

UPDATE: Television and Children: A Bibliography

by Carmen Luke

This is an update of a more comprehensive bibliography published previously in CJEC (Fall, 1982; Winter, 1983). Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in published studies based on an 'interactive' theory of the viewer and the medium. Recent quantitative and qualitative research demonstrates that viewers are not passive blank slates but, instead, actively interpret and organize TV information on the basis of prior knowledge about the world in general, and about TV in particular.

TV research is in the process of what Thomas Kuhn calls a "paradigm shift". The move away from behaviorist to cognitive/interactive research models is paralleled by a similar reorientation in reading research, developmental and educational psychology. Practically, what this means is that the pretest-exposure-posttest model is now seen by many researchers as methodologically and conceptually problematic. As Kuhn suggests, changes in basic approaches within a

research community occur when "anomalies" develop. Characteristic research problems appear unresolvable with existing models. From decades of "effects" studies, several such problems have emerged. Researchers appear unable to resolve, for instance, the relationship between televised violence and aggressive behavior. As well, the relationship between children's TV habits and their acquisition of print competence has yet to be fully clarified.

A variety of alternative approaches have emerged. Ethnographic studies, for example, have been undertaken to observe and assess (1) children's interaction with TV, (2) group interaction while viewing, (3) subsequent play patterns, and (4) the development of cognitive and social strategies. While such studies are by their very nature situational and therefore, cannot be taken as indicative of universal age-specific TV habits or TV learning abilities, this kind of research appears to be a fruitful alternative to the

traditional measurement of TV effects.

This kind of qualitative research, moreover, can better account for individual and shared group background knowledge. The background knowledge which the child brings to the viewing situations is considered by many researchers to be a far more significant indicator of children's perception and comprehension. Many of the researchers noted in this bibliography are seeking this kind of a more comprehensive and contextual account of why and how children view TV, and what is learned.

It seems, then, that this next generation of media and educational research on TV and children will identify "effects" not as direct outcomes of particular TV exposure. Rather, the qualitative aspects of televiewing — family communication structures, the variety of social and linguistic interaction which occurs during viewing — are likely to become central research concerns. As well, we can justifiably expect that 'educational' research on TV and children will be influenced by other current developments in film and video criticism. The application of semiotic and literary theory is opening up new and ambitious avenues for the analysis of media codes, symbol systems, and messages.

Alexander, Alison; Wartella, Ellen and Brown, Dan. "Estimates of Children's Television Viewing by Mother and Child." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer 1981, 25(3), 243-252.

"Comparisons among several measures of children's television viewing revealed few age differences in ability to produce consistent self-report viewing data but wide discrepancies between mother and child viewing estimates." Children's self-reports are consistent but generally underestimate their actual viewing time. Accuracy of self-reports does not consistently increase with age. Mothers tend to underestimate younger children's viewing time, but mothers' estimates of children's viewing at all grade levels underestimates actual viewing amount. The number of TV sets in the home, number of siblings, or mothers' absence because of work did not influence the original correlation, and did not influence the discrepancy between mother/child viewing estimates. The authors caution researchers to be suspect of mother and child self-reports of TV viewing.

Baxter, Leslie A., and Kaplan, Stuart J. "Context Factors in the Analysis of Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior on Prime

Time Television." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Winter 1983, 27(1), 25-36.

This study investigated two context factors within which televised antisocial and prosocial acts occur: 1) motivation for actor's behavior, and 2) the portrayed importance of the act. "Female acts more than male acts were portrayed with internal motivation for prosocial acts regardless of act importance." Portrayal of act importance did mediate frequency of male and female antisocial acts. Male behavior was more likely to be antisocial compared to female initiated acts. Sex difference disappeared when antisocial acts are portrayed as high importance in content analyses to move beyond frequency counts of enacted behaviors, and stress the need to include context factors such as the portrayal of motivation and enacted importance of behaviors. A recognition of contextual TV information as a mediating factor in viewers' understanding of and response to TV's messages has important implications for research on TV's socialization effects on children. Children's observation and imitation of TV behavior focuses not only on one unit of behavior, but involves the processing of sequences of behaviors in relation to portrayed motives or levels of importance. Studies of children's social learning from TV, then, must attend to the context provided by TV's narrative structures, and rely less on frequency counts of both on-screen and children's behavior.

Breen, Myles and Corcoran, Farrel. "Myth in the Television Discourse." *Communication Monographs*, June 1982, 49(2), 127-136.

The authors concur with Gerbner's opinion that TV has assumed the preeminent cultural role of story-telling, of mythologizing ideology, and of monopolizing the creation and mass perpetuation of cultural myths. Although this article does not explicitly focus on children in relation to TV, it does provide a thorough explanation of the role of TV in promoting contemporary cultural myths. It holds particular significance for studies of TV and children, since children are more prone to believe that TV's narratives and advertising 'myths' are true.

Bruffee, Kenneth, A. "CLTV: Collaborative Learning Television." *Educational Communication and Technology*, 30(1), Spring 1982, 26-40.

In agreement with current assumptions about the 'social nature' of televiewing, the author proposes an educational model that would utilize TV to center and facilitate small group learning. It is suggested that "collaborative learning television would promote learning by taking advantage of the social nature of watching television and the social nature of learning. Viewers would be organized into semi-autonomous learning groups so that learning would occur through the focused conversation of a community of peers." This engaging, at times perhaps too abstract, discussion fails to provide concrete information about program (CLTV) implementation, instructional methods, age group applicability, group structuring, evaluation, and so forth.

Buerkel-Rothfuss, Nancy L.; Greenberg, Bradley S.; Atkin, Charles K.; and Neuendorf, Kimberly. "Learning about the Family from Television." *Journal of Communication*, Summer 1982, 32(3), 191-201.

The relationship between children's viewing of communication behaviors of TV families and children's expectations about behaviors in real family settings is examined. TV family roles are particularly salient to children, and enacted family behaviors can be a prime source for children's learning about family relations. To incorporate the complexity of context within which TV viewing and social learning takes place, the authors used variables in four categories: 1) TV content: high affiliative behavior in family shows, low affiliative, high conflictual, and exposure to all types of family shows; 2) Children's perceptions: realistic family portrayal, and what children thought they had learned from TV; 3) Parental behavior: viewing restriction, guidance towards certain shows, parent/child co-viewing, parental negative/positive comments about TV portrayal of families, intra-familial communication about being a family member; 4) Family behavior: supportive, compliant, opposing, and ignoring. Control variables were grade, sex, race, SES, siblings, and total viewing time. Questionnaires were administered to 648 fourth, sixth and eighth grade students, with an equal distribution of male and female, black and white children. The overall results suggested that "children who frequently watch family shows appear to believe that families in real life show support and concern for each other." The more mediating con-

trol that parents exert, the higher children's beliefs about 'support' in real families. Frequent parent/child co-viewing related significantly to children's beliefs about real life compliance behaviors in families. Parental positive comments about TV families enhances children's beliefs of support and compliance behaviors in real life; parental negative comments correlated with stronger beliefs about opposing behaviors in real families. The authors conclude that parental involvement with children's televiewing and intrafamilial communication can greatly influence children's learning about social roles and family behaviors from TV.

Bybee, Carl; Robinson, Danny; and Turow, Joseph. "Determinants of Parental Guidance of Children's Television Viewing for a Special Subgroup: Mass Media Scholars." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer 1982, 26(3), 697-710.

This study examined the kind of TV guidance provided by parents who are mass media scholars. The relationship between the nature of that guidance, the beliefs about the effects of TV held by parents, and the characteristics of their scholarship is discussed. Questionnaires containing 18 statements requiring an evaluative response, and 14 questions were sent to 784 mass media scholars throughout the U.S. Of 486 respondents, 200 were parents of children under 18, 86% of the respondents were male, the median age of respondents was 39, and the average age of children was 8. Three dimensions of 'guidance' were discovered: 1) restrictive, 2) evaluative, and 3) unfocused. Restrictive guidance was more frequently used with younger children, and unfocused guidance more with older children. Parental age did not correlate with any guidance dimensions, but parental sex and child's age related significantly, although in varying patterns, to guidance. Female parent/scholars were found more likely to provide guidance than males. Overall, in contrast to previous research on non-scholar parental guidance patterns, this study found scholar/parents more likely to employ restrictive guidance. Evaluative guidance — the most critical and effective form of guidance — "had the smallest possibility of being carried out by mass media scholars . . . no matter what their teaching, research, or publishing orientation." This finding, the authors found "somewhat disturbing."

Cantor, Joanne. "Modifying Children's Eating Habits Through Television Ads: Effects of Humorous Appeals in a Field Setting." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Winter 1981, 25(1), 37-47.

Thirty-seven three to nine-years olds (25 males; 12 females) were studied to investigate the difference in appeal to children between serious and humorous food advertisements. Two groups were formed and both were exposed to TV programming in which two advertisements varied: one a serious public service announcement (PSA) advocating fruit as a dessert and avoiding sweets, the other a humorous version of the same message. The results showed that children were more likely to choose fruit over sweets after exposure to the serious PSA rather than the humorous version. When the serious PSA was followed by an advertisement promoting commercial sweets,

children's choice of dessert was modified in favor of commercial sweets.

Cantor, Joanne and Reilly, Sandra. "Adolescents' Fright Reactions to Television and Films." *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1982, 32(1), 87-99.

In this study the emotional effects on adolescents of frightening TV content and movies are studied. Mothers' and adolescents' perceptions of mass media 'fright experiences' are compared. 63 sixth-grade and 210 tenth-grade students were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing 10 "frightening media" questions, in addition to a 17 page 'media habits' questionnaire. The aim of this survey was 1) to determine the frequency of adolescents' fright reactions to mass media, and 2) to assess their remembered fright experiences as children. All sixth-graders' mothers and 18% of 10th graders' mothers agreed to be interviewed by telephone. The general finding was that mothers underestimate the frequency of their children's fright reactions to mass media. Recollected childhood fright reactions were reported as more enduring than recent (1-2 yrs. prior) reactions; this trend, the authors suggest, is due to adolescents' cognitive maturity in coping ability with media induced fear, and understanding the representational nature of the media. Regret over watching a 'scary' movie/TV experience was more prevalent with sixth-graders. Significant correlations were found between mothers and daughters, as opposed to mothers and sons. On the basis of comparing mothers' and adolescents' responses to media induced fear in youths, the authors conclude that family communication about frightful experiences is generally poor. Further research on children's fright reactions to media should focus on younger children, since childhood fright reactions were reported as more enduring, and may well have more lasting emotional consequences.

Christenson, Peter G. "Children's Perceptions of TV Commercials and Products." *Communication Research*, October 1982, 9(4), 491-525.

Previous research of children's perceptions and responses to TV commercials is surveyed. Christenson then reports on his own study conducted with 90 children in 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 6th grade. Three experimental groups were formed to which subjects were randomly assigned: 1) no commercials, 2) commercials, and 3) consumer information processing (CIP). This latter sample was exposed to the same commercials as group 2, but their viewing was preceded by a two minute video segment on advertising intent and credibility. All groups watched two animated Saturday morning cartoons. Subjects were subsequently interviewed on a one-to-one basis and were asked product-related questions to which responses were rated on 4 and 5 point scales. Six and seven-year olds exposed to CIPs showed more "unexpected" critical responses to commercial truthfulness and credibility than anticipated. The author suggests that since brief audiovisual messages (e.g., PSA's) can influence children's knowledge and perception of TV information, repeated exposure to PSAs as part of commercial programming should ideally be included in state, federal or network policy.

Collins, A. "Recent Advances in Research on Cognitive Processing Television Viewing." *Journal of Broadcasting*, 1981, 25(4), 327-334.

Recent research reflecting changing trends in TV research are reviewed and discussed. In psychological research,

Collins notes, the trend is reflected in increasing concerns with individual construction of meaning, rather than seeing meaning as a function of an external stimulus (TV). Developmental research is focussing more on "the different degrees of completeness and complexity at which constructive cognitive processing may take place." Shifts in mass media research are reflected in increased concern with audience use of TV, and a de-emphasis in concern about TV's effects. Overall, a subtle, although significant research reorientation has emerged that is less preoccupied with TV content and viewing outcomes, and is taking a more cognitive, information processing approach. Collins explicates the main problems TV research has addressed, and discusses the implications emerging out of the new perspective.

James, Navita and McCain, Thomas A. "Television Games Preschool Children Play: Patterns, Themes and Uses." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Fall 1982, 26(4), 783-800.

This ethnographic study investigated if and how preschoolers use TV based ideas in their play. 36 three to seven-year olds (4 black; 32 white) from a lower middle class suburb of Columbus, Ohio were studied for 7 consecutive weeks (approx. 110 contact hours) during the summer. "Mickey Mouse" was watched daily throughout the summer session in the daycare center by almost every child. "Star Trek" was watched by a few five-year old and older boys who rarely watched more than 5-10 minutes of the program; "Sesame Street" was the least frequently watched. Most TV based play was not directly influenced by programs watched in the daycare center. The most popular games, in order, were Batman, The Bionic Man, The Bionic Woman, Captain Marvel & Isis, Starsky & Hutch, Emergency, and Star Trek. Superhuman, high-action characters were most frequently adapted from TV for play content. Older preschoolers developed more complex game plans with more complicated plots and of longer duration. The daily viewing of Mickey Mouse, which was "enormously popular," generated little if any play beyond the immediate viewing. Four and five-year olds selected TV content for play most frequently. The use of TV content in play was found to decrease after age 5 when TV verbal content increases. Preschool boys played TV games more often and adapted a greater variety of TV content. Girls used TV content more in language-oriented or small motor skills situations; boys tended towards more action oriented and gross motor skills activities. Major play themes were: 1) good guys vs. bad guys, 2) doctor/fireman, 3) house and family, 4) follow the leader, 5) pretend that I am . . . , 6) singing, entertainment, dialogue games. The authors conclude that TV is a source of content for preschoolers' play. TV based games are not all 'new' games, but many have their roots in Anglo-American culture which TV merely re-presents. Developmental differences are the strongest predictors of how preschoolers use TV content and what they choose. A positive relation between the use of TV content in play is proposed: it can promote prosocial behavior by serving as a play/idea framework, "helping children to have fun, learn more about their feelings and abilities, introduce more variety in their play and interact with others."

Desmond, Jon D. and Jeffries-Fox, Suzanne. "Elevating Children's Awareness of Television Advertising: The Effects of a Critical Viewing Program." *Communication Education*, January 1983, 32(1), 107-115.

Recent research on critical viewing skills curricula is reviewed. Next the authors report on a study they con-

ducted to assess what instructional methods are most effective with early elementary school age children in teaching critical viewing skills. 176 kindergarten, first and second grade students (75% Black; 20% Caucasian; 2% Hispanic) were sampled. Children in groups of 20 were pretested one week before the experimental instructional units were administered. Three modes of instruction were used: 1) lecture, 2) audio-visual, and 3) role-playing. The role-playing approach produced the most significant increase in awareness about commercials for all age groups. Awareness scores were greatest for younger children, since their baseline awareness about TV commercial intent, truthfulness, etc. was lower than that of older children. The authors suggest that critical viewing skills curricula based on the principles of child development can significantly increase children's critical understanding of TV information. Utilization of role-playing techniques, for instance, are particularly effective for instructing 5 and 6 year olds to become more critical viewers.

Donohue, Thomas R., Henke, Lucy L., and Meyer, Timothy P. "Learning About Television Commercials: The Impact of Instructional Units on Children's Perceptions of Motive." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer 1983, 27 (3), 251-

This study demonstrated that children in the early stages of Piagetian cognitive "concrete operations" are able to understand TV advertising motive and intent. Direct instruction was found effective in enhancing cognitive awareness in six and seven-year olds; these findings contrast with previous research which demonstrated comparable understanding in ten and eleven-year olds. Two instructional units were designed: 1) role playing, and 2) traditional (discussion and a 15 minute video presentation promoting awareness of advertising motives). 75 six and seven-year olds from a middle class elementary school in central Connecticut were pretested on "a standard battery of classic Piagetian tests" to avoid using age as the sole predictor of developmental stage. Both groups demonstrated increased awareness of commercial intent; the role-playing approach produced significantly higher levels of understanding; the traditional approach resulted in a significantly greater ability to articulate TV advertising motives. Children at higher cognitive developmental levels profited more from the instructional units than those at lower levels. The authors suggested that for those children who are about to enter, or who have entered the concrete operational stage, "the impact of an instructional unit is potent and of great significance in light of its implications." This study supports and reflects current research efforts to design cognitive developmental measures rather than rely on age as predictors of cognitive development. It is a significant and noteworthy contribution to qualitative research on TV and children.

Dorr, Aimee. "Television and Affective Development and Functioning: Maybe This Decade." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Fall 1981, 25(4), 335-345.

This essay is part of a collection of papers that review and assess ten years of research on TV and children which the *Journal of Broadcasting* put together as a theme issue. Dorr reviews a decade of research on "the relationships between children's and adolescents' television viewing and their recognition of emotions, empathy, emotional arousal, habituation, emotional reaction to characters, and personal stages." A research agenda is proposed to study the link between comprehension of TV content and TV impact. Dorr suggests that "actions which promote youth's understanding of TV programming are desirable even if

understanding has not been demonstrated to be related to impact." Viewers' involvement with TV characters in ongoing series needs further research to facilitate understanding of how and when this occurs, and how involvement contributes to exposure effects. This kind of research is particularly important with respect to very young viewers who do get involved with characters in continuing series such as cartoons, *Sesame Street*, or *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. Studies on TV use and gratification, Dorr suggests, might benefit from further development, "particularly as it might lead to an understanding of the relationship between uses and effects and to an ability to provide alternative activities of programming which still satisfy needs." Research conducted in the 1970's indicates that a viewer's motives for viewing can predict certain aspects of TV effects; but, as Dorr notes, these patterns of relationships (i.e. use motives influencing effects) are not universally applicable and only effect "some of the people some of the time." Dorr points out that it is time to "ferret out 'which people when'."

Faber, Ronald J., Perloff, Richard M., and Hawkins, Robert P. "Antecedents of Children's Comprehension of Television Advertising." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Spring 1982, 26(2), 575-584.

This study compared role taking skills and Piagetian logical operations skills in children to determine which developmental skill is a more reliable predictor of ability to comprehend advertising intent. 67 children (35 first graders; 32 third graders) were individually interviewed using Ward, Wackman & Wartella' (1977) measures and coding scheme. Children's role-taking abilities were measured by asking open ended questions about a short story; response to questions required children's ability to take a variety of character perspectives and understand constraint relationships among characters. The results showed that role-taking abilities correlated significantly higher with understanding advertising intent than the physical skills of logical operations. The effects of grade level, gender, previous TV exposure, and the presence of siblings were analyzed as potentially influential variables, and only grade level was found to be significantly related to understand advertising intent. The authors suggest that children need to have developed the social and cognitive skills of role-taking and understanding others' perspective before they can comprehend advertising motives.

Greer, Douglas; Potts, Richard; Wright, John C.; and Huston, Aletha C. "The Effects of Television Commercial Form and Commercial Placement on Children's Social Behavior and Attention." *Child Development*, June 1982, 53(3), 611-619.

This study investigated preschoolers' attention to 30 second commercials during a cartoon presentation, and their social behavior after viewing. The study also aimed to determine "the effects of commercial interruptions on children's social behavior and attention patterns." 64 subjects (32 female and 32 male) from a university preschool were observed in pre and postviewing free-play sessions. Social behavior was scored for aggression, imaginative play, prosocial interaction and general activity. Commercial salient features were defined as high action, rapid scenery and character change, and frequent use of camera techniques. Commercials were clustered or dispersed within a 12 minute segment of *Captain Kangaroo*. High salience features (frequent visual change and high action) maintained higher attention; males were more attentive than females; no overall difference in attention was found

between clustered or dispersed commercials. Although violent and aggressive features were absent in the commercials, high action features did produce increased arousal in subjects, which the authors suggest may increase the likelihood of increased aggression in social situations.

Husson, William. "Theoretical Issues in the Study of Children's Attention to Television." *Communication Research*, July 1982, 9(3), 323-351.

This article is a comprehensive and informative overview of the main issues involved in current studies of children's attention to TV. The author surveys and discusses the variety of meanings of "attention" as applied in current cognitive and behavioral research on children's attention to TV. "Television" is specified according to the variables — perceptual and thematic — generally focused on in studies of children's attention to TV. The potential relation between age-related information processing abilities of children and developmentally-specific attention levels is discussed. The author favors a cognitive-based theory for studying children's attention to TV, and stresses the practical implications of including the context of the viewing environment in any televiewing research model.

Huston, Aletha C.; Wright, John C.; Wartella, Ellen; Rice, Mabel L.; Watkins, Bruce A.; Campbell, Toni, and Potts, Richard. "Communicating More than Content: Formal Features of Children's Television Programs." *Journal of Communication*, Summer 1981, 31(3), 32-48.

The aim of this study was to identify what combination of production techniques — formal features — constitute different types of children's programs such as: 1) animated and live, 2) humorous vs. serious, 3) Saturday a.m., daytime educational, and primetime children's programs. Exemplary children's programs broadcast by three commercial networks and by PBS during November, 1977 and February, 1978 were sampled and analyzed. Formal features are categorized at two levels: 1) action and pace, and 2) rate of character and scenery change. Saturday a.m. cartoons had the highest rate of fast action and low rates of dialogue and moderate action. Saturday a.m. programs rely heavily on attention provoking features (rapid visual and auditory pace) and minimize the use of features that require viewer reflection. Daytime educational programs make frequent use of child dialogue, action, music; visual shift levels are low; and much verbal information is provided. Children's primetime programs have the highest rates of adult dialogue and have higher frequencies of moderate action than either educational or Saturday a.m. animated programs. Live Saturday a.m. shows have the highest rate of rapid action, visual and auditory shifts. Humorous programs used more non-human dialogue, singing and noise than serious shows, whereas serious ones had higher rates of child dialogue and visual change than humorous programs. The authors suggest that, since very young children's TV diet consists of "cartoons and live programs designed for children", such viewing experiences may set the standards for what children expect from TV. The intentional use by producers of 'fast pace' features in children's entertainment programs may negatively predispose them towards developing interest in slower paced and more language oriented programs. Yet, other evidence also suggests that the young outgrow the perceptually salient "hype" of children's programs, and include at a very early age, adult and family programs in their daily viewing. The authors point out that children's programs need not rely on high action attention-getting for-

mulas, as European productions demonstrate. But American producers have "found a formula that works, and they rarely depart from it . . . This formula is defined by formal production features as much as or more than by content."

Krendl, Kathy A., and Watkins, Bruce. "Understanding Television: An Explanatory Inquiry into the Reconstruction of Narrative Content." *Educational Communication and Technology*, Winter 1983, 32(4), 201-212.

The authors argue against the traditional passive model of the TV viewer, and propose an alternative, interactive model of televiewing based on concepts derived from schema theoretic approaches to text comprehension. As with reading print, the authors suggest, 'reading' the TV 'text' relies on individuals' narrative scheme with which information is processed. Comprehension and learning from TV, then, is dependent upon an integrated network of background knowledge which is brought to the viewing situation, and whereby viewers actively select, reject, and classify incoming information. This study "assumes the existence and use of a TV narrative schema which respondents bring to a viewing situation." The central research question was "to explore the nature of comprehension in terms of perceived demands by imposing high demands on some viewers, and low demands on others." 60 fifth graders from a rural public school in Michigan were sampled. Four groups were formed and exposed to four differently edited 15 minute video narrative segments: 1) Entertainment — one group with remote control to stop, one without stop; 2) Educational — one group with stop, one without stop. The general findings indicated that subjects brought to the viewing situation an organizational strategy, "suggesting something like a TV schema among the 5th graders involved in this study." Subjects assigned to the experimental treatments (task oriented) "consistently displayed more 'mental effort' in encoding and integrating the program content." Their recall "included more analytical statements and . . . more abstract reconstructions." The Entertainment viewing group (no task demands) produced low levels of invested mental effort. In all viewing conditions "children attempted to assign meanings to schemes that were out of place." Children in the Entertainment/no stop group consistently scored highest on the criterion variables. The least amount of mental effort invested was by children in the no stop/Entertainment group. All "subjects instructed to view to learn tended to include more action units in their reconstruction than subjects who viewed for entertainment." The authors conclude by suggesting that cognitive processing effort and consequent level of learning of TV information are amenable to outside influences. "The process of attending to and learning from TV then becomes a function not only of the messages sent, but of the perceptual set with which the messages are received and interpreted."

Levin, Stephen R.; Petros, Thomas V.; and Petrella, Florence W. "Preschoolers' Awareness of Television Advertising." *Child Development*, August 1982, 53(4), 933-937.

Three, four, and five-year olds' abilities to differentiate between videotaped TV programs and TV commercials were examined. 72 preschoolers were studied who were asked to use auditory and visual cues to identify differences between content. The results indicated that preschoolers can demonstrate a significant awareness of the difference between regular programming and commercials when their responses require only minimal verbal ex-

pression. Children's ability to distinguish between advertising and programs increases with age correlative to increased verbal and cognitive capacity.

Lindlof, Thomas R. "A Fantasy Construct of Television Viewing." *Communication Research*, January 1982, 9(1), 67-112.

The author provides a comprehensive overview of current cognitive affective theories of fantasy, discusses current approaches to the study of televiewing, cognitive involvement and learning, and proposes three procedures for documenting and analyzing "televiewing involvement." Lindlof suggests that TV viewing research should rely less on empirical observational studies as a sole source of data, and incorporate more subjective self-report data. He proposes that beyond existing empirical models, a more comprehensive and informative account of the viewing experience can be compiled if viewer/subjects are given the conceptual tools and opportunity to "consciously report their experiences." This proposal is particularly relevant for studies of child viewers whose perception and comprehension of TV information is more heavily mediated by fantasy and imagination than the adult viewer.

Loughlin, Meagan, and Desmond, Roger J. "Social Interaction in Advertising Directed to Children." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer 1981, 25(3), 303-307.

Two 30-second studio produced TV commercials were shown to 48 first graders, and 51 third graders (49 boys; 50 girls). One commercial depicted peer interaction in the promotion of a puppet, the other portrayed a single child interacting with the puppet. Voiceovers for both commercials were the same; price of product, product description, and places of purchase were included in both versions. Subjects were interviewed immediately after viewing. The results indicated that peer interaction in TV advertising aimed at children increases their liking for commercials, but does not increase product desirability.

Moore, Roy L., and Moschis, George P. "The Role of Family Communication in Consumer Learning." *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1981, 31(4), 42-51.

Traditionally, TV consumer socialization studies question how TV advertising effects children's consumer values and behaviors, and how parents mediate this process. This study, by contrast, questions whether and how TV mediates parental effects on children's consumer behavior. To assess TV influence on children, and parental mediation of those influences, a four-fold typology of family communication patterns is used: 1) laissez-faire: minimal parent-child communication; 2) protective: parental stress on obedience, social harmony, and minimal concern with conceptual matters; 3) pluralistic: parental encouragement of discussion of ideas with children, fostering of children's creativity and exploration, de-emphasis on obedience and authority, stress on mutual respect and interests; 4) consensual: stress on reciprocal and one-way communication, children's interests are encouraged provided they do not conflict with a family's hierarchy of opinion and internal harmony. The general finding was that "media influence may be most direct in those families in which social harmony and deference to parents is the pattern of parent-child interactions." In socio-oriented families, the authors suggest, children are encouraged to derive from TV "appropriate consumer behaviors" which, in turn, may lead to materialistic values. It is suggested that materialistic orientations develop in these families

because parents place a higher value on children assessing their consumer behaviors in relation to the perceived effects of their actions on others. Concept-oriented families encourage differential and varied exposure to alternative media such as newspapers which, in turn, promotes the learning of consumer knowledge, not mere behaviors. Differential media exposure results in the acquisition of more varied consumer competencies and values. The study concludes with the suggestion that consumer socialization is not solely a function of TV's mediating effects on children's attitudes and behaviors, but that TV directly and indirectly effects the kind of mediation parents provide in the overall family communications environment.

Morison, Patricia; Hope, Kelly; and Gardner, Howard. "Reasoning About the Realities on Television: A Developmental Study." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer 1981, 25(3), 229-242.

The authors found that children's "reality-fantasy judgements about television shift with age, from a focus on physical features and a rigid assessment of actuality, to a sensitivity to the plausibility of characters and plotline and an appreciation of authorial intent." Eighteen 2nd, 4th, and 6th grade students (9 male; 9 female) were studied. All students attended the same school in a working class, multiethnic suburb of Boston. Subjects were individually interviewed by one experimenter for 30 minutes and were asked to judge the reality of TV on the basis of forced-choice comparisons of 12 pairs of programs. Children based their judgements on TV-real life comparisons and on TV-specific knowledge (difference between programs). It was found that facility with TV-specific criteria as a comparative base increased with age.

Palmer, Edward L., and McDowell, Cynthia N. "Children's Understanding of Nutritional Information Presented in Breakfast Cereal Commercials." *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer 1981, 25(3), 295-301.

Drawing on Piaget's developmental stage theory, the authors suggest that the cognitive abilities of five and six-year olds limits them to focus upon a single dimension (e.g., "big") of an advertised product. TV commercials promoting the notion of a 'balanced breakfast' fail to be understood by this age group who are often the target audience of breakfast cereal commercials. The authors suggest that cereal and food advertising should attempt to phrase their messages in relation to "a child's basic education in the fundamentals of nutrition."

Pezdek, Kathy, and Hartman, Eileen, F. "Children's Television Viewing: Attention and Comprehension of Auditory versus Visual Information." *Child Development*, 1983, 54(4), 1015-1023.

The relationship between children's attention and comprehension of visual and auditory information is examined. Sixty 5-year olds watched a 20 minute edited videotape of Sesame Street, and were then asked comprehension questions. The videotape sequence contained: a) visual segments, b) auditory segments, and c) mixed modality segments. Children were divided into three equally numbered experimental and control groups: a) availability of toys during viewing, b) recorded music while viewing, and c) no toys or music while viewing. A 35 item comprehension test was administered immediately following viewing. Questions utilized recall, and were ordered to correspond to the order of the videotape segments. The authors found that 5-year olds' comprehension of and at-

tention to TV information is far more sophisticated than previously assumed. Children were found to be able to distribute their attention effectively to process both auditory and visual information while simultaneously attending to other activities. The authors suggest that their findings support current notions about children's active participation in TV information processing.

Postman, Neil. **The Disappearance of Childhood.** New York, N.Y.: Delacorte Press, 1982.

Postman argues that the advent of print literacy, which required formal schooling for transmission to the young, brought about "the invention of childhood." TV, by contrast, is eroding childhood since understanding or learning from TV requires no formal instruction, and because it gives children total access to adult information. Unlike school (print) knowledge, which children acquire in stages correlative to culturally constructed stages of childhood, Postman claims that TV is a "total disclosure of the medium" — one that exposes adult concerns such as sex and violence to children regardless of their age-related abilities to deal with such information. Postman argues against biologically determined childhood, siding with Aries (1962) in his contention that during medieval times childhood was non-existent. Because formal schooling was absent, and since the young mingled with all age groups, children had unmediated access to the same social information as adults. Aries' claims have been disputed; Postman's insistence that childhood is a social construct and his rejection of contemporary developmental paradigms may draw much criticism from readers. But his suggestions that TV has blurred the child/adult distinction by creating an information environment for the "adultified-child" and the "childified-adult", is, indeed, thought provoking. The implications drawn from his well documented historical discussions are heavy handed and, at times, incredulous. TV may be contributing to a radical change in the concept of childhood, but is hardly "disappearing" it. TV has not yet eliminated institutional schooling for print.

Rapaczynski, Wanda; Singer, Dorothy G.; and Singer, Jerome L. "Teaching Television: A Curriculum for Young Children." **Journal of Communication**, Spring 1982, 32(2), 46-55.

This study reports on "the adaptation of a critical viewing curriculum first used with children in third through fifth grades for use with children in kindergarten through the second grade." Eight 40 minute lessons, initially designed for third to fifth graders, were reduced to six 30-45 minute lessons, and the material simplified to suit five to seven-year olds. 91 children participated in the project; children were pretested one week prior to the first lesson and post-tested the week the final lesson was taught. A TV Comprehension Test was designed which required that children circle responses to multiple-choice items, most of which were pictures rather than print. The objectives of the six lessons were: 1) "Introduction to TV"; 2) "How TV Programs are Made"; 3) "Real and Pretend on TV"; 4) "Effects and Special Effects"; 5) "Action and Aggression on TV"; and 6) "Commercials". Two lessons were taught per week; classroom activities and some homework was assigned to enhance learning. Pretest and post-test score comparisons indicated that the adapted curriculum did effectively improve young children's knowledge about TV. Older children scored higher on the pretest and showed less significant gains on the post-test. For all grades, TV comprehension improved in all areas covered by the cur-

riculum. The very youngest children confused actors' names and their roles. No significant difference was found in relation to gender. The authors suggest that, if a TV curriculum is adapted to the cognitive capacities of preschoolers and early elementary age children, they can benefit from instruction about TV. Post-testing to determine long-term effects of the curriculum was not administered.

Selnow, Gary W., and Bettinghaus, Erwin P. "Television Exposure and Language Development." **Journal of Broadcasting**, Winter 1982, 26(1), 469-479.

This study investigated the role of TV as a language model. The authors hypothesized that since TV lacks a feedback and reinforcement capacity, TV's influence on language development and usage must occur through observational processes. 93 preschoolers (42 girls, 51 boys) were studied. All were children of students or faculty at a large midwestern university town, and all attended the same daycare center. All subjects spoke English as a first language; no bilingual children were included in the sample. The average daily viewing time for subjects was 2.8 hours; the national average for preschoolers is 4.7 hours/day. A significant inverse relationship between TV exposure and language development was found. The authors could not determine, however, a casual relationship on the basis of the data, but offer two explanations: 1) TV viewing may displace alternative language building experiences, or 2) TV language may contribute to lower language performance scores. Moreover, less linguistically developed children may prefer to watch more programs with simplistic language structures which may, in turn, contribute and reinforce an already existant low level of language development. This study supports the environmentalist language development theories. It is suggested that the relationship between heavy viewing and diminished language development would be more significant if the sample were drawn from the general populace — not from a university community.

Singer, Dorothy G., and Singer, Jerome L. "Television and the Developing Imagination of the Child." **Journal of Broadcasting**, Fall 1981, 25(4), 373-387.

The authors suggest that preschoolers and early elementary school age children fail to comprehend much of what they see on TV, that they are easily confused by TV information, and that this misperception and confusion leads to a distorted understanding of "the real world." Moreover, the data on very young children and TV viewing suggests that televiewing "seems to preempt self-play time and may impede creativity."

Tucker, David E., and Saffelle, Jeffrey. "The Federal Communications Commission and the Regulation of Children's Television." **Journal of Broadcasting**, Summer 1982, 26(3), 675-669.

The intent of this study was to examine children's TV broadcasting using a systems theory model as an analytical framework. FCC regulations of children's TV from 1970-1981 are examined. Provided is both a thorough and well-documented historical review and analysis of policy issues and decisions for children's programming. The regulatory climate in the U.S., the authors note, has support for the development of quality children's programs, yet has minimized progress towards regulating children's programming and advertising on network TV and local stations. As the authors conclude, the FCC "creates many

outputs, but few outcomes."

Turow, Joseph. **Entertainment, Education, and the Hard Sell: Three Decades of Network Children's Television.** New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1981.

In this book Turow surveys children's programs on the three major networks aired between 1948 and 1978. Programming trends during the three decades are identified, and the development of a current dominant format for children's programs is discussed. Turow contrasts the historical development of program formats and content to developments within the industry, and draws implications for the future of children's TV.

Washlag, Jacob J. "Stability in the Popularity of Television Programs among Children and Adolescents." **Journal of Broadcasting**, Summer 1982, 26(2), 711-716.

This study examined the popularity of network primetime and Saturday morning programs broadcast during the 1975-6 season. 100 fourth, 100 sixth, and 100 eighth graders were surveyed at three month intervals, and were asked to mark a checklist of programs they watched. Specific program choices on the checklist and specific program preferences by children are not provided in this report. The authors found that program popularity "was quite stable and increased as the season wore on, especially among younger viewers."

AMTEC ANNUAL ELECTIONS

Nominations are requested for the elections to be held in 1986 to fill two positions on the AMTEC Board.

The positions are:

1. **Vice-President (President-Elect)**
This is a three year term, beginning in June, 1986 at the Annual Conference. There will be one year as Vice-President, one year as President and one year as Immediate Past President.
2. **Member-at-Large (Director)**
This is a three year term beginning at the Annual Conference in June, 1986.
All nominations must be received by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee by January 30, 1986.
3. **Secretary Treasurer**

Procedure

1. **If you wish to nominate someone:**
Nominations may be made by any five AMTEC Members providing the nominee is a member of AMTEC and has signified his/her willingness in writing. A brief biographical sketch of the nominee must be sent to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee along with the nomination.
2. **If you wish to be nominated:**
Indicate this to five AMTEC members who will arrange to nominate you by sending a letter of their intention and your biographical sketch to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. You must be a member of AMTEC.

All nominations must be received by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee by January 30, 1986.

Send nominations to: **Bill Hanson**
Chairman Nominating Committee
Past President, AMTEC
Supervisor of Instructional Materials
The Calgary Board of Education
Media Services Group
3610-9th Street S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2G 3C5