TELEVISION AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

by

Susan Lee Harper-Gilmore

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Susan Lee Harper-Gilmore

Approved: Nancy Signorielli, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: John A. Courtright, Ph.D.
Chairman of the Department of Communication

Approved: Carol E. Hoffecker
Associate Provost for Graduate Studies
DEDICATION

To my husband, Mr. Robert T. Gilmore, whose tireless support and loving devotion helped me attempt to gracefully handle life's inherent complexity. His extraordinary "game plan" inspired me to believe in myself. To my parents, Dr. and Mrs. Robert C. Harper, who offered faithful support and compassionate encouragement. Their innumerable sacrifices for me have been remarkable. They nurtured the thought that I can do anything I set my mind to--for that I am extremely thankful. To my sister and her family, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth M. Scott, Robert, and Adam--thanks for their support. To my late grandmother, Mrs. Ruth L. Lee, who always demonstrated her profound pride for her grandchildren. She will always be exceptionally close to me in my heart. To my inlaws, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Gilmore, who would loyally listen to progress made and compassionately rearrange their schedules because I had another "paper" to complete. Finally, I want to dedicate this thesis to our exquisite newborn child, Christopher Robert Gilmore, who not only inspired me to complete my thesis, but continues to inspire me every day.
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ABSTRACT

Television has an impact on children’s perceptions of their environment and learning situations. Television’s impact on viewer attitudes and behaviors has been the subject of a great deal of research since television was introduced to our homes in the late 1940s.

The area of gender-role stereotype investigation is significant because gender-roles are important in a child’s developmental process. Children learn about their roles and values from teachers, parents, siblings, peers, and other institutions. In addition, children have access to information in the media. Television is a prominent part of a child’s life due to its widespread use and availability.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between television viewing and conceptions of social reality in relation to gender-role stereotypes in a survey of a sample of third and fourth grade children. The investigation specifically focused on how boys and girls perceive their gender-related roles in real life situations and how this is related to their television viewing patterns. A questionnaire measured children’s perceptions of appropriate activities for boys and girls, women and men.
In addition, children’s perceptions of traditionally boy or
girl traits were also examined. For instance, children were
questioned about peers on traits, behaviors, jobs, authority
relations, and peer relations. In addition, children were
also questioned about thoughts on adult discipline, support,
and power. Some of the items on the questionnaire are
exploratory in nature in order to further examine children’s
attitudes towards television, program selection, critical
viewing, and parental mediation and involvement with
television. Furthermore, the impact of television on
reading and writing was also examined.

The research question that was explored was: Does
the amount of television viewing relate to children’s
perceptions of gender-role stereotypes? In addition, some
exploratory research was conducted in order to examine
possible educational implications. For example, the
children’s out of school reading and creative writing
practices were explored as they relate to television.
Children were also given open-ended questions concerning the
utilization of television in the school system.

The reason for researching this topic stems not only
from my participation in the courses "Children and the Mass
Media" and "Television, Children, Education" at the
University of Delaware but also from my interest as an
elementary school educator.
The results of this research have implications for children's conceptions about the world in relation to violence, children's having more gender stereotyped conceptions, and television viewing as it relates to children's parental involvement with television. However, due to the sundry factors involved in parental mediation, the family's role in how children use television and what they get from it deserves further study.
CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IMPACT DOES TELEVISION HAVE ON CHILDREN?

Television’s impact on viewer attitudes and behaviors has been a subject of a great deal of research since television was introduced to our homes in the late 1940s. Numerous studies have examined its impact on children’s perceptions of their environment and learning situations. For example, an early study, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961) examined television’s impact on children—the changes it made in their world, how much they watched and what they watched, and what they got from television.

An important aspect of a child’s developmental process is the acquisition of gender-roles. Consequently, the investigation of gender-role stereotypes is important. Children learn about their roles and values from teachers, parents, siblings, peers, and other institutions. In addition, children learn about gender-roles from the media, particularly television. Television is a prominent part of a child’s life due to its widespread use and availability. Gross 1
and Jeffries-Fox, (1978) note that television provides a child with:

an apparently rich array of windows through which he or she can glimpse apparently diverse images and actions, but the diversity is only in the shape of the window and the angle of the glimpse-the basic topography of the fictional world is the same. Television is also highly informative, offering a continuous stream of 'facts' and impressions about the way of the world, the constancies and vagaries of human nature, and the consequences of actions it seems to offer realism. (Gross & Jeffries-Fox, 1978, p. 246)

Television is deeply embedded in children's experience. Television can "show things happening, it can introduce its viewers to interesting people of all kinds, it can be a window on the world, it can give a sense of reality. It is the familiar medium of the children's homes" (Bluem & Manvell, 1967, pp. 231-232).

Cole confirms the notion that television is familiar to children. "At any given moment the typical American child will always have spent more of his or her lifetime watching television than being in a classroom" (Cole, 1981, p. 275). Cole also notes that school age children under twelve years spend more than a full hour each day in front of the television screen.

Finally, roles are learned from every aspect of life, including television. According to Meek,
television "has to be considered as a significant component of childhood" (Meek, 1989, p. 22). Meek suggests we need to know more about how children watch television in school and at home because children are educated about their culture and their world from television.

**Gender-Role Stereotypes on Television**

Numerous researchers have conducted content studies isolating gender-role portrayals on television (see, for example, Signorielli 1985). The studies generally conclude that men outnumber women by two or three to one in prime time and four or five to one in weekend-daytime children’s programming (Levinson, 1975; Signorielli, 1991). Signorielli also reported:

> women are generally younger than the men and are cast in very traditional and stereotypical roles. Women are less aggressive than men, take more orders than men, and are generally limited in their employment possibilities. Television does not recognize that women can successfully mix marriage, homemaking and raising children with careers. (Signorielli, 1985, p. xiv)

Stereotyping is not limited to regular programming. Stereotypes also abound in advertising and weekend-daytime children’s programming. Stereotypical images have persisted throughout the years. Ferrante,
Haynes, and Kingsley, (1988) for example, replicated Dominick and Rauch's 1972 study of television commercials. They found that television commercials in the mid-1980s still did not treat women and men equally even though some changes had occurred. Overall, women continued to be seen in a home-related context, were younger than men and were over represented in cosmetic and personal hygiene products.

In addition, Craig (1992), in a content analysis of television commercials, found that commercials targeted to one gender tend to portray gender differently than advertisements targeted to the other gender. Craig described the gender images in television commercials as "carefully crafted bundles of images, frequently designed to associate the product with feelings of pleasure stemming from deep-seated fantasies and anxieties" (Craig, 1992, p. 210).

Similarly, Durkin's (1985) comprehensive summary of content analyses in the early 1980s demonstrates: (1) males are more often shown in high status jobs, (2) females are more often shown in stereotypical jobs (e.g., secretary, nurse), (3) married females who work are more likely than non-working females to be unhappy, (4) males are more violent than females, (5) females are more often
victims, (6) females display more emotion, and (7) males are more goal-oriented.

Women on television continue to be stereotyped. For example, Adelson, a New York Times writer, contends that during the 1989-1990 television season, women were "often still depicted on television as half-clad and half-witted, and needing to be rescued by quick-thinking, fully clothed men" (Adelson, 1990, p. B3). In other words, network television programs continue to present women in stereotypical roles. Carter, a New York Times columnist, reports that "children's television is a boy's world. And they aren't fighting it anymore" (Carter, 1991, p. A1). Furthermore, Carter states that the networks are responding to the absence of female characters by giving male characters attributes considered to be "female." According to Huston and colleagues, "gender roles on many children's programs, especially cartoons, continue to be extremely stereotyped" (Huston, Donnerstein, Fairchild, Feshbach, Katz, Murray, Rebinstein, & Zuckerman, 1992, p. 28).

Effects of Television's Gender Stereotyped Portrayals

In addition to content studies, researchers have examined the effects of gender-role portrayals on television. The Child Growth and Development Corporation
(Life Magazine, 1989), a New York-based research and design firm, conducted focus groups with second and fifth graders in two disparate United States communities, Nora Springs, Iowa, and Dallas, Texas, looking among other things, at gender-role stereotypes. Even though the children in the two communities were separated by distance, income, and ethnicity, they were connected by the links of national cable and network programming. This examination of television’s impact on children confirmed the notion of stereotypical gender-roles: "some stereotypes are being reinforced. Television, observed some second graders, teaches that 'men kill' and 'women cook.' Nevertheless, on the whole, boys in both cities had little trouble separating reality and illusion" (1989, p. 79). The entire Texas-Iowa research project suggests that children have a "coherent, connected understanding of programs, even at a very early age" and that they could separate illusion and reality (1989, p. 80).

Research has also examined the relationship between television viewing and conceptions about gender-roles. Beuf (1974) found that 3- to 6-year-old children who watched more television were more likely to stereotype occupational roles. Gross and Jeffries-Fox (1978) concluded that eighth-, ninth-, and tenth-grade
children who were heavy viewers offered sexist replies to questions concerning the nature of men and women and how they are treated by society. Furthermore, Freuh and McGhee (1975) found that kindergartners and elementary students who spent more time watching television demonstrated greater gender typing than those who spent less time viewing television.

Kimball (1986) examined changes in perceptions relating to gender-roles in three Canadian communities (NOTEL, UNITEL, and MULTITEL) at two points in time: before and after NOTEL received television. Kimball’s research revealed that before the introduction of television in NOTEL, children’s perceptions relating to gender-roles were not strongly gender typed. After television was brought to the community, the perceptions of the children were more gender typed, and did not differ from the perceptions relating to gender-roles of the children in UNITEL and MULTITEL, communities who had access to a television.

Morgan (1982) conducted a longitudinal study that examined the relationship between television viewing and adolescents’ gender-role stereotypes, using a 2-year panel of 6th through 10th graders. Morgan concluded:
The findings of this study are sharply different for boys and girls. For girls, amount of television viewing predicts scores on an index of sex role stereotypes 1 year later, above and beyond the influence of earlier sexism and demographics. For boys, on the other hand, there is not a significant link between how much television they watch and what they think 1 year later. (Morgan, 1982, p. 953)

In addition, a study by Morgan and Rothschild (1983) found that television cultivates gender-role attitudes among adolescents. Morgan (1987) also assessed attitudes toward household chores, household chores done, and amount of nightly television exposure for eighth graders. Morgan concluded that for both boys and girls, heavy television viewing predicted a later tendency to endorse traditional gender-role divisions of labor with respect to household chores. Although television viewing did not predict the gender-typing of chores actually done, heavy viewers did show increases in the congruence between their attitudes and their behaviors.

Continuing this line of research using a sample of 4th and 5th graders, Signorielli and Lears (1992) examined the relationship between television viewing and children's attitudes and behaviors in relation to gender-role stereotyped household chores. The researchers made the following conclusions about the relationships:
There were statistically significant relationships between television viewing and scores on an index of attitudes toward sex-stereotyped chores that maintained statistical significance under conditions of multiple controls. The relationships between viewing and indices of doing traditional girl-or boy-chores were not statistically significant. Although viewing was not related to the children's behavior in regard to these chores in isolation, there were statistically significant relationships between attitudes, behaviors, and viewing. For both the boys and girls there were moderate to strong statistically significant relationships, that increased with television viewing, between attitudes about who should do chores and whether or not the children said they did those chores typically associated with the opposite sex. (Signorielli & Lears, 1992, p. 157)

Signorielli (1991) also examined relationships between television viewing and views about marriage, using data from the "Monitoring the Future Survey" conducted in 1985. Signorielli found that television may cultivate important ideas about marriage and intimate interpersonal relationships. The findings indicate that "among high school seniors, television seems to cultivate rather realistic views about marriage: the notion that marriage should be part of one's life but that it will not necessarily be a bed of roses" (Signorielli, 1991, p. 147).

A number of other investigations have examined the relationship between television viewing and stereotyped beliefs. Zuckerman, Singer, and Singer
(1980), for example, found that children’s viewing practices were related to the degree of gender prejudice they exhibited. Girls, however, who watched the most television had the most negative attitudes toward their gender (Zuckerman, Singer, & Singer, 1980).

Children’s television, however, does not have to be stereotyped. Kaplan, an Instructor Magazine author, investigated a shift to less stereotypical portrayal of gender-role attitudes, in the public television series, "Freestyle" (1985). The research, examining the effects of this program on 7,000 children, revealed that "Freestyle" showed that "girls could be independent-minded and achievement-oriented and that boys could express emotions and be nurturant to others" (Kaplan, 1985, pp. 52-53).

In summary, the area of gender-role stereotype investigation is significant because gender-roles are an integral segment in a child’s developmental process. Content studies reveal the existence of gender-role portrayals on television, particularly in prime time drama, weekend-daytime children’s programming, and commercials. However, numerous studies have found that children perceive their images and that what they see may be related to their attitudes about the roles of men and women in society. In addition to research that analyzes
children’s attitudes about the roles of society members, research also examines children’s attitudes about the family’s role in their television viewing habits. The following section expands the discussion of television and the family.

Television and the Family

Television is an integral part of the family activity. In many instances, the central focus of the family room or living room is the television set. The furniture is arranged in order to allow each family member to have the "best seat in the house" to see the television, not to encourage conversation. However, depending on the household, television viewing may not always be a family activity. For example, many families have more than one television set and some children may even have a set in their bedroom. In those families, there may be discussions on who will watch a certain television set, rather than what program will be seen.

Yet, when children watch television, they are not always alone or isolated from other activities. Television viewing may be a group activity. Children and other family members watch television with other people. In addition, they often do other things while they watch television. For instance, children may play with toys,
hold discussions on the day's activities, and eat meals or snacks. Some children even complete their homework while watching television. All types of activities occur in the presence of television. According to Dorr (1986), children may talk with each other, with their parents, and other adults or children who are also watching television or doing other activities.

McLeod, Fitzpatrick, Glynn and Fallis (1982) note two areas of concern: the family impact on the use of television and mediation effects of parental intervention. Research indicates that parents do not always control what programs and how much television their children watch. For instance, Lyle and Hoffman (1972b) found that four out of ten nursery school children selected the programs they watch. Lyle and Hoffman (1972a) also found that most mothers of first-grade children did not limit the amount of viewing and when the children watched television. However, the mothers reported that they did control the type of programs their children watched. Atkin, Greenberg, Korzenny, and McDermott (1979) indicated that less than one in five children were forbidden to watch violent programs.

Research also indicates that parents may say that they have more control over their child's actual viewing
than they actually do. In addition, parents may not accurately report the total amount of time children spend watching television. For instance, Robertson and Rossiter (1974) found that mothers reported more viewing rules and more coviewing than their children reported. In addition, Cantor and Reilly (1980) found that mothers reported more parental intervention. Furthermore, Greenberg, Ericson, and Vlahos (1972) found that mothers underreported the time children spent watching television.

Many parents attempt to control their child’s viewing by incorporating rules concerning television viewing. Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin (1971) found that children in one out of ten families had specific rules about watching the television. Lyle and Hoffman (1972a) found that one-third of the sixth- and tenth-grade children sampled stated that they had rules when they were younger and that they had rules at the present time.

Television rules may encompass a multitude of areas such as finishing homework or doing chores first, not watching television on a school night, not watching certain shows, and no viewing after a certain hour (Reid, 1979; Dorr, 1986). Signorielli (1990) found that two-thirds of a sample of fourth and fifth grade students reported that they were not able to watch television
until their homework was complete. In addition, Signorielli found that one-quarter of the students had rules about the types of programs they were allowed to watch and one-third of the children could not watch television after nine p.m.. Some children however, have no rules about television. Research also indicates that television rules may be related to socioeconomic status. For example, Bower (1973) found that well-educated parents reported that their family had more rules about viewing than families with less well-educated parents.

Some research has examined coviewing. Lyle and Hoffman (1972a) found that first-grade children often watch television with their siblings or both their siblings and their parents. Likewise, Rubin (1986) found coviewing with siblings and parents. In addition, Rubin found that children rarely watched television alone. Signorielli (1990) found that six out of ten fourth- and fifth-grade students reported that they coviewed with their siblings. Half of those children sampled reported that they watched television with their parents.

Research indicates that there is less coviewing in homes with more than one television set. However, coviewing still takes place. For example, Bower (1973) found that coviewing with siblings happened the most, then husband-wife viewing, entire family viewing was
next, and parent-child coviewing was last. In homes with only one television set, the order of coviewing was the family, husband-wife, and finally, sibling and parent-child coviewing.

Studies have examined program selection. Chaffee and Tims (1976) found that siblings watched comedies when their parents were not present. The researchers also found that they tended to watch violent programs with their parents. Lull (1982) found that the father was the most influential person in selecting the family’s programs and mothers did not select programs. In the same study, children reported that they would watch the programs that were selected. However, they were not always pleased with what program was selected.

Research indicates that children say that they do not like news and information programs. Lyle’s (1972) research revealed that television news and education programs were watched by few children. In addition, Rubin (1977) found that only a few children liked news or educational programs.

Parents may also attempt to mediate what children watch on television. According to Rothschild and Morgan (1987), mediation may simply be the parents making rules concerning television, commenting on certain programs, or indicating their attitudes about the content of
Parental mediation allows children to obtain more information from television. For example, Singer and Singer (1976) concluded that adults can help preschool children understand programs by referring to certain aspects of the program. In addition, Collins, Sobol, and Westby (1981) found that co-viewing adults helped second-grade children understand television programs. Moreover, Atkin and Gantz (1974) found that children remembered news events when their parents discussed the news programs.

Gross and Morgan (1985) found that when parents were positive about television or limited children's viewing, the children's conceptions of social reality were not affected. On the other hand, when parents did not interfere with television, there were significant associations between the amount of viewing and conceptions about social reality. Rothschild and Morgan (1987) found that those families who were substantially involved with television by co-viewing and discussions, gained more from television than those families not as involved with television mediation.

**Cultivation Theory**

This research is based on cultivation theory, an orientation that examines trends in television
programming as well as the relationship between viewing and conceptions about social reality. Many studies conducted in this tradition involve both content and effect studies. This study, however, only investigated the second portion of this paradigm: the relationship between the amount of viewing and conceptions about the world, building upon findings from existing content studies.

Cultivation theory assesses the major historical significance of the rise of the mass media in society and attempts to understand mass media’s impact. The theory argues that the significance comes "not from the formation of the mass but from the creation of shared ways of selecting and viewing events, by delivering... technologically produced and mediated message systems" to the main public (McQuail, 1987, p. 99). The theory is concerned with the educational function of the media. For example, cultivation theory focuses upon the effect of media programming on the individual and society.

Cultivation theory "grew out of George Gerbner’s analyses of television’s influence on public fears about violence" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 259). This research found that violence was widespread on television and postulated that the amount of violence shown on
television may magnify fears of crime and personal safety within the populace (Gerbner et al., 1979).

A large number of studies by Gerbner and associates suggest that heavy viewing is systematically related to audience images of violence and mistrust (Gerbner, 1978; Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan & Jackson-Beek, 1979, Signorielli, 1990). For example, one study found "strong support for the theory of pervasive cultivation of mistrust, apprehension, danger, and exaggerated world perception" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, p.25). In addition, Gerbner et al. (1980), found that heavy viewing was related to conceptions about the family, aging, and gender-role stereotypes. According to Morgan (1982), "the underlying premise of cultivation theory is that the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they are to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the patterns found in television drama" (p. 948).

In the article, "Living With Television: The Dynamics of the Cultivation Process" Gerbner et al. (1986) explain the dynamics of television as a feature of our age and society. The authors contend that cultivation analysis focuses on the lasting consequences of growing up and living with television (p.38). The media, especially television due to the centrality it
holds in daily lives, have powerful effects and mold society. Television dominates our symbolic environment because it substitutes messages about reality for personal experience.

The cultivation perspective contributes to the understanding of how media content may be involved in the social construction of meaning. According to Signorielli and Morgan (1990):

In its simplest form, cultivation analysis attempts to determine the extent to which people who watch greater amounts of television (generally referred to as heavy viewers) hold different conceptions of social reality from those who watch less, other factors held constant. The basic hypothesis is that heavy viewers will be more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most stable and recurrent patterns of portrayals in the television world. (pp. 9-10)

In other words, "cultivation analysis tries to ascertain if those who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and repetitive messages and lessons of the television world, compared with people who watch less television but are otherwise comparable in important demographic characteristics" (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990, p.17). The theory examines long-term cumulative exposure to television's imagery. The term cultivation, however, is not just a fancier word for
effects or reinforcement" (Signorielli, 1991, p. 123). Liebert and Sprafkin also contend that cultivation theory "predicts that the more a person is exposed to television, the more likely the person's perceptions of social realities will match those represented on TV" (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988, p. 148).

An important component of cultivation theory is the concept of "mainstreaming." Gerbner et al. (1980) describe mainstreaming as mediated reality that can influence beliefs. "The 'mainstream' can be thought of as the relatively similar cluster of outlooks and values that television cultivates in heavy viewers in those demographic groups whose light viewers hold divergent views" (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1982, p. 15).

Television has a special role in society and should be viewed as the primary manifestation of the mainstream of our culture. Signorielli and Morgan (1991) discuss the importance of television in the culture by stating:

Transcending historic barriers of literacy and mobility, television has become a primary, common source of everyday culture of an otherwise heterogeneous population. Television provides, perhaps for the first time since preindustrial religion, a strong cultural link between the elites and all other publics. It provides a shared daily ritual of highly compelling and informative content for millions of otherwise diverse people in all
regions, ethnic groups, social classes, and walks of life. Television provides a relatively restricted set of choices or a virtually unrestricted variety of interests and publics; its programs eliminate boundaries of age, class, and region and are designed by commercial necessity to be watched by nearly everyone. (Signorielli and Morgan, 1990, p. 22)

The authors also state that the mainstream can be thought of as a "relative commonality of outlooks and values that heavy exposure to the features and dynamics of the television world tends to cultivate. Mainstreaming means that heavy viewing may absorb or override differences in perspectives and behavior that ordinarily stem from other factors and influences" (Morgan and Signorielli, 1990, p. 22). In other words, the differences in the answers of light viewers, typically due to sundry social, cultural, and political views are almost nonexistent in the answers of heavy viewers. In short, television cultivates common attitudes and beliefs about society's culture among diverse populations.

Mainstreaming illustrates the theoretical elaboration and empirical confirmation stating that television cultivates similar perspectives. It features a homogenization, an assimilation of contrasting views, and disparate viewers converge. Society has become enculturated into television's version of the world.
Therefore, by the definition of the mainstreaming process, television may be thought of in terms of the true American melting pot.

Research Questions

This section will address the research questions and how they relate to cultivation theory. Questions that replicate previous research deal with children's conceptions about the world in relation to violence, children's perceptions of gender-role stereotypes, and children having more gender stereotyped views. The questions examined the general consequences of children's cumulative exposure to the cultural media. The questions focused on the repetitive and prominent position television holds in society. The questions also examined how the views of children who are heavy viewers differ from the views of children who are light viewers. Cultivation theory states that heavy viewers usually rely more on television than do light viewers. In light of the evidence from the previous research, the following are the specific research questions and hypotheses that this study will address:
Research Question One: Is television viewing related to children's conceptions about the world in relation to violence?

**Hypothesis One:** Television viewing will be related to having perceptions that the world is a scary place.

Research Question Two: Is television viewing related to children having more gender stereotyped conceptions?

**Hypothesis Two:** Television viewing is positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to:

(a) activities typically performed by mothers and/or fathers.

(b) activities that are appropriate for boys and/or girls.

(c) occupational gender-role perceptions for boys and girls.

Research Question Three: Is television viewing related to children's parental involvement with television?

**Hypothesis Three:** Television viewing will be related to children's parental involvement with television in that the more rules, limitations, and discussion children have concerning television, the less they will view television.
Research Question Four: Is television viewing related to other aspects of a child's education, including the amount of recreational reading, recreational creative writing, and homework?

The rationale for these predictions stems from the basic goal of cultivation theory. For example, these questions address the goal of cultivation analysis. According to Morgan and Signorielli (1990):

The goal of cultivation analysis is to determine whether differences in the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of light and heavy viewers reflect differences in their viewing patterns and habits, independent of (or in interactions with) the social, cultural, and personal factors that differentiate light and heavy viewers. Thus, cultivation analysis attempts to document and analyze the independent contributions of television viewing to viewers' conceptions of social reality. (Morgan and Signorielli, 1990, p. 17)

The next chapter will address the manner in which the research was conducted.
CHAPTER TWO
METHODS

Studies that test hypotheses based on the cultivation theory normally encompass two methods of research. First, a content or message system analysis is conducted in order to evaluate the images on television and the messages related to the area of investigation. According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), the first step establishes the composition and framework of the symbolic television world. Second, a survey is administered to ascertain viewing beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and/or viewing practices. As this study only focuses upon the second part of cultivation research, the main feature of the methods section is a survey.

Questionnaire

Third and fourth grade children in three elementary public schools in the Smyrna School District in Smyrna, Delaware were the focus of the study. Geographically, the Smyrna School District is located in Kent County, the most centrally located of three counties in Delaware. The Smyrna School District is a rural area
with three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Two of the elementary schools are located within the town's limits and one is located in Clayton, Delaware, a small rural area. The sample was drawn from each of the elementary schools in the district.

Approximately 516 permission slips were sent home with the students. In order for the children to participate in the research, the permission slip had to be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to the teacher. The response rate was very low; only 44% of the children returned the permission form. The final sample was comprised of 226 students. The questionnaire was group-administered to third and fourth grade students.

In early June during the normal academic schedule, but at the end of an extended academic year (due to missed snow days), the paper-and-pencil questionnaire was administered orally to the children under my supervision. There were a total of six half-hour administrations of the questionnaire because the students were grouped according to their grade level and school they attended.

The survey posed questions about the basic assumptions that relate to the child's values, beliefs, and norms in relation to the area of investigation. The questions typically have one answer that is reflective of
the world according to television. The answers that reflect the television world are printed in boldface print in the copy of the questionnaire in Appendix A. In addition, the questionnaire included questions about demographics and television viewing habits. The entire sample’s responses are analyzed in relation to television exposure time and other demographics.

The responses of the boys and girls are examined separately. The subgroups were analyzed separately due to the differences in the messages about boys and girls on television and differences in the ways boys and girls use the medium. For instance, boys and girls watch different amounts of television, watch different types of programs, and their real-world interpersonal interactions differ based on their gender. Moreover, previous cultivation analysis research has found statistically significant differences both between and within gender-formed subgroups. The present research attempts to support, clarify, and continue previous cultivation research.

This study analyzed the relationships between television viewing and children’s conceptions about the world in relation to violence, gender-stereotyped conceptions, and children’s parental involvement with television.
The sample had slightly more third (54.0%) than fourth (44.2%) graders. Only four children (1.8%) did not indicate their grade level. The sample was divided into girls (55.8%) and boys (43.8%), with only one child (.4%) not responding. The sample's racial distribution was 80.5% Caucasian and 19.5% members of minority races. This compared favorably with the Smyrna School District's overall racial distribution of 85% Caucasian and 15% minority.

The questionnaire included a number of questions to replicate some of the earlier work in cultivation research. One set of questions makes up the Mean World Index (television answer in boldface print).

1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that **you cannot be too careful in dealing with people**?

2. Do you think that **most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance**, or would they try to be fair?

3. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are **mostly just looking out for themselves**?

The responses to these questions were combined into three additive indices: (1) the entire sample (alpha=.49), (2) the girls (alpha=.43), and (3) the
boys (alpha=.55). Although the measures of internal consistency are low, this index was included in the analysis because it has been internally consistent in previous studies (see, for example, Signorielli, 1990).

Two other questions asked about how dangerous it was to walk at night in a big city or in the child’s own neighborhood.

1. Is it dangerous to walk alone in a big city at night?
2. Is it dangerous to walk alone in your own neighborhood at night?

The responses "pretty safe" and "not really dangerous" were combined to simplify these analyses.

**Formation of Indices for Gender-role Stereotypes**

Questions extended previous research on the cultural roles of the family. A number of additive indices were developed to simplify the data analysis and discussion. These indices were designed from a conceptual standpoint, building upon prior research and generally held expectations about male and female roles in the family.

The questions used to compute the gender-role indices were all recoded to reflect gender-role stereotypes (Answers reflecting such stereotypes were scored as "1"; nonstereotyped responses were scored "0.")
Each of the indices used to test hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c were calculated so that the values ranged between 0 and 1. A score of 1 indicated very gender-stereotyped responses while a score of 0 indicated non-stereotyped responses.

The indices used to test Hypothesis 2a (television viewing is positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to activities typically performed by mothers and/or fathers) were composed of questions asking whether mothers, fathers, or both should do certain tasks. These questions were divided into two additive indices—things that fathers typically do (DADTASK) and things that mothers typically do (MOMTASK).

The index for the things fathers should do did not meet standards for internal consistency (alpha=.47). It was made up of the following questions: who should have a full time job, earn the most money, make important decisions, repair things around the house, drive the family car, and teach a sport to a child. The index for things mothers should do was internally consistent (alpha=.76). It included the following: take care of younger children, cook meals, clean the house, do dishes, do laundry, help children with their homework, discipline the children, notice when children are unhappy, do things
with the children, make a child feel important, help a child with something, "tuck a child in" at bedtime, and read a story to a child.

The reliability of the DADTASK may be low because the DADTASK items are not clearly stereotyped whereas the MOMTASK items are more clearly stereotyped. In addition, the reliability of DADTASK may be low because a number of children live in single parent homes typically with their mothers. In these situations, typical "Dad" chores may become part of the single mother's activities.

Hypothesis 2b (television viewing is positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to activities that are appropriate for boys and/or girls) was tested with two indices generated from questions about activities that would be appropriate for boys and girls. These questions were divided into two groups--those traditionally designated as activities that boys would do (BOYSDO) and those activities that girls would do (GIRLSDO).

The following activities were included in the BOYSDO Index: play rough sports, play softball or baseball, go out alone after dark, show off, go on a trip alone, wear what they want to school, decide what they want to be, and stick up for their brother/sister. The GIRLSDO index was made up of the following activities:
cry when hurt, do dishes, dance, cook, make their own bed, do what parents’ say, try to please the teacher, help with chores, tell parents where they will be, help younger brothers/sisters, keep secrets well, and share things with children their age. Each of these indices met standards for internal consistency; alpha=.62 for BOYSDO and alpha=.65 for GIRLSDO.

The activities in the BOYSDO and GIRLSDO indices were also combined into one "activities index" (KIDSDO) in order to examine overall stereotyping. This combined index was also internally consistent (Cronbach’s alpha=.75).

Hypothesis 2c (television viewing is positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to occupational gender-role perceptions for boys and girls) was tested using an index of occupational roles (JOBS). This index was made up of questions that asked whether men, women or both should hold each of the following jobs: doctor, librarian, grade school teacher, cook, store clerk, scientist, principal, and judge. The occupations that were coded as male-stereotyped were: doctor, lawyer, scientist, principal, and judge. The occupations that were coded as female-stereotyped were librarian, grade school teacher, and cook. The index did not include clerk since there was not a clear stereotype
for this occupation. This index also met standards for internal consistency (Alpha=.63) and its values ranged from 0 (non-stereotyped answers) to 1 (very gender-stereotyped answers.)

Scores on the above described indices were correlated with television viewing measures to ascertain whether or not there were relationships between the children’s answers and their viewing habits.

The third hypothesis was tested using items on the questionnaire that examined parental mediation and involvement with television. These questions include:

1. Which of these rules about watching TV do you have?
   ___ finish homework first
   ___ no TV on school night
   ___ can’t watch some shows
   ___ no TV after 9 p.m.
   ___ we don’t have rules about TV

2. Do your parents limit the amount of time you view television?
   yes     no

3. Do your parents limit the kinds of programs you are allowed to view?
   no     yes
4. How often do your parents watch TV programs with you?
   almost never  once in a while  almost always

5. Do you ever talk with your parents about what you see on television?
   yes, often  once in a while  rarely

6. When you watch television, does someone watch it with you?
   ____ mother
   ____ father
   ____ brother or sister
   ____ aunt or uncle
   ____ friend
   ____ babysitter
   ____ grandparent

7. When you watch television, do you discuss the program with your?
   ____ mother
   ____ father
   ____ brother or sister
   ____ aunt or uncle
   ____ friend
   ____ babysitter
   ____ grandparent
8. Who selects the programs you watch?

   ____ mother
   ____ father
   ____ brother or sister
   ____ aunt or uncle
   ____ friend
   ____ babysitter
   ____ grandparent

Children were also questioned about what they think about parent discipline, support, and power. Some of the items on the questionnaire were exploratory in nature in order to further examine children's attitudes towards television and program selection.

Questions designed to analyze Research Question 4 focused on reading, writing, and homework.

1. How many books have you read in the last month, just for yourself--not because you had to do it for school?

2. Do you read more or less because of television?

3. How many creative stories have you written in the last month, just for yourself--not because you had to do it for school?
4. On a typical school night, about how much time do you spend doing homework?

[ ] do not have homework
[ ] less than a half hour
[ ] less than an hour
[ ] one to two hours
[ ] two to three hours
[ ] more than three hours

5. How often do you watch TV while you're doing your homework?

[ ] almost never
[ ] once in a while
[ ] almost always

**Viewing Measures**

There were two measures of television viewing—one continuous and one categorical. The continuous measure of viewing combined the responses to two questions: on an "average day" how much television do you watch (a) "between the time you GET HOME and DINNER" and (b) "between DINNER and the time you GO TO BED". This measure of weekday viewing provided a satisfactory estimate of daily viewing for each respondent.

The categorical measure reduced daily television viewing to a three-way classification: LIGHT, MEDIUM, and HEAVY, based on a 3-way split of the data. Light
viewing included those respondents who did not watch television and those who watched up to two hours of television each day. Medium viewing encompassed from two hours to four and one-half hours each day. Finally, those respondents who watched four and one-half or more of television each day made up the category of heavy viewers.

Overall, the respondents watched 3.75 hours of television each weekday, mostly between coming home from school and dinner. The percentage of children watching television after school and before dinner was slightly higher than the percentage of children watching after dinner and before bed. Overall, the boys (N=98) watched slightly more than girls (N=123); boys watched 3.99 hours and girls watched 3.55 hours each day. In addition, the fourth grade children (N=100) watched slightly more television (3.6 hours per day) than the third grade children (N=122) (3.28 hours per day).

Caucasian children (N=178) watched 3.8 hours of television each day while minority children (N=44) watched 3.52 hours each day. Contrary to previous research, there are no statistical differences between the boys' and girls' amount of daytime viewing and no difference in the amount of viewing for Caucasian and minority students.
Control Variables

A variety of control variables were used in this research, including: gender, race, reading level, occupational status of the parents, and the educational level of the parents. The children were asked to indicate if they were a boy or girl (one respondent did not answer the question) and their racial group (Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, White, or other) (4 did not reply). Responses to this question were reduced to two categories, whites and nonwhites, for the purposes of data analysis.

The children were asked two open-ended questions concerning their parent's occupations (What is your mother's occupation? What is your father's occupation?). This question was included in order to obtain an estimate of socio-economic status. The responses to each of these questions were first organized into four groups--professional, white collar, blue collar, and student. The children reported that 12.4% of the mothers held professional positions, 19.5% had white collar occupations, 29.7% worked in blue collar jobs, and about 1% were students. The children reported that 6.6% of the fathers held professional positions, 11.5% were in white collar areas, 52.7% held blue collar positions, and .4%
were students. A sizable number of children did not know the occupations of their parents; 37.6% did not know their mother’s occupation and 28.8% did not know their father’s occupation.

Occupational level was then combined into a 9 category measure to reflect whether one or both parents had blue collar, white collar or professional jobs (students were coded as not having a job). A score of 0 meant neither parent had a job. A score of 1 indicated that both parents had blue collar jobs while a score of 9 meant both parents had professional level jobs. Scores between 1 and 9 reflect some combination of blue collar, white collar, or professional jobs.

The children were also asked about their occupational aspirations (What would you like to be when you grow up?). Most of the children had high occupational aspirations: 63.7% wanted professional positions, 2.7% wanted a white collar job, and 16.8% wanted to work in a blue collar job, and 16.4% did not know what they wanted to be.

In order to ascertain the educational levels of the parents, the children were asked if their parents attended college. (Did your mother attend college? Did your father attend college?) The responses were coded as (0) the parent did not attend college and (1) the parent
attended college. Parental education was combined into one measure. A score of 0 meant neither parent attended college, a score of 1 indicated that one parent attended college, and a score of 2 meant that both parents went to college. The frequency distribution revealed that 62.4% of the mothers attended college and 37.6% of them did not attend college. The respondents answered that 56.2% of the fathers attended college and 43.8% of them did not attend.

The reading levels were established by asking the students the following question: "Which reader do you use?" The children were asked to select from seven readers utilized in the Smyrna School District. The reading levels ranged from the first semester of the second grade (2.1) to the first semester of the fifth grade (5.1). In addition, the children were given the opportunity to mark the response "other." The category of other may encompass sundry reading levels. For instance, a child may be exposed to Literature Based Reading—where the children read the same book but examine it at various levels, read their own selection of chapter books, be in an exceptional student program for special education and/or gifted and talented program. The distribution of reading levels was .4% at 2.1, 1.8% at 2.2, 1.8% at 3.1, 11.9% at 3.2, 30.1% at 4.1, 11.1% at
41

4.2, none at 5.1, and 38.5% at other. Therefore, many of the respondents reported their reading level to be at the beginning of fourth grade and in the category of other. The percentage of the children who did not know their reading level was 4.4%.

**Statistical Analysis**

The hypotheses were tested by examining the relationship between children's answers to the questions and television viewing. The analysis involved calculating zero-, first-, and fourth-or fifth-order partial correlations coefficients, controlling for gender, race, reading level, and parental occupational status. Each analysis was conducted for the entire sample as well as the girls and boys separately. Although previous studies in this tradition have also separately analyzed subgroups based on race, the number of minority youngsters in the sample was too small. In addition, a number of t-tests were calculated to test for differences in gender stereotyped perceptions. The last type of analysis used cross-tabulations, with significance tested by Chi Square.
Children's Conceptions About the World in Relation to Violence: The Mean World

The first research question asked if television viewing was related to perceptions of the world in relation to violence. The children were asked the three questions that make up the Mean World Index:

1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?

2. Do you think that most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?

3. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

Hypothesis 1 posited that there would be a positive relationship between viewing and scores on this index. The data revealed only two statistically significant correlations.

The relationships between viewing and scores on the Mean World Index (see Table 1) for the entire sample (r=.09) and when controlling for reading level, race, gender, parent education, and parent occupation were not statistically significant. The findings for the girls were similar.
There were, however, two statistically significant relationships for the boys: the first-order partial controlling for occupation \((r=.181, p<.05)\) and the fifth-order partial (simultaneously controlling for reading level, race, parents attending college, and occupational status) were statistically significant \((r=.198, p=.04)\).

### TABLE 1: Relationships of the Mean World Index to Daily TV Viewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controlling for:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>race</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college education</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupation</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>-.181*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5th order partial</strong></td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>.198*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=</strong></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\(p<.05\)

Television viewing was not related to giving more fearful responses about walking at night in a big city or walking at night in the child’s own neighborhood. Table 2 gives the crosstabulation of the 3-way split of television viewing with answers to the question is it...
dangerous to walk in a big city at night; the same analysis for walking in your own neighborhood is presented in Table 3. These results do not support findings in previous studies.

**TABLE 2:** Cross-tabulation of Television Viewing by Danger in Walking in a City at Night

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Heavy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Danger</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi Square=3.32, df=1, ns

**TABLE 3:** Cross-tabulation of Television Viewing by Danger in Walking Alone in Neighborhood at Night

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Heavy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Danger</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi Square=3.08, df=1, ns
Television Viewing As It Relates To Gender-role Stereotypes

The second general research question asked if television viewing was related to children's having more gender-stereotyped conceptions about the roles of males and females. This research question was addressed by a series of questions asking the children whether mothers, fathers, boys, girls, men or women should perform certain tasks, take part in specific activities, hold certain jobs or aspire to certain jobs.

The second hypothesis was divided into 3 areas -- activities performed by mothers and/or fathers; activities appropriate for boys and/or girls; and perceptions about occupations.

Activities Performed by Mothers and Fathers

Hypothesis 2a tested if television viewing was positively related to having more gender-stereotyped views in relation to the activities performed by mothers and/or fathers. The children were asked whether mothers or fathers should perform a series of tasks and the answers compiled into two indices (MOMTASK and DADTASK). Although data are reported for the two indices generated to test Hypothesis 2a, only the index focusing upon the
Appropriate Activities for Boys and Girls

Hypothesis 2b tested if television viewing was positively related to giving more gender-stereotyped answers in relation to the kinds of activities boys and girls should do. The children were asked whether boys, girls or both should do a series of activities. These answers were compiled into two internally consistent indices (GIRLSDO and BOYSDO), in which a score closer to 1 indicates more stereotyped responses. Again this analysis was conducted separately for the boys and girls.

The following activities were included in the BOYSDO Index: play rough sports, play softball or baseball, go out alone after dark, show off, go on a trip alone, wear what they want to school, decide what they want to be, and stick up for their brother/sister. The GIRLSDO index was made up of the following activities: cry when hurt, do dishes, dance, cook, make their own bed, do what parents’ say, try to please the teacher, help with chores, tell parents where they will be, help younger brothers/sisters, keep secrets well, and share things with children their age. Each of these indices met standards for internal consistency; alpha=.62 for BOYSDO and alpha=.65 for GIRLSDO.

Again there was only a relatively small level of stereotyping. Nevertheless, the children’s responses to
activities that boys should do \((M=.441; \ SD=.217)\) were significantly more stereotyped than their responses to the tasks that girls should do \((M=.419; \ SD=.237)\) \((t=2.25, \ df=178, \ p<.05)\). In particular, the boys were much more likely to give stereotyped answers to these questions, particularly those questions relating to the things boys should do. The boys had a mean score of .564 \((SD=.235)\) on the BOYSDO index and a mean score of .482 \((SD=.245)\) on the GIRLSDO index. This difference was statistically significant; \(t=2.88; \ df=72; \ p<.01\). The girls, however, were significantly less likely to give stereotyped responses to the activities traditionally associated with boys \((M=.299; \ SD=.161)\) than to the activities traditionally associated with girls \((M=.414; \ SD=.193)\). Again, this difference was statistically significant \((t=-5.51, \ df=105; \ p<.001)\).

Comparing the responses of the boys and the girls on each of these indices also revealed statistically significant differences. The boys were significantly more likely than the girls to give gender-stereotyped responses, particularly for those activities in the BOYSDO index (activities normally associated with boys). Looking at tasks typically associated with girls (GIRLSDO index), the difference between the average score for the boys \((M=.482)\) and the girls \((M=.414)\) was statistically
significant \((t=2.16, \text{df}=189, p<.05)\). The difference between the average score for the boys \((M=.564)\) and the girls \((M=.299)\) on the BOYSDO index was also statistically significant \((t=9.70, \text{df}=209, p<.001)\) and much larger.

A third index, KIDSDO, combining all of the activities, examined overall stereotyping. The mean score on this index was .435 for the entire sample, again reflecting a small degree of stereotyping. Overall, however, girls gave significantly fewer stereotyped responses than the boys. The average score for the girls was .356 compared to the average boys score of .529 \((t=6.25, \text{df}=174, p<.001)\).

There was, however, no support for Hypothesis 2b: television viewing was not related to giving more stereotyped responses to the activities included in the GIRLSDO, BOYSDO, or KIDSDO indices, particularly under conditions of simultaneous controls (see Table 5 and 6). There was one statistically significant relationship: among the girls, the relationship between viewing and giving stereotyped responses on the BOYSDO index (activities that boys do) was statistically significant \((r=.203,p<.05)\) (see Table 5).
5th order partials

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Gender-role Perceptions for Boys and Girls</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2c examined if there was a relationship between television viewing and responses to the questions asking if women or men should have certain occupations. Once again there was evidence of the boys giving more gender-stereotyped responses than the girls. The boys have a mean score of .588 compared to the girls mean score of .457. This difference was statistically significant ($t=3.657$, $df=207$, $p<.001$). Nevertheless, there was no relationship between television viewing and scores on this index (see Table 7).
TABLE 7: Television Viewing and Occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOBS</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M=</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N=</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Controlling for:
- reader: -.012 -.064 -.015
- race: -.015 -.016 .008
- gender: -.043
- parent education: -.013 -.086 -.019
- parent occupation: -.015 -.064 .004
- 5th order partial: -.042 -.019 .018

(*p<.05)

Television Viewing As It Relates To Children's Parental Involvement with Television

Research Question 3 examined the role of parental involvement. Children were asked which of the following television viewing rules they had: finish homework first, no television on a school night, cannot watch some shows, no television after nine p.m., and/or we do not have rules about television. The data revealed that most of the children had rules about viewing: only one-third of the children did not have any rules. One third
of the students responded that they had to finish homework before viewing television; two fifths (41.6%) said that they could not watch television on a school night; one fifth (19.0%) said they were not allowed to watch some shows. Only a small percentage (6.2%), however, stated that they were not allowed to view television after 9:00 p.m.

There was considerable support for Hypothesis 3. There was a statistically significant negative relationship between television viewing and having television viewing rules. The fewer television rules they had \((r= -.30, p < .01, N=123)\), the more television the children said they watched. In addition, this relationship retained statistical significance when controlling for the number of books read \((r= -.13, p < .05, N=123)\), as well as when simultaneous controlling for reading level, race, gender, parents attending some college, and the parent’s occupational status \((r= -.31, p = .000, N=184)\).

Similarly, there were negative relationships between the amount of both the girl’s and the boy’s weekday viewing and rules: the more rules the girls and/or the boys have, the less they watch television. This relationship also maintained statistical significance under conditions of simultaneous controls.
### TABLE 8: Everyone’s Rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M= Overall</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling for:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reader</td>
<td>-.312***</td>
<td>-.310**</td>
<td>-.300***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>race</td>
<td>-.311***</td>
<td>-.311**</td>
<td>-.307***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender</td>
<td>-.307***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>parent education</td>
<td>-.309***</td>
<td>-.316**</td>
<td>-.288**</td>
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<tr>
<td>parent occupation</td>
<td>-.314***</td>
<td>-.302**</td>
<td>-.320***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th order partial</td>
<td>-.305***</td>
<td>-.308**</td>
<td>-.306***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** P<.01; ***P<=.001

---

**Television Program Selection**

The children reported that very few of their parents selected what television programs they could watch. Almost half (49.1%) of the children said that they selected the programs they watched and about one-fifth said that everyone had a say in the selection process. Very few said that other people selected the television programs (See Table 9). Of the heavy viewers (60.0%), more children select the programs. This information indicated that parents do not tend to select television programs for children.
**TABLE 9: Program Selection Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who selects:</th>
<th>N=</th>
<th>percentage:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Mom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Dad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom and Child</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad and Child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others and Child</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Parents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Dad</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone Picks</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=226</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion of Television Program**

Most of the children said that they talk about what they see on television with other people. One-third talk to a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, friend, baby sitter, and/or grandparent (35.6%). While another third said that they discuss the programs with everyone listed on the questionnaire. Only 5% said that no one discusses television with them, 4.5% noted that just mothers discuss television, and 4.1% that just fathers discuss television and 5.4% said that mothers and fathers discuss programs. The children's responses indicate that
children seldom discuss programs with only their parents (see Table 10). In other words, for the most part children talk about television with everyone.

Table 10: Distribution of Persons with Whom Children Discuss Television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person discussing television:</th>
<th>N=</th>
<th>Percentage:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>brother or sister, aunt or uncle, friend, baby sitter, and grandparent</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everyone listed on questionnaire</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no one</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mothers and fathers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mothers and others</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fathers and others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated earlier, the children were asked if they ever talk with their parents about what they see on television. Responses were cross-tabulated with a three-way classification of daily viewing and reported in Table 11. More of the heavy viewers often spoke about television with their family: about one quarter (26.7%) of the heavy viewers reported that they often discussed what they saw on television with their parents while less
than one fifth (19.7%) of light viewers reported that they often discussed television's content with their parents (see Table 11).

Television, however, was not as popular as one might assume. Most children (83.6%) reported that they would rather do something other than watch television. Nevertheless, more than one quarter (26.7%) of the heavy viewers compared to less than one tenth (7.7%) of the light viewers said that they would rather watch television than do other things such as read, play a game, ride a bicycle, or work on a hobby.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talk About TV:</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Heavy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once in aw.</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chi Square=7.29, df=4, ns)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What They Do:</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Heavy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Act.</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chi Square=9.70, df=2, p&lt;.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Television and Other Measures of Education

Research question 4, exploratory in nature, asked if there was a relationship between viewing and recreational reading, recreational creative writing, and homework.

**Research Question Four:** Is television viewing related to other aspects of a child’s education, including the amount of recreational reading, recreational creative writing, and homework?

**Reading and Creative Writing**

Among the girls, there was a negative relation between weekend viewing and number of books read ($r = -0.23$, $p < 0.01$). In other words, the more television the girls watched on the weekend, the fewer books they tended to read. There was no statistically significant relationship between the weekday viewing and the number of books read. There were no relationships between the amount of creative writing the girls completed and either weekday or weekend viewing.

In addition, the boys had a significant negative correlation between the amount of weekend viewing and the number of creative stories they wrote ($r = -0.20$, $p < 0.05$). In other words, the more weekend viewing, the fewer
creative stories are written. Creative writing however, was not related to weekday viewing. Finally, for the boys, there was no relationship between either weekday or weekend viewing and reading books.

**Homework**

The respondents were also asked about the amount of homework they had each night. The information from two hundred and twenty-five respondents indicated that over half of the children (50.2%) had one-half hour of homework each night. The respondents also reported that 7.6% had no homework, 25.8% had one hour, 10.2% had one and one-half hour, 2.2% had two and one-half hours, and 4.0% had three hours of homework each night. Only one respondent did not answer the question. There was no relation between the amount of television watched each day and the amount of time spent doing homework ($r = -0.0187$, ns).
CHAPTER FOUR

TELEVISION AND ITS MESSAGES--IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN

The results of this research have some implications, particularly in relation to viewing and having rules about viewing. In short, the amount of television viewing depends upon parental mediation, particularly the number of television rules the children have.

This study has shown that children's television viewing is related to parental involvement: the more rules, limitations, and discussion children have concerning television, the less they view. In other words, there was a statistically significant negative relationship between television viewing and having television viewing rules. In addition, this relationship retained statistical significance when controlling for the number of books read, as well as under the simultaneous controls of reading level, race, gender, parents attending some college, and the parent's occupational status.
In the following section, I will address the concerns that this analysis generates, relate the results of the present study to past research, discuss the limitations of this research, offer some possible solutions to alleviate the problems, and discuss new directions for future research.

**Children's Conceptions About the World in Relation to Violence**

**Summary of Findings**

The first research question, (Is television viewing related to children's conceptions about the world in relation to violence?) examined television viewing as it relates to children's conceptions about violence. The first hypothesis tested if television viewing was related to having perceptions that the world is a mean place using the Mean World Index.

The findings indicate essentially no support for this hypothesis. The relationship between viewing and scores on the Mean World Index (see Table 1) for the entire sample was not statistically significant and the relationship disappeared when controlling for reading level, race, gender, parent education, and parent occupation. The findings for the girls were similar.
Although two of the partial correlation coefficients were statistically significant for the boys, it is possible these relationships were due to chance. There was also no relationship between viewing and saying it was dangerous to walk in either a city or in the child’s own neighborhood at night.

**Implications**

Past research found a relationship between television viewing and perceptions that the world is a mean place. A number of studies by Gerbner and associates suggest that heavy viewing is systematically related to audience conceptions of violence and mistrust (Gerbner, 1978; Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan & Jackson-Beek, 1979). For example, one study found "strong support for the theory of pervasive cultivation of mistrust, apprehension, danger, and exaggerated world perception" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, Signorielli, 1991).

These findings only minimally support past research, but only for the boys. In this study, more television viewing by boys was related to having perceptions that the world is a mean place. If indeed boys are more susceptible to television’s violent messages, the television viewing habits the boys develop
now could be related to an increased perception of violence in their adolescent and adult years.

Television Viewing As It Relates to Gender-role Stereotypes

Summary of Findings
The second hypothesis examined if television viewing was positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to:

(a) activities typically performed by mothers and/or fathers.
(b) activities that are appropriate for boys and/or girls.
(c) occupational gender-role perceptions for boys and girls.

First, there was only a little stereotyping in the children's answers. The children's responses to activities that fathers should do were significantly more stereotyped than their responses to the tasks that mothers should do. The boys, in particular, gave significantly more stereotyped answers than the girls in their responses about the tasks that fathers should perform as well as the activities that mothers should do.
Second, the children's responses to boys' activities were significantly more stereotyped than their responses to girls' activities. Again, the boys were much more likely to give stereotyped answers to these questions, particularly those questions relating to the things boys should do. The girls, however, were significantly less likely to give stereotyped responses to the activities traditionally associated with boys than to the activities traditionally associated with girls. Comparing the mean responses of the boys and the girls on each of these indices revealed that the boys were significantly more likely to give gender-stereotyped responses, particularly for those activities normally associated with boys. Finally, the boys in the sample gave significantly more stereotyped responses than the girls when asked whether men or women should have certain occupations.

There was, however, no support for Hypotheses 2a, 2b, or 2c: television viewing was not related to giving more stereotyped responses to the questions that made up the indices relating to tasks of mothers and fathers, activities of boys and girls, and occupations, particularly under conditions of simultaneous controls (see Table 4, 5, and 6). There was one statistically significant relationship. Among the girls, the
relationship between viewing and responses on the activities that boys do index (BOYSDO) was statistically significant (see Table 5).

Implications

Children, in particular, are inundated with stereotypes in weekday and weekend entertainment programs as well as commercials (Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingsley, 1988, Dominick and Rauch, 1972, Signorielli, 1985, Huston et al., 1992). Moreover, past research has shown that heavy viewing is related to conceptions about the family, aging and gender-role stereotypes (Gerbner et al., 1980). Specifically, research has shown that the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they are to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the patterns found in television drama (Morgan, 1982).

For example, Morgan and Rothschild (1983) found that television cultivates gender-role attitudes among adolescents (1983). Morgan (1987) also concluded that for both boys and girls, heavy television viewing predicts a tendency to endorse traditional gender-role divisions of labor with respect to household chores. Even though television viewing did not predict the gender-typing of chores actually done, heavy viewers did show increases in the congruence between their attitudes
and their behaviors. Finally, Signorielli and Lears (1992) found a relationship between television viewing and children’s attitudes and behaviors in relation to gender-role stereotyped household chores.

Even though there is no support for Hypothesis 2, there are some implications of this study. Overall, the boys tend to give more gender-stereotyped responses in all areas, but particularly in regard to their own activities and those of their fathers. This may mean that girls are receiving fewer and/or are less susceptible to stereotyped messages than boys. For example, it is possible that more opportunities are offered to the girls than the boys. Parents may offer both typically male and female gender-stereotyped activities to the girls, whereas parents may offer only typically male gender-stereotyped activities to boys.

Children’s responses to activities that fathers should do were significantly more stereotyped than their responses to the tasks that mothers should do. This may mean that mothers’ roles are also changing in society. Consequently, even though children’s television programming tends to portray women, especially mothers, in the stereotypical roles, the mothers’ roles in the home are changing. In addition children in single parent homes, typically with their mothers, may see her perform
all tasks (regardless of gender-stereotypes) that must be done to keep a home working smoothly.

Finally, even though past research found a positive relationship between television viewing and limiting conceptions about gender-roles (Beuf, 1974, Freuh and McGhee, 1975), this study did not support Hypothesis 2c (television viewing was not positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to occupational gender-role perceptions for boys and girls).

Again, however, the boys were more likely than the girls to give gender-stereotyped responses in regard to occupational roles. Because there has been societal concern about women's occupations, girls today may have more visionary perceptions of what occupations are and will be available to them.

Television Viewing As It Relates to Children's Parental Involvement with Television

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis 3 posited that television viewing would be related to children's parental involvement with television in that the more rules, limitations, and discussion children had about television, the less they
would watch television. Children were asked which of the following television viewing rules they had: finish homework first, no television on a school night, cannot watch some shows, no television after nine p.m., and/or we do not have rules about television. The data revealed that one-third of the children did not have any rules while two-thirds of the children had at least one of the four rules. More specifically, one-third of the students responded that they had to finish homework before viewing television; two fifths said that they did not watch television on a school night; one fifth said they were not allowed to watch some shows. In addition, only a small percentage stated that they were not allowed to view television after 9:00 p.m.

The findings indicated considerable support for Hypothesis 3. There was a statistically significant negative relationship between television viewing and having television viewing rules. The more television the children said they watched, the fewer television rules they had. In addition, this relationship retained statistical significance when controlling for the number of books read, as well as under the simultaneous controls of reading level, race, gender, parents attending some college, and the parent's occupational status.
Implications

Past research by McLeod, Fitzpatrick, Glynn and Fallis (1986) has shown concern in two areas: the family impact on the use of television and mediation effects of parental intervention. Research indicates that parents do not always control what programs and how much television their children watch. For example, Lyle and Hoffman (1972b) found that four out of ten nursery school children selected which programs they would watch. In addition, the researchers also found that most mothers of first-grade children did not limit the amount of viewing and when the children watched television. However, mothers reported that they did control the type of programs their children watched. Therefore, research has shown that parents do not always accurately report the total amount of time children spend watching television (Robertson & Rossiter, 1974, Cantor & Reilly, 1980, Greenberg, Ericson, and Vlahos, 1972).

Past research indicated that many parents attempt to control their child's viewing by having rules about television viewing. For example, Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin (1971) found that children in one out of ten families had specific rules about watching television. In addition, Lyle and Hoffman (1972a) reported that one-
third of the sixth- and tenth-grade children sampled stated that they had rules when they were younger and that they had rules at the present time.

Viewing with another person is also prevalent and important; past research has shown that children often watch television with their siblings and/or their parents (Lyle and Hoffman, 1972a, Rubin, 1986, Signorielli, 1990). Research indicates, however, that coviewing may depend upon the number of television sets in homes (Bower, 1973).

Past studies concerning program selection indicate that siblings viewed comedies when their parents were not present and violent programs when their parents were present (Chaffee and Tims, 1976). Meanwhile, Rothschild and Morgan (1987) found that parental mediation may simply be the parents making rules concerning television, commenting on certain programs, or indicating their attitudes about the content of television. However, Singer and Singer (1976) found that adults can help preschool children understand programs by referring to certain aspects of the program. Other researchers found that coviewing adults helped second-grade children understand television programs (Collins, Sobol, and Westby, 1981). Moreover, researchers concluded that children remembered news events when their
parents discussed the news programs (Atkin & Gantz, 1974). Furthermore, Gross and Morgan (1985) found that when parents were positive about television or limited children's viewing, the children's conceptions of social reality were not affected. In addition, when parents did not interfere with television, there were significant associations between the amount of viewing and conceptions about social reality. Past researchers have found that those families that were substantially involved with television by coviewing and discussions, gained more from television than those families who were not as involved with television mediation (Rothschild and Morgan, 1987).

This study found that the more television the children said they watched, the fewer television rules they had. As Rothschild and Morgan suggested, the implications for Hypothesis 3 are that children may benefit from parental mediation when viewing television. For example, children may benefit from watching less television and discussing programs when they are selected. If children watch less, their perceptions of the world might be more realistic.
Television Viewing As It Relates to Other Aspects of a Child's Education

Summary of Findings

Research Question 4, exploratory in nature, asked if television viewing is related to other aspects of a child's education, including the amount of recreational reading, recreational creative writing, and homework? Children were asked questions focused on reading, writing, and homework. For example, those questions were: (1) How many books have you read in the last month, just for yourself—not because you had to do it for school? (2) Do you read more or less because of television? (3) How many creative stories have you written in the last month, just for yourself—not because you had to do it for school? (4) On a typical school night, about how much time do you spend doing homework? and (5) How often do you watch TV while you're doing your homework? The data revealed that among the girls, there was a negative relation between weekend viewing and number of books read. In other words, the more television the girls watched on the weekend, the fewer books they tended to read. There was no statistically significant relationship between the weekday viewing and the number of books read. There were no relationships
between the amount of creative writing the girls completed and either weekday or weekend viewing.

In addition, the boys had a significant negative correlation between the amount of weekend viewing and the number of creative stories they wrote. In other words, the more weekend viewing, the fewer creative stories are written. Creative writing however, was not related to weekday viewing. Finally, for the boys, there was no relationship between either weekday or weekend viewing and reading books.

In addition, the respondents were also asked about the amount of homework they had each night. The information from two hundred and twenty-five respondents indicated that over half of the children (50.2%) had one-half hour of homework each night. The respondents also reported that 7.6% had no homework, 25.8% had one hour, 10.2% had one and one-half hour, 2.2% had two and one-half hours, and 4.0% had three hours of homework each night. Only one respondent did not answer the question. There was no relation between the amount of television watched each day and the amount of time spent doing homework.
Limitations

Like other studies, this study has a number of limitations. First of all, there was a low return of permission slips. If the study were conducted in the fall of the school year, more permission slips might have been returned. At the beginning of each school year, students and parents attempt to do their best in returning pertinent information to school. In addition, there is tremendous time pressures at the end of the school year to complete everything before the close of school and the data were collected during days added to the normal calendar to "make-up" time lost because of inclement weather during the winter.

More importantly, the results indicate that there may have been a high parental mediation within this sample of children. Thus, the youngsters who returned the permission slips might have been different from those who did not return the permission slips. These children may have been more involved with school had greater supervision in regard to television viewing and perhaps watched less television. In addition, because of the high level of parental mediation, the children may have watched more video cassettes (parental controlled) than broadcast programming or the children may have had more
There may have been limitations in the administration of the questionnaire. Even though the questionnaire was read to the students, some students may have had difficulties completing the questions because they had special educational needs. On the other hand, children who felt confident about completing the survey were told that they might progress at their own speed. Some of them may have been over confident in completing the questionnaire, thereby creating unreliable results.

There also may have been unreliable results when the children responded to the parental occupational status and parental education level variables. Anytime that children report this type of information, problems may occur. However, none of the children in this research indicated that they did not know their parent’s occupation.

The children’s responses to the DADTASK items, might have been unreliable. In particular, the DADTASK items tasks that both parents may complete. For example, mothers may have a full time job and drive the family car. On the other hand, the index for things mothers should do, while sometimes performed by men, were clearly female-stereotyped. Those were: take care of younger
children, cook meals, clean the house, do dishes, do laundry, help children with their homework, discipline the children, notice when children are unhappy, do things with the children, make a child feel important, help a child with something, "tuck a child in" at bedtime, and read a story to a child. Finally, the low level of stereotyped responses across the board might have reduced the likelihood of finding relationships between these opinions and television viewing and thus be a serious limitation to detecting relationships.

Conclusion

There was no support for Hypothesis 1 (Television viewing will be related to having perceptions that the world is a mean place) and Hypothesis 2 (Television viewing is positively related to having more gender stereotyped views in relation to: (a) activities typically performed by mothers and/or fathers, (b) activities that are appropriate for boys and/or girls, (c) occupational gender-role perceptions for boys and girls). There was strong support for Hypothesis 3 (Television viewing will be related to children's parental involvement with television in that the more rules, limitations, and discussion children have concerning television, the less they will view
television). In other words, this research has revealed that there is a positive relationship between children's parental involvement with television and television viewing. Finally, viewing was related to an involvement with recreational reading and writing. (Is television viewing related to other aspects of a child's education, including the amount of recreational reading, recreational creative writing, and homework?)

Since parental involvement and television viewing are so closely dependent upon one another, we owe it to our children to afford them every opportunity to teach them critical viewing skills. We also need to offer assistance to parents by teaching in the manner of appropriate parental mediation skills, program selection, and discussion of television programs. Incidental learning from televised messages and portrayals all contribute to the children's learning environment.

Obviously, since the medium reaches millions of children for hours each day, the ideal setting in which to learn about television viewing skills, would be in the school system. Of course, many educators may state that school systems should focus on the basic skills of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics and teaching about television would add to the already over crowded curriculum. However, a great deal of information about
those same subject areas could be accessed through television if only the children were shown how to access, organize, and evaluate available information. As Cole appropriately stated, television is a familiar medium to children, "At any given moment the typical American child will always have spent more of his or her lifetime watching television than being in a classroom" (Cole, 1981, p. 275). Cole also notes that school age children under twelve years spend more than a full hour each day in front of the television screen. It alarming to me, however, that this research found that the average amount of television the children viewed each day was 3.75 hours each weekday mostly between school and dinner.

In addition to the parents and schools, the mass media and the broadcast industry have a responsibility to serve their viewing audience, especially impressionable youngsters. For instance, the mass media and broadcast industry use a public resource, the airwaves, and thus, have special privileges in society. With these privileges, however, comes a responsibility to serve the public’s best interest which many would argue is not met adequately.

There was a little support to indicate that the boys in this study who watched more television tended to believe that what they saw on television was true to
life. The girls' viewing, on the other hand, was not related to their perceptions of their world. Therefore, boys more so than girls, may benefit from some type of mediation with television.

Furthermore, there has been a considerable amount of public discourse over the past 25 years, and particularly within the past 2 years, about the negative effects of television viewing. Consequently, the media is cognizant of the powerful role it plays in the lives of young people. Yet their program offerings show little change—they continue to promote violence laden programs, as well as gender-role and minority stereotypes, and do little to suggest or help implement parental involvement with childrens' television viewing.

Further Research Directions

Even though this research only offered strong support for Hypothesis 3, other studies indicate that television portrays the world as a mean place. In addition, past research also conclude that images of people are stereotyped on television. These images cultivate in girls and boys the acceptance of this image—a potentially harmful image for both genders. Children are among the heaviest viewers of television;
the constant bombardment of the mass media's images may be confusing to youngsters who are constantly developing their perceptions about their world. Consequently, it may be beneficial for future researchers to concentrate their efforts on developing critical viewing skills curriculum which should include further studies on parental involvement with television.

Further directions for research may include examining parental mediation and the family's role in how children use television and what they get from it. If television viewing is becoming the basis of a family's discussion, it would be beneficial to examine the concept of television discussion with parents. For example, researchers may examine the difference between the various types of discussion about television. Further research may also examine other aspects of parental mediation. For instance, questions may include information pertaining to the comments that parents make about television that indicate attitudes about the content of television. In addition, comments made about certain aspects of the program, may also be researched.

After school television content is another area for investigation. Most of the viewing for this sample took place between the time the children get home from school and had dinner. Consequently, we should ascertain
if indeed the patterns of images in after school programming are similar to the kinds of images found during the prime time hours (the frame of reference of most studies of television content).

Future research might make some changes in the questionnaire. It may be beneficial to clarify the question, "Do you read more or less because of television?" In addition, I would ask the questions about violence in terms that would further clarify those items. Even though I answered questions that the children asked, some may have been hesitant to ask questions in a group setting. Therefore, further research may include analyzing data gathered from administering the questionnaire on a one to one basis.

In addition, on the questionnaire, I would have the children differentiate between television and video cassette viewing hours. Some children may have calculated their television viewing hours by including video cassette viewing with television viewing. Furthermore, the types of things that may be viewed on video cassette tapes may be quite different than what may be viewed on television.

It may also be beneficial to further examine the tasks included in the MOMTASK and DADTASK indices since the DADTASK index may not have been clearly perceived by
children as activities that fathers typically perform. Another reason for the lack of gender-stereotyping of MOMTASK and DADTASK may be that many homes were single parent homes where one parent does everything.

Finally, a longitudinal study may be conducted in order to ascertain any change in television viewing patterns, differences in gender-stereotyped responses, and to track and current gender-stereotyped conceptions. All of these areas deserve further study.

In conclusion, since children spend more time watching television than they do in school, children's television programs must be designed with the highest ideals, creativity, and educational applications possible. Furthermore, with technological advancements, the future educational systems may rely upon televised instruction. The future of children's television is constantly changing with the presentation of new technologies in a child's environment. Technological utopianism may be obtained through the extensive collection, interpretation, testing, development, and application of research pertaining to children and television.

Perhaps an Allen B. DuMont Laboratories Advertisement (1945) best predicts the future of children and television. The advertisement reads, "Tomorrow's
children, through the great new medium of Television will be enrolled in a world university before they leave their cradles...Think what this means. How splendidly equipped they will be while young...to carry the torch of civilization forward into undreamed-of fields."
REFERENCES


Kaplan, D. (1985). The world according to television; how real or ideal are families made for television. Instructor, 94, pp. 52-54.


APPENDIX A: TELEVISION SURVEY

This questionnaire is part of a research project to find out what children like you think and believe about a lot of things. This is not a test. The questions do not have a right or a wrong answer. If you do not know an answer, just take a guess or use your imagination. Please circle the answer you have chosen or write it down. No one at school will see any of your answers. You do not have to answer a question if you do not want to. Thank you very much for answering these questions.

1. Which reader do you use?  
   - Crystal Forest  
   - Spring Flight  
   - New Leaves  
   - Bright Wonders  
   - Silver Rain  
   - Uncharted Waters  
   - Copper Sky  
   Other: ____________________________

2. What grade are you in?  

3. Are you a boy or a girl?  
   boy  girl

4. Who do you think the following words describe:
   a. tough?  
   b. hardworking?  
   c. sneaky?  
   d. noisy?  
   e. friendly?  
   f. trustworthy?  
   g. careful?  
   h. bossy?
5. Who do you think should have the following jobs when they get older?

a. doctor? girls.....both.....boys
b. librarian? girls.....both.....boys
c. grade school teacher? girls.....both.....boys
d. cook? girls.....both.....boys
e. store clerk? girls.....both.....boys
f. scientist? girls.....both.....boys
g. principal? girls.....both.....boys
h. judge? girls.....both.....boys

6. Who do you think should:

a. cry when hurt? both.....boys.....girls
b. do dishes? both.....boys.....girls
c. play rough sports? both.....boys.....girls
d. dance? both.....boys.....girls
e. play softball or baseball? both.....boys.....girls
f. go out alone after dark? both.....boys.....girls
g. cook? both.....boys.....girls
h. show off? both.....boys.....girls
i. make own bed? both.....boys.....girls
j. go on a trip alone? both.....boys.....girls
7. In a family, who do you think do the following
   a. have full-time jobs? father...mother...both
   b. earn the most money? father...mother...both
   c. make important decisions? father...mother...both
   d. take care of younger children? father...mother...both
   e. cook meals? father...mother...both
   f. repair things around the house? father...mother...both
   g. clean the house? father...mother...both
   h. do dishes? father...mother...both
   i. do laundry? father...mother...both

8. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?
   Most can be trusted   Can’t be too careful

9. Do you think that most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?
   take advantage       try to be fair

10. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?
    try to be helpful    just looking out for themselves

11. Is it dangerous to walk alone in a big city at night?
    very dangerous      a little dangerous   pretty safe

12. Is it dangerous to walk alone in your own neighborhood at night?
    very dangerous      a little dangerous   pretty safe
13. Who do you think does the following:

a. what parents say? boys.....girls.....both
b. try to please teacher? boys.....girls.....both
c. help with chores? boys.....girls.....both
d. tell parents where they'll be? boys.....girls.....both
e. ask parents for money? boys.....girls.....both
f. wear what they want to school? boys.....girls.....both
g. decide what they want to be? boys.....girls.....both
h. stick up for their brother or sister? boys.....girls.....both
i. help younger brothers? boys.....girls.....both
j. keep secrets well? boys.....girls.....both
k. share things with children their age? boys.....girls.....both

14. In a family, who do you think do the following

a. discipline the children? mother...father...both
b. notice when children are unhappy? mother...father...both
c. do things with the children? mother...father...both
d. make a child feel important? mother...father...both
e. help a child with something? mother...father...both
f. "tuck a child in" at bedtime? mother...father...both
g. read a story to a child? mother...father...both
h. teach a sport to a child? mother...father...both
i. drive the family car? mother...father...both
j. help with homework? mother...father...both

15. Here are some things people say. Please indicate whether you always agree, usually agree, are not sure, usually disagree, or always disagree by circling the response.

a. I feel like I have no friends.
   I agree   I’m not sure   I disagree

b. I feel lonesome
   I agree   I’m not sure   I disagree

c. I feel that nobody cares about me.
   I agree   I’m not sure   I disagree

d. I am rarely lonely.
   I agree   I’m not sure   I disagree

e. I can find a friend when I need one.
   I agree   I’m not sure   I disagree

16. On a typical school night, about how much time do you spend doing homework?

   [ ] do not have homework
   [ ] less than a half hour
   [ ] less than an hour
   [ ] one to two hours
   [ ] two to three hours
   [ ] more than three hours

17. How often do you watch TV while you’re doing your homework?
   almost never   once in a while   almost always

18. Does television help with school work?   yes   no
19. On a school day, about how many hours of television do you usually watch?
   a. Between the time you GET HOME and DINNER?
      ___ none
      ___ less than a half hour
      ___ less than an hour
      ___ one to two hours
      ___ two to three hours
      ___ over three hours
   b. Between DINNER and the time you GO TO BED?
      ___ none
      ___ less than a half hour
      ___ less than an hour
      ___ one to two hours
      ___ two to three hours
      ___ over three hours

20. During the weekend, about how much TV do you watch each day?
    ___ none
    ___ less than a half hour
    ___ less than an hour
    ___ one to two hours
    ___ two to three hours
    ___ over three hours

21. Which of these rules about watching TV do you have?
    ___ finish homework first
    ___ no TV on school night
    ___ can’t watch some shows
    ___ no TV after 9 pm
    ___ we don’t have rules about TV

22. Would you rather watch television or do other things such as read, play a game, ride a bicycle, or work on a hobby?
    watch television   do other things

23. Do you ever talk with your parents about what you see on television?
    yes, often    once in a while    rarely
24. Does your family have a VCR?  yes  no

25. What kinds of shows do you most like to watch?
   - cartoons
   - comedies
   - police shows
   - soap operas
   - sports programs
   - game shows
   - news
   - science programs
   - music (MTV)

26. Do you have cable TV in your home?  no  yes

27. Do you subscribe to a pay channel (eg. Disney)?  no  yes

28. Do you have a television set in your room at home?  yes  no

29. When you watch television, does someone watch it with you?
   - mother
   - father
   - brother or sister
   - aunt or uncle
   - friend
   - babysitter
   - grandparent

30. When you watch television, do you discuss the program with?
   - mother
   - father
   - brother or sister
   - aunt or uncle
   - friend
   - babysitter
   - grandparent
31. Who selects the programs you watch?
   ___ I do
   ___ mother
   ___ father
   ___ brother or sister
   ___ aunt or uncle
   ___ friend
   ___ babysitter
   ___ grandparent

32. How many books have you read in the last month, just for yourself--not because you had to do it for school? ___ books

33. Do you read more or less because of television?
   ___ more
   ___ less
   ___ same

34. How many creative stories have you written in the last month, just for yourself--not because you had to do it for school? ___ stories

35. How do you think TV should be used in school?

36. What would you like to be when you grow up? ______

37. What is your mother’s occupation (job)? ______

38. What is your father’s occupation (job)? ______

39. Did your mother attend college? no yes

40. Did your father attend college? no yes

41. What is your racial/ethnic group?
   ___ Asian
   ___ black
   ___ Hispanic
   ___ American Indian
   ___ white
   ___ other

THAT'S ALL THE QUESTIONS

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!
APPENDIX B: PARENT REQUEST FORM

May 24, 1993

Dear Parents,

As you may know, I am a third grade teacher at Smyrna Elementary School. Currently, I am progressing towards my master's degree in the Department of Communication at the University of Delaware. For the past several years, I have been conducting research on children and the mass media. For the past twenty years, Dr. Nancy Signorielli, my advisor, has been focusing upon how television influences our perceptions of the world. Dr. Signorielli has written a book about children and television and teaches a course on children and the mass media.

Under the direction of Dr. Signorielli, I am currently working on my thesis which investigates children and television. The purpose of this thesis is to examine, in a sample of third and fourth grade children, the relationship between television viewing and conceptions of social reality in relation to gender role stereotypes. The investigation will specifically focus on how boys and girls perceive their gender related roles in real life situations and how this is related to their television viewing patterns. The research focuses on gender roles in terms of activities children think that other children and adults should perform. In addition, children's perceptions of traditionally boy or girl traits will also be examined. The children will be asked a number of questions relating to gender role stereotypes. For instance, children will be questioned about peer relations. In addition, children will also be questioned about their thoughts on adult discipline, support, and power. Some of the items on the questionnaire are exploratory in nature in order to further examine children's attitudes towards television, program selection, critical viewing, and parental mediation and involvement with television. Furthermore, the impact of television on reading and writing will also be examined.
As part of the thesis work and my ongoing research, I will be conducting an interesting research project with third and fourth grade students at your school. I am requesting your assistance by having your child participate in this study. The study will entail the children taking part in the group administration of a half hour questionnaire in June. The questionnaire will be administered to the children under my supervision. The children's responses will be anonymous; no names will be put on the questionnaires.

I sincerely hope that you will give your permission for your child to take part in this project. Please complete and return this form by Wednesday, June 2, 1993. If you do not return the letter by this date, your child will not be able to take part in this project. Remember all responses will be anonymous. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you very much for your help and participation.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Gilmore
653-8588 (W)

PLEASE RETURN BY WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1993

(PLEASE PRINT)

My child has permission to take part in the television research project.

child's school: ________________________________

parent name: ______________________________

parent signature: __________________________

date: ______________________________________

phone number: ______________________________