ASSIGNMENT OPTION 2: Examination of TV Programming

This project requires you to design your own study to examine the messages presented to children through TV, and to consider how these messages may affect their behavior. You can design your study to answer questions that may be of particular interest to you. For example, you may wish to examine sex-role stereotyping in children’s programs or commercials. You may be interested in the portrayal of ethnic or minority persons. You may be interested in examining the degree of violence, aggression, or sexuality portrayed in children’s programming or commercials. Pick ONE SPECIFIC TOPIC and ONE SPECIFIC TYPE of TV programming (ie: cartoons, family TV, commercials, etc.) to examine by observing at least 6 samples of that type of programming, with each segment lasting at least 10 minutes. Your topic should be operationalized clearly and quantitatively (i.e.: topic is aggression, to be measured by the number of hits, kicks, gunshots, or other intentional acts of physical violence). You will complete a 3-4 page typewritten paper summarizing your study and your findings.

Examples:

1. Sex role stereotyping: In this example, you might be examining the role of the leading male and female in at least 6 programs, looking at the following types of characterizations: (for example)
   - Leader/Follower
   - Competent/Needs Assistance
   - Aggressive or dominant/Nurturing or submissive

2. Aggression: In this example, you might be interested in examining the amount of verbal aggression vs. the amount of physical aggression displayed in a specific genre of children’s programming. Again, the topic should be operationalized so that you are asking a specific question that can be answered with quantitative data you collect.

3. Be creative!! There are MANY other possibilities (family types, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, problem solving strategies, etc. etc.).

Procedure:

1. Select the topic area that you wish to investigate.
2. Define, as specifically as possible, the behaviors that you are going to be observing and counting which represent your topic. You may want to watch a few programs to help you decide what to look for and how to operationalize it.
3. Select the type and viewing time of TV in which you wish to examine this topic. Examples include educational TV, morning cartoons, afternoon cartoons, family TV, dinner sit-coms, commercials during morning cartoons, etc. Pick one genre to examine.
4. Select 6 programs to use in your study. Over a 1-2 week time period, watch 10-15 minute segments of each of the programs and record the frequency of the target behavior, describe the context of the behavior, and note the gender and role (ie: hero, bully, etc.) of the character.
Report:
Your written report should be presented in a research paper format with the following sections:

Introduction and Purpose:
Describe the purpose of your examination of TV and your expected hypotheses-what would you expect based upon your reading in class and other information available to you? Include why you think this is an important issue to investigate.

Method:
Describe how you went about doing your project, the programs selected, the times you watched them, the behaviors you watched for, etc. Include the definition and operationalization of your topic.

Results:
Describe what you observed. Quantify your data whenever possible (ie: in a ten minute segment, I saw 14 shootings, 3 muggings, 2 incidents of lying to get out of trouble…). You may find it useful to include a table of frequencies of target behaviors.

Discussion:
Discuss what your observations may mean with respect to issues of child development and TV watching (which is a major activity for many children). Do your observations correspond with the information provided in the class materials? Do your observations suggest that there is a need for further examination or research on this issue? Would you suggest another project that someone could do to follow-up on your findings?

References:
References should be typed on a separate page and attached at the end of the report. Use the style of references in your text and articles. You should have at least one reference (ie: the text book), and more if we have read articles relevant to your topic.

Final Notes:
* The final report should be 3-4 pages long.
* There are examples of well-written reports on reserve at the library.
* This report is due no later than March 13th.
* Good Luck!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!