

ANNENBERG PUBLIC POLICY CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The 1998 State of Children's Television Report

Programming for Children Over Broadcast and Cable Television

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About the Annenberg Public Policy Center

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the amount and quality of television programming specifically designed for children. The *1998 State of Children's Television Report* represents the third year in which researchers at the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania have conducted a comprehensive census of the programming available for children in one large urban market (for previous *State of Children's Television* reports, see Jordan, 1996; and Jordan and Woodard, 1997). Because the 1997/98 seasons provided commercial broadcasters with their first real opportunity to implement the FCC's three-hour rule, the focus of this report is on E/I (educational and informational) programming under the new guidelines. (The FCC requires commercial broadcasters to identify on-screen the programs they consider to be "educational and informational" for children. Notices were to be sent to newspapers and grid services so they could be listed in television guides. Broadcasters were also required to begin airing a minimum of three hours of E/I programming between 7:00am and 10:00pm in order to qualify for expedited review of their license renewal application.) The evaluation includes results from a national survey of over 1,200 parents and 300 of their children to determine their use of and attitudes toward children's television.

The evaluation of the programs airing for children over broadcast and commercial stations during one week in a large urban market reveals that...

- **Children whose families both have access to broadcast television and subscribe to cable can choose from 25 different stations that program 1190 shows specifically designed for children (247 individual titles).**
- **Children have many choices of programming available to them throughout the week, and during daytime hours, but very little programming (less than 10 percent of the overall schedule) designed for them airs in the coveted primetime hours.**
- **The elementary school age audience appears to be the audience of choice for programmers.** As in previous years, nearly two-thirds of all programs address five- to eleven-year-olds.
- **Programming for the elementary school age audience is abundant, but much of it is not enriching.** Programs targeted to five- to eleven-year-olds were significantly more likely to contain violence and harsh language and were significantly less likely to contain any enriching content than programs for the preschool or teen audience.
- **The overall quality of the 1,190 programs available over broadcast and cable television has remained stable over time.** There are essentially the same number of programs available to children in a given week, and similar distributions of quality, proportionally speaking, when compared to the 96/97 season. By the Annenberg Public Policy Center's standards of quality (the inclusion of clear and salient educational lessons and the exclusion of excessive violence), 36.4 percent of the programs could be considered "high quality" (down 3 percent from 1997), 27.3 percent are "moderate quality" (up 4 percent from 1997) and a disappointing 36.3 percent are low quality (similar to 1997). Thus, the presence of the three-hour rule and the requirement that programs be labeled has not increased the proportion of educational programming available in the overall sample, probably because the commercial broadcasters account for only 17 percent of the programs available.
- **The 1997/98 season saw a growing trend toward greater programming for the long-ignored teen audience (8.3 percent vs. 3.4 percent in the previous year), but the quality of programming for this audience dropped.** Less than a third of teen programming was rated high quality, compared to 80 percent in the 1996/97 sample.

- **Parents who seek programs that are educational, diverse and generally high quality can count on PBS.** The consistency of PBS's programming is noticed by parents, who, in the 1998 APPC national survey, are most likely to cite PBS as a source for "good programs."
- **Many programs do not contain appropriate labels previewing violent content.** Only 25 percent of programs that contained "a lot" of violence (intentional and malicious acts of violence in three or more scenes) carried the "FV" (fantasy violence) warning at the beginning of the program. The remaining programs that would seem to warrant an "FV" rating did not carry such a label.

Our evaluation of the Philadelphia-area's efforts to air and publicize educational and informational programming for children under the three-hour rule reveals that...

- **The commercial broadcasters are each programming a minimum of three hours per week of educational programming between the hours of 7:00am and 10:00pm, and many are programming beyond the minimum.** A total of 35 programs were listed by the seven Philadelphia-area commercial broadcasters as meeting the FCC's requirements (we evaluated three episodes of each). It appears that the three-hour rule has been successful in getting more programming on during times when children are likely to be in the audience.
- **The commercial broadcasters are consistently reporting their E/I programs in printed listings and on the air.** *TV Guide* now regularly carries an icon (an E/I in a circle) that indicates the programs, although the local newspaper does not. Broadcasters have also devised creative ways to identify E/I programs with icons and voice-overs in the opening moments of a show. Unfortunately, the icons may be so creative that they are unrecognizable to parents. APPC survey data indicate that only 9.1 percent of parents know what E/I stands for and only 37 percent know that stations put information on the screen about which programs are intended to be educational for children.
- **The commercial broadcasters' E/I programs center on a variety of educational lessons.** Though many feared that broadcasters would fall back on narrative, pro-social programming (because it is most likely to reach a large audience), only about half were of this genre, the rest dealt with school-related information, physical health and well-being or some combination of lessons.
- Under the Annenberg Public Policy Center's criteria for educational strength (in which lessons are clear, well-integrated, involving and applicable to children's lives), **28.6 percent of the E/I shows that air are considered "highly educational," 45.7 percent are "moderately educational" and 25.7 percent are "minimally educational."**
- **The educational strength of programs offered in the 1997/98 season is roughly equivalent to that of the 1996/97 season.** One-quarter of the programs are "minimally educational" while the remaining programs are educational under the spirit and the letter of the FCC's definitions of educational programming.
- **It appears from this analysis that there is no single formula for strong educational programming.** Our top-rated programs came from a variety of sources (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox all have some "highly educational" programs), target all audiences (from preschoolers to teenagers), and convey a diverse set of lessons.
- **Though the networks have several success stories, it is clear that they are still on a sharp learning curve.** Most of the programs offered by the networks are only "moderately educational," and a few returning from the 1996/97 season remain minimally educational.

The analysis of the general sample of broadcast and cable programs and the evaluation of the commercial broadcasters' E/I efforts, lead to several recommendations...

Research is needed to answer the following questions if we are to increase the viewership and quality of children's television and realize its potential to serve the public interest:

- 1 What are parents' beliefs about the benefits of quality television? Do parents believe the best they can do is to "protect" their children from the deleterious effects of television rather than lead them toward the potentially beneficial programs? Or do they believe that television really has nothing good to offer?
- 2 Do parents' definition(s) of "educational television" match those of the FCC, the broadcasters, or The Annenberg Public Policy Center? In one recent APPC study parents were most likely to define as educational shows teaching academic subjects such as science (*Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *Science Court*) and much less likely to see as educational shows that teach social skills and lessons (e.g., *Saved by the Bell*, *Brand Spankin' New Doug*, *Fudge*).
- 3 Are the on-air E/I icons a turn-off to children (as broadcasters fear) or informative to parents (as advocates and lawmakers hope)? Without such information, it is not clear whether broadcasters should make the effort needed to standardize their symbols and publicize them more widely.
- 4 What draws school-age children to educational programs and what do they take away from their encounters? Though there is a fairly large body of research on preschoolers' learning from television, methodologically sound, theoretically-based research (that is not program-specific) is critical to the development of strong educational programming for older children.

Industry, government, advocacy and media practices may need to be altered to narrow the wide gap between public policy and parents' and children's behaviors in the home:

- 1 The industry must routinize the use of the "FV" (fantasy violence) content rating for programs with heavy violence and avoid the use of TV-Y7 to indicate the presence of potentially objectionable content. TV-Y7 is confusing now and unhelpful when the V-Chip is widely available.
- 2 The FCC should revisit its rules on the preemption of E/I programs. While approximately half of the more than 1,000 commercial broadcasters (from around the country) who filed children's programming reports in the last quarter of 1997 never preempted their core programs, the other half did so fairly regularly. Both single programs as well as morning lineups are being preempted for sports programming. West Coast stations were most likely to preempt their programs regularly, while the post 11:00am Saturday slot appeared to be the most vulnerable time slot for preemption.
- 3 The FCC and advocacy groups must place a greater emphasis on informing parents about educational programming and encourage parents and citizen's groups to provide broadcasters with feedback about their E/I efforts. This disconnect between public policy and private practice must be remedied in order for the regulations to produce their intended result: an increase in the availability and viewership of educational programming.
- 4 Newspapers and other media outlets must provide parents and children with informed and regular critiques of children's shows. Our concern is raised by our survey evidence that more children know about (and watch) *South Park* than *Nick News*.

INTRODUCTION

The 1997/98 television season is witnessing an industry at a crossroads. The commercial broadcasters struggle to implement the mandates of the FCC's new "three-hour rule", and, with the rest of the industry, have instituted ratings for both the age-appropriateness and content of shows. In addition to dealing with the regulations, nearly every player in the children's television industry felt the pinch of increasing competition for fewer advertising dollars (McConville, 1998; McClellan, May, 1998). But even in the face of this intense competition, more children's cable ventures are being announced¹ (Farhi, 1998) and record amounts spent on the production of new shows (Mikulak and Quinlan, 1998).

As a nation we are intrigued and disturbed by the concept of the "child audience." On one hand, we recognize that television has the potential to be an important educational resource available to both rich and poor children. On the other, we fear that this resource has been squandered. Profitable but otherwise empty programs such as *Power Rangers* and *Street Sharks* – designed simply to tantalize a young audience long enough to sell advertisers' goods and programmers' products – appear to have crowded out the more educational fare.² Nevertheless, there is mounting evidence that moderate amounts of educational television viewing can make real differences in children's academic achievement (for overviews of the beneficial effects of television see Anderson, 1998, and Huston and Wright, 1998).

Regulations introduced in 1996 and 1997 – rating programs and labeling the commercial broadcasters' educational and informational (E/I) programs – are designed to provide parents with more information about children's programming. Policymakers and advocates hope the new regulations will give parents a greater ability to guide children's viewing. In addition, the FCC's "three-hour rule," which mandates that commercial broadcasters air a minimum of three hours a week of educational programming in order to qualify for expedited license renewal, presents one way to ensure that parents have positive programming to which they can guide their children.

This report examines the amount and quality of programming specifically designed for children over public and commercial broadcast stations as well as basic and premium cable channels. The *1998 State of Children's Television Report* represents the third year in which researchers at the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania have conducted a comprehensive census of the programming available for children in one large urban market (for previous *State of Children's Television* reports, see Jordan, 1996; and Jordan and Woodard, 1997).

The *1998 State of Children's Television* research is carried out with three primary objectives:

First, to determine whether there are enough high quality choices available to children of different ages with different resources. Advertisers' preferences for particular audiences, programmers' desire to increase profit margins, and the encroachment of new technologies onto children's time have converged to create a climate in which entertainment-only programs (often filled with violence and stereotypes) are the most lucrative for broadcasters (Jordan, 1996). Marketplace constraints have also led to an overabundant supply of programs for the heaviest viewers and most frequent purchasers of related toys (primarily elementary school-age boys). The result has been a dearth of programming for those children who have little purchasing power or influence over their parents' purchases (preschoolers) or who have

such idiosyncratic interests that they are difficult to segment (teenagers) (Jordan, 1996; Jordan and Woodard, 1997). This research, therefore, tracks the extent to which "quality" programming is available for children of different ages, through different programming venues, and during times when children are likely to be in the audience.

Second, to identify the high-quality programs that exist (but may be hard to find) on broadcast and cable television. Research conducted at the Annenberg Public Policy Center has found that there is very little newspaper coverage of children's television, and coverage focuses on the negative aspects of television for children (Aday, 1997). It is therefore not surprising that parents have difficulty naming even one high-quality program for their school-age child (Stanger, 1997). In any given week in a large television market there are over 1,000 children's programs available to children. The vast number of programs makes it quite challenging for parents, advocates or policymakers to be aware of or familiar with the hundreds of programs listed in *TV Guide*. APPC's annual and systematic review of the children's programs that air on broadcast and cable television seeks to address this challenge by identifying the quality programs that do exist (as well as when and where they can be found and for whom they are appropriate).

Third, to track the impact of government regulations on children's television programming. The longitudinal nature of this research offers a unique opportunity to observe changes in the amount and quality of children's programming over time, as well as parents' and children's awareness and viewership of beneficial programming. A focus of the 1998 report, therefore, is on the impact of regulations on the children's television industry. Specifically evaluated is commercial broadcasters' E/I (educational and informational) programming under the new FCC guidelines, identification of such programs as educational, and the diversity and quality of educational offerings. The 1996/97 season, during which the broadcasters were required to label their E/I shows (but not program a full three hours' worth), will serve as a benchmark against which this season's efforts are judged.

This research project was guided by two advisory committees: The Advisory Council on Excellence in Children's Television, which includes experts in such diverse fields as children's literature, demography, American culture and documentary television; and The Advisory Panel on Educational Television, whose members include developmental psychologists, a middle school principal, an educational historian and the former director of research for a highly regarded preschool program.³

This report is divided into three sections. Part One examines children's television programs in the Philadelphia market. Part Two focuses on Philadelphia commercial broadcast stations' core educational programming and reporting efforts, with a subsection on the evaluation of national preemption practices based on over 1,000 children's television programming reports filed with the FCC by stations across the country. Part Three summarizes the findings of the content analysis in light of APPC's annual Spring survey and discusses the research and policy implications of the 1998 research.

PART ONE: THE AVAILABILITY, CONTENT AND QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

Methodology for Evaluation of General Sample

The 1998 data set of children's television programs was constructed to represent one week's worth of programming for children over public broadcast, commercial broadcast, basic cable and premium cable channels in the 1997/98 season. In this large (top ten) market, cable subscribers can receive a total of 25 channels that air programs specifically designed for children.⁴

Children's programs were identified through listings in *TV Guide* and the local daily newspaper (both of which include TV-Y and TV-Y7 ratings). A sampling frame was developed to reflect a daily schedule for all channels, noting the broadcast time, duration, and E/I labels and age ratings for each children's program. From the composite week's schedule, programs were sorted by title, to indicate the frequency of each programs' airing. Because of time and budgetary considerations, individual episodes of each single title were randomly selected for video recording.⁵ Programs were recorded over several months between November 1997 and February 1998. Only regularly scheduled programs lasting a minimum of thirty minutes were included. Movies, specials, short-form programs and non-English language programs were excluded from the study.

In order to create a data set representative of a composite week of programming, a file was created to account for the additional episodes of each program that air throughout the week. This file replicates the variables from the content analysis, and accounts for the individual airings, such as network, day, and time of each additional broadcast. Thus, a program such as *Scooby Doo* was coded once but appropriately weighted in the data set to reflect the fact that it aired twenty-five times during the week on three different stations (TBS, TNT, and The Cartoon Network). The weighted data set is reported in this analysis.

Individual program titles were analyzed by a five member coding team intensively trained over six weeks. The coding team consisted of one undergraduate experienced with content analysis, three doctoral students from the Annenberg School for Communication, and the primary author of this report. A sample of approximately 20 percent of the programs (n=50) were randomly assigned to be independently double-coded in order to assess the reliability of the measures. The variables reported below all achieved acceptable levels of reliability.⁶

Findings for Evaluation of General Sample

A total of 247 individual titles were identified in this market as programs that are specifically designed for children ages 16 and under (see Appendix 1 for the listing of programs included in this sample). When these programs are weighted to account for their frequency of airing in a composite week, the total number of programs available to children who have access to both broadcast and cable television climbs to 1190.⁷ This number is similar to the number of programs airing for children in the 1996-1997 season (n=1,063).

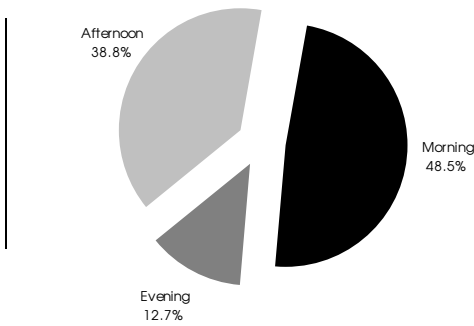
Most of the programs that air for children are 30 minutes in length (92.1 percent). In this sample, only 7.7 percent of the programs were one hour, and only two programs (.2

percent) were 90 minutes or longer.

When and Where Can Children Find Programs?

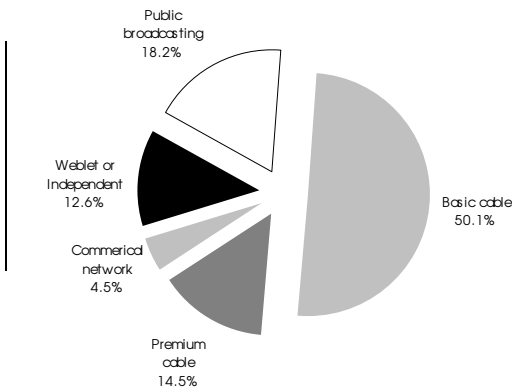
Children's programming can be found every day of the week. Three-quarters of the programs (76.2 percent) air Monday through Friday, 12.2 percent air on Saturday, and 11.6 percent air on Sunday. Children's programming is generally available throughout the day, with one notable exception: primetime. While 48.5 percent of programs aired in the morning hours (between 6:00am and 11:30am) and 38.8 percent of the programs aired in the afternoon/early evening hours (between noon and 6:30pm), less than 13 percent of the programs specifically designed for children aired in the coveted primetime slots (7:00pm to 10:00pm).

FIGURE 1
Scheduling of Children's Programs



The majority of the programs included in this sample are available only through cable⁸: 50.1 percent air on basic cable channels and 14.5 percent are available through premium cable subscriptions. The cable carrier in this market offers two PBS channels, in addition to the one available over the commercial broadcast airwaves, bringing PBS offerings to 18.2 percent of the total sample. The "big four" commercial broadcast affiliates (ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC) carry 4.5 percent of the programs and the weblets (WB and UPN) and independent station air 12.6 percent of the programs. Children's programs, as illustrated in Figure 2, can be found in virtually all venues.

FIGURE 2
Stations Offering Children's Programs



For the one-third of America's children who do not have access to cable television, the number of program venues (and consequently the number of children's shows) is

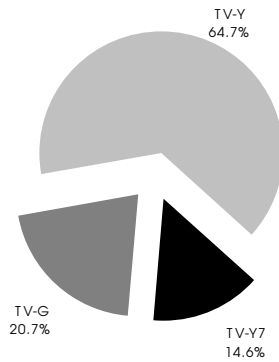
dramatically reduced. Broadcast-only programs air 276 times in a given week, approximately one-quarter of the over 1,000 programs that are available to children with cable.⁹

Who are the programs for?

The new program ratings provide a source for determining the target audience for children's programs in the 1997/98 sample. Though approximately 13 percent of the programs in this sample were missing ratings (because of taping error or programmer oversight)¹⁰, the remaining could be categorized. Of those programs with ratings, 64.7 percent were rated TV-Y, 14.6 percent were rated TV-Y7, and 20.7 percent were rated TV-G.

FIGURE 3

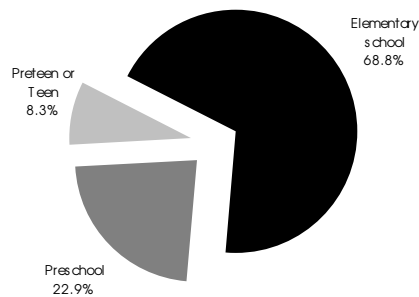
Age Ratings of Children's Programs



Analysis of the programs also included an evaluation of the "target age" for each show. Coders assessed programs as directed to the preschool-age audience (ages 0-4), the elementary school-age audience (ages 5-11), or preteen/teenage audience (ages 12-16). In judging the programs, coders used four criteria to assess target audience: the content (basic to sophisticated) of the program, the age of the program's characters, the rating of the program, and the time at which the program airs. Figure 4 indicates the distribution of programming directed to children of different ages.

FIGURE 4

Audience for Children's Programming



It is clear from these data that the 5- to 11-year-old audience is the audience of choice for programmers. Over two-thirds (68.8 percent) of programs were directed to children

in their elementary school years.¹¹ Another 22.9 percent of programs targeted the preschool audience. Only 8.3 percent appeared to be specifically designed for teenagers.

Though teen programming is a small fraction of the programming available for children in the 1997/98 season, the 8.3 percent represents an increase in programming available for this audience (up from 3.4 percent the previous year). This trend may be explained, in part, by our ability to recognize such programming through the new age-based ratings. Industry watchers, however, have written about programmers' new interest in creating specialized programming for the teen audience (see, for example, Schneider, 1998).

The Content of Children's Programming

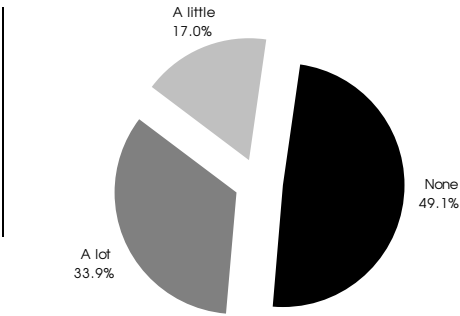
The regulations put in place over the last season have been a response to the persistent concerns of parents, advocates and lawmakers over the amount of time children spend with the medium and the types of program content to which they are exposed. Research indicates that the sheer quantity of children's programs does not ensure that programs are beneficial or even innocuous (Jordan, 1996; Jordan and Woodard, 1997).

In addition to coding the more straightforward variables (such as program venue and target audience), coders were also trained to evaluate the extent to which programs contained problematic and/or potentially beneficial content. Previous APPC surveys have indicated that while parents have a generally positive attitude toward television in general (the majority feel that television has done their children more good than harm), they also have problems with particular elements of programming for children – namely violence, sex, and harsh language (Stanger, 1997; Hart, 1996). We therefore constructed measures to assess the presence of this type of content. Conversely, parents have fairly well-developed beliefs about what constitutes beneficial programming – specifically the inclusion of educational content in an entertaining format. Parental fears and hopes tend to be supported by the volumes of research investigating the positive and negative effects of such content.¹² Research also indicates that gender and ethnic diversity in children's programming – when presented in a non-stereotypical way – may positively influence children's perceptions of themselves and minority groups (for a recent survey, see Children Now, 1998). Thus, along with measures of educational content, a measure of the gender and ethnic diversity of programming was also developed.

Violence

APPC's measure of violence is a hybrid of concepts used by Gerbner (1976) and Kunkel (1997) in their content analyses of television programs. This definition is designed to be specific but inclusive: "The extent to which the program contains the overt depiction of intentional and/or malicious threat of physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings." Programs were coded as containing "a lot" of violence if there were acts of violence in three or more scenes; "a little" if violence appeared in one or two scenes; and "none" if there were no acts of violence. Using this measure, 33.9 percent of the programs contained a lot of violence, 17 percent of the programs contained a little violence, and 49.1 percent of the programs contained no violence.

FIGURE 5
Violence in Children's Programming



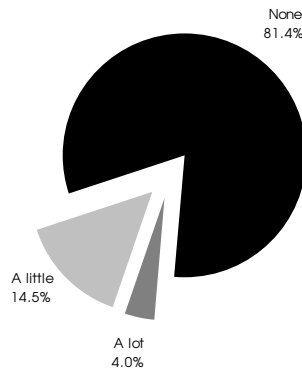
Programs for the elementary school age child were the most likely to contain “a lot” of violence (44.3 percent), although over one-third of teen programs also contained a lot. As might be expected, preschool programs were the least likely to contain violence (only 1.8 percent contained “a lot” of violence).¹³ There are also significant differences in where the violent programs air. The three stations that make up the weblet/independent category in this sample were the most likely to air programs containing a lot of violence (64.7%), followed by commercial broadcasters (40.7%), basic cable stations (38.3%) and premium cable channels (31.8%). PBS was the only venue that was virtually violence-free in its children's programming.¹⁴

A milestone in this season's programming was the inclusion of “content ratings” for all non-news and sports shows.¹⁵ Content ratings, which began airing in October, 1997, are applied by the producers of programs to indicate the presence of sexual dialogue or innuendo (D), harsh language (L), sexual content or nudity (S) or violence (V). Violence in children's programming receives its own special label: “FV” for “fantasy violence.”

Programs that contained three or more acts of violence (coded as “a lot” of violence) were examined to see whether they notified viewers of such content with the rating of “FV.”¹⁶ Data indicate that only about one-quarter (24.8 percent) of programs that contain “a lot” of violence received an FV rating. A full 75% of programs containing “a lot” of violence had no such rating.

Sexual Innuendo/Provocative Dress

Coders measured the prevalence of sexual innuendo and provocative dress (defined as “the extent to which sexual references are made through verbal comments or visual images and/or the presence of characters in revealing apparel”). Programs were coded as having “a lot” of sexual innuendo if they contained three or more scenes with sexual suggestion, and “a little” if they contained one or two scenes. By this measure, there was sexual innuendo/provocative dress in 18.5 percent of the programs (4.0 percent were coded as having “a lot” and 14.5 percent were coded as having “a little”). The remaining 81.5 percent had no sexual innuendo or provocative dress in the programs.

FIGURE 6**Sexual
Innuendo
Children's
Programming**

Differences in the amount of innuendo present were observed in programming targeted to children of different ages. Predictably, as the target age of programming increased, the amount of innuendo in programming increased. Preschool programs contained "a little" innuendo 4.4 percent of the time (none of the programs had "a lot"). Elementary school-age programs contained "a little" innuendo in 15.3 percent of the programs and "a lot" in 3.5 percent. Teen programming contained "a little" innuendo in 36.4 percent of its programs and "a lot" in 19.2 percent of them.¹⁷

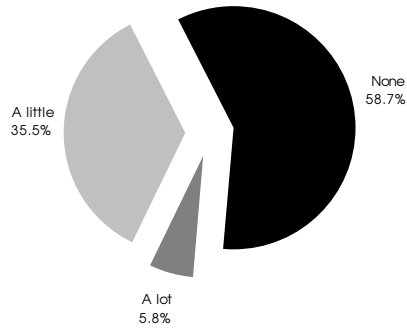
There were also differences in the amount of sexual innuendo on the various stations. PBS was the least likely to have any innuendo (99.5 percent had none), while the weblets were the most likely to contain sexual innuendo and/or characters in provocative dress (13.3 percent of the programs had "a lot" and 22.7 percent had "a little"). Of the other stations in the sample, basic cable stations had "a lot" of innuendo in 4.4 percent of their programs and "a little" in 17.4 percent; commercial broadcasters had "a lot" in 1.9 percent and "a little" in 16.7 percent, and premium cable stations had "a lot" in 0.6 percent and "a little" in 14.5 percent.¹⁸

Harsh Language

The extent to which harsh language is used in children's programming was evaluated. Harsh language was defined as "the extent to which characters use words or phrases as a form of disrespect or aggression where the intent is to be hurtful." Programs had "a lot" of harsh language if such language appeared in five or more scenes and "a little" if it appeared in one to four scenes. Overall, 5.8 percent of the programs had "a lot" of harsh language and 35.5 percent had "a little" harsh language. The majority of programs (58.7 percent) had no harsh language.

FIGURE 7

Harsh Language in Children's Programming



Programs targeting the youngest audience were less likely than those for older children to contain any problematic language. While fewer than two percent of programs for preschoolers had "a little" harsh language (none had "a lot"), about half of all programs for the elementary school-age audience (53.9 percent) and the teen audience (46.5 percent) contained some harsh language.¹⁹

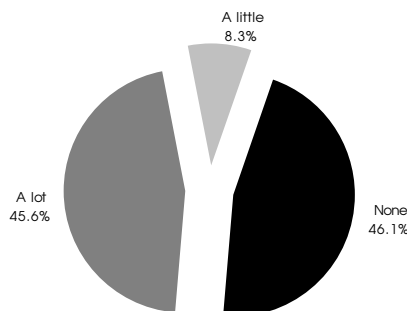
PBS was the least likely to contain harsh language – 99.1 percent of their children's shows had no harsh language – while the weblet/independent stations' programs had the most harsh language – two-thirds (69.4 percent) had "a lot" or "a little" harsh language.²⁰

Educational Content

An increasing number of studies have found that television that is designed to educate the child audience makes important contributions to developing minds (Anderson, 1998; Huston and Wright, 1996; 1998). Coders therefore assessed the extent to which programs contained clear and well-integrated health-related, pro-social or traditional academic lessons. An examination of the 1190 programs indicates that 46.1 percent had no educational content whatsoever, 8.3 percent had "a little" educational content (meaning the lesson was vague and/or superfluous), and 45.6 percent had "a lot" of educational content (that is, a clear and salient lesson). (This variable will be explored more fully in the discussion on "quality" in children's programming.)

FIGURE 8

Educational Content in Children's Programming



Preschool programming was significantly more likely to have clear and well-integrated lessons (84.2%) than either elementary school age programming (33.7%) or teen programming (38.4%).²¹

PBS was most likely to contain educational material – virtually all (99.1%) of the programs had "a lot." The weblets and independent commercial broadcast stations were least likely to have programs with "a lot" of educational content (only 17.3%) and most likely to have programs with no educational content (66.0%). Nearly half of premium cable and commercial broadcast stations had programs with "a lot" of educational content (41.6% and 44.4%, respectively), while only about one-third of the programs on basic cable had "a lot" of educational content.²²

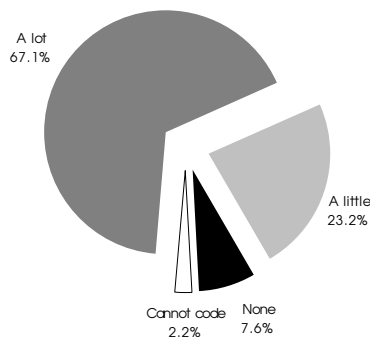
Character Diversity

It has long been recognized that television programming tends to over-represent white, male characters (Gerbner, 1993; Signorelli, 1985; Greenberg and Brand, 1995). Children's television programming is no exception (Greenberg and Brand, 1993). Research indicates that not only do children notice their presence or absence on the screen (Children Now, 1998), but they may also benefit from seeing ethnically diverse characters (Loughlin, Donohue, and Gudykunst, 1982; Greenberg and Brand, 1994) and the positive interaction and portrayal of children and adults in unconventional gender roles (Williams, LaRose and Frost, 1981).

Coders evaluated whether programs contained both boys and girls (gender diversity) in major and minor character roles. Two thirds (67.1 percent) of the programs were coded as having "a lot" of diversity (girls in major and minor roles) with another 23.2 percent having "a little" diversity (girls in minor roles). Only 7.6 percent of the programs had no gender diversity. (The remaining programs had characters that could not be gender coded.)

FIGURE 9

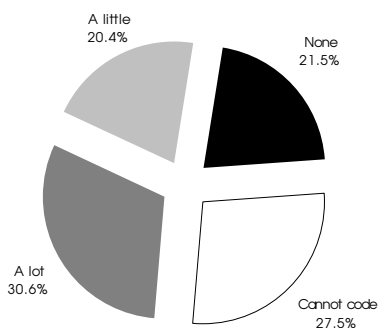
Gender
Diversity in
Children's
Programming



Coders also evaluated whether programs contained characters representing more than one ethnic group. Interestingly, over one-quarter (27.5 percent) of the programs contained characters whose ethnicity could not be coded because they were not human (for example, anthropomorphized vehicles, animals, bugs, or aliens). Of the remaining programs, 30.6 percent contained ethnically diverse characters in major and minor roles, 20.4 percent contained ethnically diverse characters in only minor roles, and 21.5 percent contained no ethnic diversity.

FIGURE 10

Ethnic Diversity in Children's Programming



Teen programs were most likely to include female characters in both major and minor roles (83.8 percent vs. 77.6 percent in preschool and 61.5 percent in elementary school age programming). In addition, teen programs were most likely to include ethnically diverse characters in major and minor roles (56.6 percent compared to 40.8 percent in preschool and 24.1% in elementary school age programming).²³

Gender diversity in children's program also varies by station venue. There was a great deal of gender diversity on PBS programs (84.3%) and also high levels on the "big four" commercial networks (74.1%) and basic cable (70.1%). The weblet/independent stations (57.3%) and premium cable channels (41.0%) were less likely to include female characters in major or minor roles in their children's programs.²⁴ Ethnic diversity followed the same trends: 77% of the programs on PBS were coded as having "a lot" of ethnic diversity, 50% on the major commercial networks, 22% on basic cable, 12.1% on premium cable, and 11.3% on the weblets.²⁵

Assessing the Quality of Programming Available to Children

The Annenberg Public Policy Center's measure of "quality" in the general sample of children's programming assesses the extent to which programs are potentially enriching and devoid of excessive violence. These criteria were developed in consultation with our advisory groups and have been used in previous analyses (see Jordan and Woodard, 1997). Though other program features surely factor into the entertainment value of programming (for example, production techniques, creativity), these criteria reflect research findings that indicate that programs designed to be educational are generally beneficial to children and that the violence in children's programming may be detrimental. Moreover, violent content in educational programs has been found to overshadow educational content for children under the age of ten (due to younger children's tendency to focus on action over dialogue) (Wackman and Wartella, 1977; Katzman, 1972).

Coders therefore evaluated the quality of programs along the following four dimensions:

- **Clear Lesson** (*the extent to which there are one or more positive lessons (traditional academic or pro-social) in the content of the program that are explicit and clear and would "further the development of the child in any respect, including the child's cognitive/intellectual or emotional/social needs" [Children's Television Act of 1990]*).

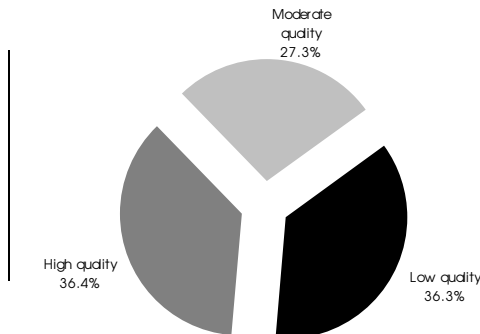
- **Integration of Lesson** (*The extent to which the lessons are a salient aspect of the program – consistently conveyed throughout the program and integral to the program as a whole.*)
- **Violence** (*The extent to which the program contains the overt depiction of intentional and/or malicious threat of physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings.*)²⁶
- **Overall Subjective Assessment** (*The program, on the whole, is one that could be seen as negative [much problematic content with little or no redeeming value]; neutral [little or no problematic content, primarily entertainment-oriented]; positive [an "enriching" program that would likely be beneficial to the target audience].*)

Programs were given higher marks for containing clear and salient lessons, no violence, and positive subjective assessments. The "objective measure" (composed of lesson clarity/salience/violence; with total scores ranging from 0 to 6) and "subjective measure" (defined as negative, neutral, positive; with scores ranging from 0 to 6) were combined to produce an overall "quality" measure. Programs were recoded into three categories: low quality; moderate quality; and high quality.²⁷

By APPC standards of quality, 36.3 percent of programs available to children in this market are "low quality;" 27.3 percent are "moderate quality;" and 36.4 percent are "high quality." Comparisons between the 1996/97 season and the 1997/98 seasons indicates little change in the quality of programming. There are slightly fewer high quality programs available this year than last (36.4 percent vs. 39.8 percent) and slightly more moderate quality programs available this year as compared to last (27.3 percent vs. 23.2 percent). Low quality programs remain at a disturbingly high 36 percent.

FIGURE 11

Quality of Children's Programming

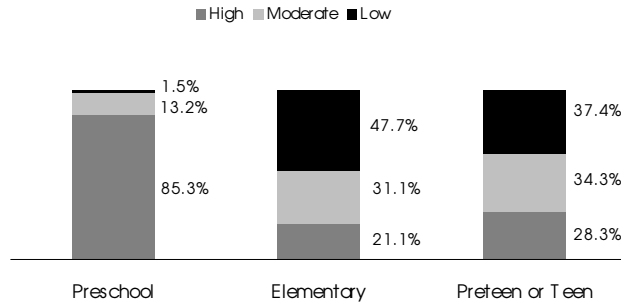


Who are High Quality Programs for?

The earlier discussion of the content of programs foreshadowed the availability of high quality programs for children of different ages. Preschool children have the highest quality programming available to them (85.3 percent were labeled high quality). Elementary school age children and teens have significantly fewer high quality programs available to them (21.1 percent and 28.3 percent, respectively).²⁸

FIGURE 12

Quality of Programming Available in Different Age Groups



The trends for the quality of programming for children of different ages have held constant for the preschool and elementary school age audience (see Jordan, 1996 and Jordan & Woodard, 1997). The quality of teen programming, however, has shown a remarkable decline. Previous analyses (1996 and 1997) showed programs targeted to 12 to 16-year-olds to be, for the most part, high quality. This year's distribution in quality programming reveals a more mixed picture. While in 1997, 80.6% of teen programs were rated "high quality," only 28.3% of this season's programs for teens were high quality.

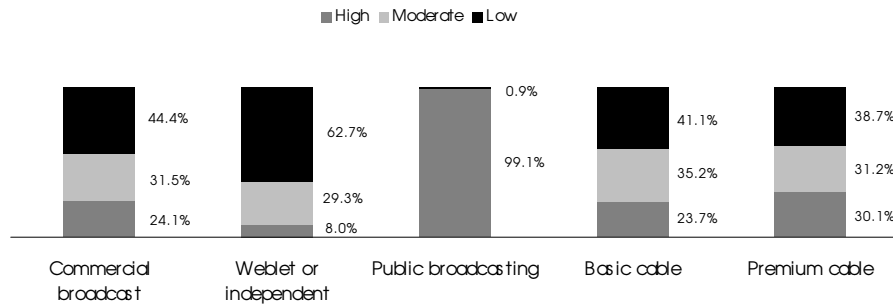
Another important comparison is the relationship between programs that receive different age-based ratings – TV-Y (suitable for all children), TV-Y7 (suitable for children over the age of 7), and TV-G (suitable for a general audience) – and their level of quality. While 52.5 percent of TV-Y-rated programs were of high quality, only 13.9 percent of TV-Y7 and 5.1 percent of TV-G programs were high quality. Conversely, TV-Y7 programs were overwhelmingly low-quality (80.1 percent) while TV-G programs tended to be of moderate quality (62.2 percent).²⁹

Where Can High Quality Programs be Found?

Public broadcasting stations are, by far, the most likely venues in which one can find high quality programs for children. While less than 30 percent of the program offerings on the commercial broadcast and cable stations were high quality, a full 99.1 percent of programs on PBS were high quality. The weblet and independent stations in the sample offered the fewest high quality programs (just 8 percent of their total offerings) and the lowest quality programs (62.7 percent). In a similar vein, the major network affiliates aired about one quarter (24.1 percent) high quality and one half (44.4%) low quality programs. Cable station offerings were almost equally distributed across low, moderate and high categories (with basic cable offering slightly lower quality programs than premium cable stations).³⁰

FIGURE 13

Proportion of High, Moderate and Low Quality Programs by Type of Station



PART TWO: AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS' CORE EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL (E/I) PROGRAMMING

In January, 1997, the Federal Communications Commission began requiring commercial broadcasters to identify the programs they considered to be "educational and informational" for children. These identifiers were to be placed at the beginning of the program and notices were to be sent to newspapers and grid services so they could be listed in television guides. In September, 1997, the broadcasters were also required to begin airing a minimum of three hours' worth of E/I programming between 7:00am and 10:00pm in order to qualify for expedited review of their license renewal application.³¹

In this section, the commercial broadcasters' efforts to implement the FCC children's educational television guidelines are tracked in one large urban market. Where relevant, comparisons are made with E/I offerings from the 1996/97-television season.

Reporting Requirements

Since January, 1997, commercial broadcasters have been required to inform their viewers about their educational offerings through three sources: on-air identifiers, icons in listings services, and a station representative (called a children's television liaison) charged with the task of providing information about programs and providing access to the stations' quarterly reports.

To assess compliance with the FCC's reporting requirements, each of the seven commercial broadcast stations in Philadelphia was contacted by phone to ascertain the core program offerings. The seven stations in this market include affiliates of ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, and WB. An additional commercial broadcast station, unaffiliated with a network, is also included. Table 1 illustrates the stations, their core E/I programs (and the total number of hours of E/I programming), the air times of these programs, and whether or not they are listed in *TV Guide* as educational and informational.

TABLE 1

Commercial Broadcasters' Core Educational Programming 1997/98

Network/ Channel	Core Educational Programs	Target Age	Air Time	TV Guide Listing w/ E/ Symbol?	Program Source
CBS (KYW-3)	Beakman's World	6 to 11	11-11:30 a.m. Sat	Yes	CBS
	CBS Story Break (Fudge)	2 to 6	11:30-Noon Sat	Yes	CBS
	New Ghostwriter Mysteries	7 to 11	Noon-12:30 Sat	Yes	CBS
	Wheel of Fortune 2000	7 to 11	12:30-1:00 p.m. Sat	Yes	CBS
	Sports Illustrated for Kids	7 to 11	7-7:30 a.m. Sun	Yes	CBS
	Weird Al Show	7 to 11	7:30-8 a.m. Sun	Yes	CBS
	Total = 3 hours/week				
NBC (WCUA-10)	Saved by the Bell (2x)	12 to 18	10-10:30/11-11:30a.m. Sat	Yes	NBC
	Hang Time (2x)	12 to 18	11:30-12 & 12:30-1 Sat	Yes	NBC
	City Guys	12 to 18	10:30-11 a.m. Sat	Yes	NBC
	NBA Inside Stuff	12 to 18	1:00-1:30 p.m. Sat	Yes	NBC
	Total = 3 hours/week				
ABC (WPVI-6)	101 Dalmatians	7 to 11	8-8:30am Sat	Yes	ABC
	Disney's One Saturday Morning	8 to 12	8:30-10:30am Sat	Yes	ABC
	New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh	3 to 6	10:30-11am Sat	Yes	ABC
	Science Court	8 to 12	11-11:30am Sat	Yes	ABC
	Jungle Cubs	5 to 8	11:30-Noon Sat	Yes	ABC
	Total = 4 hours/week				
FOX (WTFX-29)	Bobby's World	4 to 11	2-2:30pm M-F	Yes	Fox
	Life with Louie	6 to 11	2:30-3pm M-F	Yes	Fox
	Bill Nye the Science Guy	6 to 11	7:30-8am Sat	Yes	Synd.
	Total = 5.5 hours/week				
UPN (WPSG-57)	Algo's Factory	8 to 12	8-8:30am Sun	Yes	Synd.
	Mr. Men	2 to 6	8:30-9am M-F	Yes	Synd.
	Bananas in Pajamas & Crayon Box	2 to 6	9-9:30am M-F	Yes	Synd.
	Total = 5.5 hours/week				
WB (WPHL-17)	Channel Umptee-3 TV	6 to 16	7:30-8am Fri	Yes	WB
	Captain Planet	2 to 11	9-9:30am M-F	Yes	WB
	Oscar's Orchestra	2 to 11	7-7:30am Sat	Yes	Synd.
	Captain Kangaroo	2 to 6	7:30-8am Sat	Yes	Synd.
	Jack Hanna's Animal Adventure	12 to 16	10-10:30am Sun	Yes	Synd.
	Total = 4.5 hours/week				
Independent (WGTW-48)	Young Americans Outdoors	13 to 16	7:30-8am Mon	Yes	Synd.
	Young Americans Outdoors	13 to 16	11:30-Noon Sun	Yes	Synd.
	Critter Gitters	9 to 14	7:30-8am Tue & Fri	Yes	Synd.
	Field Trip	6 to 11	7:30-8am Wed	Yes	Synd.
	Wild About Animals	8 to 16	7:30-8am Thu	Yes	Synd.
	Sing Me a Story with Belle	3 to 11	11-11:30am Sun	Yes	Synd.
	Peer Pressure	13 to 16	Noon-12:30 Sun	Yes	Synd.
	Click	13 to 16	12:30-1pm Sun	Yes	Synd.
	Total = 4.5 hours/week				

The E/I Icons

In addition to providing public file information about E/I programs, commercial broadcasters, since January 1997, have been required to identify their offerings through an on-air symbol or voice over. In the 1997/98 season, as with the previous season, the commercial broadcasters routinely used identifiers, generally in the preceding moments or in the first few seconds of a program (ABC intersperses its icon throughout its "One Saturday Morning" lineup).

The survey of last season's efforts to identify programs indicated that the broadcasters' symbols and accompanying voice-overs were often obtuse and brief (Jordan and Woodard, 1997). This season's identifiers are no different (in fact, there are very few changes in the identifiers at all). While the majority of the broadcasters use the E/I symbol, the letters are sometimes obscured (as in Fox's symbol under the graduation cap) or in the far background (as in TBS's "wallpaper"). ABC does not use an E/I, but instead uses a small light bulb. Accompanying voice-overs are as direct as: "The following program is designed to be educational and information for children ages 6 to 12" or as indirect as "illuminating programming."

TV Guide and Newspaper Listings

Parents can inform themselves about the content of programs through TV listings in *TV Guide* and the local daily newspaper. A survey of the May 2, 1998 issue of *TV Guide* indicates that each of the local broadcasters' E/I programs (as identified through phone calls to the local broadcasters) is listed in *TV Guide* with an E/I icon. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, however, is not carrying the icon.

Preemption

The FCC's "three-hour rule" mandates that commercial broadcast stations seeking expedited license review air three hours of educational children's programs per week, and that these shows air between the hours of 7am and 10pm. However the FCC has not yet established guidelines for the number of times stations can preempt their core educational shows during a quarter. Stations are only required to re-schedule a preempted show to air at another time.

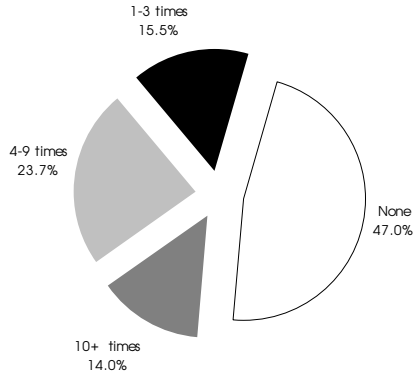
There are a number of issues that may arise if programs are frequently preempted. For children and parents, the benefits of having educational programming on the air will be lost if children do not know where and when they can find these shows. Viewers may not look for, or be able to locate a show if it is moved to a different time slot. In addition, it may be difficult for a program to build an audience (especially if it is a new show), because it will be harder to develop a core of loyal viewers. This is especially problematic for educational shows, which often take longer to develop a following.

In order to assess the extent to which stations are preempting their core educational shows, an analysis was conducted based on the information provided by stations in their FCC filings. All stations are required to provide the FCC with a quarterly listing of their core educational programs, the times that those programs are scheduled to air, and the number of times each program was preempted. The following analyses are based on all commercial broadcast stations' filings with the FCC. The reporting of preemption patterns is therefore based on a national census of stations that filed during this quarter, not on the much smaller sample of Philadelphia-area stations. Filings examined were from the fourth quarter of 1997 (October 1-December 31),³² the first filing under the new three-hour rule. The information was accessed on the Internet from the FCC's Web site (www.fcc.gov), which electronically posts these filings.

During the 4th quarter of 1997, the 1077 stations that filed with the FCC¹ preempted their core educational programs a total of 4,829 times. Of the 1077 stations that filed, 47% did not preempt their core programming at all. About 16% of the stations preempted between 1-3 times, 24% preempted between 4-9 times and 14% preempted ten times or more during the quarter (a total of 571 stations, 53%, preempted their core programming).³³

FIGURE 14

Preemption of Core Educational Programming

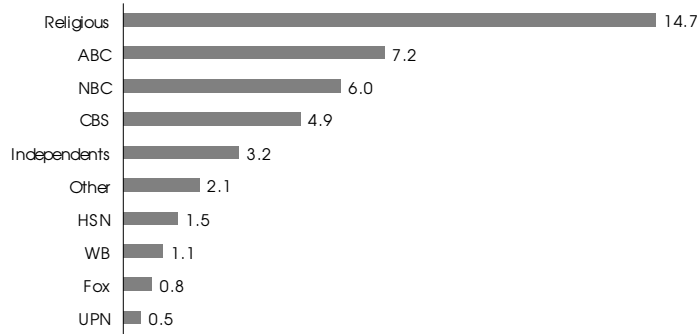


Because the majority of core educational children's programming airs on Saturday mornings, it is not surprising that, nationally, commercial broadcast stations were most likely to preempt shows that aired during Saturday morning time slots. It appears that the most vulnerable time slots were Saturday 10-10:55 and 11-11:55 (43% and 48% of the stations that preempted did so during these times). Very few stations preempted on Sunday or during the week. In addition, stations were more likely to preempt an entire morning's line-up than they were to preempt one or two shows. This seemed especially true on Saturday mornings, when many stations would preempt 3-5 shows, probably to accommodate sports programming.

Stations in this national analysis preempted an average of 4.5 times during the quarter, but there was significant variation in preemptions across networks. Stations affiliated with religious networks (Trinity Broadcast Network, Worship) preempted their shows most often, with an average of 14.7 times. Among the major networks, ABC affiliates averaged the greatest number of preemptions (7.2 times) followed by NBC (6.0), and CBS (4.9), while Fox affiliates were much less likely to preempt (.8). UPN and WB affiliates also averaged very few preemptions.³⁴

FIGURE 15

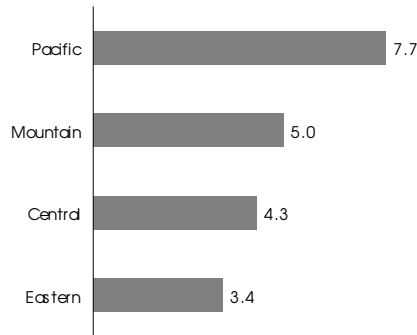
Average Preemptions by Network Affiliation



The analysis of the over 1,000 commercial broadcasters that filed children's programming reports from around the country reveal regional differences in the average number of times stations preempted. Stations on the West Coast were significantly more likely to preempt their shows than stations in other regions. Affiliates in the Pacific region averaged 7.7 preemptions during the quarter. The average number of preemptions decreased from the West Coast to the East, with East Coast affiliates averaging the fewest number of preemptions (3.4).³⁵

FIGURE 16

Harsh Language in Children's Programming



In addition, some Saturday morning time slots were more vulnerable in certain geographic regions. Shows airing between 9 and 11am on Saturdays were likely to be preempted by stations in the Mountain and Pacific regions. Shows airing between 10-12 were likely to be preempted in the Central region, and shows airing between 12-1pm were likely to be preempted on the East Coast. This pattern of results probably reflects preemption due to sports programming. On the East Coast, Saturday morning children's programs are more likely to have already aired by the time televised sporting events begin, so programs are probably less likely to be preempted than they are on the West Coast.

Three Hours of Programming

To evaluate the amount and quality of E/I offerings, this section focuses on one large market in the Northeast: Philadelphia. As Table 1 indicates, each of the commercial broadcasters surveyed in the Philadelphia broadcast region is offering a minimum of three hours' worth of educational and informational programming for children between the hours of 7:00am and 10:00pm. In fact, five of the seven stations are offering significantly more than the minimum three hours' worth.

The implementation of the three-hour rule has had the effect of increasing the number of educational programs that air when children are likely to be in the audience. Though in 1997 most of the Philadelphia-area broadcasters were airing between 2 and 6 hours of programming they considered to be educational, a significant portion of those programs were relegated to the pre-dawn hours (e.g., 5:00am) (see Jordan and Woodard, 1997; Jordan and Sullivan, 1997). Today, there are still many educational programs airing in the pre-dawn hours, but they are in addition to the three hours' worth and are not counted toward the mandated three hours of core educational programming offered after 7:00am.

Methodology for Content Analysis of E/I Programs

The sample of E/I programs included in this analysis are those shows listed as educational and informational (E/I) and airing during times allowed under the FCC's guidelines for core programming. Early in this research project it was hoped that we could gather a sample of educational programs that would be representative of efforts across the nation. The "call for programs,"³⁶ however, yielded only a handful of additional programs that complemented the Philadelphia-area broadcasters' offerings. This may be because few producers saw or responded to the request printed in the major industry magazines. Contributing is the fact that, because Philadelphia is a top ten market, many of the syndicated programs that are available throughout the nation actually air in this market. Finally, as will be described in the next section, the majority of E/I programs that air are provided by the networks to their local affiliates. A total of 35 core educational programs were thus identified for inclusion in this sample.

Our call for programs gave producers and programmers the opportunity to submit three episodes of each program title. The majority of the programs were collected in this fashion. Admittedly, this presents a potential bias, since those who sent in tapes are able to select what they consider to be the best examples of their program. Post-coding evaluations, however, indicate no significant differences in the quality of programs submitted and the quality of those taped off-air.

Three individual episodes of each of the 35 programs were included in the evaluation based on the belief that there may be some variability in the program from week to week. Technical difficulties resulted in the procurement of only two examples of *Wild About Animals* and *Algo's Factory* and one example of *Field Trip*. The data from the episodes coded were duplicated to create three examples of these programs (so they would be appropriately represented in the sample).

Several programmers requested that program segments (15 minutes in length) be used in the evaluation. In these programs (which include many of ABC's programs and one of Fox's programs), two segments typically make up a half-hour E/I offering. The segments were accepted and treated as representative of the entire half-hour.³⁷ A total sample of 105 programs provides the basis for the evaluation of E/I programs offered to fulfill the "three-hour rule" in the Philadelphia market.

A five-member coding team was trained over the course of three months in the evaluation of the commercial broadcasters' educational offerings. Coders included an undergraduate Communications major experienced in content analysis; three doctoral students at The Annenberg School for Communication, and the primary author of this report. Except for the primary author, coders were not involved in the content analysis of the general sample of children's programs described in Part One.

Twenty-percent of the E/I programs in this sample were double-coded to ensure the reliability of the measures. Each of the variables reported below achieved acceptable levels of reliability.³⁸

Findings for Evaluation of E/I Programs (Philadelphia Sample)

Where do the Programs Come From?

Two-thirds (65.7 percent) of the core educational programs in this sample originate with the networks, while the remaining one-third (34.3 percent) are syndicated. ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, and WB all provide their broadcast affiliates with a full three hours' worth (or more) of educational programming. In every case except Fox (which airs the syndicated *Bill Nye the Science Guy* in place of *C-bear and Jamal*), the affiliates air the networks' complete line-up to fulfill their obligations. The UPN-affiliate and independent station air syndicated shows as their core educational programming. None of the seven commercial broadcasters airs locally produced E/I programs to meet the three-hour mandate (though some air locally produced E/I programs in the early morning hours or on a quarterly basis).

Who are the Programs for?

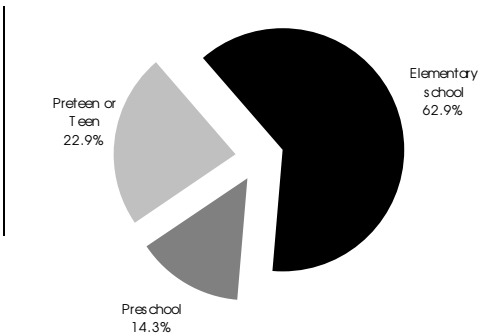
The commercial broadcast stations are required to indicate the target age for their educational programs. Though most programs targeted an age range that spanned three to five years (67.6 percent), many said that their programs were appropriate for age groupings of six or more years. Several said their programs were appropriate for 2-12 year olds.

Using the broadcasters' information about appropriate audiences as guidance, the target age of each program was recoded as "primarily preschool" (0 to 4 years), "primarily elementary school" (5 to 11 years), or "preteen/teen" (12 to 16 years). In cases where programs spanned two age groupings, the content and the air times were considered in order to place the program into one of the three target audiences.³⁹

Two-thirds of educational/informational programs offered by the commercial broadcast stations are designed for five- to 11-year-olds, while only 14.3 percent are targeted to preschoolers and 22.9 percent are designed for the teen audience.

FIGURE 17

Target Audience for E/I Programs

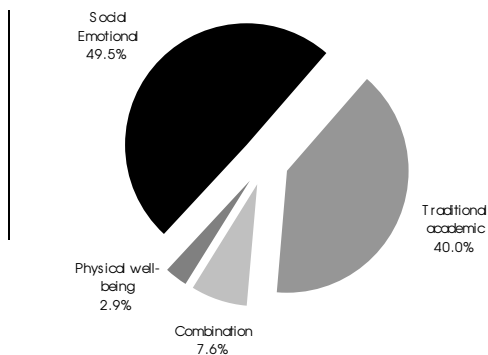


What are E/I programs designed to teach?

Programs were coded according to the central educational message in the program. The program's "primary lesson" was placed into one of four categories: physical well-being/motor skill development (e.g., sports-related information, nutrition information); traditional academic lessons (e.g., literacy, science information, or cognitive challenges); and social/emotional skill development (e.g., learning how to feel good about oneself or get along with others). Though most programs clearly fell into one category, a minority equally emphasized more than one type of lesson.

FIGURE 18

Primary Lesson of E/I Programs



Nearly one-half (49.5 percent) of the programs focused their lessons around social/emotional issues. Programs such as *Hang Time*, *Brand Spankin' New Doug*, *Life With Louie*, *The Weird Al Show*, and *Sing Me a Story With Belle* fell into this category. Traditional academic lessons were the focus of another 40 percent of the programs. *Beakman's World*, *Science Court*, and *Bill Nye the Science Guy* taught scientific lessons, while *The New Ghostwriter Mysteries* centered on the use of literacy skills and *The Adventures of Captain Planet* emphasized the importance of conserving the environment. Several games shows – including *Click* and *Wheel 2000* – also fell into this category. Physical lessons were the primary theme of a small number of programs (2.9 percent) – including *NBA Inside Stuff* and *SI for Kids*. 7.6 percent of programs equally emphasized two or more lesson types.⁴⁰

But are they educational?

The FCC relies on the good faith of the commercial broadcasters to ensure that their programs meet the FCC's criteria for educational and informational programming laid out in the August, 1996 processing guidelines. Briefly, these guidelines state that core E/I programs must be: 1) specifically designed for children; 2) have education as a significant purpose; and, 3) enhance the positive development of the child in any respect, including social/emotional and cognitive/intellectual domains (Federal Communications Commission, 1996).

In this section, we examine the educational strength of the commercial broadcasters' educational offerings under a set of criteria developed from the available research evidence on teaching through television and in consultation with our Advisory Panel on Educational Television. These criteria were also used in APPC's evaluation of the 1996/97 E/I programs. Though there are many ways to evaluate the educational strength of programs, APPC's approach represents one effort to develop reasonable benchmarks by which to evaluate and track the quality of educational programming for

children freely available over our nation's airwaves.

Starting from the FCC's definition of educational, we developed a series of questions that form the basis of the operationalization of "educational value." These questions, which make up the "objective" portion of our scale, are:

- **Lesson Clarity:** *Is the lesson clearly laid out so that it can be easily comprehended by the target audience?*
- **Lesson Salience:** *Is the lesson consistently conveyed and/or an integral element of the program as a whole?*
- **Lesson Involvement:** *Is the lesson presented in such a way that it is engaging and challenging for the target audience?*
- **Lesson Applicability:** *Is the lesson conveyed in such a way that the target audience can see its usefulness in their own lives?*

As with the assessment of program quality in the larger sample of children's programming reported in Part One, we also used a "subjective measure" of educational quality in assessing E/I programs. For this variable, programs were given an overall rating of "highly educational" (engaging, challenging and educationally valuable); "moderately educational" (has some problems but likely imparts some important lessons); or "minimally educational" (has almost no educational value for the target audience).⁴¹

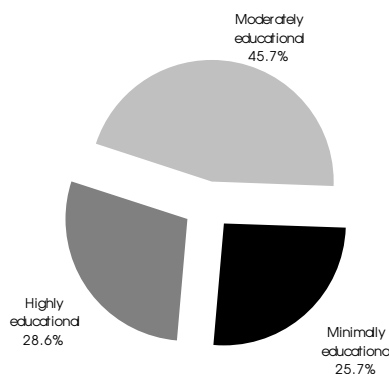
Objective measure scores ranged from 0 (objective criteria completely absent in program) to 4 (objective criteria are fully present in program) and subjective measure scores ranged from 0 (minimally educational) to 2 (highly educational). An "educational strength" scale was created from the sum of the objective and subjective measures. Programs receiving a score of 0 to 2.5 were rated "minimally educational", programs receiving a score of 2.6 to 4.9 were rated "moderately educational," and programs receiving a score of 5 or 6 were rated "highly educational." The averaged ratings of the three episodes of the 35 programs included in this sample can be found in Appendix 2.

The Availability of High Quality Programs

The overall measure of the educational strength of the commercial broadcasters' educational programs indicates that, of the 105 programs evaluated in this sample, 28.6 percent are "highly educational," 45.7 percent are "moderately educational," and 25.7 percent are "minimally educational."

FIGURE 19

Educational Strength of E/I Programs



The distribution of the educational strength of programs is somewhat different from that which was available in the previous season. Though there is a similar percent of "minimally educational" programs from 1996/97 (22.0 percent) to 1997/98 (25.7 percent), the percentage of "highly educational" programs has fallen (from 42.9 percent in 1996/97 to 28.6 percent in 1997/98). The difference is made up in the percentage of "moderately educational" programs (35.2 percent in 1996/97 vs. 45.7 percent in 1997/98).

Highly Educational and Minimally Educational Programs

As Table 2 indicates, the highly educational programs in both the Philadelphia sample and the sample of programs that air outside of this market are a diverse group. The highest scoring programs (which consistently received "highly educational" evaluations) were, interestingly, science-related programs: *Bill Nye, the Science Guy*, *Beakman's World*, *Algo's Factory* and *Science Court*. In addition to teaching basics about scientific principles, many of these shows also conveyed lessons to develop cognitive skills such as hypothesis testing and investigation. Pro-social, narrative programs also received high marks – for example, *C-Bear and Jamal*, *Doug* and *Saved by the Bell*. The focus of many of these pro-social programs was on the resolution of anger and disappointment in constructive ways. Highly rated programs did more than simply validate the difficult feelings and experiences of young people. They provide viewers with tools to more effectively manage and communicate about difficult encounters. Teen-oriented, magazine-style programs like *Nick News* and *Whatever* also scored highly for presenting current affairs and locally-relevant topics in a way that is meaningful to young people.

Highly educational programs, according to Annenberg Public Policy Center criteria, have clear and well-integrated lessons, are involving for children (by both including children within the show and using appropriate production techniques) and contain lessons that children can use in their own lives. The evaluation of programs indicates that it is possible to create strong programs in a variety of program formats and genres – from pro-social, narrative style-programs like *Pepper Ann* to non-traditional, expository-style programs like *Popular Mechanics for Kids*. Highly educational programs are effective at targeting all ages, but primarily target elementary school-age children (e.g., *Algo's Factory*) and teens (e.g., *Saved by the Bell*). Only two preschool-oriented program (*Sing Me A Story With Belle* and *Captain Kangaroo*) are on the

“highly educational” list, probably reflecting the commercial broadcasters’ reluctance to program for this audience.

TABLE 2

Top Scoring E/I Programs
(received 2 or 3 “highly educational” scores out of three episodes analyzed; listed alphabetically)

- Algo’s Factory
- Beakman’s World
- Bill Nye, the Science Guy
- Disney’s Doug
- Captain Kangaroo
- C-Bear and Jamal
- Nick News
- Pepper Ann
- Popular Mechanics for Kids
- Saved by the Bell
- Science Court
- Sing Me a Story with Belle
- Whatever

The weakest programs in this sample were also a diverse group. One pattern was the ineffectual use of the game show format for teaching a coherent lesson (e.g., *Peer Pressure*, *Wheel of Fortune 2000*). Though previous analyses have indicated that game shows can be educational, the game shows in this sample tended to lack clear, overarching educational foci. The educational nature of the programs seemed to lie in irrelevant, factoid-like information. Without a context for these facts (e.g., Question: What is Cinco de Mayo, Answer: Mexican Independence Day), or an overall theme to tie the facts together, it is unlikely that children will learn much that will “contribute to their positive development.”

Other minimally educational programs received low scores because education did not appear to be a “significant purpose.” *Oscar’s Orchestra*, for example, is purportedly designed to teach children to appreciate classical music, but only does this by playing a classical music soundtrack against a violence-laden action/adventure narrative. *NBA Inside Stuff* includes some commentary on players’ lives but conveys no real lesson—pro-social or otherwise. Its primary objective seems to be updating fans on basketball players’ trades and team scores.

Finally, there were those programs that simply need to improve their message delivery. *Mr. Men* is an example of a show for preschoolers that is too unfocused, confusing, and poorly produced to be of much educational value to the youngest audience.

TABLE 3

Lowest Scoring E/I Programs
(3 “minimally educational” scores out of three episodes analyzed; listed alphabetically)

- Mr. Men
- NBA Inside Stuff
- Oscar’s Orchestra
- Peer Pressure
- Wheel of Fortune 2000

PART THREE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Summary and Conclusions

The third annual evaluation of the 1,190 programs available to children over broadcast and cable stations in the Philadelphia-area reveals that, while much of the universe of children's television has remained stable over the years, there have been some interesting and noteworthy changes. Because it is important to consider not only the researchers' evaluations of children's television but also parents' and children's use and perceptions of such programs, the findings from the Annenberg Public Policy Center's 1998 Spring survey are referred to in this section (see Stanger, 1998 for the full survey). These data come from a nationally representative survey conducted in April 1998 with 1208 parents of two- to seventeen-year-olds and 300 of their ten- to seventeen-year-old children. The survey was conducted by Chilton Research Services, Inc. and has a margin of error of ± 3.0 percent for parents and ± 6.2 percent for children.

Children who have access to cable in the Philadelphia market can choose from 25 different stations that program 1,190 shows specifically designed for children (247 individual titles). The one-third of America's children who do not subscribe to cable (Nielsen, 1996), however, have far less from which to choose. Broadcast-only programs air 276 times in a given week.

Though children have many choices of programming throughout the day, very little programming designed for them airs in the coveted primetime hours (less than 10 percent of the overall schedule). It has long been recognized (and borne out in ratings) that children are much more likely to watch adult programs than they are to watch children's programs. Moreover, when asked to list their favorite programs, the young people surveyed in the 1998 poll tended to list family situation comedies (such as *Home Improvement*) or adult-oriented programs (such as *Friends* and *Seinfeld*) (Stanger, 1998). One wonders if children's tastes are simply a reflection of the availability of programs that air when children like to watch (in the evening with their parents). (Recent Nielsen ratings indicate that *Rugrats*, which airs weekdays at 7:30pm, has climbed into the list of Nielsen's top-rated programs, the only children's program on the list. It is likely that both children and parents enjoy this program, in part, because it airs at a time when they like to watch television together.)

The elementary school age audience appears to be the audience of choice for programmers in both the general sample of children's programs (68.8 percent are for this age group) and the E/I sample (62.9 percent).

Programming for the elementary school age audience is abundant, but it is sometimes abysmal. Programs targeted to five- to eleven-year-olds were significantly more likely to contain violence and harsh language and were significantly less likely to contain any enriching content when compared with programming for the preschool or teen audience.

The overall quantity and quality of the children's programs available over broadcast and cable television has remained stable over time. By the Annenberg Public Policy Center's standards of quality (the inclusion of clear and salient educational lessons and the exclusion of excessive violence), 36.4 percent of the programs could be considered "high quality" (down 3 percent from 1997), 27.3 percent are "moderate quality" (up 4 percent from 1997) and a disappointing 36.3 percent are low quality (similar to 1997).

The weblets (UPN and WB) and independent commercial broadcast stations in this sample aired proportionately more low-quality programs. These stations also had programming that contained greater amounts of violence, sexual innuendo and harsh language and lesser amounts of educational content and character diversity. With the exception of PBS, the other venues in this sample also aired significant amounts of low-quality programming

The 1997/98 season saw a growing trend toward greater programming for the long-ignored teen audience (8.3 percent vs. 3.4 percent in the previous year), but the quality of programming for this audience dropped precipitously. Less than a third of teen programming was rated high quality, compared to the 80 percent of high quality teen programs in the 1996/97 sample. NBC's E/I lineup for teens is no longer the only game in town. Programs such as *Breaker High* and *Peer Pressure* have been introduced, skewing the program ratings toward the "moderate" level of quality. It should be noted, however, that teen programs were significantly more likely to have gender and ethnic diversity in program characters than programs designed for younger children.

Parents who want to avoid problematic content such as violence, sexual innuendo and bad language and seek programs that are educational and diverse can count on PBS. The consistency of PBS's programming is noticed by parents, who are most likely to cite PBS as a source for "good programs" (48 percent cited PBS, 37.7 percent cited cable, and 8.8 percent cited the commercial broadcasters).

Parents who rely on the FV (fantasy violence) content rating to discourage their children's viewing of violent programs may be misled. Our analysis found that only 25 percent of programs that contained "a lot" of violence (malicious acts of violence in three or more scenes) carried the FV warning at the beginning of the program. The remaining 75 percent of programs that warranted an FV rating did not carry such a label. It appears that some stations are using TV-Y7 as a cue that the program contains violence or other problematic content. Indeed, a full 80 percent of programs with the TV-Y7 rating were assessed as "low quality."

The Annenberg Public Policy Center's evaluation of the implementation of the FCC's three-hour rule has sought to assess both the reporting and the quality of 35 educational and informational (E/I) programs available on the Philadelphia-area's seven commercial broadcast stations.

The commercial broadcasters, under the first season of the "three-hour rule," are each programming a minimum of three hours per week of educational programming between the hours of 7:00am and 10:00pm, and many are programming beyond the minimum. Though broadcasters in the previous year had been airing between two and six hours of programming each week, a significant proportion of those programs aired in the pre-dawn hours. It appears that the three-hour rule has been successful in getting more programming on during times when children are likely to be in the audience.

The commercial broadcasters are also consistently reporting their E/I programs in printed listings and on the air. *TV Guide* now regularly carries an icon (an E/I in a circle) that indicates the programs, although the local newspaper does not. Broadcasters have also devised creative ways to identify E/I programs with icons and voice-overs in the opening moments of a show. Unfortunately, the icons may be too creative so as to be unrecognizable. APPC survey data indicate that only 9.1 percent of parents know what E/I stands for and only 37 percent know that stations put information on screen about which programs are intended to be educational for

children. Not surprising, then, is the finding that only 3.4 percent of parents say they use the E/I symbol to guide their children's viewing.

The evaluation of the commercial broadcasters' FCC filings (over 1,000 stations from around the nation) indicates that stations are preempting their core educational shows fairly frequently. We should note that because we only looked at the fourth quarter of 1997, the data reported may not be representative of the frequency with which stations preempt throughout the year (preemption may be more frequent in the fall months due to football games). However, this is an important quarter to look at, because many shows debut during the fall months. Clearly if a new show such as *Science Court* is placed in the 11:00 Saturday time slot it would have a difficult time developing an audience if it is frequently preempted.

The commercial broadcasters' E/I programs center on a variety of educational lessons. Though many feared that broadcasters would fall back on narrative, pro-social programming (because it is most likely to reach a large audience), only about half were of this genre, another 40 percent were traditionally academic (e.g., science, literacy), 3 percent dealt with fitness and nutrition, and the remaining 7.6 percent equally emphasized more than one type of lesson. CBS has the most diverse line-up, and while ABC and Fox relied heavily on pro-social programming, they also included programs designed to develop school-related knowledge and cognitive skills. The majority of the syndicated programming aired in this market was not classified as pro-social in nature.

The E/I programs in this sample were evaluated for their educational strength using criteria developed in 1996 under the guidance of the APPC advisory groups. To be rated "highly educational," programs had to contain clear, well-integrated lessons that were involving to children and applicable to their lives. In addition, coders evaluated the program as a whole as highly educational, moderately educational, or minimally educational. Under these criteria, 28.6 percent of the E/I shows that air in Philadelphia were considered "highly educational," 45.7 percent were "moderately educational" and 25.7 percent were "minimally educational."

The educational strength of programs offered in the 1997/98 season is similar to that of the 1996/97 season. Roughly one quarter of the programs remain "minimally educational" while the remaining programs can be seen as educational under the letter of the FCC's definitions of educational programming. Minimally educational programs had weak, unfocused, or nonexistent educational goals, or contained information that was judged to be so useless that the programs were "unlikely to further the positive development of the program in any respect."

On a more positive note, a significant number of programs were judged to be "highly educational." *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, for the second season in a row, garnered the top spot, along with two other science-based programs (*Science Court* and *Beakman's World*). *Saved by the Bell*, a pro-social program for twelve to sixteen year olds, was also judged to be highly educational. *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *Saved by the Bell*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Bananas in Pajamas*, *Doug*, and *Science Court* were the only E/I programs mentioned frequently in our 1998 APPC survey of parents as "good programs" for children (other good programs were network sitcoms, cable programs or PBS shows).

It appears from this analysis that there is no single formula for strong educational programming. APPC's top-rated programs came from a variety of sources (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox all have some "highly educational" programs), target a variety of audiences (from preschoolers to teenagers), and convey a variety of lessons.

Though the networks have several success stories, it is clear that they are still on a sharp learning curve. Most of the programs offered by the networks are only "moderately educational." They have all the proper elements to satisfy the FCC's definition of educational and informational programming but they have a ways to go before they can be considered the best that they can be.

Next Steps

Research Recommendations

The research conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center provides important but limited insight into the role of television in the lives of children and society. Given the dramatic changes that have occurred in the last several years, there is still much we need to learn about the forces that shape the availability and viewership of educational television.

One much-needed study is an examination of parents' beliefs about the benefits of educational television. A great deal of research now indicates that not only is educational television viewing in moderate quantities not bad for children, it can actually be good for children as such viewing is correlated with significant gains in academic abilities well beyond the early years (see Anderson, 1998; Huston and Wright, 1998). We need to ask: Why aren't more parents seeking out educational programming for their school age child? Do they believe their role is to "protect" them from the deleterious effects of television rather than lead them toward the potentially beneficial programs? Or do they believe that television really has nothing good to offer? In the 1998 APPC survey, nearly half of parents ages 2 to 17 believed that television had "only a few" or "almost no" good shows for children.

It is also important to consider whether parents' definitions of "educational television" match those of the FCC, the broadcasters, or The Annenberg Public Policy Center. In one recent APPC study, parents were given a list of the commercial broadcasters' E/I programs and asked which were "intended to be educational" or "just intended to be entertaining." Parents were most likely to place shows teaching academic subjects such as science in the "educational" category (*Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *Science Court*). They were less likely to consider shows that teach social skills and lessons (e.g., *Saved by the Bell*, *Brand Spankin' New Doug*, *Fudge*) as educational. In this same study parents were asked whether they had bought a licensed product based on an educational TV show. The most often cited program was *Goosebumps*, which neither the programmer (Fox) nor APPC considered to be educational (Holz, 1998).

Experimental studies need to be designed and carried out to address the debate over whether the on-air E/I icons are a turn-off to children (as broadcasters fear) or informative to parents (as advocates and lawmakers hope). Though they currently don't appear to garner much notice, they are a potentially important mechanism through which parents can be more informed about the types of programs their children watch and the educational offerings of broadcasters. Without such data, it is not clear whether broadcasters should make the extra effort needed to standardize their symbols and publicize them more widely.

A final recommendation is for up-to-date research on how and what children learn from educational programs. Studies conducted during the seventies and eighties provided us with a fairly complete picture of preschoolers' learning from such programs as *Sesame*

Street, Barney, and Mister Rogers. As more and more educational programs are created for older, school-age audiences (six to twelve-year-olds), it is important to understand what draws these children to educational programs and what they take away from their encounters. Wackman and Wartella's (1977) call for action sounded twenty years ago is just as relevant today. They argued that research was needed to clarify: 1) what children look at when they watch television; 2) what information, both visual and auditory, they store in their memory systems; 3) how they classify and order this information; and 4) how they utilize this information in subsequent behavior (1977, 221). Methodologically sound, theoretically-based research (that is not program-specific) is critical to the development of more educationally strong programming for older children and a clearer understanding of their relationship with the medium.

Policy Recommendations

The 1998 State of Children's Television Report provides a picture of an industry in which programming is available in abundant supply but is of uneven quality. Of the 1190 programs that air for children, more than one-third are of disturbingly low quality – full of violence, peppered with sexual innuendo and harsh language, and generally devoid of enriching value. Only programs designed for preschoolers and programs which air on PBS are safe bets for parents and children looking for educational, high quality programs.

The content ratings system adopted by the industry in the Fall of 1997 was advocated as a means by which parents could screen out objectionable content. Indeed, the "V" in V-chip stands for violence – content many parents and researchers worry about. Our content analysis of children's programs reveals that fully three-fourths of programs with "a lot" of violence (malicious violent acts in three or more scenes) do not contain the "FV" rating (indicating fantasy violence). Instead, many programmers and producers are using TV-Y7 as the code for problematic content (as reflected in the finding that eighty percent of TV-Y7 programs are "low quality"). When the V-Chip does finally make its way into the TV sets of families with young children, parents will be faced with a no-win situation as they try to program their chips. If they block out only programs rated with an FV, objectionable amounts of violence will get through. If they block out programs rated with a TV-Y7, they will restrict children's access to violent shows but also their access to educational programs intended for an older audience (such as *Beakman's World* and *Saved by the Bell*).

Data from our 1998 APPC Survey indicate that parents are neither aware of the FCC's regulations nor the symbols that broadcasters use to identify educational programming. It is therefore no surprise that less than five percent of parents say they use the new information to guide their children's viewing. This disconnect between public policy and private practice must be remedied in order for the regulations to produce their intended result: an increase in the availability and viewership of educational programming. The FCC, broadcasters, and advocacy groups need to put greater emphasis on informing parents about educational programming and encouraging them to provide broadcasters with feedback about their E/I efforts.

Newspapers also need to be more responsible about providing information about television programming that is suitable for children. Though *TV Guide* carries the E/I icons, very few daily newspapers do. Instead, they typically focus on primetime situation comedies and dramas or controversies in children's television viewing. It is a sad commentary on the type of information available when more children know about (and watch) *South Park* than *Nick News*. This is not to say that it is the job of

newspapers to act as promoters of stations' programming. Rather, providing parents and children with informed and regular critiques of children's shows should be at least as valued as the regular updates papers provide of the broadcasters' daily soap operas.

It is time for the FCC and commercial broadcasters to revisit the issue of preemption. Admittedly, limiting the number of times a station can preempt educational shows poses some difficult issues. Many stations run their children's line-up on Saturday mornings. These shows regularly come up against sports programming which begins in the late morning and early afternoon. This presents a dilemma for West Coast stations, which begin airing sports events earlier in the morning than East Coast stations. Perhaps stations (especially those on the West Coast) will need to consider scheduling their E/I shows on Sunday or during the week in order to reduce the number of times they preempt these shows. Or, if they run their children's line-up on Saturday mornings, stations might begin airing their shows earlier, perhaps using the 7am-10am time slots for their educational programs to ensure that the shows will air before televised sporting events begin.

In addition, it is important to consider whether stations are preempting particular shows multiple times, or whether they are preempting their entire line-up once or twice a quarter. While we were not able to provide quantitative data to answer that question in this study, it seems an important question to ask in establishing limits on the number of times stations can preempt their shows. For instance, if a show such as *Winnie the Pooh* is preempted five times out of 13 in a quarter, is that worse/better/the same as preempting five different shows on a particular Saturday?

The collection of data on the commercial broadcaster's educational programming was easy and straightforward. Both the local broadcast affiliates and the networks (with the exception of WB) cooperated with our requests for information about the titles and target ages of programs. They also sent tapes for the evaluations. In addition, the FCC's website contains comprehensive and easily accessed electronic quarterly children's television reports. This should encourage community activists, national advocacy organizations and other interested parties to seek out and assess the commercial broadcasters' efforts to serve the public interest.

We conclude on a cautiously optimistic note: children's television is a vital industry that appears to be responding to a demand for more high-quality, educational programming. Not only are the commercial broadcasters providing the minimum of three hours' worth of educational television, the networks' offerings are, for the most part, acceptably educational. Clearly, they could do better. Most of the commercial broadcasters' were only moderately educational pro-social programs. Though such programs are acceptable, they are not the kind of excellent and diverse programs that could be offered. But given that this is the first year in which the networks have created a large number of new and re-vamped E/I offerings, the one-quarter of "minimally educational" offerings in this sample should not be too discouraging. There are more and more production houses creating educational programs (as can be seen by the additional programs in Appendix 2 that air outside of Philadelphia or outside that allowable 7:00am to 10:00pm time slot). In addition, there have been success stories – ABC's creative and consistent efforts at promoting its Saturday morning educational lineup has translated into high ratings (Stroud, 1998). Finally, the fact that such market-savvy companies as Fox Kids' and Nickelodeon are launching educationally-oriented basic cable services in the coming season may be all the more reason to hope that the quantity and diversity of programming available for children will improve in the near future.

APPENDIX ONE: SAMPLE PROGRAMS

Program	Network	APPC high quality	Parents mention as good program	10-17 yr-olds mention as good program
1 Zone	PBS	*		
101 Dalmatians	ABC			
2 Stupid Dogs	Toon			
Aaahh! Real monsters	Nick			
Acme Hour	Toon			
Addams Family	Toon			
Adventures in Wonderland	Disney			
Adventures of ARK	Discovery	*		
Adventures of Oliver Twist	WB			
Adventures of Pete and Pete	Nick			
Adventures of Quasimodo	Starz			
Adventures of Winnie the Pooh	Disney/ABC	*	*	
Aladdin	Disney			
Algo's Factory	UPN	*		
All dogs go to Heaven	UPN			
All That	Nick		*	*
Allegra's Window	Nick	*	*	
Amazing Animals	Disney	*		
Angry Beavers	Nick			
Animaniacs	WB			
Animated Hero Classics	HBO	*		
Are You Afraid of the Dark?	Nick	*	*	
Arthur	PBS	*	*	*
Babar	HBO			
Babysitters Club	Disney	*	*	
Bananas in PJs/Crayon Box	UPN	*	*	
Barney & Friends	PBS	*	*	
Beakman's World	CBS	*		
Bear in the Big Blue House	Disney	*	*	
Beast Wars	UPN			
Beetleborgs Metallix	Fox			
Beetlejuice	Nick			
Big Bag	Toon	*		
Big Comfy Couch	PBS	*	*	
Big Garage	TLC	*		
Bill Nye	PBS	*	*	*
Bingo & Molly	TLC	*		
Biography for Kids	A&E	*		
Bloopy's Buddies	PBS	*		
Blues Clues	Nick	*	*	
Bobby's World	FOX			
Boneheads	Discovery	*		
Breaker High	UPN			
Bugs Bunny	TNT			
Bugs 'n Daffy Show	WB			
Busy World of Richard Scarry	Nick	*		
California Dreams	TBS	*		
Capt. Simian	Ind.			
Cartoon Planet	Toon			
Cartoon-a-Doodle-Do	Toon			
Casper	Fox			
C-Bear and Jamal	Fox	*		
Ch. Umptee 3	WB	*		
Charlie Horse Magic Pizza	PBS	*		
Chicken Minute	Starz			
Chief Halftown & His Friends	ABC/WPVI			
Chip 'n Dale	Disney			
City Guys	NBC			
Clarissa Explains it All	Nick	*	*	
Click	Ind.			
Cow & Chicken	Toon			
David the Gnome	TLC			

Program (continued)	Network	APPC high quality	Parents mention as good program	10-17 yr-olds mention as good program
Dexter's Laboratory	Toon			
Dinobabies	FOX			
Dinosaurs	Disney			
Double Dragon	USA			
Doug	ABC/Nick	*	*	*
Dr. Seuss	Nick	*		
Dragonballz	WB			
Duck Tales	WB			
Enchanted Tales	UPN			
Extreme Dinosaurs	Ind.			
Extreme Ghostbusters	Ind.			
Family Double Dare	Nick			
Fantastic Four	Toon			
Fantastic Max	Toon			
Feed Your Mind!	TBS	*		
Field Trip	Ind.			
Field Trips USA	History	*	*	
Figure it Out	Nick			*
Flash Forward	Disney	*		
Flintstone Kids	Toon			
Friendly Giant	Toon			
Funky Phantom	Toon			
Garfield	Nick			
Gargoyles	USA			
Global Guts	Nick			
Godzilla	Toon			
Going Wild	Disney	*		
Goof troop	Disney			
Goosebumps	FOX			
Gullah Gullah Island	Nick	*	*	
Hall Pass	Ind.			
Hang Time	NBC			
Happily Ever After	HBO			
Hey, Arnold	Nick	*		*
Hey, Dude	Nick			
Huckleberry Hound	Toon			
Imagination Station	PBS	*		
Inspector gadget	Toon			
Incredible Hulk	UPN			
Inside Out	Disney			
Iron Man	WB			
Jaws & Claws	Discovery	*		
Jonny Bravo	Toon			
Journey of Allen Strange	Nick			
Jumanji	UPN			
Jungle Cubs	Disney			
Just Imagine	Ind.	*		
Kablam!	Nick			
Katie & Orbie	Disney	*		
Kenan & Kel	Nick		*	*
Kidsongs	PBS	*		
Kitty Cats	TLC			
Kratts Creatures	PBS	*	*	
Launch Box	Nick	*		
Legends of the Hidden Temple	Nick			
Life with Louie	FOX			
Little Bear	Nick	*	*	
Little Lulu	HBO			
Little Mermaid	Disney		*	
Looney Tunes	Nick			*
Madeline	Disney			
Magic school Bus	PBS	*	*	
Mega Movie Magic	Discovery	*		
Men in Black	WB			
Mighty Ducks	WB			
Mighty Max	USA			

Program (continued)	Network	APPC high quality	Parents mention as good program	10-17 yr-olds mention as good program
Mister Rogers' Neighborhood	PBS	*	*	
Mortal Kombat	USA			
Mouse Tracks	Disney			
Mr. Men	UPN			
Mr. Wizard's World	Nick	*		
Mummies Alive	UPN			
Muppet Babies	Nick			
Muppets Tonight	Disney			
My Brother and Me	Nick			
My Life as a Dog	Showtime			
Mystery Files of Shelby Woo	Nick			
NBA Inside Stuff	NBC			
New Batman/Superman Adventures	WB			
New Capt. Kangaroo	WB	*		
New Capt. Planet	WB			
New Ghostwriters	CBS	*		
New Voltron	UPN			
Newton's Apple	PBS	*		
Nick news	Nick	*	*	
Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation	Fox			
Omba Mokomba	Disney	*		
Oscar's Orchestra	WB			
Pappyland	TLC	*		
Peer Pressure	Ind.			
Pepper Ann	ABC	*		
Pinky and the Brain	WB			
Pirates of Darkwater	Toon			
Pop-Sci: Science 4 Kids	Discovery	*		
Popular Mechanics for Kids	FOX	*		
Power Rangers Turbo	Fox		*	*
Pup Named Scooby Doo	Toon			
Puzzle Place	PBS	*	*	
Quack Attack	Disney			
Quack Pack	WB			
Quick Draw McGraw	Toon			
Reading Rainbow	PBS	*	*	
Real Adventures of Jonny Quest	Toon			
Recess	ABC			
Ren & Stimpy	Nick			
Richie Rich	Toon			
Robotech	Toon			
Rocko's Modern Life	Nick			
Rory's Place	TLC	*		
Rugrats	Nick		*	*
Rupert	Nick			
Sailor Moon	USA			
Salute Your Shorts	Nick			
Savage Dragon	USA			
Saved by the Bell	TBS		*	*
Saved by the Bell: New Class	NBC	*		
Science Court	ABC	*	*	
Scooby Doo	Toon			
Secret Squirrel	Toon			
Sesame Street	PBS	*	*	
Shining Time Station	PBS	*		
Sing me a Story with Belle	Ind.	*		
Skinamarink TV	TLC	*		
Small World	Toon			
Smurfs' Adventures	Toon			
Sonic the Hedgehog	Ind.			
Space Cases	Nick			
Space Ghost Coast to Coast	Toon			
Space Goofs	FOX			
Space Race	toon			
Spider Man	Fox			
Sports Illustrated for Kids	CBS	*		

Program (continued)	Network	APPC high quality	Parents mention as good program	10-17 yr-olds mention as good program
Storybook Musicals	HBO	*		
Storybreak	CBS	*		
Street Fighter	USA			
Street Sharks	USA			
Student Bodies	FOX			
Super Friends	Toon			
Superman	WB			
Swamp & Tad	Toon			
Swamp Critters	TLC			
SWAT Kats	Toon			
Sweet Valley High	UPN			
Sylvester & Tweety	WB			
Tale Spin	Disney			
Taz-mania	Toon			
Teen summit	BET	*		
Testament: Bible in Animation	HBO			
The Flintstones	Toon			
The Gary Coleman Show	Toon			
The Jetsons	Toon			
The Legends of Treasure Island	Starz			
The Mask	Ind.			
The Tex Avery Show	Toon			
The Torkelsons	Disney	*		
Theodore Tugboat	PBS	*		
Thundarr The Barbarian	Toon			
Thundercats	Toon			
Timon & Pumbaa	Disney	*		
Tiny toon Adventures	WB		*	
Tom & Jerry	Toon			
Tom & Jerry Kids	Toon			
Toon Town Kids	UPN			
Tots TV	PBS	*		
Tweety and Sylvester	Toon			
Ultra Force	USA			
Underdog	Toon			
USA High	USA		*	*
Van-pires	WB			
Weird Al	CBS			
What a Cartoon Show	Toon			
What Would You Do?	Nick			
Wheel of Fortune 2000	CBS			
Wild About Animals	Ind.			
Wild and Crazy Kids	Nick			
Wimzie's House	PBS	*		
Wing Commander Academy	USA			
Wishbone	PBS	*	*	
World of Alex Mack	Nick			
X-Men	WB			
Year by Year for Kids	History	*		
Yogi Bear	Toon			
Young America Outdoors	Ind.	*		
Zooventure	Discovery	*		
Zorro	UPN			

APPENDIX TWO: APPC EVALUATION OF E/I PROGRAMS

E/I Programs (listed alphabetically)	Aired in Philadelphia	APPC Evaluation (3 episodes per program)
Adventure Rio	No/Local	Moderate Moderate Moderate
Algo's Factory	Yes/Synd.	Moderate High High
Bananas/Crayon Box	Yes/Synd.	Moderate Moderate High
Beakman's World	Yes/CBS	High High High
Bill Nye the Science Guy	Yes/Synd.	High High High
Bobby's World	Yes/Fox	Moderate Moderate* Minimal
Disney's Doug	Yes/ABC	Moderate High High
The New Adventures of Captain Planet	Yes/WB	Minimal* Moderate* Moderate*
Captain Kangaroo	Yes/Synd.	High Moderate High
C-Bear and Jamal	No/Fox	High High* High
Channel Umptee 3 TV	Yes/WB	Moderate Moderate Minimal
City Guys	Yes/NBC	Moderate Moderate High
Click	Yes/Synd.	Minimal Minimal Moderate
Critter Gitters	Yes/Synd.	Moderate Moderate* Minimal
Down at the Zoo	No/Synd.	Moderate Moderate Moderate
Field Trip	Yes/Synd.	Moderate Moderate Moderate
Fudge	Yes/CBS	Moderate High Moderate
Hang Time	Yes/NBC	High Moderate Moderate
Jack Hanna's Animal Adventures	Yes/Synd.	Moderate Moderate Moderate
Jungle Cubs	Yes/ABC	Moderate* Moderate Minimal
Life With Louie	Yes/Fox	High Minimal Moderate
Mr. Men	Yes/Synd.	Minimal Minimal Minimal
E/I Programs continued (listed alphabetically)	Aired in Philadelphia	APPC Evaluation (3 episodes per program)
NBA Inside Stuff	Yes/NBC	Minimal

		Minimal Minimal
New Ghostwriters Mysteries	Yes/CBS	Moderate Minimal Moderate
Nick News	No/Synd.	High High* High
One Hundred & One Dalmatians	Yes/ABC	Minimal* Moderate* Moderate
Oscar's Orchestra	Yes/Synd.	Minimal* Minimal* Minimal*
Peer Pressure	Yes/Synd.	Minimal Minimal Minimal
Pepper Ann	Yes/ABC	Moderate High* High
Popular Mechanics for Kids	No/Synd.	High High Moderate
Recess	Yes/ABC	Minimal Moderate Moderate*
Saved by the Bell	Yes/NBC	High Moderate High
Science Court	Yes/ABC	High High High
Sing Me a Story with Belle	Yes/Synd.	High High* Moderate
Sports Illustrated for Kids	Yes/CBS	Minimal High High
Weird Al Show	Yes/CBS	Moderate Moderate* High
Whatever	No/Local	High High High
Wheel of Fortune 2000	Yes/CBS	Minimal Minimal Minimal
Wild About Animals	Yes/Synd.	Moderate Moderate Moderate
Winnie the Pooh	Yes/ABC	Moderate Moderate Moderate
Young Americans Outdoors	Yes/Synd.	Moderate Moderate Moderate

* Contained violence in three or more scenes.

ENDNOTES

¹ CTW/Nickelodeon's "Noggin" and Fox's child-friendly "Family Channel."

² Worry over the amount and content of children's television viewing was recently reflected in a bipartisan report from The Council on Civil Society. In this report, television broadcasters are called upon to readopt the 8-9pm "family hour," and Americans are urged to turn off their TVs one week a year. Such measures, the report argues, are a means to "restoring the nation's moral compass" (Whitmire, 1998).

³ The membership of The Advisory Council on Excellence in Children's Television is: Daniel Anderson, Ken Burns, Peggy Charren, James Comer, William Damon, Paula Danziger, Jonathan Kozol, Charles Ogeltree, Zena Sutherland, and Marta Tienda. Membership of the Advisory Panel on Educational Television is: Daniel Anderson, Sandra Calvert, William Damon, Eliot Larsen, Valeria Lovelace, Ann McGillicuddy-DeLisi, and John Zimmerman.

⁴ These channels included three PBS stations, seven commercial broadcast stations, eleven basic cable channels, and four premium cable services.

⁵ Programs were selected from the alphabetical listing of all programs using a random number table. That is, if a show was scheduled to air several times in the overall list, a random integer (between one and the total number of times the show was scheduled) determined which broadcast was recorded. At times over the course of the recording phase, the random selection procedure had to be replaced by a convenience selection procedure, due to conflicts in the scheduled videotape recordings.

The exception to the above procedure occurred with programs broadcast on The Cartoon Network, a cable channel. Program listings for this channel are not included in either *TV Guide* or newspaper listings, but can be found on the Internet. Initially, recordings were scheduled from the Internet listings, but the recorded broadcasts did not match the listings. Consequently, the decision was made to record a full day of programs from each day of the week (counting only the period from 6am to 10pm). The complete week's worth of programming for The Cartoon Network was extrapolated from the recordings.

⁶ Inter-coder reliability was assessed for the variables reported in this analysis using Krippendorff's alpha (1980), a rigorous test of reliability that accounts for agreement due to chance, level of measurement and variable range. Though .60 is seen as an acceptable level of reliability, most of the variables in this sample achieved .70 or better.

⁷ The total number of programs in the sample for the 1996/97 season was 1069.

⁸ There are three cable stations that program exclusively for children: the Disney Channel (premium), Nickelodeon (basic) and The Cartoon Network (basic). The majority of programs offered through cable are concentrated in these three venues.

⁹ Since cable-wired homes receive three PBS stations and non-cable homes receive only one, only 72 PBS programs were included in this figure. Commercial networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox) accounted for 54 programs, weblets (WB, UPN) and the sole independent station (WGTW) accounted for another 150.

¹⁰ Ratings air very briefly at the beginning of many programs (sometimes as briefly as 5 seconds) and were sometimes, inadvertently, cut off during the taping. In other instances, ratings were never aired – particularly in the case of the independent commercial broadcaster.

¹¹ This number might be somewhat inflated by the old-style cartoons (e.g., *The Flintstones*, *Speed Racer*, *Droopy Dog*) that air on The Cartoon Network. Coders were instructed to place such cartoons in the 5- to 11-year-old category.

¹² For a comprehensive look at the negative effects of violent television on children, see Wartella et al. (1997); for an overview of the potential effects of sex and sexual innuendo on children's sexual attitudes and practices, see Huston et al. (1998).

¹³ Chi Square = 263.952, df = 4, p = .000

¹⁴ Chi-Square = 284.455, df = 8, p < .001

¹⁵ Two stations – NBC and BET – do not provide content ratings for their programs.

¹⁶ Because the sample was collected after the initiation of the new ratings system, programs containing violence should, in theory, contain the FV rating (in addition to the age-based rating).

¹⁷ Chi-Square = 143.112, df = 4, $p < .001$.

¹⁸ Chi-Square = 102.246, df = 8, $p < .001$.

¹⁹ Chi-Square = 231.162, df = 4, $p < .001$.

²⁰ Chi-Square = 231.022, df = 8, $p < .001$.

²¹ Chi square = 252.923, df = 4, $p < .001$.

²² Chi-square = 334.324, df = 8, $p < .001$.

²³ Gender Diversity: Chi-Square = 38.667, df = 6, $p < .001$; Ethnic Diversity: Chi-Square = 98.906, df = 6, $p < .001$.

²⁴ Chi-Square=152.92, df = 12, $p < .001$.

²⁵ Chi-Square = 509.780, df = 12, $p < .001$.

²⁶ This definition is adapted from Kunkel (1997). Programs were coded as having "a lot" of violence if there were violent acts or threats of such acts in three or more scenes.

²⁷ Programs scoring from zero to 3.9 were "low," 4.0 to 8.9 were "moderate," 9.0 to 12.0 were "high."

²⁸ Chi-Square = 379.395, df = 4, $p < .001$.

²⁹ Chi-Square = 374.088, df = 8, $p < .001$. Note: analysis conducted only on programs containing ratings.

³⁰ Chi-Square = 481.406, df = 8, $p < .001$.

³¹ Broadcasters may air somewhat less than three hours' a week of E/I programming, but they must provide evidence (in a full FCC hearing) that they are serving the child audience in other, equally significant, ways.

³² Not including stations in Guam and Puerto Rico

³³ Note: these figures represent the number of times the stations preempted their shows in total.

For instance, a station that preempted one particular show five times, and a station that preempted five different shows on one occasion would be counted the same.

³⁴ Anova results showed significant differences between groups $F=27.70$, $p < .001$. Religious stations were significantly higher than all others; ABC, CBS, NBC were all significantly higher than Fox; ABC was significantly higher than CBS.

³⁵ Anova results show differences between groups were significant $F=12.44$, $p < .001$. The pacific region was significantly higher than the other three regions.

³⁶ We placed advertisements (one-eighth of a page to one-half of a page) in *Broadcasting and Cable Magazine* and *Electronic Media Magazine*. We also sent letters to producers on our mailing list for publications.

³⁷ The networks were alerted that, under our criteria, it may be more difficult to accomplish in 15 minutes what others have the opportunity to accomplish in a half-hour episode.

³⁸ An assessment of inter-coder reliability was obtained using Holsti's formula. Though this formula is sometimes criticized for not accounting for agreement that would occur by chance, Krippendorff's alpha could not be used due to the small size of the sample and the bivariate nature of many of the variables. Each variable achieved a level of agreement of .80 or greater.

³⁹ *Captain Planet*, for example, is listed as appropriate for preschoolers and elementary school age children. Coders determined that the sophistication of the environmental lesson would be most appropriate for school age children.

⁴⁰ The distribution of primary lessons in the programs offered in the 1997/98 season is strikingly similar to those offered in the previous season. This season's programs are slightly more pro-social in focus (49.5 percent in '98 vs. 41.8 percent in '97) and slightly less likely to convey traditional academic lessons (40.0 percent in '98 vs. 42.9 percent in '97).

⁴¹ The objective and subjective measures were significantly correlated ($r = .68$, $p = .01$).