

2002

## Positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood

Rachel R. Morris  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©2002 Rachel R. Morris

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Morris, Rachel R., "Positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood" (2002). *Graduate Research Papers*. 1233.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1233>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

---

## Positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood. Benefits, as well as problems, associated with television viewing were discussed. Guidelines to assist parents for using media in positive ways that match a child's developmental levels and needs were presented. Conclusions were drawn from the literature and recommendations made to complement the developmental level of the young child.

**Positive and Negative Effects of  
Television Viewing in Early Childhood**

**A Graduate Research Paper  
Submitted to the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**By  
Rachel R. Morris  
July 15, 2002**

This research paper by: Rachel R. Morris

Titled: Positive and Negative Effects of Television Viewing in Early Childhood

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

Charles R. May

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Faculty Reader

July 8, 2002  
Date Approved

Jill M. Uhlenberg

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Faculty Reader

Jul 8, 2002  
Date Approved

Rick Traw

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

July 15, 2002  
Date Approved

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood. Benefits, as well as problems, associated with television viewing were discussed. Guidelines to assist parents for using media in positive ways that match a child's developmental levels and needs were presented. Conclusions were drawn from the literature and recommendations made to complement the developmental level of the young child.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My gratitude to Dr. Charles May, graduate advisor and mentor, for all his encouragement and guidance during the past two and a half years. A special thank you to Dr. Jill Uhlenburg for your assistance with my research paper.

A big thank you to my friends and fellow colleagues - Debbra, Vicki, Torrana, Pat and Nancy for their continued moral support.

A special thank you to my husband, Jerry, and son and daughter, Michael and Elizabeth, who were a constant source of encouragement, support and understanding through out the duration of my Masters' program.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Need for the Study.....	6
Limitations.....	7
Definitions.....	7
Chapter 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	9
Advantages to Children in Viewing Television.....	9
Disadvantages to Young Children in Viewing Television.....	10
Chapter 3 GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING GOOD VIEWING HABITS IN THE HOME.....	13
Developing Guidelines.....	13
Teachers Have An Important Role to Play.....	13
Parents Can Positively Influence Their Children’s Television Viewing.....	14
Parents Can Monitor Children’s Television Viewing.....	14
Parents Can Set A Media Diet.....	15
Parents Can Encourage Media Literacy in School and at Home.....	15
Chapter 4 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	17
Summary.....	18
Conclusions.....	19
Recommendations.....	19
REFERENCES.....	21

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Children growing up today spend an enormous amount of time watching television. They average 35 hours per week of screen time (Levin, 1998), either watching television or playing video games. Before entering kindergarten, they have spent approximately 4,000 hours watching television. This is more time than they have spent doing anything but sleeping, more time even than they will spend in school.

Heavy television viewing can affect the quality of a child's social interaction (Aregenta, Stoneman, & Brody, 1986) and specific programs viewed clearly affect the social interaction and toy play of preschoolers. In one study, (Lyle & Hoffman, 1971, cited in Atkin, C. K., Murray, J. P., and Nayman, O. B. 1972), first graders who were heavy viewers engaged in less interpersonal play. An extreme view of television's potential disruption of interpersonal interaction was taken by Jerry Kozinki, when he stated, "Imagine groups of solitary individuals watching their private, remote-controlled TV sets as the ultimate terror; a nation of *videots*." (Sohn, 1982, p. 362). And Lansberg (1985) mourned the demise of all of the old games, chants, rhymes, and other forms of play that children engaged in for generations, that were part of their private world.

It is not difficult to see that while children are viewing television they are not exercising, playing outdoors with friends, reading, helping with chores, or practicing piano; or, if they are, these activities are being done peripherally or superficially, with one eye and one ear glued to the set. A recent article in the *Globe Gazette*, reported, "Children are less active today due to increased use of television and computer games, use of the automobile and lack of safe places for children to play outside" (July 17, 2001, p. A2). This study was done by the group for Prevention



of Child and Adolescent Obesity in Iowa, which collected data for the Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control.

Television was first introduced at the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing Meadow, New York. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) exhibit showed a tiny and fuzzy picture while Americans stood gaping at the new wonder. By late 1947, the Radio Corporation of America was converting factories to turn out televisions and needed a market to sell the sets. By 1949, *The Howdy Doody Show* was the sixth most popular program on television, just below *Ted Mack and the Original Amateur Hour*. As early as 1949, Jack Gould had written an article for the *New York Times Magazine* in which he posed some serious concerns about the effects of television viewing on the American family, and suggested ways in which television could be used for purposes besides entertainment. On April 1, 1954, Fred Rogers joined WQED-TV, the country's first community-supported Public Broadcasting Service Station. He set up his first children's program, *Children's Corner*. The program ran for seven years. In November of the same year, *Tinker's Workshop* starring Bob Keeshan aired on WABC-TV. The show had few cartoons; it was designed to be a quiet beginning of each weekday for young children. By July 1955, the first pilot for *Captain Kangaroo*, again starring Bob Keeshan, was filmed. The intent of this program was to talk to one child at home with the program presented from the child's point of view.

Action For Children's Television (ACT) was formed in the 1960s by a small group of Massachusetts women who objected when a Boston television station cut *The Captain Kangaroo* hour long program to a half hour in order to air a local and more profitable program. The Action for Children's Television has remained an outstanding advocate for American children over the past decades. In 1968, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* became nationally distributed.

The decade of the 1970s brought a few more refinements in children's television, including

the Television Code for Children's Commercials. In 1971, a Children's Television Unit was commissioned to recognize that children do view television differently than adults. By 1974, a Children's Television Report and Policy Statement argued that television be used with an educational goal in mind.

In 1989, a convention on the Rights of the Child resulted in the announcement that mass media education should be directed to help prepare children for a responsible life in a free society. The biggest regulatory change affecting children's programming was the Children's Television Act of 1990, which called for broadcasters to air informational and educational programming for children. The National Ready to Learn Act in 1993 was passed with the goal of having children prepared and ready to learn when they entered public school. This bill included television as part of the mandate.

In 1994, The National Television Violence Study (NTVS) was conducted. The NTVS was a three year study that assessed the amount, nature, and content of violence in entertainment programming. The effectiveness of ratings and advisories was examined. By 1996, with the help of child advocacy organizations, the Telecommunications Act was passed which gave a rating system for programs. In December of 1996, the TV industry leaders developed their own voluntary program-ratings system officially known as TV Parental Guidelines.

### Cognitive Understandings and Television

Early childhood educators' current understanding of cognitive development in children is grounded in three broad theoretical perspectives: (1) Piaget's theory describing these years as preoperational (Piaget, 1952), (2) Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and (3) the information-processing theories of short-and long-term memory ability and use of cognitive

strategies in young children (Siegler 1983; Seifert 1993). Research related to each of these theories influence early childhood practice today. These theories are illustrated in the following discussion.

Among the major contributions of Piaget's work has been the recognition that young children actively construct their own understanding of concepts and operations (such as cause and effect, number, classification, seriation and logical reasoning). This constructivist perspective in cognition emphasizes children's need to act on objects, interact with people, and think and reflect on their experiences. Much of Piaget's research identified ways in which preschool children's thinking and ability to perform such operations are less mature than those of older children, because younger children tend to view the world from their own point of view (egocentrism) and confuse appearances and reality (Bredecamp & Copple, 1997).

Vygotsky (1978) described the role of language development and social interaction in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, young children often use private speech when they are trying to perform a task in their *zone of proximal development*. Vygotsky demonstrated that much of children's understanding first occurs in communication with other people, then appears in private speech and eventually is internalized as thought (Berk & Windsler, 1995).

Newer research efforts in both communication and developmental psychology have emphasized the complexity of the television experience and the interactions among child, program, technical, familial, experiential, motivational, and contextual variables. Developmental research has focused on children's variables (e.g. age, gender, socioeconomic background, intellectual level) as though television was all the same. Other psychological research has focused on the television content (e.g. violent, stereotypic, or prosocial), as if the audience was a homogenous group. Research from the communication field has emphasized technical

characteristics and formal features of television itself, as well as programming issues, motivations for viewing television, and the context of viewing.

Definitions and issues vary from researcher to researcher and from study to study, making simple comparisons of results difficult. The question of the influence of television on the many facets of child development is highly complex. The full extent and precise nature of television's impact is still unclear, but what is clear is that parents must monitor their young children's viewing of television. Young children are good observers, but they do not have the life experiences to evaluate television programs for content. They have not yet developed the skills that help them distinguish trivial from important, logical from fanciful, and probable from absurd. Young children need parents' guidance and maturity to develop those skills. Parents who limit the amount of time their child watches, and find good program choices, use television as a tool for entertainment and education without allowing it to dominate their lives.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood education and to develop guidelines for its use. To accomplish this purpose, this paper will address the following questions:

1. What are the advantages to young children in viewing television programs?
2. What are the disadvantages to young children in viewing television programs?
3. What guidelines should teachers share with parents in enhancing good viewing habits in the home?

## Need for the Study

Researchers, from a variety of disciplines, have shown continued concern over the proliferation of media in our children's lives today. We have an over-reliance on television, videos, movies, gameboys and computers that has given rise to stifled creativity, hampered social skills, and health affects such as eye strain and obesity.

Children need our help learning how to process and use the media they see. As children grow older and take more control of their lives, they will need resources and skills to become responsible and literate consumers of media. We need to develop strategies that effectively help children cope now and in the future (Levin, 1998).

Singer and Singer (1984), in a study of intervention strategies for children's television, expressed their concerns through the following remarks:

A home where there is uncontrolled viewing, heavy viewing by preschoolers, heavy viewing of violence, parents who emphasize physical discipline and parents whose self-descriptions do not emphasize creativity, curiosity and imagination that might lead to alternatives to the imitation of television behaviors or to reliance on television for entertainment is frightening. Children from such backgrounds made less cognitive progress, were more suspicious and fearful, and showed less imagination and more aggression as well as poor behavioral adjustment in school. (p. 93)

Teachers are spending more and more of their classroom time trying to deal with aggressive and unfocused behavior of more and more children. Teachers also point to concerns over the nature of play in their classrooms. Many children use playtime to imitate the violence they see on screen rather than to develop creative, imaginative play of their own making. The quality of play and learning is undermined for children in early childhood classrooms (Levin, 1998).

## Limitations

One limitation was the study's reliance on self-report rather than using direct observation to assess both television viewing and home environment variables. It is possible some parents inflated their responses in the viewing diary. A second limitation was that in using my class, the use of minorities could not be generalized. A third limitation was that some literature studies were not available.

## Definitions

For the purposes of clarity and understanding, the following terms will be defined:

Accommodation: to develop schemata to allow for the organization of stimuli that do not fit into existing schemata (Hulit & Howard, 1997, p. 59).

Assimilation: the cognitive process whereby a person includes new stimulus into existing schema (Hulit & Howard, 1997, p.59).

Developmentally appropriate: those classroom activities and lessons that meet the young child's educational needs according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines.

Desensitization: refers to the increased toleration of violence (Aidman, 1997, p.13).

Media Diet: refers to the need to control the quantity and quality of media exposure in children's lives (Steyer, 2002, p. 187).

Private speech: self-directed talk, when a child guides himself or herself through his or her actions. Private speech is a first step toward more elaborate cognitive skills (Hulit & Howard, 1997, p.93).

Schema: a concept, mental category, or cognitive structure. As a child develops intellectually, the individual develops many schemata by which he or she organizes and adapts to his or her environment (Hulit and Howard, 1997, p.58).

Television violence: any overt depiction of the use of physical force-or credible threat of physical force-intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings (National Television Violence Study, Executive Summary, 1996, p. ix).

V-chip: a device that can be programmed to electronically block selected programming. Beginning in 1998, new television sets were to include V-chip technology (Aidman, 1997, p.4).

Videots: refers to groups of solitary individuals watching remote-controlled TV sets (Sohn, 1982, p. 362).

Zone of Proximal Development: Vygotskian term for “ the distance between what an individual can accomplish during independent problem solving and what the individual can accomplish with the help of an adult or more competent member of culture” (Berk & Windsler, 1995, p.171.)

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Advantages of Young Children Viewing Television Programs

Children are exposed to television from early infancy. At some point, usually during the toddler years, children become interested in actively viewing the images on television. They may stop their activity when they hear a particular song, a familiar voice or a commercial jingle. In many homes, a television is on whenever the family is at home. Because television viewing can have a strong influence on children's development, it is an important issue for parents to consider.

Certain programs have educational value. Concerts, nature programs, and dance performances can enrich children's lives. Many educational programs introduce young children to letters, numbers, and other topics that interest and benefit them

Television sparks curiosity and opens up distant worlds to children. "Through its magic, young children can travel to the moon, the bottom of the ocean or inside a cell. They can visit medieval castles and climb mountains" (Dennis & Pease, 1996, p.6). Children are exposed to science, technology, history and art, all with the flick of a wrist.

In the earliest studies about the relationship between television viewing and children's academic performance, researchers found no evidence of detrimental effects of viewing. Greenstein (1954) concluded that television viewing could not be held responsible for the decreasing grade point averages of elementary school children. Greenstein also noted children with television in the home had higher grade point averages than children lacking television, a phenomenon probably related to socioeconomic status in the 1940s and 1950s.



Singer and Singer (1986), in their study observed that television can stimulate imagination as long as the child does not depend on it for imaginative activity.

Children can learn prosocial skills from well-designed programs, including such behaviors stressed on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* as sharing, delaying gratification, persistence, engaging in creative and imaginative play, and understanding others' points of view (Huston-Stein & Friedrich, 1975). Fred Rogers stated in his book, "Our programs do not try to avoid anxiety-arousing situations...we try to show models for coping with feelings as well as models of trustworthy, caring and available adults" (Rogers & Head, 1983, p. 167).

Television programs can incorporate repetition and other adjustments to facilitate language gains. The rapid increase in the use of videocassette recorders (VCRs) means parents can have increased control over the content that is viewed and the rate at which it is presented (Rice, Huston, & Truglio, in press).

Social relationships can be established and negotiated through the use of television in positive ways. Children's everyday social talk about television seems to provide a means of defining friendships, and establishing a kind of social pecking order in the group.

Keith W. Mielke, senior research fellow at the Children's Television Workshop, emphasized the importance of *Sesame Street*. This program is reaching and helping low-income children who have a narrower range of educational opportunities in the critical preschool years" (Dennis & Pease, 1996).

### Disadvantages to Young Children in Viewing Television

There are many disadvantages to young children in watching too much television. The

passivity, the simplicity, the stifling of imagination, the behavior modification, the shortened attention span, the training to be an avid consumer, and the distortions that characterize much of the learning from television has a negative influence on young children..

Television's usefulness to parents as a babysitter is addictive. It is always available, it is free, and it keeps the children quiet and out of trouble. The problem with this is, while they are watching television, young children are missing out on a great deal more:

Television retards the physical development of the brain, blunts the senses and encourages mental laziness. It impairs children's sense of their own identity, their attention span and their linguistic abilities. As a result of their addiction to television children are deprived of play and the opportunity to participate in the everyday rituals of normal family life. (Winn, 1985, p.37)

L. Wells (1974) found, in her studies with books, preschoolers can control context presentation, and when an adult is involved, there is personal contact, variety of presentation, and much repetition, often prompted by the child. Repetition helps the child to learn the rhythm of the language, new vocabulary and other cognitive skills, as well as logical sequencing. These benefits to the child are not present with television viewing.

Kelly (1981) found that reading requires children to generate their own imagery, which is more likely to approximate their own real-life situation. In watching television and its ready imagery, on the other hand, children can more easily note deviations from their own experiences.

Children are now surrounded by the clamor of media messages day and night. For millions of American kids, the media is, in fact, "the other parent" - a force that is shaping their reality, setting their expectations, guiding their behavior, defining their self-image, and dictating their interests, choices and values. (Steyer, 2002, p.7)

A rapidly growing body of research reveals how violence in the media harms children and contributes to the epidemic of violence we are now seeing among our youth. According to the

American Medical Association, media violence causes an increase in mean-spirited, aggressive behavior, causes increased levels of fearfulness, mistrust, and self-protective behavior toward others, contributes to desensitization and callousness to the effects of violence and the suffering of others, provides violent heroes whom children seek to emulate, provides justification for resorting to violence when children think they are right, creates an increasing appetite for viewing more violence and more extreme violence, and fosters a culture in which disrespectful behavior becomes a legitimate way to treat each other.

Alvin Poussaint, a clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Director of the Media Center of the Judge Baker Children's Center, observed that one long-term effect of watching too much television is that children can become passive. Television is not interactive, and that is not a good way to promote learning. Children get the message that they can just sit and be entertained. Children will think activities other than media experiences, particularly school, are boring if there's not a high level of stimulation and entertainment-focus. Media interferes with creativity. Children are not engaging in their own skills, imagination or fantasy, because they are getting their entertainment passively from a TV screen. When children are passively watching TV they are not physically active. Overweight children are being hospitalized at dramatically rising rates for diabetes and other diseases that obesity causes or worsens. Advertising aimed at children is very sophisticated, particularly with the tie-ins to fast food - children don't realize they are being targeted. If children are watching TV instead of talking to others, they may not develop social skills. Consequently, children should talk to people and not just watch television to enhance their language skills. Not only are language skills enhanced through this interaction, but social skills can be improved as well.

## CHAPTER 3

### GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING GOOD VIEWING HABITS IN THE HOME

#### Developing Guidelines

It is important for parents and teachers to think about the effects television viewing has on young children. Parents can set limits so that their children do not sacrifice play time or opportunities for real interaction for heavy television viewing. Parents should make sure they balance time spent viewing television with time for reading, active play and face-to-face communication with their child. Using a VCR, parents can select taped programming that meets the individual nurturing needs of their children. Parents can use VCRs to do time-shifting, so children can watch a particular program without interfering with the children's regular bedtime.

1. Teachers have an important role in helping students to use television more effectively.

Teachers have an important role to play in giving parents assistance in choosing age-appropriate television viewing. Encourage parents to use television program guides to plan and discuss program selection with their child. Parents should view television with their child. Parents can use television as a springboard for discussions with their child. Watching television with their child gives parents the opportunity to express their approval or dislike of behavior modeled on the screen. Parents can talk about new words and link the information presented to their child's own life, e.g. *So now we know where milk comes from.* Active discussion and explanation of television programs can increase children's comprehension of content, reduce stereotypical thinking, and increase prosocial behavior. If a portrayal is upsetting, parents should turn off the television and discuss their reason for doing so with the child.

Children's major exposure to media, media violence, and media culture occurs in the

home. "As we reach out to parents it is important to match what we do to the realities and stresses of parenting in a society where violent media and popular culture make the job of parenting even harder than otherwise it would be" (Levin, 1998, p.119).

## 2. Parents can positively influence their children's television viewing.

Parents need to encourage good media habits and values at an early age. They need to set limits on usage and help children choose the content they, as a parent, find appropriate. They need to establish rules about when, where, and how their children can use the media. Study after study shows that children who spend more time engaged in learning and personal enrichment activities - including hobbies, sports, household chores, and community youth programs - are far more likely to be high achievers in school (Steyer, 2002).

## 3. Parents can monitor children's television viewing.

Where you put a television or a computer sends an incredibly important message to children and to yourself about whether media is a choice or a habit. Do not put a television in a child's bedroom. Televisions should only be in common areas or family rooms where parents can monitor what their children are watching. Parents should discuss the TV listings for the week. Also they should offer children choices and encourage them to make thoughtful decisions about their viewing time. In addition, parents can watch for high-quality programs and documentaries that everyone in the family can enjoy. After watching a program together, parents should ask the children for their opinions of the program and discuss the important issues presented. Limit children's screen time to one or two hours daily (Steyer, 2002).

#### 4. Parents can set a media diet.

Setting a media diet implies limits as well as balance. It does not mean banishing all media from your home. It means sending a clear message to children and teens about the need to control the quantity and quality of media exposure in their lives. To get started parents can keep a media diary for a week. Keep track of all the media that each family member uses and post the results in a conspicuous place, like on the refrigerator door. A media diary can make family members more conscious of their media use. Parents can then develop a healthy media diet for the whole family. Parents need to co-view programs their children are watching so they can set knowledgeable limits. When parents let children know how they feel about a program and why, even though they may disagree, they will remember what the parent said. When the child is at a friend's house and a program comes on that they know they should not watch, they will have some guidance to follow. When parents talk about and share difficult or frightening media experiences with their children - avoiding their repeated exposure to scary images, staying in control of our emotions, and conveying information as well as our own feelings and values - parents can help children process experiences and limit the anxiety they feel (Steyer, 2002).

#### 5. Parents can encourage media literacy in school and at home.

Parents are not alone in helping their child along the path of responsible viewing. They can talk to their child's teacher, the librarian, and other parents. Several schools have a viewing component within the district's literacy curriculum. Media literacy teaches children to analyze, evaluate, and process media. Parents can ask about the goals and work with the principal, Parent/Teacher Organization, and classroom teachers to provide real-life alternatives for making television a more manageable part of their family life. Parents can create themed nights, i.e.

Monday would be Reading Night, Tuesday would be Puzzle Night, Wednesday would be Board Games Night and Thursday, Movie Night. Friday night could be Kids' Choice. Another suggestion would be to read books out loud, especially during prime television time, 8:15 to 9:00 every night. Parents might prefer to choose a system of tokens as a useful way to limit children's television time. Each child would be given tokens at the beginning of the week. Each token would be worth thirty minutes of television time. Children would have to plan ahead. A token system would help them to become more select about the programs they watched. If the tokens were not used by the end of the week, they could be cashed in for money or special privileges. Families could be encouraged to set up a fun zone where children could be creative. Parents could fill the area with children's books, puzzles, games and craft supplies.

## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The intent of this study was to examine the positive and negative effects of television viewing in early childhood education and to develop guidelines for its use. Research related to cognitive development in young children has been affirmed by both theory and research. Piaget (1952) described these years as preoperational. His constructivist perspective in cognition emphasizes the child's need to act on objects, interact with people, and think and reflect on their experiences. Vygotsky (1978) described the role of language development and social interaction in cognitive development. The paper addressed three questions to accomplish this purpose:

1. What are the advantages to young children in viewing television programs?

Although researchers have pointed out many disadvantages of television viewing by young children, there are a few positive advantages, especially when coupled with co-viewing by a parent or guardian. When television is used wisely, it can stimulate a child's wonder and curiosity about the world, as well as provide some special family times together. Concerts, nature programs, and dance performances can enrich children's lives. Many educational programs introduce young children to letters, numbers, and other topics that interest and benefit them. Television sparks curiosity and opens up distant worlds to children (Dennis & Pease, 1996, p.6). Children can learn prosocial skills from well-designed programs (Huston-Stein & Friedrich, 1976; Dennis & Pease, 1996).



## 2. What are the disadvantages to young children in viewing television programs?

The studies of Singer and Singer (1984) have clearly shown that children from homes where there is uncontrolled and heavy viewing of television by preschoolers made less cognitive progress, and were more suspicious and fearful. They also showed less imagination and more aggression, as well as poor behavioral adjustment in school. Our children are living in an entirely different, much more complex media environment than we could have ever imagined sixty years ago. In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when television first began, children lived in a much simpler and safer environment. There were only three major networks plus The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and computers were so big they filled a room. Media was new and exciting and safer. Today, as child development expert T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., warns, media is really “the biggest competitor for our children’s hearts and minds,” (Steyer, 2002, p.4).

In the early years of television, media was governed by public-interest policy. Action For Children’s Television (ACT) was formed in the 1960s by a small group of Massachusetts women who objected when a Boston television station cut the *Captain Kangaroo* hour long program to a half hour in order to air a local and more profitable program. Spurred by cable competition and relentless deregulation of the media industry back in the 1980s, television broadcasters, led by the new Fox network, abruptly abandoned the family hour, from 7:00-9:00 P.M., and dropped the unwritten code that kept most sexual and violent content off the screen (Steyer, 2002). For millions of children, media is “shaping their reality, setting their expectations, guiding their behavior, defining their self-image, and dictating their interests, choices and values,” (Steyer, 2002, p 7).

3. What guidelines should teachers share with parents in enhancing good viewing habits in the home?

This study determined that parents and teachers need a set of guidelines to follow to achieve a healthy balance of media consumption. The first step is to set limits on television usage. Establish rules about when, where, and how your child can use the media. Next, parents and educators need to unite to promote good programming that serves the interests of our children. Parents need to encourage alternatives to television viewing. Examples could be reading, playing board games, participating in sports, doing artwork or playing outside. We must use the power of media and technology to help make our children stronger, wiser, and more aware of their social responsibilities (Steyer, 2002).

### Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. Media influences cognitive and social skills in our children.
2. Media influences violence and aggression in our children.
3. Media impacts children's health.
4. Parents and teachers can work together to open students' minds to subject matter and the potential of promising technology.

### Recommendations

Based on a review of the literature, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Families need to plan television viewing. Let children choose from programs that parents know are nonviolent, informative, or entertaining.
2. Limit children's screen time to one or two hours daily. Move the television to a room that is

not at the center of family life.

3. Offer alternatives to television. Examples could be board games, sports, art activities, drama, or outdoor play.
4. Parents must watch television with their children and talk about the shows they view together.
5. Encourage legislation that promotes educational, nonviolent television programming and restricts advertising during children's programming.
6. More articles need to be written to inform parents about the effects television and videos have on their child.

## REFERENCES

- Aidman, A. (1997). Television Violence: Content, Context, and Consequences. ERIC Digest. EDO-PS-97-26.
- Argenta, D. M., Stoneman, Z., Brody, G. H. (1986). The effects of three different television programs on young children's peer interactions and toy play. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 7, 355-371.
- American Medical Association, Physician Guide to Media Violence (1993). Chicago.
- Atkin, C. K., Murray, J. P., & Nayman, O. B. (1972). The surgeon general's research program on television and social behavior: A review of empirical findings. Journal of Broadcasting, 16 (1), 21-35.
- Berk, L. E. & Windsler, A. (1995). Scaffolding children's learning: Vygotsky and early childhood education. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Bredenkamp, S. & Copple, C. (1997). Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Buckingham, D. (1993). Children Talking Television, The Making of Television Literacy. Washington DC: The Falmer Press.
- Dennis, E. E. & Pease, E. C. (1996). Children And The Media. New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers.
- Greenstein, J. (1954). Effect of television upon elementary school grades. The Journal of Educational Research, 48, 161-176.
- Huston-Stein, A. & Friedrich, L. K. (1975). Impact on children and youth. In E. M. Hetherington, J. W. Hagen, R. Kron, & Huston-Stein (Eds.), Review of Child Development Research, 5, 183-256.
- Kelly, H. (1981). Reasoning about realities: Children's evaluations of television and books. In H. Kelly & H. Gardner (Eds.), New Directions for Child Development: Viewing Children Through Television, 13, 59-71.
- Langsberg, M. (1985). Women and Children First. Ontario: Penquin Books.
- Levin, D. E. (1998). Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Neuman, S. B. (1986). Television, reading, and the home environment. Reading Research and Instruction, 25, 173-183.

- Piaget, J. (1952). The Origins of Intelligence in Children. New York: International Universities Press.
- Rice, M. L., Huston, A., Truglio, R. & Wright, J. (in press) Words from *Sesame Street*, learning vocabulary while viewing. Developmental Psychology, pp. 12-13.
- Rogers, F. & Head, B. (1983). Mister Rogers Talks With Parents. New York: Berkley Books.
- Singer, J. L., & Singer D. G. (1984). Intervention strategies for children's television. In J.P. Murray & G. Salomon (Eds.), The Future of Children's Television (pp 93-102). Boys Town, NE: Father Flanagan's Boys' Home.
- Singer J. L. & Singer, D. G. (1986). Family experiences and television viewing as predictors of children's imagination, restlessness, and aggression. Journal of Social Issues, 42, 107-124.
- Sohn, D. (1982). David Sohn interviews Jerry Kosinski. A nation of videotots. In H. Newcomb (Ed.), Television: the Critical View (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp.351-366). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Steyer, J. P. (2002). The Other Parent. New York: ATRIA Books.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). Mind In Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.
- Wells, L. (1974). Television versus books for preschoolers. Child Study Journal, 4, pp. 93-97.
- Winn, M. (1985). The Plug-In Drug. New York: Penquin Books.