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Situating Rogers's Vision

A SOCIOCULTURAL FRAMING

In the October 1969 volume of the *Pittsburgh Area Preschool Association Publication*, Fred Rogers coauthored a piece with Linda J. Philbrick, former head teacher of Oakland Nursery School, titled "Television and the Viewing Child." In it, Rogers and Philbrick describe the reaction of a young girl named Nancy to an episode of *The Three Stooges* television program in which the Stooges are shown harming a dog. "I want to go into the television and help it [the dog]," Nancy says as she burrows her face in her mother's lap, "but I'm afraid that they will hurt me too." Rogers and Philbrick use this anecdote to lead into a larger discussion about young children's perceptions of the actors and scenarios they view on the television screen. They note Nancy's "deep emotional involvement" with the encounter on the screen and how her mother was taken aback by her daughter's reaction. "The young child's limited experience and immature perceptual system," they

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write, "makes it difficult for [her] to separate fantasy from reality." They continue:

> The vivid images presented by the television camera make it even more difficult for him when these images are violent and frightening, the child faces an *additional dilemma*. Since television is a piece of furniture, placed in the home by parents, it is endowed with an air of parental sanction. Children witness their parents firmly terminating a sibling battle, but sitting and staring in apparent unconcern while a bloody slaughter takes place on television. This presents *deep confusion* for the child who perceives one incident to be as real as the other. Much public concern has been expressed over the effect that the *content* of violent television programs ha[s] on children. We also need to be concerned about how these programs affect the child's *relationship* with the people who present them.[1]

In this rich and revealing paragraph, Rogers and Philbrick communicate the complexities involved in the then novel process of children's televisual reception and communication. In their analysis, they make an original link between the lived emotion felt by the child and her ethical sense of this emotion as it calls for action to resolve the conflict. Nancy cannot stop the beating of the helpless dog, of course, because she cannot enter the contiguous and yet impossibly distant space depicted on the screen. Revealingly, Rogers and Philbrick speak of the child's dilemma, which in and of itself addresses the "ethical emotionality" that underscores the creative fabric of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. Adding to the dilemma of the child's original response to the ethical imperative is the fact that the parent, by not intervening, seems to the child to be condoning the unethical events that have now entered their family dynamic. "As adults," Rogers and Philbrick write, "we may feel that we 'permit' the happenings on the television

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screen because we clearly recognize them as unreal."[2] They are, of course, speaking of the adults' learned ability to compartmentalize so that while they intervene in conflict within the family system, they allow for representations of conflict on television to go on unmitigated. To the child, this compartmentalization represents an emotionally distressing and puzzling behavior, for the ethical emotionality attendant on the experience of viewing the beating of a dog goes unaddressed.

This understanding of the ethical emotionality embedded in television programming, further compounded by the reality that this medium operates within the home space of the family, serves as the key point of inflection in Rogers's television creation. His emphasis on the ways television interacts and interferes with the actual human relationships in the family home is one of the unique and most innovative aspects of Rogers's philosophy and approach to his own television program. In almost every document he produced that develops the main ideas and framework for the program, Rogers emphasizes the significant location and proxemics of the television set as existing within the domestic space of the family home and thus embedded in the family communication culture. At the same time, Rogers's analysis of television is deeply grounded within and influenced by a troubled popular discourse on television and children rooted in concern over the new medium's effects on emotional development, social life, morality, and human behavior. Trained as a musician and composer with former Presbyterian ministerial ambitions, Rogers, who entered the new industry of television as an NBC production assistant during its initial exploratory and experimental phase, moved quickly from critic to producer, asserting that the new medium could be used to display and promote more elevating, ethical, and nurturing ways of being and behaving.

Rogers, in identifying the vast communication opportunities that the new television technology created to reach a wide net of

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Americans in their familial environment, and in trying to counter what he perceived as representations of callous and debased behavior displayed on the new medium, set out to employ television to communicate, through dialogical and theatrical pedagogy, a set of anthropocentric behavioral, ethical, and cultural values that he hoped would contribute to the stabilization and formation of postwar subjectivities in a rapidly changing and culturally contested period.[3] In this regard, he aimed to perform a pedagogical intervention in the public sphere by privileging a televisual interpersonal communication ethic, with an emphasis on mutuality, the management of feelings, and the maintenance of ethical social relationships, in order to counter the industry's increasing privileging of commercial, vaudevillian, and slapstick entertainment forms.

TELEVISION, INFLUENCE, AND INTERPERSONAL CONNECTION

When the television set was sold as piece of furniture within the home, it was intended by manufacturers to blend with other objects in the "living" (familial social) space of the home. As such, it transformed the previous intimacy of the home, as it provided an opening for "strangers" to occupy a space previously restricted to only those of kinship. Thus, television is not an extension of the cinema, in part because of its location within family life. Film is viewed in the darkness, in a public space with unfamiliar surroundings. The screen is large; its size and that of the images depicted on it can overwhelm the viewer. Characters rarely appear in more than one film. In contrast, television is viewed in the familiar space of the home, usually with the lights on, and in the presence of family members. The screen is small, indeed smaller than a child. And the same characters appear week after week in series programming. Newscasters appear daily. "Children," Grant Noble notes, "report that they answer the talking head when it

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simulates face to face interaction."[4] These characteristics are of critical importance for understanding how television functions on an interpersonal and familiar social level.

In 1985, communication scholar Joshua Meyrowitz noted that "much more than in print, electronic media tend to unite sender and receiver in an intimate web of personal experience and feeling" due to the embodied, oral nature of human representation on the screen.[5] He contrasts the discursive nature of print communication, in which messages are communicated through the use of language or language-like symbols, and the "presentational" nature of electronic media, in which embodied human expressions dominate. Written language "communicates," Meyrowitz writes, while electronic media is characterized by "expressions." Expressions are personal and idiosyncratic; in contrast, communication can be about anything. Meyrowitz relates these two contrasting styles—communication and expression—to Erving Goffman's back and front regions of the brain: "Discursive and presentational forms are so distinct that they are apparently produced and perceived primarily by different hemispheres of our brains."[6] Print media, Goffman posited, have a "front region bias,' meaning that the brain processes this information within the context of a conception of public life. In contrast, electronic media, characterized by "expressive," embodied communication practice, have a "back region bias." That is to say, this form speaks to the part of the brain that connects with the personal or the familial. It is due to the embodied nature of electronic communication—its orality, physicality, and expressive quality—that a more personal, elementary kind of response occurs within listeners and viewers. Thus, if this form of media is brought into the home, it makes sense that those communicating on the device could become integrated into the family communication culture, which is constituted by an embodied togetherness in the home space in which communication is primarily oral.[7]

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In a speech he delivered at a Yale symposium on young children and television in 1972, Rogers says that "television, whether by intent or accident, is now an essential aspect of practically every home. Even families without telephones have television sets—consequently, the attitudes expressed by us or anyone else on television become involved in family communications."[8] Rogers emphasizes the interpersonal aura and function of the television, a consistent theme in his writings. It is from this critical observation that Rogers builds his program's approach to educating both young children and their parents. As we will see, his program is, at its core, an interpersonal, dialogical, and familial endeavor, in which Rogers, the host, ritually establishes and reestablishes an intimate, parasocial relationship with his intergenerational viewers in order to reassure them about their worth, the stability of the world around them, and the importance of creating and maintaining a life-giving ethos with both themselves and others.

In his Yale speech, Rogers asserts that any person delivering messages on a consistent basis through the television medium will almost "organically" become incorporated into the communication culture and interpretive meaning-making processes of the family unit. Although his analytical assessment of television reiterates the prominent cultural understanding of television's unique position within the family institution, Rogers's articulation of the penetrating significance of this positionality in regards to the ways that televisual communication functions *within* the family communication culture itself offers a nuanced perspective on the phenomenon in its implied personification aspects of television technology.[9] Rogers asks, "Have you ever observed a baby at her mother's breast? Did you notice how carefully the baby watched its mother's face as it sucked and drank her milk? Do you ever notice a similar sight with people watching television? Older children eating popcorn and [drinking] Cokes, younger ones sucking on their fingers. If this association is by any means a valid one, then

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television viewing must be considered as having its roots at the very core of human development." Rogers follows this analytical analogy by noting that the difference between looking at most mothers and looking at television sets is that "a human mother can help the baby develop active modes with dealing with what he or she is feeling, while the television set invariably presents some kind of stimulation and lets the viewers drink it in as they will." He thus concludes that the effects of television viewing should be considered with specific regard for the possibility that child viewers "are exposed to experiences which may be far beyond what their egos can deal with effectively," as in the case of young Nancy watching the dog being abused by the Three Stooges. Here, Rogers reveals the grounding philosophical and psychological positions from which his sociopedagogical project departs; he is questioning not only the content of television programs but also the damaging neglect on the part of those who create and produce television for children. He calls on producers to address the subjectivity of the child as different from the subjectivity of the adult. "Those of us who produce television must assume the responsibility for providing images of trustworthy, available adults who will modulate these experiences and attempt to keep them within manageable limits," he asserts. Rogers's visionary directive here illustrates his focus on providing a sense of security, responsibility, reassurance, and "appropriate" content to children via television.

Both the Yale speech and the narrative he authored with Philbrick for the Pittsburgh Area Preschool Association publication illustrate Rogers's keen analysis and insights into the visceral communicative power of televisual representation. Both are also suffused with Rogers's deep sense of care for the child's emotional and developmental wellbeing and thus inscribed with an overarching ethical imperative for adults (and parents especially) to understand their role in mediating the child's viewing experience.

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As such, they demonstrate the primary social-emotional concerns that drive Rogers's efforts in television production, his prescient understanding of the interpersonal connections made between screen players, events, and viewers, and his understanding of his project as a kind of family intervention. In later chapters I will show how, indeed quite remarkably, *Neighborhood* captures and enacts in televisual form Rogers's initial understanding of and vision for his project as an intervention in childhood culture and pedagogy.

But I first want to open a window into national discussions of the postwar period regarding television and its categorical connection to the placement of machines into domestic spaces, including anxieties surrounding the potential threats of the new television device and the ways that domestic machines were resemanticized with anthropomorphic qualities—qualities that ascribed to television an aura of familial membership. Rogers can be placed within a rhetorical tradition of pastoral ideal concerned with the technological sublime and the machine's challenges to a once dominant agrarian culture in which values of community, creative work, and social-emotional bonds were of primary importance for human health and survival. *Neighborhood* as "middle landscape," as Leo Marx would have it, embodies the artificiality of the city and cultivates the naturalness of the pastoral such that threats of the wilderness are safely avoided.

The middle landscape/Arcadian village of *Neighborhood* and its emphasis on the "invisible essentials"—community building, creative work, and the development of social-emotional bonds—characteristic of its way of life can be seen as a response to the frustrations and anxieties at work during the postwar period of the 1950s and 1960s. In the face of the increases in alienation, destruction of community bonds, rampant narcissism, unbridled consumption, and flattening of the individual perceived to be taking place at the time, *Neighborhood* offers a quiet, calm,

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interpersonal, and inventive environment in which to restore an affective sense of self-worth and human connection in the mind of the viewer.

Rogers, as both a television artist and a Presbyterian minister beginning in the 1960s, straddles the line of public life and acceptable religious expression during a period that many scholars might label as the beginning of the post-Christian era in the West. In the context of a Protestant establishment fighting to maintain its cultural dominance within a rapidly changing early mid-twentieth-century environment characterized by urbanization, industrialization, increasing mobility, immigration, and pluralism, Rogers's vision fits into a lineage of American Christian concern with theatrical content and efforts to address such concern that ranged from censorship to proactive intervention. Rogers and his lead consultant, Dr. Margaret McFarland, understood their project as a pedagogical family intervention; this intervention, I will demonstrate, takes its place within a progressive approach to achieving educational equality at the national level—PBS. With the new television technology, traditional educators and "cultural elites" like McFarland and Rogers could administer a finely tuned cultural and educational program that taught the insights of child development psychology "inside" the most important pedagogical system of the family. Rogers's solution to the problem of exposing children to representations of images and human behavior that they are not emotionally or cognitively equipped to process reveals his insightful and critical perspective on the medium's reception. For one, he asks producers to become more aware and self-critical of the programming destined for the child viewer, whose cognitive and emotional abilities are significantly distinct from the adult viewer. Second, he posits that in watching such disturbing content on television with the child, the adult is essentially condoning the behavior depicted on the screen.

In a document that appears to have been written prior to

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the inception of *Neighborhood*, "Children's TV: What Can the Church Do about It?," Rogers decries the ways that television programming and its antieducational, debased content are quickly becoming a dominant cultural force in children's lives. If, Rogers seems to posit, television is added to the existing pedagogical sites such as the church, family, and school, then children's programming should be subject to a standard regime of carefully prescribed emotional and ethical staging. From the Victorian period on, adults had been in charge of exposing the young to various forms of socioethical knowledge and assisting them in intellectually and emotionally grasping concepts and phenomena. In his assessment, Rogers appears to be alerting his audience to the fact that television transmits content to whoever is watching, without any local system of adult censorship or chaperoning.[10] Further, viewers perceive the human activity on the screen in ways similar to that of real life and the process of watching at home arguably creates a more intimate and personal relationship with screen characters who appear every day or every week in their homes. It is thus irresponsible, Rogers argues, for adults charged with instructing and caring for the younger generation to allow children unbridled and unaccompanied viewing of representations they have not yet reviewed and deemed worthy of consumption.[11]

In addition to his perspective on the radical changes television brings to the lives of children in regards to content exposure and adult supervision, Rogers details how television's representation of human life appears to affect individuals in an interpersonal, almost familial way by likening images of people watching television to that of a baby nursing at the breast of her mother.[12] Rogers's analogy configures an understanding of the dynamic between the screen and the viewer that can be understood in relation to Horton and Wohl's concept of the parasocial relationship. In this relationship, they write, characters portrayed in audiovisual media like television "come to life . . . in an especially vivid and arresting

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way." The parasocial experience entails the erasure of the line that separates reality from fiction such that the viewer becomes mesmerized by events that transpire in the televisual space and therefore develop a kind of "real" relationship with the characters. This interpersonal way of connecting and relating, brought about by the power of orality that television revives, bears relating to Walter Ong's observations of orality and the sacral power of the spoken word that binds individuals into communities. "Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups. The interiorizing force of the oral relates in a special way to the sacral, to the ultimate concerns of existence."[13] When Rogers notes that those watching television behave similarly to babies who are sucking from their mother's breast, he alludes to the essential, organic, and material process of bonding and interpersonal formation that is the very essence of human social life. It is the formation of these close-knit bonds that constitute what Émile Durkheim identified as the sacramental bonds of community, which he posited emerge from religion and the concept of the sacred. Indeed, Ong points out that "in most religions the spoken word functions integrally in ceremonial and devotional life" because the voice emerges from the materiality of the human body.[14] In this light, Rogers appears to identify in television the very fundamental communication pathways that allow for the development of significant human bonding and community formation in which he will make an intervention.

THE CONTROVERSY OVER TELEVISION

At the turn of the twentieth century, progressives grew increasingly concerned about the "dehumanizing effects of machines." Tasks previously performed by individual labor and the physi-

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cal work of human hands were transferred to new technologies, resulting in the machinization of human work.[15] The idea of having machines regulate relations in the family domestic setting was met by ambivalent response in many American homes as long-held agrarian ideals informed the collective imagination and challenged the emerging mechanized world.[16]

The new invasion of household machines contributed to what Ruth Cowan Schwartz calls a redefinition of the concept of family leisure from the Victorian understanding of spiritual development that prepared members for daily duties to a modern and more secular one designed to "liberate" subjects from the toils of work life. In this new industrialized domestic setting, everyday domestic duties such as the washing of clothes, as well as traditional leisurely pursuits such as playing the piano or reading stories aloud, were reassigned to the work of these household machines (e.g., electric washing machines, radio). Interestingly, although household machines were promoted as devices that would reduce the laborious manual work of women in the home, "they reorganized the work processes of housework in ways that did not save the labor of the average housewife."[17] As such, a tension ensued in American culture between a celebration of new pleasures and an anxiety about the reorganization of time and relationships being spelled out by the machines. Suffice it to say that there were notable variations across different areas and regions of the country in these overall patterns.[18]

As the economy shifted from production to consumption during the early part of the twentieth century and mass production in particular removed productive work from the private sphere, persuasion agents of the new consumer economy set out to ease anxiety over the vast social and economic changes that the new household technologies brought about. In this new environment there emerged a new subjectivity of the consumer, who, "courted by new kinds of advertising, purchased new kinds of goods at new

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kinds of stores," culminating in the "wholesale transformation of most Americans' daily life from near-subsistence farming to mass participation in the money economy both as workers and consumers."[19] Because of their reimagined role as keeper of a household in which using and overseeing the work of machines was key, women were targeted by advertisers as a primary audience for the marketing of such devices.[20]

By the 1950s similar efforts were made by industry agents to refamiliarize the population with the new machine of television. Many popular magazines described the television device as a "newborn baby," a "family friend," a "nurse," a "teacher," and a "family pet," tension giving way to a resemanticization of the domestic machine, which has moved from the position of a stranger, intruding upon the family space, into a constitutive and subordinate member of the family.[21] While citizen groups and others interested in the public good (e.g., journalists and activists) remained suspicious of the presence of this machine in the home life, advertisers, for whom the television was poised to become indispensable, sought to neutralize its negative image by incorporating a rhetoric of the technological sublime in its messaging. For example, a 1951 newspaper advertisement by the Admiral Corporation, a maker of televisions, features an image of a seductive, ethnically ambiguous, exotic, and glamorous woman with long eyelashes, dressed in an off-the-shoulder top, looking off into the distance as she rests her chin on her gloved hand. Her grand presence is set just behind a smaller television device that features an image of a white man and woman, most conventional in appearance, singing. The visual rhetoric lends a sense of conventional, Americana familiarity within the frame of the television "box," while at the same time emphasizing the abilities of television to transport its owner to larger-than-life exotic and seductive places and peoples. In a mix of script and print, the ad headline reads, "Built for the Future: Admiral 20" TV." Just

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below the set in smaller letters it states, "World's Most Powerful TV: Ready for UHF Stations."[22] Such ads focused on the device's ability to broadcast both the glamor culture of Hollywood and the more conventional Americana musical entertainment shows into the home space.

On the other hand, Spigel notes how advertisers, perhaps attuned to discourse that anthropomorphized the device, often conjured the relational image of master-servant to assure potential consumers that the device would operate as other machinery in the house did and with the primary purpose of serving family, household needs. A 1952 newspaper advertisement for Magnavox television sets features a photograph of a young boy standing next to a large television set and manipulating the channel-changing knob. He smiles while exerting his control over the depiction on the screen—a clown in full makeup and red nose who appears as if he is staring right back at the boy. Notably, the boy looks down at the clown, whose head is tilted upward to see him. The image displays a high power/low power dynamic in which the boy holds the higher status.[23]

Within a discourse of threat and warning, popular magazine writers posited the idea of a "technology out of control" that had the potential to wreak havoc on family life. In 1956 prominent critic Jack Gould of the *New York Times* noted that while television broadcasters should not be expected to "solve life's problems . . . they can be expected to display adult leadership and responsibility in areas where they do have some significant influence." Gould went on to decry the promotion of performer Elvis Presley, whom Gould described as partaking in "strip-tease behavior," to a teenage television audience. Gould places the phenomenon of television with a host of other early to mid-century developments that were uprooting young adults from the traditional dwelling places of home and school: "With even 16-year-olds capable of commanding $20 or $30 a week in their spare time, with access

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to automobiles at an early age, with communications media of all kinds exposing them to new thoughts very early in life, theirs indeed is a high degree of independence. Inevitably it has been accompanied by a lessening of parental control." Gould prefaces this concern over the lessening of restrictions for young adults by noting that "family counselors" have "wisely noted" that the culture is in a period of "frantic" and "tense" transition.[24]

In addition to the threat of the television machine dominating and destroying an idealized harmonious family life, there was concern about its "encouragement of passive and addictive behavior."[25] A page from a 1950 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* on the "Telebugeye" illustrates this concern with passivity and distraction. The copy presents a profile drawing of a small child slumped on a stool watching the television set. Her eye is attentive, large, and fixated on the screen; her hair is scraggly, and she does not wear shoes. The copy below the drawing reads: "This pale, weak, stupid-looking creature is a Telebugeye, and, as you can see, it grew bugeyed by looking at television too long. Telebugeyes just sit and sit, watching, watching. This one doesn't wear shoes because it never goes out in the fresh air anymore and it's skinny because it never gets any exercise. The hair on this Telebugeye is straggly and long because it won't get a haircut for fear of missing a program. What idiots Telebugeyes are."[26] Discourses emphasizing the phenomenon of television "addiction" suggest ways that the device inspires antisocial behavior. Indeed, popular wisdom of the time often connected "addictive" television viewing to aggressive behavior in children. Such concerns followed theories resulting from social-scientific experiments on children and media, such as the Payne Fund Studies of the 1930s, which characterized mass media as injecting their ideas into passive victims.[27]

In *The People Look at Television: A Study of Audience Attitudes*, a 1968 social-scientific research tome commissioned by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University, Gary

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A. Steiner notes themes of violence, education, and babysitting in adult audience responses on television and the family. He cites an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* calling television a form of "American brainwashing" and asserting that television is a device of social pressure that leads young minds to conclude that violence is a socially acceptable way of life. Steiner also found, parallel with many responders' concerns about representations of violence, that parents generally worried that television was exposing their children to "things they shouldn't see," contributing to a broader fear of television's "bad influence." He quotes one parent as stating, "You read in the paper where the kids are shooting each other or hanging by the neck, that they've seen on TV." On the more positive side, Steiner reports, viewers note that parents who favor television find that the device can be intellectually educational for their children.[28] Other parents emphasize that they are able to find freedom and relief for themselves in the domestic sphere by occupying their children with television programming. Some expressed pleasure in the idea that the television keeps the children in the safety of the home and away from possible trouble outside of it.

Within this kind of cultural discursive space, in which both anxiety and curiosity regarding the effects of mass media coalesced with advertising efforts to promote the new medium and its products, Rogers developed his own views and perspectives on the subject. Rogers, dedicated to understanding the ways that the new technology of television affects ethical and emotional development, culture, community, and human relationships, appears to view media with an air of both skepticism and wonderment.[29]

REDEPLOYING THE PASTORAL IDEAL

The contrast between the television as the "nurse" or "new baby" in the family and the "Telebugeye" can be understood in

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the context of discourses of praise and concern regarding the emergence of industrial machines. Writing in 1964, Leo Marx examines Perry Miller's concept of the "technological sublime" in his book *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America*.[30] Marx looks at how canonical writers dealt with the machine's challenges to the dominant agrarian/pastoral ethos. Focusing on nineteenth-century technologies such as the locomotive and the telegraph, he posits that they were viewed as "sublime" because they at once appeared to overshadow and dominate both the individual and the vast, romanticized American pasture.[31] This overshadowing and domination of the individual was of special concern in regard to conceptions of work, an aspect of human life ascribed with the highest virtue in several American Protestant traditions. Thus, as industrial machinery took human creativity and reward out of the working person's experience, concerns arose about the dehumanizing effects of such mechanized jobs and the replacement of the worker by a machine. Could the worth of each individual be seen in factory settings where industrial machines performed the work formerly done by human hands and manual labor? How could a hardworking individual find satisfaction and value in a system where his everyday work practices were reduced to unskilled, repetitive actions ostensibly mimicking the movements of industrial machines? The question raised by radio and television—as machines within the family that do not perform work like a washing machine but that entertain and disseminate information—constitutes a radical shift from the concerns of industrialization. The insertion of this "domestic machine" in the intimacy of the home marks a qualitative shift from a consideration of a machine engaged in doing work to a machine engaged in the construction of subjectivity. While one could argue that this domestic artifact is not unlike the book in its ability to construct and influence subjectivity, radio and especially television are markedly different from the literary medium in their

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orality and the visceral, socioemotional power of such embodied communication.[32] Those who praise, as well as those who suspect, the power of this new machine recognize in it its potential for supplanting teachers and parents in the production of the "subject."

The replacement of the worker by the machine provoked a romanticization of an agricultural society in which the relationship of the producer and the object produced was not mediated by the machine. Thus, the relationship of the artisan to the production of his craft is praised and highlighted as the preferential option in comparison to the mechanized worker, who is now tied to the machine, and whose work involves zero individual creativity or craftsmanship. In this sense, the neighborly, small-town setting of *Neighborhood* is linked to the idealization of a society in the early stages of industrialization where the relationship of the worker to the factory has not yet reached the generalized impersonal relationships of the advanced industrial age. A kind of simultaneous effort to place value in the integrity of human work while embracing new industrial technologies can be seen in various elements of Rogers's philosophy and programming as he clearly rejects the alienating conditions of the worker as an appendix to the machine.

Rogers is artfully expressing what Marx identifies as "the middle landscape," or, in modern capitalist times, "the garden." As Marx explains, the middle landscape belonged to the topography of the pastoral scene famously described by Virgil in the *Eclogues*, where a shepherd tends to his flock in pastures between the city and the natural wilderness. Man here lives in nature, but a cultivated nature set apart from the chaotic and threatening wilderness. It is here, in this middle landscape, that, as expressed in literary works up until the eighteenth century, serenity lies. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Marx tells us, these depictions begin to change: instead of Virgil's pasture, we see the appearance of the garden. The garden thus becomes a space where the two polarities of men in the Western philosophical tradition—the

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rational and the animalistic, wild, and emotional—can find reconciliation.[33] Indeed, this analogy works quite well for thinking about *Neighborhood*, a space where children are called to visit to participate in their own kind of "taming." The garden appears to correlate with the primary aim of Rogers's *Neighborhood*, which he articulated in 1969 as a project that could do a great "service for mental health."[34] *Neighborhood*, as middle landscape, embodies both the artificiality of the city and the cultivated naturalness of the pastoral, leaving out the wild threats of the wilderness. As such, it is an ideal stage for the project of "taming" the young.

As *Neighborhood* illustrates, Rogers's understanding of the relationship of the human subject to work offers a countervailing sense of the value of the person in relation to work. Rogers places the person at the center of production, above both the machine and the object produced. It is useful to detail part of the structure of a standard episode here, to demonstrate how Rogers routinely illustrates the value of human work. After Rogers begins the episode with his invitational song, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" he enters a conversation with his viewer in the living room of his home. Such conversation often centers on an object that he has brought in for discussion and investigation. After initial understanding and curiosity about the object has been established through Rogers's inquisitive and dialogical speech, he will usually move to learn more about the purpose and meaning of the object by asking his "Picture Picture" wall frame to play a short film about the object. The film runs through moving pictures of the object as it is employed and understood by various people, while Rogers performs a voiceover with his own interpretive and descriptive narrative of the object and the ways people construct and use it. Musical director Johnny Costa's instrumental dreamscape adds another layer of wonder to the progression of the film in the eye of the viewer. There are times, too, that Rogers chooses instead to visit a business or other locale, such as a factory, where the object

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is either constructed or used by humans. Factory visits to see "how people make sneakers," "how people make wagons," "how people make plates," and "how people make crayons" are some of viewers' most beloved scenes from the program.

Hedda Sharapan, a longtime producer of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, has highlighted the way Rogers celebrated the role of the person in industrial and creative production in both demonstrations of play and visits to adult workplaces such as factories and small businesses. She recalls that during an early program in which Rogers visits a crayon factory, he introduces the segment by saying, "Let's see how crayons are made." Soon after the production of this segment, she noted that he shifted his language to make the human person the agent of action in workplace visits. "He started saying, instead of 'how sneakers are made,' it was 'how people make sneakers.'"[35] Rogers makes an effort toward a kind of anthropocentric industrialism, in which new technologies are embraced, but the worker remains centrally valued as the primary contributor to the material creation. This understanding of work and its connection to the person seems to harken back to the American small-town mythos, in which industry had not yet displaced the artisan and where personal relations among the members of the community offset any kind of deep alienation present in the "Telebugeye" illustration.

Rogers's sense of the person was no doubt influenced by his formative years growing up in the small town of Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where his elders were highly active and well regarded in community life. Latrobe was founded in 1852 by a civil railroad engineer named Oliver Barnes, who bought a 140-acre farm from Thomas Kirk in the hopes of connecting the eastern part of the state with the city of Pittsburgh. Although the city of Latrobe is a phenomenon of industrialization, the Latrobe area is, like much of western Pennsylvania, constituted by old, agrarian farming communities. Barnes donated three acres of his land to establish a

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railroad station, a water tower, and a hotel. The city's proximity to the railroad and to Loyalhanna Creek helped attract the interest of industrial businessmen who quickly established a paper mill, tanneries, distilleries, and breweries.[36] Both Rogers's father and grandfather were industrialists, well regarded for their treatment of workers and for their active and personal engagement in the community of Latrobe's well-being.

Rogers's iconographic use of the "neighborhood," aesthetically expressed in the setup of small houses and cottages, constitutes the program's outer set concept and can be understood to some extent within the context of an American mythos that romanticized a return to nature. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, upper-class Americans began building homes outside of the city, in the country, where they sought privacy and aesthetic beauty. Middle-class men and women gradually followed this exodus just as mass public transportation provided them with the opportunity to live farther and farther away from their places of work.[37]

In his book *American Dreamscape*, Tom Martinson identifies three kinds of freestanding suburbs that emerged in the late nineteenth century—"the isolated refuge of the Nobility and Gentry," the company town, and the Arcadian village—the latter of which appears to be most relevant to our discussion of Rogers's romanticized, neighborhood environment. The Arcadian village was intended to be peaceful, simple, and unadorned. Martinson calls it "an archetypal yeoman environment" in which comfortably sized houses were set on relatively large lots. Like Rogers's "television home," Arcadian domestic structures usually have front and side porches (Rogers has a large front porch with a bench swing) and are set back from a street landscaped with lush bushes, grass, and trees. Martinson describes Arcadian neighborhood blocks as "peaceful and inviting" and asserts that Arcadian villages are "highly romantic environments, in part because of the relaxed

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visual interplay between house and landscape." The idea that the everyman, or the "yeoman," as Martinson calls him, could settle in the kind of picturesque, naturalistic, and peaceful neighborhood of an Arcadian village was made a reality in this nineteenth-century moment in which a kind of American suburbia inspired by the romantic movement led to the creation of land plots "featuring large individual lots for the so-called common man—the Yeoman."[38] Indeed, *Neighborhood* is rooted in the aesthetic and discursive values of this "American dreamscape," its picturesque simplicity and its egalitarian sense of social, cultural, and economic attainment.

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is set in Rogers's modest house. The surrounding neighborhood, we learn from a camera pan of a model Arcadian neighborhood at the beginning of the program and during subsequent visits to neighborhood locales, is composed of houses, small businesses, and civic spaces (the library, the police station, parks) and an imaginary, fantasy realm called the Neighborhood of Make-Believe (NMB), which constitutes the middle segment of the program. The NMB set mirrors Rogers's surrounding neighborhood on a much smaller scale, with fantastical animal puppets and their toylike homes, which distinguish it from reality. *Neighborhood*'s primary environment, the home of Mister Rogers, seems most appropriate for viewing by very small children, as it reflects the child's world—centered within and on a safe, modest American home. The program also emphasizes the presence of a larger outside world, similarly safe and modest, in its articulation of the neighborhood—the community within which the family home resides. In all of these ways, the neighborhood exudes the celebrated ethos of this particular American dream, articulated exceptionally well by Scott Russell Sanders when he says that the "deepest American dream is not . . . the hunger for money or fame; it is the dream of settling down, in peace and freedom and cooperation, in the promised land."[39]

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It is this concept of the American dream, presented in the American village ideal and captured in the architectural and planning aesthetic of the Arcadian village, that *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* depicts. In the simplicity of the neighborhood-oriented lives of Rogers and his "neighbors," in the slow and manageable pacing of the program embodied in Rogers's speech patterns and in the steady and easy movements of people and events, this manageable village life is created on screen. Interestingly, such a setting seems characteristic of the collection of neighborhoods that make up the city of Pittsburgh or, perhaps, Latrobe itself with its surrounding pastoral and agricultural makeup. Martinson writes that in both symbol and fact, the Arcadian village was esteemed as an "ideal environment" by millions of Americans: "This widespread conviction—whether in rural areas, small towns, or suburbs—reflected a powerful mixture of contributing influences, ranging from the Yeoman's desire for personal space, to the metaphysical value attributed to nature by the transcendentalists. For the average American, hopeful that the new republic was indeed a better place, an appreciation of the preeminence of nature went hand-in-hand with the characteristic optimism of the romantic movement and its emphasis on creative exploration and personal freedom."[40] The interplay of these American idyllic virtues of "creative exploration" and "personal freedom" and their embeddedness within this presuburban, romantic aesthetic is recognizable in the visual, performative, and discursive rhetoric of *Neighborhood*.

These ideals were indeed thriving in Western Pennsylvania at the time when Rogers came into the world. Born in 1928, Fred McFeely Rogers was the only son of James Hillis Rogers and Nancy McFeely Rogers. He was raised in the Presbyterian church, where both his mother and father were highly active.[41] James was an elder of the First Presbyterian Church's board of trustees. After a short career in business, James became president of the First National Bank, owner of his father-in-law's McFeely Brick Company, and

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owner and president of the Latrobe Die Casting Company.[42] The family was very prosperous, valued hard work, and made an effort to treat their workers well. According to Sharapan, James Rogers "was known as someone in the community who really respected and cared for his workers. I think the word was that every now and then there were thoughts about union but they trickled away because he was so caring to them. . . . That whole sense of caring for and respecting your workers—Fred grew up in that world."[43] Nancy Rogers was well known in the community for her volunteerism and concern with social justice, eventually becoming a nurse's aide. She knit sweaters for the American troops during the war.[44] According to Fr. Douglas Nowicki, the current archabbot of Saint Vincent College and a longtime friend of Fred Rogers, the college had a large fire in 1963 to which James and Nancy Rogers responded by creating a foundation to help people in need in the community.[45]

Set in the nearby, larger city of Pittsburgh in the 1960s, *Neighborhood* depicts elements of both industrial and agrarian culture and values. Rogers's now famous handmade cardigan sweaters, which he wore in every episode, are notable as a fleeting piece of residual, preindustrial culture wherein everyday attire was often made by mothers and grandmothers rather than by textile machines. In fact, all of the sweaters Rogers wore on *Neighborhood* were made by his mother and given to him as Christmas gifts throughout his life.[46]

A communicative ethos that juxtaposes the fast-paced nature of industrial life with the slower-paced living characteristic of an agrarian culture is also resonant in *Neighborhood* and represented most clearly in the figure of Mister Rogers's mailman, Mr. McFeely, named for Rogers's maternal grandfather, Fred McFeely, with whom Rogers was very close during his childhood and upbringing.[47] McFeely makes visits to both Rogers's home and the fantasy world of the Neighborhood of Make-Believe on nearly every episode. His imminent arrival is often communicated to the

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audience and to the host character of Mister Rogers by a change in background music from a settling and moderately paced piano overlay to a staccato, upbeat, piano-led interlude.

McFeely announces himself by repeating the phrase "Speedy Delivery" in an urgent, almost anxious manner. The juxtaposition between Rogers's slow, calm aura within his modest home and McFeely's excitable entrance onto the scene at the front door is somewhat startling, but Rogers always reacts to McFeely's arrival with a smile and a hint of excitement to reassure his audience of the nonthreatening nature of his fast-paced guest. He treats McFeely's arrival not as an unwelcome disturbance, which would be easy to do given the interruptive nature of the event, but rather as a moment that calls for a disciplined social adjustment wherein Rogers calmly and graciously turns his attention from interpersonal dialogue with the viewer toward greeting McFeely at the door, all the while maintaining an inclusive discourse whereby he holds both McFeely and the viewer in his communicative gaze. Rogers greets the mailman with a warm smile, indicating his pleasure at seeing McFeely. The two have a brief exchange wherein Rogers receives the mail and McFeely emphasizes that he is on a schedule and must soon be on his way. They say goodbye to one another, Rogers smiling genuinely throughout the exchange, and McFeely exits the scene.

The presence of the mailman is a sign of those outside the walls of the home and surrounding neighborhood that is the program's imagined community. As such, the mail system puts people in contact with those who are not physically present. Historically speaking, Rogers appears to be recapitulating here an iconic scene of the arrival of mail via the train, which disrupts the rhythms of the older, sleepy agrarian community. Rogers's joyful reception of the messenger who brings news from those who are not physically present enlarges the child's imagined community and constitutes a significant representation and intervention of

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the industrial characteristics of modern life, such as imagined community, speed, and the collapsing of time and space through rapid communications.

Although McFeely brings messages to Rogers from persons who are outside the purview of Rogers's home, Rogers and McFeely have a substantial, embodied relationship. They know one another, greet each other with the proper "How are you?" and engage in small talk. Though their relationship is constituted by labor and service, they treat one another as neighbors; they acknowledge each other's personhood and express care and concern for the other's wellbeing. The symbolic representation of this interaction can be read not only as a contrast between a fast, industrial culture and an older and slower agrarian one but also as a pedagogical representation of the demarcation of home/private and public life—a divide carried over from Victorian culture where the home space is characterized by peace, quiet, intimacy, the spiritual, and relief from the rapid pace and high demands of public life.[48] Still, the relationship is a fixture of the program and as such serves to connect the two worlds in a human and neighborly way. In a neighborhood, people know one another by name and engage with each other when they have encounters. This contrasts with the alienating forces of urbanization and industrialization in which individuals tend to live in varying degrees of anonymous isolation.

The simple, pleasant, and manageable villagelike iconography of *Neighborhood*, the straightforward and neighborly behaviors of the characters, and the moderate pacing of human action appear designed to quell human anxieties faced by children in their efforts to master "healthy" behaviors and ways of being during their early development. They also appear poised to provide relief for adults navigating a complex, postindustrial world in which stressors resulting from urban isolation, longer workdays, the destabilization of the family (e.g., increasing divorce rates), and Cold War anxieties created collective and individual unease.

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Rogers tries to integrate industrialism with the American pastoral ideal, perhaps most significantly in his visits to factories, where he provides a kind of anthropology of how people make things. These film clips that detail the various mechanical production mechanisms and human work in places like a crayon factory are interspersed with B-roll of craftspeople and artisans, seemingly with the hope of calling forth the anthropocentric elements of material creation in both types of human production. Both depictions emphasize the work of human hands and the dignity of human work. Yet, as we know, the alienation of the factory worker from the product he makes and from the buyer of his product is not experienced by the artisan/craftsman. Further, the kind of satisfaction that is derived from creative, noncommodified crafting does not result from factory work.

In *The Machine in the Garden*, Marx discusses the powerful generation and regeneration of the concept of American pastoralism within the collective imagination and thus the language of cultural symbols in the United States. It is important to underscore that around the time that Rogers went into television, Marx was writing his book, describing the "uses of the pastoral ideal" in the construction and reconstruction of the American experience. Marx is particularly interested in identifying the ways that this ideal "has been incorporated in a powerful metaphor of contradiction—a way of ordering meaning and value" that elucidates the zeitgeist and inconsistencies of the postwar period. "What possible bearing can the urge to idealize a simple, rural environment have upon the lives men lead in an intricately organized, urban, industrial, nuclear-armed society?" he asks.[49] The idea that pastoralism serves a therapeutic function for moderns persuasively responds to Marx's question if we consider that the pastoral imaginary has been articulated in such American classics as Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Henry

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Adams's *The Education of Henry Adams*. This point appears most relevant to our understanding of Rogers's project in its discursive efforts to present to young and older viewers alike, a world that is human-centered, manageable, deeply connected to nature, and full of wonder in its ability to nurture curiosity and creativity.

Rogers's redeployment of the American pastoral includes an attention to the moral, emotional, and spiritual benefits that agricultural life and culture convey to the individual. David Danbom identifies "romantic agrarians," ostensibly disciples of Thoreau, who concentrate on the "moral, emotional, and spiritual benefits" that agricultural life and culture convey to the individual. The ideology of romantic agrarianism has been employed as a vehicle for criticizing industrial capitalism. It became extremely popular at the turn of the twentieth century, when American culture was undergoing a vast "sea change" in which the dominance of factory work and commercial values were bleeding into human relations in every sphere of life. As when new technologies of communication were introduced—radio, television, film—many accepted and welcomed such changes, while others resisted it. Part of the resistance took place by way of a framework of romantic agrarianism, which promoted a return to traditional values. Another took the form of unionizing. Some became radicalized. Others embraced Populism, which was agrarian, to a fault.[50] Rogers expresses this *romantic* agrarian view of life that has been developed and intertwined with an industrial, postwar suburban ethos. *Neighborhood* seems to embrace the nostalgia of romantic agrarianism as a subset of its redeployment of the American pastoral.

RESPONDING TO EXIGENCIES IN POSTWAR AMERICA

Rogers's emphasis on helping children (and adults) "manage" their feelings should be understood not only from a child development perspective but also from this broader social, economic, and

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cultural context.[51] Rogers created *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* during an increasingly tumultuous time in modern American history—the 1960s. As Todd Gitlin keenly summarizes in *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, the disruptive movements of this decade—the birth of the New Left, the hippies, the civil rights movement, the assassinations of key public figures on the left, the sexual revolution, youth rebellion, and second-wave feminism—grew out of an immediate postwar decade characterized by affluence and abundance.

During the 1950s a rhetoric of renewal and rebirth was trumpeted by a mass media made increasingly influential by the introduction of the television into the home environment. A return to the intertwining of a cultivated nature and civilization was embraced by the creation and settlement of suburbs, which sought, once again, to offer relief from urban life. Shopping centers and automobiles brought about the possibility of unlimited consumption. Improved roads promised to finally unite the large landmass of the country and inspired a sense of endless individual freedom of movement. A "flush of prosperity," an unprecedented acquisition of consumer goods, and a thrill of military victory combined to produce a zeitgeist of national glory, success, wealth, and freedom from the fears and anxieties brought about by the Depression and Second World War. "The idea of America had long been shaped by the promise of opportunity in a land of plenty, but at long last the dream seemed to be coming true," Gitlin writes.[52] But underneath the surface of this "affluent state of mind" and the rewarding payoffs for hard work and a willingness to accept authority lay anxieties and frustrations about the changes and costs of the new status quo.

Bestselling books of the period written by prominent social critics reflected the more distressing phenomena of the new mass culture. In 1950, David Riesman's book *The Lonely Crowd* decried a new shift in the American social character in which he

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posited that individuals were relying less on the influence of the past authorities in their kin/group to inform their own conduct of affairs and more on that of their peers. Gideon Lewis-Kraus writes that Riesman thought that "contemporary society . . . was best understood as chiefly 'other-directed,' where the inculcated authority of the vertical (one's lineage) gives way to the muddled authority of the horizontal (one's peers). The inner-directed person orients herself by an internal 'gyroscope,' while the other-directed person orients herself by 'radar.'"[53] Riesman's critique speaks to a number of emerging characteristics of mass society, including a deterioration of tradition, the decreasing authority of the family, the increasing authority of the mass media, and the decline of intergenerational interactivity. Indeed, the less radical critics of the period were in agreement that "authentic community and tradition were being flattened by a mass society"—an issue Rogers seeks to addresses on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* through the representation of the "neighborhood" as community.[54]

In addition to the "flattening" of the sense of community was an equally important concern about the "flattening" of the individual. While earlier decades brought about anxieties over ways industry was doing this to workers, especially in factories where individuals performed like cogs in a larger machine, 1950s corporate culture was producing a similar type of numbing of middle-class, white-collar workers. The banality of a work life in which one's work is not one's own but instead belongs to an autonomous company who essentially owns one's time and labor was producing what C. Wright Mills calls the ebbing of a once independent middle class. In his 1951 book, *White Collar*, Mills laments the rise of a sales mentality in which a deadening culture of rationalization and bureaucratization reigns, and the death of a middle class formerly employed by more entrepreneurial practices such as small manufacturing, retail, and farming. These former middle-class professions, Mills decries, have been replaced by

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managers, salaried professionals, salespeople, and office workers—all of which require these middle-class workers to forfeit their liberty and authority to those higher on the corporate ladder. As articulated by Steven Rytina, "the angst of the frontier-bred free spirit pounded into the corporate cage made a timely theme" for Mills and other critics identifying these new, constraining structural changes in society that were affecting people at both the individual and collective levels.[55]

Later in the decade, muckrakers like Vance Packard, John Keats, and John Kenneth Galbraith criticized the rise of a consumer society. In *The Hidden Persuaders*, Packard exposes the manipulative strategies of advertising executives who exploit consumer anxieties. Keats critiques the 1950s "chrome car culture" and its celebration of the period's arguably irrational consumptive practices of the middle class in *The Insolent Chariots*, by showing how the average man earning less than $5,000 per year paid something like $1,250 per year in car payments.[56] That same year, Galbraith hoisted a critical spear into the "giddiness" of the culture of abundance in his *The Affluent Society* by illustrating how while the United States was becoming more wealthy in the private sector, it continued to be poor in the public sector, charging that public services were being starved.

Rogers does his own work of social critique in *Neighborhood* by emphasizing the importance of human relationships and creative work over displays of wealth, glamor, and automation. In contrast to the glossy portrayals of the culture of affluence in the visual media of the time, *Neighborhood* exhibits an aesthetic of simplicity, frugality, and moderation. Each episode focuses on creative abilities of persons, with Rogers introducing an everyday object to the viewer on nearly every episode and then showing how it can be manipulated and interpreted within the social context in several different ways. No object is branded and, due to the noncommercial uniqueness of the initial PBS project, no advertisements were

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run before, during, or after the program. Moreover, Rogers often makes a point of tracing the object back to its origins in nature, celebrating the natural world and its gifts. Few, if any, consumptive practices are evident on the program.

In addition to object use and manipulation, Rogers celebrates the performative arts, such as music, dance, and theater, by showcasing a plethora of visiting artists who not only discuss their art form from the perspective of personal origins and cultural relevance but demonstrate it on screen. The focus on these enriching and rewarding human activities contributes to an emphasis on the range of creative expressions—expressions that take form without any need to buy something—that constitute the program's ethos. Such emphasis certainly works to counter the practices and values of "organization man," described in William H. Whyte's bestselling book, *The Organization Man* (1956), whose banal office tasks and focus on a dehumanizing obsession with productivity arguably contribute to the flattening and narrowing of human subjectivities.

Another of Rogers's aims is to provide viewers with models for coping in this dramatically changed and changing postwar world.[57] He does this not only through empathic verbal messaging and a focus on creative work, which we now know reduces the levels of cortisol (stress hormone) in the brain, but also through the visual rhetoric of the show's pastoral-inspired, neighborhood setting.[58] Visually, *Neighborhood* focuses less on elements of busy images of urban, industrial life, and more on the quiet and peaceful space of the home during daytime hours. Through this lens of the home as refuge, the program is constituted as a tranquil and friendly space inside of a quiet, slow-paced village attuned to the speed and rhythms of the body. It is a village in which people walk, ride bikes, or hop on the sole trolley that navigates the neighborhood streets. There seems to be a "soft veil of nostalgia" operating in *Neighborhood* that, while not a complete return to the pastoral, functions in dialogue with it.[59]

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The interweaving of the American pastoral imaginary with the galloping growth of industrial life is historically tied to the rise of political Progressivism during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The heart of this political movement sought to employ government as an agency of human welfare in addressing the problems caused by industrialization and urbanization.[60] Indeed, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English note that even "revolution" in the term "industrial revolution" is "too pallid a word," as "people were wrested from the land suddenly, by force; or more subtly, by the pressure of hunger and debt—uprooted from the ancient security of family, clan, and parish."[61] In response to this widespread uprooting and the embodied feelings regarding the loss of the old world, the antimodernist back-to-the-land movement critiqued urban-industrial society and its impact on human happiness and "right living." Through the publication *The Craftsman*, proponents of this movement urged Americans to leave their cities and purchase acreage in the country, arguing that rural living would foster a "restoration" and recapturing of "a free and natural existence that had been lost." In 1907 Bolton Hall, the author of *Three Acres and Liberty*, wrote, "We want to check . . . needless want and misery in the cities," pointing to the harsh conditions of urban life and the creation of consumer desires by commercial interests.[62] During the same period, sociologist Kenyon Butterfield, of the country life movement, celebrated the freedom of the farmer by waxing poetic about his ability to "read God's classics, listen to the music of divine harmonies, and roam the picture galleries of the eternal."[63] Similarly, rural journalist Liberty Hyde Bailey describes the city as "parasitic . . . elaborate and artificial."[64] Missing from Leo Marx's understanding of these pastoral movements is the reality that the prominent country life movement recognized the advancement of urban, industrial society as an unalterable reality. As such, they did not hope to eradicate it from existence but rather to reform rural life to the extent that it could and would remain

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a "vital and vibrant" sector of American society in order to "continue to serve the social and economic needs of an urban nation." In order to achieve these aims, country lifers aimed to make the countryside more like the city in regards to its efficiency, sophistication, organization, and mechanization and commercialization of operations. These steps, they thought, would help preserve "the essence of rural life."[65] Clearly, in the understanding of Rogers, whose father and grandfather were industrialists in a once dominantly agrarian community, the tension between industrialization and the social and ethical values of the agrarian community could be reconciled and negotiated in a kind of third way.

The transition from agrarian culture to industrial life meant significant changes for the structure of family life and the conceptualization of the child. As Spigel writes, while the child in agrarian culture was essential to the family income, industrialism shifted the societal understanding of children, as they were no longer directly essential to the economic survival of the family. In this new context, the child was reimagined as a "new sociological category in whom the middle-class adult culture invested new hopes and dreams."[66] Under the influence of Darwin's evolutionary theories, the child came to play a critical role in human evolution and as such, its habits and activities were no longer considered trivial matters. Rather, children became of critical importance to the survival of the entire species due to the fact that the old rural society was diminishing and a new society centered in cities and constituted economically by a new world of professions was forming. In a world changing every day due to the rapid developments in science and technology, the child, in her ability to quickly learn new information and skills, became more important than ever for the survival and success of the family and family name into the new century. In this new setting, the former educational methods of imitation that take place within the family setting (and are heavily reliant on the mother and her natural abilities) are no longer

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relevant; instead, pedagogy occurs outside, and a sense that the "child cannot be left to women" arises and power over the education of young children is seized by "child experts."[67]

At the turn of the century, as birthrates and infant mortality rates dropped, parents began to view their children more as individualized persons with distinct personalities in need of moral support and guidance. Simultaneously, child labor practices among black, immigrant, and working-class families became widespread as a way to achieve some measure of familial income security. Out of this milieu, "child-saving" movements emerged out of the larger Progressive movement that attempted to address industrial practices of employing children, labeled as child abuse, through the proposal of broad political reforms for children of diverse races and classes.[68] This sentimentalization of the child, or as Viviana Zelizer conceptualizes it, "sacralization," was a relatively new phenomenon in the collective structures of feeling that took place at the turn of the century. Notably, this new sacralization of the child led to new measures to protect children from harm, which resulted in their increased domestication and supervision—a legacy that carries into *Neighborhood*, which occurs ritually inside the safe space of the home.

At the heart of this new social shift, children were viewed as both innocents and arbiters of progress; as such, their image "was not only at the center of power struggles at home" but also served to "legitimate the institutional power of scientists, policy-makers, and media experts who turned their attention to children's welfare."[69] Such developments contributed to even more accumulation of power for men, whose occupations in the public sphere now reached into the realm of childhood, a space formerly governed by women, and the domestic realm. "Now it is as if the masculinist imagination takes a glance over its shoulder and discovers it has left something important behind in 'woman's sphere'—the child. This child—the new child of the twentieth century—is not valued,

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like the child of patriarchy, simply as an heir. The child is conceived as a kind of evolutionary protoplasm, a means of *control* over society's not-so-distant future."[70] This emerging social interest in the child was thus capitalized upon by men in the medical and other scientific professions who presented themselves as experts in child-raising and child development. Through sustained efforts of persuasion, in which they "wooed their female constituency," these agents effectively turned motherhood into a science and redirected its origins away from the innate process led by women in the home and community, toward a scientific model of expertise led by male doctors and researchers.[71] The relationship between such self-appointed experts and the mothers who listened to them was never one of equality, as it "rested on the denial or destruction of women's autonomous sources of knowledge: the old networks of skill-sharing, the accumulated lore of generations of mothers."[72] Within this context, women found themselves in crisis, confused about their role in the new modern world, questioning the knowledge passed along to them during their upbringing, and finding themselves with little authority in any realm of the social order.

This is the framework into which, decades later, Rogers, McFarland, and the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* television project fit. Rogers, who became a child development expert himself in order to gain legitimacy as a producer of educational children's television (and other multimedia material, including books, records, and pamphlets), envisioned his program as a pedagogical endeavor aimed at providing a "healthy" alternative to the content and values prominently displayed in commercial, vaudevillian, and slapstick television entertainment of the time. Moreover, he seems to be interested in providing a model of interpersonal communication exchange rooted in an older, agrarian network of human interaction in which cultivation of land, stability, continuity, and community maintenance foster the practices of neighborliness, friendship, and cooperation are reasserted as the order of the day.

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Such an ethos appears aimed to counter an ever-emerging zeitgeist constituted by the production of a competitive, survivalist world of individual achievement characteristic of 1950s corporate culture and the age of abundance. In this context where "an old world was dying and a new one was being born,"[73] Rogers appears steadfast and keen in his discursive project to recover for himself and others the human-centered social dynamics of this old world some seventy years into the new American order of industrial capitalism, and to display this dynamic on the screen.

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND MASS ENTERTAINMENT IN CONFLICT

Beyond identifying Rogers's project as a redeployment of the American pastoral, given the cultural anxieties brought about by galloping industrialization, it is important to situate Rogers within the cultural and political lineage of the debates that took place between intellectuals, Christians, and the entertainment industry. The struggle over the evolution of American theater involved an alliance between religious citizens and the educated wealthy elite that was held together by the dominant Victorian social system.[74] In response to the emergence of theatrical and later cinematic entertainment that featured vaudevillian forms of artistic representation, these dominant forces in American life often came together to critique and decry what they often viewed as the transmission of undesirable values and tastes.[75] As William Romanowski has observed, "cultural elitists derided popular culture on grounds of aesthetic taste; religious moralists feared its influence and yearned for disciplinary control."[76] What resulted from this ongoing struggle during the mid-to-late nineteenth century was the discursive creation of the categories of high and low culture by "the arbiters of culture" who sought to categorize and differentiate types of fare and assign them as appropriate or inappropriate to different social groups of people.[77]

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According to Lawrence Levine, these arbiters "were convinced that maintaining and disseminating pure art, music, literature, and drama would create a force for moral order and help to halt the chaos threatening to envelop the nation."[78] William D. Romanowski is careful to note that these categories do not merely describe created products. Rather, they are "ways of thinking that affect the policies, practices, and institutions" (such as schools and museums) of modern society.[79] "The new industrial democracy," which included an emerging culture of abundance, popular culture, and mass entertainment, rivaled the older Victorian cultural model for dominance. This tension is illustrated well in Levine's descriptions of Henry James's observations of a changing America represented in the face of the non-English-speaking urban immigrant of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Upon visiting Boston's Athenaeum, James came away with the following feeling of disgust: "This honored haunt of all the most civilized—library, gallery, temple of culture" had become "completely out of countenance by the mere masses of brute ugliness. . . . It was heart-breaking."[80] To cultural arbiters of a formerly predominant singular, homogenous American Victorian, Anglo-Saxon culture like James, Levine notes, "it was not merely tradition that was in danger but taste itself."[81] It is within this conflicted setting of emerging ethnic diversity and cultural multiplicity that film, the phonograph, and the radio were born and that Victorian intellectual and religious agents experimented with different and varied ways of negotiating their cultural dominance inside this new shifting terrain of mass culture.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the notion that the United States was a "Christian nation" was a standard, foundational given for most Americans. Protestant leaders saw themselves as setting the norms for American public life, "relish[ing] their status as the established religion." These leaders' sense of authority "came with a God-given responsibility for the

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moral and religious character of the nation and a sacred duty to work toward its improvement."[82] In general, the Protestant establishment of the early to mid-twentieth century identified its core values, with an ardent emphasis on the conscience of the individual, justice, and stewardship as part and parcel of American democratic values. The preservation of these values, along with the institutions that supported and purveyed them, was of key importance to ensure the cultural reproduction of a Christian-American ethos. These dominant, but not necessarily hegemonic, goals contained in them profound contradictions that would prove difficult to negotiate when dealing with the challenges of what would arguably become the most powerful influencing tool ever known to man—cinematic and televisual technology. According to Romanowski, the Protestant establishment "wanted social control and individual freedom, progress and traditional moral purity, corporate profits and the common good," unaware of the fact that these binomial objectives contain irresolvable contradictions at their very core.[83] Questions about how to go about ensuring the reproduction of Protestant culture in America in the face of the dual rise of cinema and cultural pluralism were prominent among these groups during the earlier part of the century.[84]

Romanowski notes that when cinematic content challenged the normative Protestant values, most mainline leaders and believers did not partake in boycotting or censorship efforts as some of the more conservative ones did. Rather, because cultural separatism was not a practice typical of most Protestants, and because they understood themselves largely as "cultural caretakers responsible for securing a fitting place for movies in American life," mainline Protestants took an integrative approach to the challenges posed by the new medium.[85] This approach is in stark contrast to the efforts of the American Catholic church, who saw its population gain in numbers at the beginning of the twentieth century, and whose leaders actively spoke out against representations of

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"immorality" in cinema, organizing efforts to censor the public displays of countless Hollywood and foreign films.[86] Like such Catholic leaders, however, Protestant leaders perceived early on the ways that cinema was becoming a critical tool for socialization. Since there already existed a deep desire on the part of such Protestant leaders to integrate Protestant teachings into all aspects of American life, it follows that such leaders were eager to see movie producers work "in harmony with the home, school, and church to promote a truly healthy Americanism." Romanowski points out that "even if they were not always frequent moviegoers themselves, the Protestant elite recognized that film contributed to the marketplace of ideas. They saw legal censorship as un-American, undemocratic, impractical, unnecessary, and prone to political graft and corruption. At the same time, they believed that a reasonable measure of self-restraint on the part of moviemakers was acceptable—even necessary—to protect the public welfare."[87] Clearly, the Protestant establishment did not see the depth of the dilemma that was beginning to emerge between the principles of freedom of speech and artistic expression, which involved the expression of values, and their desire to see the continuation of the dominance of the Protestant ethos.[88] In the crux of this dilemma Rogers managed to make a televisual intervention that remained true to his Christian convictions within an increasingly secular and pluralistic public sphere.

During the decades that *Neighborhood* ran on PBS, Rogers responded to questions regarding what television shows he viewed by noting that he did not actually watch television. In autobiographical recollections of his upbringing, he notes his study and playing of the piano; his special relationship to his grandfather Fred McFeely, who encouraged him in this practice; his role as newspaper writer for the high school paper; his election as senior class president; and the bullying he endured as a young boy. His family was highly active in the Presbyterian church and it was

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expected that after graduation from college, Rogers would go into the seminary to become a Presbyterian minister. His path made a slight turn after his sophomore year of college at Dartmouth, when he realized that he wanted to major in music instead of Romance languages. He then transferred to Rollins College, a school with a more robust music program. Still, his track to seminary school continued and by his senior year in 1951 he was accepted to Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. It was not until he watched television for the first time that year, during a break from school, that he realized that he wanted to pursue creative work options in the new medium. His initial perception of television as being exciting as a new medium and at the same time distasteful in its imagery provided Rogers, he remembers, with the motivation to pursue a career in the industry in order to create better programming. If we consider his response within the context of his religious, elite, upper-class upbringing, Rogers appears to be a descendent of the intellectual, Protestant establishment perspective wary of mass entertainment forms.

In "Children's TV: What Can the Church Do about It?," Rogers discusses his project from a religious, ministerial perspective, asking his readers if they are aware that children see and hear an average of three thousand hours of television before they begin their schooling and that by the time they finish schooling they will have spent more time "with the television than they have in the classroom."[89] He then asserts that, in regards to the content they will have consumed by this point in their lives, children will have seen mostly "charmingly cynic, sardonic, sadistic animated tripe with slick puns, inversions and asides."[90] The negative characterization that Rogers gives to this children's programming exceeds his earlier concerns about pie throwing. These programs, according to Rogers, are downright insidious and seductive. Here, he is clearly raising an urgent alarm and attempting to awaken an audience that may be confusing the charm of animation and human

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performance with benign entertainment. "To the occasional viewer and listener children's tv fare may seem 'harmless' enough: but a steady diet of the weak always magically winning and the villains always being the big ones, of people getting flattened out one second and popping into shape the next, of conniving and teasing and hurting and belittling and stopping tears with elaborate gifts . . . is a steady diet of this what we would choose to feed our children's needs?"[91] Rogers poses for his audience a cascade of questions designed to prompt the church to face the facts of a now dominant televisual culture, which it seems to continue to ignore and deny. Are parents aware that they are condoning the behavior depicted on the screen? he asks. "Without knowing it," he writes, "we are encouraging our children to disrespect, disobey, dispel much that we feel is important in our heritage. Are our children (and the children whom the Church has never been able to reach), being fed a slick stimulating sound-tracked trash 1,000 hours a year while our Church schools try to teach the opposite with posters, crayons and paste in one tenth the time?"[92] Rogers's fears regarding children's consumption of television are centered upon the fundamental concern that the representations depicted on the new device undermine the education and values disseminated to children by traditional institutions—institutions that were established, in part, to communicate certain sets of knowledge to young people to aid in their development and upbringing.[93] He has clearly already made the decision to move into this cultural vacuum left by the church's misunderstanding of the situation and inaction.

Rogers's concern here addresses, like many critiques of the time, the undermining of the social and ethical lessons and values taught in schools and the church. Employing a tone of deep urgency and concern, uncharacteristic of his television persona, he writes, "We must know this . . . we must know that we're failing our children but, either we won't let ourselves admit it, or we think

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that there's nothing we as the Church can do about it." Employing the persuasion technique of problem-solution organization, Rogers, with fervor, offers a bold solution. For its values to regain a platform in American culture, the church must move beyond the limits of its institutional, historical tradition. The church can no longer represent its values as solely the values of the Protestant tradition or the values of an unquestioned, dominant worldview. It must reach beyond religious, class, race, and economic differences and approach a universal child for whom it deeply cares.

> There *IS* something we can do! But, it's not so simple (or cheap) as writing letters of complaint! Irate parents who by the thousands have written to local tv stations bewailing the frenetic inferior children's fare have repeatedly received courteous curt replies: "You can always turn your television set off!" That may be true—but you can't do it without becoming the ogres in the house: just as tv has been intimating to your child that big people are! But we as the Church CAN do something very effective. We can begin to *produce* and promote television programs for children as an expression of caring for the children of the whole country. We can communicate to a child that he is accepted as he is: happy, sad, angry, lonely, exactly as he is. We can do what commercial broadcasters fail to do over and over again and that is to give the child a healthy choice on the television dial. I say we can because some of us already have!

Rogers's exhortation to action is not in the least utopian. He offers the church not only a plan of action but the experience (10-plus years) that he has already gained. He calls for those in the church to get involved in television production by describing the "overwhelming" positive responses his program has received since he began his work with *The Children's Corner* in 1954. In an appeal to maintain the attention of his readers through a dire sense of

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urgency, Rogers prefaces his call to action with testimonies of public praise for his efforts to produce wholesome and interpersonal programming. "Please make your program longer"; "You're the only tv person who treats my children like real people"; and "You're my favorite," he quotes viewers writing to him.

Rogers does not point to explicit religious instruction—nor does his program. Rather, he urges readers to get involved in making programming that communicates care and worth to young audiences, leaving out any connection of such care to the Divine. That is to say, he removes the signifier of the divinity (Christ) from the gospel message. By breaking out of the confines of the explicit, traditional language of Christianity, Rogers frees himself to blend gospel teaching with a modern understanding of child development to construct a pedagogy and rhetorical framework that meets the exigency of the historical and cultural moment as he perceives it. His primary aim thus becomes helping children to feel loved and accepted as they exist within the array of emotional states experienced by all persons living in the world. Rogers could be trying to motivate Christians to support his media forays into the child developmental psychology of the period that appear geared more toward liberal secularized ethics than conventional religion. Rogers's explicit project is to set a countervailing force against the charming cynicism, sadistic puns, and inversions and asides that he feels do not mitigate anxiety and confusion but actually foster it.

Rogers's rhetorical choices are notable in several ways. For one, as I mentioned above, they are devoid of the explicit religious language of piety that one might expect given the fact that he is addressing an church audience. That choice could reflect the growing exclusion of religion from the public square and the postwar emphasis on pluralism. It could also likely be that Rogers continues the approach of the social gospel tradition, which was not pietistic. Elsewhere, Rogers does not shy away from religious language; in a 1975 transcription of a *Protestant Radio Hour*

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featuring Rogers, he ties his messages of love, forgiveness, acceptance, neighborliness, and care directly to the gospel. "It seems to me that one of our most important tasks as parents and Christian educators is to help and encourage both children and their adults to discover their own unique ways of expressing love," he begins. Later in the document he discusses how Jesus inspires acceptance and emphasizes the importance of loving a person for who they are "on the inside." "Christianity to me is a matter of being accepted as we are. Jesus certainly wasn't concerned about people's stations in life or what they looked like or whether they were perfect in behavior or feeling. . . . Children often show me the clothes they're wearing and tell me that their pants or their dresses are new. After I tell them that I like their clothes I often add, 'But you know the part of you that I like best; it's the person *inside*!'"[94] Here, he ties his core beliefs to the teachings of Christ and notes the ways that he tries to model Christ in his behaviors and attitudes. He does so on a religious radio program, despite excluding religious language in secular spaces in order to reach a broader audience.

Second, Rogers's rhetoric regarding care, affect, and its connection to "health" is deeply engaged with the contemporary theories of child-rearing and child development stemming from the work of Erik Erikson and popularized by Dr. Benjamin Spock. In this rhetoric, language of health replaces language of grace and salvation.[95] Thus, he advocates for his readers to come together to produce "healthy" programming choices for children, in contrast with the commercial stations' "trash." Such a rhetorical move is indicative of the ways Rogers sees his project as allied with the interests of the church and its behavioral and cultural curricula, a perceived need on the part of Rogers to speak the values of Christian ethics through secular language, and Rogers's attempt to integrate Christian ethics with child development understanding of the time.[96]

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Finally, Rogers addresses the question of funding and the church's either inadequate resources or insufficient commitment. Thus far, his program has had to rely on the budget of educational television or the support of a local department store to underwrite his program: "The Church has always had to retreat to radio jingles and spot quilt makers." This funding situation cannot be the basis on which to launch a project that calls for a "long-range excellence in children's television." Rather, such a ministry would be fulfilled only if secure funding for long-range television production were made possible. This is Rogers's challenge to the church should it want to have agency and influence in this cultural moment. Only then, he implies, would there be a choice in the television market for viewers. With passion, he tells the church that this is practically its last chance to assert both paramount values to their tradition—individual freedom (here in relation to consumer choice) and social influence. "The time of speaking to our children in an entertaining yet SANE way through television has never been more appropriate. It is not fair for parents (and children) not to have a choice. It is evident that the commercial telecaster will not give this choice. The Church *can* offer that choice by recognizing what we already know: that television *is* the major source of broad communication in our world today. Let's find the money to produce, and promote long-range excellence in children's television. What a magnificent ministry it really can be!"[97] As an alternative to writing letters to broadcasters in order to censor displeasing television content, Rogers suggests creative action by offering his work as a model of success in this new cultural setting. In order to influence the behavioral and cultural instruction of the young to ensure the maintenance of once dominant Protestant values, Rogers proposes an alliance between individual agents such as himself and the church. He sees in the church an old and successful institution that can swerve into a new field of cultural and political action and construction of consciousness. From this

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perspective, we can view Rogers as part of a tradition of more liberal mainline Protestants working within media to promote the maintenance of traditional cultural and ethical values in American society.[98] Rogers seeks to empower his Christian peers to assert themselves more directly into the production of television. He hopes that taking this action will lead to the development of choices in television programming that reflect his values, which he feels are not currently represented on the small screen.

BLURRING BOUNDARIES: TELEVISION AND FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Rogers's perspective on the family's critical position as educator of the young, as constituted by the deep and essential bond created by constant contact and communication, is informed by his advanced academic studies with University of Pittsburgh child development psychologist Dr. Margaret McFarland. McFarland asserted that all education in our society is founded upon in the interactions of infants and young children and their parents. As such, the family, she wrote, "is the primary educational institution."[99] Indeed, she criticized the development of a primary educational system that avoids the family altogether as an educational unit. McFarland and Rogers saw an opportunity with television to make a cultural and pedagogical intervention into the American family unit, especially with regard to its educational role in child development and upbringing. Television, like radio before it, thus posed opportunities to transcend the former institutionalized educational system hindered by its nonfamilial organizational model, class-structured economic inequalities, and curriculum differences.[100]

Through collaboration with McFarland, Rogers developed a deep understanding of how adults could communicate with children by taking into account not only the capacity of television for the production of communication with the wider public but

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also the new understanding of the child's consciousness as an amalgam of cognitive and affective development, which involves specific stages. Drawing from Erikson, whose work observing and working with children produced breakthrough understandings of the development of personality, McFarland and Rogers attempted to translate their knowledge about healthy child development through the new medium of television.

Writing in 1950, Erikson details new conclusions in psychology about how persons develop neurosis. Whereas previously, "psychopathology" professionals pondered whether neurosis resided in the individual or in his society, new research had produced a nuanced consensus that held that "a neurosis is psycho- *and* somatic, psycho- *and* social, and *inter*personal."[101] Such a conclusion shifts attention away from the individual himself and emphasizes instead his psychological development within the larger social system—the most important and influential of which is the family unit. Erikson's groundbreaking therapeutic approach stresses a process of observing the child in his family environment to gain greater understanding of the child's internal conflict, engaging in interpersonal talk therapy with the child to assist him in articulating his feelings, dialoguing with all family players about the new breakthroughs in understanding the child's perspective, and figuring out ways, collectively, to manage and resolve the problematic dynamic. Erikson's discoveries were adopted and employed by McFarland and Rogers on *Neighborhood*. As we will see, this perspective arguably served as the foundational footing for *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. Rogers had been instructed by his Pittsburgh Theological Seminary professors during his final semesters there to do research in the field of child development at the Arsenal Family and Children's Center.[102] In planning the structured contents of each program, Rogers worked closely with McFarland, his primary consultant and mentor. The two worked to construct scenarios, stories, and messages keenly tailored to the educational

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and psychological needs of children as understood by the Arsenal Center's founders, Spock, Erikson, and McFarland herself.[103]

Reading magazine articles by such scientific "experts" became a nationwide practice among women. The new child psychology was a "child-centered model," which called for mothers not only to care for her child's body and health but for the mind "and its rate of development."[104] As a result of these additional pressures, along with the increasing stress on the importance of early life and its connection to raising a well-adjusted child, mothers found themselves in a role with more pressures and yet lacking in the specialized knowledge needed to succeed in their changing role.

Within this sphere of heightened anxiety regarding child-raising, Dr. Benjamin Spock stepped in to quell some of the collective parental distress by reassuring mothers (and fathers) that their natural instincts were more than likely correct and thus empowering them to redevelop confidence in their abilities. With this new outlook and in other ways that broke from early twentieth-century psychological consensus on parenting, Spock's intervention into the sphere of child-raising advice with the publication of his 1946 book, *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, marked a deep break with the predominant thinking in the field of child raising during the pre–World War II period. In contrast to expert John B. Watson's theories on child-rearing, which emphasized the treatment of infants and toddlers as small adults who should never be kissed or hugged, Spock argued that children needed love, not coercion.[105] In *Baby and Childcare*, he encourages parents to trust their instincts and preaches that traditional disciplining methods, which he equates to punishment, are far less effective than the modeling of good behavior by parents in raising well-adjusted, emotionally and socially healthy adults.[106] "Discipline comes from the word 'disciple,' and really means 'to teach'.... the main source of good discipline is growing up in a loving family—being loved and learning to love in return," writes Spock.[107]

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Spock's approach to child raising integrated psychology, educational theory, and pediatrics; he was especially influenced by Sigmund Freud and shared Freud's assumption that the early years of life determined the personality of the adult.[108] He also was inspired by John Dewey's democratic educational approach. Through this integration of psychology, education, and medicine, combined with his personal and practical experience, Spock advised mothers and fathers how to prevent their children from developing antisocial and emotionally impaired habits of being. His key pedagogical points instructed parents to respond to their child's needs, to foster a close, secure attachment with the child, and to give and model love within the entire family.[109]

As a pediatrician, Spock was beloved by mothers and children alike. Part of his charm had to do with his other-oriented dynamic that stressed mutuality and respect. A 1998 *New York Times* obituary of Spock states that part of his success was due to his concern for the feelings of his patients and their parents, noting that he wore business suits to work instead of the traditional white coat in order to make his visitors feel more relaxed.[110] Spock's focus on mutuality, concern with the feelings of others, and practice of making others feel comfortable in his presence harkens to the style and approach of Rogers, who emphasizes his show's offering of ritual expressions of care for his television viewers.

By 1952 *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* had sold more than four million copies, demonstrating an enthusiastic reception by a public that could not get enough advice texts.[111] Like his predecessors in the area of giving advice on child-rearing, Spock published widely in women's magazines such as *Redbook* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, offering his democratic, "common sense" style of parenting. One could argue that the magazines and books proffering advice on child-rearing acted as a precursor to the televisual presence within the family of a credible male stranger, who communicates with mothers in a helpful, authoritative way. In

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contrast to the presentation of textual advice, the television, which does not require the skill of reading in order to be understood, allows such authorities to, in a double irony, speak directly to the child, bypassing both mother and father as the primary educators. Prior to Spock, the primary assumption that undergirded such practices was that both the child and the mother were passive receptors, that the expert knew best, and that therefore it was the responsibility of the lay adults, as led by the "experts," to "generate moral values in the young by guarding the gates to knowledge."[112] Although Spock still assumed a position of "expert," his primary message to readers placed agency and confidence in parents by encouraging them, in overarching fashion, to trust their own lay knowledge and biological instincts. Spock's discursive intervention marked a sharp turn within expert consensus—and, with the success of his book, society at large—in regards to child-rearing approaches and practices.[113]

Examining and analyzing these documents and placing them in the sociocultural context of the discussions regarding television and the family, the rhetoric of the "technological sublime," the cultural critiques of the 1950s and 1960s (regarding alienation, rampant individualism, loss of community bonds, unbridled consumption, etc.), Christian responses to mass entertainment, and postwar child development theory, contextualizes and situates the approaches and aims of Rogers and McFarland in ways that reveal the curious paradox of the television medium's parasocial affects. In an increasingly alienating, advanced capitalist society, television promises to bring people closer together and to transcend the physical and temporal divides that exist in the new mass society. So too, the then novel theories on child development during the period stress the importance of creating and nurturing interpersonal bonds between adult caregivers and children. While Rogers and McFarland emphasize the unique teledialogical opportuni-

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ties for human connection that television affords and attempt to capitalize on such knowledge, that paradox of the simulacra—the perceived feelings of closeness and community that television inspires juxtaposed with the reality that real connections between screen actors and viewers are not actually being made—remains. Indeed, Rogers and McFarland made a unique and revolutionary discovery in the moment when they understood the parasocial capacities of the medium for teledialogism with the family—an understanding that came to inform their conception of the program as a pedagogical intervention in the family.

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