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Won't You be my Neighbor? A Study of Familial Perceptions of Character Education in PBS Media Programming in the United States?

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Abstract

This study investigates family perceptions of character education and social emotional learning in PBS Kids educational media programming as a variable. This qualitative study used a purposive sample to analyze transcripts from 60 interviews (132 participants) with parents and their children about PBS. Transcripts were used to investigate their perceptions of children's media programming and the impact it has on character development and social emotional well-being. This study indicates that many parents who were exposed to PBS in their youth and are returning to PBS for foundational support when in raising their children. The wholesome messages depicted on PBS shows, like Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, are helping parents teach their children about complex topics, such as how they feel, what they value, and cleanliness in the home. This assistance, in turn, enables parents to have conversations that help their children thrive, and foster a healthy and supportive parental/child relationship.

Keywords: Social Emotional Learning, Character Education, Media, Early Childhood Education

Introduction

Confronting our feelings and giving them appropriate expression always takes strength, not weakness. It takes strength to acknowledge our anger, and sometimes more strength yet to curb the aggressive urges anger may bring and to channel them into nonviolent outlets. It takes strength to face our sadness and to grieve and to let our grief and our anger flow in tears when they need to. It takes strength to talk about our feelings and to reach out for help and comfort when we need it. Mr. Rogers (2003)

Seventeen years after the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) aired the final episode of *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*, many of the lessons and values promoted on the PBS program still resonate with those who grew up watching the show. For 33 years, many children learned how to embrace their feelings, support and develop friendships, and cultivate an understanding of what it meant to be a good neighbor. Mr. Rogers' "kids" have become adults, and many have children of their own, integrating morals and values learned from their favorite neighbor and instilling the social-emotional knowledge into their families.

However, passing down Mr. Rogers' lessons in character is becoming increasingly difficult in a generation inundated with recent technology and media. Many children are accessing varied forms of media at a younger and younger age. They have the potential to be exposed to a variety of different messages through the TV shows and videos they view, websites they visit, and advertisements on each of these mediums. However, PBS continues to bring what many consider is quality content. According to the mission statement of PBS, their organization "serves the American public with programming and services of the highest quality, using media to educate, inspire, entertain and express a diversity of perspectives. PBS empowers individuals to achieve their potential and strengthen the social, democratic, and cultural health of the U.S." ("Mission", 2018).

Educational programming has continued with the social and emotional learning piece that Mr. Rogers used to provide by creating *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*. Many parents are returning to their roots and are introducing their children to the "Land of Make-Believe" via Daniel Tiger. PBS continues to offer this type of safe programming for children that promotes character education and other life lessons for kids to engage with early on in their development.

To keep up with a modern and changing technological world, PBS delivers content via television broadcasts and online media outlets. Our research aims to investigate themes presented in parents and children's reaction to PBS Kids content. As researchers, we would like to know more about the experiences of PBS viewers, and how their shows are allowing students to understand the foundations of character education. Thus, our research strives to answer the question: How do parents and their children perceive modern forms of character education delivered by through multiple mediums?

Purpose Statement

In this study, a further exploration of PBS Kids Programing will be analyzed to describe parents' and children's experiences in using modern mediums to learn and understand character education. Character Education and Social Emotional Learning will be defined and explained about its contribution within early childhood education and development. Literature will be used to discuss ways in which parents may be able to integrate positive interventions through the coping mechanisms and skills offered through PBS Kids. To be clear, there are other potential coping tools that could be utilized, but for this research study, Social Emotional Learning and character education will be further investigated as possible tools to be used in media to benefit how families integrate health and wellness into their homes.

Significance

The current study is significant for several reasons. In examining the literature, we found that there is a significant amount of information discussing social emotional learning, character education, media, media use, and PBS, but there is not a lot of information intertwining the topics together. In addition, this study examines social emotional learning into the content of

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PBS Kids and how viewers respond, which has been typically contained within PBS. Thus, understanding how parents and their children interact with modern forms of character education would provide a deeper understanding in how to apply PBS Kids content into child development.

Background of the Problem

The future of our democracy is dependent upon the health and wellness of all individuals in our society, from old to young (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Functioning together as one society allows us to recognize all people. Additionally, it informs society in how its members should optimally function to their highest degree. For this reason, there is a high importance on preparing our children to be the future. As Garvey (2017) notes, "When we give children today what they need to learn, develop, and thrive, they give back to society in the future through a lifetime of productive citizenship." The high prevalence of mental health problems including depression, anxiety, and stress, shows a need for a psychological intervention (Baer, 2003). Although many psychological interventions may have originated within the medical community for treatment of clinical populations, research has since expanded into exploring the benefits outside of the medical community, including early childhood education (Fischer, 2011).

There is a high importance of positive intervention tools in early education as cognitive, social, and emotional skills are developed from ages 0-6 (Remer, Croteau-Chonka, Dean, D'Arpino, Dirks, Whiley, & Deoni, 2017; Shonkoff, 2017). Stability within caregiving and positive external stimuli allow the brain to operate and healthily grow building a firm foundation. However, if negative stimuli are introduced, brain development is hindered (Remer, Croteau-Chonka, Dean, D'Arpino, Dirks, Whiley, & Deoni, 2017). Stimulus-dependent alteration of the brain can be both positive and negative, dependent upon what the stimulus is within the child's environment (Draganski, Gaser, Busch, Schuierer, Bogdahn, & May, 2004).

Two positive interventions beneficial to the cognitive, social, and emotional skills include Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and character education. SEL is an effective intervention tool for the modern learner and facilitates a more mindful citizen by focusing on the social and emotional development of a child to facilitate empathy and care amongst students (Elias, 2004). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning' (CASEL), "What is SEL?" – "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

Character education has also served as another fruitful intervention tool. In schools, character education encompasses many things but generally serves to teach the "whole child" (What is Character Education?, n.d.). As a curriculum piece, the teaching of character education can help foster sound moral and ethical behavior within students and even increase academic achievement. While the instructional methods vary, the notion of having students become

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responsible members of their communities is generally accepted in the school setting (Russell & Waters, 2010a; Russell, et al, 2018; Ungvarsky, 2016) Understanding the best methods for teaching and the place character education holds in the K-12 setting is still a topic of debate within the field.

With these constructs in mind, it is hypothesized when both intervention tools are integrated into modern mediums such as television and online platforms, there may be positive outcomes in social, emotional, and cognitive behavior for parents and children.

Problem Statement

Unfortunately, today's children are experiencing unprecedented levels of mental disorders, with national studies suggesting that slightly more than one in four to five adolescents in the general population experience disorders that result in severe impairment (Cohen, 1992; Lewinsohn,1993; Merikangas, 2010). Although mental disorders have been observed in all ages, disorder types tend to vary on what the typical age for onset is: 6 years old for anxiety disorders, 11 years old for behavior disorders, by age 13 for mood disorders, and 15 years old for substance use disorders (Merikangas, 2010). According to research, 15% to 22% of youth in the nation experience social, emotional, and mental health problems that require treatment (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, K.W., 2009). "Anxiety disorders were the most common condition (31.9%), followed by behavior disorders (19.1%), mood disorders (14.3%), and substance use disorders (11.4%), with approximately 40% of participants with one class of disorder also meeting criteria for another class of lifetime disorder. The overall prevalence of disorders with severe impairment and/or distress was 22.2% (11.2% with mood disorders, 8.3% with anxiety disorders, and 9.6% behavior disorders" (Merikangas, 2010).

More and more research is showing the onset of mental illness and disorders is beginning younger and into the early stages of a child's development (Carter, Briggs-Gowan, & Davis, 2004; Middlemiss, Puzzo, Smaragdi, Gonzalez, Martin-Key, & Fairchild, 2016; van Bokhoven, Matthys, van Goozen, & van Engeland, 2005) Research has indicated brain development during early childhood is crucial, and is more sensitive to external stimulations (Holt & Mikati, 2011), thus nurturing social-emotional and cognitive experiences during the first 3 years of life is an important factor in the development of children's mental health. (ZERO TO THREE, 2016).

Literature Review

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and Emotional Learning is a significant part of human development, but even more significant during early childhood as the foundation of social and emotional understanding is established at an early age. Children's social and emotional development can be understood by breaking Social Emotional Learning into two definitions- "children's ability to interact with others and their capacity for self-regulation" and/or "perceptions of themselves, their abilities to understand the feelings of other people, and their ability to interpret and express their own

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feelings" (Rasmussen, Shafer, Colwell, White, Punyanunt-Carter, Densley, & Wright, 2016). By examining both definitions, we can infer the term SEL refers to a combination of both social and emotional experiences by the child and is essential to both the development of their physical and mental health (Denham & Brown, 2010; Joseph, Allison, Rebecca, Roger, & Kriston, 2011). Research has shown developing social and emotional skills is a predictor of future success within a number of realms; including education, career, and interpersonal relationships (Rasmussen, 2016).

SEL was developed in the 1990s and is constructed of several different components including: self-awareness, self-management, social understanding, building relationship skills, and decision-making (Brensilver, 2016; Tantillo, 2016). Within SEL, the value of learning is encouraged but not without recognizing the importance of social-emotional skills for academic success. Social and emotional understanding provides the foundation for "the capacity to love, work, and be an active community member" (Cohen, 2006). SEL can facilitate a child's deeper understanding of both their minds and their hearts and provide further understanding in how to be more aware of themselves and others (Cohen, 2006). Yet for children to have access to both the mind and the heart, John Dewey suggests there needs to be a change in education to achieve the true democratic standard that were to be taught to students, stating, "were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked" (Dewey, 1966).

Social-Emotional Learning is an effective intervention tool for the modern learner, and facilitates a more mindful citizen (Elias, 2004). Advocates for the implementation of mindfulness and SEL strategies into the classroom include Tim Ryan, United States Congressman, and Tim Shriver, Board Chair of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Each advocate for mindfulness and SEL by suggesting the implementation of these mindful strategies in American classrooms. Ryan and Shriver explain the United States' "commitment to citizenship and character are as important as our commitment to competition and growth. For too long, schools have been told to separate the head from the heart--to separate the social and emotional development of children from their cognitive learning ("Congressman Tim Ryan Introduces the Academic, Social and Emotional Learning Act"). Instead, Ryan argues that the whole child needs to be taught to improve students' overall learning ability. The whole child can be addressed through many different methods, which may or may not be entirely addressed in the following research.

Character Education

"Character education is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society." - U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2004

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Character education has a long and storied history in the United States. It has served as a rudder of sorts in directing how students should be educated and as to the real purpose of public schooling in America (Waters & Russell, 2014; Ungvarsky, 2016, Kenna & Russell, 2015, 2018). During the Colonial times, while it was more religious, or faith based, the emphasis on character or moral education was clearly a goal of early educators (Waters & Russell, 2012; McClellan, 1999). A focus on character education can be traced throughout the decades in American schools, but this emphasis diminished in in the late 1950's due to a variety of factors. While not comprehensive, some factors included the push for individual rights, classroom emphasis on the controversial values clarification approach in schools, and an overall abandonment of formal character education curriculum (McClellan, 1999; Mulkey, 1997; Ungvarsky, 2016; Watz, 2011). Following this period of abandonment, character education is once again being incorporated as an intervention in an attempt to address many of the issues facing our nation and its future citizens (U.S.Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2004).

Public schools have attempted to use character education to influence not just the school, but the greater community and society students come from. Outside the classroom, organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), 4-H, and many religious groups have set out to develop young people and focused on the societal sphere (Watz, 2011; What is 4.H?, n.d.). While these organizations operate outside the realm of public education, it is important to note their influence in developing young people. Since the turn of the century, character development has found a place in the digital world, helping kids learn and develop these skills. Television programs from Mr. Rogers to Sesame Street the Magic School Bus have helped guide kids by teaching lessons related to charter education.

Media and Learning

In the 21st century, media is no longer mere entertainment (Alexander, 2013). Instead, media is all-encompassing in the lives of Americans, allowing for a shared connection to information with individuals near and far (Graber, 2002). Over the past century, media has drastically changed. From radios, televisions, to computers- Americans have experienced an evolutionary advancement in how they can access information.

Television, became a predominant resource for children's television programming in the early days of television history, but many did not see an issue or a need for educational content until the 1960s (Kunkel, 1991). It would not be until the 1990's that educational children's television programs would see a resurgence due to the Children's Television Act (CTA). In this act, the FCC defined educational programming as programming that "furthers the positive development of the child in any respect, including the child's cognitive/intellectual or social–emotional needs" (Federal Communications Commission, 1991). Since the early 90s, effects of television programs with academic and prosocial messages have been studied continually with positive impacts ranging from academically prepared children to increased rates of altruism (Calvert, 2003).

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Yet the changing societal demographics and advances in technology have led to the rise in popularity of a new medium- social media. Within the 21st century, social media has shifted the way people receive and share information (Anderson and Caumont 2014; Qualman 2009). Social media is less than twenty years old. Yet in its infancy, the explosion in popularity and technological advancement has grown significantly with each passing year. While originating in the late 1990s, social media did not see significant growth until the early 2000s (Hale, 2015). The availability of the internet created an upsurge in new social media sites, but the desire to communicate with like-minded individuals created the drive to produce new platforms (Hale, 2015).

With many new platforms being developed by and for millennials, it is understandable why so many social media users are young adults. A statistic from 2010 showing three-quarters of adult Internet users under age 25 have a profile on a social networking site (Correa, 2010; Lenhart, 2010); and since 2010, there has been increase. In 2016, Pew Research Center reported 87% of those surveyed in the 18-29 age demographic used Facebook as compared to only 56% of those in the 65+ age demographic (2014). In comparison to Facebook, the 2014 Pew report of Twitter showed 37% of those surveyed in the 18-29 age demographic using the network as compared to 10% of those in the 65+ age demographic (Duggan 2015). Younger generations still hold the largest percentage of social media use and is the dominant market. With the market of millennials becoming older and many now having children, media platforms have adopted to include an aging millennial generation.

Media geared towards children has come a long way since the days of television. Many networks and other companies now have apps or other social media sites that allow 24/7 access to their programs and messages. The most common activity among children and adolescents is using social media sites (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011), but parents should be aware that not all social media sites are safe for children, as they can be exposed to material to mature for young viewers. According to Austin et al. (1999) content children view through media can have an impact on the messages a child pays attention to and how the child perceives the message being sent. Additionally, current literature shows many parents do not monitor what messages their children come across while using several types of media (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Research suggests that media is a distraction and can pull families apart (Turkle, 2011). However, the American Academy of Pediatrics has changed its policy recommendations from limiting or restricting screen media for young children (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999) to now encouraging parents to co-use media with their children and adolescents (2013). By co-using media, parents can ensure that the children are understanding the message being sent.

With the easy accessibility of media in today's world, many researchers have begun to question how it can be used for educational and teaching purposes (Russell & Waters, 2010b, 2013, 2014; Kimmerle et al., 2013; Yigit & Tarman, 2013). Beauchamp and Hillier (2014) report that 83% of parents believe technology is important to their child's success. However, many parents

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reasoning for giving kids technology is to either 'entertain' or keep their children calm (Wooldridge, 2016). Yet, as PBS Kids demonstrates, there is a way to merge technology and learning together into one happy medium, demonstrating the priority of including a holistic perspective of media that imbeds virtue awareness into all forms of teaching and curriculum (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001).

PBS and Media

Today's media platforms are diverse in both content and technology including: television, websites, mobile applications, and other smart devices (Pasnik, Llorente, Education Development Center, & SRI, 2012). The diversity of platforms allows further access to media and learning content, as more and more families are spending a significant amount of time engaging with media and technology at home (Pasnik, et al, 2015; Rideout, et al, 2003). PBS is one such broadcasting network that is utilizing modern technology to stream to a modern generation.

Integrating varied platforms of media has allowed PBS Kids to reach over 8.2 million monthly viewers. In 2015, 77% of children 2–8 watched PBS Kids in the United States (Roberts, 2016). Within this 77% are diverse amounts of viewers, as PBS Kids' desires to deliver content to all to incorporate a strategy of universal access to learning content, so that any family may use media to support their child's learning. In total, PBS reaches close to 99% of American households with free, high-quality programing. Content shown on television, is also available online, with extensions for learning available (Johnson, et al, 2016). Content and learning extensions has been made possible via the "Ready To Learn" Initiative (Ernestosilva; 2018; Llorente, et al, 2015). According the Center for Public Broadcasting, the U.S. Department of Education's Ready To Learn Television grant "has funded the development of educational television and digital media targeted at preschool and early elementary school children and their families, especially those who live in low-income communities, for the past two decades. Under this federal grant, Center for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS KIDS work with producers, researchers, local public media stations, and other partners to develop, distribute and evaluate PBS KIDS multiplatform content – including television programs, video, interactive games, mobile apps and hands-on activities – to engage children, families, and educators in learning experiences at home, in preschool, and in out-of-school settings" (Ernestosilva; 2018). The "Ready To Learn" Initiative emphasizes the role parents and caregivers have in the overall development of their child. PBS allows for easier access to quality programing by providing for a positive home learning experience for all families (Cohen, Hadley, & Marcial, 2016; Llorente, Pasnik, Moorthy, Hupert, Rosenfeld, Gerard, & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, 2015).

Outside of the technological benefit PBS has provided, literature has been reviewed to understand the effects PBS has had on character education. It is important to note past research on PBS's contributions as a whole are limited. However, much research has been conducted on programs featured on the network itself. Sesame Street is one specific program that has had much research conducted. With Sesame Street being one of the longest-running programs on American television (Anderson, 1998), there has been ample opportunity for study. A meta-analysis of the effects of Sesame Street, have synthesized the literature on the

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impact Sesame Street has on content knowledge, culture, and social reasoning and attitudes. According to Mares and Pan (2013),

"Watching Sesame Street was associated with learning about letters, numbers, shapes, and sizes — the elements of basic literacy and numeracy that remain fraught for millions of children globally. It was also associated with learning about science, the environment, one's culture, and health and safety-related practices such as washing one's hands or wearing a bike helmet. Finally, it was also associated with more prosocial reasoning about social interactions and more positive attitudes toward various out-groups, including those that were associated with long-standing hostilities or stereotyping."

Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street, has continued since the 1960s to provide landmark television program across the globe to facilitate foundational development for young children (Cole, Lee, Bucuvalas, & Sırali, 2018; Truglio, Stefano, & Sanders, 2014). Other popular programming on PBS such as Mr. Roger's Neighborhood and Daniel Tiger's Neigbhorhood did not return the same amount of peer-reviewed research as Sesame Street. However, the discussion is growing on the effects shows like Daniel Tiger and Mr. Rogers had on social and emotional learning, and our research desires to add to the literature (Dotson, Rasmussen, Shafer, Colwell, Densley, Brewer, Martinez, 2017; Rasmussen et. al, 2016).

Background Conclusion

With these constructs in mind, we believe the combination of these varied elements provides a fertile field to research. In the following sections we will detail our methods, findings, and implications of this study.

Methods

This qualitative study is designed to investigate the perceptions parents and children have regarding Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) kids content. The methods and procedures described in the section were designed to parallel the qualitative research methods outlined in Patton's (2002) Qualitative Research and Evaluation to fully analyze a purposive sample of participants. The researchers analyzed the transcripts from 60 interviews (132 participants) with parents/children about PBS. In addition to the interviews of parents and children, analysis of Mr. Rogers Neighborhood and Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood transcripts will be used to analyze themes embedded in the show that are reflective of the parent and children interviews. For this study, the interview data analyzed was originally collected in the southeastern section of the United States, at a local event called "Be My Neighbor Day" in the Spring of 2018. The total number of participants was 132 (n=132). This included male and female festival participants, ages 3-70. Interview transcriptions were analyzed and coded to allow for themes of parent perceptions to emerge (Patton, 2002). Additionally, the local PBS affiliate provided transcripts from Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, allowing for a further examination of PBS content

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to explore the research question: How do parents and their children interact with modern forms of character education mediums?

To address this question, we analyzed what participants reported about their perspective of PBS Kids content, about their experiences with their children and the shows, and about the impact the shows have on their lives. We want to know how PBS programing and other similar programing can impact participants' attitudes, understanding, and accessibility to modern mediums of character education. This approach allows us to find out if and how viewers of PBS Kids reflect on their learning experience and viewership, if they are aware of any benefits and able to name them, how they explain the impact on their household.

Transcription and Data Analysis

In total 60 interviews were conducted, with 132 participants. The initial analysis of the interview transcripts were analyzed and the following trends emerged:

•Quality Programing- Televisions shows have been analyzed from varied points on what makes them "quality". From one perspective, they can be analyzed based of the technical aspects. The second perspective- is based off the viewer's opinion. For this paper we will be using the objective definition of the quality programming- by examining the content and ethics of the programming (Alberto, Cristina, & Alfonso, 2015)

•Values/Morals- Many philosophers have concluded morals encompass three human traits- reason, passion, and character. According to Noddings (2017), "virtues are described as those attributes of character that lead individuals to respond in ways that are labeled "good" or "bad" (pg. 5). For this study, we will be using values and morals interchangeably.

•Personal Hygiene- Hygiene include cleanliness and any habit or practice that humans use to lessen reduce sickness and disease (Thivierge, 2014). For the following coding, hygiene will be used to describe practices learned during childhood such as brushing teeth, going to the bathroom, and washing hands.

•Life Lessons - For our research life lessons will be coded as the values learned by using scenarios and stories for children to come to a fuller understanding on ethics (Cajete, Eder, & Holyan, 2010).

Upon analysis of the interviews, further information was needed to fully understand the themes presented in the interviews. Thus, episodes from Mr. Roger's Neighborhood and Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood were transcribed to cross-reference themes from the interviews and the themes present within PBS Kids shows. For the purposes of this study, one episode from each television show was chosen and transcribed (a total of 2 episodes). A brief synopsis of the content within Mr. Roger's Neighborhood and Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood is included below. Two episodes were chosen at random - Episode 1614 of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, and Episode 1 of Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood.

The two episodes were transcribed verbatim by one of the researchers. A second transcriber, a graduate student, checked the transcripts for accuracy. Coding the transcripts were coded for the same themes that were evident in the interviews: quality programming, values/morals, personal hygiene, and life lessons.

Episode 1614 of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood includes several topics. Ranging from a discussion of hygiene on how to use the bathroom and the importance of understanding the toilet is helpful not harmful. In addition, Mr. Rogers visits the music shop, and discusses with an employee how parents often think of their children while at work. Mr. Rogers continues to visit the music shop and listen to Natasha, a famous and talented oboist who plays for Mr. Rogers. In the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, all the events that occurred in the neighborhood also occurred in the neighborhood of make believe to solidify the themes of the episode- hygiene, and the importance of discussing feelings with someone you love.

In Episode 1 of Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, it is Daniel Tiger's birthday and he is excited for his party. Daniel, his mom, and his friends go pick out a cake at the bakery, and they bring it home just in time for the party. Unfortunately, Daniel's cake has been smashed inside its box. Yet the party continues and all sing together a song about finding something positive in disappointing situations. Although the content of the episodes varied greatly, each has similar content in discussing positive themes and morals for early childhood education.

This informed the examination of various episodes of the PBS programs of Mr. Rogers Neighborhood and Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood. The relationship of the themes that emerged in the interviews and the themes portrayed by the episodes surfaced. In the following sections, we will discuss the emergent topics.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of parents and children regarding character education delivered through modern mediums. While conducting this study, several limitations presented themselves. First, the perceptions are self-reported, and the sample was limited to those who attended the "Be My Neighbor" event. The event itself was hosted by a PBS affiliate and attendees were most likely consumers of the content being analyzed prior to the start of the study. As such, their views and attitudes toward the shows may contain prior positive bias toward the content being delivered.

Understanding this does not diminish the findings but using an experimental design in the future may provide the relational impact of the shows. As we continue to investigate how PBS and related programming is implementing character education, we anticipate having to interview and observe more parents and children in a later study. Having a more varied sample, would facilitate a deeper understanding of the integration of character education into modern mediums.

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Findings

Throughout our research, we have attempted to understand how parents and their children perceive modern forms of character education delivered through multiple mediums. Several themes emerged upon data analysis indicating a parental preference in media programing. Through interviews and script analysis, parents appear to prefer shows on television or online imbedded with quality programming, values/morals and personal hygiene. The medium preferred is based on choice and accessibility of content, dependent if the family prefers to stream PBS content online or watch on cable television (Graham, 2018).

As researchers we were not focused on the medium of choice as much as the preference in content. Instead, content choice depicted a trend rooted in character education themes. Parents voiced the desire to show their children content that they could learn social and emotional lessons from, which can be seen in Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood and Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. The findings described below suggest of programming choice, and the incentive of showing children content that benefits the whole child. The predominant themes discussed by guardians included quality programming, values/morals, and personal hygiene.

Quality Programing

Many parents at Be My Neighbor Day expressed their love for the programming they find on PBS, especially Daniel Tiger. One parent said, "PBS is trustworthy", since other kid shows "aren't like they used to be." (1:47:53) Another parent adds, "I'm a huge PBS fan because it's something I know I can let him watch without the bad influences and all this screaming and yelling like other shows on television anymore but something that is educational we have fun for him to actually watch and pay attention to." These kinds of responses were common throughout the interviews. With many parents having grown up watching PBS themselves, they knew it was a trusted source to introduce to their own children.

Parents indicated that they are happy with the fact that the shows teach their children how to deal with their emotions. For example, in the Daniel Tiger episode Daniel Tiger gets disappointed because his cake gets ruined. His mother sings to him, "when something seems bad, turn it around, and find something good", teaching Daniel to control his negative feelings. This is a lesson many parents at Be My Neighbor Day reflected on. In one interview the parent states "She is special needs, it helps a lot, it teaches her how to take turns and take a deep breath when she's mad." (51:20). A second parent said, "so much, the songs about you know getting over things when you're frustrated, and you know being kind and sharing they don't forget that, it goes a long way."

Values/Morals

Values and morals were discussed throughout the interview by multiple parents. Sharing was another important lesson that parents felt their children learned through the shows on PBS, including Daniel Tiger. In one interview, a parent shared "I like that it teaches her about sharing and stuff, because sometimes at home she doesn't share. But because when she watches it, it

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teaches her how to share and about emotions." (53:56) In the Daniel Tiger episode, Daniel invites his friends along to go pick up his birthday cake and then shares the cake with his friends at the end of the episode. Sharing can help young children build friendships with those they encounter.

Similarly, patience and dealing with emotions in positive ways another theme that emerged within this vein. One parent stated, "My favorite part about Daniel Tiger is just the good lessons about sharing and patience and being able to teach you how to interact with other children." (56:15). Another stated that there was "So much - the songs about you know getting over things when you're frustrated, and you know being kind and sharing they don't forget that, it goes a long way." (1:20:30). Parents appeared to feel that the shows supported their beliefs and helped their children learn the lessons they wanted them to learn.

Personal Hygiene

Both parents and children portrayed support for the programming ability to teach children about personal hygiene. One theme that emerged was the parents' views of how the programming impacted their ability to support the growth of their children. Multiple participants displayed not only enthusiasm, but graciousness for the programs ability to teach their children. Potty training appeared to be an influential theme for viewers of Daniel Tiger and Mr. Rogers, and the delivery of this content was through various mediums, including the television broadcast, YouTube streaming, and the Amazon app.

One mother noted her daughter "started watching Daniel Tiger and she absolutely loves it! The songs are… I can't even explain how much they've come in handy to help with the little situations. It is actually how we potty-trained her." (1:08:57) Following this comment the daughter proceeds to sing the potty-training song from the Daniel Tiger show. This is a value that parents even remembered from episodes of Mr. Rogers. Another parent stated, "We are learning potty training and she loves Daniel the Tiger Amazon app with potty training," (53:56) inferring a connecting bridge between the mediums.

In the episode "Parents go to Work," Mr. Rogers states the following: "Something else children learn as they grow, is how to Urinate and make Bowel Movements--B.M.s--in the toilet, instead of their diapers." PBS has attempted to address these issues and it is evident from the interviews that parents/children are receptive to the programming.

Discussion

"All life events are formative. All contribute to what we become, year by year, as we go on growing. As my friend the poet Kenneth Koch once said, "You aren't just the age you are. You are all the ages you have ever been!"
(Rogers, 2003)

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Media use, whether through the television, computer, tablet or smartphone, is a part of everyday life where today's children are exposed to media daily. Digital technology has contributed to changes in childhood development, with youth being "the most connected age group" (The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World, 2017). In this new era of digital technology, media has contributed to parental behaviors and choice in media for their children (Merz, et al, 2015; Rasmussen et al, 2016; Strasburger, et al, 2014). Past research has indicated a relationship between parenting, media, and children's social emotional learning with television show content acting as a mediator between the parents and children (Rasmussen et al., 2016). With this knowledge, we desired to answer the question: how do parents and their children perceive modern forms of character education delivered by through multiple mediums?

Several themes emerged in our data analysis exhibiting a parental preference in media programing. The interviews conducted at "Be My Neighbor Day" depict the desire for parents/caregivers to raise their children on wholesome programs and shows that include more than a plot or storyline. Building off Rasmussen's (2016) information from prior research conducted on Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, it is understandable why parents desire more quality content if televisions shows are acting as a mediator for children's social emotional development. For example, messages depicted in PBS shows are helping parents teach their children about complex topics, such as how they emotional intelligence, what they value, and a sense of morals. This assistance, in turn, enables parents to have foundation building conversations with their children that help them thrive. Presenting character-based lessons through various media helps to foster a healthy and supportive parental/child relationship. According to the data, the content from PBS is valued because of its quality programming, their focus on values/morals, and the teaching of personal hygiene. Parents believe their children are growing and learning when watching and interacting with the PBS programming in ways unavailable to them through other media outlets. Further, the children's ability to articulate the lessons learned on the shows and messages discussed by the characters provides anecdotal evidences of the programming positive influence.

The research detailed above shows the benefits of each theme independently and explains the desire to use values/morals, personal hygiene, and life lessons in a children's programing. According to the data, parents appreciated using PBS as a developmental support in raising their children, but also enjoyed the familiarity of the programming from their own childhood. According to the interview transcripts, roughly 75% of 132 interviewed participants reported watching Mr. Rogers as a child. The participants voiced their excitement in seeing something similar to a childhood icon with the airing of Daniel Tiger. Further, the parents had a nostalgically induced sense of trust with the new programming as it harkened back to the same themes and characteristics they learned from as children. This sense of trust allowed the parents to quickly embrace the programing to voice what they like about PBS. For PBS, it provides insights into what parents like to see in the programming and the content their children are exposed too.

Going forward, more research is needed to fully understand the implications of these foundational themes of character and quality programing. Within future research, there is

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opportunity for advanced study within the demographics of viewers, and understanding how the emerging themes apparent in this study may change or shift dependent on demographic variables. Yet one thing is certain, parents and children alike are looking to visit their favorite neighbor again. Lessons presented on PBS are valuable for parents and children alike, as it fosters important content for character and moral education- something that is easily available and accessible to all people. Parents and children desire quality programing that promotes values and lessons for all.

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