

A DECONSTRUCTION AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONSUMPTION
OF TRADITIONAL ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA BY ELEMENTARY-AGED
CHILDREN DIAGNOSED WITH EMOTIONAL DISORDERS
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This qualitative study examined whether a connection exists between children with emotional disorders consumption of traditional entertainment media and their subsequent negative/anti-social classroom behavior. Research participants included six first-grade children diagnosed with an emotional disorder and their teacher. They were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. The students were observed in the natural setting of their classroom for a total of twenty-four hours, over a four-day period. Transcripts and classroom observations were analyzed, looking for connections between behavior and consumption of traditional entertainment media. Findings from this study concluded that these students used traditional entertainment media as a method of temporally escaping from the environment of their respective households.

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Growing up watching Saturday morning cartoons and afternoon Creature Features was a staple of my childhood. I have always enjoyed the adventure and fantasy that television brought. Not limiting myself to just the one-eyed monster, I grew up reading fantasy, both fiction and comic books. I am glad that I have been able to turn that boyhood journey into a life's pursuit. Television to me is more than the totality of the violence portrayed, it is the sum of fantasy, adventure, and looking to see what is just over that next range.

My ability to have the freedom to pursue my fascination of entertainment media and technology would never have been possible, if not for my wonderful family, especially my parents Deirdre and Johnny Lowdermilk who have always been there for me, even when I was too self-absorbed to realize. More thanks than I could ever express goes to my maternal grandparents Ralph and Bobie Harris who have been both teachers and life anchors, even in my darkest hours. I would also thank my mother's sister, Felicia Kenrick, my aunt who has always been there to remind me that an ego is best, if kept in check.

My time in the doc program has not been without tragedy - I lost my younger brother in a car wreck Sunday, August 24, 2003. At the age of 21, Jeffrey Lee Lowdermilk was taken from our family. While Jeff and I did not always see eye-to-eye, as would

be expected of brothers, he was and is my best friend, an astute student of others, and the smarter of us. Jeff, you are sorely missed. And a special thanks to his best friend and my friend Jaymz Alonzo.

Finally, I want to thank my wife Carey Ann (McKee) Lowdermilk - (wondering when I was going to get around to you?). There is not more that I can say about her, except she means the world to me. She has supported me in not only every way conceivable, but every way that helped me make it through the my doc program. Saturday, April 3, 2004 was the happiest day of my life. This is when Carey "allowed" a "Buffy watching, comic book reading, couch potato" to become her husband. Honey, I love you!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Calvin, of *Calvin and Hobbes* (Watterson, 1994), escapes the plight of his Mom and Dad and his teacher by escaping into a vivid fantasy world of aliens, monsters, and transmorgaphying machines. When reality becomes overwhelming, Calvin jumps into his cardboard box, better known as the "Great and Wonderful Transmorgaphying Machine," and becomes a speckle of dust that can float around, instead of dealing with his Mom's insistence that he clean his room.

Fantasy and internal dialogue can be part of everyone's experience. But, not all fantasies are adaptive or self-enhancing. Consider *Beavis and Butthead* (Judge, 1996), while this show provided many people with an entertaining/humorous -- albeit skewed -- glance at the world of two teenagers, how would someone (e.g., a teacher) outside the show's constructed reality describe their behavior? And what of the adult cartoon *South Park* (Parker & Stone, 1999)?

The children of *South Park* (Parker & Stone, 1999) provide a politically driven, child's view of American society and culture; that is, if the child's view was first filtered through a very "unique" prism. *South Park* may seem astute to the adult viewer, but imagine having these children in class. These

television programs illustrate examples of children that might be diagnosed with an emotional disorder.

While there has been extensive research into emotional disorders (e.g., Griffin, 1993; Hay, 1992; Kauffman, 1993), one area that deserves more attention is the qualitative analysis and deconstruction of the believed influence of media (e.g., television) on the behavior of children with a diagnosis of an emotional disorder (Gauntlett, 2004; Jones, 2002).

Violence and antisocial behavior has been a subject in literature and the arts since the beginning of human civilization. In part, this may simply reflect the unfortunate realities of civilization. But, it is also likely that people's fascination with violence satisfies some basic human needs. The adrenalin rush, the satisfaction of imagination, fantasy, and vicarious adventure, probably explain why millions of nonviolent people enjoy violent entertainment (Bettelheim, 1975; Jones, 2002).

Gauntlett (2004) writes that despite many decades of research, the connection between traditional entertainment media consumption by children and children's negative behavior has remained persistently elusive. Somewhere between 200 and 300 laboratory experiments and correlational studies have been done on media effects and the results have been dubious and inconsistent (Gadow, Grayson, & Sprafkin, 1987; Gadow &

Sprafkin, 1989; Gauntlett, 1997). One experiment found aggressive and antisocial behavior, in children, after they viewed *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* (Jones, 2002).

According to Fischhoff (1999) and Goldstein (2001), for the minority of quantitative experiments that have yielded a correlation between antisocial behavior and media consumption by children, the explanation probably has more to do with the general arousal effect of violent entertainment than with viewers' actual imitation of violent acts. The following are some findings surrounding television viewing and children (Bryant, 2000):

1. American children spend the equivalent of a full-time work week using media.
2. Many parents do not appear to exercise much oversight of their children's media use.
3. African American and Hispanic children spend significantly more time using television than Caucasian children.
4. Although boys and girls spend approximately the same amount of time each day using media, girls listen to more music, and boys watch more television.
5. Children in single-parent homes watch more television than do those in two-parent homes.
6. Both claims for antisocial effects and claims for beneficial effects from using television abound (p. xii).

Laboratory-based experiments do not measure real aggression (Gauntlett, 1997) instead these studies measure other behaviors that the researchers consider proxies (e.g., hitting Bobo dolls) for real aggression (Freedman, 2002). Fischhoff (1999) indicates that the evidence for the connection between media consumption and antisocial behavior is very controvertible. Fischhoff believes, as does other researchers (e.g., Gadow et al., 1987; Goldstein, 2001; Gauntlett, 2004; Jones, 2002), that the use of a quantitative research design when examining the effects of media on children, is flawed, and that it is more appropriate to use qualitative methodologies, especially when examining something as nebulous as motivation and intent.

I ascribe to the use of qualitative methodologies to explore whether a connection between consuming traditional entertainment media is linked to the behaviors of children with a diagnoses of emotional disorders. The intention of this study is to serve as a model for future special education qualitative research that examines traditional media effects in relation to children with emotional disorders.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined whether it is contraindicated that children diagnosed with an emotional disorder should view traditional entertainment media. This study used qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, observations) to critically examine

and deconstruct the *prima fascia* stance of media effect theories as they apply to children's consumption of traditional entertainment media.

Significance

Information derived from this study may prove useful to parents when deciding what types, if any, of traditional entertainment media they should allow their children to consume. Also, this study may prove beneficial to (a) researchers, (b) policymakers, (c) media advocates, and (d) other professionals within the education and/or entertainment industry that are concerned about the possible connection between the behavior of children with emotional disorders and their television viewing.

Assumptions

1. The student participants were regular viewers of traditional entertainment media.
2. The participants were aware of and appreciative of current popular culture in the United States.
3. The participants were cognitively able to participate in this research study.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to students, within the special education environment and educators involved in teaching these exceptional students, at an elementary campus of an East Texas school district.

2. Selected students were receiving services within a special education environment and had been previously diagnosed with an emotional disorder.
3. Educator participant was the teacher of the selected students.
4. Participants were limited to volunteers.
5. The study did not involve showing traditional entertainment media to the participants; instead, it involved the participant's viewing history.

Delimitations

1. I gathered all pertinent information concerning participants at an elementary campus in an East Texas school district.
2. I confirmed - by way of the elementary campus administrator - that selected students had been identified as having an emotional disorder.
3. I provided questionnaires to student participants at the beginning to ascertain the knowledge, level, and interest of popular culture.
4. Individuals volunteered because (a) of their high interest in the subject matter and (b) volunteers were given a pizza party at the end of this study, that was approved by parents and school officials.

Definition Terms

While access to research should not be limited because of the overuse of technical and profession specific language, it is sometimes necessary to use technical language of differing fields. For this reason, the following terms are defined for the edifice of the reader.

1. Emotional disorder: A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely effects a child's academic performance:
 - a. an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
 - b. an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
 - c. inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
 - d. a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
 - e. a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems
 - f. includes schizophrenia, but does not apply to children that are socially maladjusted, unless, it is determined that they have an emotional disorder (IDEA Practices, 2004).

2. Exceptional children: An inclusive term that refers to any child falling outside of the normal distribution of children/youth. Exceptional children include children falling into both tails of the Bell Curve (e.g., children that are gifted and talented, children that have mental retardation) (Heward, 1996).
3. Ideological codes: A primary process of reality construction and maintenance, whereby positions of inequality, dominance, and subservience are produced and reproduced in society and at the same time appear natural (Chandler, 2001).
4. Media: The physical elements within the environment that communicate messages (Sherman, 2002).
5. Popular culture: A refinement dictated by outside forces. It is inclusive in the sense that it appeals to the mass market. It involves the fundamental needs of human beings and has no set position; it is constantly changing since it is an element that is part of an ongoing cycle (Lipsitz, 1990).
6. Technical codes: A complete scanning cycle of the electron beam, which occurs every $1/30^{\text{th}}$ second (Zettl, 1978).
7. Traditional entertainment media: A complex blend of aesthetic, narrative, visual, verbal, and ideological and technical codes transmitted over a media (Seiter, 1990).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Special educators define the term "negative effect" as reflections of the child's contemporary culture and society (Jenks, 1982). One point addressed herein is how the field of special education defines the negative effects of emotional disorders. Also included in this review of literature chapter is a discussion of historical and current research, pro and con, related to the influence of traditional entertainment media on children diagnosed with an emotional disorder. In addition, a section delineating background information on the field of emotional disorders is included. The deconstruction of the effect of media is examined from multiple media theories (e.g., cultivation, reception theory). The University of North Texas Library, Texas A&M Library, the University of Texas at Tyler Library, University of Kentucky Library, Endnotes and EBSCO databases, and multiple search engines, were used to locate materials for this study. Articles and books were taken from 1957 to 2004.

Background on Emotional Disorders

A variety of terms are used to describe students with an emotional disorder: emotionally disturbed, socially maladjusted, psychologically disordered, emotionally handicapped, or even psychotic if their behavior is extremely abnormal or bizarre

(Kauffman, 1993; Jenks, 1996). These individuals are also referred to as exceptional children with emotional disorders. The term *exceptional children* is a relatively new entry into the educational lexicon. Originating in the 1950s, the term *exceptional children* was adopted in the late 1980s by the National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition, a group formed in 1987 to foster collaboration among various professional and advocacy organizations (Forness, 1988; Forness & Knitzer, 1992).

Dodge (1993) writes that three primary factors contribute to the development of children with emotional disorders: (a) an adverse early rearing environment, (b) social rejection by peers, and (c) modeling of antisocial behavior by external sources (e.g., peers, parents, television programming). Other researchers (e.g., Dishion, Patterson, & Reid, 1992; Dumas, & Wahler, 1986) agree with Dodge's assertions related to the development of children with an emotional disorder. According to Dumas & Wahler, some of the behaviors children with emotional disorders exhibit are recognized as abnormal in nearly every cultural group and social strata. Muteness, serious self-injury, coprophagia, and murder are examples of disorders that are seldom or never considered culture specific or acceptable (Kauffman, 1993).

American Culture and Television

Because culture specific behaviors are sometimes incorrectly identified as an emotional disorder (Kauffman, 1993); the process of identifying a child with an emotional disorder may be difficult (Bower, 1981). Torres-Velasques (1999) states *that* unlike many conditions that originate from biological causes, emotional disorders may also be tied to other precipitators that are more difficult to quantify (e.g., classroom culture). Take the example of a child that grew up in a northern state in an urban environment. This child might exhibit characteristics that are normal for his/her environment, but could be considered to have an emotional disorder in a small, rural setting in East Texas. While examining one's microculture may explain differentiations in diagnosis of emotional disorders, the macroculture should not be overlooked.

Children living in the United States have, as their macroculture, the American family. While many adults fondly remember the American nuclear family (circa 1950s), the family of the 21st century is quite different. According to Bryant (2000), the form of the American family that most people envision has become rare. Bryant cites a survey from the National Opinion Research Center, entitled *The Emerging 21st Century Family* (Smith, 1999) that delineates how family

compositions have changed. Bryant lists the following transformations as being notable:

1. Whereas two decades ago most American households included children, today, kids are in just 38% of homes.
2. Whereas two married parents with children comprised the most common type of family unit a generation ago, in the year 2000, that type of family can be found only in about one in four households.
3. The average age when marriage occurs has increased; men and women marry approximately 4 to 5 years later than they did in the 1960s.
4. The most typical household today is that of an unmarried person with no children; such homes account for a third of all U.S. households, a share that has doubled since the 1970s.
5. Whereas three out of four adults were married a generation ago, only slightly more than half of them are today.
6. Divorce rates more than doubled between the 1960s and the 1980s, although the divorce rate actually declined slightly in the 1990s.
7. The number of women giving birth out of wedlock has increased dramatically over the past generation, from 5% of births to nearly 33% of births.

8. The portion of children living with a single parent has jumped over a generation from 1 out of 20 to about 1 out of 5 children.

Diagnosing Emotional Disorders

In medicine, most diagnoses are based on biological models (Braunwald et al., 2004). However, using a biological model for emotional disorders may prove difficult. For instance, it cannot be stated with certainty that something "goes wrong" in the brain, causing a child to act in a particular way. Contrary to early psychiatric theories (e.g., Kanner's Frigid Mother Theory), it is impossible to conclude that a mother or father did something "wrong" early in the child's life causing an emotional disorder (Kauffman, 1993).

While some may tend to latch onto simple explanations of why a child has an emotional problem, causations are complex and often the result of multiple co-morbidities. It is perhaps more useful for professionals to concentrate not on the "cause" of the emotional disorder (except to the extent that cause can be readily agreed on), but on their role in helping the exceptional child to learn the adaptive skills and appropriate behaviors s/he lacks (Barkley, 2002).

Different professionals view emotional disorders in different ways (Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997). Their outlook and treatment plans are usually shaped by their training and

philosophy about the origins of emotional disorders. One such theory, which attempts to draw correlations between media consumption and behavior, is Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). Social Learning Theory as Bandura writes is emphasizing the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bandura (1977) states:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this ideological code serves as a guide for action. (p. 22)

Social learning theory attempts to explain human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences.

According to Bandura (1977), the four component processes underlying observational learning are:

1. Attention, including modeled events (i.e., distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence, functional value) and observer characteristics (e.g., sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement).
2. Retention, including symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal.

3. Motor reproduction, including physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, and accuracy of feedback.
4. Motivation, including external, vicarious and self-reinforcement.

Social Learning Theory is one theory used by educational researchers in conjunction with media effects studies to "discover" what effect, if any, media has on children.

Discussion of Effect Studies

Media effects studies are typically conducted using cause and effect analysis where the spectator is presumed to be affected by what is viewed (Gauntlett, 1997). The studies treat spectators as fundamentally passive, undiscriminating and malleable, and the mass media as correspondingly vapid, undemanding, and meaningless.

By deconstructing traditional media theories (e.g., psychoanalytic, cultivation), according to Gauntlett (1997; 2004), it may be concluded that traditional entertainment media (a) is a reflection of the larger society and (b) that spectators, in this present case children, are discriminating viewers who not only explicitly understand, but can also discriminate between the social norms of society and the social norms of the constructed reality of what is being viewed.

Psychoanalytic criticism attempts to explain how identity is formed through the viewer's (child's) relationship to the

narrative world of television (Hay, 1992). This is especially important when examining personality formation in the child diagnosed with an emotional disorder (Barkley, 2002).

Psychology and Emotional Disorders

The individualism of psychology has also had a significant impact on the way in which children are regarded in effects research. Sociology typically regards childhood as a social construction, demarcated by attitudes, traditions, and rituals which vary between different societies and different time periods (Ariés, 1962; Jenks, 1982, 1996). This is unlike cognitive-developmental psychology which remains more tied to the idea of a universal individual who must develop through the following four stages before reaching adult maturity (Funderstanding, 2001; Piaget, 1970):

1. Sensorimotor stage (birth - 2 years old): The child, through physical interaction with his or her environment, builds a set of concepts about reality and how it works. This is the stage where a child does not know that physical objects remain in existence even when out of sight (object permanence).
2. Preoperational stage (ages 2-7): The child is not yet able to conceptualize abstractly and needs concrete physical situations.

3. Concrete operations (ages 7-11): As physical experience accumulates, the child starts to conceptualize, creating logical structures that explain his or her physical experiences. Abstract problem solving is also possible at this stage. For example, arithmetic equations can be solved with numbers, not just with objects.
4. Formal operations (beginning at ages 11-15): By this point, the child's cognitive structures are like those of an adult and include conceptual reasoning. This is a Piagetian concept (e.g., 1970). Piaget's developmental stages are arranged as a hierarchy, from incompetent childhood to rational, logical adulthood.

According to Jenks (1996), progression through the stages is characterized by an achievement principle in which the child is expected to master specific knowledge/skills/abilities. In psychoanalytic terms, children are often considered not so much in terms of what they *can* do, as what they cannot. Negatively defined as non-adults, children are regarded as the "other," much the same way women or non-heterosexuals are viewed in patriarchal societies (Gauntlett, 1997). Children are considered a "strange breed" whose failure to match generally white, middle class adult norms must be charted and discussed. Most laboratory studies of children and the media presume, for example, that their findings apply only to children, but fail to run parallel

studies with adult groups to confirm this (Jones, 2002). Consider the underlying assumption, of certain researchers (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994) that children are unable to properly process ideological codes within traditional entertainment media. These researchers seem to believe that while children must be careful what they watch, they (i.e., the researchers) are able to watch whatever they desire without fear of falling under the influence of the ubiquitous media. Griffin (1993) writes:

Some studies produced by social scientists, have tended to blame the victim, to represent social problems as the consequence of the deficiencies or inadequacies of young people, and to psychologize inequalities, obscuring structural relations of domination behind a focus on individual, deficient working-class young people and/or young people of color, their families or cultural backgrounds. (p. 199)

Problems such as unemployment and the failure of education systems are, thereby, traced to individual psychology traits (Greene, 1994).

The ordinate/subordinate approach to media effects research can be observed when involving children and the media. The production of which seem to be dominated by psychologically-oriented researchers whom, it can be imagined, have nothing but benevolent intentions (Gauntlett, 1997). These studies delineate that exposure to the full range of traditional entertainment media results in young media users who are inept victims of

products, which, while obviously puerile and transparent to adults, may trick children into all kinds of ill-advised, antisocial behaviors.

This idea of children as the "other" is countered by research which seeks to establish what children can and do understand from the mass media. Such projects have shown that children can talk intelligently, even cynically, about the mass media (Buckingham, 1993). Some studies show that children as young as seven can make thoughtful, critical, and media literate video productions themselves (Gauntlett, 1997). This is diametrically opposed to media theories such as cultivation theory. According to Jones (2002), every bit of research on the relationship between children's behavior and entertainment, even those that find substantial correlations, shows that entertainment is a far less significant influence than peers, schools, socioeconomic environment, and, especially, family. *The Longitudinal Study of Development Aggression* (Eron, Huesmann, & Walder, 1977), which is considered the bed rock of psychological criticism of violent television, found a correlation of about 10% between aggression and viewing habits, but the correlation it found between aggression and family patterns ran 50%.

Cultivation Theory and Media Violence

According to the tenets of cultivation theory, very high exposure to traditional entertainment media can result in the viewer's perception of reality varying in a markedly different manner from what the viewer might perceive of reality if they consumed less (Gauntlett, 1997). In other words, the highly stylized, stereotyped, and repetitive images portrayed by traditional entertainment media have been regarded as an important source of socialization and everyday information.

Gerbner et al. (1994) defined cultivation as the independent contributions made by viewing traditional entertainment media to viewer conceptions of social reality. The cultivation differential is the margin of difference in conceptions of reality between light and heavy viewers in the same demographic subgroups. According to Hall (2000), Gerbner et al. are saying, for example, (that) violence found in traditional entertainment media is not actual violence, but messages about violence. This seems to be related to Skinner's (2002) notions of operant conditioning where the subject is presented with a stimulus and responds in one uniform manner.

Behaviorism is one of the philosophical tenets of intervention for children with an emotional disorder (Kauffman, 1993). It is the idea that people are shaped by their environment, irrespective of their conscience. Pure behaviorists

believe that since motivation and conscience cannot be measured, even if these concepts exist, they are irrelevant (Skinner, 2002). To a pure behaviorist, a person responds to a message because it was sent with direct, textual meanings, and it will be received revealing the same textual meaning. Belleville & Rouleau (1996) oppose this view by using Shannon's Second Derivative of Mass Communication Theory (Shannon & Weaver, 1963). Shannon's theory is based on a mathematical model of communication which demonstrates that communication acquisition is affected by white noise. Belleville & Rouleau have taken white noise to mean not only the interfering sounds produced by combining different frequencies together, but also includes a psychological component. The psychological component includes nonverbal communication and intrapersonal conflicts that could affect message interpretation.

Hall (2000) states that ideological codes are very complex and should be considered in terms of encoding and decoding. Hall's theory of encoding and decoding seems to take on a feel of chaos theory in that the observation is affected by the observer's relationship (position) to what is being observed. According to Stam (2000), Hall sees the mass media as not having a univocal meaning, but being read differently by different people depending on their social location and their ideologies and desires. Cultivation theorists, instead, seem to believe the

viewer is only able to see the constructed reality of the specific traditional entertainment media as the true reality.

Critics (e.g., Gauntlett, 1997; 2004; Hirsch, 1980; Jones, 2002; Stam, 2000) of cultivation theory focus on the validity of cultivation research. According to Hirsch, cultivation effects found in the various studies are statistical artifacts of demographic differences in both viewing and perceptions. According to Gunter (1994) and Hay (1992), the dichotomy between critics and supporters of cultivation theory notwithstanding, another shortcoming of cultivation research has been the treatment of viewing traditional entertainment media as a uniform activity that ignores variations in viewers, variety of viewers, and content to which viewers are exposed. This idea of varietability and individualization is a hallmark of the field of special education.

Children and Traditional Entertainment Media

Children begin to organize the world of traditional entertainment media at an early age; an important aspect of which is reality status, that is, how their world is similar to those depicted in traditional entertainment media (Formichelli, 2001). Their understanding of reality is essentially based on factuality, which concerns the relation of mediated traditional entertainment content to the real world as they understand and experience it. Young children's assumptions about the reality of

traditional entertainment media begin at the age of three or four when they learn that the ideological codes of traditional entertainment media can indicate differences in reality (Friedlich-Cofer & Huston, 2000). An example of this is identifying the signifier of animation to mean that the contents of a program are not real.

It has been suggested that children, even children with an existing emotional disorder, can be active and powerful decoders of traditional entertainment media and from an early age and are capable of their own understanding of the ideological codes, (Formichelli, 2001; Friedlich-Cofer & Huston, 2000). While popular culture of traditional entertainment media perceived relation to the real world varies, children's ability to make subtle and adequate reality judgments about it can be enhanced by their experiencing it. For example, younger children's relatively high consumption of cartoons can serve to mark out reality in other genres of programs.

By the age of five or six, children can identify jointly occurring aspects of form and context which allow them to distinguish between genres, and once this understanding is established, their evaluations of the reality found in traditional entertainment media are based on solid foundations (Friedman, 2000). According to Friedman, they ask "*Is it true to life?*" (p. 24).

Another way of examining the issue of traditional entertainment media and children is from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecologically embedded niches. According to Bryant (2000) a home ecology-based approach is useful because the generation of the late 20th and early 21st century represent the first generations to grow up in a multimedia environment. Not only is cable television present, many (most) children have access to digital video recorders (DVRs), gaming consoles, and the fifth medium - the Internet. Even before the video revolution, the issue of television's impact on children was one of the most widely researched topics in the social sciences (e.g., Bryant & Zillmann, 1986; Gauntlett, 1997).

According to Bryant (2000), Bronfenbrenner's model of ecologically embedded niches may be used as the starting point for investigation into dynamically changing environment of traditional entertainment media and impact on viewership. Bryant uses Bronfenbrenner's model to contextualize mediation of children's viewing habits. The components include:

1. Mesosystem: Involves the interrelations among two or more settings in which the child actively participates (e.g., child's relationship among home media environments, school, peer groups).

2. Exosystem: Involves one or more settings that do not involve the child as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the child (e.g., television).
3. Microsystem: Pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships experienced by the child in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics (e.g., interpersonal interaction in home).
4. Macrosystem: Involves consistencies, in the form and content of lower order systems (micro, meso, and exo) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief or ideology underlying such consistencies.
5. Ontogenic system: Comprises the child's individual psychological competencies for development (p. 51).

Since television enters the home via an external source, Bronfenbrenner (1973) placed television as a second-order effect operating partially within a microsystem but, also across the ecological borders. Bryant was quoted in a 1992 interview by *Education Week on the Web* (Portner, 1992), "(that) viewing of television (i.e., traditional entertainment media) (sic) is a function of distractibility" (p. 1). The results of one study conducted by Bryant at the University of Alabama found that children who watch MTV were prone to have shorter attention

spans than children watching more sedate programming (e.g., *Sesame Street*). While it has been delineated by Bryant that children watching television at an early age have an increased probability of distractibility, this has also been shown to be the result of many things (e.g., multitasking at work, pressure to produce and learn more in less time) within modern societies and cultures.

Reflections

Surveys (e.g., *Science Barometer, Television Across the Years: The British Public's View*) typically show that while a certain proportion of the public feels that viewing traditional entertainment media may cause other people to engage in antisocial behavior, almost no one ever says that they have been affected in that way themselves (Gauntlett, 2004; Jones, 2002). This view is taken to extremes by researchers and advocates whose work brings them into regular contact with the supposedly corrupting material and, yet are unconcerned for their own well-being as they implicitly know that the effects will only be on other people.

As far as the "others" are defined as children or unstable individuals, their approach may not seem unreasonable. Nonetheless, the idea that it is "others" that will be affected - the uneducated? Children with emotional disorders? - remains

at the heart of the media effects paradigm, and is reflected in its texts.

Gerbner et al. (1994) write about heavy viewing as if this media consumption has necessarily had the opposite effect on the weightiness of their brains. Such people -- children with emotional disorders -- are assumed to have no selectivity or critical skills, and their habits are explicitly contrasted with preferred activities. Gerbner et al. (1994) indicate that:

Most viewers watch by the clock and either do not know what they will watch when they turn on the set, or follow established routines rather than choose each program as they would choose a book, a movie or an article. (p. 26)

This view makes inappropriate comparisons by ignoring the serial nature of many types of traditional entertainment media. It is also unable to account for the widespread use of TV guides and VCRs/DVRs with which audiences plan and arrange their viewing. Gerbner et al.'s attitudes seem to reveal a very patriarchal, Marxist ordinate/subordinate position of the researcher. It seems that first society commodifies children with emotional disorders, and then, instead of looking at how they (society) might have helped to bring about the emotional condition, it looks at other institutions as being the main contributing cause.

The point is not that the content of traditional entertainment media must not be criticized or researched, but

rather than the public (e.g., parents, children with emotional disorders) are not well served by studies which are willing to treat them as potential fools. By examining the way in which researchers have assumed an almost Marxist's ordinate/subordinate position, it may be presumed to open up the idea that research involving children and the media is not without its own political motivation.

Few, if any, other innovations have had such an extreme impact on society, particularly on children, as television (Davis, 1998). According to Nielsen Media Research (2004), in 2001 there were 102.2 million television homes in the United States. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 1996) - this title demonstrates how television has changed since the days when *Leave It to Beaver* (Abbott, 1957) reigned supreme.

Titles of today clearly show women in positions of power (e.g., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). The content of the programs are a move from traditional patriarchal society. In *Bewitched* (Saks, 1964), Samantha always tried to do what her husband wanted (e.g., never using her witchcraft). When she "broke" his rule, it typically led to Samantha getting into trouble. In contrast, Buffy typically goes against the wishes of the Watcher's Council, a group of British, patriarchal males, and by the end of the story line, she is shown to be right. In *I Love Lucy* (Asher, 1954), Ricky and Lucy are never shown sleeping in

the same bed. While, on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 1996), not only is one of the lead characters (Willow) a lesbian, but she is a lesbian that practices Wicca and is regularly shown kissing and sleeping with another woman.

This change in how characters are portrayed in traditional entertainment media is another example of how the actions of children with emotional disorders can be seen, not in the light of their diagnosis, but as examples that go against middle-class society. As it was mentioned earlier (Torres-Velasques, 1999), the diagnosis of an emotional disorder may sometimes be a result of a child who is emulating the behavior of his/her culture, but it is "out of sync" with the cultural beliefs of others (e.g., his/her teacher). When this occurs, the other (i.e., the child) is perceived as having something wrong that society must fix.

While emotional disorders are a valid diagnosis, the label may also be circumscribed to any activity that goes against patriarchal society (Torres-Velasquez, 1999). By taking an emotional topic, such as children with emotional disorders, and adding in the perceived anxiety that supposedly many people have for traditional entertainment media, it is possible to shift the real societal problem of children with emotional disorders (Hodge & Tripp, 1986).

Traditional entertainment media is separate from society, and because it is separate, then society - as parents,

educators, and people - are no longer responsible for causing children to have an emotional problem. It becomes the problem of the "other." As Matthew Lillard's character said in the film *Scream* (Craven, 1996), media does not create sociopaths, it makes sociopaths creative.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

While the use of quantitative statistics to research media effects and children has been used (Jones, 2002), some researchers (e.g., Fischhoff, 1999; Gauntlett, 1997; 2004; Jones, 2002; Gadow & Sprafkin, 1989; Goldstein, 2001) set forward the proposition for using qualitative research methodologies to gain a better understanding of media effects and children.

Researchers trained in the use of quantitative designs face real challenges when called upon to use qualitative research (Stallings, 1995). There is, however, a growing body of literature devoted to qualitative research in education. The goals of this section are to elaborate on the reasons for choosing qualitative methodologies, and to provide a basic introduction to the features of this type of research.

Waetjen (1992), in his call for good research in education, states that the plea is to use experimental research as much as possible. Interestingly, some areas of research outlined in his essay (e.g., understanding motivation, asking the question why) would lend themselves to alternative methodologies, including

qualitative methodologies. Of the 220 reports included in Zuga's (1994) review of education-related research, only 16 are identified as having used qualitative methods, and Zuga notes that many of those studies were conducted outside the United States. Johnson (1995) suggests that educators engage in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features. He notes that qualitative methodologies are powerful tools for enhancing understanding of teaching and learning, and that they have "gained increasing acceptance in recent years" (p. 4).

Basis for the Use of Qualitative Methodology

Corbin and Strauss (1990) write that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. These methodologies can also be used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Thus, qualitative methods are appropriate in situations where the researcher needs to first identify the variables that might later be tested quantitatively, or where the researcher has determined that quantitative measures cannot adequately describe or interpret a situation. According to Fischhoff (1999) and Jones (2002), this is the case when conducting media effects studies involving children. Research problems tend to be framed as open-ended

questions that will support discovery of new information.

Greene's 1994 study of women in the trades, for example, asked "What personal characteristics do tradeswomen have in common? In what way, if any, did role models contribute to women's choices to work in the trades?"(p. 524a).

The ability of qualitative data to more fully describe a phenomenon is an important consideration not only from the researcher's perspective, but from the reader's perspective as well. If it is the researcher's intention for people to understand more than they otherwise might and provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Qualitative research reports, which are typically rich with detail and insights into participants' experiences of the world, may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience (Stake, 1978) and thus more meaningful.

Features of Qualitative Research

Several writers (e.g., Biklen & Bogdan, 1982; Eisner, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Patton, 1990) have identified what they consider to be the prominent characteristics of qualitative research. The list that follows represents a synthesis of those authors' descriptions of qualitative research:

1. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data. The researcher attempts to observe, describe and

interpret settings as they are, maintaining what Patton calls an "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 1990, p. 55).

2. The researcher acts as the "human instrument" (Patton, 1990, p. 55) of data collection.
3. Qualitative researchers predominantly use inductive data analysis.
4. Qualitative research reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the "presence of voice in the text" (Eisner, 1991, p. 36).
5. Qualitative research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher.
6. Qualitative researchers pay attention to the idiosyncratic as well as the pervasive, seeking the uniqueness of each case.
7. Qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design, and researchers focus on this emerging process as well as the outcomes or product of the research.
8. Qualitative research is judged using special criteria for trustworthiness.

Patton (1990) points out that these are not absolute characteristics of qualitative inquiry, but rather strategic

ideals that provide a direction and a framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics. These characteristics are considered to be interconnected and mutually reinforcing (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

It is important to emphasize the emergent nature of qualitative research design. Because the researcher seeks to observe and interpret meanings in context, it is neither possible nor appropriate to finalize research strategies before data collection has begun (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research proposals should, however, specify primary questions to be explored and plan for data collection strategies.

The particular design of a qualitative study depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what information will be most useful, and what information will have the most credibility. This is no strict criteria for sample size (Patton, 1990). Qualitative studies typically employ multiple forms of evidence, and there is no statistical test of significance to determine if results count (Eisner, 1991). Judgments about usefulness and credibility are left to the researcher and the reader.

Gaining Access and Researcher Obligations

Based on their experience with naturalistic research, Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. H. (1984) believe that researchers are more likely to gain successful access to situations if:

1. They make use of contacts that can help remove barriers to entrance.
2. They avoid wasting respondents' time by doing advance research for information that is already part of the public record.
3. They treat respondents with courtesy.

Because naturalistic researchers are asking participants to grant access to their lives, their minds, and their emotions, it is also important to provide respondents with a straightforward description of the goals of the research.

The Role of the Reader

Those who are in a position to judge or use the findings of a qualitative inquiry must play a different type of role than people who review quantitative research. This is because there are no operationally defined truth tests to apply to qualitative research (Eisner, 1991). Instead, researcher and readers share a joint responsibility for establishing the value of the qualitative research product (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Pragmatic validation, of qualitative research, means that the perspective presented is judged by its relevance to and use by those to whom it is presented (Patton, 1990).

Eisner (1991) believes that the following three features of qualitative research should be considered by reviewers:

1. Coherence: Does the story make sense? How have the conclusions been supported? To what extent have multiple data sources been used to give credence to the interpretation that has been made? (p. 53).
2. Consensus: The condition in which the readers of a work concur that the findings and/or interpretations reported by the investigator are consistent with their own experience or with the evidence presented (p. 56).
3. Instrumental utility: The most important test of any qualitative study is its usefulness. A good qualitative study can help researchers understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing (p. 58).

A good study can help researchers anticipate the future, not in the predictive sense of the word, but as a kind of road map or guide. Guides call attention to aspects of the situation or place that might otherwise be missed (Eisner, 1991).

Conclusion

The decision to use qualitative methodologies should be considered carefully; by its very nature, qualitative research can be emotionally taxing and extraordinarily time consuming. At the same time, it can yield rich information not obtainable through statistical sampling techniques.

Qualitative researchers have a special responsibility to their subjects and their readers. Since there are no statistical

tests for significance in qualitative studies, the researcher bears the burden of discovering and interpreting the importance of what is observed, and of establishing a plausible connection between what is observed and the conclusions drawn in the research report (Guba, 1978). To do all of this skillfully requires a solid understanding of the research paradigm and, ideally, guided practice in the use of qualitative observation and analysis techniques.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This study examined whether there is a relationship between the behavior of children with an emotional disorder and their consumption of entertainment media (i.e., television). This study attempted to emphasize that a connection between media consumption and the negative behavior of children with emotional disorders is an artifact of previous research. This chapter describes (a) purpose of the study, (b) research questions developed for this study, (c) setting, (d) participant selection process, (e) procedures, (f) instrumentation/data collection procedures, and (g) data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined whether it is contraindicated that children diagnosed with an emotional disorder should view traditional entertainment media. The study used qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, observations) to critically examine and deconstruct the *prima fascia* stance of media effect theories as they apply to children/youth's consumption of traditional entertainment media.

Research Questions

The review of literature revealed that most of the current body of research related to media effects and children with emotional disorders is disproportionately limited to

quantitative data reduction techniques that utilize a researcher ordinate/subordinate position. The researchers, by way of their research design, seem to implicitly believe that while media can affect children, that same media has no effect on them. The researchers did not consider the opinions of said children nor did they explore if the children can explain the reasons for said behaviors. This lack of exploration led to the following questions to be answered by this study:

1. In what ways do children with a diagnosed emotional disorder interpret traditional entertainment media?
2. In what way do children diagnosed with an emotional disorder believe that their interpretation of the traditional entertainment media has an effect on their (the children's) behavior?
3. Are the children aware of why they demonstrate negative/antisocial behavior?
4. In what way do the children's teachers believe that their (the children) behaviors are a result of consumption of traditional entertainment media?

Setting

The participants for this study were drawn from an elementary campus of a school district in East Texas. The students and teacher were interviewed in the natural setting of their classroom.

Participant Selection

Study participants were chosen from the population of an elementary school. Six student participants were chosen based on the campus administrator's verification of identification of students as having a diagnosed emotional disorder. The campus administrator required a release form (see Appendix A for letter) that was sent to the parents of potential participants. A second release form (see Appendix B) was sent to the teacher that participated. After receiving approval from the parents, the campus administrator submitted to me a list of at least six students - who met the criteria of the study and whose parents/legal guardians were willing to allow them to participate.

I then asked the students and their teacher if they wished to participate. Diversity for this study was defined to include ethnicity, gender, age, and diagnosed emotional disorder.

Instrumentation/Data Collection Procedures

Four types of data were accrued in this study:

1. A questionnaire (see Appendix C, Part I for questionnaire) was given to the students to determine the specific traditional entertainment media consumed and whether they believed that the traditional entertainment media they watch influences whom they are (i.e., their behavior). I read the each question to each individual student

participant to ensure that they had read and understood the questions. The questions were read to each student in the school's library during a time period that promoted privacy.

2. Audio-recorded interviews of the students and teacher were utilized. The audio-recordings were destroyed to ensure confidentiality of participants' responses.
3. I observed the students in their natural setting (e.g., classroom). Observations determined whether the students were modeling the behavior which they had viewed on the traditional entertainment media. Behaviors were recorded using sheets of paper that had been coded by me, with the behaviors observed from the traditional entertainment media that the children had stated they watch.
4. The participants' teacher was interviewed (see Appendix D for interview questions) to ascertain whether she had observed or believe (and what makes them believe) that the students' behavior was a result of viewing the traditional entertainment media.

Procedures

1. Once the student participants had been identified, I interviewed students to determine the traditional entertainment media that the students watched on a regular basis.

2. I then viewed the stated programs, observing the behavior of the characters.
3. I then coded the behaviors of the characters he observed watching the traditional entertainment media the children stated they watch on a regular basis.
4. I spent one week in the class setting observing and taking field notes of the behavior of the students using the coded material (see Procedures # 3), which were later destroyed to ensure confidentiality.
5. An interview of all participants was conducted by me to determine whether the teacher (see Appendix F) and/or student participants (see Appendix F) saw any behavior that could have been influenced by the programming.

All interviews were audio recorded. The audio recordings were kept at my home and destroyed at the end of this study. The audio tapes were transcribed and analyzed (refer to Appendices E and F for Transcripts).

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis was approached using respected, researcher-accepted practices, including (a) recording of the data in minute detail, (b) open-ended questions presented to this study's participants, (c) researcher observations of both the participants and the traditional entertainment media, and (d) data analysis using a

deconstruction approach (Gauntlett, 1997; 2004; Merriam, 1998). I deconstructed the data by examining it for influences of culture, social, education, and/or economic biases of the students' teachers and me. Final analysis was presented in visual (e.g., graphs, tables) and narrative form with transcriptions of the interviews.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a relationship between the behavior of children with an emotional disorder and their consumption of entertainment media (i.e., television). I attempted to examine if a connection between media consumption and the negative behavior of children with emotional disorders is an artifact of previous research.

I spent one week at an elementary school in East Texas interviewing the six student-participants, their teacher, and observing the student-, and teacher-participants in their natural environment of the classroom. The students' favorite television programs were TIVOd and observed by me. This was done to compare the observable, classroom behaviors of the students to the observable behaviors of the television characters.

Interviews with all participants were transcribed to allow for easier access to the acquired data. Interview transcripts are included in Appendices E and F. Synopsis of television programs, taken from TVTome.com (2004) are included in Appendix G. The information from this study was analyzed by applying techniques of data display and analysis.

Data Reduction

Line by line analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted, extrapolating information related to television programs viewed, attitudes towards said programs, and influences said programs had on participants. The extrapolated information was then categorized, according to genre of programs and participants responses related to watching programs. Tables 1-3 were then created using the above criteria. Data was used to determine answers to the research questions. Data was analyzed without use of a qualitative software program; instead, I relied on traditional, hand-coding. The uniqueness of this study, the need to extrapolate seemingly unrelated data, and the data-set size were all considered as factors that suggested the use of traditional, non-qualitative software based methods.

Data Display

After the investigative week at the elementary school in East Texas, certain commonalities were discovered among the majority of participants related to their viewing of traditional entertainment media. These commonalities included: (a) that the participants viewed shows that were contradictory to their behaviors, (b) that the shows viewed were not antisocial in message or intent, (c) that the student participants all stated a need for "something" in their lives that was not chaotic. These commonalities were instrumental in identifying factors

that answer each of the research questions. The following are data gathered through interviews and observations of participants and television programs.

Table 1

Descriptors of Student- and Teacher-Participants' Favorite
Television Programs

Television Programs	Participants (Initials)	Genre of Programs	Channel Programs Televised
<i>Fear Factor</i>	P	Reality	NBC
<i>Forensic Files</i>	Teacher	Crime/Documentary	Court TV
<i>Kim Possible</i>	D, S	Cartoon	Disney Channel
<i>Lilo & Stitch</i>	W	Cartoon	Disney Channel
<i>Lizzie McGuire</i>	W	Children's show	Disney Channel
<i>The Proud Family</i>	D	Cartoon	Disney Channel
<i>Sister, Sister</i>	S	Family situation comedy	ABC
<i>Scooby-Doo, Where are You?</i>	A	Cartoon	Cartoon Network
<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i>	B, D	Cartoon	Nickelodeon
<i>Tom and Jerry</i>	B	Cartoon	Cartoon Network
<i>VeggieTales</i>	P	Religious Cartoon	Videos*

Note. Even though *VeggieTales* is not a television program, it is included in this study because it is viewed on television using a VHS or DVD player.

Table 2

MPAA Rating of Television Programs

Television Programs	MPAA Ratings of Television Programs
<i>Fear Factor</i>	Unrated
<i>Forensic Files</i>	Unrated
<i>Kim Possible</i>	TVY7
<i>Lilo & Stitch</i>	TVY
<i>Lizzie McGuire</i>	TVY
<i>The Proud Family</i>	TVY
<i>Sister, Sister</i>	TVG
<i>Scooby-Doo, Where are You?</i>	Unrated
<i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i>	TVY
<i>Tom and Jerry</i>	Unrated
<i>VeggieTales</i>	Unrated

Note. See Appendix H for explanation of MPAA rating system

Table 3

Researcher Observed Negative Classroom Behaviors of Student-Participants

Students' Initials	Verbal abuse to other students	Hitting other students	Pulling Chairs of other students	Damaging property	Leaving classroom w/o permission
W	40 times	4 times	2 times	4 times	5 times
P	26 times	6 times	0	0	15 times
B	14 times	2 times	0	0	4 times
D	50 times	10 times	0	0	2 times
S	21 times	6 times	1 time	1 time	6 times
A	4 times	0	0	0	26 times

Data Analysis

According to Douglas and Olshaker (1999), there have been instances where criminals or others engaged in violent behavior have imitated specific aspects of violent television shows. While it has been noted earlier that some researchers (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994) hypothesized that children process television shows by imitating what they view, this has never been proven conclusively (Gauntlett, 1997; Jones 2002). The student-participants' interviews (see Appendix E) and observable, negative classroom behaviors (see Table 3) illustrate a dichotomy between actions and viewing.

All student-participants had been identified as having an emotional disorder according to the federal definition. A majority of students (5 out of 6) stated that they preferred watching television programs that coincidentally have an MPAA Rating of TVG to TVY (see Appendix H for explanation of rating system). Student-participants stated that they liked television shows that IMBD.com (2004) and TVtome.com (2004) describe as family-friendly, positive shows. Conversely, they (i.e., the student-participants) were observed engaging in such negative behaviors as pulling chairs out from under other students and/or flooding the restroom with water (see Table 3). The two students

(W and S) that pulled chairs out from under other students laughed when the students cried.

When asked why they liked a particular show, the students responded that they wanted, needed, and/or should have some normalcy in their lives (see Appendices E and F for transcripts of interviews). This included P, who stated (that) while his favorite program was *Fear Factor*, he also watched *VeggieTales* because ". . . They help me learn about God." When asked how watching their favorite television programs made them feel, the student-participants responded that it made them feel good and/or happy. This seems to support their earlier statements that they wanted something that was positive.

In classroom discussions between teacher and students -- that I observed -- many students would speak about their home lives. When the teacher asked the students to name words that had a double E in them, one of the participants responded by saying weed. She went on to say that when her father smoked weed at home, it would give her a headache. She also said that her father had stated she was able to roll the perfect joint. This is just one example of the lifestyle participants said they experienced. Another student mentioned to the class that her parents would "yell" at her all night, every night.

When the student-participants were engaged with the other students, it was not atypical that they would hit, call others

names (e.g., fat, jerk, asshole), and/or try to direct the actions of the other students. Yet, the television shows that they watched did not show any of this behavior (see Appendix G for synopsis of shows). One episode of *Lizzie McGuire*, that I viewed, had her helping a new student in her class. An episode of *Scooby-Doo Where are You?* had the Scooby gang putting themselves in danger to protect a cousin from a vampire. The characters in both shows displayed contrary behaviors to the student-participants' behavior. Even *Fear Factor*, which was the most "adult" show viewed, had contestants helping each other complete trials. A May 2004 episode arc of *Fear Factor* featured elementary and middle school aged children competing for prizes. The anti-social behavior observed in the classroom was not present in any of the shows that the student-participants stated that they viewed.

Research Questions

The four research questions investigated were:

1. In what ways do children with a diagnosed emotional disorder interpret traditional entertainment media?
2. In what way do children diagnosed with an emotional disorder believe that their interpretation of the traditional entertainment media has an effect on their (the children's) behavior?

3. Are the children aware of why they demonstrate negative/antisocial behavior?
4. In what way do the children's teacher believe that their (the children) behaviors are a result of consumption of traditional entertainment media?

Research Question One

By examining the transcripts (Appendix E) and Tables 1-3 it can be delineated that children interpret traditional entertainment media (i.e., television shows) as a form of entertainment that allows them to escape from the realities of their lives. Using television as a form of escapism is supported by the students' answers to the interview questions. When asked why they liked a particular show, the students responded that they wanted, needed, and/or should have some normalcy in their lives (Appendix E). *Fear Factor* which was watched by Student P -- while it is intended for older audiences -- still has elements of characters supporting and helping each other and overcoming their fears. I hold that question 1 implies that television is used as a pseudo-coping mechanism.

While the students have differing backgrounds, one constant is that the students' families are dealing with some type of chaos. One student, S, states that her father is a drug user and, according to S, she is regularly exposed to second-hand marijuana smoke. Another student, B, has been diagnosed by a

psychiatrist as having multiple personalities. Yet, according to B's teacher, her mother is unwillingly to accept the diagnosis. Choosing instead, to believe that her child has imaginary friends and she will grow out of it. Both of these students, as well as the other students interviewed, state that at least part of their enjoyment of the television shows comes from the support and/or positive way in which the characters treat each other. Based on the answers to the interviews and viewing the programs, it seems that the students interpret the textual codes of the programs to represent how families and/or social units can interact with each other in a positive manner. This seems to support the idea of escapism.

Research Question Two

The second research question which sought to determine whether the students saw a connection between their behaviors and the behaviors of characters on the television shows. This is not supported by the student interviews. The students did not believe that their negative behaviors were the result of imitating television characters. The following excerpts from the student transcripts (Appendix E) illustrate this subtextual position. When B was asked how it makes her feel pretending to be her favorite character, she responded that it made her feel good. Other participants responded that they liked to pretend to crawl (P), that they do not pretend (W), or that it makes them

happy (D). While I observed the behaviors of the characters and student-participants, no common observable behavior patterns could be found. Based on my observation and interviewing, a connection between the students' interpretations of the behaviors of the characters and the students' negative behavior could not be found. To delve further into the behaviors of the participants and their denial that they used traditional entertainment media to create meaning, goes beyond the scope of this study. From my position, the students were unable to see corollaries between individual, student behavior and viewing. If a connection exists between these specific students' behavior and their viewing of traditional entertainment media, it would seem to be at a deeper, unobservable level.

Research Question Three

By observing the behaviors of the student-participants in their classroom environment, I could not determine if the students knew why they had negative/antisocial behavior. Anecdotal evidence was observed that the students appeared to get upset when they talked about their family life. One student stated that she did not want to talk about her mother. Another student got very agitated with the subject of her family. In the classroom, students that were not participants in this study would say derogatory comments (e.g., "your mom is a crack-

whore") to student-participants. This would cause the students to either "yell" back or to leave the classroom.

Research Question Four

When I interviewed the student-participants' teacher (see Appendix F for transcript of interview), she stated that she believed television negatively affected the behavior of her students. When questioned further, she was unable to give specific examples of this occurring. She said that media violence has been pervasive in the news and, because of that reason, it was likely media would have an affect on her students. This belief seems to be a function of Gebner et al., (1994) cultivation theory. Wherein, people that view media may come to perceive their environment more in terms of what is televised, than what is reality. The teacher also stated that television can have positive effects on children because it exposes them to "things" that they may not otherwise be aware. She gave the example of *Forensic Files*, which is a documentary of crime scene investigations.

Reflections on Study Findings

It has been suggested by Kubey (1986) and Vorderer (1996) that the most prominent approach of explaining causes of television viewing involves escapism. According to Vorderer, "In its core, escapism means that most people have, due to unsatisfying life circumstances, again and again cause to leave

the reality in which they live in a cognitive and emotional way" (p. 69). In addition to one's social situation, there is also a psychological situation that is largely independent of social influences and can trigger an escapist manner of television viewing.

Kubey (1986) hypothesizes (that) it has been made clear traditional entertainment media is an activity likely to be chosen by people wishing to escape from negative feelings and from the demands of reality. Kubey also writes the form of escapism is referred to as social-psychological escapism. This is when escapism concerns the close social (e.g., family) setting of the person. Although this conceptualization of escapism seems plausible, empirical (i.e., quantitative) have shown weak results (Gauntlett, 1997). According to Jones (2002) and Kubey, social-psychological escapism has been identified in mass communication research since the early 1940s. By examining the data from collected from this study, it seems probable that the student-participants may be using social-psychological escapism as a way of dealing with the day-to-day realities of their lives.

I found that the students spent only a small part of their days watching television, anywhere from one to two hours per day (see Appendix E). While the quality of the programming watched is more important than the time spent watching, it can be

concluded that the student-participants were watching age-appropriate programming that teaches positive social messages (see Table 1 and Appendix G). It would seem that while the appropriateness of the television shows that children are watching does not belay all of the criticisms (e.g., increased distractibility). Even Bryant (2000), who is concerned with the viewing habits of television, has worked on and approves of positive, shows such as *Sesame Street* (Berger, 2004).

Conclusion

This study examined six, first-grade exceptional students and their viewing habits. Numerous classroom observations, student and teacher participant interviews', and an extensive review of past and current literature should provide starting points for re-examining children and media effects from a qualitative standpoint. By examining television from the emic voice of the children, without placing them (i.e., the children) in a Marxist ordinate/subordinate position to the researcher, I believe that a better understanding of media effects can be delineated.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study has examined the relationship between six, first-grade students with an emotional disorder and their consumption of entertainment media (i.e., television). This study attempted to emphasize that a connection between media consumption and the negative behavior of children with emotional disorders is an artifact of previous research. This study found that the student-participants, instead of imitating inappropriate/anti-social behaviors of television characters, were using television programming as a method of escaping their home environments.

Study participants were chosen from the population an elementary school in East Texas. Six student-participants were chosen based on the campus administrator's verification of identification of students as having a diagnosed emotional disorder. These participants and their teacher were interviewed at the beginning and end of the data collection portion of this study. Over twenty-four hours (four days) of classroom observation were conducted. I also viewed each television program indicated by the students, examining individual episodes for characters portraying negative/anti-social behaviors. TVtome.com (2004) and Internet Movie Data Base (2004) were

referenced to ascertain MPAA ratings of said shows and intended audience and content.

All interviews were transcribed and a field journal was kept during the observational period. My observations of students and their teacher were recorded. Qualitative (e.g., emic voices of participants) and deconstructive methods (e.g., ordinate/subordinate positioning) were used to analysis data. Through this process emerged findings that students were using television to escape from the negative aspects (e.g., narcotic addiction, verbal abuse) of their home life. This parallels Kubey's (1986) observation that people use television as a form of social-psychological escapism. The findings were also consistent with *The Longitudinal Study of Development Aggression* (Eron, Huesmann, & Walder, 1977), which found that while television viewing accounts for 10% of behavior, 50% of behavior is related to parents and home environment. Jones (2002) also wrote in his book, *Killing monsters: Why children need fantasy, super heroes, and make-believe violence*, that children use the make-believe violence of television as a way of channeling real-life aggression.

Implications

The implications of this study's finding suggest that children may view traditional entertainment media as a mechanism of escaping to a place where everything is not chaotic. Where

as, one student-participant (W) stated in the first interview, people help each other and they never leave. According to (W) and her teacher, (W's) mother left her when she was three because of an addiction to crack-cocaine. (W) was born with the same addiction.

This study helped identify reasons that children use television. Unlike, previous quantitative research that measured amounts of violence in television shows -- including one that found acts of violence in Mr. Roger's Neighborhood (Jones, 2002) -- this study found that children can use television in a positive manner. While escaping from one's problems is typically not the best long term solution, it can provide a method of momentarily dealing with situations that are beyond one's control.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have identified reasons for, other than negative ones, media effects on children. The findings also suggested that the behaviors' of exceptional children are not concussively tied to their consumption of traditional entertainment media. Motivation and behaviors can be nebulous in nature, having multiply co-morbidities. While some researchers (Bandura, 1977; Bryant, 2000; Dishion, Patterson, & Reid, 1992; Dumas & Wahler, 1986; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994) use quantitative methods to measure and

evaluate media effects and children; this study applied techniques of observation and inductive reasoning to examine the programming from the view point of the student-participants. This has led to the following recommendations that future researchers should:

1. Conduct studies to examine the efficacy of using traditional entertainment media to educate children with emotional disorders and/or the children's families on positive, family interactions.
2. Conduct studies to determine the extent to which the diagnosis of emotional disorders may be attributed to the child's home (family) life.
3. Examine whether using traditional entertainment media as a form of escapism is an effective form of short-term psychological therapy.
4. Conduct more extensive research using (a) a larger, more diverse student population and (b) a wider variability in student-ages.
5. Engage in a larger-scale qualitative study to determine if the findings of this study are consistent.
6. Examine whether it is more effective to design media effects studies in children using qualitative (e.g., emic) methodologies.

7. Consider examining traditional entertainment media through the cultural lens of exceptional children before ascribing a blanket condemnation of children's viewing of television.

An American Indian Prayer goes "Great Spirit, grant that I may not criticize my neighbor until I have walked a mile in his moccasins," (Fussell, 1992, p. 89).

APPENDIX A
RELEASE FORM FOR STUDENTS

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 1 of 6

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the
Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-
Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders

Principal Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts of the study. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND HOW LONG IT WILL LAST:

Research question:

1. In what ways do children with a diagnosed emotional disorder interpret traditional entertainment media?
2. Do the children diagnosed with an emotional disorder believe that their interpretation of the traditional entertainment media has an effect on their (the children's behavior)?
3. Are the children aware of why they demonstrate negative/antisocial behavior?
4. Do the children's teachers believe that their (the children) behaviors are a result of consumption of traditional entertainment media?

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 2 of 6

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the
Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-
Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders

Principal Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

The proposed study will be conducted between February, 2004 and
May 2004.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY INCLUDING THE PROCEDURES TO BE USED:

The researcher will interview students to determine the
television programs that the students watch on a regular basis.
The researcher will then view the stated programs, observing
behavior of the characters. Once that has been completed, the
researcher will spend one week, in the class setting, observing
the behavior of the students. All interviews will be videotape
recorded.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE/ELEMENTS THAT MAY RESULT IN DISCOMFORT
OR INCONVENIENCE:

The researcher will interview students to determine the
television and movies that the students watch on a regular basis.
The researcher will spend one week in the class setting observing
and video recording the behavior of the students. All interviews
will be videotape recorded.

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 3 of 6

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the
Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-
Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders

Principal Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

DESCRIPTIONS OF PROCEDURES/ELEMENTS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH
FORESEEABLE RISKS:

No risks are anticipated in this study.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT OR OTHERS:

People (e.g., parents, teachers, researchers) concerned about
the effects of entertainment media on children will have the
opportunity to potentially gain some insight into the dynamics
of children viewing entertainment media and the resulting
behaviors. Student participants will receive a pizza party at
end of study - if individual parent(s)/guardian(s) agree.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH RECORDS:

All **video tapes and field notes** will be kept by the researcher
in a secure location at the researcher's home and destroyed at
the completion of the study. All participants' anonymity will be
maintained in all public presentations (e.g., dissertation
defense) and publications resulting from the research. The video
tapes will not be viewed by anyone other than the primary
investigator. Anonymity will be maintained by only referencing
the results and not specific individuals within the study. No
reference will be made to location or person that could result
in divulging identity of participants.

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 4 of 6

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the
Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-
Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders
Principle Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

REVIEW FOR PROTECTION OF PARTICIPANTS:

This research study will be reviewed and approved, before
conducted, by the University of North Texas Committee for the
Protection of Human Subjects Phone number (940) 565-3940.

RESEARCH SUBJECTS RIGHTS: I have read or have had read to me all
of the above.

John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III has explained the study to me and
answered all of my questions. I have been told the risks or
discomforts and possible benefits of the study.

I understand that I do not have to allow my child to take part
in this study, and my refusal to allow my child to participate
will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am
entitled. I may withdraw my permission for my permission for my
child to participate in the study at any time without penalty or
loss of benefits to which I am entitled.

In case there are problems or questions, I have been told I can
call John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III, Principal Investigator of this
study and Doctoral Student in Special Education at the
University of North Texas at telephone number (940) 369-5363. I
may also contact Dr. Lyndal M. Bullock, Faculty Advisor to Mr.
Lowdermilk at telephone number (940) 565-3583. I understand my
rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to
participate in this study. I understand what the study is about
and how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy
of this consent form.

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 6 of 6

For the Investigator

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form and been present at the signing of this form with the person signing above, who, in my opinion, understood the explanation. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research.

Principal Investigator's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

RELEASE FORM FOR TEACHERS

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 1 of 5

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders

Principal Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts of the study. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND HOW LONG IT WILL LAST:

Research questions:

1. In what ways do children with a diagnosed emotional disorder interpret traditional entertainment media?
2. Do the children diagnosed with an emotional disorder believe that their interpretation of the traditional entertainment media has an effect on their (the children's) behavior?
3. Are the children aware of why they demonstrate negative/antisocial behavior?
4. Do the children's teachers believe that their (the children) behaviors are a result of consumption of traditional entertainment media?

The proposed study will be conducted between February, 2004 and May, 2004.

University of North Texas
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 2 of 5

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders

Principal Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY INCLUDING THE PROCEDURES TO BE USED:

The researcher will spend one week, in the class setting, observing the behavior of the students. A final interview will be conducted by the researcher to determine if the participants see any behavior in the students that could have been influenced by the programming. All interviews will be videotape recorded.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE/ELEMENTS THAT MAY RESULT IN DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE:

The researcher will interview students to determine the television and movies that the students watch on a regular basis. The researcher will spend one week in the class setting observing and video recording the behavior of the students. All interviews will be videotape recorded.

University of North Texas
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 3 of 5

Subject Name _____ Date: _____

Title of Study:

A Deconstruction and Qualitative Analysis of the Consumption of Traditional Entertainment Media by Elementary-Aged Children Diagnosed with Emotional Disorders

Principal Investigator: John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III

DESCRIPTIONS OF PROCEDURES/ELEMENTS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FORESEEABLE RISKS:

No risks are anticipated in this study.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT OR OTHERS:

People (e.g., parents, teachers, researchers) concerned about the effects of entertainment media on children will have the opportunity to potentially gain some insight into the dynamics of children viewing entertainment media and their resulting behaviors. Student participants will receive a pizza party at end of study - if individual parent(s)/guardian(s) agree.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH RECORDS:

All **video tapes and field notes** will be kept by the researcher in a secure location at the researcher's home and destroyed at the completion of the study. All participants' anonymity will be maintained in all public presentations (e.g., dissertation defense) and publications resulting from the research. The video tapes will not be viewed by anyone other than the primary investigator. Anonymity will be maintained by only referencing the results and not specific individuals within the study. No reference will be made to location or person that could result in divulging identity of participants.

University of North Texas
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 4 of 5

REVIEW FOR PROTECTION OF PARTICIPANTS:

This research study will be reviewed and approved, before conducted, by the University of North Texas Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects Phone number (940) 565-3940.

RESEARCH SUBJECTS RIGHTS: I have read or have had read to me all of the above.

John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled.

In case there are problems or questions, I have been told I can call John Lloyd Lowdermilk, III, Principal Investigator of this study and Doctoral Student in Special Education at the University of North Texas at telephone number (940) 369-5363. I may also contact Dr. Lyndal M. Bullock, Faculty Advisor to Mr. Lowdermilk at telephone number (940) 565-3583. I understand my rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

You are making a decision about whether to have your child participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have decided to allow your child to participate, that you have read (or have had read to you) the information provided in this Consent Form and that you have received a copy of it.

Participant's Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

University of North Texas
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Page 5 of 5

For the Investigator

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the person signing above, who, in my opinion, understood the explanation. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research.

Principal Investigator's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Part I

1. What do you like to do for fun?
2. How many hours of television do you watch per day?
3. What are your favorite television shows?
4. Who are your favorite characters on your television show?
5. Why are they your favorite characters?
6. When you watch "insert program," how does it make you feel?

Part II

1. Tell me about your favorite television character and what influences s/he has on you.
2. Do you like to pretend that you are "insert favorite character's name"? Why?
3. If yes, how does it make you feel pretending to be "insert favorite character's name"?
4. Do you ever get in trouble at home or at school for pretending to be "insert favorite character's name"?
5. Is television real? Why/Why not?

APPENDIX D
QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHER

1. What grade level do you teach?
2. Tell me about the television programming you watch.
3. How many hours a day do you typically watch television?
4. Do your students watch television?
5. Tell me how you know?
6. In what ways do you think that television affects children's behavior?
7. Can you give me specific examples of how it has affected your students' behaviors?
8. Are you a parent?
9. If yes, do you allow your children to watch television?
10. If yes, tell me how watching television has affected your child's behavior?
11. Can you give me specific examples?
12. Tell me how you feel about children watching television?
13. Can you give me specific examples of why you feel that way?
14. In what ways do you believe that watching television can be positive for children?

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS:
TRANSCRIPTS

[All participants were enrolled in the same first grade classroom.]

W (6 year old Female living with foster parents - First Interview)

DO YOU HAVE CABLE OR SATALITE?

We have the dish network.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

Play.

WHAT TYPE OF PLAY?

Watch my brother Jason play with things.

WHAT DOES HE PLAY?

He plays like a story. Making up things and then telling me it is true. I like to be like him. You know.

DO YOU LIKE TO PLAY ANYTHING ELSE?

I like to play outside.

HOW MANY HOURS OF TELEVISION DO YOU WATCH PER DAY?

I watch every single day. Non-stop, after I do homework.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS?

Lizzie McGuire. It comes on Disney.

DO YOU WATCH IT A LOT?

Yes. I also watch *Sister, Sister* and *Lilo and Stitch*. When it is time to go to bed, I shut the T.V. off.

WHAT TIME DO YOU GO TO BED?

Eight or 8:30 and I like to watch a lot of the Disney Channel.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

Lilo and Stitch.

WHY ARE THEY YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

Because they are funny.

ANY OTHER REASON?

Because they stay his brothers and sisters and no one gets left behind.

DO YOU WATCH ANY SHOWS THAT YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO?

I don't get into trouble for watching anything. If something is bad, I can't watch it.

COULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?

I can't, but it is really hard for me because I have nightmares.

WHY DO YOU HAVE NIGHTMARES?

Because, when I was younger it was bad and I don't like it (SHE IS GETTING UPSET).

DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE TALKING ABOUT IT?

No.

CAN I ASK YOU ONE MORE QUESTION ABOUT TELEVISION?

That is fine - I don't want to talk about my mother.

NOT A PROBLEM. I JUST HAVE THIS LAST QUESTION. WHEN YOU WATCH

LILO AND STITCH, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Happy. Because they are always helping and being nice to each one.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT LILO AND STITCH AND WHAT INFLUENCES THEY HAVE ON YOU?

He saves his cousins. He always tears up the house when his friends come over.

DO YOU LIKE TO PRETEND THAT YOU ARE EITHER LILO OR STITCH?

No.

WHY NOT?

I don't have all of their stuff.

DO YOU EVER GET IN TROUBLE AT HOME OR SCHOOL FOR PRETENDING TO BE LILO OR STITCH?

I never pretend anything.

IS TELEVISION REAL?

No.

WHY NOT?

It is fake because people don't really get to not be left behind.

IS ANY T.V. REAL?

Sometimes.

COULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?

It is really hard for me to think.

IS THE NEWS REAL?

Yes.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NEWS AND *LILO AND STITCH*?

The news is really important and *Lilo and Stitch* is not.

WHY?

Because the news is about what happens to people and the show is about what is make believe.

P (6 year old Male - lives with biological parents - First
Interview)

DO YOU HAVE CABLE OR SATALITE?

Cable.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

Well, I like playing computers.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH COMPUTERS?

I like play soldier, if he breaks, I can turn it off.

HOW MANY HOURS OF TELEVISION DO YOU WATCH PER DAY?

Uhh, I don't watch television a whole bunch - I do watch *Fear Factor* most weeks. Sometimes I don't watch it at all.

WHAT AEW YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS?

Ummm. *Fear Factor*.

WHAT CHANNEL DOES THAT COME ON?

I don't really know - but, my mom starts it when she sees it. I also like watching racing and basketball. And, I watch

VeggieTales because they are good for me. What makes them good for me is that they help me learn about God.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS ON YOUR TELEVISION SHOW?

I kinda have trouble with that.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I don't really know what the characters are. I don't know their real names, but I like the person on *Fear Factor* who tells them what to do.

YOU MEAN THE HOST?

Yes. Him.

WHY DO YOU LIKE *FEAR FACTOR*?

Well, because it is cool. My mom is scared because she thinks the things are real. I say it is not real.

WHY IS IT COOL?

Cause they do neat stuff that is hard to do. And because they eat a lot of gross stuff that I don' think is cool. Once I stood in a pool like *Fear Factor*. I also crawl on the floor. I was just practicing in case I get on the show.

WHEN YOU WATCH *FEAR FACTOR*, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Ahh- it makes me feel (pause) it makes me feel like playing the computer. It helps me learn - *Fear Factor* does.

HOW DOES IT HELP YOU LEARN?

Ohh. Me watching, I have to see how they do it and how there bodies move.

HAVE YOU EVER GOTTEN INTO TROUBLE FOR ACTING OUT SOMETHING FROM THE SHOW?

No.

DOES YOUR MOM KNOW THAT YOU PRETEND THAT YOU ARE ON *FEAR FACTOR*?

She does not want me pretending but I have never gotten into trouble.

DO YOU EVER WATCH ANYTHING ELSE ON TELEVISION?

No.

WHAT ABOUT SHOWS WITH VIOLENCE?

I don't like them because of my dad.

WHAT DOES YOUR FATHER HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

I see him fight with mom and, sometimes with the neighbors and I really, don't like it.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT THE HOST OF *FEAR FACTOR* AND WHAT INFLUENCES HE HAS ON YOU.

Because he tells all of the gamers and he tells cool stuff and I know that he did it himself.

DO YOU LIKE TO PRETEND THAT YOU ARE THE HOST?

No.

WHY NOT?

But, I want to be him when I grow up. I want to be the host.

Because I don't have the job yet.

HOW WOULD IT MAKE YOU FEEL BEING THE HOST?

Happy, but not really. Because playing is more fun.

DO YOU EVER GET IN TROUBLE AT HOME OR SCHOOL FOR PRETENDING TO BE THE HOST OR PRETENDING TO BE A CONTESTANT ON *FEAR FACTOR*?

I don't get in trouble because I don't do anything from the show that is dangerous. I just balance myself on the sidewalk and pretend to crawl around. I don't get in trouble at school because I don't pretend at school.

IS TELEVISION REAL?

Some things are real, but some TV is not real because you can see the animation. Some people just make up the stories. *Batman* is not real. But my dad made a film while we were in Mexico. That is real.

WHY IS TELEVISION NOT REAL?

Because some people just make up stories.

B (7 year old female. Lives with biological mother and stepfather - First Interview)

FIRST, DO YOU HAVE A SATELITE OR CABLE?

I'm not sure what it is called, but the people put it up outside on our roof.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

What I like to do for fun is play on the computer.

WHAT DO YOU PLAY ON THE COMPUTER?

I just play games.

HOW MANY HOURS OF TELEVISION DO YOU WATCH PER DAY?

Television?

YES

Actually, I just do it for a little bit.

HOW LONG IS A LITTLE BIT?

I don't know.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU WATCH MORE THAN AN HOUR PER DAY?

Actually, I do.

WOULD YOU SAY MORE THAN TWO HOURS PER DAY?

I just do one hour.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS?

I knew you were going to say that. One of them is Most Extreme something.

WHAT ELSE?

I like *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

ARE THERE ANY OTHERS?

Yeah, I think there is one more - let me see - *Tom and Jerry*.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

SpongeBob Square is my favorite, favorite.

DO YOU LIKE SPONGEBOB BETTER THAN MOST EXTREME?

SpongeBob is cool. You know what, when I watch Most Extreme, it is a painful show with Spanish things.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Well, actually I mean that [name deleted] changes it to TLC.

WHO IS [NAME DELETED]?

He is my friend. [According to her teacher, name deleted is one of her other personalities]

SO, YOU WOULD SAY THAT *SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS* IS YOUR FAVORITE?

Yes.

WHEN YOU WATCH *SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS* HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

It makes me feel funny and happy that I am watching it. You know what, I just say [name deleted]. [Name deleted] is not a monster.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT SPONGEBOB AND WHAT INFLUENCE HE HAS ON YOU?

I want to be SpongeBob for Christmas. No, I mean Halloween.

DO YOU LIKE TO PRETEND THAT YOU ARE SPONGEBOB?

Yeah.

WHY?

Because I like SpongeBob.

HOW DOES PRETENDING TO BE SPONGEBOB MAKE YOU FEEL?

It makes me feel like I am reading. [at this point, she starts talking in another voice that sounds like an adult male.] Ready to get some pizza and go to work. SpongeBob doesn't say that, I made that up [back to her voice.]

DO YOU GET IN TROUBLE FOR PRETENDING TO BE SPONGEBOB?

No. But I do with my imaginary friends not SpongeBob.

WHO ARE YOUR IMAGINARY FRIENDS?

The people that talk to me in my head and use me to talk to other people. They also help me with stuff.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Well, [deleted name] does math. [Deleted name] does reading. [Deleted name] likes to kick people and do karate. [Deleted name] does Mexico talking. [Deleted name] does Spanish talking. [Deleted name] really likes to walk. [Deleted name] likes to collect things in the yard. [Deleted name] loves honey and really collects it. They do not like me watching SpongeBob.

WHY?

I don't know. I don't want to talk about it.

IS TELEVISION REAL?

No. T.V. is not real.

WHY NOT?

Because it is fiction. Fiction means fake, not real. Well, except for my friends.

D (7 year old male - lives with maternal grandmother - First Interview)

DO YOU GET CABLE?

No.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

DirectTV.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

Play my video games like spiderman. I got to the last level, but I can't get past it.

HOW MANY HOURS OF TELEVISION DO YOU WATCH PER DAY?

A lit bit then I go outside and play. I get sweaty then I go in a play with my playstation.

HOW LONG IS A LITTLE BIT?

For a couple of hours.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS?

SpongeBob SquarePants and *Kim Possible*. *Proud Family*.

IS THAT DISNEY?

Yes. So is *Kim Possible*. I also like *Lilo and Stitch*, but sometimes I forget to watch it.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

SpongeBob and Patrick are what I like the most. And there is *Stitch* that I like.

WHY ARE THEY YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

Because they're funny

WHEN YOU WATCH *LILO AND STITCH*, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Makes me feel good inside.

WHY?

Because it is so funny and sad sometimes.

HOW IS IT SAD?

Because, sometimes they get split and they cry. It makes me sad when they are sad. I really like the show because I get to see people that really like each other and take care of each other.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT LILO AND STITCH AND DO THEY HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON YOU?

They do not.

DO YOU LIKE TO PRETEND THAT YOU ARE LILO OR STITCH?

Yeah. But, my sister can sound most like Stitch.

WHY DO YOU LIKE PRETENDING YOU ARE STITCH?

Because he is so funny that I want to act like him.

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL PRETENDING TO BE STITCH?

Funny inside. It makes me feel funny and happy inside.

DO YOU EVER GET IN TROUBLE AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL FOR PRETENDING TO BE STITCH?

No.

IS TELEVISION REAL?

No. Except some that are based on a true story that really happened.

WHY NOT?

Because there is no such thing as SpongeBob being alive or fish talking.

S (7 year old female. Lives with biological parents - First Interview).

DO YOU HAVE DIRECTV OR CABLE?

We have cable.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

Play with my sister, brother, and cousins.

WHAT TYPE OF GAMES DO YOU PLAY?

My sister has a sleeping bag and we had her play in it. I'm the only one that doesn't get one.

HOW MANY HOURS OF TELEVISION DO YOU WATCH PER DAY?

I watch T.V. after homework and until I take a bathe.

WHEN DO YOU TAKE A BATHE?

Before 8:00.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS?

I watch *Kim Possible*.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS ON *KIM POSSIBLE*?

I like Rufus.

WHY DO YOU LIKE RUFUS?

Because he is silly and when people talk about him, he goes "Hey." Kim is always helping people and she does not yell. I don't like it when people yell.

WHO YELLS?

My parents and my friends when they don't like me.

WHEN YOU WATCH *KIM POSSIBLE*, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Mmmmm. Silly

ANYTHING ELSE?

Sometimes it kinda makes me angry. Because the bad guys are really mean.

HOW ARE THEY MEAN?

They be telling - OK, they be telling people that they created it, when they stole it.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF BAD GUYS IN TELEVISION?

I don't like them. I like to be watching people that are nice. I like shows where good people win. Like *Kim Possible*.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT RUFUS AND WHAT INFLUENCES HE HAS ON YOU?

Sometimes I like to act like Rufus.

WHY?

Because sometimes he acts silly and I like to act silly like other people.

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL PRETENDING TO BE RUFUS?

Like I want to be him.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE HIM?

Because he is silly. [Participant raises voice and hits table with her fist] I ain't got any more answers. They are going out of my head.

DO YOU EVER GET IN TROUBLE FOR PRETENDING TO BE RUFUS?

At home. Because it is too loud and I repeat it over and over again. OK, I got no more. It out of my head.

ONE LAST QUESTION AND THEN WE WILL BE FINISHED. IS TELEVISION REAL?

No. Because animals on T.V. talk but they don't really talk, it is the people.

WHY NOT?

Because animals don't even talk to me. It is fiction. Non-fiction is real. No more. I want to go back to class.

A (7 year old, female S lives with biological parents - First Interview)

DO YOU HAVE CABLE OR SATALITE?

Satellite.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

Play outside.

WHAT DO YOU PLAY?

Everything.

CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?

We'll play hide-n-seek.

HOW MANY HOURS OF TELEVISION DO YOU WATCH PER DAY?

Hour.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS?

Scooby-Doo

ANYTHING ELSE?

That is my favorite.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE CAHRACTERS ON *SCOOBY-DOO*?

Daphne and Fred.

WHY ARE THEY YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS?

Cause.

CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU MEAN?

I can't answer that. I don't know what you mean.

WHY DO YOU LIKE FRED AND DAPHNE?

Cause they look good.

WHEN YOU WATCH *SCOOBY-DOO*, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Good.

WHY?

Cause they got funny shows.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT DAPHNE AND FRED, DO THEY HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON YOU?

No.

DO YOU LIKE TO PRETEND THAT YOU ARE DAPHNE?

Yes.

WHY?

Cause she likes Fred and Fred is good.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN FRED IS GOOD?

He looks good. When I go to bed, I watch *Scooby-Doo*.

WHICH SCOOPY-DOO SHOW DO YOU LIKE TO WATCH?

Scooby-Doo, Where are you is my favorite.

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL PRETENDING TO BE DAPHNE?

Good.

WHY?

She looks good.

SO YOU WANT TO LOOK LIKE DAPHNE?

PARTICIPANT SHAKES HEAD YES.

WHY?

Cause she looks good.

DO YOU EVER GET IN TROUBLE FOR PRETENDING TO BE DAPHNE?

No.

IS TELEVISION REAL?

No.

WHY NOT?

Cause. I can't answer those questions.

IS DAPHNE SOMEONE YOU COULD EVER MEET?

No.

WHY NOT?

Cause.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY CAUSE?

I could not meet them and they are not real, but I don't understand how to explain it.

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER:
TRANSCRIPT

WHAT GRADE DO YOU TEACH?

First Grade

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A TEACHER?

Over 15 years.

TELL ME ABOUT THE TELEVISION SHOWS THAT YOU WATCH?

I don't watch the networks. I prefer stuff like *Forensics Files*.

I like anything dealing with investigations and documentaries.

DO YOUR STUDENTS WATCH TELEVISION?

Yes.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

They like to talk to me about some of the shows they watch. One of there favorites is *SpongeBob SquarePants*. I also hear them talking about shows with each other. Especially *SpongeBob SquarePants*. I have one student that likes to watch R-movies and talk about them at school.

IS THAT ONE OF THE STUDENTS THAT I AM WORKING WITH?

No. It is another one. He likes to talk about what he sees in them, such as the nudity and that sort of stuff. I had to make it against the rules to talk about those movies.

DO MANY OF YOUR STUDENTS TALK ABOUT THE MORE ADULT THEMED MOVIES?

No. Not too many.

IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THAT TELEVISION AFFECTS CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR?

For some it can wind them up or cause them to have a different outlook. For example, they are more likely to just start talking about sex.

CAN YOU GIVE ME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW IT HAS AFFECTED YOUR STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR?

No. It just pops up. I can't think of anything specific, but I know that it does.

ARE YOU A PARENT?

Yes.

DO YOU ALLOW YOUR CHILDREN TO WATCH TELEVISION?

Yes.

TELL ME HOW WATCHING TELEVISION HAS AFFECTED YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR?

I had to ban *The Three Stooges* because it made them more aggressive, also Wrestling. They also have a better understanding of adult humor than children did at one time.

HOW WOULD DESCRIBE YOUR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL?

No problems.

DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS OK TO LET CHILDREN WATCH TELEVISION?

I don't have a problem with it.

WHY?

It can let them see the world that they would not normally see. Many of the children that live here will never leave and television and the Internet give them opportunities to see what

is out there. My biggest problem with television or the Internet is that younger children can be exposed to things that they do not understand.

CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?

Well, just getting on the Internet children have access to the porn sites and I even found one that tells people how to commit suicide. These type of things are not appropriate really for anyone.

WHAT ABOUT CARTOONS OR STUFF THAT COMES ON THE NETWORKS? I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE ONE OF THE AUTHORS THAT I READ SAID THAT *MR. ROGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD* HAD VIOLENCE.

Some people go overboard but I do think that parents should make sure that their kids are not watching really violent shows or porn. Even some of the shows like *Friends*.

APPENDIX G

SYNOPSIS AND INFORMATION OF TELEVISION SERIES PARTICIPANTS
STATED AS BEING THEIR FAVORITES

Fear Factor (TVTome.com, 2004)

Fear Factor is a reality program on NBC. Contestants, three males and three females, compete in extreme games designed to take them to their limit. For example, on one episode contestants were required to eat a blended drink consisting of flies, maggots, and worms. Contestants are eliminated based on either their unwillingness or failure to complete a task.

Forensic Files (TVTome.com, 2004)

Forensic Files is a reality program that takes the viewer behind the scenes of a forensic investigation. Real cases are presented and the science behind the investigation is explained.

Kim Possible (TVTome.com, 2004)

Kim Possible is about a teenaged girl, Kim, and her friend, Ron Stoppable, who fight evil on a regular basis, saving the world many times from evil. According to TVTome.org, *Kim Possible* was nominated for "Outstanding Children's Animated Program" and "Outstanding Performer In an Animated Program."

Lilo & Stitch (TVTome.com, 2004)

Lilo & Stitch is based on the movie *STITCH: THE MOVIE*. Dr. Jacques, the evil hamster who was imprisoned at the end of *STITCH: THE MOVIE*, hires ex-Captain Gantu to find the other experiments before *Lilo & Stitch*. According to TVTome.org Disney plans on having all 625 experiments printed on upcoming merchandise. Each experiment will constitute an episode.

Lizzie McGuire (TVTome.com, 2004)

Lizzie McGuire starring Hilary Duff shows the day-to-day life of average middle school student Lizzie McGuire. Instead of focusing on popular, rich kids (e.g. *90210*), Lizzie shows that you don't have to be popular or rich to enjoy school. According to TVTome. Org, The television program also spawned a film *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* in 2003.

The Proud Family (TVTome.com, 2004)

The Proud Family airing on the Disney Channel follows the adventure of 14-year-old Penny Proud, while she comes to grips with her family. She sees her family as being unusual, but she loves them.

The Proud Family Rap (TVTome.org)

F is for family, and mine's the bomb.

A is for attitude, 'cause we got it going on.

M is for my Suga Mama, she is crazy cool.

I is for "I can't clean up my room now, I gotta go to school."

L is for love, that's what my family's all about.

Y is for "If you don't watch my show, you're gonna be mad 'cause you missed out."

Sister,Sister (TVTome.com, 2004)

According to TVTome.org, "*Sister, Sister* first aired in April 1994 as a mid-season replacement on ABC, and continued on that network until the series moved to the WB in the fall of

1995." The series was about two sisters separated at birth but united when they were 14. One was from the suburbs and the other from the city.

Scooby-Doo, Where are You? (TVTome.com, 2004)

According to TVTome.org, "*Scooby Doo, Where Are You?* premiered on September 13, 1969." This cartoon sleuths and a dog named Scooby-Doo. These investigators were Daphne Blake, Fred Jones, Velma Dinkley, Norville "Shaggy" Rogers, and their mascot, Scooby-Doo. They traveled around in a green van - "The Mystery Machine" - solving mysteries.

The show has been around in some format since 1969 including two feature length films, *Scooby-Doo* (2002) and *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed* (2004) starring Freddie Prince, Jr., Sarah Michelle Gellar, Mathew Lillard, and Linda Cardellini.

SpongeBob SquarePants (TVTome.com, 2004)

SpongeBob SquarePants lives in the undersea township of Bikini Bottom, along with an assortment of many supporting characters.

The show launched in the summer of 1999, and quickly became one of the highest-rated cartoons on television (TVTome.org). The show has a wide and loyal fan base. In fact, many celebrities are taken away by SpongeBob's antics.

Tom and Jerry (TVTome.com, 2004)

Tom and Jerry is a weekly cartoon from the 1950s that has been repackaged by the Cartoon Network. Tom (the cat) and Jerry (the mouse) are the main characters of the series that features Tom attempting to capture and eat Jerry. In the end Jerry always escapes.

VeggieTales (TVTome.com, 2004)

VeggieTales is a computer animated children's video series. The series debuted in 1993 with its first video, *Where's God When I'm S-Scared?* - according to TVTome.org, it is the first full-length, computer-animated film to be produced in the United States (since it was released while Disney and Pixar's *Toy Story* was still in production). Each episode teaches Bible stories and moral lessons in new and creative ways. While this is not a program that airs on the television, it is included because it is viewed in a television format.

APPENDIX H
TELEVISION RATING SYSTEM EXPLAINED

Rating: TVY All Children MPAA.org (2004)

Appropriate for all ages.

Rating: TVY7 Directed to Older Children MPAA.org (2004)

This program is designed for children age 7 and above. It may be more appropriate for children who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality.

Rating: TVG General Audience MPAA.org (2004)

According to MPAA.COM, ost parents would find this program suitable for all ages. It contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.

Rating: TVPG Parental Guidance Suggested MPAA.COM (2004)

This program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children.

Rating: TV14 Parents Strongly Cautioned MPAA.org (2004)

This program contains some material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. "Parents are strongly urged to exercise greater care in monitoring this program and are cautioned against letting children under the age of 14 watch unattended," (MPAA.COM).

Rating: TVMA Mature Audience Only MPAA.org (2004)

This program is intended for adults, which is considered by MPAAA.COM as anyone over 17.

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