CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

SESAME STREET

A Report on its History and Development and its Utilization within the Kindergarten Curriculum

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education

by

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June, 1974
The thesis of Peter Antony Lumsden is approved:

Committee Chairman

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December, 1973
To my wife, Nancy, with love.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr. Sarah Moskovitz, Dr. Rose Bromwich, Dr. Margaret Thompson, Dr. Leo Martucci, and to my parents for their patience, encouragement, and helpfulness during the research and writing of this thesis.
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ABSTRACT

SESAME STREET

A Report on Its History and Development and Its Utilization Within the Kindergarten Curriculum

by

Peter Antony Lumsden

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The major portion of the report details the history of the popular children's television program, Sesame Street, from its inception through its development, implementation, and evaluation by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey. The more noteworthy criticisms of Sesame Street are presented, with special emphasis given to the research of Dr. Herbert A. Sprigle. The criticisms serve to illustrate the controversy over Sesame Street's use in the preschool curriculum.

The second portion of the report concerns a survey administered to the 37 Kindergarten teachers of the Santa Monica Unified School District to determine teacher attitudes toward the program and the utilization of Sesame Street within the individual Kindergarten curricula.
The results of the 20 responses to the questionnaire reveal that the program is not used in the curricula, but related materials such as Sesame Street books, records, and puppets are used on an infrequent basis by 60 percent of the teachers. However, 65 percent of the teachers recommend at-home viewing to their students because they consider the program to be good readiness for the first grade. When asked to rate Sesame Street and four other Kindergarten activities on the basis of their importance to the learning and development of the child, Sesame Street was judged the least important.

The conclusions drawn from the results are that Sesame Street is valuable as an at-home preparation for concepts taught in the first grade such as reading and number skills. Kindergarten teachers place a greater emphasis on psychomotor, verbal, and aural skills in their curricula and therefore Sesame Street is not used because Kindergarten teaching priorities are not compatible with the goals most emphasized on Sesame Street.
CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Four years ago on November 10, 1969, the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) began its first season of Sesame Street. One hundred and thirty hour-long programs were created to test the effectiveness of television in educating preschool children. This venture was unique in that over a year of research costing more than $1,000,000 went into determining what techniques were most effective in teaching children via the television medium. The goals of the program included the teaching of letters, numbers, geometric forms, cognitive skills, and increasing awareness of the physical and social environment. Although the Sesame Street series was aimed at all three-, four-, and five-year-olds, particular emphasis was placed on reaching the disadvantaged child who often enters the first grade without the intellectual background of his middle-class schoolmates (Cooney, 1970a).

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey, was hired to perform an evaluation of Sesame Street to determine whether or not it was actually teaching
preschoolers. The results of the year-long study revealed that Sesame Street had significantly taught preschoolers in its specific goal areas. Children from varied economic backgrounds and geographic locations all learned through watching the show. Also, for children who viewed Sesame Street as part of their Head Start or preschool program, viewing was more beneficial than the same amount of viewing at home (Ball & Bogatz, 1970).

As expected, there has been a great deal of criticism aimed at Sesame Street since that first season. The most serious attack came from Dr. Herbert A. Sprigle (1971, 1972). He produced evidence that, when it is used as the main component of a preschool curriculum with extensive follow-up by the teacher, Sesame Street does not prepare the child to compete on a level with middle-class children by the time they reach the first grade.

With evidence of the dramatic ability of Sesame Street to teach at home and in Head Start settings on one hand, and research showing that it fails to prepare poverty children for the first grade when used as a basis for a preschool curriculum on the other, the question arises as to what is Sesame Street's place in the early education of children. Is the program only useful to children viewing at home or does it have an active part in the curriculum of
a pre-first grade classroom? Indeed, is Sesame Street useful in any setting?

The major portion of this report will detail the inception, development, and implementation of Sesame Street, the results of the Educational Testing Service's survey, and the popular criticisms of the program. A second portion will attempt to find some possible answers to the questions posed above by analyzing the results of a questionnaire administered to the 37 Kindergarten teachers of the Santa Monica Unified School District to determine their attitudes toward Sesame Street and if they have found a useful place for the program, or its related materials, in their daily curricula. It is hoped that the results will help clarify the role Sesame Street plays in early education.
CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND

The Inception of Sesame Street

A review of the history of Sesame Street must begin with its creator, Joan Ganz Cooney. Mrs. Cooney earned her degree in education at the University of Arizona and then worked as a newspaper reporter before moving to New York. She found employment with WNDT-TV, a New York City National Educational Television (NET) station, and subsequently produced a documentary entitled Poverty, Anti-Poverty, and the Poor, for which she won an Emmy Award in 1966 (Wylie, 1970).

At a party given by Mrs. Cooney to celebrate her achievement, she began talking with Lloyd Morisett, who at that time was Vice President of the Carnegie Corporation. The conversation came around to the topic of television and young children. As Mrs. Cooney describes it, "Something clicked in Lloyd's mind. Television and preschoolers. Was I interested?" (Forgotten..., 1969). Joan Cooney said she was indeed interested and was hired as a research consultant to the Carnegie Corporation, investigating the problem of television and the preschool child.
By November of 1966, Mrs. Cooney had completed her research report and submitted it to the Corporation. During her investigations she had been particularly struck with five important facts:

1. Ninety-six percent of American homes have at least one television set, and even among families with incomes of $5000 or less, 90 percent own television sets (A lot of..., 1971).

2. There are 12 million three-, four, and five-year-olds in the United States (Little, 1969).

3. Television is turned on 55 to 60 hours per week in the homes of preschool children. The national average for preschool watching is 30 hours per week (Cooney, 1969), and that is 12 hours more per week than for adults. By the time children reach the first grade they have spent more time in front of a TV set than they will spend in front of their teachers for the next five years (Cooney, 1970). That is over 4000 hours of watching (Sesame Street, 1969). Since TV fare fills such an enormous part of preschoolers' lives, these 12 million are in danger of being intellectually stunted for lack of mental stimulation or from being exposed to the wrong kind of excitement on television (Little, 1969).

4. Between birth and age four, half of all growth in human intelligence takes place, and another 30 percent
occurs between the ages of four and eight (Wylie, 1970). These years from birth to the time a child enters school are considered crucial to the intellectual development of the child. It is the time when the groundwork is laid for school achievement (Changing..., 1968).

5. The growing consensus among specialists in early childhood education is that children's education should begin long before the age of five or six (Cooney, 1970b). In fact, the National Education Association recommended in 1966 that all children be placed in preschools at the age of four (Little, 1969; Wylie, 1970). However, this proposal would cost an estimated 2.75 billion dollars, according to Mrs. Cooney (Little, 1969), and that figure did not include the expense for additional classrooms.

In effect, Joan Cooney discovered that there were a lot of preschoolers watching a lot of TV at a time of their lives that was crucial to their intellectual and social development and whose formal schooling was economically unfeasible. Her conclusion was to use the channel of communication that was reaching the preschool children to supply them with learning as enjoyable as playing (Boutwell, 1968). The idea for a preschool educational television program was born.
During 1967, Joan Cooney worked as a full-time consultant for the Carnegie Corporation gathering financial support for her new venture (Wylie, 1970). She succeeded in obtaining donations from such prestigious groups as the Ford Foundation, Markle Foundation, United States Office of Education, Office of Economic Opportunity, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Project Head Start, the National Endowment of the Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Her idea seemed promising to many important people for she was able to raise eight million dollars for a full year of research for the show and a second year of pretesting, pilot programs, seven months of broadcasting, and a national evaluation (A lot..., 1971).

The Development of Sesame Street

Until the summer of 1968, the show had been largely in the idea stage, but this was to change very quickly. Five three-day seminars were organized that summer by Mrs. Cooney to develop a set of educational goals for the program. Seminar topics included discussions of (a) social, moral, and affective development, (b) language and reading, (c) mathematical and numerical skills, (d) reasoning and problem solving, and (e) perception. Invited to the
seminars were 75 distinguished teachers, authors, film makers, perceptual psychologists, artists, education prof-

essors, psychiatrists, advertising men, and TV producers (Little, 1969). By deliberately including representatives

of the television media, Mrs. Cooney ensured that the goals chosen for the program could be successfully implemented

within the limitations of the television camera. The broadly stated goals agreed upon for the program included

the following:

1. Recognition of numbers 1 through 10, and simple counting ability.

2. Recognition of the letters of the alphabet and the sounds most commonly associated with them.

3. Basic language skills such as the ability to handle grammatical concepts, to differentiate among prepo-
sitions, and to speak in whole sentences.

4. Concepts of space and time.

5. The beginning of logical concepts such as logical classifications and concepts of relationships.

6. The beginning of mathematical concepts.

7. The growth of reasoning skills such as cause and effect, and reasoning by association and inference.
8. Beginning awareness of basic emotions, such as aggression, fear and anger, as a step toward mastering them (Horn, 1968).

Throughout the seminars there was a concern for the intellectual and social aspects of the child and this was reflected in the formation of not only cognitive goals, but also of affective ones.

While she was doing the research study for the Carnegie Corporation and formulating the educational goals for the program, Joan Cooney had a special concern for one portion of the 12 million target audience. Joan Cooney (1969b) describes in her own words:

While we are interested in creating a series for all children between the ages of three and five we are especially concerned with reaching the so-called disadvantaged child wherever he may live. Our special concern for reaching the disadvantaged child stems from the fact that this child often begins school as much as a year and a half behind his middle-class peers in terms of intellectual development, and this gap tends to widen as he continues in school. With it grows a sense of inadequacy and defeatism, a loss of motivation and, ultimately, a tragic failure to realize his potential as a person.

Joan Ganz Cooney now had the concept of an educational television program for preschoolers and the goals to aim for in producing the shows. All that remained was the immense task of gathering together all the necessary
talents and directing them toward the molding of a unique blend of entertainment and education.

In the fall of 1968, Joan Cooney founded the Children's Television Workshop (CTW), an affiliate of National Educational Television. She divided the Workshop into four areas to handle the various aspects of the program: (a) administration, (b) information, (c) research, and (d) production.

**Administration.** From the administrative standpoint, Joan Cooney, along with Robert Davidson who had previously worked for the Columbia Broadcasting System, was in charge of organizing and coordinating the various areas of the project. A 12-man board of advisors and consultants was formed to aid Mrs. Cooney and Mr. Davidson. Three of the distinguished members of this board were Gerald S. Lesser, Professor of Education and Developmental Psychology at Harvard Graduate School, J. McVicker Hunt, Advisor to the National Laboratory on Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois, and Paul Henry Mussen of the University of California at Berkeley (Little, 1969: Sesame Street, 1969).

**Information.** Robert A. Hatch, a former director of public information for the Peace Corps in Washington, D.C., was hired by Mrs. Cooney to handle the promotional aspects
of the program which had been given the title of Sesame Street. Robert Hatch described the show as an "experiment in community education," and that it did not matter how good a show they produced if it failed to reach its intended audience (Stretch, 1969). With an intended audience of 12 million children that cut across every social and economic status in every part of America, the program's public relations project began to assume monumental proportions. Hatch launched a major promotional campaign using every media available: newspapers and national magazines, but also "soul" radio stations, black publications, comic book syndicates, neighborhood associations, mothers' groups, PTAs, church and welfare organizations, Head Start centers, nursery schools, and libraries. The National Council of Negro Women and the National Council of Jewish Women helped distribute information brochures, arranged for placement of TV sets in nursery schools and day care centers, and arranged informal groups of parents and children to watch the show and participate in follow-up activities (Stretch, 1969). Even the major television networks helped in promotion. The Xerox Corporation sponsored a half-hour special on NBC to introduce the show, and ABC and CBS also devoted air time to publicize the series (Cooney, 1970b). A monthly parent-teacher guide to Sesame Street was distributed,
listing the educational elements of each show and suggesting follow-up activities and games to reinforce what was learned (Stretch, 1969). The CTW Book Committee was formed under the auspices of the National Book Company Incorporated and created three bibliographies of children's books as a supplement to the series (Caruba, 1970). Every conceivable means of informing the public about the series was employed, and over $600,000 was spent on promotion before the first season had even begun.

Research. Dr. Edward L. Palmer was appointed head of the research department of the Children's Television Workshop on June 30, 1968. Dr. Palmer had received his degree at the Oregon College of Education and had gone on to earn the MA and PhD degrees at Michigan State University specializing in the Design and Development of Educational Research. Dr. Palmer had previously worked with the Teaching Research Division of the Oregon State System of Higher Education, pursuing a study of children's television viewing behavior under the sponsorship of the U.S. Office of Education. Dr. Palmer's initial task was to establish goals for the series, test for appeal, and test for achievement (Palmer, 1970).

a. Establishing goals. Late in 1968. Dr. Palmer and his research staff reviewed the goals that were set up
during the previous summer. Priority goals were selected and these broadly-stated goals were rewritten in behavioral terms (see Appendix A). Now that the research staff knew exactly what behavior skills would be taught by the program, they went about collecting ideas and strategies they felt would teach to these objectives through the television medium. A writer's workbook was established to catalogue these ideas and each goal had a section to aid in production of the animated and live segments of the program (Reeves, 1970).

b. Testing for Appeal. Mrs. Cooney had expressed the opinion that you "cannot change viewing habits or achieve significant impact with programs shorter than one hour in duration" (Morris, 1969). Therefore, the show had to be interesting enough to sustain the attention of a preschooler for sixty minutes "without compromising the instructional objectives," according to Dr. Palmer (1969). He and his research staff had to find out just what does interest three-, four-, and five-year-olds, and what appealing techniques could be used to keep the preschooler from "tuning out." In Dr. Palmer's words:

Every available form of popular film and television fare was tested for appeal. To the extent possible, only the elements most capable of catching and holding the attention of the children were incorporated into the program (1970).
But how do you measure the attention of a preschooler? You can chart when he ignores the television by looking away, but what if he simply loses interest without finding some other interesting pastime? As a solution to this problem, Dr. Palmer developed a technique using what he termed a "distractor." A child was placed in front of a TV screen on which was shown the film to be tested for its attention-holding power. Off to the right of the subject was placed a slide projector screen on which interesting slides were shown every eight seconds. When a child became uninterested with the TV film, his reaction could be charted by recording when, and for what duration, he was "distracted" by the slide projector. Dr. Palmer used this technique extensively and gradually compiled a list of what preschoolers like to see on TV (i.e., those things which hold their attention), and what they do not attend to. Some of the results were that children like to watch commercials, cartoons, animals, and young children, and to listen to word play, alliteration, and adults talking to children they could see. Some of the things that are boring to preschoolers are seeing adults full-face and talking to the viewers, puns and satire, and too much time spent on one subject (Sesame at One, 1970). This information was relayed to the production
department which began filming teaching segments using the ideas and strategies compiled in the writer's workbook.

The discovery that preschoolers disliked too much time spent on one subject formed the basis for the program's format. In order to hold the audience's attention, teaching segments could last no more than five minutes with many being only 30 seconds long. The use of a slow teaching segment bounded by fast-paced segments was also used extensively because the change of pace attracted the viewer's attention. The fast pace is therefore necessary to hold the preschool audience's attention for the program's entire 60 minutes (Palmer, 1969).

The production department filmed over 30 pieces of program material which were then turned over to Dr. Palmer for testing with the distractor. Much of the animated shorts were in commercial form which was a direct result of Mrs. Cooney's suggestion. In her initial study for Carnegie she found that children were fascinated by commercials with fast action, catchy music, and cartoons (Wylie, 1970). This prompted a further investigation by Dr. Palmer (A lot..., 1971) who found that commercials caught the attention of children because they were, above all, a change of pace, have jingles, use slapstick, and carry a short, simple, straightforward message. The fact that children often sang
or repeated commercials gave rise to the idea of presenting the alphabet and numbers in a catchy commercial format. One particular alphabet commercial was called the "J-spot." This depicted two children observing the letter J in the sky and commenting on it before an echoing voice proclaims its true name. The "J-spot" was first tested in front of the distractor and later was shown to day care center four-year-olds in New York City. Three pairs of children viewed the film. The first group saw it once, the second twice, and the third group watched it six times. The results showed that the third group, after seeing it six times, could identify and write the letter J, while the other two groups could do neither. This demonstrated a third key concept, besides fast pace and commercial learning spots, and that was repetition as the key to learning (Little, 1969). Repetition was considered essential to insure the maximum planned effect, especially in regard to teaching letters and counting ability.

From these three discoveries, further testing was done on pace, repetition, and combinations of live-action film and animation in the commercial format to sell preschoolers on the alphabet, numbers, and other educational concepts. In addition, Dr. Palmer undertook studies to determine the competence range of preschoolers when using
a variety of teaching methods and techniques. In Dr. Palmer's words (Who's afraid..., 1970):

Later, a number of small studies were undertaken in order to learn which conventions of film and television the children could understand (e.g., departures from "real time"; departures from reality; character premises underlying the behavior of performers; various forms of humor; visual puns and visual analogies, to mention a few). Other studies evaluated the effect of presenting brief elements under various schedules of repetition and spacing; of presenting such elements with and without preliminary explanations; of presenting the approaches to a given goal separately or in combination; with and without an adult voice dubbed over a given visual segment, with or without voices of children commenting on a particular visual presentation, and so on. Another type of study focused on the problem of eliciting verbal and motor forms of overt responses among viewing children.

The preceding description was presented to give the reader some idea of the extent to which Dr. Palmer and his team went while researching the program's format. Since there was no precedent for a children's educational program on the scale of Sesame Street, Dr. Palmer and his staff literally had to be pioneers in this phase of early education. Indeed, over $1 million was spent in the year of formative research before the series was even presented on television.

C. Testing for Achievement. The final phase of pre-broadcast research consisted of testing for achievement. Five hour-long pilot programs were filmed in June and July of 1969 and, during the last week of July and the
first week of August, four independent studies evaluated these five programs. Two studies were conducted with 60 black and white four-year-olds in Philadelphia where the shows were aired over a little-known UHF channel owned by the local education station. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey, had been contracted to perform an independent evaluation of the first year of Sesame Street and at that time was in the process of completing a battery of tests to measure achievement in the specific goal areas of the program. The preschoolers from the Philadelphia sample were pre- and post-tested on five items from the ETS test battery. These included (a) body parts, (b) numbers, (c) letters, (d) forms, and (e) classification. Two additional studies were conducted in New York City day care centers. The first study observed the reactions of 24 four-year-olds while they viewed the programs in a group situation. The second recorded the attention of ten children who viewed just two of the pilots individually with the distractor. On the basis of the test scores and observational data, Dr. Palmer and his staff made recommendations for improving the shows (Reeves, 1970).

Production. Joan Cooney appointed David Connell head of production for Sesame Street. He had produced the popular children's program, "Captain Kangaroo," for twelve
years but was intrigued by the idea of a children's program that would educate while it entertained. Sesame Street was slated to debut on November 10, 1969, and to continue five days a week for 26 weeks. There would be 163 NET stations across the country broadcasting the show, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. This was to allow for the greatest possible exposure to the preschool audience. The responsibility of Mr. Connell and his staff was to review each of the curriculum goals and think up interesting contexts and situations in which to present them. These ideas were added to the writer's workbook and then sent to the three departments of production: animation, puppetry, and live cast (A lot..., 1971).

The animated alphabet and number commercials were created by 36 film companies because of the considerable length of time required to make them (TV's switched..., 1970). The animation costs were very high, over $1 million, but no segments were longer than 90 seconds and some were even as short as ten seconds. These commercials were repeated a dozen or more times during the course of a week's programming to boost retention (Scott, 1969; Forgotten..., 1969).

As previously mentioned, the preliminary research for the series found that children like seeing puppets and
that they were good attention-holding devices, and so David Connell hired Jim Hensen and his Muppets to aid in the non-animated learning portions. Ernie and Bert, Oscar the Grouch, the Cookie Monster, Kermit the Frog, Professor Hastings, Big Bird, and the Anything People proved to be the biggest attraction of the program.

Black and white human hosts were chosen to "provide the show with continuity and also reinforce the educational elements of the program" and to "give the show the human warmth so essential to young viewers," according to Dr. Palmer (1969). Bob McGrath (Bob), Loretta Long (Susan), Will Lee (Mr. Hooper), Brandon Maggart and Jim Catusi (Buddy and Jim), and Matt Robinson (Gordon) were the human half of the cast. Matt Robinson was originally hired as a producer for Sesame Street but when David Connell was having difficulty in filling the part of Gordon, Matt Robinson auditioned for the role and was given the part (Culhane, 1970).

After the five pilot programs had been studied and the research results had been used to modify programming, David Connell began gearing for full production. The cost of preparing one Sesame Street show for broadcast was $28,000 but, with such a large potential audience, it was
hoped that the cost-per-child ratio would be quite economical (Who's afraid..., 1970).

The Implementation of Sesame Street

As November 10, 1969, arrived, it became apparent that the success of Sesame Street would be measured by how many preschoolers it attracted. The CBS Television Network generously funded a Nielson rating survey to determine how many American homes were watching the show. The results revealed that 1.9 million televisions were tuned in on the program daily with an estimated 4 million viewers (TV's switched..., 1970). It seemed that Robert Hatch had performed a very successful publicity campaign but it was still necessary to determine if the program was reaching its prime audience, the disadvantaged child. To find out, the Daniel Yankelovich Inc. public opinion polling firm was commissioned in March of 1970 to do a study of 500 families in the black Bedford-Stuyvesant section of New York. The firm interviewed homes which met three criteria: (a) a television was present in the home, (b) one or more preschoolers were living there, and (c) the annual family income was less than $5000. The results of the survey revealed that 60 percent of the families viewed the program five times a week, 32 percent watched Sesame Street more than once
daily, and 90 percent of the preschoolers were viewing at least twice a week. It appeared that, for the New York area, Sesame Street was reaching its prime target audience (Culhane, 1970).

Possibly the most intriguing and unprecedented aspect of the Sesame Street series was the dependency of production on research. Prior to the opening of Sesame Street, a sample of 210 day care three-, four-, and five-year-olds from New York, Maine, and Tennessee were pretested using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and eight subtests from the ETS test battery. For the first three months of the series, 107 children viewed the program while 103 did not. One-third of the sample was tested after six weeks. The same third and another one-third were tested after 12 weeks, and finally all 107 viewers and 103 non-viewers were tested after three months. Comparisons between the experimental (viewing) groups and control (non-viewing) groups at each stage of the testing gave indications of strengths and weaknesses both in the execution of the curriculum and in the production design. The results were relayed to the production department which modified its future programming accordingly. Because of the continual changes being made in format from the ongoing research, David Connell and his staff could only prepare
each program four or five weeks in advance (Gibbon & Palmer, 1970).

By March of 1970, an estimated six million preschool children were watching Sesame Street. With an $8 million investment, this came out to less than a penny a day per child (Cooney, 1970b). In April of 1970, Sesame Street was presented a Peabody Award as the best children's show and also claimed the distinction of winning three Emmy Awards (TV's switched..., 1970; Sesame at one, 1970). The NET stations carrying the Sesame Street series jumped from the initial 163 in November to over 200 by May of 1970.

In April of 1970, the Children's Television Workshop severed its connection with NET to become an independent company. Joan Cooney was appointed President of CTW while Lloyd Morrisett, the Vice President of the Carnegie Corporation, became Chairman.

The Second Season. The results of research and audience opinion polls of the first experimental season of Sesame Street caused a number of changes in the format for the second and subsequent seasons. Dr. Palmer discovered that the program's goals had underestimated the learning ability of preschoolers, especially the five-year-olds, and so an expanded set of goals was added (see Appendix B). Counting from 1 to 20, simple addition and subtraction,
pre-reading skills such as letter sounds and a small sight vocabulary, and double classification were included to better prepare the older viewers for first grade. A continued interest was expressed for minority preschoolers with the inclusion of a small Spanish-English vocabulary and the extended use of material reflecting black cultural life and language styles (Gibbon & Palmer, 1970).

At the beginning of the second season, CTW also decided to experiment with the teaching of affective and social goals. Three classes of interpersonal behaviors were to be emphasized on the program: (a) conflict resolution, (b) cooperation, and (c) the recognition of differing perspectives. Three programs during the last month of the 1970-1971 season presented these goals in situations using the Muppets and live cast members. Greater emphasis was placed on social and affective goals in the third and following seasons (McDonald & Paulson, 1971).

The research department also discovered that greater learning was achieved when a continuity was present between one program and another. This resulted in the sequencing of blocks of programs so that one could not be shown independently of the others in the series (Tierney, 1971).

Mrs. Cooney also announced a new "utilization" campaign costing over $1 million to be carried out by Robert
Hatch during the second season in a new redoubled effort to reach inner-city children. Mrs. Cooney described it as consisting of "local directors based in fifteen cities who will work out programs to get Sesame Street before a maximum number of deprived city youngsters" (Little, 1970).

The presence of Sesame Street on the networks created another dramatic effect in the major television broadcasters--ABC, NBC, and CBS. They established divisions to upgrade their own children's programming and to create educational programs of their own (Caruba, 1970).

The Evaluation of Sesame Street

In the summer of 1968 when Joan Cooney was organizing the educational goals for the series, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey, was commissioned at a cost of $300,000 to conduct an independent evaluation of Sesame Street's first season. Dr. Samuel Ball (Bogatz & Ball, 1971b) headed the research team that developed three sets of testing instruments from the program's goals. One set of instruments was developed to assess growth in the specific goal areas and in areas where unanticipated learning might occur. A second set was intended to measure the background variables whose presence might affect the amount of learning achieved by a child viewing
Sesame Street. A final group of measures dealt with assessing how many of the 130 hours of programming were viewed by each, what the child did while viewing, and what was actually on the show.

The pretests and post-tests were administered to 1,124 three-, four-, and five-year-olds from advantaged and disadvantaged homes in urban, rural, and suburban areas across the country. The areas chosen were Boston, Phoenix, Philadelphia, Durham, and Marysville, a rural community in northern California. The testing included black, white, and Spanish-speaking preschoolers. In each area a project coordinator was appointed who lived in the community and, to keep the results as valid as possible, members of the communities were trained to explain and administer the tests. The data were collected and reviewed during the summer of 1970.

The results of the evaluation were published in a 450-page volume in October of 1970 entitled, "The First Year of Sesame Street: an Evaluation." In the words of Dr. Ball (1970):

Sesame Street achieved what its fondest friends could only have dared hope for. The extent of the across the board educational gains it achieved really surprised us. Sesame Street had taught 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, from every kind of economic background and geographic location, all manners of educational
skills, not merely counting and the alphabet, but classification, sorting, geometric forms and even problem solving. The more children watched the more they benefitted. Kids in the ghetto who watched five days a week learned more than middle-class children who saw the program less frequently, and 3-year olds who were regular viewers outgained 4-, and 5-year old occasional viewers.

Also, preschoolers who watched Sesame Street daily as a supplement to their regular Head Start or preschool curriculum and were given follow-up by the teacher learned significantly more than matched groups of preschoolers who viewed the program at home.

The success of the first year evaluation of Sesame Street was overshadowed somewhat by the discovery of control group contamination. The only measure that had been taken to assure the control group preschooler could not view Sesame Street was the agreement of his or her mother not to turn on the program in the home. However, some of the subjects had either turned on the program themselves or had seen it at a friend's home and so a second year study was initiated to establish a more reliable control group (Bogatz & Ball, 1972). A sample was chosen from two new sites, Los Angeles, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, because reception of Sesame Street in these two cities depended on either a UHF receiver or a cable hookup on the television set. The sample, which consisted only of
disadvantaged preschoolers, was divided into experimental and control groups and administered a revised series of tests reflecting the expanded goals in the second season (Bogatz & Ball, 1971a). The analysis of this second year evaluation supported the general finding of the initial study in that the show "benefitted the viewer over a range of goal areas," but it was also found that "the new, extended goal areas were not well learned in comparison to the more basic goals carried over from the first year" (Bogatz & Ball, 1972).

In addition, a follow-up study of the disadvantaged preschool subjects of the first year evaluation was conducted by Dr. Ball and his staff. The results from this group who had viewed Sesame Street for two seasons were "positive, but mainly in the new, extended goal areas" (Bogatz & Ball, 1972).

Criticism of Sesame Street

Since its debut in the fall of 1969, Sesame Street has aroused a good deal of criticism, the majority of which occurred during the second and third season. These individual criticisms can be organized into three main categories: (a) those which consider certain aspects of presentation on the series as harmful to the intellectual or
emotional development of the child, (b) those which recommend new strategies to better achieve the stated goals of the program (i.e., constructive criticisms), and (c) those which consider Sesame Street a failure because it has not produced the expected results.

Criticisms of Presentation. The fast pace of Sesame Street which Dr. Palmer considered so necessary to hold the attention of the preschooler was attacked by Frank Garfunkel, Professor of Education at Boston University, as "nurturing irrelevance" and giving "reinforcement to a type of intellectual process that can never engage in sustained and developed thought" (Culhane, 1970). Dr. Gerald S. Lesser (1972), Chairman of CTW's Board of Directors, replied that the program did present slow segments but that these were bounded by fast-moving episodes because "the interest in any particular episode is higher if it creates a pace and mood that looks, sounds, and feels different from one the preceded it." Still, the point is well taken, but it is difficult to imagine Sesame Street sacrificing the viewer attention so necessary to teach to their goals for a slower overall pace. Whether the pace is detrimental to sustained thought warrants further experimentation.

The decision of CTW to portray a happy, uncomplicated view of life on Sesame Street has been criticized by
the television reviewer for the *New Republic* (Sesame Street, 1970). He claims that life is unrealistic on this simulated ghetto street where nobody is "ever genuinely miserable, terrified, or exultant," and where among the adults, according to Urie Bronfenbrenner (1970), "there are no cross words, no conflicts, no difficulties," and the "old, the ugly or the unwanted is simply made to disappear through a manhole." Both these critics felt that children should be shown conditions they must learn to change rather than tolerate. This question of what parts of the real world to include in presentations was also deeply considered by the Workshop's staff. It boiled down to the question of what would the child gain if all the harsh realities of life were shown on the series. It was finally decided that the target audience had "enough conflict in their lives already," according to Joan Cooney (Bronfenbrenner, 1970), and the basic position would be "to show the child what the world is like when people treat each other with decency and consideration," in the hopes that such attitudes would be learned by the viewers (Lesser, 1972).

In an article published in *Young Children*, A. R. Ratliff and R. G. Ratliff (1972) take to task the presentation of aggression on Sesame Street. Quoting CTW's policy
towards this emotion as treating it "as an expected element in human interaction" and trying "to show constructive resources which are possible in dealing with aggression," they suggest that the program actually presents unpunished aggressive acts and, in the case of the Cookie Monster, portrays aggression which is "sometimes materially, and even socially rewarded." The Ratliffs cite the study of Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963) in which children imitated the aggressive actions of puppets to suggest that the disadvantaged child, "who has a history of insufficient reward or low esteem may...identify with the aggressive monster when the creature's behavior is not only bad, but also successful." They asked the Sesame Street staff to take a serious look at all acts of aggression presented on the program and to bring them in line with their goal of presenting constructive ways of dealing with this emotion.

Dr. Lesser (1972) replied that such acts of aggression are a part of the slapstick comedy so prevalent on the program and which often shows one puppet harming another. In this mode of comedy, "the elements of zaniness and harm are not inseparable," according to Dr. Lesser, and therefore the child cannot "extract the aggression from it devoid of its association with the comic portion," in his words.
Slapstick is appealing because of its "incongruity and surprise and not its harmful outcomes."

At present, it is difficult to make a judgement for or against Dr. Lesser's assertion. A future study of slapstick comedy is required to determine whether or not children will model the aggressive element in it.

Another popular criticism of Sesame Street's presentation was voiced by John Holt (1971), and echoed by Dr. Herbert Sprigle (1972), and concerns the fact that adults do most of the talking on the program. Dr. Sprigle reviewed the conversations between adults and children on 36 programs during the third season and concluded that adults talk "90 percent of the time when they are with children." In addition, he found that when a child says something which is "not directly solicited by an adult, it is frequently ignored."

Joan Cooney (Sesame under..., 1971) has acknowledged this fault in the program and replied that children would do more talking on Sesame Street in the future, but from the recent observations of this researcher (1973), adults still dominate conversations with the children on the program and the problem is still apparent.

Constructive Criticisms. John Holt (1971) wrote one of the finest early criticisms of Sesame Street. He
held a positive attitude toward the program, keeping an eye on its great potential, but at the same time he pointed out those facets of Sesame Street that could be modified or made more effective. He began his critique with the statement, "The program asks, 'How can we get children ready to learn what the schools are going to teach them?', instead of 'How can we help them learn what the schools may never teach them?" He urges Sesame Street to place more emphasis not on numbers and letters, but on how to teach children to become better at "learning from the world and people around them." Other criticisms Holt made were directed toward the program's lack of continuity, the absence of scenes showing children figuring out problems, and the lack of emphasis on writing as an extension of speech, as well as the functional use of numbers. Holt also pointed out the untapped potential of the television screen to "convey ideas, information, relationships that cannot be conveyed with words."

In line with John Holt's thoughts on Sesame Street was the article by D. H. Meichenbaum and L. Turk (1972). Their purpose was to systematically review the literature on disadvantaged children in order to state the nature of their deficits. They would then review those cognitive training programs which were designed to overcome these deficits and suggest ways in which the methods used in
these cognitive training programs could be adapted to the Sesame Street format. Meichenbaum and Turk recommended that Sesame Street model ways to (a) comprehend a task, (b) spontaneously produce mediators and strategies, and (c) use such mediators to control nonverbal and interpersonal behaviors. One way in which the program could implement these recommendations, say the authors, would be to have the puppet and human characters think out loud when confronted with a problem to demonstrate how to organize thoughts, how to reflect on the problem to comprehend its meaning, and how to devise strategies to solve the problem and then implement a solution.

As a direct result of the articles by Holt and Meichenbaum and Turk, the research and production departments of CTW expanded the reasoning and problem-solving portions of Sesame Street's curriculum to teach the viewers that "their minds can perform several important functions for them, including pretesting alternative solutions to problems, imaginably before acting, planning a sequence of steps to solve a problem, and guessing intelligently from progressively revealed clues" (Lesser, 1972).

Criticisms of Results. Herbert A. Sprigle, Director of the Learning to Learn School, Inc., of Jacksonville, Florida, looked upon the claims of Sesame Street educating
children for "a penny a day per child" (Cooney, 1970b) as a threat to government funded preschools, such as Head Start. He could foresee Sesame Street inadvertently diverting funds from such programs even though CTW had emphatically stated that it was not a substitute for Head Start.

In order to counteract the economical appeal of the program, Sprigle objected strongly to the claim that Sesame Street could prepare disadvantaged children for the first grade, a hope which CTW encouraged during the first season. Sprigle also challenged the assumption that the program could "narrow the achievement gap which now exists between the disadvantaged and the advantaged child" (1971). To prove his assertions, he matched 24 pairs of five-year-olds on the basis of Binet IQ scores, family background, parent education and occupation, and family income. An experimental group of 24 children attended Head Start kindergartens in which they viewed Sesame Street daily with a follow-up period held immediately afterwards. Additional follow-up material was sent home to the parents. A control group of 24 children attended another program which exposed the children to numbers, letters, shapes, spatial and temporal relationships, language, communication, and listening experiences for 15 to 30 minutes daily in a 1 to 4 teacher-pupil ratio. At the time the two groups entered the first
grade, the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT) was administered to them along with a test in which the children had to draw a figure like themselves. The results showed that the control group scored significantly higher on all six measures of the MRT and on the draw-yourself test. Dr. Sprigle stated that these conclusions upheld his first assertion that Sesame Street could not prepare children from disadvantaged backgrounds for the first grade.

Dr. Sprigle also noted that, in the ETS survey, the results showed that the advantaged child who watched the program gained 15 percent more than the disadvantaged child. This proved that Sesame Street was in fact widening the learning gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged child.

The results of his experiment suggested to Dr. Sprigle that "knowledge learned in a passive effortless fashion is no longer available to the child to use." Dr. Sprigle was not alone in his reaction to the apparent passive learning on Sesame Street. Jeanette Veatch (1970) argued that the child could not interact or be personally involved with a television set, while the television critic of the New Republic (Sesame Street, 1970) described the brand of learning on Sesame Street as "like school's: passive and sedentary."
Reaction to Dr. Sprigle's research was immediate. Gary M. Ingersoll (1971) noted that the control group was not really a control group in the experimental sense "since it was given a different concentrated instructional sequence which reflected his (Sprigle's) biases." Joan Cooney had to admit that Sesame Street was not the final answer in the education of disadvantaged children and that the program was not designed to take the place of Head Start and other school programs but "is only a vital supplement" (Sesame under..., 1971). As for Herbert Sprigle's second assertion, Mrs. Cooney had predicted that the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged child would be widened because the program could be watched by all children, but she added, "we are still raising the lower group above the literacy level, and that's significant" (TV's switched..., 1970).

A second more comprehensive study by Dr. Sprigle (1972) compared the experimental Sesame Street group of the previous year's study with their first grade blue collar classmates on the basis of MRT and Stanford Achievement Test scores. The results, in Dr. Sprigle's words, proved that "an hour a day during just one school year was not sufficient time to overcome the educational handicaps of the poverty child."
Dr. Sprigle consequently performed another experiment to determine if two years of Head Start with a Sesame Street curriculum was equal to two years of Head Start with a child-initiated and guided curriculum. The MRT was administered to these two groups after the third week of the first grade and the results showed that the control group did significantly better on three of the six subtests. When this experimental two-year Sesame Street group was compared to its first-grade, blue-collar classmates on the MRT, the results were significantly in favor of the blue-collar classmates in the six subtests.

Dr. Sprigle concluded that even two years of Sesame Street viewing was not enough to overcome the learning deficit of the disadvantaged child. He proposed an end to Sesame Street because it had failed to make a significant change in the educational preparation of these children and, by widening the gap between them and the advantaged child, was actually making the situation worse.

Though Dr. Sprigle seems to be overly severe towards Sesame Street because it poses a threat, in his estimation, to other government funded preschools, this researcher believes that the important point he did prove was that Sesame Street cannot compete with a comprehensive preschool curriculum but is only one component in a wide range of
educational activities that should be open to all children. Dr. Sprigle has placed Sesame Street in the correct perspective. It is not a panacea for the education of the disadvantaged child, but neither is it a waste of the talents, research, and energy which were drawn together to create it.

Summary

In the six years since Joan Cooney had the conversation with Lloyd Morisset about the possibility of educating preschoolers through the use of television, Sesame Street has grown from an idea to a corporation. Its success can be largely attributed to the conviction that future production must be based on ongoing research and the ability to change. The willingness of CTW to listen to the criticisms of others and change their format accordingly when such change did not compromise their objectives is another strong factor which keeps a vitality in the production and a freshness in its style. The Children's Television Workshop has been the pioneering force behind the study of early childhood education through television. They have been proven successful in teaching their goals despite the limitations of the medium which is without feedback and the
close personal relationships associated with a teacher in a real preschool setting.

The amount of criticism against the program's presentation as well as Dr. Sprigle's research have aroused the question as to what setting Sesame Street occupies in the field of early education. Sprigle points out the failure when Sesame Street is used as the sole basis for a preschool curriculum; the ETS survey clearly shows a greater achievement in the goal areas results when the program is viewed in a school setting with teacher follow-up. Is Sesame Street being utilized in a nonexperimental preschool setting, or is its position in education only as an at-home educational experience? To find an answer to this question is the basis of the remaining part of this report.
CHAPTER III
SURVEY PROCEDURES

There are 37 Kindergarten teachers assigned to the elementary schools in the Santa Monica School District. A questionnaire was drawn up to measure the utilization of the television program, Sesame Street, and its related materials in the curricula of these teachers. The questionnaire also measured teacher attitudes toward the program: its strengths and weaknesses and the purpose Sesame Street serves in early education (see Appendix C).

The Santa Monica School District was chosen as the site for this investigation because, even though it is small in size, containing only 12 elementary schools, it still possesses many characteristics of a large urban district. Dr. Leo Martucci, a Supervisor in the Office of Special Services for the School District, describes Santa Monica as "a city in microcosm." Santa Monica has large industry and business, and both black and Mexican-American ethnic groups are represented in the 80,000-plus population. A profile of the socio-economic status of the residents would show 30 percent of the population on the lower end
of the spectrum with 30 percent on the upper end and the
remaining 40 percent in the middle. Therefore, Santa
Monica, though small in size, can still reflect many of
the concerns and feelings of a larger city.

The questionnaire was reviewed by a Kindergarten
teacher in the district before being distributed to all the
teachers and small modifications were made in the format
as a result.

The questionnaire and a cover letter were placed
in manila envelopes and sent through school mail to each
of the Kindergarten teachers in the district. A letter
explaining the study was also sent to the various elemen-
tary school principals by Dr. Martucci. A return envelope
was enclosed with the questionnaire and the teachers were
asked to complete and return the survey to the School Dis-
trict Office within ten days.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Of the 37 Kindergarten teachers who received the questionnaire, 20 responded (54%). According to Dr. Martucci, the average response to surveys in the district is 50 percent or lower and so this particular survey received a slightly above average response. The results described below are therefore based on these 20 responses.

Since the questionnaire was essentially in two parts, (a) the use of Sesame Street in the Kindergarten curriculum, and (b) teacher attitude toward the program, the results will be presented in two sections.

The Utilization of Sesame Street in the Curriculum

| TABLE 1 |
| USE OF SESAME STREET IN THE CURRICULUM |
| (N = 20) |

| View Sesame Street in class | 0 | 0 |
| Do not view Sesame Street in class | 20 | 100 |
All the teachers in the sample answered this question which concerned the use of the Sesame Street program within the individual curricula of the Kindergarten teachers. The results show that none of the teachers use the actual program in their classrooms.

In order to determine whether this lack of use was due to personal choice by the teachers or to the unavailability of a television or other technical problems, the second portion of this question asked the teachers to state the reasons why the program was not shown.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY SESAME STREET IS NOT USED IN CURRICULUM (N = 19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class time used for active work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time for program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program not shown in afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most view program at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class advanced beyond concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of reasons were given for not viewing the program during school hours. Only 25 percent of the teachers
were unable to show the program either because there was no television available or because they had afternoon classes. Sesame Street is shown at 7 a.m., 9 a.m., and 4 p.m. in Los Angeles. That leaves 70 percent who felt that, for one reason or another, Sesame Street viewing was not appropriate for their curriculum.

TABLE 3

USE OF SESAME STREET MATERIALS IN THE CURRICULUM (N = 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use materials</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use materials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4

SPECIFIC MATERIALS USED (N = 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Records</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puppets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 3, 60 percent or 12 out of 20 of the teachers use Sesame Street materials in their teaching, even though they do not use the program itself in their curricula. The most popular materials are records and books, as can be seen from Table 4. However, the 60 percent of the sample who use Sesame Street materials do so, on the whole, less than once a week.

Teacher Attitude Toward the Program, Sesame Street

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
<th>FAMILIARITY WITH SESAME STREET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have seen the program</td>
<td>19 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not seen the program</td>
<td>1 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 7
FREQUENCY OF VIEWING
(N = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have seen 1-5 programs</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have seen 6-15 programs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have seen 16-25 programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have seen over 25 programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8
TEACHER RECOMMENDATION OF PROGRAM
(N = 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommend to students</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not recommend to students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked if they had seen the program, Sesame Street, 95 percent of the Kindergarten teachers replied that they had, with only one teacher admitting that she never had the opportunity to view the series. Of the 19 teachers who said they had seen the program, 60 percent had only watched the program five times or less, with an additional 25 percent replying that they had seen it between 6 and 15 times. It was surprising to find that 90 percent of
the sample had only seen three weeks of programming or less. However, when the teachers were asked whether they recommended the series to their students, 65 percent said they do recommend it. Evidently, what little exposure the Kindergarten teachers had to Sesame Street left a positive impression in their minds, such that they would, by a 13 to 7 margin, want their students to watch it.

**TABLE 9**

**RANKING OF KINDERGARTEN ACTIVITIES IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE**

(N = 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Responses (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative materials</td>
<td>19 (most important)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story time and discussion</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic play</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading readiness</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame Street</td>
<td>61 (least important)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table lists five Kindergarten activities which the teachers were asked to rank according to their importance in the learning and development of the child. The teachers were to place a #1 beside the most important activity, a #2 by the second most important, and so on, giving the least important a ranking of #5. The results
show the total number of points given to each activity by all the teachers.

Of the 13 responses to the question, 12 teachers gave Sesame Street a ranking of 4 or 5, 5 meaning the activity is of least importance to the learning and development of the child. However, reading readiness was ranked fourth which may indicate a lack of emphasis on academic learning in the Kindergarten setting. The fact that psychomotor, verbal, and aural skills rank as the most important tends to bear this out.

TABLE 10

OVERALL STRENGTHS OF SESAME STREET
(N = 16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning is exciting, entertaining, and fun</td>
<td>5 agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program holds viewer attention</td>
<td>3 agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The repetition reinforces learning</td>
<td>4 agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program reinforces concepts already learned</td>
<td>5 agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program teaches readiness skills</td>
<td>7 agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good presentation of format</td>
<td>4 agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 lists seven of the most common responses the teachers expressed when asked what they felt were the overall strengths of Sesame Street. A summary of all the views expressed by those who responded to this question would read: Sesame Street appeals to the child because it is above all entertaining. Learning is exciting because ideas and concepts are presented in a clever, colorful, and meaningful way. The characters and methods of presentation such as short lessons, fast moving pace, and transitions are geared to the preschooler and attract and hold his interest. Sesame Street not only exposes the child to many areas of learning such as letters, numbers, shapes, listening skills, and phonics, but also makes the young viewer aware of ideas to come and helps the older viewer to acquire readiness skills.

| TABLE 11 |
| WEAK POINTS IN SESAME STREET |
| (N = 6) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning is passive</td>
<td>4 agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skips around too rapidly</td>
<td>2 agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what they felt were the weak points in Sesame Street, only six of the 20 teachers responded. The reason given by those who failed to respond was a lack of familiarity with the program. It appears the majority of the teachers had seen enough of Sesame Street to recommend viewing to their students but not enough to detect any weak points in its presentation. However, even though the response was low, there was a surprising agreement on what was wrong with the program. Four of the six respondents listed passive learning as a criticism, and two of the six felt that the frenetic pace was a weak point in the show. The passive learning complaint was the same voiced by Herbert Sprigle and Jeanette Veatch, while the criticism of the pace of the program was the original complaint of Frank Garfunkel. It seems that the teachers share these criticisms of Sesame Street's drawbacks.

The final question in the survey encompassed the central problem of this report, namely, what purpose Sesame Street serves in the education of young children, and what its place is in early education. Of the 15 teachers who replied to this question (N = 15), twelve (80%) agreed that Sesame Street's main purpose is to introduce children to the basic concepts of learning and various educational skills such as letters, numbers, shapes, and vocabulary.
Four of the respondents (27%) felt that the series gave an awareness of ideas to come to preschoolers. It appears the teachers consider Sesame Street a warm-up for Kindergarten and first grade, a vehicle which exposes preschoolers to some of the kinds of learning they will encounter in elementary school.

Summary and Conclusion

This report investigated the problem of what place Sesame Street occupies in the field of early education. A questionnaire was administered to the 37 Kindergarten teachers of the Santa Monica Unified School District to determine whether or not the program, Sesame Street, or its related materials were used within the individual Kindergarten curricula, and what teacher attitudes were toward the series.

In the first portion of the survey results, which dealt with the use of Sesame Street and its materials in the classroom, it was found that none of the teachers had their students view the program in class. The reasons given for this decision are varied, but there seems to be some consensus (45%) that the classroom should be used for active educational lessons and not passive viewing. Time in school should be spent on doing those things which are
different from what the child does at home. Class time should be an enrichment of the child's learning experience, not a repetition of a program the preschooler can watch on his own. However, this same feeling is not directed toward the use of Sesame Street materials, evidently because they take up a smaller amount of time in the curriculum. Sixty percent use either records, books, or puppets patterned after the characters and music presented on the series. However, these materials are not used on a frequent basis, with 92 percent of the teachers using them less than once a week.

In the second portion of the survey results, the attitudes of Kindergarten teachers toward the program were analyzed. A high percentage (95%) of the teachers had viewed the program but their experience was based on less than three weeks of programming. However, the low number of shows seen and the lack of Sesame Street use in their curricula was not a true indication of their opinion toward the series because 65 percent actually recommended the program to their students for at-home viewing. The decision not to use the program in school was supported by the ranking of Kindergarten activities in Table 9. It is interesting to note what the teachers felt were the most important activities and consequently the most worthwhile use of time.
in their curricula. Activities which require manipulative skills as well as aural and verbal skills were most popular, while academic activities such as Sesame Street and reading were of lesser concern. It was encouraging to note that the academic pressures of the primary grades had not filtered down to the Kindergartens and that the teachers could devote most of their time to the psychomotor, social, emotional, and creative aspects of the child.

The teachers were quite specific in their views concerning the attributes of the program, remarking that it teaches readiness skills in a fun, exciting way, but the response to the question of what was wrong with the program was sparse. The objections that were recorded tended to reflect two common criticisms: the passive learning of the child and the fast pace.

Finally, when asked to place Sesame Street in perspective within the structure of early education, the teachers responded in the majority to the view that the program served as an introduction to the first grade, that its value as an educational experience was in its ability to familiarize preschoolers with some of the ideas and concepts they would encounter in elementary school. The goals which Sesame Street presents had little in common with the Kindergarten curricula but were beneficial for the child.
to learn at home to prepare him for eventual entrance into first grade.

The findings indicate that Sesame Street's role in non-experimental pre-first grade settings is quite limited. Even though the Children's Television Workshop has tried to encourage the program's use in preschool curricula with its "Parent-Teacher Guide" and utilization campaigns, its present place in early education seems to be as an at-home introduction to first grade concepts. Sesame Street's goals are not geared to what the Kindergarten teachers feel is most important for them to teach their pupils.

Since the conclusions are based on an investigation of one type of preschool education, namely, Kindergarten, a further study concerning the use of Sesame Street in private preschool programs may reveal a different set of conclusions.
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APPENDIX A

STATEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS FOR THE 1969-1970 EXPERIMENTAL SEASON OF SESAME STREET

I. Symbolic Representation
   A. Letters
   B. Numbers
   C. Geometric Forms

II. Cognitive Processes
   A. Perceptual Discrimination
      1. Body Percepts
      2. Visual Discrimination
      3. Auditory Discrimination
   B. Relational Concepts
      1. Size Relationships
      2. Positional Relationships
      3. Distance Relationships
      4. Amount or Number Relationships
      5. Temporal Relationships
      6. Auditory Relationships
   C. Classification
   D. Ordering
E. Reasoning and Problem Solving

1. Inferences and Causality

2. Generating and Evaluating Explanations and Solutions

3. Attitudes Toward Inquiry and Problem Solving

III. The Physical Environment

A. The Child and the Physical World Around Him

1. The Natural Environment
   a. Land, Sky, and Water
   b. City and Country
   c. Plants and Animals
   d. Natural Processes and Cycles

2. The Man-Made Environment
   a. Machines
   b. Buildings and Other Structures

IV. The Social Environment

A. Social Units

1. Self

2. Roles

3. Social Groups and Institutions of Concern to Children

B. Social Interactions

1. Differences in Perspectives

2. Cooperation

3. Rules Which Insure Justice and Fair Play
APPENDIX B

STATEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS FOR THE 1970-1971 EXPERIMENTAL SEASON OF SESAME STREET

I. Symbolic Representation
   A. Pre-Reading Goals
      1. Letters
      2. Words
   B. Number Goals
      1. Numbers 1-20
      2. Numerical Operations
   C. Geometric Forms
      1. Labelling
      2. Recognition

II. Cognitive Organization
   A. Perceptual Discrimination and Orientation
      1. Visual Discrimination
      2. Auditory Discrimination
      3. Subjective/Objective Discrimination
   B. Relational Concepts
      1. Same/Different
      2. Size Relationships
      3. Quantitative Relationships
4. Positional Relationships
5. Distance Relationships
6. Temporal Relationships

C. Classification
  1. Sorting
  2. Classifying
  3. Multiple Classification

III. Reasoning and Problem Solving

A. Making Inferences
  1. Inferring Antecedent Events
  2. Inferring Consequent Events

B. Generating Explanations and Solutions

C. Evaluating Explanations and Solutions

IV. The Child and His World

A. Self
  1. The Mind and Its Powers
  2. Body Parts and Functions
  3. Audience Participation
  4. Emotions

B. Social Units
  1. Roles and Functions
  2. Social Groups and Institutions

C. Social Interactions
  1. Differing Perspectives
2. Cooperation
3. Conflict Resolution

D. The Man-Made Environment
1. Machines and Tools
2. Buildings and Other Structures

E. The Natural Environment
1. Land, Sky and Water
2. City and Country
3. Plants and Animals
4. Natural Processes and Cycles
APPENDIX C

SESAME STREET SURVEY

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AT NORTH RIDGE

1. a) Have you ever watched the television show Sesame Street?

   ____ yes   ____ no

   b) If yes, approximately how many times have you seen the show?

   1-5 times   ____
   6-15 times  ____
   16-25 times ____
   over 25 times ____

2. Do you recommend Sesame Street viewing to your students?

   ____ yes   ____ no

3. a) Does your class ever view Sesame Street during their school day?

   ____ yes   ____ no

   b) If no, please explain why they do not, then skip to question 6.
c) If yes, what days of the week and at what time do they watch the show?

   days________________________
   time_______________________

d) Approximately how many children in your class watch the program at this time?

   children watching_____

4. About how much of the 60 minutes of Sesame Street do most of the children watch during their school day?

   45 to 60 minutes _____
   30 to 45 minutes _____
   15 to 30 minutes _____
   0 to 15 minutes _____

5. a) Do you ever have follow-up activities after the program?

   _____yes _____no

   b) If yes, how often do you have follow-up activities and how long do they last?

   c) Would you briefly describe how you follow-up after a Sesame Street program.
6. a) Would you please check any of the following Sesame Street materials that you use in your teaching.
   - records ____
   - puppets ____
   - books ____
   - other (specify) ______________________

   b) How often do you use these materials?
   - almost every day ____
   - about 3 or 4 days per week ____
   - about 1 or 2 days per week ____
   - less than once a week ____

7. What do you feel are the overall strengths of the program Sesame Street?

8. What do you feel are the weak points in Sesame Street?
9. Rank the following Kindergarten activities in the order of importance for the learning and development of a child. (#1 being of greatest importance, #5 of least importance)

___ dramatic play
___ story time and discussion with the teacher
___ blocks, puzzles, and manipulative materials
___ Sesame Street
___ reading readiness work (tracing, discrimination, etc.)

10. In your opinion, what purpose does Sesame Street serve in the education of young children? What is its place in early education?