

Covert Action in Global Children's Programming

Claim television character is homosexual a mathematical issue

By Brajaraj (People's News Service)

The Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) provide high-quality educational programming across the United States to people of all ages, but it seems that they can't put two and two together themselves when it comes to the global phenomenon of *Teletubbies*.

Teletubbies is a morning television program carried by PBS featuring four roundish, cuddly little creatures that aims to educate very small children two years and younger. In 1999 it was the subject of passing comments and more in-depth looks in several publications, including *People*, *Time*, *The Washington Post*, Christian minister Rev. Jerry Falwell's *National Liberty Journal*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. *Tribune* columnist Eric Zorn quoted several gay writers who were convinced that Tinky Winky, one of the characters, is gay.

The American flurry of controversy over *Teletubbies* has since passed. The program itself remains, however, broadcasting to American pre-schoolers on a never-ending basis. It is also spreading worldwide. In their year 2000 annual report, the BBC reported licensing 365 episodes of the program to Russian state broadcaster RTR and a potential 200 million viewers. In their 2004 report, the company noted it being seen in 120 countries, "performing extremely well in China". *Teletubbies*, part of the growing phenomenon of global programming, is becoming an element of children's culture everywhere. If this Anglo-based production has a message besides entertainment or education it is hardly irrelevant to other cultures around the world.

Tinky is purple, similar to the gay pride color lavender, has a triangle, the gay pride symbol, on his head, carries a "magic bag" that looks like a woman's purse, and talks in a husky voice far older than that of pre-schoolers. The British gay community have adopted Tinky Winky as an icon, and two American gay publications recognize him as gay. A "transgender" site claims "Tinky Winky fits the classic model of the transgendered, especially the transsexual child." It bases this claim on a description of the character's personality traits as well as his preference for dancing in a tutu, a piece of clothing for Western female classical dancers.

PBS headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, when originally contacted in 1999, did not discuss the issue and referred the matter to their New York office. Harry Forbes, spokesman for PBS in New York, refused to confirm the allegation and said "the whole thing is kind of silly" and that the show is "just meant to be funny". "None of [the *Teletubbies*] have a sexual orientation." If gays adopt Tinky Winky as one of their own that is their business.

The PBS web site still carries no discussion of the controversy, stating only that Tinky's handbag is his "favorite 'thing'". All the characters have their own favorite things.

“Many young children demonstrate a close relationship with a comforting object as they are developing their own sense of self, just as Tinky Winky has with ‘something of his own,’ a bag to put his things in,” it explains.

Nor does everyone in print journalism accept the verdict of gays or Rev. Falwell. Tom Jicha, of the *Sun-Sentinel* of South Florida, has flayed Rev. Falwell for assuming the character is gay. He does so with an interesting logic, or perhaps attack on logic.

Just because purple is the gay color, he writes, anyone using purple could be accused of being gay. “The Minnesota Vikings [a U.S. football team that with purple in their uniforms] might want to file a dissenting opinion.”

Similarly, any use of a triangle need not be considered gay either. The pyramids, for example, he writes.

Finally, Tinky Winky’s purse is supposed to be a magic bag, and not a woman’s purse at all, even though it resembles one in its entirety.

In other words, Tinky’s color, symbol and favorite thing are accidentally gay emblems. Let’s look at this proposition.

The Exploitation of Randomness

What this is saying is that it is chance that Tinky Winky came up with all these symbols. It is chance that he is purple, chance that he has a triangle, and chance that he has a handbag.

There are laws governing chance, however. According to statistical science, it can be proven whether something is chance or not.

Let us accept for the time being that Tinky is purple for no apparent reason. But his chances of having the triangle are at best one in four (1:4), since there are four Teletubbies, any of whom could have had the triangle instead.

His chances of having the handbag, which looks exactly like a female accessory no matter what people say, are also one in four. He could have instead had Po’s scooter as his favorite thing, for example.

The chance of having both the triangle and the handbag is found by multiplying 1:4 by 1:4, which gives 1 in 16, or 6.25 percent. Statistical laws say that this percentage is entirely too small in such a small group of four characters to come about by chance. The percentages are reduced to near zero if we consider that purple, a triangle and a handbag need not have been any of the colors, mathematical symbols or favorite things included at all. Any other color such as green, for example, could have been used instead of purple.

Also, being ornamented with symbols is itself odd, and unnecessary. The different colors, names and sizes would have sufficed to distinguish the Teletubbies, or some other means

used like numbers or letters, which are much closer to young children's experience than somewhat obscure symbols.

The official gay color is lavender, not the purple like Tinky's, but lavender is still a form of purple and this distinction doesn't seem to bother gays who have latched onto Tinky. I also walked past a European gay club outside which hung their flag, a rainbow array of colors in which the purple was dark, not lavender. The Teletubbies also have rainbow colors, and the program is made in Europe, not the U.S. Both purple and lavender are used by gays.

Similarly, the triangle is not pink as it is for gays, but that is only because all the Teletubbies are of uniform color, body and symbol. It couldn't have been pink unless Tinky Winky's body was pink.

The color, symbol and favorite thing for Tinky Winky were all deliberately chosen for him. Though separately each characteristic may be questioned as evidence of being gay, as Mr. Jicha has done in his demonstration of ridicule as argument, Tinky Winky is the combination of all three, not any of them alone. And, since they are all marks of gay culture, Tinky Winky is beyond reasonable doubt or chance gay.

Well, so what, one might ask. The Teletubbies are probably the most harmless creatures ever created for television. Though there are questions about the program as an educational tool according to Mr. Zorn's article, it does appear to offer a format where, as PBS describes, "our youngest viewers find their place: a playful, imaginative world inhabited by gentle, loving characters". Sexual innuendo does seem quite far beyond the capacity of tiny tots to grasp.

Socialization is a big part of the tiny tot world, however, and this *is* what *Teletubbies* is about. Since Tinky Winky is deliberately gay, *Teletubbies* is an effort to insert gay symbols into the lives of little folk from the earliest possible viewing age. If they grow up with these symbols they will be inclined to accept gay culture as an everyday part of their world as they grow older. And more open to becoming recruits for the gay movement. This contrasts with the "Live and let live" attitude between gays and heterosexuals, since active efforts at socialization goes well beyond this attitude and may concern parents who grant homosexuals their right to live and oppose violence against them but refuse to approve of what they do. Nor will subterfuge create genuine social solidarity.

What is the role of PBS in all this? That's a good question. They refuse to confirm that *Teletubbies* has any gay agenda in spite of media opinion, including the gay media, that weighs in with the opposing view. This denial is groundless, however, as gay support for Tinky Winky and statistical science show. If PBS continue with *Teletubbies* as is, it can only mean that they support a gay agenda. As a public corporation the least they should do is to acknowledge this and then open the issue for debate. Regarding PBS's stand in the event that Tinky Winky is proved to be gay Mr. Forbes said, "We can't deal in hypotheticals like that."

Any PBS acknowledgement would most likely be in terms of promoting acceptance of

diversity within American society amongst young children. On the face of it this seems exactly what *Teletubbies* is all about given Tinky Winky's symbolic preferences.

This would be a bit off the mark on the part of PBS, however, since what is really being promoted is acceptance of gay culture, though from the gay side it may be "just for fun". A lot of people may not care whether there are homosexuals or not. But more is involved here, such as what gay culture is beyond the obvious same-sex sexual relations and whether it is good for people, including gays. The people's health is one of the primary issues at stake.

A responsible public corporation would investigate what it promotes before endorsing it. Consumer auto magazines refrain from giving good marks to any particular auto model before conducting rigorous investigations. One model may look good, but it's also important to find out what is under the hood. So why shouldn't PBS know what it is promoting when it comes to its endorsements? An issue PBS will have to face unless it stonewalls in the face of the obvious. Likewise the BBC and other television corporations worldwide.

The Rest of the Cast

That aside, *Teletubbies* may be more gay than anyone thinks. It's a bit of a risk to say so, but *all* of the Teletubbies may be gay. Let's look at the possibilities.

The triangle is admittedly a symbol amongst gays, and was chosen deliberately. What about the other symbols? They are a rather peculiar assortment - a line or spike, a curlicue, and a circle on a stem. Other symbols could have been chosen but were not, such as a square, rectangle, hexagon, wave etc.

All except the circle are mathematical symbols. According to the *CRC Standard Mathematical Tables* (18th edition), the inverted triangle is the *nabla*. The first definition of *nabla* concerns linear vector operators, divergence, and "partial differentiation". The second refers to "backward difference" in interpolation theory. Both in other words refer to any of the words associated with difference or differentiation, a key point for gays.

Dipsy's line or spike can be found in [reverse E]. The [reverse E] means "there exists", the [reverse E] "there exists uniquely". Another indication of difference and the special feeling gays have about themselves.

Laa-Laa's curlicue could be the "d" in vector analysis indicating a differential operator, another symbol for differentiation. In the Tables it is slanted just as it is on Laa-Laa's head, though it lacks the additional curl.

Po's circle on a stem does not show up in the Tables as far as I can tell. But it could represent the commonly used female symbol. Removing the crossbar would suggest difference from heterosexual women, and Po is a little girl.

Also, none of the characters has a square, an old symbol for heterosexuality and

mainstream relations. It is an elementary symbol, however, and seems to come to mind more easily than, say, a curlicue.

Is this stretching things a bit too far? Possibly. And it may not matter much since there is abundant proof Tinky Winky has always been out of the closet if his accoutrements are examined for what they are. But since none of Tinky Winky's characteristics was chosen randomly, it is quite fair to wonder if elements of the other characters were deliberately selected to represent something also.