

September 3, 1996

Doron Weber
Program Officer
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
630 Fifth Ave, Suite 2550
New York, NY 10111

Dear Mr. Weber:

This is a proposal for an Officer Grant of \$30,000 for a research project to demonstrate the urgent need for a more diverse and realistic image of science, technology and engineering in television drama, including films seen on television.

The research would be based on the Cultural Indicators television database from 1973 through 1995 of prime time and Saturday morning children's programs. The reason for starting with this sample, aside from its availability, is that it represents a new and crucial factor in human socialization.

For the first time in history, our children are born into a home in which television is on more than seven hours a day. Dramatic programs (including comedy as well as serious drama) have been by far the principal sources of information about science, scientists and related matters, shaping images, from infancy on, that affect public support, occupational choices, and markets for other media, especially film. The results of this research would establish baseline trend data essential for any informed effort toward more accurate portrayals. The results would show (1) what such efforts are up against, and (2) what are the key features to be countered and/or overcome. They would be suitable for public release and dissemination to film schools, award judges, symposia and conferences, and media writers and executives.

The specific plan calls for the following:

1. Frequency and context of science and technology as themes in prime time and Saturday morning children's programs, including films. Comparisons will be made with the presentation of pseudo-science and the supernatural.

2. Comparative analysis of the image of scientists and engineers. This would examine science both as an activity and as an occupation, compared to those of selected groups such as persons in business, government, religion, education, etc. The comparative analysis will be along three dimensions:

(a) Demography: what gender, age, race, class and family structures are presented?

(b) Evaluation: what are the distributions of positive ("hero") and negative ("villain") characterizations?

(c) Fate: what are relative ratios of success vs. failure, involvement in violence, risks of victimization?

A report of approximately 10-15 pages will summarize and interpret results presented in a set of Appendix Tables, and will include a 2-page "Highlights" section.

The study will commence upon approval and will be completed in approximately six months. It will be conducted by the Cultural Indicators research team under my direction. Next steps, if desired, may include other media samples, a study of effects upon viewer perceptions and conceptions, and outreach and dissemination.

The contracting party will be the Cultural Environment Movement (CEM), a non-profit tax-exempt educational corporation of which I am Founder and President. (The purpose of CEM is compatible with this project; it is to improve media presentation of key issues such as health, minorities, violence, etc.).

My budget estimate:

Coding, computer.....	\$3,000
Research assistance.....	6,000
Database management, data analysis.....	8,000
Clerical, duplication, supplies, misc.....	3,000
Communication.....	2,000
Report writing, professional.....	<u>8,000</u>
Total.....	30,000

Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

George Gerbner, Dean Emeritus
The Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania
Director, the Cultural Indicators Project
Founder and Chair, the Cultural Environment Movement