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<th><strong>Title:</strong></th>
<th>‘B’ is for Breaking Barriers: How Sesame Street Revolutionized Children’s Television and Education</th>
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<td><strong>Name(s):</strong></td>
<td>Clarisse Cabagay, Thao-Nhi Tran, Ayumi Vazquez, Izumi Vazquez</td>
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Note: *Italicized* unhighlighted text indicates a quote. Blue highlighted text indicates photograph captions. Purple highlighted text indicates section and subsection titles. Yellow highlighted text indicates student-composed words.
Since it first aired, Sesame Street has educated kids beyond the means of traditional television. By exploring complex themes oftentimes unaddressed, Sesame Street has broken multiple barriers in television and education. During a time when many were unwilling to mention such topics, Sesame Street’s efforts to bring controversial topics to light has allowed children to understand the world around them through a perspective shaped by acceptance and respect.
Since it first aired, Sesame Street has educated kids beyond the means of traditional television. By exploring complex themes oftentimes unaddressed, Sesame Street has broken multiple barriers in television and education. During a time when many were unwilling to mention such topics, Sesame Street’s efforts to bring controversial topics to light has allowed children to understand the world around them through a perspective shaped by acceptance and respect.
“Against the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty, Sesame Street founders Joan Ganz Cooney and Lloyd Morrisett had a simple but revolutionary idea: television would help prepare disadvantaged children for school. They tapped educational advisors, researchers, television producers, artists, and other visionaries to create what would become the longest-running children’s show in American television history.” (Sesame Street Workshop)

“We hoped to find a way — using television — that we may help those children who would otherwise not succeed in school, do better.” - Lloyd Morrisett (TIME)

“Sesame Street aims at all kinds of children, and the program’s setting makes this plain. But a problem is getting more parents in the ghetto to urge their kids to watch the show. Above, Loretta Long, one of several hosts, coaches the children.” Loretta Long with children on the set of Sesame Street (1969, Ebony)

Big Bird (1973, TIME)

“Puppeteer Jim Henson poses with some of his creations, including Kermit the Frog, Bert and Ernie. "Sesame Street" was created by television producer Joan Ganz Cooney and Lloyd Morrisett, a psychologist who was vice president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. They brought on Henson and his colorful Muppets to help bring the show to life.” (CNN)

“W is for Worm” (Muppet Wiki)

“Count Von Count with the number 8.” (2012, BBC)

“Richard Polsky, a National Educational Television researcher, tests the attention span and reaction of a 4-year-old boy watching "Sesame Street." The show used educational experts to help craft its curriculum.” (CNN)

“Very few kids were in center-based nursery school, most kindergartens were only half-day, there really wasn’t this sort of emphasis on enrichment or educational activities for young children at that time… it was just around that time that early childhood scholars, development psychologists, and education researchers were realizing that kids actually had a lot of capacity to learn before the age of five.” - Melissa Kearney (American Economic Association)

“It’s hard now to think that Sesame Street was ever radical, because so much of TV looks like that. But what Sesame Street was doing was thinking about how best to reach its audience, in ways the rest of TV at the time was slower to account for.” - Myles McNutt (The Guardian)

Sesame Street was unique because it was one of the first television programs made for educating children. The show garnered mixed reviews regarding its effectiveness as traditional educators opposed using television to educate children.

“... too much TV watching leaves little time for imaginative play, that visually oriented youngsters have trouble following spoken directions, and that children have lost patience with slower moving tasks like cutting and pasting… Others have expressed concern about “sensory overload” (The New York Times)

But others saw their children learning at a faster pace, attributed to the “Brought to you by” segments focusing on letters and numbers. The benefits were further confirmed in studies.

“Independent research found that children who regularly watch Sesame Street gained more than nonviewers on tests of letter and number recognition, vocabulary and early math skills.” (News Week)
How We Got To Sesame Street (Continued):

“The alert preschooler has made a discovery, and that’s the whole purpose of Sesame Street, a new television show for children, ages three through five. Sharon Lerner makes a note of the fact for Children’s Television Workshop, sponsor of the show. Program, which is beamed from New York, is seen nationwide via National Educational TV.” (CNN)

“Advisers of Children’s Television Workshop (the program’s sponsor) get together with Executive Director Joan Ganz Cooney (second from 1).” (1969, Ebony)

“Richard Hunt, Jim Henson, and Frank Oz on the set of Sesame Street.” (Los Angeles Magazine)

"Before Sesame Street, kindergartens taught very little, and suddenly masses of children were coming in knowing letters and numbers." - Joan Ganz Cooney (News Week)

“With so much emphasis on early childhood interventions these days, it is quite encouraging to find that something so readily accessible and inexpensive as Sesame Street has the potential to have such a positive impact on children’s school performance, in particular for children from economically disadvantaged communities. These findings raise the exciting possibility that TV and electronic media more generally can be leveraged to address income and racial gaps in children’s school readiness.” - Melissa Kearney (Wellesley)

Sesame Street’s educational value went beyond numbers and letters, as the show set out to address and normalize topics stigmatized by society.

“But Sesame Street also diversified television’s storytelling options. It could tackle big, difficult topics like death or the birth of a younger sibling, right up alongside silly pop-culture parodies. It could do sketch comedy, and it could do musical numbers. Its characters could be one-joke, or they could have surprising pathos and depth. It reflected the world as children might have seen it, and that meant it reflected a bevy of emotional states and storytelling styles.” (Vox)

Big Bird and Children (Reader’s Digest)

Bert, Ernie, Big Bird, and Oscar the Grouch with Human Cast (National Public Radio)

Gordon, Sally, and Oscar the Grouch (Muppet Wiki)

“It was intentional from the beginning to show different races living together. [Its developers] were very conscious of the modeling that kids and parents would take away from that. “It normalizes other kinds of diversity, too—from learning disabilities to destitution to imaginary friends, the show teaches children that it was okay to be different, that everyone struggles and develops in their own ways.” - David Kleeman (The Atlantic)

Bert and Ernie on Set (People)
Breaking Barriers - Social Issues

Racial Diversity:

Sesame Street was created with the intention of portraying diversity in the real world. Since its first season, the show employed a diverse cast, with two of the original actors being African-American (Matt Robinson and Loretta Long). Soon after, they included two Latino members, Maria and Luis, portrayed by Sonia Manzano and Emilio Delgado.

"Sesame Street" was intentional in making its cast racially diverse and its fictional neighborhood integrated." (The Smithsonian)

"Chester Pierce, an African-American psychiatrist and Harvard professor, helped design what he called the show’s “hidden curriculum” to build up the self-worth of black children through the presentation of positive black images...there were a handful of primetime programs in the ‘60s that opened up to racial minorities, but they tended to be gimmicky or call attention to their progressivism. Sesame Street was different. In the world of the show, people were diverse, because they were diverse in the world outside of television screens." (Vox)

“I was a child of the 50s, and I watched a lot of TV, back then, Latinos were invisible. I used to feel like I was the only Puerto Rican in the world.”...”Then when I got on 'Sesame Street,' I thought, wow, maybe there's another kid somewhere who was like me, just looking for a moment of recognition and sanctuary.” - Sonia Manzano (NBC News)

“Maria and Luis, played by Sonia Manzano and Emilio Delgado, the show’s first Latino characters, arrive in “Sesame Street” [in 1991]. Manzano would appear on “Sesame Street” until 2015.” (PBS Socal)

“1991: Rosita, who comes from Mexico, is introduced. She is the first Hispanic Muppet.” (PBS Socal)

Death:

Will Lee as Mr. Hooper (Muppet Wiki)

“Big Bird with a drawing of Mr. Hooper on the cover of I’ll Miss You, Mr. Hooper.” (Pinterest)

Sesame Street addressed topics that were conventionally “difficult” to explain to kids, such as death. They emphasized the importance of having the courage to tell children the truth.

"...actually, you really comfort them more if you're straight-up with them and tell them the truth. I'll quote Fred Rogers, who said, why leave them to the mercy of their imaginings? Why not tell them exactly what's going on? - Sonia Manzano (National Public Radio)

When Will Lee (Mr. Hooper) passed, the writers planned to have him “move away”, but instead decided to show children that death is a natural part of life.

9/11:

Addressing 9/11 posed challenges for the writers as it was an unprecedented event, but one that couldn’t be ignored.

“We felt we needed to do something in response to 9/11, but we knew we had to be very careful, because our viewers are so young, and parents are returning to educational programming as a safe haven for kids.” - Rosemarie Truglio, vice president of education and research for Children's Television Workshop (Muppet Fandom)
9/11 (Continued):

"...children were not oblivious to what had happened. We needed to find a legitimate way to deal with it...The first episode of the new season following 9/11 confronted fear directly through a fire in Mr. Hooper’s store. It was a powerful episode because Elmo was in the store when the fire broke out. The firefighters saved the store, but Elmo was still frightened. We wanted to teach kids that it is ok to be scared, but that there are adults who are trying to protect you and take care of you.” (Joan Ganz Cooney Center)

"Four New York firefighters with John Weidman and Sesame Street character Elmo in 2001.” (Harvard Magazine)

Elmo with Maria and Alan (Muppet Fandom)

Adoption:

In an effort to showcase familial diversity, Sesame Street addressed adoption through Susan and Gordon’s son Miles.

“There are children who need to be loved and cared for, and Miles is one of those children who need to be loved and cared for. And Susan and I want a child to take care of and love, so we’re adopting Miles, which means he’s going to be our son, and we’re going to be his parents.” (The Free Lance-Star Newspaper)

“Once you adopt a baby, he’s yours forever” - Gordon to Big Bird (The Free Lance-Star Newspaper)

“Miles Orman, [who plays adopted Miles on the show,] in a “family portrait” with Roscoe Orman and Loretta Long.” (The Muppet Cast)

Breaking Barriers - Disabilities

Sesame Street’s continuous mission of fostering “self-esteem and positive socialization” meant including and normalizing muppets and people with disabilities.

Down Syndrome:

Jason Kingsley with Cookie Monster (YouTube)

Ernie and Jason (Muppet Wiki)

Their first foray into addressing disability began in 1970 with Jason Kingsley, a 15 month-old boy with Down Syndrome. During this time, individuals with Down Syndrome were ostracized.

“Children... get validation when they see others like themselves... We take the strangeness out of it. Why should difference be equated with fear?” - Emily Perl Kingsley, Sesame Street writer (Muppet Fandom)

“The doctors told us ‘Your child is a mongoloid. He’s not gonna walk. He’s not gonna talk. He’s not gonna read. He’s not gonna write.’ But Charles and I decided that you don’t write off a person because of the label that he carries, that Jason was a person who could learn.” - Emily Kingsley (Jerome Lejeune Foundation)

“Emily Kingsley, Jason’s mom and a writer for the show, used her experiences with her son to push for more inclusion as an activist for kids with disabilities... he [Jason] became one of the first people with Down syndrome to appear on TV. Jason became a recurring character on Sesame Street, appearing in over 50 episodes and playing an important part in changing cultural perspectives about individuals with Down syndrome.” (The Huffington Post)
Deafness:

They later included Linda the Librarian in 1979 (portrayed by deaf actress Linda Bove), who exposed children to sign language and set a precedent for characterizing future disabled characters.

“As a deaf character, Linda allowed the producers of Sesame Street to teach viewers about sign language and address the issues faced by deaf people.” (History Controversy)

“In the beginning, Bove thought her character was too one-dimensional, as writers on the show were more focused on the ways deaf people do things differently and how courageous it was to be deaf. Bove turned that on its head. “It was not a big deal,” she said in a 1991 interview. “I have a sense of humor; why don’t you show that? I can be angry over something. Show that I can have a relationship with another person.” This would set the mold for portraying individuals with disabilities in the future.” (PBS Connecticut Public Television)

Linda Bove with Bert and Ernie (Muppet BlogSpot)

Wheelchair-Use:

Cast member Tarah Schaeffer, who uses a wheelchair due to her osteogenesis, taught children to look beyond the limitations of wheelchairs.

“In her very first appearance she demonstrated for the other children (and some eager-to-learn-Muppets) how she did her wheelchair exercises, and even wowed them with a video tape of her winning a big race. In later episodes, she taught about accessibility ramps and performed in a wheelchair ballet.” (History)

“’Sesame Street gave Tarah a lot of self-confidence, and we approached it as a family adventure as we did everything...We would do it as long as it was fun, and when it wasn’t fun anymore that would be it.’” - Scott G. Schaeffer (father) (Muppet Fandom)

“Tarah Scheafer in her specialized racing chair.” (Muppet Fandom)

Blindness:

Additionally, a muppet with blindness was introduced.

“[Aristotle the muppet] appeared in the 1980s to teach children how blind people live in the wider world. In one scene, he shows Big Bird how he uses Braille by reading Little Red Riding Hood. Most Sesame Street characters don’t have visible ears - but Aristotle was a rare exception, to help explain how he uses other senses instead of sight.” (BBC)

“The show used Aristotle to teach children that blind people can be just as capable as those with sight by having him read Braille and make sandwiches at Hooper’s store. Though he only appeared on the program for a few years, he was one of the earliest of many "teachable" puppets.” (TIME)

Aristotle (1981, Muppet Fandom)

Aristotle with Honkers (Muppet Fandom)
Modern Day
In response to subjects that have recently emerged in the media, Sesame Street continues to curate content that exposes children to such topics in an appropriate manner.

Girls Rights:
“In 2016, “Sesame Street” introduced its first Afghan Muppet Zari, a character who promotes girls’ rights...” (The Huffington Post)

“[Sherrie] Westin emphasizes that Afghanistan’s first Muppet was created as a female because over two-thirds of girls in the country are not schooled and stressed the importance of role models not just for little girls, but to “model for young boys that it’s okay for a girl to have an education and for women to have different roles and responsibilities.” She continued, “We even found many Afghan mothers have said it’s Baghch-e-Simsim and Zari that have changed their husbands’ minds about sending their daughters to school.”” (Muppet Fandom)

Zari and her performer, Mansoora Shirzad (Muppet Fandom)

Zari with Rula Ghani, the First Lady of Afghanistan (Muppet Fandom)

“Meet Zari from Afghanistan, an incredible role model for both girls and boys!” Sesame Street (Twitter)

Autism:
“Julia (center) first appeared online and in printed materials as a part of Sesame Street's See Amazing in all Children initiative. She'll now appear on TV as well. From left, Elmo, Alan Muraoka, Julia, Abby Cadabby and Big Bird.” (2017, National Public Radio)

Julia with her parents, brother, and dog. (Today)

“Julia, the first Muppet with autism, draws with a crayon.” (PBS SoCal)

“Julia has autism, but she also has green eyes and red hair and an artistic temperament. Does autism define her? Isn’t the first thing we tend to notice about people whatever makes them different from us? Sesame’s autism initiative is about fighting this most harmful of human instincts. Its battle cry is “See Amazing in All Children.”” (The Smithsonian)

“My goal was to help clarify and destigmatize autism for viewers.” (The Smithsonian)

“Alan soon explains to Big Bird that Julia ‘has autism, and she likes it when people know that.’ “Autism. What’s autism?” “Well, for Julia, it means that she might not answer you right away...and she may not do what you expect. Yea, she does things just a little differently, in a Julia sort of way.”” (The Smithsonian)

Homelessness/Food Insecurity:
“Lily will represent one of the 17 million children in the U.S. that the Department of Agriculture estimates are “food insecure,” meaning they don't always know where their next meal will come from. Though she is no less colorful than her fellow Muppets, Lily will be soft-spoken and withdrawn — traits representative of kids who don't know where their next meal is coming from. The gang's most recent addition aims to make it easier for children in need to broach the topic of hunger in a healthy and sensitive way.” (TIME)

“‘Now we don't have our own place to live, and sometimes I wonder if we'll ever have our own home,” Lily expressed to Elmo.” (USA Today)
Homelessness/Food Insecurity (Continued):

“We know children experiencing homelessness are often caught up in a devastating cycle of trauma—the lack of affordable housing, poverty, domestic violence, or other trauma... We want to help disrupt that cycle by comforting children, empowering them, and giving them hope for the future. We want them to know that they are not alone and home is more than a house or an apartment—home is wherever the love lives.” - Sherrie Westin, president of social impact and philanthropy for Sesame Workshop (CNS News)

"Lily with Sofia, played by Jasmine Romero." (PBS Socal)

Lily (Today)

Lily with Elmo and friends (Today)

Opioids:

“Salia Woodbury, whose parents are still in recovery, with "Sesame Street" character Karli.” (USA Today)

“The storyline for Karli, left, “allows us to raise awareness to the importance of addressing the impact on a child, and not just the adult who is struggling with addiction,” Sherrie Westin of Sesame Workshop said.” (The New York Times)

“'Sesame Street' is tackling America's opioid epidemic head on, revealing that Karli, the little green Muppet with yellow hair, was in foster care because her mother suffered from addiction. Karli will explain that her mom 'was away for a while because she had a grown-up problem.'” (NBC News)

“'One of the things we found was that there were very limited resources for parental addiction, especially for young children. We wanted to explain what parental addiction was, and, more importantly, provide the hope and resilience for understanding it and moving forward as well.'” - Dr. Jeanette Betancourt, senior vice president of US social impact (SheKnows)

“So often, it’s only an adult issue and grown-ups are being treated. Given that we know how much this impacts a young child, in terms of their own development and the trauma that can literally inhibit a healthy development, more and more I think this allows us to raise awareness to the importance of addressing the impact on a child and not just the adult, who is struggling with addiction.'” - Sherrie Westin (The New York Times)

Hygiene:

Raya and Elmo (World Vision)

Raya (World Vision)

Raya (Global WA)

“Sesame's lovable characters have the unique ability to reach children and model behaviors around topics adults may see as taboo, such as toilet use and menstrual hygiene. Take our global health ambassador, Raya, an energetic six-year-old who's guiding conversations all over the world about clean water, handwashing, and proper latrine use. Raya always remembers to wash her hands with soap and water and wear her sandals in the latrine to avoid contracting illness.” (Sesame Workshop)

“In Nigeria, kids who participated in the [Sesame Street WASH UP!] program were twice as likely to wash their hands after defecation. Children in India who participated were 48% more likely to use an improved latrine at home.” (Sesame Workshop)
Military Children:

“In 2006, when military deployments were at record levels, Sesame Street reported for duty with a multimedia initiative that equipped families with child-friendly tools to tackle the unique challenges of military life. Topics include deployments and homecomings, grief and loss, military-to-civilian transitions, and how to stay healthy as a family. When Elmo’s dad is deployed, he creates a new bedtime ritual: No matter where they are, the family will say “good night” to the same moon. When Rosita struggles to accept her father’s new wheelchair, she soon realizes she’s not alone.” (Sesame Workshop)

Elmo with his father Louie (TV Dads)

Incarceration:

“Meet Alex, the first Muppet to have a dad in jail. According to a Pew Charitable Trusts report, one in 28 children in the United States now has a parent behind bars... it’s a real issue, but it’s talked about far less because of the stigma.” (Today)

“Children of parents behind bars often feel sadness, shame and guilt about the situation, so they need to know they are loved and that the incarceration is not their fault, said Carol Burton, executive director of Centerforce, a non-profit dedicated to supporting families impacted by incarceration.” (Today)

“I just miss him so much,” he tells a friend. “I usually don’t want people to know about my Dad.” (Today)

“Sofia, Abby and Rosita comfort Alex by giving him a hug and listening to his feelings as part of the “Sesame Street” program’s Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration initiative.” (Latin Times)

“Alex is part of a Sesame Workshop online toolkit aimed to help children with a parent behind bars understand and cope with the situation.” (Today)

HIV:

“Kami, an HIV+ Muppet from @LoveTakalani, is helping to break the culture of silence around HIV and AIDS in South Africa.” (Twitter)

“Kami, the first HIV-positive Muppet, poses in front of a sign from Sesame Street's South African co-production, "Takalani Sesame.” (PBS Socal)

Apart from her cropped hair and constant sniffles, there are no outright signs that she lives with the disease — in fact, her healthy appearance and fun-loving personality are meant to challenge the presumption that HIV-infected children are sickly and miserable. Kami — the word means “acceptance” in Setswana — is still a fixture on the show, on which the character helps explain to viewers the perils of living with the disease. (TIME)

“For the South African version of “Sesame Street” called “Takalani Sesame,” the show introduced a Muppet named Kami who is HIV-positive. The character, who also appears in the show's Nigerian version, teaches basic facts about HIV and tackles the stigma of having it. In 2006, she also appeared in a UNICEF campaign with former U.S. President Bill Clinton to encourage parents to talk to their kids about HIV and AIDS.” (The Huffington Post)

Conclusion:

Sesame Street remains relevant amidst changes in the children’s entertainment industry through its undiminished commitment to public education. Nonetheless, as new issues arise, there are still barriers yet to be broken—if not Sesame, then who?
Magazine
Viewers are invited to flip through the LIFE Magazine; the edition showcased Sesame Street and celebrated the show’s 50th anniversary. Throughout the magazine, various articles discuss the impact of Sesame Street and its continued work.

Video Media
Viewers are invited to watch a 2:44 video that plays clips from episodes of Sesame Street, which are centered around characters and muppets who have broken barriers on the show.
Map Text
This map reflects a portion of the 150 countries Sesame Street has influenced:
‘B’ is for Breaking Barriers: 
How Sesame Street Revolutionized Children’s Television and Education

Clarisse Cabagay, Thao-Nhi Tran, Ayumi Vazquez, 
Izumi Vazquez

Senior Division
Group Exhibit

Process Paper: 500
Student-Composed Words: 500
‘B’ is for Breaking Barriers: How Sesame Street Revolutionized Children’s Television and Education

Word Count: 500

For this year’s theme, “Breaking Barriers in History”, we chose to do our project on Sesame Street. Coming at the turn of a decade, we wanted to do a project that was nostalgic for us and upon further discussion, we discovered that Sesame Street played a notable role in our childhoods. After conducting extensive research, the connections between Sesame Street and this year’s theme were made evident as the show was progressive in the way it tackled controversial topics in an age-appropriate manner at a time when others in the children's entertainment industry failed to do so.

An important resource utilized in the development of our project was the Sesame Street Workshop, the show’s official website. The site contained primary and secondary information that guided us in our initial research, including the stigmatized topics the show was not afraid to address and information regarding the early years of the show. We also utilized clips of original episodes and audio, which allow us to gain an understanding of how the show presented challenging topics. With a strong foundation of research, we were then able to begin the construction of our own analysis. We expanded our research through a variety of other sources, including articles, books, magazines, clips of original episodes, and personal accounts. In addition, we were able to obtain multiple interviews with puppeteers that work on the show, a few cast members, individuals who work for Sesame Workshop, and a special education teacher. The vast media coverage of Sesame Street in the past year, as a result of the show’s 50th anniversary, provided us with a modern perspective on our topic and an understanding of the show’s continuous impact.

With its colorful design sets and iconic lovable characters, Sesame Street creates a unique environment of its own—one that we wished to highlight throughout our project. We made the conclusive decision to do an exhibit as we felt that bringing the characters and environment to life visually would be the most impactful way to share Sesame Street’s story. A PVC structure was constructed to support the exhibit and such a design allowed us to include heavier elements that paid homage to the show’s most recognizable features, such as the iconic street sign. The inclusion of a map served to emphasize the worldwide impact and presence of Sesame Street.

Since its debut in 1969, Sesame Street has transformed the television industry and children's education through its innovative use of characters and storylines. Made up of a diverse cast and crew, the characters showcased multiracial inclusion and acceptance of all children. From teaching children their ABCs to exploring complex themes such as death, autism, and
parental drug addiction, otherwise unaddressed by other outlets of children’s entertainment, Sesame Street has broken multiple barriers in television and education. During a time when many were unwilling to mention such topics, Sesame Street’s efforts to bring controversial topics to light has allowed children to understand the world around them through a perspective shaped by acceptance and respect.
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:
Books

This book was based on the Sesame Street television script for the episode in which Mr. Hooper passes away and other characters must cope with his death. In the book, Big Bird copes with Mr. Hooper’s death by recalling cherishable past memories with Mr. Hooper, rather than focusing on the sadness caused by his lack of presence. Such coping mechanisms enable Big Bird and others to cope with death. Thus, the book (aimed towards child audiences) was instrumental in allowing us to understand the manner in which the show appropriately addressed complex themes, such as death, to viewers.

Interviews
Bennett, Tau. Personal Interview. 13 May 2020.

Tau Bennett is a Sesame Street puppeteer and was the protégé of Elmo performer and voice Kevin Clash. Bennett’s interview clearly conveyed his admiration for the organization's unique ability to address tough topics that he expressed were helpful for kids to be aware of, as an understanding of such topics from a young age would make it easier for children to “know how to deal with it if/when it occurs in life.” During the interview, Bennett discussed a few of the characters he considers to have broken important barriers and championed inclusivity, among these being a boy with Down Syndrome (whom we featured in our exhibit). Bennett explained, “The kid's name was Jason and he would be included in all kinds of activities that would happen on the street and it wasn't even beaten over the viewers head that he was developmentally behind or anything like that. He was just included.” This insight supported the theme of empowerment and inclusion seen throughout the entirety of our exhibit, whilst also allowing us to gain an understanding of what it was like to witness barriers broken on set, from a cast member perspective.

The Carnegie Corporation provided a series of interviews with Joan Ganz Cooney, which was conducted by Sharon Zane on July 13, 1998, in New York, New York. Cooney and Zane discussed the origins of Sesame Street and how it came to be. Many questions were steered towards the creation and contributors, such as who helped fund the show and the public promotions. Cooney also goes into detail about how the educators created the curriculum and the overall impact the show had on public television. We acquired quotes from this interview to use on our exhibit because Cooney was one of the original creators and we wanted to include her thoughts on the show in our project.

Cordero, Frankie. Personal Interview. 22 May 2020.

Frankie Cordero is a puppeteer for Sesame Street and plays Rudy, in addition to being the U.S. performer for Zeerak (a character that promotes gender equality and education in Afghanistan). Our favorite part of the interview was when Cordero explained to us that, “As a pre-school child in the early 80s, my first exposure to children and adults with disabilities was on Sesame Street. Many of these actors who represented these characters with disabilities were recurring and long-time cast members.” Such personal reflection enabled us to better understand the impact Sesame Street’s championing of inclusion had on viewers. This reinforced the ideas expressed in the section of our exhibit in which we explored the barriers broken with regards to disabilities.


Our personal interview conducted on May 13, 2020 with Ingrid Hansen revealed the hard work and deliberate planning show writers and puppeteers put into their craft. Hansen works as a puppeteer for the character Heart on the show Helpsters, which is produced by Sesame Workshop. She shared the positive and supportive working environment that surrounded her while working on the show, and explained the ways in which they went about planning the movements and lines for the puppets in a way that would relate to the children. She also discussed the show’s intentions and goals when it came to topics that would be explored on the show. “Sesame Street has had children characters on the show who have autism, children who are homeless, Puppets who have incarcerated parents, and they do some really incredible work to explain and share those things with children in a way that is appropriate, tailor-made for the young audience.” But not everything was made for the general public, and that is why Hansen also discussed the work Sesame Street also does for social workers. They created programs for “tougher subjects” which are used for specific cases, revealing Sesame Street’s work towards inclusion both in front of the camera and behind the scenes.

Thomas Chris Hayes is a Sesame Street muppet performer for the character Hoots the Owl. In the interview conducted with him on May 13, 2020, he discussed his love for the show and cast members, along with the initiatives and objectives that Sesame Street seeks to achieve. Hayes discussed how the show addresses difficult topics in a way that helps families have conversations about it, and how the time and resources that go into doing research and using specialists helps the show create a program that “helps kids understand what’s going on in the world around them”. He also mentions how the “actors and puppeteers care so much about the content” which further helps them create meaningful content that results in beneficial impact. Not only that, but Hayes also praised the show’s deliberate diverse representation, stating how the characters “all have their own stories that connect with viewers” and how they do this not just within the U.S. but also internationally, “so they’re tackling issues that are specific to the shows in those countries”. Hayes praised not just the representation seen internationally, but also the initiatives the international shows tackle. “I actually love the international work Sesame does. The barriers over in other countries are massive. AIDS, Racism, Cultural Conflicts and Girl Empowerment are amazing initiatives that are being addressed. The show is on a mission to save the world through the kids.” From this interview, we were able to see the true passion that the puppeteers and show creators put into their work and ultimately understand that the work Sesame Street is doing is not just for the children, but the world.


A personal interview was conducted with Kathleen Kim on May 14, 2020. Kim has worked on Sesame Street since 2014 and currently plays the mother of Julia, the first muppet on the show to have autism. Through this personal interview, we were able to learn of her views on Sesame Street’s efforts to acknowledge controversial topics in an age-appropriate manner, as both a cast member of the show and a mother of a 4 year-old daughter. In the interview, Kim provided us with valuable insight on just how much research Sesame Street does beforehand when talking about these sensitive topics in order to ensure that when new characters are introduced, viewers are able to connect with them as much as possible and not feel alone in their struggles. She also talked extensively about the importance of inclusion on Sesame Street, both onset and offset, as well as how the show does so by portraying social issues and disabilities in a way that makes viewers feel represented and loved. “I think the way Sesame handles disabilities is to not treat them as disabilities at all, but just aspects of how we're all different,” she explained. Later, Kim also shared with us a personal memory of how this show has impacted her life. “Seeing other kids who looked like me and my family made me feel like I didn't
necessarily live in an all white world, but that I belonged here too and maybe I could be whatever I wanted when I grew up! (like a puppeteer on Sesame Street!)” She talked to us about how memories like this are what the show is all about—making sure everyone feels like someone. Overall, the insight provided by this personal interview aided us in understanding the real-life impact of Sesame Street’s initiatives.


Our personal interview conducted with Suki Lopez provided especially insightful information regarding Sesame Street’s impact from a cast member’s perspective. On the show, Lopez works at the Sesame Street laundromat and bike store, while also playing the role of Elmo’s babysitter. Lopez explained to us that, “I remember an episode...called “Martian mission”. Martians land in Sesame Street and they think ALL humans are the same, so we show them that there are all different kinds of humans, big, small, short, tall...People who speak different languages—some people even speak with their hands. It’s utilizing fun storylines like this the Sesame Street can both introduce and represent the deaf community or show a differently abled person playing a game in a way that empowers and positively represents them.” Memories recalled such as this one reinforced the notion that Sesame Street continuously seeks innovative ways to embed messages of empowerment and inclusion, as noted by viewers and the cast themselves. When asked what her favorite barrier broken was, Lopez responded, “I don’t think I can pick a favorite! What I love is that they continue to break them. Whether it’s a subtle thing like having me “the girl” be the one everyone calls to fix things on Sesame Street or a big moment like introducing Julia, our newest muppet friend who happens to have Autism…” Such reflection enabled us to truly understand the vast extent to which Sesame Street has broken barriers, causing even cast members to find it hard to pick a favorite! A common trend noticed between this interview and others we conducted was an immense appreciation to be a part of an organization that does so much good for the world, a true testament to the virtues Sesame Street embodies.

Orman, Miles. Personal Interview. 22 May 2020.

Miles Orman played Miles on the show, whom we featured in our exhibit, from 1985 until 1992. The real-life son of Roscoe Orman (who played Gordon Robinson on the show) was instrumental in educating children about adoption as he was portrayed to be adopted by Gordon and Susan Robinson. In our exhibit, we discussed how Sesame Street’s introduction of adoption promoted inclusion and familial diversity. In regards to his role in the portrayal of adoption, Orman explained to us that, “I think Sesame Street's
introduction of the topic of adoption created a great image for children who were adopted themselves. It showed children that there were loving and conscious people in the world who had interests in building a family with a child, even though they were not their biological parents.” Orman’s insight on adoption and other broken barriers on the show was particularly insightful and aided us in understanding how these broken barriers not only impacted viewers but characters who helped break those barriers themselves.

Videos


This youtube video included a thumbnail of Big Bird watching Gordon read a book to his newly adopted son Miles. This moment came from the episode in which Gordon and Susan adopted Miles and was important to include within our project as it was the first time the show addressed this topic and made an effort to show that just because someone is adopted, it doesn’t make them any less of a family.


This clip from a 1983 broadcast of Sesame Street shows the patrons of Sesame Street explaining to Big Bird that fellow shop owner Mr. Hooper is dead, and that means he won’t be coming back. This clip was useful in giving us quotes regarding how to discuss death with children in a way that they will understand.


This clip from a 1991 broadcast of Sesame Street shows the debut of a Hispanic muppet, the first one to be included in the show. This clip showcased the racial diversity Sesame Street had with its members and characters.

“Sesame Street: The Wheels Go Round.” Sesame Street, season 25, 1993, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zO2MsEEk5q4&list=PLj-v7AVvrxmdCKwdgQfx59y5sreUaGgPL&index=2&t=0s.

This clip from a 1993 episode of Sesame Street shows child cast member Tarah Schaeffer, the first human on the show to be seen in a wheelchair. We used this clip to
learn more about Tarah and see her first appearance on the show. We also used this video clip to get a screencap that we used as a photo on our board.

**News Articles**


This news article from USA Today provided us with information about Lily, Sesame Street’s first homeless character. Lily was created to address the stigma around homelessness and how 1 in 20 children under 6 years old are homeless yet it’s not an issue that is widely discussed. This article also provided us with a quote about how the goal behind Lily’s inclusion was to be a source of comfort and hope for children. It provided us with another quote about Lily expressing her concerns to Elmo in one of the episodes.


This news article provided information on Lily, a muppet who faces homelessness and food insecurity on the show. Lily was put out as part of the Sesame Street in Communities program, whose goal is to control the impact that homelessness has on children. We used this website to get a quote that addressed Lily’s purpose on the show, which was to help kids understand what it meant to be homeless and food insecure, but to also make those who are homeless and food insecure feel represented. Her presence on the show helps these kids know that they aren’t alone and that a home is characterized by love.


This news article provided us with information about Karli, the muppet on Sesame Street who is in the foster care system because her mother is recovering from addiction. We used this source to provide us with a quote describing Karli’s situation with her mother and how she is away because of a “grown-up” problem.
This news article explains the new movement Sesame Street is participating in, which is aimed at helping children in Syria. They created a new crossover program for children in Syria titled ‘Ahlan Simsim’ or ‘Welcome Sesame’. The main hope of the movement is to teach the children rudimentary education, while also enhancing their social and emotional skills.

In this brief article the obstacles Karli, a puppet in the show, faces while coping with her mother’s drug addiction are discussed. Prior to the episode, she had been introduced as a puppet in the foster care system, however, it was not until later that it was revealed to the viewers why her mother had to leave for a while. The article also mentioned a statement issued by the Sesame Street Workshop about how one in every eight children has a parent who struggles with a substance abuse disorder. This harsh reality thus persuaded them to discuss the topic on the show. The source provides us with resourceful information over a topic that had not been talked about prior through means of children’s television.

This news article from CNN detailed information about Lily, who is the show’s first muppet to experience food insecurity and homelessness. The article went into great detail and helped us build a cohesive summary and image of Lily the muppet and her part in impacting the show as a whole.

This news article explains the new movement Sesame Street is participating in, which is aimed at helping children in Syria. They created a new crossover program for children in Syria titled ‘Ahlan Simsim’ or ‘Welcome Sesame’. The main hope of the movement is to teach the children rudimentary education, while also enhancing their social and emotional skills.
NPR, National Public Radio, had a news article describing one of Sesame Street's newest Muppets, Lily. We used this article to help do our initial research on the muppet. Lily was introduced to address food insecurity that children faced, and then was later reintroduced as muppet with homelessness, becoming one of the first to address these topics in children's television media.


This Washington Post news article addresses the character Karli, who tackled the topic of parental drug abuse in the midst of the opioid crisis. In one of the episodes she introduces the viewers to 10 year-old Salia Woodbury, whose parents are recovering from addiction. Sesame Street received several negative comments from parents saying that they should not bring such dark topics as drugs and addiction into childrens’ television, however, that did not faze them. They felt the need to discuss the topic with children and teach them how to cope with their feelings and understand that their parents substance abuse was not their fault. The source aided in providing information on this wonderful character and how she taught and helped children.


This news article from the Today Show was used to find information on Alex, the first muppet on Sesame Street to reveal that he has a parent in jail. He explains that his father is in jail, and that it’s something that he doesn’t like telling people. The article goes on to further explain that 1 in 28 children have parents who are incarcerated, and how children of incarcerated parents tend to feel a lot of shame and guilt around the situation. The purpose of Alex is to erase the stigma around incarceration and to tell children that incarceration isn’t their fault.


This news article gave us information about Lily, the first muppet to address her homelessness. We learn about her situation and we see her trying to explain to Elmo
about why she had to leave her old home. This source also gave us information about how many children are homeless and the emotional problems they have to deal with because of it.


This news article talked about the 2011 debut of the muppet Lily, who tackled the topic of child hunger and helped illustrate the food insecurity that was affecting millions of households. The article also addressed her return in 2018, where she did not have a place to live and was consequently jumping between the houses of relatives and shelters. At the time, one in every ten children in New York (the city where Sesame Street is shot) was homeless, which influenced the decision to address such a serious concern within childrens’ television. Though the show never explicitly states the word ‘homeless’, due to the negative connotations surrounding the word, the show provided resourceful information about the impact of homelessness through Lily’s story and the ways in which she handled her situation. This source thus provided us with an instance in which a taboo topic otherwise not addressed in childrens’ television was appropriately incorporated into the show.


This news article from the New York Times website explains how Sesame Street used the muppet Karli to explain addiction and the opioid epidemic to children. Karli, who was earlier revealed to be in the foster care system, revealed that the reason she was in the system was because her mother was battling addiction. The article goes on to further explain that Karli’s situation mirrored those of many children, but there wasn’t a big focus on how children are focused on the epidemic, and existing resources are catered towards adults.

Editorials
This editorial was our initial starting point for researching Karli, the newest muppet on Sesame Street, who was added to address the issue of addiction and the consequences it has on the child. For Karli, her mother’s addiction put her in the foster care system while her mother was trying to get better.

**Photographs**


The Muppet Wiki provided us with a photograph of the muppet Aristotle, who was blind. He was one of the only muppets to have ears because they wanted to showcase him using his other senses. The photograph provides a visual aid to show what Aristotle the muppet looks like.


From this source, we acquired a photograph of Karli the muppet. The article from People Magazine explains that Karli’s introduction to the show was significant in that it addressed parental drug addiction in an appropriate manner. Parental addiction was and continues to be, a topic left unaddressed by the majority of children's television. Therefore, the show felt the need to address the topic, as a major concern affecting children throughout the nation.


From this source, we acquired a photograph of the original cast of Sesame Street for the background section of our exhibit. The cast depicted in the photograph reflects the diversity embraced by the show since the beginning.


The NBC, National Broadcasting Company, provided photographs from multiple spin-offs of the original Sesame Street show from around the world. The specific photograph we chose was one from Mexico, their spin-off called “Plaza Sésamo” which aired in 1973.
The photo had Big Bird’s cousin, Abelardo, seemingly conversing with a child and presumably the father. The photograph helps showcase the impact Sesame Street has worldwide.


We used this website to find more information on the muppet Alex, which was the show’s attempt to address and represent children with incarcerated parents. We used a photograph from this website that shows Abbie Cadabby, Rosita, and Sofia comforting Alex.


The digital book supplied us with a multitude of photographs. The photographs are in black and white and show a series of people ranging from directors and advisors of the show, kids playing on set, or watching the program. The photos bring an old-school feel to the show and a sense of nostalgia.


This webpage provided information on the pilot episode of Sesame Street, which first aired November 10, 1969. We used multiple screen caps from this episode, including a photo of their learning letters segment, which featured a worm for “W”. We also used a photograph of Roscoe Orman and a little girl interacting with Oscar the Grouch, who was still orange at the time. We used these photographs to capture how the show has changed over the years, but also to show how they haven’t changed, such as the segments they feature or the topics they address.


This website included multiple photos from episode 1553, which was centered around
Oscar showing the adults his trash can. The photo we used was a photo of Bert holding up a mirror and Jason Kinglsey looking at his reflection in it. This photograph helped to emphasize the caring and friendly relationships between the muppets and Jason Kingsley.


This webpage describes the episode in which we are first introduced to Aristotle. The page includes many screencaps from this episode. We used a photo of Aristotle feeling a trash can so that he can “see”.

“Episode 3981.” Muppet Wiki, FANDOM TV, muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Episode_3981

This website provided us with images of the episode Sesame Street released regarding fear surrounding the 9/11 attacks. This episode centered around Elmo getting stuck in a store while a fire broke out, and follows the emotional trauma he has to cope with afterward. The image we used from this site is the one with Elmo and the firefighters.


NPR, National Public Radio, provided photos of the first muppet introduced with autism that was a part of Sesame Street’s ‘See Amazing in all Children’ initiative. The photograph we used in the creation of our exhibit featured Julia (the muppet with autism) in the center surrounded by other characters such as Alan Muraoka, Elmo, Big Bird, and Abby Cadabby.


The Smithsonian Institution provided us with an insightful article on Sesame Street’s diverse roots, as well as photographs of iconic moments on the show. One of the photographs showed the cast, made up of racially diverse people, in the fictional neighborhood. The photograph provided us with an idea of what early episodes were like and demonstrated the diversity evident within Sesame Street’s original cast.

This website provided us with an image of Linda Bove on the cover of a book about sign language. Bert and Ernie are also on the cover with her.

“I'll Miss You, Mr. Hooper: I'll Miss You, Miss You, Big Bird.” *Pinterest*, www.pinterest.com/pin/191473421629299770

This website provided us with an image of a book titled, *I’ll Miss You, Mr. Hooper*. The book was released in conjunction with the episode Sesame Street released about death after Mr. Hooper’s actor, Will Lee died. The image shows Big Bird holding a drawing of Mr. Hooper.


This source provided us with several images regarding Julia, the first muppet on Sesame Street to have autism. The images show Julia with several of her friends as well as her family and dog that was introduced to the show in honor of Autism Awareness Month.


The British Broadcasting Company, BBC, contained a photograph of Count Von Count holding an eight. The photograph was used to display an image for one of the iconic muppets that's part of the cast. Count Von Count, on the show, teaches children numbers and how to count.


The source provided a photograph that we used in our project. The photo displayed a group of emergency responders and firefighters with Elmo being in the center. Sesame Street created an episode surrounding emergency responders and firefighters after 9/11 to help children understand and learn.

“Linda Bove.” *Muppet Wiki*, FANDOM TV, 6 Dec. 2005,
We used this webpage to procure a photo of Linda Bove holding the Sesame Street sign. Linda Bove portrayed Linda the Librarian on the show, she was the first deaf character to appear on the show.


From this source, we acquired a photograph of Raya, a character created to combat issues related to water sanitation and proper hand hygiene. This character was created in partnership with a world health organization and holds notable influence to children in less developed countries.


The New York Times article explained one of the newest muppets Zari. We used a photograph of Zari from this source. The muppet Zari was introduced in hopes of creating a good role model for young girls in a country where there was poor representation for girls in general.

“Miles Orman.” *Muppet Wiki*, muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Miles_.

The Muppet Wiki provided a photograph of Miles. Miles was a character that was adopted, and the show used that as an opportunity to explain that families come in all shapes and sizes.


This source discussed the importance of the introduction of Karli, a character who is revealed to have a mother who struggles with addiction. The source explains that addiction is often an issue understood to only affect adults, when in reality it is an issue that impacts children and their parents alike. Thus, the introduction of Karli took an important stride towards addressing the societal issue in an appropriate, yet relatable manner, for child
viewers.

“Mr. Hooper.” Muppet Wiki, FANDOM TV, 8 Dec. 2005,
muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Mr._Hooper.

This webpage included many photos of Mr. Hooper, who was played by Will Lee from 1969 to 1982. The photos we used included a headshot of Mr. Hooper and photos from the episode in which Mr. Hooper died. Those photos included Big Bird hanging up a photo of Mr. Hooper by his nest, and a shot of Mr. Hooper’s store with the adults and Big Bird in the back.

Ortiz, Erik. “‘Sesame Street' Introduces Muppet with Dad in Jail.” NY Daily News, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, 19 June 2013,

We used this website to procure a photograph of Alex, the muppet whose father is in jail. He was part of Sesame Street’s “Little Children, Big Challenges” initiative, where they try to address heavier topics in a way children can understand.


From this source, we acquired photographs of Raya. Raya is a recently introduced character on the show focused on promoting hand hygiene and water sanitation. The efforts of this character have been particularly impactful in less developed countries, such as Africa.

Quinn, Dave, and Dave Quinn. “New Study Shows Sesame Street Viewership Can Lead to Kids' Success in School and Work.” PEOPLE.com, 19 Aug. 2019,
people.com/parents/sesame-street-study-kids-success/.

This source contained a photograph of Bert and Ernie. The characters are holding a rubber duckie and are surrounded by various objects. We used the photograph to show some of the original characters as well as to bring more color to the project.

“Sesame Street: 50 Years of Representing Viewers Like You.” PBS SoCal, 5 Aug. 2019,
This source provided multiple photographs which we utilized. One of the photographs displayed Rosita, who comes from Mexico, as the center object. She was the first muppet introduced as a Hispanic muppet. The next photograph is from the South African version of Sesame Street, Talakani Sesame, which has Kami (a muppet from the show) going down a slide at a park with other children. Another photograph we obtained was of Lily, the muppet who deals with homelessness and food insecurity, hugging Sofia who is played by Jasmine Romero. The last photograph we used was of Julia, the first muppet that was introduced with autism, and she is seen drawing with crayons. The photographs were used to show the diversity of Sesame Street Program. They also provided a photograph of Maria and Luis (played by Sonia Manzano and Emilio Delgado) who were the first-ever Latino characters to show up on Sesame Street. Maria, who was played by Manzano, would stay on the show until 2015. The photograph showcases the diversity of the show’s cast during a time when such magnitude of diversity was uncommon.


This youtube video includes a thumbnail of Cookie Monster teaching Jason Kingsley about the word love. We used this photo to emphasize the importance of the interactions and relationships between Jason and other muppets, as Jason was the first child with down syndrome to be featured on the show.


This source provided us with a photograph of the Season 23 cast of Sesame Street. The photograph reflects a racially diverse cast and reinforces the fact that since the commencement of the show, Sesame Street has continued to embrace diversity.


CNN, Cable News Network, provided multiple photographs from the Sesame Street program. One photo we acquired was a photograph of Jim Henson posing with some of his puppets which included Kermit the Frog, Bert, and Ernie, all while being surrounded by numbers and letters. Another photo we got was one of Oscar the Grouch and Mr. Hooper.
who was played by actor Will Lee and the other photograph displays Richard Polsky who is a national educational television researcher testing the attention span and reaction of children in response to the Sesame Street show. All these photos are from the early stages of the making of the show, which helps build a visual timeline for the board.


The source contained a photograph of Salia Woodbury, whose parents were in recovery for substance abuse, with the Sesame Street character Karli, who also had parents that struggled with substance abuse and was later put into foster care. The photograph showed how the program actually brought out children who were suffering from the topics the show discussed.


NPR, National Public Radio, provided a photograph of some of the original cast and the early stages of the show. Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, Bert, Mr. Hopper are some of the characters featured in the photograph. The photograph was used to depict the beginnings of the program as it was first starting to air.


From this website, we obtained a photograph of Elmo posing with firefighters. The photograph reflected efforts by Sesame Street to address the 9/11 attacks in an indirect manner, aware that parents were reliant upon television as a safe haven for their children during the aftermath of this historical event in American history.

Street, Sesame. “Kami, an HIV Muppet from @LoveTakalani, Is Helping to Break the Culture of Silence around HIV and AIDS in South Africa. #WorldAIDSDay Pic.twitter.com/MfcxZkdsO7.” *Twitter*, Twitter, 1 Dec. 2017, twitter.com/sesamestreet/status/936609890717569026.

From this source, we acquired a photograph of Kami from Sesame Street’s official
Twitter account. The photograph reflects the impact Kami has had across the globe through her efforts to break the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS.


The Muppet Wiki provided photographs of Tarah Schaeffer. Tarah Schaeffer was the first human character to use a wheelchair on Sesame Street, she helped kids understand that wheelchair limitations can be overcome. This source also provided us with quotations expressing the impact of Tarah’s introduction and presence on the show for child viewers with disabilities.


The Time magazine cover obtained from this source displayed Big Bird as the central figure with the subtitle as Sesame Street being TV’s gift to the children. The image shows how well received the show was with the public and further emphasizes the positive influence the program had.


Today provided several photographs of Lily with her friends. The pictures helped give a visual to the struggles she was facing and how her friends were there to help her along the way.

Website Content

This page on the Sesame Street Workshop website explained what their goal was with their Sesame Street for Military Families initiative is, and how they hope to explain to children why their parents are away and prepare them for the changes that occur when they leave and return. This page also explained that there are over 800,000 children with parents in the military and also explains the success they’ve had with the initiative, like how 71% of caregivers reported that the initiative helped them explain what it means to have an injured family member.

The Sesame Street Workshop website contained information regarding the history behind the show and program. We used the source to help in our initial research and we were able to obtain a quote. The quote will be used to explain some of the background information and essentially explains why the show was created and the environment it was created in, which helps with the context of our project.


This source was useful in gaining a better understanding of the impact of Sesame Street’s initiative relating to military families. The U.S. Department of Defense stated that they appreciated the efforts made to support military families. Statements such as these reinforced Sesame Street’s importance and served to justify the show’s impact.

“Sesame Workshop and 9/11.” *Joan Ganz Cooney Center*,

In this source, the Joan Ganz Cooney Center explains how the studio and the writers decided to tackle the issue of 9/11. A lot of planning went into the process as writers consulted many officials and professionals such as psychologists to figure out how to best address the situation. This led to them tackling the issue by explaining both fear and intolerance. The quote we used from this website talked about the episode they created where Elmo was stuck in a fire and how he had to cope with the trauma afterward.

Suskind, Ron. “Why the Team Behind Sesame Street Created a Character With Autism.”
*Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 Dec. 2017,

In this source, the Smithsonian explains why Sesame Street created the muppet Julia, a character with Autism. Sesame Street created her to help destigmatize autism and raise awareness about the different ways autism is expressed in different children. We used a quote from this article that explains that Julie is more than her autism, and also includes a quote from the show where Alan tries to explain what autism is to Big Bird.

“Where We Work.” *Sesame Workshop*, www.sesamewkshop.org/where-we-work.
This source provided us with some of the many countries, among approximately 150 countries, where Sesame Street has had and continues to have a worldwide presence. This information was utilized in the creation of the world map location beneath information pertaining to the show’s modern-day impact on our exhibit. The map allowed us to visually convey the show’s undeniable influence throughout the world.

**Newspapers**


The source was used to explain the cast member Miles and his adoption. They explain how there are different types of families and that's okay. Gordon and Susan are the parents that choose to adopt them. We used two quotes from the source to help explain the situation.

**Secondary Sources:**

**Books**


This book discussed the history of Sesame Street, beginning from its creation after a dinner party to the introduction of Abby Cadabby. Notably, the book also discussed important milestones and aspects of the show, including the impact of the first season, biographies of iconic cast members such as Sonia Manzano and Emilio Delgado, and the creation of iconic muppets such as Cookie Monster and Elmo. Overall, the book provided us with comprehensive information utilized in the process of conducting initial research on our topic.


Karen Falk wrote a book analyzing the diaries of Jim Henson, a prominent producer, and puppeteer on Sesame Street. Falk adapts the diary that Henson consistently kept throughout his career, which contained rare sketches, photographs, doodles, storyboards, and etc. The book celebrates Henson's life and artistic development, which allowed us to gain a better understanding of Jim Henson as well as the show, Sesame Street.

Fisch, Shalom M., and Rosemarie T. Truglio. *G Is for Growing Thirty Years of Research on*
This book on the history and impact of Sesame Street was instrumental in helping us see how Sesame Street truly impacted children’s growth and development. It gave us lots of statistics and quantifiable evidence about how Sesame Street has impacted children in and throughout their education. This book provided us with many good quotes about the effectiveness of Sesame Street.

This book was especially useful in gaining a better understanding of how Sesame Street was able to develop an accessible platform for addressing societal issues in an age-appropriate manner for children across the nation, and eventually around the world. The book discussed the transformative effects of the show on children's television through its engaging approaches and memorable storylines and characters alike. Furthermore, the interviews mentioned in the book conducted by Kamp with Sesame Street figures including Sonia Manzano, Emilio Delgado, Loretta Long, and Frank Oz expressed that the cast’s participation in the show was not driven by fame nor money, but rather a desire to make a difference. Such interviews provided us with insight into the values embraced by the show.

A personal interview was conducted with Rebecca Brauchle on December 16, 2019. From this personal interview, we learned of her views regarding Sesame Street’s efforts to address disabilities and inclusion, both as a special education teacher with over 30 years of experience and as a mother of two daughters. In the interview, Mrs. Brauchle expressed that within her classroom, the impact of Sesame Street on students who watched the show was evident. For students with disabilities including cerebral palsy, autism, and deafness who watched the show, Sesame Street played an important role in guiding them to recognize that their disabilities did not impose limitations on their abilities of any sort. The show also aided students in realizing that having a disability did not justify the exclusion of other classmates. Overall, the insight provided by this personal interview aided us in understanding the real-life impact of Sesame Street’s initiatives to break down barriers relating to disabilities.

“Learning from Sesame Street.” American Economic Association,
This source provided us with an interview held with Melissa Kearney, a Neil Moskowitz Professor of Economics at the University of Maryland, as well as the director of the Aspen Economic Strategy Group. In the interview, Kearney discussed the impact of educational television on young children, specifically Sesame Street. They discussed the research and educational development the show went through to promote better learning for children and the impact Sesame Street had on her own childhood. We used a statement from this interview as a quote to go in our background and history section.

**Magazine Articles**


This online article provided us with information about the history of Sesame Street and how it started. Lloyd Morisset and Joan Ganz Cooney, the creators, realized how much children loved to watch television and started to think about how they could tie in entertainment with education. This article also explained about the other factors the creators took into mind, as they wanted to create a show that reached out to children who were underprivileged.


This online article explains how Sesame Street is tackling the issue of food insecurity with the inclusion of the muppet Lily. We used a quote from this source that explains what it means to be food insecure, meaning that you don’t know where your next meal is coming from, and to explain how Lily has the mannerisms of kids who are food insecure, such as being withdrawn and insecure.


The LIFE magazine came out with a whole edition on Sesame Street and celebrated its 50th anniversary. Throughout the whole magazine, the articles discussed the impact Sesame Street had and the continuing influence the show has even after 50 years.

This online magazine article was used in procuring a quote about the worldwide spread of Sesame Street. The quote addressed how many languages and countries Sesame Street is now shown in, and likened the show to the British.


This source supplied us with information relating to the character Aristotle, who is blind. Aristotle’s presence on the show was important as it demonstrated to child viewers that all children, whether inflicted by a disability or not, are capable of doing activities that other children came. Overall, Aristotle was significant in that this character teaches children that disabilities should be viewed with a preconception that they are accompanied by limitations and unbreakable barriers.

**News Articles**


This news article from the New York Times contained information regarding Sesame Street. We used a quote from this source that explained the criticism the show received from traditional educators and people who thought the show would be harmful towards their children. We used this quote to show that while many liked the program, there were still some who were skeptical.


The news article had information about the educational impact Sesame Street had and continues to have. We obtained a few quotes from this source to be used, which described the research and studies done on children who watched Sesame Street and how they were positively impacted by the show.

Murray, Noel. “‘We Know We're More than a TV Show': How Sesame Street Made It to 50.” *The

This news article discussed the origins of Sesame Street and how they went about accomplishing their early goals in childhood learning and teaching diversity. The article then goes on to discuss how the show has evolved to stay relevant and how they’ve used empirical research to continue to deliver the content that parents and children need.


We used this article from BBC to find information and a quote on the muppet Aristotle, Sesame Street’s first blind muppet. He showed children what it was like for a blind person to live in the world, showing kids how to read braille. Aristotle's character design also showcased his blindness in that his ears were exposed (while most other characters didn’t) to show that he had to rely on his other senses.


The NBC news article had information on their website which we used. We used a quote from this source that had Manzano talk about what it was like being a Latino representative for children of the time.


This was one of the first articles we used to start our research as it introduced us to a lot of the characters that were revolutionary on the show such as, Kami, the HIV positive muppet. This source also gave us a direction to go to see the modern-day and continuing impact Sesame Street has on its viewers, as this article talked about the 50th anniversary of the show.

“We Wanted To Show Children Real Life': Sesame Street's Sonia Manzano.” NPR, NPR, 31
The NPR news segment had Sonia Manzano on as a guest and she talked about some of the episodes that were impactful. We used a quote in which she is saying how you are better off telling children the truth instead of lying. We also obtained another interview clip, in which she explains the episode about Mr. Hooper and his death, and how it was a wonderful episode.

**Videos**
KaleidoscopeEnt. “I am Big Bird Official Trailer” *YouTube*, 12 March 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYNao9CAeRs

This youtube video was the official trailer for the documentary film made on Caroll Spinney’s life and time on Sesame Street as Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch. We used clips and audio from this video to create a memorial video for Caroll Spinney as he recently died on December 8, 2019, in the midst of us creating this project at the school level. We felt it was appropriate to honor him and the pioneering work he did on the show, as he’s been on Sesame Street since the beginning. The clips featured Spinney behind the scenes and gave us a glimpse into what it was like to be a puppeteer on Sesame Street.

**Website Content**

This online encyclopedia page gave us a starting point for our research as it gave us a brief and general overview of the show. It gave us information on the history of the show, like when it started, the broadcasting company it aired on, and the many minds that went behind creating the show and notable puppeteers who made it possible.


This webpage on the Sesame Street Workshop website introduces muppet Raya, Sesame Street’s global health advisor, whose role is to teach children about healthy hygiene habits. She was made with a focus in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East- areas where large amounts of children die from sanitation, water, and hygiene-related illnesses like Pneumonia and diarrhea. This source provided us with a quote about the different practices Raya preaches, such as handwashing and wearing
sandals in the latrine. It also provided us with a quote about the effectiveness of the program, as kids in Nigeria who’ve participated in the program are now twice as likely to wash their hands after using the bathroom.


The source explained how characters with down syndrome were introduced, which was due to one of the writers wanting to bring her son who had down syndrome to the show to help dissolve the stigma surrounding it. Jason, the son, was one of the first to appear in the show with a disability and inspired many who watched the show. We obtained a few quotes from this source to help explain why the mother wanted him on the show.


This was a very good source that helped us kick off our research, this list gave us a brief list of moments and muppets on the show that broke barriers and were revolutionary at the time. These topics included how they tackled racism, their inclusion of an HIV-positive muppet, their tribute to 9/11, their inclusion of a child with down syndrome, a wheel-chair using child, and when they discussed death. We also used multiple quotes from this source, one of them being the impact the episode of death had on the viewers, and another quote we used explained the inclusion of Kami the HIV-positive muppet. These quotes were included in our breaking barriers section of the board to show the importance of how Sesame Street changes with the times to address relevant topics like these.


This website included a press release on a study done by Melissa Kearney and Phillip B. Levine about the educational and social impact that Sesame Street has had on children who watched the show. We procured a quote regarding the benefits of watching Sesame Street, and how widespread the show is due to its accessibility, allowing it to reach all
kinds of children from all walks of life.

“The Connecticut Public Television contained information on the representation Sesame Street had in its show. Specifically, we took a quote that explained the character Linda the Librarian who was deaf, she taught the children sign language and essentially changed how characters with disabilities were written.

“Sesame Street’s official website gave us information about the goal of Sesame Workshop, and how it aims to make kids not only smarter and stronger, but also kinder. It gave us information about the spread of the program, as it operates in over 150 countries in hopes of helping kids with their developmental needs.

This website gave us information about characters on Sesame Street who broke barriers and broke social norms. More specifically we focused on Tarah Schaeffer, a child who uses a wheelchair because she was born with osteogenesis. This site provided us with a quote about how Tarah explained the parts of her wheelchair to the other children, and also taught them about accessibility aids like ramps.

The article from Vox describes how Sesame Street impacted the world. We used quotes from this source to go more in-depth with our project. The quotes we used explain how Sesame Street revolutionized a new way to use television to help children. The quotes also showed the diversity in the cast with Matt Robinson and Loretta Long, which was then followed by Sonia Manzano and Emilio Delgado.

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This website included an article with information on Kami, Sesame Street’s first character with HIV/AIDS. We used a quote that explained that despite having cropped hair and constant sniffles, Kami is just like any other kid. The show did this to dispel the stigma that those with HIV/AIDS are always sick and miserable and that they can live happy and “normal” lives.


From this website, we obtained information regarding the manner in which Sesame Street chose to address the 9/11 attacks. The quote used from this website, from Rosemarie Truglio, explains that the show felt that an indirect address was best, as parents relied on television as a means of comforting their children during this time. In a season premiere episode, Episode 3981, the show indirectly referenced 9/11 when Hooper's Store caught on fire. The episode featured a real New York City firefighter and was dedicated to Lt. Robert Nagel, a first responder who passed away during the 9/11 attacks. This episode, along with others later produced, focused on themes of coping with death and community unity in times of crisis.


We used this website to find information on Zari, a muppet from Sesame Street’s Afghanistan production, Baghch-e-Simsim. We used this site for a quote about how Zari serves as a much-needed role model for young girls, and especially stresses how important it is that girls have an equal right to education too. The quote also discusses how the show has changed fathers’ minds about sending their daughters to school.