Pos Jalan Pantai Bharu, Kuala Lumpur 22-07) since 1979 has offered a prize for radio and television programmes for children and has co-sponsored with PRIX JEUNESSE, Hosokuni Foundation, and the Goethe Inst. the Regional Workshop for Producers of Television Programmes for Young Children held at Kuala Lumpur 25 Oct - 5 Nov 1982. Workshop goals included teaching participants theoretical and practical knowledge to plan and produce various children's TV formats, showing programmes which have successfully held children's attention because of their format, content and technical treatment. The goal was to assist producers in developing countries to design formats for young children's programmes to meet their own cultural needs. Examples of formats studied include these categories: Presentation variety (games with children; presenters as entertainers, actors, links between films). Magazine programme components (numbers and letters, social learning, nature, animals, how things are made, etc.). Single-story programmes (documentaries, feature films). A summary report, *Television for Very Young Children*, is available from PRIX JEUNESSE, Munich.

SWEDEN

Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, Audience and Programme Research Dept., S-105 10 Stockholm). **Cecilia von Feilitzen**, **Leni Filipson**, **Ingegerd Rydin**, **Ingela Schyller** and **Ulla Abrahamson** are part of the team studying children and TV. **C. von Feilitzen** is surveying 3-15-year olds' needs and interests and making a content analysis of how children are presented. **I. Rydin** studies children's comprehension of radio and TV. **L Filipson** and **I Schyller** have written "Video Use among Children and Young Adults in Sweden". **U. Abrahamsson** is studying *People and Society in TV Fiction for Children and Youth* (SR/PUB 1983) to discover how programmes intended for adults differ from those for children.

SWITZERLAND

Jean-Fred Bourquin (2 chemin Chapeaurouge, 1231 Conches-Geneva) is

directing a programme on television about the key tests psychologist Jean Piaget used in studying child development.

UNITED STATES

Robert Abelman (Dept. of Communication, Cleveland State Univ., Cleveland, OH 44115). The goal of his research is to amplify children's prosocial/positive use of television information. He will examine how children recognize and assimilate TV video/audio techniques.

Aletha C. Huston and John C. Wright (Ctr for Research on the Influences of TV on Children (CRITC), Dept of Human Development, The University of Kansas, Lawrence KS 66045) are studying how children decode formal feature cues to determine fantasy vs. reality. CRITC focusses on the effects of the form and structure of TV on U.S. children, and publishes a list of its findings.

Media Center for Children (3 West 29th St, New York City, NY 10001, Maureen Gaffney, Exec. Dir.) serves adults who use media with or make media for children. Its goals include: transforming media to be child-appropriate, audience-specific, participatory and creative; improving calibre of children's media; demystifying TV technology and incorporating other forms of communication/art/education. MCC researches contents and formats most suitable for different child audiences — pre-school, learning disabled, museum groups; is a children's media information clearinghouse; and produces model programmes in various media formats for such institutions as schools, museums, hospitals.

Laurene Meringoff (Project Zero Development Group, Graduate School of Education, Harvard Univ., Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138) with **Howard Gardner** has researched children's story understanding from various media and plans a book for parents and professionals who create select and implement stories from TV and other media for children. **Project Zero** investigates human symbolic functioning especially in the creation and comprehension of the arts.

John P. Murray (Dir., Youth & Family Policy, Communication & Public Service, Boys Town, Boys Town, NE 68010) with the **National Council for Children and Television**, in conjunction with the **American Academy of Pediatrics**, the **American Psychological Association**, and the **National Parent-Teachers Assoc.** produced materials for the 13-19 March 1983 *National Children and Television Week* proclaimed by the U.S. President.

Prime Time School Television (212 W. Superior, Chicago, IL 60610, Vicki Rosenbluth, Production Mgr.) publishes study guides for more substantial U.S. TV offerings (e.g., TV versions of Mark Twain's work) and curriculum projects, for example, to analyze TV news content and influence.

Dorothy Singer & Jerome Singer (Family Television Research and Consultation Ctr, Dept of Psychology, Yale Univ., 405 Temple St., New Haven, CT 06511) as a result of their study of how children's play fosters cognitive development have developed *Getting the Most out of TV* to help children distinguish between fantasy and reality. Publication list available.

Television Information Office of the Nat. Assoc. of Broadcasters (745 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10022) publishes *TV Sets-In-Use*, reports on how educators, librarians, parents and broadcasters are working to increase utilization of television's values for children and lifelong learners.

Ellen Wartella (College of Communications, Inst of Communications Research, 222B Armony Bldg, Champaign, IL 61820) with **Byron Reeves** (Mass Communication Research Ctr, Univ of Wisconsin at Madison) is examining the history of research on children and media in 20th century USA, especially governmental discussions of the impact of the new technologies on children.

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