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There is a story about a mother who said to her child, "I wish you would change your behavior." The child said, "That's all right mother, Mr. Rogers loves me as I am."

Thirty years as a gentle provocator and a counter pointer clearly is more than a story of personal success. If you are trendy you will last as long as a trend does. If you are going along with convention you will get used up by television very quickly.

What is it then? Thirty years in the same program that is so different from many others is an event of historic significance, and my purpose is to try to place it in an historic if not cosmic perspective. If I ask you what is the most unique or distinct aspect of human life or the human species what would you say?

There have been many answers to that question. Homosapiens are the tool making animal; is the social animal; is the language-using, communicating animal. I think that is all true but I don't think any of those is the most distinct characteristic of our species, there are other creatures that do some of each of those things. But there is one thing that no other species does, and if I were to sum it up in one word it would be the word storytelling.

Not only because we live by storytelling, but because we erect a world that is constructed from the stories that we hear and we tell. Most of our reactions are not in response to the immediate physical environment, which is what most other species do most of the time. Pleasant as this room and building is, we are not here just to look at it or to experience it. We are here in a very general but very real way to exchange stories. We are here to contribute to that reality-- or should I say that fantasy we call reality that provides the larger context, the larger environment, the larger world in which we live most of which we have acquired not through direct experience, but on the contrary most of which we have acquired through stories we hear and through stories we tell.

To each we adjust our everyday experience and by which we judge and measure our everyday experience and even ourselves. So it is the stories that animate the human imagination, the stories about how things work, what they are and what to do about them, that provide the most distinctive and characteristic aspect of human life, and in fact there are these three kinds of stories. In reality they are all mixed up, but the pure types are these three kinds of stories.

First, there is a kind of story which illuminates that which is the most important in human life and invisible relationships. It illuminates how we relate to each other, and it illuminates the hidden dynamics of the network of relationships in which we live.

And by doing that these are stories that can tell the truth about how things really work, because how things really work is not apparent, is not visible. It is something behind the scenes, and the only way to make it apparent is to make us believe that we see something that we otherwise can not see. The way to do that is fiction and drama, or as Mr. Rogers says, make believe.

Make believe is the construction of a story that makes us see what is invisible, that illuminates the hidden dynamics of life and of relationships, and that depends on characters and actions that we invent in order to tell the truth about how things really work or might work or should work or shouldn't work. That is the first kind of story, generally speaking what we call fiction, drama, fairy tales, that are often dismissed as unreal or fantasy that are in fact the unique and indispensable ways of illuminating not that which is but that which shows how things work, that is what's behind the scenes.

It is the second kind of story, the story about what things really are, the story of fact and explanation and explication, the legends of the past, the news of today, which are the legends of our own age. The second kind of story that is the story of factual explanation and explication. That story is meaningless by itself, it doesn't mean anything. A news story, a story of a fact acquires significance only as it is fitted in a framework that is erected by the first kind of story of how life really works behind the scenes when we can't see them. Once we understand that and we all acquire some understanding of it as we grow up in a culture then we can use the facts, then we can fit in the facts to either confirm our fantasy that yes, that's real, or to hold it up against that fantasy we call reality and if it doesn't fit we discard it or we say it is biased or false or invalid. So the second kind of story about what things are is meaningless by itself because it is the telling of what is called fantasy often gives us meaning about how things work at far away lands, at far away times and here behind the scenes that we can't see and how to interpret the things called facts.

The third story is a story of value and choice and in reality these things are all mixed up. I am trying to pull them apart for analytical purposes, there are few pure stories of any one kind. Although there are some. The third story is a story of value and choice as if to say well if this is how things work and this is how things are then what are we going to do about them. These are the sermons, the instructions, today most of them are commercials, that present a little vignette about a style of life that says this is how things work, this is how things are, this is a desirable thing to do, to attain, or an undesirable thing that you want to avoid and if you want to do that you should chose this particular product or this particular service. It is an enormously important constant cultivation and reinforcement of a framework of life, of what is desirable of what are the values and choices of what to select and how to select from them.

These three kinds of stories have always been interwoven and together provide the fabric or context of what we call the culture. I define culture as that system of stories that regulates human relationships, to which we are born and to which we absorb and acquire as we grow and become socialized into a society and even more importantly into our place in a social structure.

They have been woven together at very different times in different ways at different times in history. The first and by all means longest period, the pre-industrial period of many tens of thousands of years, story telling was oral, handcrafted and infinitely adjusted to time, place, circumstance. An orally told story is always a play or production. The play is the thing, it is the telling and just as you have heard it is infinitely adjustable and often always interruptable or transformable depending on the reactions that you get, and also requires a great deal of human resources. The so called primitive men and women needed much more talent, needed much bigger and better memories, needed much greater skills in order to live in a world of stories as they did. Usually called mythology or later on religion. Because they had to carry with them and in them most useful knowledge that had to be remembered and memorized because education in a pre-industrial age consisted of aphorisms and folk tales and stories and memorization of instructions about the seasons and about how to handle the land and the animals. The older you were the more valuable you came because of the more you experienced and remembered.

In order to accumulate this knowledge, this reservoir of human resources of so called primitive people of things that we a=say 'I don't have to remember all that, I can always look it up.' What ever they didn't remember wasn't available for use. And the way to do that was what we might call ritual, it was a ritualistic repetition and reiteration of the stories, of the songs, of the dances, of the celebrations. Most celebrations had to do with a sort of rehearsal about what is true and tried and established and valid. And that ritual that encompassed all three kinds of stories about what the world is like and how it works and what is the nature of the universe and meaning of life, and what are the facts of life presumed to be true and untrue and what to do about them, and embodied in the mythologies of all communities and of all tribes, and it is only when certain tribes explored and found that there were other people who had other mythologies that the notion that that is not just the way things are but the notion of religion arose. That was much later.

And soon came the first major transformation in the way in which the storytelling process of humanization occurs. The first major transformation is otherwise called the industrial revolution. the first machine is the printing press. The first mechanical reproduction of stories is the book. It represents the beginning of the industrialization of the story telling process. One of the most profound transformations if not the most profound

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transformation in the way human beings live their lives.

The beginning of a stage in which we are deeply embedded in which industrial structure has a direct impact on the mind, because the way in which stories are recorded, and printed and later on distributed by other media, there is an immediate connection with the world that we erect and through which we live through our stories.

The coming of printing broke up the ritual. You could look it up, you didn't have to remember it all. It broke up the centralized ministration of stories by the priests, the interpreters, the storytellers. You didn't have somebody to interpret a book namely in the western world, the Bible. You can read it yourself, take it with you. This is the beginning of the Reformation.

The Reformation is inconceivable without printing because it is based on the possibility of a diversity of interpretation without the ministration of the interpreter or the reader of the book. It is the beginning of the notion that a community can exist with more than a single philosophy, more than a single interest, more than a single perspective. Just as the industrial revolution itself establishing factories and mines, establish what we call the class structure. The industrial revolution in storytelling after long and hard struggles which are still not over, established the right of different classes and different regions and different interest groups, different regions and ethnic and religious communities to tell stories from their own points of view. To tell stories that presumably illuminate the interest and the way of looking of life and of a particular subculture of a larger community and it is permitted to do that, which is itself a revolutionary development only a few hundred years old in the history of human kind. And by doing that establishing the basis of which most of our political, cultural, social, and religious life is based.

The theory that there is a community in which there are competing and conflicting interests can live more or less peacefully side by side, freely pursuing their competing and conflicting interests by being given the power and the right to tell stories from their own points of view. Not just to tell but to publish stories from their own points of view.

Publication is the process by which the new form of social enterprise arises called Publics. Publics is inconceivable without printing and publication. The reason is that a public is a community who have a great deal or something in common but who never meet. Before the industrial revolution this was inconceivable. The area that a community could be governed was the area that its most distant citizens could reach in maybe one or two days of marching so that they can meet and discuss matters face to face. A larger community, the so called ancient empires were really not communities, they are really tribute collecting

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organizations. You sent out the legions when the roads hardened in March to collect the taxes. It is only since the coming of printing that it has been possible to reach and enlarge the community's reach to what we today call a public by publication, which reaches behind all impenetrable barriers of time of space and of class, and of language, because print can be translated, disseminated and preserved.

So the notion of public, on which all modern theories of government and education and communication are based, is itself a product of the industrial revolution. It broke up the ritual, it decentralized and pluralized communication, it gave rise to the notion of mass publics and therefore to a plurality of perspectives in modern society.

Now comes the present age which we call the telecommunications age whose mainstream, whose flagship is television, and despite other technological developments I think it is here for a long time, and to dominate and to dominate our culture for a long time to come because television has certain very specific and unique characteristics that no other medium has.

The first and most important is that television is for most people a ritual. Most people watch television by the clock and not by the program. Its true predecessor is not radio or film, but its pre-industrial religion. Children today are born into a home in which the set is on an average of seven hours a day. That means that in half of our homes it is put on in the morning and turned off in the evening. It is like the wallpaper, you are born into it, you absorb its patterns without knowing, you learn a great deal, and we learn from research that by the time you get to be five or six years of age which is when you first used to encounter the outside culture, either by going to school or by going to church or both, by that time you have lived at a very informative age, at a very intensive, everpresent in the home symbolic environment in which all the stories are told and retold in endless repetition but very little variety.

In which the same basic patterns are told over and over again and disguised by what appears to be the novelty of the plot. Forget the plot, the plot is there to conceal what is really going on and to give you the appearance of novelty. Look at the casting, look at the relationships, look at the fate of different social types in these stories, and whether it is news or drama or talk shows, look at the cast, look at the relationships, look at the outcome of the fate that awaits different social types and you find a great deal of similarity in the basic constituents of story telling among all of these forms.

Television has become a ritual in all of our homes into which our children are born, and for the first time in human history the storyteller that tells most of the stories to our children, and at the same time to our parents and grandparents is not the church is not the school. It is a small group of distant

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corporations with purposes of their own which have great virtues and great weaknesses. They are the story tellers that in many ways have taken over and given us a world into which our children are born and in which we all live our lives.

Let me tell you a few things about what kind of a world that is both good and bad. But remember the positive things as well as the negative.

For the first time in human history the poor share a great deal of cultural content with the rich, this has never before happened. For the first time in human history isolation, parochialism is no longer necessary. A child from the farm may know just as much or more sophisticated brands or practices than the aristocracy because of television. You are no more out in the sticks, you are part of the mainstream. You have been brought into it. You are no more politically uninformed, you have been brought into a national stream of social, political, and cultural current. The great names and celebrities of our age, the beautiful and the ugly, the famous and the infamous come into your homes everyday, and provide a semato-social cohesion between otherwise very different and heterogeneous groups of people, and this has never before happened.

It is also true that by doing that they set up a standard which stands to erode traditional differences among human beings in our society. They get absorbed by the process that we in our research have named mainstreaming which is very different than the process of educational mainstreaming, which means that groups that are divergent from the great national mainstream become divergent in their points of view, in their philosophies and standards by which they measure how things work and what to do about them, only as long as they are light viewers. Light viewers doesn't mean that they don't like television, but that they watch more selectively and that they engage in a variety of other cultural pursuits. They tend to be higher income, higher educated, many more cultural opportunities available to them, and many more tastes cultivated in them.

The heavy viewers are those groups who are otherwise divergent on the mainstream tend to converge upon the mainstream. Television tends to erode cultural differences, and by doing that present a kind of homogenized standard for response for action and reaction that is national and almost international in scope. What kind of a world does this mainstream present?

Here I'm going to pick out results of research of our colleagues that has studied that world and its basic story making elements. We have a group of maybe forty or fifty million Americans who had very little before but a lot of boredom. Who are not bookreaders, have never been bookreaders, but television has monopolized the lives of people who have had very little cultivation of diversified tastes. It has become all of culture for them, and it has become in the lives of people less

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culturally privileged, just the most interesting thing going on any time of the day or night, and that is what is a tremendous attraction and nobody is going to take it away or try to take it away from them. What we should try to be much more concerned about what kind of a world it presents, to become more active citizens in participating in the construction of the kind of world it presents, and to appreciate the few or perhaps only one

Because the world of the mainstream is a world in which men outnumber women across the board at least three to one. Starting out with that kind of cast, what can you get that is really right and valid? There is a basic flaw in almost every play, in most of our news, in all of our mechanically produced children's programs in which the disproportion is even greater. Now representation is not only a question of numbers. Representation is a question of the range of opportunities that you see a significant majority element of human beings take and pursue. If you are underrepresented in the culture in which we grow up you see yourself limited in the number of opportunities in the number of life's chances. You see yourself undervalued, underendowed in the number of resources and power and overvictimized. Less powerful and more vulnerable. That is the true meaning of representation and its distribution in the world in which we grow up.

It works the same way with age. Young people are vastly overrepresented, less than one third of their true proportion of the population, older people 65 and above are less than one-fifth, they are practically invisible. And when they are visible, if you are underrepresented you play the obligatory parts which are most stereotyped—a romantic partner, a grandmother babysitting, or a child who is either overly charming or overly abused. The most victimized population on television is young boys and adolescent girls. Our measure about victimization is not the frequency but it is the relation between the ability to put your will over on an unwilling person which is a good definition of violence. And somebody subjecting you to that kind of violation.

So the question is that if and when you get into a situation of that kind of conflict that leads to violence, do you tend to come out on top or do you tend to be victimized. That is an indication of relative power, and in that sense, young boys are the most victimized, young girls are the second most, in general women are more victimized than men, and minorities are more than majorities. If you are a white male in the prime of life, although your chances of getting into a violent situation are frequent on television, your chances of getting away with it, of being the winner rather than the victim are the greatest.

This leads me to violence. Violence is essentially a demonstration of power. What keeps the continuing underrepresentation in the world of women and minorities viable.

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What enforces the kind of cultural colonization of our people that takes place in the world of television is the frequency of violence. Violence is the demonstration of power. What really counts in violence is not only the possibility of imitation, although that is a price that we pay for maintaining the structure of power; but what really counts is who can get away with what against whom most frequently. That is what violence demonstrates because it is simply a convenient and widely accepted and acceptable dramatic shorthand.

What [redacted] of the [redacted] and [redacted] and [redacted] is weakened [redacted] prime [redacted] ingredient to hype otherwise lagging interest in relatively poor programs, most of the highly rated programs tend to be the least violent, and it has become a great exercise and demonstration of power in our society which is a kind of subtle, unrecognized and unwitting function and certainly unacknowledged function that it plays.

If you line up what we called the victimization ratios: men or women, young or old, white or black, and you simply count the number of people who can administer violence to somebody else and a number of people who are victimized by violence which is usually a higher number, and you take the higher number and divide it by the lower number, and you get a minus ratio and in most groups you get a higher number of victimization than violence. And you line up these victimization ratios and you find that they reproduce the hierarchies of power of our social structure.

If you get ten violent people on television the overall number of victims is about 12. But if you get 10 women who are written into scripts that are able to enforce their will on others you get about 16 who are victimized. If you get older women who are cast, that if they get into a violent situation they will become victims. Their victimization ratio is 1 to 36. And so on with non-whites, with boys, with girls, and other cultural minorities.

It is in this way that the lesson of violence which is a demonstration of power is administered, and that lesson in our research is the lesson of insecurity. For the people that the exposure that violence occurs at the rate of six times per hour in prime time and 20-25 times per hour in weekend programming is a lesson in what we call the mean and scary world. Is a lesson in constructing out of these stories an image of the world which is mean and scary in which the way to deal with people especially strangers is to be suspicious and distrust them to shy away to become scared and frightened, is a world in which to retain or restore your sense of security is by depending on the strong and by accepting and sometimes even welcoming repression both at home and in the world if it can come in the name of security of enhancing or preserving your security. It is a humanly, socially

and politically volatile and scary phenomenon.

The occupational distribution in the world of television is very peculiar because of this power play. Prime time is essentially during a world of power, where power plays are dominant. Daytime is a much maybe artistically less pleasing, but a world of equitable, internal turbulence rather than external power. Children's commercial programming involves an extended combination of both. It is not muted. Everything in terms of stereotyping and violence, and in terms of the imbalance that you find in prime time and daytime programming for relatively mature and sophisticated tastes in children's programming you find in its crudest most exploitive manifestations. As if to assume that no one else is watching and monitoring and caring what children get.

The fact that we permit an average of 25 instances of violence on children's programming is the scandal of the civilized world. It is not just a little aberration. I know of few countries that doesn't have its best artists put on at least half an hour of programming in prime time. But the iron rule of ratings and demography excludes that and that is a problem we have to come to. The problem that emphasizes the historic significance for why we are here and to celebrate and acknowledge.

I was telling you about the occupational distribution. The average viewer of prime time and most children watch prime time the most. Four-fifths of children's viewing time goes into an absorption of the accelerated, overheated story context of the adult cultural environment of prime time. The average viewer of prime time sees a cast of about 300 characters week in and week out. It has been stable for the 17 years we have been studying on an annual monitoring basis. Included the single highest occupation is law enforcer, there about 44 people enforcing the law, about 23 criminals violating the law. There are about 12 nurses, 10 doctors, 6 lawyers, and three judges. Intimate glimpses of how these things really work, most of it untrue but very realistic. I mean who doesn't know what an operating room looks like from the inside and how many of us have been on the inside of an operating room. And every child has an image of what a police station looks like, and also an executive board room. Most children today has a realistic understanding of rare types of work more than understanding what their mothers and fathers do at work which they don't see.

There is a skewed occupational distribution and we are now studying the occupational choices that it leads to. Right now we are in a study of science, technology and engineering occupations which are very rare as occupational types on television, and a study of how this kind of exposure to occupational world will influence children in occupational choices as they grow up.

Lets talk about health, television is the single largest source of health information. Some mention of eating and drinking comes

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up 9 to 10 times an hour.

The new frontier, the culturally induced health related behavior. The world of politics, science, and sex, it is in this world which presents to our children and to us a world of manufactured, assemblyline, mass produced, high pressure day dreams. The dreams that may be enormously successful for the objective for which they get payed, namely selling goods and services. But dreams that scare, that shame, that hurt too many, it is in that world that we have the historic significance of Mr. Rogers Neighborhood.

You will see this afternoon a few samples, and among one of them is how Fred explores and goes behind a very scary phenomenon, the Incredible Hulk. He shows all of us how this is made. In one program he achieves the shift from what we call attribution to inference. Attribution is a kind of childish way of looking at a story or a symbolic manifestation as something natural arising out of the natural world. You attribute the significance to the images. Inference is when you can get behind the scenes and know there is a script, an actor, a camera, and make up. You a lot of things from what you see. Immediately you are in control, and you say "Aha, this is a kind of make-believe that makes me see it the way it is and makes me a kind of independent, autonomous person who can reflect on it. And as soon as you do that it becomes an enriching experience no matter how bad the program may be as unwittingly absorbed.

It is in this world of too many, high pressured, too fast assembly line manufactured dreams that Fred Rogers is handcrafting for all of us as well as for our children, the dreams that heal.

June 15, 1993

There is a story about a mother who said to her child, "I wish you would change your behavior." The child said, "That's all right mother, Mr. Rogers loves me as I am."

Thirty years in the same program--a program that is so different from so many other programs--is an event of historic significance. Thirty years as a gentle provocateur and a counter pointer clearly is more than a story of quick success. If you are trendy you will last as long as a trend does. If you are going along with convention you will get used up by television very quickly.

What is it about *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* that's outside convention or trend? My purpose is to try to place this program in an historic if not cosmic perspective.

If I ask you what is the most unique or distinct aspect of human life or the human species, what would you say? There have been many answers to that question. *Homo sapiens* is the tool making animal; the social animal; the language-using, communicating animal. All are true but I don't think any of those is the most distinct characteristic of our species. There are other creatures that do some of each of those things. But there is one thing that no other species does: *tell stories*.

Our ability to tell stories is important not only because we live by storytelling, but because we erect a world that is constructed from the stories that we hear and we tell. Most of our reactions are *not* in response to the immediate physical environment, which is what most other species do most of the time. We are not on this planet just to look at our immediate environment or to experience it. We are here in a very general but very real way to exchange stories. We are here to contribute to that reality (or should I say that fantasy we call reality). Each of our stories contributes to a larger context, a larger environment, a larger world in which we live--most of which we have acquired

not through direct experience, but through stories we hear and through stories we tell. To each story we adjust our everyday experience; by each story we judge and measure our everyday experience and even ourselves.

So it is the stories that animate the human imagination, the stories about how things work, what they are and what to do about them, that provide the most distinctive and characteristic aspect of human life.

In theory, there are these three kinds of stories. In reality they are all mixed up; there are few pure stories. For the sake of analysis, the pure types can be reduced to three categories:

The first kind of story illuminates one the most important aspects of human life: invisible relationships. It reveals how we relate to each other--the hidden dynamics of the network of relationships in which we live. By such revelations, these stories tell the truth about how things *really* work, because how things *really* work is not apparent, is not visible. It is something behind the scenes, and the only way to make it apparent is to make us see something that we otherwise can not see. The way to do that is fiction and drama, or as Mr. Rogers says, make believe. "Make believe" is the construction of a story that allows us see what is usually covert. It depends on characters and actions that we invent in order to tell the truth about how things really work or might work or should work or shouldn't work. These kinds of stories--what we usually call fiction, drama and fairy tales--are often dismissed as unreal or fantasy when they are in fact the unique and indispensable ways of illuminating not that which *is* but that which shows

how things work, or what's behind the scenes.

The second kind of story that is the story of factual explanation and explication. Histories, documentaries, the news of today--these are all examples of this second brand of story. By themselves, these stories are meaningless. A news story--a story of a fact--acquires significance only as it is fitted in a framework that is erected by the first kind of story of how life really works behind the scenes where we can't see. Once we understand that--and we all acquire some understanding of it as we grow up in a culture--*then* we can use the facts, *then* we can fit in the facts to either confirm the fantasy we call reality and say, "yes, that is real." If it doesn't fit we discard it or we say it is biased or false or invalid.

So the second kind of story (about "what things are") is meaningless by itself. It is in fantasy that we understand the meaning about how things work in far away lands, at far away times and here behind the scenes where we can't see. It's how we learn to interpret the things called facts.

The third story is a story of value and choice. This type of story asks, "well if this is how things work and this is how things are, then what are we going to do about them?" These are the sermons, the instructions--today most of them are commercials--that present a little vignette about a style of life that says, "this is how things work, this is how things are, and this is a desirable outcome for us to attain (or an undesirable thing that you want to avoid), and therefore you should chose this particular direction, product or service." It is an enormously important cultivation and reinforcement of a framework of life, of what is desirable of what are the values and choices of what to

select and how to select from them.

These three kinds of stories have always been interwoven and together provide the fabric and context of what we call the culture. (I am defining "culture" here as a system of stories that regulates human relationships, into which we are born and to which we absorb and acquire as we grow and become socialized into our place in a social structure.) They have been woven together at very different ways at different times in history. In the first (and longest) historical period, the pre-industrial period of many tens of thousands of years, story telling was oral, handcrafted and infinitely adjusted to time, place, and circumstance. An orally told story is always a play or production or dramatic interpretation. As Shakespeare said, "The play's the thing"--it is in the *telling*--it is infinitely adjustable and often always interruptable or transformable depending on the listeners' reactions. Such oral narrative--usually called mythology and later on religion--requires a great amount of human resources. Pre-technological men and women needed much more talent, needed much bigger and better memories, needed much greater skills in order to live in a world of stories as they did. They had to carry with them and in them most useful knowledge that had to be remembered and memorized. Education in a pre-industrial age consisted of aphorisms and folk tales and stories and memorization of instructions about the seasons and about how to handle the land and the animals. The older you were the more valuable you became because of the more you experienced and remembered and could share.

So, in order to accumulate this knowledge, this reservoir of human resources, these "primitive people" developed *ritual*--a ritualistic repetition and reiteration of the

stories, of the songs, of the dances, of the celebrations. Most celebrations had to do with a sort of rehearsal about what is tried and true and established and valid. And that ritual that encompassed all three kinds of stories--about what the world is like and how it works and what is the nature of the universe and meaning of life, and what are the facts of life presumed to be true and untrue and what to do about them. In other words, these rituals embodied in the mythologies of all communities and of all tribes, and it is only when certain tribes explored and found that there were other people who had other mythologies that the notion of religion arose.

But that was much later. First came a major transformation in the way in which the storytelling process of humanization occurs. This first transformation is the Industrial Revolution, which includes the first machine is the printing press, and the first mechanical reproduction of stories in a book. It represents the beginning of the industrialization of the story telling process, and remains one of the most profound transformations (if not the most profound transformation) in the way human beings live their lives. This had a direct impact on the mind; once stories are recorded and printed and later on distributed, there is an immediate connection with the world that we erect and the way in which we live through our stories.

The coming of printing broke up the ritual. You could look it up, you didn't have to remember it all. It broke up the centralized ministrations of stories by the priests, the interpreters, the storytellers. You didn't have to have somebody to interpret a book --for instance, in the Western World, the Bible. You can read it yourself, or take it with you. This is the beginning of the Reformation. The Reformation is inconceivable without

printing because it is based on the possibility of a diversity of explanation instead of a grand interpreter of the book. It is the beginning of the notion that a community can exist with more than a single philosophy, more than a single interest, more than a single perspective. Just as the industrial revolution itself established factories and mines (and established what we call the "class structure"), the Industrial Revolution in storytelling established the right of different classes, regions, ethnic and religious communities to tell unique stories from their own points of view.

To tell stories that illuminate the interest and perspective of a particular subculture *and to permit the publication and dissemination and analysis of those stories* is a revolutionary development. Publication is the process by which the new form of social enterprise arises called *publics*. The concept is unthinkable, without printing and publication, because a "public" is a community who have something in common but who never meet. Before the industrial revolution this was impossible. The area that a community could be governed was the area that its most distant citizens could reach in maybe one or two days so that they can meet and discuss matters face to face. A larger community, the so called ancient empires, were really not communities but tribute collecting organizations. You sent out the legions when the roads hardened in the spring to collect the taxes. It is only since the coming of printing that it has been possible to enlarge the community's reach to what we today call a "public" by publication, which extends beyond all impenetrable barriers of time of space and class and language, because print can be translated, disseminated and preserved.

This theory of community--in which there are competing and conflicting interests

can live more or less peacefully side by side, freely pursuing their competing and conflicting interests by being given the power and the right to tell stories from their own points of view--is only a few hundred years old, yet it has transformed the basis of our political, cultural, social and religious life. So the notion of public, on which all modern theories of government and education and communication are based, is itself a product of the industrial revolution. It broke up the ritual, it decentralized and pluralized communication, it gave rise to the notion of mass publics and therefore to a plurality of perspectives in modern society.

Now comes the present age, which we call the telecommunications age, whose flagship is television. Despite other technological developments I think television will dominate and to dominate our culture for a long time to come. Television has certain very specific and unique characteristics that no other medium has.

The first and most important characteristic is that television is for most people a ritual. Most people watch television by the clock and not by the program. Its true predecessor is not radio or film, but pre-industrial religion. Children today are born into a home in which the set is on an average of seven hours a day. That means that in half of our homes it is put on in the morning and turned off in the evening. It is like the wallpaper: you are born into it, you absorb its patterns without knowing, and you learn a great deal about your surrounding. We know from research that by the time children

are five or six years of age--about when they first encounter the outside culture, either by going to school or by going to church or both--they have already lived in a very informative, intensive, ever-present televised environment in which all the stories are told and retold but very little variety.

The same basic patterns are told in endless repetition but are disguised by what appears to be the novelty of the plot. Forget the plot--the plot is there to conceal what is really going on and to give the appearance of novelty. Look at the casting, look at the relationships, look at the fate of different social types in these stories, and--*whether it is news or drama or talk shows*--you'll find a great deal of similarity in the basic constituents of story telling among all of these forms.

For the first time in human history the storyteller who tells most of the stories to our children, and at the same time to our parents and grandparents, is not the church or the school. It is a small group of distant corporations with purposes of their own which have great virtues and great weaknesses. They are the story tellers that in many ways have taken over and given us a world into which our children are born and in which we all live our lives.

Let me tell you a few things about what kind of a world that is, both good and bad. Remember the positive things as well as the negative.

For the first time in human experience, the poor share a great deal of cultural content with the rich. This has never before happened. Isolation and parochialism are no longer a given condition of poverty. A child from the farm may know just as many sophisticated brands and practices as the aristocracy because of television. You are no

more out in the sticks; you are part of the mainstream. You have been brought into it. You are no longer politically uninformed; you have been brought into a national flow of social, political and cultural current. The great names and celebrities of our age, the beautiful and the ugly, the famous and the infamous, come into your homes everyday, and provide an unprecedented semato-social cohesion between otherwise very different and heterogeneous groups of people. This has never before happened.

It is also true that such a normative standard erodes traditional differences among human beings in our society. They get absorbed by a form of "cultural mainstreaming," which is very different from than its namesake, educational mainstreaming. In cultural mainstreaming, groups who are divergent from the great national mean--divergent in their points of view, in their philosophies and standards by which they measure how things work and what to do about them--are divergent only as long as they are "light" viewers of television. Light viewers doesn't mean that they don't like television, but that they watch more selectively and that they engage in a variety of other cultural pursuits. They tend to have higher incomes, be more educated, have many more cultural opportunities available to them, and have more diverse tastes.

The heavy viewers are those groups who are otherwise divergent from the mainstream but tend to converge upon the mainstream. Television tends to erase cultural differences, and by doing that present a kind of homogenized standard for response for action and reaction that is national and almost international in scope.

What kind of a world does this mainstream present? We have a group of maybe forty or fifty million Americans who had very little before television but a lot of

boredom--who are not bookreaders, who have never been bookreaders. Television has monopolized the lives of people who have had very little cultivation of diversified tastes. TV has become all of culture for them. It has become, in the lives of people less culturally privileged, the most interesting thing going on any time of the day or night, and that is a tremendous attraction. Instead of being automatically critical of television and everything it stands for, we should try to understand what is going on; we should examine about the kind of a world it presents, to become more active citizens in participating in the construction of the kind of world it presents, and to appreciate the few historical phenomena such as *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

I'm going to pick out results of research of our colleagues who have studied that TV world and its basic story-making elements. This "mainstream" television world is a place where men outnumber women across the board at least three to one. Starting out with that kind of cast, what can you get that is really accurate and valid? There is a basic flaw in almost every play, in most of our news, in all of our mechanically produced children's programs (where the disproportion is even greater). Now representation is not only a question of numbers. Representation is a question of the range of opportunities where one sees a significant majority element of human beings take and pursue. If you are under represented in the culture in which you grow up you see yourself limited in the number of life's opportunities. You see yourself under valued, under endowed, over victimized, less powerful and more vulnerable. That is the true meaning of representation and its distribution in the world in which our children become encultured.

It works the same way with age. Young people are vastly underrepresented, less than one third of their true proportion of the population. Likewise, older people 65 and above are less than one-fifth of their true population. They are practically invisible. And when either group is visible, they play the obligatory parts which are most stereotyped--a romantic partner, a grandmother babysitting, or a child who is either overly charming or overly abused.

The most victimized populations on television are young boys and adolescent girls. One way to measure victimization is not to simply calculate the sheer number of "violent acts" but assess the frequency of someone asserting his or her will over on an unwilling person--which creates a good definition of violence: someone subjecting another to that kind of violation. It establishes a gauge for measuring *relative power*. In that sense, young boys are the most victimized, young girls are the second most, in general women are more victimized than men, and minorities are more than majorities. If you are a white male in the prime of life, although your chances of getting into a violent situation are frequent on television, your chances of getting away with it, of being the winner rather than the victim, are the greatest.

This leads me to violence. Violence is being shown on television an average of six times per hour in prime time; 25 per hour in children's weekend prime time programming. It has become a cheap industrial ingredient to hype otherwise lagging interest in relatively poor programs (most of the highly rated programs tend to be the least violent), and it has become a great exercise and demonstration of power in our society. This role of violence on television is subtle, unrecognized, unwitting, and

certainly unacknowledged.

These "victimization ratios"—the relationship (ratio) between the violent and the victimized—reflects the hierarchies of power in our social structure. If you get ten violent perpetrators on a television show the overall average number of victims is about 12. But for every ten competent, non-victimized women written into the scripts (women who are able to enforce their own will), about 16 women will be victimized. For older women, this "victimization ratio" is 1 to 36. And so on with non-whites, with boys, with girls, and other cultural minorities.

Violence is essentially a demonstration of power—the very thing that perpetuates the underrepresentation of women and minorities. The frequency of violence enforces the kind of cultural colonization of our people that takes place in the world of television. What really counts in violence is not only the *possibility* of imitation (although that is a price that we pay for maintaining the structure of power), but *who can get away with what against whom most frequently*. Television violence is simply a convenient and widely accepted dramatic shorthand for this kind of power equation.

It is in this way that the lesson of violence, this demonstration of power, is administered. It's a lesson of insecurity. It's a lesson in constructing out of these stories an image of the world which is mean and scary; in which the way to deal with people—especially strangers—is to be suspicious and distrust them, to shy away and become scared and frightened; it's a world in which to retain or restore your sense of security is by depending on the strong and by accepting and sometimes even welcoming repression both at home and in the world if it can come in the name of enhancing or

preserving your protection. It is a humanly, socially and politically volatile and threatening phenomenon.

The occupational distribution in the world of television is very peculiar because of this power play. Prime time is essentially devoted to a world of power, where power plays are dominant. Daytime TV is maybe artistically less pleasing, but at least it's a world of equitable, internal turbulence rather than external power. Children's commercial programming involves an extended combination of both. It is not muted. Everything in terms of stereotyping and violence, and in terms of the imbalance that you find in prime time and daytime programming for relatively mature and sophisticated tastes, takes on its crudest, most exploitative manifestations in children's programming.

The fact that we permit an average of 25 instances of violence on children's programming is the scandal of the civilized world. It is not just a little aberration. I know of few countries that don't have its best artists put on at least half an hour of children's programming in prime time. But, in the US, the iron rule of ratings and demography excludes anything like that.

Children are also viewers of prime time. Four-fifths of children's viewing time goes into an absorption of the accelerated, overheated story context of the adult cultural environment of prime time. The average viewer of prime time sees a cast of about 300 characters week in and week out. The single highest occupation on television is law enforcer; there about 44 characters enforcing the law per week, and about 23 criminals violating the law. There are about 12 nurses, 10 doctors, 6 lawyers, and three judges.

The intimate glimpses of how law and order and medicine works is mostly untrue but very realistic. (Thanks to television, who doesn't know what an operating room looks like from the inside?) And every child has an image of what a police station looks like, and an executive board room. Most children today have a better understanding of these types of occupation more than they understand what their mothers and fathers do at work each day.

This is a skewed occupational distribution, and we are now studying the occupational choices that it leads to. For instance, science, technology and engineering are very rare occupational types on television; we're curious as to how this kind of exposure will influence children in their future occupational choices.

It is this television culture which presents to our children and to us a world of manufactured, assembly line, mass-produced, high pressure day dreams. The dreams that may be enormously successful --at least for the objective for which they exist, namely to sell goods and services. But dreams that scare, that shame, that hurt too many, is where we discover the historic significance of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

You will see this afternoon a few samples, and among one of them is how Fred explores and goes behind a very scary phenomenon, the Incredible Hulk. He shows all of us how this is made. In one program he achieves the shift from what we call attribution to inference. Attribution is a kind of childish way of looking at a story or a symbolic manifestation as something natural arising out of the natural world. You

attribute the significance to the images. Inference is when you can get behind the scenes and know there is a script, an actor, a camera, and make up. You a lot of things from what you see. Immediately you are in control, and you say "Aha, this is a kind of make-believe that makes me see it the way it is and makes me a kind of independent, autonomous person who can reflect on it. And as soon as you do that it becomes an enriching experience no matter how bad the program may be as unwittingly absorbed.

It is in this world of too many, high pressured, too fast assembly line manufactured dreams that Fred Rogers is handcrafting for all of us as well as for our children, the dreams that heal.

June 6, 1995

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Our first story begins...well, with a story. George Gerbner explores the deep-rooted human penchant for telling tales--an innate drives which, Gerbner argues, is our species' most distinctive trait. Although uniquely innovative, television programming, Gerbner says, is just the latest step in the development of storytelling. Like the ritualized storytelling of the pre-industrial age, modern TV viewers "absorb" their programs at a certain time, in a certain place. With the television on an average of seven hours a day in most homes, programs are digested without even acknowledging their presence--"It is like wallpaper: you are born into it, you absorb its patterns without knowing..."

By itself, Gerbner says, television is not evil, and does, in fact, perform important cultural functions. But its (ever-)presence in our lives means that the values of our cultural stories may be filtered through a gauze of rote plots, commercialism and advertising. Through the lens of this "historical if not cosmic" perspective, Gerber sees Fred Rogers as something of a subversive, whose alternate views "contrasts with the unwitting absorption of what is seen elsewhere."

Dean Emeritus of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, Gerbner has written numerous books and articles in the field of communications and was the editor of *The Journal of Communication*. He has served on a number of national councils and commissions, including the National Commission on Aging, the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, the Surgeon General's Science Advisory Committee, the National TV Cable Association, and is founder of the Cultural Environmental Movement. the US Commission on Civil Rights.

Fred Rogers and the Significance of Story

George Gerbner

(Adapted and revised from a speech at the *Symposium on Child and Story: The work of Fred Rogers* at the University of Pittsburgh)

There is a story about a mother who said to her child, "I wish you would change your behavior." The child said, "That's all right mother, Mister Rogers loves me as I am."

Forty years in children's television--with an approach that is so different from so many other programs--is an event of historic significance. Forty years as a gentle provocateur and a counter pointer clearly is more than a story of quick success. If you are trendy you will last as long as a trend does. If you are going along with convention you will get used up by television

very quickly.

So what is it about *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* that's outside convention or trend? My purpose is to try to place this program in an historic if not cosmic perspective.

If I ask you what is the most unique or distinct aspect of human life or the human species, what would you say? There have been many answers to that question. *Homo sapiens* is the tool-making animal, the social animal, the language-using, communicating animal. All are true but I don't think any of those is *the* most distinct characteristic of our species. There are other creatures that do some of each of those things. But there is one thing that no other species does: tell stories.

Our ability to tell stories is important not only because we live by storytelling, but because we erect a world that is constructed from the stories that we hear and we tell. Most of our reactions are *not* in response to the immediate physical environment, which is what most other species do most of the time. We are not on this planet just to look at our immediate environment or to experience reality. We are here in a very general but very real way to exchange stories. We are here to contribute to that reality (or should I say that fantasy we call reality). Each of our stories contributes to a larger context, a larger environment, a larger world in which we live--most of which we have acquired not through direct experience, but through stories we hear and through stories we tell. To each story we adjust our everyday experience; by each story we judge and measure our everyday experience and even ourselves.

So it is the stories that animate the human imagination--the stories about how things work, what they are, and what to do about them--that provide the most distinctive and characteristic aspect of human life. And, as Fred Rogers wisely notes, each of us is capable of contributing; each individual viewer creates his or her own exciting, vital story.

In theory, there are three kinds of stories. In reality they are all mixed up; there are few pure stories, but for the sake of analysis, the pure types can be reduced to three categories.

The first kind of story illuminates one of the most important aspects of human life: invisible relationships. It reveals how we relate to each other--the hidden dynamics of the network of relationships in which we live. By such revelations, these stories tell the truth about how things *really* work, because how things *really* work is not apparent, is not visible. It is something behind the scenes, and the only way to make it apparent is to make us see something that we otherwise can not see. The way to do that is fiction and drama, or as Fred Rogers calls it, make-believe. "Make-believe" is the construction of a story that allows us see what is usually covert. It depends on characters and actions that we invent in order to tell the truth about how things really work or might work or should work or shouldn't work. (When Lady Elaine challenges a pronouncement of King Friday, it is really an inquisitive child insisting one more time, "But *why*, Mom?") These kinds of stories--what we usually call fiction, drama, and fairy tales--are often dismissed as unreal or fantasy when they are in fact the unique and indispensable ways of illuminating not that which *is* but that which shows *how things work*, or what's behind the scenes.

The second kind of story is that of factual explanation and explication. Histories, documentaries, the news of today--these are all examples of this second brand of story. By themselves, these stories are meaningless. A news story--a story of a fact--acquires significance only as it is fitted in a framework that is erected by the first kind of story of how life really works behind the scenes where we can't see. Once we understand that--and we all acquire some understanding of it as we grow up in a culture--*then* we can use the facts, *then* we can fit in the facts to confirm the fantasy we call reality and say, "Yes, that is real." If it doesn't fit, we

discard it or we say it is biased or false or invalid.

So the second kind of story (about "what things are") is meaningless by itself. It is in fantasy that we understand the meaning about how things work in far away lands, at far away times, and here behind the scenes where we can't see. It's how we learn to interpret the things called facts.

The third story is a story of value and choice. This type of story asks, "Well, if this is how things work and this is how things are, then what are we going to do about them?" These are the sermons, the instructions--today most of them are commercials--that present a little vignette about a style of life that says, "This is how things work, this is how things are, and this is a desirable outcome for us to attain (or an undesirable thing that you want to avoid), and therefore you should chose this particular direction, product, or service." It is an enormously important cultivation and reinforcement of a framework of life, of what is desirable, of what are the values and choices of what to select, and how to select from them. Rogers' reiterative theme of recognizing the worth of the individual echoes and re-echoes in the lives of the children who watch.

These three kinds of stories have always been interwoven and together provide the fabric and context of what we call the culture. (I am defining "culture" here as a system of stories that regulates human relationships, into which we are born and which we absorb and acquire as we grow and become socialized into our place in a social structure.) They have been woven together in very different ways at different times in history.

In the first (and longest) historical period, the pre-industrial period of many tens of thousands of years, story-telling was oral, handcrafted, and infinitely adjusted to time, place, and circumstance. An oral story is always a play or production or dramatic interpretation. As

Shakespeare said, "The play's the thing." It is in the *telling*--infinitely adjustable, always interruptable and transformable, depending on the listeners' reactions. Such oral narrative--usually called mythology and later on religion--requires a great amount of human resources. Pre-technological men and women needed much more talent, needed much bigger and better memories, needed much greater skills in order to live in a world of stories as they did. They had to carry with them and in them most useful knowledge that had to be remembered and memorized. Education in a pre-industrial age consisted of aphorisms and folk-tales and stories and memorization of instructions about the seasons and about how to handle the land and the animals. The older you were the more valuable you became because you experienced more and remembered more and could share more.

So, in order to accumulate this knowledge, this reservoir of human resources, these "primitive people" developed *ritual*--a ritualistic repetition and reiteration of the stories, of the songs, of the dances, of the celebrations. Most celebrations had to do with a sort of rehearsal about what is tried and true and established and valid. And that ritual encompassed all three kinds of stories--about what the world is like and how it works and what is the nature of the universe and meaning of life, and what are the facts of life presumed to be true and untrue, and what to do about them. In other words, these rituals were embodied in the mythologies of all communities and of all tribes, and it is only when certain tribes explored and found that there were other people who had other mythologies that the notion of religion arose. All the great religious teachers--Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammed--were storytellers. They said to their people, "Listen to me. I know this; believe it." And the people listened and believed.

Then came a major transformation in the storytelling process: the printing press allowed the first mechanical reproduction of stories in a book. This began the industrialization of the

story-telling process, and remains one of the most profound transformations (if not the most profound transformation) in the way human beings live their lives. It had a direct impact on the mind; once stories were recorded and printed and later distributed, there was an immediate connection with the world that we erected and the way in which we lived through our stories.

The coming of printing broke up the ritual. You could look it up; you didn't have to remember it all. It broke up the centralized ministration of stories by the priests, the interpreters, the storytellers. You didn't have to have somebody to interpret a book--for instance, in the Western World, the Bible. You could read it yourself, or take it with you. This was the beginning of the Reformation. The Reformation would have been inconceivable without printing because it was based on the possibility of a diversity of explanation instead of a grand interpreter of the book. It is the beginning of the notion that a community can exist with more than a single philosophy, more than a single interest, more than a single perspective. Printing helped to establish the right of different classes, regions, ethnic and religious communities to tell unique stories from their own points of view. With print, the storyteller was out of view, and could no longer look at the crowd and cry, "Believe me; I know." As receivers of story, we lost an absolute faith in the storyteller alone. The story was there, but we gained time and perspective. We could *choose* to say, "Yes, I've read this and I believe and I have faith"--or choose to reject that story in favor of another one.

To tell stories that illuminate the interest and perspective of a particular subculture *and to permit the publication and dissemination and analysis of those stories* was a revolutionary development. Publication is the process by which the new form of social enterprise arises called *publics*. Without printing and publication, the concept was unthinkable, because a "public" is a community who have something in common but who may never meet. Before the printing

press, the territory in which a community could be governed was the area that its most distant citizens could reach in a short period of time, perhaps one or two days. Citizens had to meet to discuss matters face to face. The larger communities of the so-called ancient empires were really not communities but tribute-collecting organizations. You sent out the legions when the roads hardened in the spring to collect the taxes. It is only since the coming of printing that it has been possible through publication to enlarge the community's reach to what we today call a "public," which extends beyond all impenetrable barriers of time, space, class, and language, because print can be translated, disseminated, and preserved.

This theory of community--where competing interests can live more or less peacefully side by side, freely pursuing their conflicting interests by virtue of their power to tell stories from their own points of view--is only a few hundred years old, yet it has transformed the basis of our political, cultural, social, and religious life. So the notion of public, on which all modern theories of government and education and communication are based, is itself a product of the printing press. It broke up the ritual, it decentralized and pluralized communication, it gave rise to the notion of mass publics and, therefore, to a plurality of perspectives in modern society. But to participate fully in this pluralized society, to participate in the changed ritual of story, the individuals in the community must be literate. Without literacy human beings are without the story that is literature. We have always asked that literature turn statistics into human beings. We have story to guide us and illuminate our thoughts and behaviors. We have story to provide a shared and common experience, to stimulate our imagination. Without commonality or imagination, it is not possible to hope; without hope we lose our soul.

Now comes the present age, the telecommunications age, whose flagship is television. Despite other technological developments I think television will dominate our culture for a long

time to come. Television has certain very specific and unique characteristics that no other medium has.

The first and most important characteristic is that television is a ritual. Most people watch television by the clock and not by the program. Its true predecessor is not radio or film, but pre-industrial religion. Children today are born into a home in which the set is on an average of seven hours a day. That means that in half of our homes it is put on in the morning and turned off in the evening. It is like the wallpaper: you are born into it, you absorb its patterns without knowing, and you learn a great deal about your surroundings.

We know from research that by the time children are five or six years of age--about when they first encounter the outside culture, either by going to school or by going to church or both--they have already lived in a very informative, intensive, ever-present televised environment in which all the stories are told and retold but with very little variety. The same basic patterns are told in endless repetition but are disguised by what appears to be the novelty of the plot. Forget the plot--the plot is there to conceal what is really going on and to give the appearance of novelty. Look at the casting, look at the relationships, look at the fate of different social types in these stories. Whether it is news or drama or talk shows, you'll find a great deal of similarity in the basic constituents of storytelling among all of these forms.

For the first time in human history the storyteller who tells most of the stories to our children, and at the same time to our parents and grandparents, is not the church or the school. It is a small group of distant corporations with purposes of their own which have great virtues and great weaknesses. They are the storytellers that in many ways have taken over and given us a world into which our children are born and in which we all live.

Let me tell you a few things about what kind of a world that is, both good and bad. Remember the positive things as well as the negative.

For the first time in human experience, the poor share a great deal of cultural content with the rich. This has never before happened. Isolation and parochialism are no longer a given condition of poverty. A child from the farm may know just as many sophisticated brands and practices as the aristocracy because of television. You are no more out in the sticks; you are part of the mainstream. You have been brought into it. You are no longer politically uninformed; you have been brought into a national flow of social, political, and cultural current. The great names and celebrities of our age, the beautiful and the ugly, the famous and the infamous, come into your homes everyday, and provide an unprecedented social cohesion between otherwise very different and heterogeneous groups of people. This has never before happened.

It is also true that such a normative standard erodes traditional differences among human beings in our society. They get absorbed by a form of "cultural mainstreaming," which is very different than its namesake, educational mainstreaming. In cultural mainstreaming, groups who are divergent from the great national mean--divergent in their points of view, in their philosophies and standards by which they measure how things work and what to do about them--are divergent only as long as they are "light" viewers of television. Being a light viewer doesn't mean that one doesn't like television, but that a person watches more selectively and may engage in a variety of other cultural pursuits. Such viewers tend to have higher incomes, be more educated, have many more cultural opportunities available to them, and have more diverse tastes.

The heavy viewers are those groups who are otherwise divergent from the mainstream

but tend to converge upon the mainstream. Television tends to erase cultural differences, and by doing that present a kind of homogenized standard for response for action and reaction that is national and almost international in scope.

What kind of a world does this mainstream present? We have a group of maybe forty or fifty million Americans who had very little before television but a lot of boredom--who are not bookreaders, who have never been bookreaders. Television has monopolized the lives of people who have had very little cultivation of diversified tastes. TV has become all of culture for them. It has become, in the lives of people less culturally privileged, the most interesting thing going on any time of the day or night, and that is a tremendous attraction. Instead of being automatically critical of television and everything it stands for, we should try to understand what is going on; we should examine the kind of a world it presents, become more active citizens in constructing that kind of world, and appreciate the few historical phenomena such as *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

I'm going to pick out ^{some out} results of research ^{on the} ~~done by our colleagues who have studied that~~ TV world and its basic story-making elements. This "mainstream" television world is a place where men outnumber women across the board at least three to one. Starting out with that kind of cast, what can you get that is really accurate and valid? There is a basic flaw in almost every play, in most of our news, in ~~all~~ ^{most} of our ~~mechanically produced~~ ^{formula-based} children's programs (where the disproportion is even greater). Representation is not only a question of numbers, but also a question of the range of opportunities one sees a significant majority element of human beings take and pursue. If you are under- represented in the culture in which you grow up you see yourself limited in the number of life's opportunities. You see yourself under-valued, under-endowed, over-victimized, less powerful, and more vulnerable. That is the true meaning of

representation and its distribution in the world in which our children become encultured.

It works the same way with age. Young people are vastly underrepresented, less than one-third of their true proportion of the population. Likewise, people 65 and older are portrayed on TV in less than one-fifth of their true numbers. They are practically invisible. And when either group *is* visible, they play the obligatory parts which are the most stereotyped--a romantic partner, a grandmother babysitting, or a child who is either overly charming or overly abused.

The most victimized populations on television are young boys and adolescent girls. One way to measure victimization is not to simply calculate the sheer number of "violent acts" but assess the frequency of someone asserting his or her will over an unwilling person--which creates a good definition of violence: someone subjecting another to that kind of violation. It establishes a gauge for measuring *relative power*. In that sense, young boys are the most victimized, young girls are the second most, in general women are more victimized than men, and minorities are more than majorities. If you are a white male in the prime of life, although your chances of getting into a violent situation are frequent on television, your chances of getting away with it, of being the winner rather than the victim, are the greatest.

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These "victimization ratios"--the relationship (ratio) between the violent and the victimized--reflects the hierarchies of power in our social structure. If you get ten violent

perpetrators on a television show the overall average number of victims is about 12. But for every ten ~~competent, non-victimized~~ ^{victims} women written into the scripts (women who are able to enforce their own will), about 16 women will be victimized. For older women, this "victimization ratio" is 1 to 36. And so on with non-whites, with boys, with girls, and other cultural minorities.

Violence is essentially a demonstration of power--the very thing that perpetuates the underrepresentation of women and minorities. The frequency of violence enforces the kind of cultural colonization of our people that takes place in the world of television. What really counts in violence is not only the *possibility* of imitation (although that is a price that we pay for maintaining the structure of power), but *who can get away with what against whom most frequently*. Television violence is simply a convenient and widely accepted dramatic shorthand for this kind of power equation.

It is in this way that the lesson of violence, this demonstration of power, is administered. It's a lesson of insecurity. It's a lesson in constructing out of these stories an image of the world which is mean and scary; in which the way to deal with people-- especially strangers--is to be suspicious and distrust them, to shy away and become scared and frightened. It's a world in which the way to retain or restore your sense of security is by depending on the strong and by accepting and sometimes even welcoming repression both at home and in the world if it comes in the name of enhancing or preserving your protection. It is a humanly, socially, and politically volatile and threatening phenomenon.

The occupational distribution in the world of television is very peculiar because of this power play. Prime time is essentially devoted to a world of power, where power plays are dominant. Daytime TV is maybe artistically less pleasing, but at least it's a world of equitable,

internal turbulence rather than external power. Children's commercial programming involves an extended combination of both. It is not muted. Everything in terms of stereotyping and violence, and in terms of the imbalance that you find in prime time and daytime programming for relatively mature and sophisticated tastes, takes on its crudest and most exploitative of violence on children's programming is the scandal of the civilized world. It is not just a little aberration. I know of few countries that don't have its best artists put on at least half an hour of children's programming in prime time. But, in the U.S., the iron rule of ratings and demography excludes anything like that.

Children are also viewers of prime time. Four-fifths of children's viewing time goes into an absorption of the accelerated, overheated story context of the adult cultural environment of prime time. The average viewer of prime time sees a cast of about 300 characters week in and week out. The single highest occupation on television is law enforcer; there about 44 characters enforcing the law per week, and about 23 criminals violating the law. There are about 12 nurses, 10 doctors, six lawyers, and three judges. The intimate glimpses of how law and order and medicine works is mostly untrue but very realistic. Thanks to television, who doesn't know what a court room or an operating room looks like from the inside? And every child has an image of what a police station looks like, and an executive board room. Most children today have a better understanding of these types of occupation more than they understand what their mothers and fathers do at work each day.

This is a skewed occupational distribution, and we are now studying the occupational choices that it leads to. For instance, science, technology and engineering are very rare occupational types on television; we're curious as to how this kind of exposure will influence children in their future occupational choices.

It is this television culture which presents to our children and to us a world of manufactured, assembly line, mass-produced, high-pressure day-dreams. The dreams may be enormously successful--at least for the objective for which they exist, namely to sell goods and services. But dreams that scare, that shame, that hurt too many, are where we discover the historic significance of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

Rogers explores the very stuff of this violence. In one episode (one of many examples), he goes behind a very scary television show, *The Incredible Hulk*. He shows all of us how this is made. In a single stroke he achieves the shift from attribution to inference. "Attribution" is a kind of childish way of looking at a story or a symbolic manifestation as something natural arising out of the natural world--in other words, attributing meaning to something that's merely an image. "Inference" is when you can get behind the scenes and know there is a script, an actor, a camera, and make-up. You infer from what you see. Immediately you are in control, and you say "Aha, this is a kind of make-believe that makes me see it the way it is, and makes me a kind of independent, autonomous person who can reflect on it." And as soon as you do that it becomes an enriching experience no matter how bad the program may be, or how unwittingly absorbed. By interviewing the actors, by looking at the process of make-up and acquisition of "character," Rogers allows a young audience to make this crucial shift.

It is in this world of too many manufactured dreams that Fred Rogers is handcrafting--for us as well as for our children--the dreams that heal. Just how does Fred craft these dreams? First, he always has something to tell, rather than something to sell. He has a purpose, a message that respects the viewer and what the viewer may need, rather than what the viewer may be induced to buy.

His perspective on life's needs, problems, and conflicts does more than help the child.

It confers a measure of immunity from other programs that may be damaging. Knowing that there is another way of looking at things counteracts the unwitting absorption of what is seen elsewhere.

His dreams, his stories, offer ways to control the chaotic life of the streets and neighborhoods in which our children often live. Our children are starving for story, the kind that builds on hope, the kind that echoes for a lifetime. We need story in our lives, for the dreams they suggest. In our television world, story has once again been ritualized. Storytellers appear on the screen saying, "Believe me; I was there." They show us a spaceship blowing up or war in the streets of yet another community. Television storytellers look our children in the eye and demand that all of us believe their stories--stories that blind the mind's eye with unreflected light and discourage imagination and build dreams based on greed. But Rogers turns to the viewer and says quietly, "Believe *you*. It is *your* story that is important. It is *your* mind and heart that can make things possible--just because of who you are."