

Briefing Paper on NAEYC's Policy-Making Process, Especially as it relates to War and the Media

By John Surr, for CEASE

January 12, 2007

Just before the November 2006 NAEYC Conference in Atlanta, NAEYC's Governing Board decided to review its process and priorities for Position Statements at its March 2007 meeting in Washington, DC. It also decided upon an answer to the letter from CEASE sent in September 2006 concerning the updating of its Position Statement on Violence in the lives of Children. It did not then decide to respond to CEASE's other letter to it, concerning its advertising policy and the role of media in the lives of young children. At the Conference, Jerlean Daniel, who will be managing the NAEYC Staff's work on these matters, responded positively to my offer of a briefing paper on the issues. This is that briefing paper.

Our work on these issues takes place in the context of NAEYC's mission "*to serve and act on behalf of the needs, rights and well-being of all young children with primary focus on the provision of educational and developmental services and resources*".¹ NAEYC's Strategic Objectives include: "*5. Building public understanding and support for activities and services that promote the healthy development and learning of all young children and their families.*"² CEASE believes that the recommendations it makes below support this mission and that objective in particular.

I. Role of Position Statements in NAEYC:

At its November 2006 meeting NAEYC's Governing Board has asked its Staff to examine how NAEYC's Position Statements now in effect serve NAEYC's mission, and how their role might be modified to serve that mission better. Although CEASE's specific requests in September did not relate specifically to this question, its consideration goes to the root of CEASE's concerns, so we offer our views on the issue for the Staff and Governing Board to consider in the context of that general review.

CEASE believes that any organization should attune all of its policies and activities, not just its investment and sponsorship policies, to its basic mission. For instance, NAEYC should examine all of the advertisements it accepts from the standpoint of whether the products or services advertised support or retard children's growth. If there is research-based evidence that healthy growth is impeded when the product or service is used, advertising for the product should not be accepted. Such a policy might deprive NAEYC of financial resources on occasion, but it will enhance the public trust of NAEYC's organizational integrity, in contrast with some other organizations in its field.

CEASE has some concern that NAEYC is in danger of letting its forms and procedures get in the way of its mission and its strategic objective as identified above. The carefully drafted statement on page 6 of the July 2006 *Young Children* about NAEYC's policies for accepting advertisements left us with a clear impression that NAEYC may regard its Position Statements as its exclusive avenue for the development and expression of its public policies. The *Position Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development and Analysis of Early Childhood Public Policy* and the *Goals and*

¹ NAEYC By-Laws, Article I, Section I.1.

² From "NAEYC Mission and Goals," <http://www.naeyc.org/about/mission.asp>.

Vision Statement on www.naeyc.org all focus entirely on what happens in the early childhood classroom, with no relation to the world outside.

"It takes a village to raise a child" has real meaning to us and, we hope, to you as well. For at least the last ten years, NAEYC has been an important part of the movement to integrate services and facilities relating to young children in a family-friendly way, so that each child can succeed in school and in life, whatever the deprivations the child and its family suffered when the child came into the world. A young child does not feel sharp divisions between home, child care or early education, and community. To a parent, an early educator is the expert to be called upon to help to make the home environment more conducive to the child's growth. The influences on a child's growth that come from home or the community need to be addressed by NAEYC's policies for the benefit of all young children, including those in care.

NAEYC indeed has addressed these issues, in its *Position Statements on Media Violence in Children's Lives, Prevention of Child Abuse, Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, Technology and Young Children, and Violence in the Lives of Children*. In addition, NAEYC takes part in a number of coalitions and joint efforts with other organizations in Washington, DC and other locations to address issues relating to young children that are not exclusive to out-of-home care and education. Finally, the Governing Board on occasion has used means other than Position Statements to express NAEYC's position about public issues, such as its November 2002 statement of support of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. These activities in support of NAEYC's mission demonstrate the flexibility inherent in its policies and practices, allowing it to state its mind and add its voice on matters affecting the welfare and growth of young children generally, and not limited to the child care or early education classroom.

NAEYC's focus on out-of-home care and education is not, and should not be, exclusive. Classroom practices need to address the many aspects of life outside the classroom that have major impacts on a child's growth, if they are to succeed in helping young children to thrive. The Position Statement format may or may not be the best way in which NAEYC's position on these features can and should be addressed.

NAEYC has a number of other vehicles by way of which it may express or implement its views on these issues. CEASE believes that NAEYC should use these other vehicles flexibly, to fit the circumstances in which the interests of young children and their teachers will be helped. Other children's advocacy organizations, such as the Children's Defense Fund and the Child Welfare League of America, have expressed their collective concerns about war and the media, for instance, in a variety of ways.³ The National Education Association goes one step further, with a compendium of resolutions on a wide variety of public resolutions on issues relating to children, their education, and teachers. Some of the wording of these resolutions, particularly those relating to electronic media and war, might be useful to the Staff and Governing Board in drafting NAEYC's own comparable positions.⁴

Therefore, CEASE recommends that NAEYC should work continually to support its mission, its vision, and its strategic objectives in all of its policies, practices and actions, such as its acceptance of advertising and exhibits.

³ See www.cwla.org and www.childrensdefense.org, search for "war" or "television + children".

⁴ See <http://www.nea.org/handbook/images/resolutions.pdf>, especially Resolutions numbered A-19, A-32, B-54, B-59, B-65, C-6, C-34, and I-12.

II. War Harms Children:

NAEYC's July 1993 *Position Statement on Violence in the Lives of Children* states convincingly that all forms of violence, whether direct or witnessed, impede the growth of young children, and that they should be prevented or mitigated to the extent possible. References to war do not appear in the Position Statement, except in concluding that children who experience violence suffer the same post-traumatic stress disorders as war veterans.

In 2002 and again this year, CEASE asked NAEYC's Governing Board to state its conclusion that war, as a form of violence supported by the Government, harms children equally with other forms of violence. The Governing Board's response in 2002 was to reaffirm the Position Statement, but not to refer to war. Again this year, CEASE asked the Governing Board to conclude that war harms children. The reply we received on November 28, 2006, states:

"NAEYC does not have the expertise on determining whether the United States should or should not declare war or to engage in other military actions. However, through our Position Statements and other work, NAEYC does speak on children's positive development in relation to the prevention of and responses to violence and harm experienced by children and families in a variety of settings and situations, including children of military families. The Governing Board will determine a schedule for revising Position Statements at its March 2007 meeting, which will include the issue of our Position Statements relating to violence, media violence, and child abuse. . . ."

There is ample evidence to support the inclusion of war in the any NAEYC Position Statement about children and violence. War has a number of effects on children, not all of them specifically related to violence. Without limitation, some of the effects of war substantiated by research include:

1. It violently injures children and their families, either directly through attack or witnessed through media coverage;
2. It kills or causes physical or mental/emotional injury of family members and other loved ones by violent means;
3. It injures children and other war survivors through unexploded ordnance left in public places;
4. It leaves children with traumatic memories, either of violence directly or through media or other vivid recollections of violent events;
5. It legitimizes, even glorifies, violence on behalf of the Government, which sends a mixed message to children about their own avoidance of violence in their relations with other people and animals.
6. It legitimizes negative stereotypes of innocent "enemy" civilians and cultures in parental, community and media characterizations that children take seriously;
7. It distorts national fiscal and policy priorities away from legitimate needs of children and families;
8. It uses fear as primary motivator for action, rather than more healthy incentives.

When war is on the national political agenda, the countervailing legitimate national interest in promoting healthy growth and learning in children needs to be considered by all. In these circumstances organizations concerned with children need to speak up. If these organizations stay silent, as NAEYC has done so far, the national interest in children is quite likely to be ignored, to their detriment. That is why CEASE is asking NAEYC to be willing to speak up for the protection of children against war when appropriate, as it appears to us to be right now.

Because of the worsening situation in Iraq, which has a far greater effect on civilians, including children, than the military, and is adversely effecting the growth of children in our classrooms through the diversion of attention and resources from their needs to a war that will not help them be more secure, CEASE urges the NAEYC Board to act now to join the chorus of other organizations interested in children and their growth, in calling for a rapid end to the war in Iraq and a reallocation of our national resources to benefit America's children and their families. NAEYC's action does not have to be in the form of a Position Paper. It can be a press release, or a signature on a joint call for action along these lines with other organizations working for children⁵. But the need to act for children in this instance is extreme, and it is urgent.

Therefore, CEASE urges NAEYC, as soon as possible, to:

- + Recognize publicly that war (including the current war being conducted with American troops in Iraq) is harmful to young children, and*
- + Implement that recognition in its policies and actions.*

The rest of this Part II summarizes some relevant research on the effects of war on children. It is arranged according to the type of effect on young children due to war, with the most recent relevant research being summarized and referenced first.

a. Children in Areas of Hostilities:⁶

The Winter 2006-07 issue of ACEI's Childhood Education features a short article entitled "War, Children, and Education" pointed out that

*"Unfortunately, war and fighting have taken the place of childhood and schooling [in countries where war has become a way of life]. Worldwide, more than 100 million children do not attend school (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2004) where war is a way of life. . . . The data [on war as it affects children] collected to date reveal that even when children do manage to experience some education, war changes the social and economic roles of children, . . . Zwi and Grove (2005, ¶ 5) explain that the greatest burden of ill health in conflict situations is borne by children. 'Disabled children have greater difficulty escaping during attacks, especially those with a moving, learning, or visual difficulty. Parents may have to make decisions about who to leave behind when fleeing.'"*⁷

A review of the literature concluded that *"Available evidence suggests that massive exposure to wartime trauma seems likely to overwhelm most children's defenses; however, children's cognitive immaturity, plasticity, and innate adaptive capacities may mitigate war's effects in low-to-moderately intense wartime settings, resulting in self-protective, adaptive, cognitive styles that allow effective functioning after acclimatization. Promising recent research has shifted from the focus on psychopathology to social awareness, values, and attitudes. More research will be needed to determine how age, developmental, family, and community factors may mediate the strength and*

⁵ See, e.g., the organizations and their Web sites referred to above in footnotes 1 and 2.

⁶ See generally, Hart, J. & Tyrer, B., (May 2006) *Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics & Methods*, Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper No. 30, Oxford U., 58 pages, which details the many, mostly harmful consequences of children's direct involvement in armed conflict, and the ethical and other constraints on research involving those children.

⁷ Oja, L.A., (Winter 2006/07), *War, Children, and Education*, Childhood Education 83(2): 98-L.

nature of wartime effects, and to determine which interventions are most effective in a variety of settings and cultural contexts.⁸

“Up to two million children have been killed in war zones in [1987-1996], often painfully, without medical care, and sometimes alone. A further four million have been permanently disabled. . . . One million children have been orphaned. Twelve million children have been displaced from the security of their homes and one third of these have spent time in the restrictive and abusive confines of a camp for refugees or internally displaced persons. . . . In Afghanistan, after more than 17 years of war, it is estimated that up to 45 % of soldiers are under 18 years of age. Allegations of cruelty to children as young as 12 years — involving solitary confinement while naked and blindfolded, beatings, electric shocks, and hosing with cold water — have all been documented by Amnesty International and corroborated by medical evidence. . . . Rape as a crime of war is not restricted to adult women. . . . Rape also affects those children who have witnessed, or are ostracized because of, the rape of their mother or other family member.

“Psychological effects of war on children are sinister and extremely difficult to document. They touch many more children than are affected by physical injuries and are less likely to be treated effectively. . . . Psychological effects of war depend on the age, sex, personality, and previous experiences of the child and on the child’s culture. The nature of events and the extent of the child’s exposure are also important. Effects are further modified by other consequences of war, such as physical injury, loss of family members, and loss of family home and community support. Children do present the hallmarks of post-traumatic stress disorder, with recurrent, intrusive and distressing recollections of disturbing thoughts and sensory images. They may re-experience the events through other behaviors such as dreams, story telling, or play. Depression and anxiety disorder are common. . . . In children exposed to the terror of shelling nearby, there is evidence of an increase in aggressive attitudes, expressed through increased patriotic feelings. Such children have also been found to place greater value on displays of courage by their peers. . . . Children are prone to feel guilt, and in a situation of armed conflict, although they may have been forced to grow up and adopt an adult role, they remain emotionally immature. . . .

“Civilian casualties numbered 5-19 % of total casualties in World War I; it is estimated now that they can account for up to 90 % of fatalities in some wars, particularly those occurring within a single state.”⁹ (emphasis added)

The Recent World Report on Violence against Children¹⁰ deflected its approach away from war, but did point out that, situations of conflict in the current world *“have exposed children to mass kidnapping and abduction, so they can*

⁸ Jensen, P.S., & Shaw, J., (July, 1993), *Children as Victims of War: Current Knowledge and Future Research Needs*, J Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry, 32(4): 697-708; Quotation is from abstract at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=8340288&dopt=Citation.

⁹ Plunkett, M.C.B., & Southall, D., (January 1998), *War and Children*, Arch Dis Child, 78: 72-77. available at <http://adc.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/78/1/72>. Also see Garbarino, J., et al, (1998), No Place to Be: Growing Up in a War Zone, 180 pages, and Graca Machel, (1996), Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, United Nations/UNICEF, 78 pages. .pdf available at http://www.unicef.org/graca/a51-306_en.pdf. Depleted Uranium ammunition, used by US troops during the Gulf War, were seen to have associated with *“a sharp increase in the incidence of birth defects and anomalies, childhood leukemia, and cancerous tumors. . . . For instance, . . . from 1990 to 2000, the proportion of children under age 5 with leukemia in the Basra area more than quadrupled from 13 % to 57 % [in contrast with areas outside the combat zone, where no significant change occurred]”*. Shenk, J., (2007), *My Discovery of DU*, Signs of the Times, Christian Peacemaker Teams, 16(4): 14.

¹⁰ Pinheiro, et al, (2006) World Report on Violence Against Children, United Nations, especially Chapter 7, available at <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>.

perform as fighters, porters, or be in support positions; girls have been used as sexual slaves. . . ."

In the aftermath of 9/11, the President's frequent reminders to all of us that our homes and public spaces are battlefields in his War on Terror are likely to be taken far more seriously by young children than by their parents.¹¹ The fear generated by those credible allegations inhibits the normal growth of their brains.

*Many of the effects of terrorism-induced trauma are similar to the effects of natural and man-made trauma. Children's responses include acute stress disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, regressive behaviors, separation problems, sleep difficulties, and behavioral problems. However, several aspects of terrorist attacks result in unique stressors and reactions and pose specific challenges for treatment. The unpredictable, indefinite threat of terrorist events, the profound effect on adults and communities, and the effect of extensive terrorist-related media coverage exacerbates underlying anxieties and contributes to a continuous state of stress and anxiety. Intervention strategies include early community-based interventions, screening of children at risk, triage and referral, and trauma-loss-focused treatment programs. . .*¹²

b. Children Exposed to News of War:

*Based on a random sample of parents of children aged 5 to 17 in Michigan, "the results show that 13- to 17-year-olds reportedly watched more news coverage of the war and experienced greater fear/concern than did 5- to 8-year-olds. Also consistent with predictions, younger children were reportedly more scared by concrete, visual dangers depicted in the news whereas older children were reportedly more scared by abstract, verbally communicated threats. Despite multiple controls, news viewing of the War on Iraq was a significant and positive predictor of children's heightened safety concerns but not behavioral manifestations of upset."*¹³

c. Children with Deployed Parents:

"The authors compared children and families with and without a deployed soldier-parent prior to and during Operation Desert Storm. 383 children and the remaining caretaking parent completed self- and parent-report instruments concerning child and family functioning and life stressors. Children of deployed personnel experienced elevated self-reported symptom levels of depression, as did their parents. Likewise, families of deployed personnel reported significantly more intervening

¹¹ One of CEASE's members, Loyan Beausoleil, who worked in a preschool in Silver Towers, a high rise apartment building about a mile from the site of the 9/11 attacks, reported that many children who were only two on 9/11/01 expressed persistent fears that Silver Towers would fall similarly, and were not comforted by adult reassurances that it was extremely unlikely. Beausoleil, L., (Spring 2004), *Even Younger Witnesses to September 11th*, CEASE News 25(1), 4.

¹² Fremont, W.P., (2004), *Childhood Reactions to Terrorism-Induced Trauma: A Review of the Past 10 Years*, J. Am. Acad. Child & Adolesc. Psychiatry, 43(4): 381-392. Generally, see the very moving account of the effect of having a relative among the "detainees" at Guantanamo Bay in Amnesty International, (1/2007), *Guantanamo: Lives Torn Apart. The Impact of Indefinite Detention on Detainees and their Families*, available at <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?id=12192&flag=report>.

¹³ Smith, S.L., & Moyer-Gise', E., (2006), *Children and the War on Iraq: Developmental Differences in Fear Responses to Television News Coverage*, Media Psychology, 8,3: 213-237.; abstract at http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s1532785xmep0803_2. See also Fleischman, D., (1991), *War Can Cause Stress, Frighten Children*, AAP News, 7,2: 1; abstract at <http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/7/2/1-a>. Generally, see Moses, L.F., et al, *Children's Fears of War and Terrorism*, ACEI, (2003), 60 pages with references; Raviv, A., et al, (1999), *How Children Understand War and Peace: A Call for International Peace Education*, 352 pages; and Cronston, J., Ed., (1999), *Bibliography: Children and Media Violence Research: A Selection*, UNESCO 43 pages. Also see Beausoleil, L., *op. cit. supra*, note 11.

stressors, compared with children and families of nondeployed personnel. However, deployment per se rarely provoked pathological levels of symptoms in otherwise healthy children. [But] boys and younger children appear to be especially vulnerable to deployment effects, and increased monitoring of these children is warranted. Adequate treatment of children requires treatment of the effects of the deployment on other family members.”¹⁴

There are several research-based articles and handbooks for parents and other caregivers of young children of parents who are deployed by the Military. As these are not direct reports of research, they are only listed below.¹⁵

d. Diversion of Government Financial Resources from Programs Assisting Young Children and their Growth to Military Spending:

For research on this issue, you need go no further than Adele Robinson, to ask her whether Federal funding for early childhood was easier to get before the invasion of Iraq than it has been since then. Of course the Bush tax cuts and the conservative doctrine disdaining domestic programs also had an influence on the availability of funding, but the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were responsible for much of the fiscal stringency forced on domestic programs such as the CCDBG and Head Start.

¹⁴ Jensen, P.S., *et al*, (April, 1996), *Children’s Response to Parental Separation during Operation Desert Storm*. *Jrnl. Am. Acad. Child & Adol. Psychiatry*, 35(4):433-441; abstract at <http://www.jaacap.com/pt/re/jaacap/abstract.00004583-199604000-00009.htm;jsessionid=FZXlbO4tOnOxvGxI41sOPGPTmFHSgwItXy2IywMQv0WM5DVpPp2Ll641301743!-949856144!8091!-1>.

¹⁵ Stafford, E.M., & Grady, B.A., (February 2003), *Military Family Support*, *Pediatric Annals*, 32, 2: 110-115; .pdf version at http://sitemaker.umich.edu/airforce_study/files/family_support.pdf; Biringen, Z., *et al*, (2005), *Babies, Toddlers, and Coping with Military Deployments: Ensuring Emotional Security and Remaining Emotionally Available*, Colorado St. U., .pdf version at http://www.4-h.uiuc.edu/omk/Babies_and_Toddlers_%20the_effect_of_deployment.pdf;

III. Entertainment Media and Children:

a. Background:

Members of CEASE were among those who protested the inclusion of a full-page ad for BabyFirstTV™ on page 53 of the July 2006 *Young Children*. Use of BabyFirstTV™, a TV channel that is specifically aimed at infants and toddlers, is contrary to the well-established recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics and other experts that children under two years of age should not be exposed to television or video entertainment, as interaction with live caregivers is far more helpful to their growth. When NAEYC accepts such an ad in its publication, whatever its intention, it suggests to the reader that NAEYC supports or at least endorses the product advertised. This particular BabyFirstTV™ ad, sandwiched between articles on infants and toddlers, had no obvious indication that it was a paid advertisement. The fine print disclaimer on page 4 of *Young Children* has only legal, not moral, relevance to this issue, as few readers know it exists.

We noted the carefully worded Editor's note about that ad on page 6 of the September issue of *Young Children*, as well as its concluding statement that: *"In response to the concerns raised by readers, NAEYC will examine our current advertising policies for Young Children and implement changes as needed. At the same time, the Association will continue to review our Position Statements on critical issues, then expand and update them as deemed necessary by the Governing Board."*

We also observe that, although NAEYC does have Position Statements on media violence and technology (e.g., computers), it has no Position Statement in force about the role of media in the lives of young children generally. Mark Ginsberg, in his December 14, 2006, reply to CEASE's recommendation to the NAEYC Board of a more general Position Statement about media in the lives of young children, said: *"As to the other issue you raise, when the Board reviews the issue of the revision and formulation of Position Statements, the issue of the impact of electronic media on children is an item among the list of items to be considered."*

Therefore, CEASE encourages the NAEYC Governing Board to decide to have a Position Statement prepared and action taken on the Role of Electronic Media in the Lives of Young Children. Such a Position Statement is needed to cover a number of important media-related developmental issues involving public policy. Among these are:

- + The amount of time young children spend in front of a video monitor instead of with real people and nature,*
- + The participation of parents or teachers in that viewing time,*
- + The adult or developmentally inappropriate content of the programs to which the children are exposed before they are ready for them developmentally,*
- + The saturation of young children with advertising, especially through electronic media.*

CEASE makes this recommendation based on the research findings incompletely described below. The descriptions of research studies that follow will not relate explicitly to media violence in children's lives or technology in the lives of children aged 3-8, as those topics are covered in NAEYC's Position Statements on those subjects.

b. The Scope of Media's Impact on Young Children:

Electronic media occupy a substantial amount of time for most of America's young children. Almost all American households have at least one television set. The television is on constantly, or nearly so, in 32 percent of American family households,¹⁶ so many if not most young children experience electronic entertainment media as a significant part of their lives. According to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation study involving surveys of 1,051 parents and 8 focus groups of parents nationwide, 83 percent of all children 6 and under use some form of electronic media, which is about equal to the percentage of them who read or are read to, or who listen to music. 75 percent of all young children watch TV daily, 32 percent watch DVDs or videos, 16 percent use computers, and 11 percent use video games apart from the computer.¹⁷

The young children experiencing electronic media average about 79 minutes a day of TV watching and 78 minutes a day of watching videos or DVDs. Computer use accounts for 50 minutes a day, and video game use takes 55 minutes. "On the whole, the 83 percent of all children who use screen media in a typical day spend an average of just under 2 hours doing so."¹⁸ If the children who are not daily screen watchers are included in the figures above, the average daily durations of screen time for all children 0-6 are 59 minutes for TV, 24 minutes for videos or DVDs, 6 minutes playing video games, and 7 minutes using a computer, making an average total daily screen time for all children at 96 minutes.

These averages, of course, mask a huge variation, from no screen time to 12 hours a day. Older young children on average spend more time in front of the screen, watch DVDs or videos less, and use computers and video games more. Even so, only 24 percent of children 0-2 never watch TV, but 43 percent of them watch TV an average of 62 minutes every day.¹⁹ 27 percent of infants have an "educational" Baby Einstein video.²⁰ 19 percent of children 0-2 have televisions sets in their bedrooms, and 43 percent of 4-6 year olds do.²¹ Among young children with a TV in the bedroom, the convenience of the TV leads to more time spent watching it, and 37 percent go to bed with the TV on at least half the time. Particularly for babies, and to a lesser degree for older young children, the amount of electronic media time far exceeds the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.²²

Young children's media exposure increases with the daily duration of their parents' use of such media, and most parents spend at least some time watching the same program as their young child. It may or may not be a program directed toward children, as 61 percent of the daily TV watching children were in the room when a parent was watching an adult show. But young children often watch screen media apart from their parents. Although 83 percent of parents say their children watch

¹⁶ Rideout, V., *et al*, (May 2006), *The Media Family: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers and their Parents*, Kaiser Family Foundation.

www.kff.org/entmedia, at pp. 8-10. 93 percent of young children's homes have a VCR or DVD player; 80 percent have cable or satellite TV; 84 percent have a home with more than one TV, and 24 percent with more than 3 TVs. *Id.*, at page 17.

¹⁷ *Id.*, at page 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Id.*, at page 26.

²⁰ *Id.*, at page 10.

²¹ *Id.*, at page 18.

²² *Id.*, at page 33.

mostly shows aimed at children, many parents and older siblings expose young children to mature content in electronic media.²³

*"In general, children whose parents have a lower income or less formal education tend to watch more television and play more video games; they are more likely to have TVs and video game players in their bedrooms, to have parents who watch more TV, and to live in homes where the TV is left on much of the time. Conversely, children with wealthier parents or those with a higher level of education tend to read more and are more likely to have used a computer."*²⁴

Similarly, young children of African-American parents spend about 47 percent more time watching TV every day than children of white parents.²⁵ If you're home alone as a low-income child of a working single parent, television may be a much lesser evil than other activities that might appeal to you.

TV/video skills are learned early by most young children. At 6-23 months of age, already 38 percent can turn on the TV by themselves, 40 percent can change channels with a remote control, and 7 percent can put in a DVD or video by themselves.²⁶

Of the parents who allow their children to watch any TV, 85 percent have rules about what or how much the children watch, and 63 percent say they enforce those rules consistently. Rules limiting TV time reduce the average exposure to TV from 86 minutes a day to 75. But parents also push their children to watch certain shows or DVDs deemed educational or helpful to the parent in getting other things done. "Go outside and play!" seems to have been replaced by "Go watch TV!"

The Kaiser Family Foundation did a similar study in 2003, and in the May 2006 study found that the results had changed in several significant ways in the previous three years. Reported television viewing time by young children diminished by 10 minutes, and DVD/video watching diminished by 7 minutes. The number of households where the TV is always on diminished by 5 percent, and even more among households with a child under 2. The number of children in a home with a computer increased by 5 percent, Internet access by 6 percent, and high-speed Internet access more than doubled. The numbers of parents who had rules limiting their young children's time watching TV diminished by 9 percent, and those with similar rules about computer use declined by 12 percent. Parents were 4 percent more likely to say that TV watching hurts learning than they were before.²⁷

c. Research on the Effects on Young Children of Screen Exposure: The impact of modern electronic media on the lives of children is clearly substantial and pervasive. The questions addressed in this section are whether and to what extent that involvement with media helps or hinders children's growth. The concluding section addresses the issues of what can or should organizations like NAEYC do to foster children's growth in relation to these electronic media.

²³ *Id.*, at page 23.

²⁴ *Id.*, at page 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Even so, 23 percent of Hispanic children have not used a computer by age 6, compared with 42 percent of African American and 50 percent of white children. 54 percent of young children from low-income families have a computer at home, versus 95 percent of children from families earning over \$75,000 per year. *Id.*, at page 33.

²⁶ *Id.*, at pages 7-10.

²⁷ *Id.*, at pages 30-31.

Although public perceptions may be otherwise, electronic media have a substantial impact also on young children's experiences during their presence in early care and education programs. Most family child care providers, many center programs, and some private and public schools expose children to frequent DVDs and videos, less frequent "educational" children's programs, some video games, substantial computer experience (e.g., see NAEYC's new performance standards for accredited programs²⁸), and occasionally entertainment content aimed at adults rather than children.

Children bring from home to their early care and education activities quite a few concerns, habits and practices that are derived from their media exposure. Teachers must address these issues as well as, or as part of, their own curriculum. Teachers need NAEYC's guidance on how to use what children bring to early childhood settings, to help the children grow.²⁹

The rest of this section summarizes some of the relevant research on media and young children. It is arranged according to the type of effect on young children due to media exposure, with the most recent relevant research being summarized and referenced first.³⁰

1. Effects on children under age 2:

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommended in 2001 that children under two be kept away from electronic media if possible, for three reasons:

- ✚ The brain's basic architecture is forming in response to environmental stimuli over the first 18-24 months of life;
- ✚ interaction with real caregivers, manipulation of environmental objects, and creative problem-solving activities are optimal for neural development, and
- ✚ electronic media take time and attention away from those activities.³¹

It is important to emphasize that, primarily because of ethical concerns, there has been no research conducted on actual children aged 0-2 to determine whether electronic media exposure helps or harms their growth, or which kind of electronic media might help that growth. Even so, DVDs, videos, and even television programs aimed at this age group have become a major market, and inflated claims about the educational value of specific products have proliferated. Despite the absence of relevant research, the producers of these materials persist in their unfounded claims that their products are educational for children from birth to age 2. Recently several organizations, led by the

²⁸ See, e.g., <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/standards/standard2/standard2H.asp>.

²⁹ NAEYC's publication of Levin, D., (1988) *Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture*, began to address this issue, but given the role of media in children's lives, a more extensive and ongoing effort is needed.

³⁰ Some of what appears below is based on data from Kaiser Family Foundation (January 2005), *Issue Brief: The Effects of Electronic Media on Children Ages Zero to Six: A History of Research*, www.kff.org/entmedia, Levin, D.E., (1998), *supra*, is a good general resource for a research-based perspective on the problem and how to cope with it.

³¹ American Academy of Pediatrics, (February 2001), *Policy Statement: Children, Adolescents, and Television*, 107 Pediatrics, pp. 423-426; available at: <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;107/2/423>.

Generally, see R. R. Thakkar, et al, (11/1/2006), *A Systematic Review for the Effects of Television Viewing by Infants and Preschoolers*, Pediatrics 118(5), 2025-2031. See Kaiser Family Foundation, (January 2005), *op. cit. supra*, note 31, reporting research by Rideout in 2004 that says, "the vast majority of parents have never heard of the recommendations and continue to allow and even encourage their very young children to use screen media".

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC), have filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission against Baby Einstein, Brainy Baby, and Baby First TV, requesting that they be ordered to cease their false and deceptive advertising.³²

On behalf of CEASE, and with advice from Dr. Susan Linn, the Executive Director of CCFC, I recently wrote to Dr. Matthew Melmed, the Executive Director of Zero to Three, the following additional research-based³³ reasons for keeping babies away from screen entertainment, and in particular from Sesame Beginnings, with which Zero to Three has established a consulting and advertising partnership:

“(a) The only scientific evidence that does exist about babies’ exposure to videos points in the direction of suggested harm.

“(b) Sesame Beginnings has no control over how long parents are putting babies in front of these videos.

“(c) A study on children’s time use by Elizabeth Vandewater, et al, suggests that babies who watch television spend less time engaged in creative play and interacting with their parents and that even babies who co-view with their parents spend less time engaging with them in other activities.

“(d) Zero to Three’s partnership and co-branding with Sesame Beginnings compromises their ability to speak critically of any other video product for babies, and promotes the whole notion that watching screens is beneficial for them

“(e) By partnering with Sesame Workshop on this endeavor Zero to Three is likely to be encouraging even those parents who have chosen to keep babies away from screens to change their minds.

“(f) Through these videos Zero to Three is promoting an early beginning to a life-long addiction to screen entertainment, which has mostly negative consequences.

“(g) Sesame Workshops is using these videos to market dozens of products, including some that are not helpful to growth, to babies and their parents. This marketing exploits the vulnerabilities of babies and parents, and damages Zero to Three’s reputation. Examples of these advertisements can be provided on request.

“(h) Finally, the choice presented to parents by the public health community shouldn’t be limited to “good” videos and “bad” videos but also include--if not promote--the third option of no screens. According to the Kaiser report, about 40% of American parents were making that choice--that’s a lot of families. It needs to be more, to ensure the healthy growth of America’s infants and toddlers.”³⁴

A 2006 study based on a nationally representative sample of 1712 children in 1997 found that

“Time spent viewing television both with and without parents and siblings present was strongly negatively related to time spent interacting with parents or siblings. Television viewing was associated with decreased homework time, and decreased time in creative play. . . . especially among very young children.”³⁵

³² www.commercialfreechildhood.org/babyvideos/ftccomplaint.htm.

³³ Details of the research appear in context below.

³⁴ E-Mail of November 3, 2006.

³⁵ Vandewater, E.A., et al, (2006), *Time Well Spent? Relating Television Use to Children’s Free Time Activities*, Pediatrics 117(2): 181-191. See, e.g., Christakis, D.A., (December 31, 2006), *Smarter Kids, Brought to You by the Letters T and V*, The Washington Post, B3. Cf. Surr, J., (January 5, 2007), *What TV Does to Kids*, The Washington Post, A16; and Kleeman, D.W., *Television: Good for Kids*, (January 13, 2007), The Washington Post, A18.

In other research on infants' responses to media, a 2005 analysis of longitudinal data found negative effects on later cognitive development from each additional hour per day of TV viewing by children 0-2.³⁶ Similarly, another 2005 study concluded that:

*"When learning from videos is assessed in comparison to equivalent live presentations, there is usually substantially less learning from videos. Although one study finds positive associations of language learning with exposure to some children's TV programs, other studies find negative associations of viewing with language, cognitive, and attentional development. Background TV is also a disruptive influence."*³⁷

A recent article explored the association between TV viewing and irregular sleep schedules among children under 3 years old.³⁸ And six year-olds protest more when the TV is turned off if they watched it as an infant.³⁹

2. Addiction from frequent viewing.

Television viewing is widely believed to be addictive: 65 percent of a national sample shared that belief in a 1986 survey, and 70 percent of college students had the same view in a 1990 survey.

*"[T]elevision addiction can be defined as heavy television watching that is subjectively experienced as being to some extent involuntary, displacing more productive activities, and difficult to stop or curtail. . . . [An earlier study] suggested that the behaviors people described [in their reactions to TV viewing] paralleled five of the seven [generally used] criteria used for diagnosing substance dependence: television consumed large amounts of their time; they watched TV longer or more often than they intended; they made repeated unsuccessful efforts to cut down their TV watching; they withdrew from or gave up important social, family, or occupational activities in order to watch television; and they reported "withdrawal"-like symptoms of subjective discomfort when deprived of TV."*⁴⁰

3. Effects of time spent viewing TV on obesity and physical fitness.

The TV is on during mealtimes in about 16 percent of the homes, and 53 percent of all young children eat snacks or meals in front of the TV. Many parents complain about the impact of TV food commercials on their children and their eating habits.⁴¹

Several recent studies have documented a correlation between children's TV viewing and obesity.⁴² Body fat and body mass index increased most between the ages of 4 and 11 among children who watched the most TV;⁴³ the likelihood of obesity among low-income multi-ethnic preschoolers aged 1 to 5 years increased for each hour

³⁶ Zimmerman, F.J., & Christakis, D.A., (2005), *Children's Television Viewing and Cognitive Outcomes: A Longitudinal Analysis of National Data*, *Pediatrics & Adolesc. Medicine*, 159(7): 619-625.

³⁷ Anderson, D. & Pempek, T., (2005), *Television and Very Young Children*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48(5): 505-522.

³⁸ Thompson, D.A., & Christakis, D.A., (2005), *The Association Between Television Viewing and Irregular Sleep Schedules among Children Less than 3 Years of Age*, *Pediatrics*, 116(4), 851-856.

³⁹ Christakis, D.A., & Zimmerman, F.J., (2006), *Early Television Viewing Is Associated with Protesting Turning Off the Television at Age 6*, *Medscape General Medicine* 8(2): 63; available at <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/531503%20accessed%20June%2006>.

⁴⁰ McIlwraith, R.D., (1998), *"I", Addicted to Television": The Personality, Imagination, and TV Watching Patterns of Self-Identified TV Addicts*, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 42. See Christakis, D.A., & Zimmerman, F.J., (2006), *supra*.

⁴¹ Rideout, V., et al, (May 2006), *op. cit. supra*, note 16, at 25.

⁴² Generally, see Lu;meng, S., et al, (4/1/2006), *Television Exposure and Overweight Risk in Preschoolers*, *Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med.*, 160(4), 446-448. See Christakis, D.A. (12/31/06), *op. cit. supra*, note 36.

⁴³ Proctor, M.H., et al, (2003), *Television Viewing and Change in Body Fat from Preschool to Early Adolescence: The Framingham Children's Study*, *International Journal of Obesity & Related Metabolic Disorders* 27(7), 827-833.

per day of TV or video viewed, and children with TV sets in their bedrooms (about 40% of the sample) watched more TV and were more likely to be obese;⁴⁴ children with an average age of 4 preferred specific foods advertised on video more than children who had not seen the advertisement;⁴⁵ among 191 three and four year olds observed over 4 years, the more time watching television was associated with the less time in physical activity; however, no associations with obesity were found.⁴⁶

Commercials for “no added sugar” snacks and public service announcements promoting good nutrition, reinforced by a live adult’s positive comments, resulted in children 3-6 choosing more nutritious snacks more often than without the live adult’s reinforcement.⁴⁷

4. Effects of sudden changes in stories and scenes, as well as on-screen action, on concentration and distractibility when away from such media.

TV viewing at ages one and three was associated with parental reports of attention disorder symptoms at age seven, according to data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. For every additional 2.9 hours of TV viewed per week at age one, a child was 28 percent more likely to exhibit attention disorder symptoms at age seven.⁴⁸

Preschoolers were more aggressive after viewing commercials with high action, fast pace, and frequent visual shifts than quieter commercials.⁴⁹ But no differences were found between preschoolers who watched a normally paced version of Sesame Street and a rapidly-paced version in hyperactivity, impulsivity or shortened attention span.⁵⁰

5. Effects of age-inappropriate content on minds that don’t understand it.

Viewing of educational programs like Dora, Blue’s Clues, Dragon Tales, Arthur, and Clifford between 6 and 30 months of age was associated with accelerated language growth, whereas overall television viewing (including adult programs) was associated with reduced vocabulary.⁵¹

Two cohorts (ages 3-5 and 5-7) totaling 326 children kept multiple one-week TV diaries over 2 years. Their viewing patterns changed very little during that time, though they viewed more cognitively demanding programs as they aged. Family characteristics were the strongest contributors to viewing patterns.⁵² Children tend to

⁴⁴ Dennison, B.A., et al (2002), *Television Viewing and Television in Bedroom Associated with Overweight Risk among Low-Income Preschool Children*, Pediatrics 109(6), 1028-1035.

⁴⁵ Borzekowski, D.L.G., & Robinson, T.N., (2001), *Pitching to Preschoolers: The Impact of Televised Food Commercials on a Sample of Head Start Children*, Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 101, 42-46.

⁴⁶ DuRant, R.H., et al, (1994), *The Relationship among Television Watching, Physical Activity, and Body Composition of Young Children*, Pediatrics, 94(4 pt. 1), 449-455.

⁴⁷ Galst, J.P., (1980), *Television Food Commercials and Pro-Nutritional Public Service Announcements as Determinants of Young Children’s Snack Choices*, Child Development, 51(3), 935-938..

⁴⁸ Christakis, D.A., et al (2004), *Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attentional Problems in Children*, Pediatrics, 113(4), 708-713.

⁴⁹ Greer, D. et al, (1982), *The Effects of Television Commercial Form and Commercial Placement on Children’s Social Behavior and Attention*, Child Development, 53 (3), 611-619.

⁵⁰ Anderson, D.R., (1977), *The Effects of TV Program Pacing on the Behavior of Preschool Children*, AV Communication Review, 25(2), 159-166.

⁵¹ Linebarger, D.L., & Walker, D., (2005) *Infants’ and Toddlers’ Television Viewing and Language Outcomes*, American Behavioral Scientist, 48(1), 624 - 645.

⁵² Huston, A.C., et al, (1990), *Development of Television Viewing Patterns in Early Childhood: A Longitudinal Investigation*, Developmental Psychology, 26(3), 409-420; Truglio, R.T., et al, (1996), *Predictors of Children’s*

watch adult programs while their parents are present, and children's programs in their absence.⁵³ The more time they spent viewing with parents, the less time they watched educational programs.⁵⁴

6. Effects of advertising on minds that can't understand advertising intent.⁵⁵

TV commercials often will generate an "I want that" response.⁵⁶ Children as young as 2 had established beliefs about specific brands based on advertising and parental behavior;⁵⁷ Children aged 3-6 could recognize brand logos, including Joe Camel, that increased with TV viewing hours, with age, and with visual cues in advertising;⁵⁸ 91 percent of 3 to 5 year olds can use "commercial" correctly to identify an ad, but only 31 percent can understand that the commercial isn't part of the story of the program where it is shown.⁵⁹ 5-7 year old children, when shown videotaped children's programs including commercials, can identify whether what they are watching is a commercial only 55-65 percent of the time, just above random assignment. Broadcast separation devices such as "We'll be right back..." did not affect the results.⁶⁰

Among two groups of 4 and 5 year old children, 71 percent of the group exposed to a TV program with ads for a particular toy at the beginning and end wanted to play with that toy afterwards, but only 36 percent of those not exposed to the ad wanted to play with the toy.⁶¹ The number of hours of TV viewed per week by children ages 3-11 (average 4-7) directly predicted how many product requests they made at the supermarket.⁶²

Entertainment Television Viewing: Why are They Tuning In?, Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 17(4), 475-493.

⁵³ St. Peters, M., et al, (1991), *Television and Families: What Do Young Children Watch with their Parents?* Child Development, 62(6), 1409.

⁵⁴ Taras, H.L., et al, (1990), *Children's Television-Viewing Habits and the Family Environment*, American Journal of Diseases of Children, 144(3), 357-359.

⁵⁵ The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, <http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org>, has an abundance of current information and resources about this topic. See, e.g., Linn, S., (2005), *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*, Anchor; Taylor, B., (2003), *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World*, Warner Books; and Truce Toy Guides, <http://www.truceteachers.org>. Cf. Clark, E., *The Real Toy Story: Inside the Ruthless Battle for America's Youngest Children* (2007), Free Press.

⁵⁶ Rideout, V., et al, (May 2006), *op. cit. supra*, note 16, at pages 20-22.

⁵⁷ Hite, C.F. & Hite, R. E., (1995), *Reliance on Brand by Young Children*, J. of the Market Research Society, 37(2), 185.

⁵⁸ Henke, L.L., (1995), *Young Children's Perceptions of Cigarette Brand Advertising Symbols: Awareness, Affect, and Target Market Identification*, Journal of Advertising, 24(4), 13; Macklin, M.C., (1994), *The Effects of an Advertising Retrieval Cue on Young Children's Memory and Brand Evaluations*, Psychology and Marketing, 11(3), 291; Fischer, P.M., et al, (1991), *Brand Recognition by Children Aged 3 to 6 Years: Mickey Mouse and Old Joe the Camel*, Journal of the American Medical Association, 266(22), 3145-3148. Also see Borzekowski (2001) study at footnote 46, *supra*.

⁵⁹ Kunkel, D., (1988), *Children and Host-Selling Television Communicate*, Communications Research, 15(1): 71-92.

⁶⁰ Palmer, E. & McDowell, C., (1979), *Program/Commercial Separators in Children's Television Programming*, Journal of Communication, 29(3): 197-201.

⁶¹ Goldberg, M.E., & Gorn, G.J., (1978), *Some Unintended Consequences of TV Advertising to Children*, Journal of Consumer Research, 5(1), 22-29.

⁶² Galst, J., & White, M., (1976), *The Unhealthy Persuader: The Reinforcing Value of Television and Children's Purchasing Influencing Attempts at the Supermarket*, Child Development, (47): 1089-1096.

7. Substitution of media story lines for creative imagination in dramatic and social play.

Increases in the amount of time watching television were associated with a reduction in the amount of time spent in creative play, especially among children under 5.⁶³ Imaginative play increased after children saw a low action/low violence program or no television, but decreased after a high action/high violence program. Aggressive behavior increased after viewing high action/high violence or high action/low violence programs.⁶⁴

8. Effects of media viewing on school performance and general intelligence.

a. Positive Effects: Many parents encourage their children to watch educational television shows, videos or DVDs, to help with the child's education. A parent's attitude toward the educational value of the media to which the child is exposed is a strong indicator of the amount and type of media exposure the child experiences, but computers are viewed as more educational than other media, while video games often are viewed as harmful.⁶⁵

Several studies showed that some children who regularly watched only educational TV improved their school readiness scores: This applied to low- to moderate-income children.⁶⁶ Children who watched *Blue's Clues* scored higher on standardized measures of problem solving than those who did not watch it, even though both groups had scored equivalently on a pre-test.⁶⁷ Of 160 children 3 to 5 years old and 166 5 to 7 year olds, one group watched *Sesame Street* regularly, and the other did not. Whatever other factors were involved, the younger children got higher scores on a picture test of vocabulary, and similar but attenuated results occurred for the older cohort.⁶⁸ 3 to 5 year olds can learn novel words from TV, and 5 year olds learn more of them than 3 year olds.⁶⁹

Four and five year old children who used developmentally appropriate software on a computer 3 times weekly during seven months were compared with children who used non-developmentally appropriate software, and were found to have better intelligence test scores, non-verbal skills, dexterity, and long-term memory. Supplemental activities related to the DAP software improved verbal and conceptual skills. Use of the non-DAP software reduced creativity.⁷⁰

These studies showing positive academic effects in situations of viewing limited to educational programs are not typical of the viewing patterns of today's children, and they ignore the serious accumulation of negative effects from such patterns as documented elsewhere in this paper.

⁶³ Zimmerman, F.J., & Christakis, D.A., (2005) *op cit supra*, note 37.

⁶⁴ Huston-Stein, A., et al (1981), *The Effects of Action and Violence in Television Programs on the Social Behavior and Imaginative Play of Preschool Children*, *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 138, 183-191.

⁶⁵ Rideout, V., et al, (May 2006), *op. cit. supra*, note 16, at page 16.

⁶⁶ Wright, J.C., et al (2001), *The Relations of Early Television Viewing to School Readiness and Vocabulary of Children from Low-Income Families: The Early Window Project*, *Child Development*, 72(5), 1347-1366.

⁶⁷ Anderson, D.R., et al (2000), *Researching Blue's Clues: Viewing Behavior and Impact*, *Media Psychology* 2(2), 179-194.

⁶⁸ Rice, M.L., et al, (1990), *Words from Sesame Street: Learning Vocabulary While Viewing*, *Developmental Psychology*, 26(3), 421-428.

⁶⁹ Rice, M.L., & Woodsmall, L., (1988), *Lessons from Television: Children's Word Learning When Viewing*, *Child Development*, 59(2), 420-429.

⁷⁰ Haughland, S. W., (1992), *The Effect of Computer Software on Preschool Children's Developmental Gains*, *Journal of Computing in Childhood Education*, 3(1), 15-30.

b. Negative effects: 3 year olds often mistake television images for real items residing in a TV set, while most 4 year olds can recognize televised images as pictorial representations.⁷¹

Among girls, viewing violent programs in preschool was associated with lower high school grades.⁷² Another longitudinal study found, controlling for parental cognitive stimulation throughout early childhood, maternal education, and IQ, that there are modest adverse effects of television viewing before age 3 years on the subsequent cognitive development of children. Each hour of average daily television viewing before age 3 years was associated with deleterious effects on a number of intelligence and comprehension tests at ages 6 or 7.⁷³

Of two groups of 6 year olds, one group's parents were asked to reduce their TV time and the other group did not. A reduction in TV time was associated with increases in IQ and Matching Familiar Figures tests, as well as their time that they spent reading.⁷⁴ Children who watched more TV at ages 3, 4 and 5 (according to their parents) had lower grades and were rated by peers as less sociable than their others at age 6.⁷⁵

Entertainment television viewing was related to fewer educational activities outside the TV, and less social interaction; however, the viewing of educational TV programs did not affect those other activities.⁷⁶

9. Effects of viewing on the development and maintenance of social and emotional skills and commitment.

*"Each hour of television viewed per day at age 4 years was associated with significant odds . . . for subsequent bullying."*⁷⁷(emphasis added) Preschoolers with behavior problems in school watched more television than children without these problems, and specifically watched more violent action-adventure programs and less pro-social programs like *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*.⁷⁸ Preschoolers who watched *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* did not increase imaginative play or social interactions unless provided with program-related play materials (such as dramatic play props) with pro-social themes.⁷⁹ Children 4 to 6 years old did more aggressive acts and fewer pro-social

⁷¹ Flavell, J.H., & Flavell, E.R., (1990), *Do Young Children Think of Television Images as Pictures or Real Objects?*, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34(4), 399-480.

⁷² Anderson, D.R., et al (2001), *Early Childhood Television Viewing and Adolescent Behavior: The Recontact Study*, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development 66(1), 1-147.

⁷³ Zimmerman, F.J., & Christakis, op. cit. supra, note 12. Also see Anderson, D. & Pempek, T., op. cit. supra, note 13. See Christakis, D.A., (12/31/06), op. cit. supra, note 32.

⁷⁴ Gadberry, S., (1980), *Effects of Restricting First Graders' Television Viewing on Leisure Time Use, IQ change and Cognitive Style*, Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 1(1), 45-58.

⁷⁵ Burton, S.G., et al (1979), *Effects of Preschool Television Watching on First Grade Children*, Journal of Communications, 29(3), 164-170.

⁷⁶ Huston, A.C., et al, (1999), *How Young Children Spend their Time: Television and Other Activities*, Developmental Psychology, 35(4), 912-925..

⁷⁷ Zimmerman, F.J., et al, (2005), *Early Cognitive Stimulation, Emotional Support, and Television Watching as Predictors of Subsequent Bullying among Grade-School Children*, Archives of Pediatrics & Adolesc. Medicine, (159(4): 368-388.

⁷⁸ Singer, D.G., & Singer, J. L., (1980), *Television Viewing and Aggressive Behavior in Preschool Children: A Field Study*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 347, 289-303.

⁷⁹ Friedrich-Cofer, L.K., et al, (1979), *Environmental Enhancement of Prosocial Television Content: Effects on Interpersonal Behavior, Imaginative Play, and Self-Regulation in a Natural Setting*, Developmental Psychology, 15(6), 637-646.

acts after watching *Road Runner* or playing *Space Invaders*, but whether the game or the cartoon preceded this change made no difference.⁸⁰

Children 4-6 years old were exposed to 5 minutes of aggressive or non-aggressive film. After the viewing, when choosing between a normal toy and a doll that hit another doll on the head when a lever was pressed, children exposed to the aggressive film chose the hitting dolls more than others.⁸¹ Children aged 3-5 experienced either a live or filmed adult aggressive model, or no model. Afterwards, those who had experienced aggression played more aggressively than those who had not, without any difference between the filmed and live aggression. If the model had not been punished, his or her behavior was imitated.⁸²

10. Effects of age-inappropriate violent TV on fears and attitudes toward violence:

TV often calms young children down when they are watching entertainment rather than educational shows; even so, fast-paced or violent shows can make a child act out what they witness on the screen. Children will imitate both positive and violent behavior they see in entertainment media, and young boys are about twice as likely to imitate aggressive behavior as girls their age.⁸³

Viewing frightening TV by children aged 3-5, even when deemed appropriate for preschoolers, raised 116 children's heart rates and caused symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 40 percent of the sample, including at least one symptom that lasted at least a month. Sleep difficulty was the most common symptom.⁸⁴

286 parents said their older school-aged children were more frightened by news stories and less frightened by fantastic content than younger children,⁸⁵ Similar results from an earlier study.⁸⁶ Viewing a suspenseful program with an older sibling reduced a young child's arousal.⁸⁷

When viewing a scary program, younger children found non-cognitive strategies such as holding a blanket more effective than cognitive strategies such as self-assurance that it's not real. As a child ages, the effectiveness changes toward the cognitive strategies.⁸⁸

5 to 12 year old boys who watched less than 4 hours of TV per week were more aroused (measured by galvanic skin response and blood volume) by viewing media

⁸⁰ Goodwin, L.D., et al, (1986), *Cognitive and Affective Effects of Various Types of Microcomputer Use by Preschoolers*, American Educational Research Journal, 23(3), 611-619.

⁸¹ Lovaas, O.I., (1961), *Effect of Exposure to Symbolic Aggression on Aggressive Behavior*, Child Development, 32, 37-44.

⁸² Bandura, A., et al, (1963), *Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models*, Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 66(1), 3-11.

⁸³ Rideout, V., et al, (May 2006), *op. cit. supra*, note 16, at page 27.

⁸⁴ Crum, J.E., (1994), *What Determines Young Children's Reactions to Media Violence?* [report], American Sociological Association; Groer, M. & Howell, M., (1990), *Autonomic and Cardiovascular Responses of Preschool Children to Television Programs*, Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 3(4), 134-138.. See Christakis, D.A., (12/31/06), *op. cit. supra*, note 36.

⁸⁵ Cantor, J., & Nathanson, A.I., (1996), *Children's Fear Reactions to Television News*, Journal of Communication, 46(4): 139-152.

⁸⁶ Cantor, J., & Sparks, G.G., (1984), *Children's Fear Responses to Mass Media: Testing Some Piagetian Predictions*, Journal of Communication, 34(2), 90-103.

⁸⁷ Wilson, B.J., & Weiss, A.J., (1993), *The Effects of Sibling Coviewing on Preschoolers' Reactions to a Suspenseful Movie Scene*, Communications Research, 20(2), 214-248.

⁸⁸ Wilson, B.J., et al, (1987), *Children's Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Techniques to Reduce Fear from Mass Media*, Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 8(1), 39-52.

violence than boys who watched more than 25 hours per week, suggesting a desensitization to violence through media experience.⁸⁹

11. Inappropriate Adult Content in Computers, Internet, and Video Games.

It is well established that there is a substantial amount of violent, pornographic, or otherwise content unsuitable for children freely available through video games, computer programs, and Websites and e-mails. Children using the Internet can fall prey to sexual predators. Children with unrestricted access to their own video games or Internet-equipped computers,⁹⁰ especially those in their own bedrooms, are often tempted, lured, or accidentally subjected to these adult materials.⁹¹ The video game industry has a voluntary rating system for video games, but frequently repeated tests involving children buying M-rated games show that the system is not being implemented in the field. A number of computer programs are available to parents to block obviously inappropriate Internet sites from their children's access, but others can and do sneak through the blocks. Television programs and commercials with adult content are exposed to young children quite often during children's viewing hours, and children's shows often promote premature sexuality⁹² or the resolution of conflicts through violence.⁹³ Even the many young children who have no inclination to seek out inappropriate content may be exposed to it by accident, or by being with parents, siblings, or friends. The effects of such exposure can impede a child's healthy growth.⁹⁴

12. Effects of adult media use on their interest in and interaction with children.

When we think of television and young children we often ignore how they are impacted by the substantial and well-documented effects of electronic media on their parents, teachers, and other primary caregivers. These were thoroughly documented in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), which found a very close statistical association of adult television usage and the decline in a number of social capital indicators in the United States since 1970.⁹⁵ He notes that "*The greater the youthful exposure of any cohort of individuals to television, the greater their degree of disengagement today. . . . Younger*

⁸⁹ Cline, V.B., et al, (1973), *Desensitization of Children to Television Violence*, *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 27(3), 360-365.

⁹⁰ Generally, see Cordes, C., and Miller, E., (2004), *Fool's Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood*, Alliance for Childhood, 99 pages with research references.

⁹¹ Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., & Smith, J.H., (2004), *Playing With Fire: How Do Computer Games Influence the Player?* Nordicom/Goteborg U., especially page 34 and the references cited therein.

⁹² Levin, D., (2007), *So Sexy So Soon* (in press). Cf. Orenstein, P., (December 24, 2006), *What's Wrong With Cinderella? One Mother's Struggle with her 3-year-old daughter's Love Affair with Princess Culture*, *New York Times Magazine*: 34.

⁹³ See, e.g., NAEYC's 1994 (1990) Position Statement on Media Violence in Children's lives, available at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/PSMEVI98.asp>.

⁹⁴ Levin, D., (1998), *op. cit supra*, note 30.

⁹⁵ Putnam, R.D., (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, page 228:

"In a correlational sense, the answer is simple: More television watching means less civic participation and social involvement. Television viewing is also correlated with other factors that depress civic involvement, including poverty, old age, low education, and so on. . . . Other things being equal, each additional hour of television viewing per day means roughly a 10 percent reduction in most forms of civic activism — fewer public meetings, fewer local committee members, fewer letters to Congress, and so on. . . . Americans spent nearly an hour more per day in front of the tube in 1995 than in 1965, then that factor alone might account for perhaps one quarter of the entire drop in civic engagement over this period."

Generally, see www.ksg.harvard.edu/sugaro.

generations, exposed to television throughout their lives, are more habitual in their television usage, and that habitual usage in turn is associated with lesser civic engagement.”⁹⁶ Putnam calls television “the single most consistent predictor of civic disengagement” that he had identified.⁹⁷ He notes possible causes of the relationship of hours in front of the television to the decline in connectedness:

✚ “Television competes for scarce time.

✚ “Television has psychological effects that inhibit social participation.

✚ “Specific programmatic content on television undermines civic motivation.”⁹⁸

Putnam notes that, “If TV steals time, it also seems to encourage lethargy and passivity.”⁹⁹ He reports on the research that television viewing is addictive, and adds that it seems to add to headaches, indigestion, and sleeplessness.¹⁰⁰ “By making us aware of every social and personal problem imaginable, television also makes us less likely to do anything about it.”¹⁰¹ He emphasizes that “not all television is anti-social. Experimental research has shown that pro-social programming can have pro-social effects, such as encouraging altruism. Moreover, television . . . can sometimes reinforce a wider sense of community by communicating a common experience to the entire nation.”¹⁰² Even so, he adds, “Television ‘in the wild,’ so to speak, is represented mostly by programs that are empirically linked to civic disengagement. . . . Another probable effect of television . . . is its encouragement of materialist values.”¹⁰³ He concludes,

“Americans at the end of the twentieth century were watching more TV, watching it more habitually, more pervasively, and more often alone, and watching more programs that were associated specifically with civic disengagement (entertainment, as distinct from news. . . . The trends were most marked among the younger generations that are . . . distinctively disengaged.”

Later in the same book Putnam zeroes in on young children:

“Child development is powerfully shaped by social capital. A considerable body of research dating back at least 50 years has demonstrated that trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child’s family, school, peer group, and larger community have wide-ranging effects on the child’s opportunities and choices and, hence, on his behavior and development. Although the presence of social capital has been linked to various positive outcomes, particularly in education, most research has focused on the bad things that happen to kids who live and learn in areas where there is a deficit of social capital. The implication is clear: Social capital keeps bad things from happening to good kids.”¹⁰⁴

Putnam points out a remarkable convergence between his Social Capital index for States with the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count index of child welfare, even while holding constant other relevant factors such as poverty, family composition, etc.¹⁰⁵ He concludes that social capital is second only to poverty as a factor influencing child development. He points out that children perform better in States with high social

⁹⁶ *Id.*, at page 235.

⁹⁷ *Id.*, at page 231.

⁹⁸ *Id.*, at page 237.

⁹⁹ *Id.*, at page 238.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*, at page 240.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*, at page 242.

¹⁰² *Id.*, at page 243.

¹⁰³ *Id.*, at page 244-45.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*, at page 296, citing Bronfenbrenner, U., et al, (1984), *Child, Family and Community*, in Parke, R.D., ed., *Review of Child Development Research* (7).

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*, at pages 296, 297.

capital in large part because they and their parents spend less time in watching TV, again holding constant other relevant variables. *“It seems likely that where community traditions of social involvement remain high, children are naturally drawn into more productive uses of leisure than where social connectedness and civic engagement among adults is limited.”*¹⁰⁶ He also points out research concluding that *“social capital within families also powerfully affects youth development.”*¹⁰⁷

One of the recommendations in Putnam’s concluding chapter is that *“the electronic entertainment and telecommunication industry must become a big part of the solution instead of a big part of the problem. . . . Let us find ways to ensure that by 2010 Americans will spend less leisure time sitting passively in front of glowing screens, and more time in active connection with our fellow citizens.”*¹⁰⁸

Teachers, family child care providers, and parents who are addicted to television, the Internet, or video games themselves are distracted from their important duties and opportunities to interact with young children. The passivity, inattention to social and other community issues, and materialism bred into them by their viewing habits all have harmful demonstration effects on the children entrusted to their care. Although some evidence of positive trends in social capital, such as an increase in volunteer time and political engagement by adolescents and young adults has arisen since the publication of *Bowling Alone* in 2000, the overall trends in social capital continue to decline.¹⁰⁹ And a generation of parents and teachers who have always experienced children’s television since its deregulation in 1986 is bound to reflect the continuing degradation in children’s programming on television and related video entertainment. NAEYC ignores these significant direct effects of media on adults, and their indirect effects on children, at the peril of its mission to help children grow.

In some contrast with the evidence of parental disengagement noted above, a 2003 national poll of a sample of 1,000 parents by Mark Penn for Common Sense Media showed that 64 percent thought that media content is inappropriate for their children,¹¹⁰ but 66 percent wished that they could do a better job supervising their kids’ media. 90 percent thought that the amount of marketing to children contributed to them becoming too materialistic; 89 percent thought that the amount of sexual content in the media contributed to children becoming sexually active at younger and younger ages; and 85 percent thought that the amount of violence in the media contributed to violent behavior in children.¹¹¹

Although parents’ attitudes toward their children’s viewing habits are difficult to quantify scientifically, the 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation survey and focus group responses to the did unearth some common themes: Often the TV or DVD/video is used as a baby sitter, to engage the child while the parent does chores or gets immersed

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*, at page 302.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*, at page 305.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*, at page 410.

¹⁰⁹ See www.ksg.harvard.edu/sugaro for more details.

¹¹⁰ Including 70 percent of parents whose children were between 2 and 5, 58 percent of parents of children aged 14-17, 60 percent of fathers, 65 percent of mothers, 50 percent of parents with incomes below \$35,000, 68 percent with incomes between \$35,000 and \$60,000, 71 percent of those with incomes above \$60,000.

¹¹¹ Penn, M., et al, (2003), *New from the Family Room: Parents Speak on the Media that Affects Our Kids’ Lives: The 2003 Common Sense Media Poll of American Parents*, Common Sense Media, www.common Sense Media.org.

in his or her own electronic media. Often, as mentioned above, the TV is a background environment for all of the family's activities. Often the child is provided another TV set so that he or she won't fight over what to watch on the family's TV. Fathers are often reported as being insensitive to the adult content of what they and their children are watching, but sometimes they and their children can bond over a video or computer game. Young boys are three times as likely as young girls to play video games. Electronic media often is valued as an alternative to outside play or the disruptions that come from children who are bored.¹¹²

d. Conclusion to Part III:

Based on our review of the abundant research literature on children and electronic media, CEASE believes that the impacts of those media on the young children we teach are so significant and pervasive that NAEYC should examine soon those impacts from its perspective so that it can adopt policies aimed at guiding teachers and parents to help children grow and learn in the light of that research. It is immaterial to CEASE whether NAEYC's policies in this regard are in the form of a new or revised Position Statement or otherwise.

IV. Summary: The Specific Requests of CEASE to the NAEYC Governing Board:

A. "Keep your eyes on the prize":

CEASE recommends that NAEYC should work continually to support its mission, its vision, and its strategic objectives in all of its policies, practices and actions, such as its acceptance of advertising and exhibits.

B. Identify War as a Form of Violence Harming Young Children:

CEASE urges NAEYC, as soon as possible, to:

- + Recognize publicly that war (including the current war being conducted with American troops in Iraq) is harmful to young children, and*
- + Implement that recognition in its policies and actions.*

C. Recognize and Act on the Effects of Electronic Media on Young Children's Growth:

CEASE encourages the NAEYC Governing Board to decide to have a Position Statement prepared and action taken on the Role of Electronic Media in the Lives of Young Children. Such a Position Statement is needed to cover a number of important media-related developmental issues involving public policy. Among these are:

- + The amount of time young children spend in front of a video monitor instead of with real people and nature,*
- + The participation of parents or teachers in that viewing time,*
- + The adult or developmentally inappropriate content of the programs to which the children are exposed before they are ready for them developmentally,*
- + The saturation of young children with advertising, especially through electronic media.*

¹¹² Rideout, V., et al, (May 2006), *op. cit. supra*, note 16, at pages 10-16.