

TELEVISION VIEWING AS IT RELATES  
TO THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF  
FOURTH GRADERS IN THE CHRISTIAN  
COUNTY, KENTUCKY, PUBLIC SCHOOLS

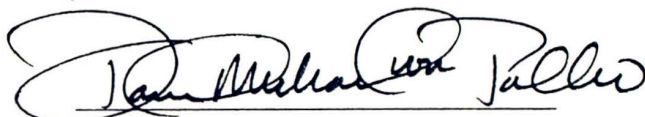
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FLORA MANIRE SCHALLER

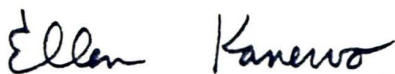
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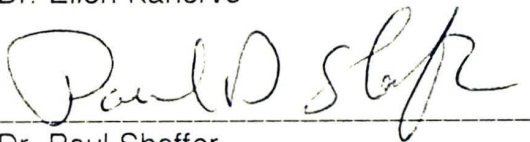
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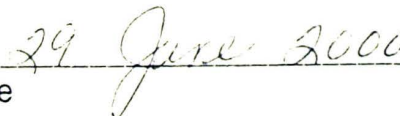


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TELEVISION VIEWING AS IT RELATES  
TO THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF  
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COUNTY, KENTUCKY, PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts Degree

Austin Peay State University

Flora Manire Schaller

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, John and Ruby Grace Manire, and to my sister, Katie Manire Whitson, in whose memory I have been motivated. I also dedicate this work to my 4 R's: Rhonda, Rene', Rachelle, and Randall whose persistent "you can do it, Mom" kept me focused.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A sincere appreciation is owed to Mr. Scott Harper, District Assessment Coordinator for Christian County Schools, and to the principals of the participating schools. Without their help this thesis could not have been done.

I appreciate all who completed and returned their questionnaires, both teachers and parents of the fourth graders. I also wish to thank Dr. Jim Jury, Christian County School Superintendent, who granted me permission to conduct this study.

## **ABSTRACT**

This research explored the effects of increased television viewing on communication skills of fourth graders in Christian County, Kentucky, public schools. When relating the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey language skill scores to that of the parents' responses to the number of hours of television viewing, the average scores were higher for those watching one hour or less a day and lower for those watching four or more. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

There were significant differences between the parents' opinions and teacher's opinions as indicated on Likert Scale type questionnaires. The teachers thought their students watched more television, spent less time in conversation, and that television had a greater negative effect on the children than the parents thought.

This research concludes that there is no real correlation between the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey (CTBS) language skills scores and increased television viewing and that there is no evidence of cause and effect.



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The effects of media, particularly television, on audiences have been the focus of a vast number of studies over the past half century. Through these studies theories of communication have developed to help inform and improve practical life (Wood, 1997).

One theory known as cultivation theory claims that television promotes a view of social reality that is inaccurate, but that viewers nonetheless assume reflects real life (Wood, 1997). George Gerbner, professor at the Annenberg School of Communication in Pennsylvania, states that the synthetic reality of television shapes heavy viewers' attitudes, beliefs, and actions (Gerbner, 1990). This theory refers to the cumulative process by which television fosters beliefs about social reality. According to the theory, television transmits particular and often unrealistic understandings of the world as being more violent and dangerous than statistics on actual violence indicate (Wood, 1997).

The cultivation theory can also be applied to the idea that television can teach improper language skills. For example, the children's program "Teletubbies" uses verbage that falls short of basic sentence structure.

The purpose of this study is to see if there is a correlation between increased television viewing and lack of ability of fourth grade students to correctly express themselves in both oral and written language. This study will



also compare teachers' and parents' opinions concerning children's television viewing habits and time spent in conversation with others.

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

Some educators of the Christian County, Kentucky, Public School System say that their students are not exposed to enough reading and grammatically correct conversation outside of the classroom. The children's vocabulary is limited and they are unable to write or speak in complete sentences. Even some English speaking dialects create confusion with enunciation and pronunciation.

One teacher said that children who watch a great deal of television are used to things moving so fast that they can not slow down enough to have the patience to read. It is difficult for them to stay focused long enough to complete a task (Teacher, 2000 a). Another stated that when the children are ask to write a story, they try to recreate the gore they have watched on television and they don't even do that very well (Teacher, 2000 b).

Research done by Huston and Wright (1999) verifies that children do spend a lot of time watching television. They spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleep. A study by the Center of Research on the Influences of Television on Children (CRITC) showed that children's overall interest and involvement in television content predicted the amount of viewing, and the early patterns of viewing affected some aspects of children's cognitve development. In theTopeka study developmental changes

in viewing were related to the cognitive demands of programs. Children moved from programs that were fairly redundant and did not require them to integrate plot events over a long time span to programs that were less redundant and had longer or more complex plots. The children appeared to be choosing programs that were consistent with their ability to understand and interpret the content. Children who talked about television characters and events, used such events in their play, and asked questions of their parents about television usually watched the most television. The researchers stated that the age-related cognitive abilities were related to viewing but they did not explain individual variations (Huston and Wright, 1990). This will be a beginning research into the communicative skills variation of cognitive abilities.

Because children are not passive viewers but are actively involved while watching television (Anderson and Lorch, 1983), what are they learning from some of the top rated children's programs such as "Sponge Bob Square Pants" and "Pokemon" (Cooper , 1999)? Will such programming have an effect on children's ability to correctly write and speak the English language at their expected grade level? Does excessive television viewing affect children's communication skills?

By contrast, what does adult programming watched by children who do not understand the words or content teach? In the Topeka study, five-year-olds who had been exposed to a lot of general audience entertainment programs had poorer reading skills than did lower viewers. They were also less attentive

to televised stimuli shown in the laboratory and their short-term memory scores were lower (Huston, 1993).

Several studies ( e.g. , Fetler, 1983; Huston, 1993; Stowle, 1992), have investigated the correlation between increased television viewing and school performance, but little has been done on the effects of TV on communication skills. Will children who watch a lot of uninformative programming or listen to improperly spoken dialog in programs be affected? Does increased television viewing have a negative effect on children's written and spoken language skills?

With these ideas in mind the first hypothesis was formed:

H1 The more television parents report their child watching, the lower that child will score on the language skills portion of the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey.

This study will also examine the differences of opinion, if any, on the effects of increased television viewing between the parents and the teachers

This study expects to confirm the subsequent hypotheses:

H2 The teachers will think their students watch more television than the parents think they watch.

H3 Parents will estimate their child spends more time in conversation than teachers will estimate.

H4 Teachers will estimate a stronger negative effect of TV on children's communicative skills than will parents.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Television viewing has been accused of consuming the majority of a child's week. In 1986 children watched television on the average of 28 hours a week; however, that number decreased over the next several years and, by 1992, the average had dropped to 23 hours. Half of this time the children spent watching alone or with other children. The other half was co-viewing with adults. About 90 % of the children watched programs that were not designed for them (Comstock, 1991). This child involvement in adult viewing where they don't understand the communication cues has been said to be detrimental to the child's academic development.

Yet young children can and do learn from television programs, but the longer a child has spent watching TV at any one time, the more difficult he or she is to distract (Anderson, 1987). So what are the children missing because of the hours spent watching TV?

Much of the research literature concerning children and media has been concerned with the harm that media may cause. Television should be regulated by responsible adults, but many times parents or other adults are not home to guide their children's choices of programs. This has given rise to the V-chip where parents can program their television sets to certain shows that they can curb undesirable programs, such as those with violent scenes (Banta, 2000).

There has been much research done on the effects of violence in television on children.

In 1960 Leonard Eron, Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, studied third graders in Columbia County in semi-rural New York. He observed that the more violent television these eight-year-olds watched at home, the more aggressive they were in school. Eron returned to Columbia County in 1971, when the children from his sample were nineteen. He found that the boys who had watched a lot of violent television when they were eight were more likely to get in trouble with the law when older. He returned a third time in 1982, when his subjects were thirty. He discovered that those who had watched the most television violence at age eight inflicted more violent punishments on their children, were convicted of more serious crimes, and reported more aggressive by their spouses than those who had watched less violent television (Gerbner, 1997).

Other studies show that excessive viewing has resulted in lower achievement. For this thesis, the literature review concentrates on television and its relation to reading and language skills. A child's understanding of television wording and jargon is known as "teleliteracy" and most of the current argument regarding "teleliteracy" centers on its effect on literacy in general (Bianculli, 1992).

Some believe that educational television is making great milestones toward promoting literacy (Palmer, 1993). The majority, however, see television

as acidic, eating away at literacy. Students are more likely to know how to complete the theme song from "Gilligan's Island" than how to finish a Shakespearean couplet (Marc, 1995). Marc says that television is eroding long-term social memory and substituting Disney fictions. Television is creating a world of "subliterate" who might be able to read but find it a lot more boring than an episode of "Deep Six Nine" (Marc, 1995). Attention spans of students have melted down to the MTV clip and the sound bite (Marc, 1995).

Some television programs combine entertainment and education to help children learn characters and shapes, sequence numbers and letters, and vocabulary. However, children learn far less from TV than they do from spending comparable time in reading (Solomon, 1983).

Barry Sanders (1994), tried to establish a theory when he states that the disciplined, reflective self-accounting person is the product of literature, silent reading, and the private experiences with texts. Reading engages the imagination by allowing the person to construct what the logicians call contrafactuals. It confers objectivity, neutrality, and the ability to consider things from outside the give and take of the everyday sensory world. Television is anti-literacy, worse, it even erodes orality and both literacy and orality are necessary for the development of healthy children.

Dr. Jane Healy, author of *Endangered Minds*, says, " The overall effects of television viewing and other forms of video on the growing brain are poorly understood, but research strongly indicates that it has the potential to affect both



the brain itself and related learning abilities. Abilities to sustain attention independently, stick to problems actively, listen intelligently, read with understanding, and use language effectively may be particularly at risk. No one knows how much exposure is necessary to make a difference. Likewise, no information is available about the overall effects on intelligence of large amounts of time taken away from physical exercise, social and independent play, pleasure reading, sustained conversation, or roaming around in one's own imagination. There is the notion that left hemisphere language systems and higher-order organizational abilities, including the all important control, motivation, and planning functions of the prefrontal lobes, may be in jeopardy for children who watch without expending much mental effort" (Healy, 1990).

As part of a media literacy project, Mima Spencer of the College of Education at the University of Oregon concurred with Dr. Healy. She argued that language skills are best fostered through reading and active two-way participation in conversations and play activities. Excessive (3-5 hours) TV watching can interfere with growth in these areas (Spencer, 1999).

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry issued a statement on children and watching TV in 1996. It stated that children also learn information from television that may be inappropriate or incorrect. They often can not tell the difference between the fantasy presented on television versus reality. Children who watch a lot of television are likely to have lower

grades, read fewer books, exercise less, and be overweight (AACAP, 1996).

### PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are several studies that have been done on the effects of television on learning abilities. One four-year longitudinal study was of low-income children's media use and its relationship to the subsequent development of their academic skills, school readiness, and school adjustments (Wright and Huston, 1995).

More than 250 families from Missouri and Kansas who had preschool children participated in the study. Children were two to four years of age at the beginning of the study and five to seven at the end. The families were evaluated four times, once each year, in a two-hour office visit. The parent was interviewed and the child was tested on a variety of achievement tests and assessment situations. There was a two-hour visit each year in the home to assess supports for social, emotional, cognitive, and educational development (Wright and Huston, 1995).

One of the questions considered was how television shared time with other activities in the child's life. Did television displace other beneficial activities? Specifically did it replace reading and other educational activities? The results were not as expected. Children with the highest levels of school achievement watched on an average about ten hours a week. They did better than children who watched little or no television. However, above ten hours a

week, school achievement was lower the more television a child viewed (Wright and Huston, 1995).

High viewers of "Sesame Street" and other children's informational programs spent more time reading and engaging in educational activities than did low viewers. Therefore, educational television did not displace print use and other educational activities, rather it may have enhanced them (Wright and Huston, 1995).

Children who spent a lot of time watching cartoons and adult programs spent less time in educational activities and reading. The greatest negative effects of television came from the cartoon viewing of the six-and seven-year olds. Those of this same group who regularly watched informative children's programming performed better on reading comprehension (Wright and Huston, 1995).

A synthesis of 23 research studies done between 1954 and 1980 found a slight negative relationship between television viewing and achievement. The effect was found in large, national surveys and statewide assessments as well as small studies in single schools. This meta analysis concluded that television accounts for little variance in achievement (Williams, Haertel, Haertel, Walberg 1982).

The synthesis also showed that up to 10 hours a week viewing might actually enhance achievement slightly, but beyond that achievement diminishes (Williams et al, 1982). The study also found that the negative relationship was



stronger for girls and for children of high intelligence than for boys and children of average or low intelligence (Williams, et al, 1982).

The objective of another study was to determine if the students' preferences for reading or TV viewing were related to the quality of their leisure reading.

Reading logs were kept by 198 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who also recorded their complete TV viewing for four weeks. Four groups emerged from this study:

1. heavy TV viewing and heavy reading, 2. light TV viewing and heavy reading, 3. light TV viewing and light reading, and 4. heavy TV viewing and light reading.

Heavy viewing was considered three or more hours a day (Neuman, 1982).

Light viewing is assumed to be anything less.

The specific goal was to see whether there would be a difference in the quality of a particular book that was chosen by members of the four groups. The quality of the book was determined by an analysis of its intellectual challenge. The researchers used Gray and Rogers Maturity in Reading Scale which measures the maturity level of both fiction and nonfiction materials. Two reading professionals analyzed 171 books that the sample group had read and rated them from one to five with five being the highest level of maturity. Each book received three scores based on quality of subject matter, intellectual challenge, and richness of ideas. Students who clearly preferred reading to television viewing read the highest quality of books. Average scores for students who were either heavy or light in both reading and television viewing showed no difference in book level preferences. Those who were heavy TV viewers



and high level readers did not choose lower quality leisure reading material. However, those students who were heavy TV viewers and light readers tended to choose books of lower quality (Neuman, 1982). This continues to indicate that the more a student watches television, his desire for educational activities seem to decrease.

There was another extensive study conducted with the California Assessment Program survey and the viewing habits of sixth graders. It followed Gerbner's theory of mainstreaming which is the sharing of that commonality among heavy viewers in those demographic groups whose light viewers hold divergent views. In other words, differences deriving from other factors and social forces may be diminished or even absent among heavy viewers (Gerbner, 1980). The socioeconomic and environmental factors that might have an affect on school performance for light viewers do not seem to have as much influence on the results for the heavy viewers. Therefore, it seems plausible that heavier viewing of television diminishes differences in academic achievement in groups defined on the basis of variables associated with socioeconomic status (Fetler, 1983).

There were 292 California schools that participated with 10,603 usable self-report questionnaires in the research. For the question on how much television did the sixth grader view a day, a second survey was used to substantiate their response. On the second survey the students were to report how often they watched each of 27 shows before or after school. The ratings

were averaged to obtain the number of hours. Other questions asked whether the students did homework in front of the set, watched the same programs as their parents, discussed what they saw with their parents, watched late at night, were permitted to watch whatever they wanted, and how frequently they watched public or educational television (Fetler, 1983).

In reading and mathematics, scores were relatively higher for students watching one to two hours per day compared to those who watched a little more or none at all. Students watching relatively moderate amounts of television had higher achievement scores than those reporting watching less. This information would be explainable for reading and English language usage but doesn't seem to fit for the increase in mathematic skills scores (Fetler, 1983).

To compare the mainstreaming theory, teachers were asked to write the occupation of their students' parents on the back of the test booklet. The researchers believed that the teachers would know their students well enough to choose one of the following categories: unskilled, semi-skilled to skilled, semi-professional, and professional. There were 16% of the parents that were unskilled, 38% semi-skilled to skilled, 24% semi-professional, and 21% professional. Differences in achievement for students of different social classes were large when viewing was light. They diminished as the amount of viewing increased. This finding suggests that students who would otherwise do well by virtue of aptitude or environment are more adversely affected by increased viewing. For example, students from homes where the parents were

professionals would rank in the 80th percentile on the test for those that watched half an hour or less a day but dropped to below the 75th percentile for those that watched six hours or more a day (Fetler, 1983).

Heavy viewers were more likely than light viewers to do their homework in front of the TV, to watch the same programs as their parents, to discuss programs with their parents, and to watch more often in the morning and late at night. Light viewers were less likely to be permitted to watch their preferences than heavy viewers. Heavy viewers watched markedly less public television than the average viewer. There was also a marked difference in the shows most frequently watched by heavy viewers. They watched more light entertainment while the light viewers watched more public affairs, performing arts or public television (Fetler, 1983).

The relationship between the amount of viewing and school achievement is not simple. Even research of this magnitude can only show a correlation, not a cause and effect.

Taking a slightly different angle and looking at communication skills of nonverbal behavior learned from television, a 1993 study suggested that people's actions are shaped by their environment (Feldman, 1993). The norms prescribing the appropriateness of specific facial expressions vary as a result of culture and social context (Ekman, 1984). One powerful source of information relevant to the socialization of nonverbal behavioral skills is television. The author of the study had previously conducted a content analysis on one hour of



television viewing and found that there were 200 emotional displays. Because of this children may learn a substantial amount from this exposure (Feldman, 1993).

The subjects of the study were second through sixth graders. Three nonverbal skills of decoding, spontaneous encoding, and posed encoding were assessed for each of five emotions: anger, disgust, fear or surprise, happiness, and sadness. The children were to identify these emotions from 20 videotaped facial expressions. Then spontaneous encoding ability was assessed by having the children watch a series of movie clips and their own expressions were videotaped. Then they were asked to make facial expressions to identify the five emotions as they were videotaped. Subjects who watched television at high levels were significantly more accurate when encoding and decoding emotions that appear often on television shows than those that appear infrequently. A conclusion was made that a child's television viewing is linked to his or her nonverbal behavior skills. There is the belief that children's nonverbal behavioral skills are linked to their social competence (Feldman and Coats, 1993).

But in a slightly contrasting vein, one study about television viewing and the ability to speak without fear states that television may cause communication apprehension. Children who spend more time watching television than interacting with parents, siblings, and friends may develop communication apprehension because they have not learned the be way for interacting with



others. As a result the child grows into a shy, quiet, withdrawn adolescent, and communication apprehension becomes more firmly established (Stowle, 1992).

A report to the Surgeon General on Television and Social Behavior noted that low-TV-user first graders reported higher levels of daily play with other children compared to high-TV-user groups. Among child rearing practices associated with high TV viewing were demands for obedience and quiet (Dorr, 1992). This also could lead to communication apprehension.

In the study the following hypotheses were developed: 1. The preschool or elementary child who watches more than two hours of TV per day will be more likely to develop communication apprehension, 2. The preschool or elementary child who receives communication suppression will be more likely to develop communication apprehension, 3. Preschool or elementary school children who watch more than two hours of television per day and who receive communication suppression will display higher levels of communication apprehension than children who watch less television and are encouraged to express themselves orally (Stowle, 1992).

The sample were students from a junior college going to college for the first time. They were from families of moderate to high socioeconomic status. Most were caucasian. More than half were very apprehensive about speaking publicly (Stowle, 1992).

A self-report questionnaire and the last six questions of the Personal

Report of Communication Apprehension which dealt with speech giving were used as research tools. The subjects were also given a list of television programming for 1970 and they were to answer another questionnaire about how much television they watched between the ages of three and eight. The first hypothesis was confirmed and a follow-up study done a year later supported the same results. The other two hypotheses were not supported. The conclusions stated that if a child is spending several hours a day in front of the television he will not have time to interact with others in order to learn what is required to cope in a communicating world (Stowle, 1992).

There are other researchers who believe that children do have the power to regulate their own viewing time and make good choices in programming. Myron Orleans (1999), Professor of Sociology at California State University at Fullerton, says it is important to recognize that children are not passive consumers of media. The very poliferation of media options and contents offers children a wide range of choices. Research on early childhood supports the notion that children are creative and critical users of media (Austin, Roberts, and Nass, 1990) and that media serve as topical resources for children's interaction (Jenkins, 1997).

The present study was conducted to test for real and perceived effects of television on children's testing performance and communication activities.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The sample for this study was chosen from among the elementary school children of Christian County, Kentucky, a farming and industrial community of more than 72,000 people. Its multi-ethnic characteristics are reflected in all 11 of its elementary schools of which nine participated in this study.

The fourth grade students of Christian County, Kentucky, Public Schools were the target audience for this research because they were the group that had taken the most recent Comprehensive Test Battery Survey (CTBS) for which scores were available. The CTBS is an annual assessment test that is administered to Kentucky school children in grades three, eight, and 11. It measures reading, language, and mathematic skills. The language skill scores were used to test the first hypothesis.

The parents of these students were asked how many hours a day they thought their child watched television on a modified Likert Scale questionnaire that also asked questions about their child's use of television in conversation and in writing. The teachers of these students were given a different questionnaire with comparative questions about their students' television viewing and use in classroom discussion or writing assignments. The questionnaires for this opinion survey are included in the Appendix.



## PROCEDURE

Packets containing a teacher questionnaire with instructions to disperse the parent surveys in order of their classroom roll and enough parent surveys to cover the classroom census were compiled and delivered to each of the participating elementary school principals. Each packet was coded to represent the school and each teacher survey was coded so that the teacher would be matched to the school.

Each parent survey was coded to the school and to the classroom. For example, the school whose name comes first in the alphabet was coded as 1. It had three fourth grade teachers, therefore their packets and questionnaires were coded 1A, 1B, and 1C. The parent surveys for that school were coded 1A1-20, 1B1-20, and 1C1-20. This procedure was used for the rest of the nine participating schools with each succeeding school receiving a number code.

The principals were also given personal instructions as well as written directions as to the procedure of the survey. After the parents had returned their questionnaires, the principals were to randomly select 16 to be sent to the District Assessment Coordinator to be compared to the CTBS language skill scores. The principals were given a code-name list form that they along with the fourth grade teacher could match the parent survey to the student. That list and the chosen parent surveys were sent to the Coordinator. After the scores were placed on the envelopes, the list was destroyed by the Coordinator. The surveyor never saw the names on that list. This way anonymity was maintained.



The parents were sent a letter of instructions along with their questionnaire telling them the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary. They were also informed that by returning a questionnaire they gave consent to use their responses in this study and that their survey might be selected as one of the 16 from their child's school to be compared to their child's CTBS language skill score. Copies of the letters of instruction along with the Austin Peay State University Human Subjects application and approval letter are included in the Appendix.

There were a total of 125 parent surveys that were compared to their child's CTBS language skill scores. The discrepancy between the 144 expected and the number received was due to some schools having less than 16 returned. Some selected parent surveys had no scores because their fourth grader did not take the CTBS last year. Any remaining parent surveys that were not used in the CTBS comparison were picked up to be evaluated as to the remaining three hypotheses. All returned surveys were used in these comparisons.

### RESPONSE RATE

Parents that chose to participate sent their questionnaires back in a sealed envelope that was provided. Their fourth grade child brought that envelope back to his or her teacher.

The teachers were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that by returning a questionnaire they gave implied consent for use of their

responses in this study. The teachers who participated returned their questionnaire in a self-addressed stamped envelope that was provided.

There were 535 parent questionnaires sent home with the fourth grade children and 226 returned for a response rate of 42%. Twenty-two teachers were given questionnaires and 18 mailed back their responses for an 81.8% return.

### CODING THE DATA

Three questions were asked of the teachers concerning amounts of time: time they think their students spend in watching television and in full-sentence conversation, and how much TV viewing time do they think is excessive. Responses were coded 1-4 with one being the least amount and four the greatest amount chosen. There were five questions concerning amounts of time asked of the parents. Three of those questions were nearly the same as the teachers were asked. The two additional questions were concerning time their child spent in speaking with adults. Those responses were coded using the same scale as the teacher responses.

Three of the parents' questions were measured in frequencies: how often does your child write a letter or discuss with you about something he or she saw on television, and how often do you think teachers ask their students to write stories about what they see on TV? Those were coded with never being 1, rarely 2, sometimes 3, and frequently 4. The teachers responded to three such questions: how often does television programming inspire your students with

subject ideas to write in their journals, how often is a TV plot used in the classroom discussion and how often do you ask your students to write a story about what they saw on television? Those responses were coded the same way as the parent responses.

Two questions on the parent survey about turning off the TV and spending more time in conversation required yes and no responses. The teachers answered likewise to a question about whether turning off the TV would cause their students' families to spend more time in conversation? A yes was coded as 1 and no as 2.

There were two questions on each of the questionnaires that measured effect: what effect do you think excessive TV viewing has on your child's performance in school, and what effect do you think excessive TV viewing has on your students' Comprehensive Test Battery Survey communicative skills scores? These used terms of no effect, small, medium or great. The no effect response was coded 1 with great being 4. The other questions: what effect do you think television viewing has on your child's being able to say what he or she really means to say and what effect do you think television viewing has on your students' communication skills could be responded to on a five-point range from strongly negative to strongly positive. Those responses were coded with strongly negative effect being 1 and strongly positive being 5.

The teachers had two questions that were answered in terms of degree. There were nine selections to questions about the percent of their students who

wrote at grade level and who could carry on a meaningful conversation with adults. These were coded with less than 25% as 1 and 100% as 9.

Missing data from the teacher and parent surveys were coded with 0. In the case where a parent survey was not selected as part of the CTBS language skill score correlation with TV viewing the missing score was coded as 00.

Comparisons were made between the parent and teacher responses. In the instances where there was no teacher questionnaire those parent responses were used in the total percentages of responses to the specific questions.



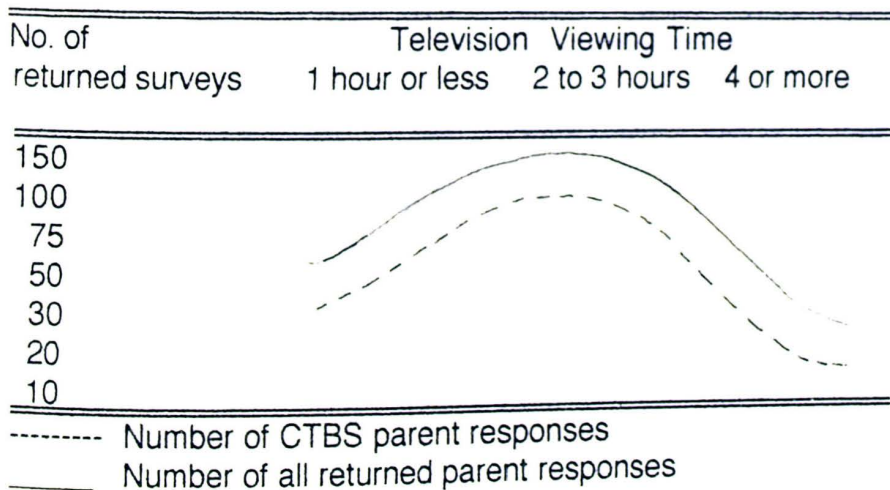
## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

When the data were analyzed the numbers were in the direction proposed in Hypothesis 1, which states that the more television parents report their child watching, the lower that child will score on the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey, but the difference was not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient of  $-.080$  between higher TV viewing as related to lower CTBS scores was not significant ( $p=.373$ , two tailed test). Therefore the relationship that existed between parent's estimate of television viewing and the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey language skills scores was not enough to make a difference.

Figure 1 shows the slightly skewed bell-shaped curve distribution of the parents responses to the number of hours they think their child watches TV and Table 1 shows the average CTBS scores for each of the three time choices.

**FIGURE 1 Distribution of the number of parent responses for each TV viewing time choice**



**TABLE 1**

**Average CTBS Language Skill Scores in each TV Viewing Time Choice (scores rounded to nearest whole number)**

Time Choice	1 hour or less	2 to 3 hours	4 or more
Average CTBS score	52	45	44

Interestingly, when correlation coefficients were run on the teachers' estimates of how much time their students watch television Hypothesis 1, the more the parents reported their child watching TV the lower the CTBS score, was confirmed ( $r = .219$ ;  $p = .027$ , two tailed significance).

Hypothesis 2 suggested that teachers would think their students watch more TV than parents would think they watch. Sixty percent of the parents and 59% of the teachers thought the fourth graders watched between two and three hours of television a day. However, five percent of the teachers chose one hour or less as compared to 23% of the parents who said their child only watched one hour or less of television a day. Also 35% of the teachers believed their fourth grade students watched TV four or more hours a day while only 14% of the parents believed that was the case.

In Table 2 the SPSS(Statistical Package for Social Sciences)  $t$ -test for differences between teachers and parents shows there was a significant difference with  $p = .000$ .

**TABLE 2**  
**Parent and Teacher Estimates of Children's  
 TimeSpent Daily Watching Television**

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	t	Significance
Hours of TV	Parent	1.90	.619	-9.38	.000
	Teachers	2.44	.552		

The average hours of television the parents believed their child watched was less than what the teachers thought as shown in the mean figures above. The standard deviation is slightly greater for the parents. These factors support Hypothesis 2.

The second variable was the amount of time the children spent in conversation. The parents' estimate of time spent in conversation was derived from a scale of three questions: " how much time do you think your child spends in full sentence conversation with others outside of the classroom," "how often does your child talk with adults while they are with you," and "how often in your opinion does your child talk with adults?"

Using an inter-item correlation summary statistic that estimates the total variance of the set of scales and the individual contribution of each item known as Cronbach's Alpha, the above scale has a reliability coefficient of .7076. A high correlation co-efficient is defined as a statistic greater than .60 (Singletary, 1994).



The teachers' estimates of time spent in conversation by their students were taken from two questions: "how much time outside of the classroom do you think your students, on the average, are involved in full sentence conversation with others" and "how many of your students can carry on a meaningful conversation with adults?" This set only had a moderate alpha coefficient of .4097, thus not considered to be reliable. Yet there were significant differences between the parent and teacher responses to amounts of time spent in conversation. Parents did estimate their child spends more time in conversation than the teachers estimated. A t-test comparing mean scores of the two groups shows the difference was statistically significant, consequently Hypothesis 3, parents will estimate their child spends more time in conversation than the teachers will estimate, was supported (see Tables 3 and 4).

As to the last hypothesis, teachers will estimate a stronger negative effect of TV on children's communicative skills than will the parents, the teachers estimate of effect came from two questions: "what effect do you think that television viewing has on your students' communication skills" and "what effect do you think that excessive television viewing has on the CTBS communicative skills scores of your students?" The parents estimate of effect came from responses to "what effect do you think television viewing has on your child being able to say what he or she really means to say" and "what effect do you think excessive TV viewing has on your child's performance in school?" These scales also lacked reliability on the Cronbach Alpha correlation scale.

There was a significant difference between the estimates of the teachers and the parents as to the negative effects of television on communication skills and school performance. This difference as shown in Tables 3 and 4 supports Hypothesis 4, the teachers did estimate a statistically significant greater negative effect of television on their students.

**TABLE 3**

**Parent and Teacher Estimates of Hours Spent in Conversation and Negative Effect of Television**

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Significance*
Parents' estimate of conversation	8.71	1.94	9.69	.000*
Teachers' estimate of conversation	6.56	2.30		
Parents' estimate of effect	4.33	1.05	10.60	.000*
Teachers' estimate of effect	3.17	.96		

\* (Significant difference if  $P < .05$ ) SD- standard deviation

**TABLE 4**  
**Comparisons of Parents and Teachers in**  
**Percentages to Similiar Survey Questions**

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Selection</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
Time child spends in full sentence conversation	20 min. a day	9.9	17.7
	30 min. a day	16.6	35.3
	1 hr + a day	<u>73.5</u>	<u>47.0</u>
	Total	100%	100%
Effect of TV on communication skills of the child	Strongly negative	4.6	5.9
	Somewhat negative	21.0	64.7
	No effect	38.9	0
	Somewhat positive	30.1	11.8
	Strongly positive	<u>5.4</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total	100%	100%
How often a TV program is used in discussion with child	Never	4.1	5.9
	Rarely	12.9	58.8
	Sometimes	57.1	35.3
	Frequently	<u>26.3</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total	100%	100%
How often parents think teachers ask and teachers actually require children to write about TV programs	Never	28.4	70.5
	Rarely	52.6	23.7
	Sometimes	17.6	5.8
	Frequently	<u>1.4</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total	100%	100%
If less TV viewing would more time be spent in family conversation	Yes	75.6	88.2
	No	<u>24.4</u>	<u>11.8</u>
	Total	100%	100%
How much TV a day is excessive	1 hr or less	4.5	0
	2-3 hours	24.0	64.7
	4 hours	45.4	35.3
	More	<u>26.1</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total	100%	100%



TABLE 4 continued

Keywords	Selection	Parents	Teachers
Effect of excessive TV viewing on school performance	No effect	25.1	12.5
	Small amount	31.4	25.0
	Medium amount	22.8	31.2
	Great Amount	<u>20.7</u>	<u>31.3</u>
	Total	100%	100%

Parents and teachers were also asked to give their opinions about the fourth graders' communication with adults. The majority of the parents thought their child spoke often with adults on a daily basis, but most of them also thought that it was not while the child was with them. The teachers' perception of the percentage of their students who could carry on a meaningful conversation with adults ranged from 25% to 100%. Most of the teachers indicated that 75% of their students were capable of this task.

In some of the studies that have been conducted concerning television viewing and conversation, some parents had been reluctant to turn off the television set. More than 81% percent of the parents in this study said they had no problem turning off the set so that they could talk with their child.

Writing skills as part of language skills of the fourth graders were briefly covered in this study also. Leisure writing such as writing a letter can help improve a child's ability to put thoughts down on paper and thus perhaps increase his communication skills. Only two parents checked that their children frequently wrote letters to someone about something they saw on TV

while 132 indicated their children had never written a letter mentioning anything they had seen on television.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Does increased television viewing have an effect on school performance? In this study the average CTBS language skills score was lower for those students whose parents indicated they watched television four or more hours a day and higher for those whose parents reported they watched only one hour or less. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

What was interesting is that, when the correlation was made between the teachers' estimates of time spent watching television and the CTBS language skills scores of their students, there was a significant difference. This may be because the teachers are familiar with their students' overall school achievement. It also could be a general belief by some of the teachers that television has no educational benefit.

Another interesting fact was that there were very high scores and extremely low scores in each of the three viewing time groups. However, the students whose parents indicated their child watched four or more hours a day had consistently lower scores on the language skills portion of the CTBS than did those in the other two groups. This seems to follow the same premise found in other studies (Fetler, 1983; Williams, 1982; Wright and Huston, 1995) as the television viewing time increased school achievement decreased. These same studies also found that some television may even enhance school performance. In this study 17% of the students whose parents reported their child watched



two to three hours a day had scores of 80 or above while only 15% of the group that watched one hour or less made that score. That dropped to 11% for those whose parents reported their child watched four or more hours daily. Still these percentages are relatively close together; therefore one can only conclude that there is very little, if any, correlation between increased television viewing and CTBS scores. It would also seem to follow that television does not cultivate improper communication skills and that not all programming is negative.

However, the teachers responded as expected to the negative effects of increased television viewing. The majority felt that two to three hours a day was excessive whereas the majority of the parents felt four or more hours would be too much. The teachers felt that television had a greater negative effect on communication skills and CTBS scores than the parents felt.

As indicated before and in previous studies some television may enhance learning. This positive influence would then have to come from programs where the child understood and interacted with the characters such as in "Sesame Street" or educational television. Perhaps the majority of the teachers were thinking that their students watched programs where they were passive viewers and their minds were not being stimulated.

Another purpose of this study was to evaluate parents' and teachers' perceptions of time spent in full sentence conversation by their fourth grade child or students. The greatest number of parents thought that their child spent an hour or more each day in full sentence conversation while the most of the

teachers thought it was much less. The difference may be somewhat related to the interpretation of a full sentence.

The teachers' opinions were much closer to the parents' opinions as to the ability of the fourth graders to carry on a meaningful conversation with adults. Yet the parents stated that the majority of the child's conversation with adults was not while the child was with them. This suggests that the parents thought their child spent more time in conversation with adults while they were at school. This would also indicate a need that parents take more time to talk with their child and encourage them to participate in conversation with other adults in their presence.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY AND FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

This was an opinion survey comparison and is valuable in understanding the differences of opinions concerning television and its effects on conversation and school achievement. However, a scientific experiment evaluating the types of programming the children are watching and a survey of the children's opinions would have enhanced this study. In the future, environmental and cultural factors that may effect communication skills should also be studied.

The experiment could consist of three groups of fourth graders with two groups watching different children's programming and the third being the control group. The first group could watch a cartoon that would not be considered educational and the other would watch a show on educational

television. Then the researcher could have a discussion with all three groups separately concerning these programs. The students could also be asked to write about what they thought they learned from the program they watched. For those in the control group they could write about what they thought they would learn from the programs and what they did learn from the discussion.

Classroom observations and evaluations could also help in assessing the communication skills of the fourth graders. In any event the children themselves need to be involved in the study and a more reliable measure would need to be used.

In this study some of the questions asked were not considered to be reliable because there were not enough questions asked about each variable. A measure that has been pretested and considered reliable should be used if one could be found to cover the relationship between communication skills and television viewing.

#### BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Research in this study would indicate that there are many other factors that affect communication skills and that properly selected TV programming might indeed increase verbal abilities. It also could lead to a classroom discussion of what programming would help the children and they might be encouraged to choose more informational shows. There is also a need for children to be encouraged to spend more time in conversation when they are not in school.



The following were some suggestions from the Media Literacy Online Project established by the College of Education at the University of

Oregon. Television viewing can have positive effects if parents and teachers:

1. Set limits. Limit your children's viewing to one or two hours a day. Participate with your children in alternative activities such as reading, sports, conversation, games, and hobbies. Because children model their behavior after their parents, consider your own viewing habits: set a good example.
2. Eliminate some television viewing by setting a few basic rules, such as no television before meals, or before completing household tasks or homework.
3. Encourage the children to plan their viewing time by checking the TV Guide or newspaper rather than flipping channels. Help the children to decide which show to see and encourage them to watch a variety of programs appropriate for their level of understanding. The television should be turned on only for special programs.
4. Participate with your children. Watch with them and talk about the programs afterward. Explain situations that are confusing. Ask why any violent scenes occurred and how painful they were. Ask your child for ideas about ways the conflict could have been resolved without violence.
5. Encourage children to watch programs about characters who cooperate and care about each other. Such programs can influence children in positive ways by modeling desirable behavior and setting good examples.

6. Analyze commercials. Children need your help to critically evaluate the validity of the many products advertised on television. Teach children to analyze commercials and recognize exaggerated claims. Point out that the makers of the products pay for advertising.
7. Express your views. Call your local television station when you are offended or pleased by something on television. Stations, networks, and sponsors are all concerned about the effects of television viewing on children and are responsive to parents' concerns (Spencer, 1999).

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## **APPENDIXES**



## PARENT SURVEY

This survey is part of a graduate thesis being conducted by an Austin Peay State University student. Please answer the questions by marking the space in front of the selection that best describes your opinion. Please return this questionnaire with your fourth grade child to be given to his or her teacher tomorrow. Please do not put any names on this survey. The information will be used for statistical purposes only. By answering this questionnaire you give permission for this information to be used in a graduate thesis study.

1. How much time during the day do you think your fourth grade child spends watching television?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour or less      \_\_\_\_\_ 2 to 3 hours      \_\_\_\_\_ 4 hours or more

2. How much time in a day do you think your child spends in full sentence conversation with others outside of school?

\_\_\_\_\_ 20 minutes or less      \_\_\_\_\_ 30 minutes      \_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour or more

3. What effect do you think television viewing has on your child being able to say what he or she really means to say?

\_\_\_\_\_ strongly positive      \_\_\_\_\_ somewhat poitive      \_\_\_\_\_ no effect

\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat negative      \_\_\_\_\_ strongly negative

4. How often does your child write a letter to someone about something they saw on TV?

\_\_\_\_\_ frequently      \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes      \_\_\_\_\_ rarely      \_\_\_\_\_ never

5. How often do you have a two way discussion with your child about something they saw on TV?

\_\_\_\_\_ frequently      \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes      \_\_\_\_\_ rarely      \_\_\_\_\_ never

6. How often do you think teachers ask children to write stories about what they saw on television the night before?

\_\_\_\_\_ frequently \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ rarely \_\_\_\_\_ never

7. If there were less time spent watching television would you spend more time talking with your fourth grader?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

8. How much television viewing time a day do you think is too much?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour or less \_\_\_\_\_ 2-3 hours \_\_\_\_\_ 4 hours \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more

9. What effect do you think excessive TV watching has on your child's performance in school?

\_\_\_\_\_ no effect \_\_\_\_\_ small amount \_\_\_\_\_ medium amount \_\_\_\_\_ great amount

10. How often in a day does your child talk to adults while they are with you?

\_\_\_\_\_ seldom \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 times a day \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4 times a day \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more

11. Have you ever turned off the television so that you could talk with your child?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

12. How often in your opinion does your child talk with adults during the day?

\_\_\_\_\_ seldom \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 times a day \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4 times \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more

## TEACHER SURVEY

This survey is part of a graduate thesis being conducted by an Austin Peay State University graduate student. Please answer the questions by marking the spaces that best represents your opinion. Please mail your questionnaire in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided and please do not put any names on this survey. By answering and returning this questionnaire you give permission for the information to be used in this graduate this study for statistical purposes only.

1. On the average, how much time during the day do you think your students watch television?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour or less      \_\_\_\_\_ 2 to 3 hours      ----- 4 hours or more

2. How much time outside of the classroom do you think your students, on the average, are involved in full sentence conversation with others?

\_\_\_\_\_ 20 minutes or less      \_\_\_\_\_ 30 Minutes      \_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour or more

3. What effect do you think that television viewing has on your students communication skills?

\_\_\_\_\_ strongly positive      \_\_\_\_\_ somewhat positive      \_\_\_\_\_ no effect  
 \_\_\_\_\_ somewhat negative      \_\_\_\_\_ strongly negative

4. In your opinion, how often does television programming inspire your students with subject ideas to write in their journals?

\_\_\_\_\_ frequently      \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes      \_\_\_\_\_ rarely      \_\_\_\_\_ never

5. How often have you used a television program plot or any part thereof in classroom discussion?

\_\_\_\_\_ frequently      \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes      \_\_\_\_\_ rarely      \_\_\_\_\_ never



6. How often have you asked your fourth graders to write a story about what they saw on television the night before?

\_\_\_\_\_ frequently \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ rarely \_\_\_\_\_ never

7. If there were less time spent watching TV, do you think your students' families would spend more time talking with one another?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

8. How much television viewing time a day do you consider excessive?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour or less \_\_\_\_\_ 2 to 3 hours \_\_\_\_\_ 4 hours \_\_\_\_\_ more

9. What effect do you think that excessive television viewing has on the Comprehensive Test Battery Communication Skills scores of your students?

\_\_\_\_\_ no effect \_\_\_\_\_ small amount \_\_\_\_\_ medium amount \_\_\_\_\_ great amount

10. What percent of your students write at grade level?

\_\_\_\_\_ less than 25% \_\_\_\_\_ 25% \_\_\_\_\_ less than 50% \_\_\_\_\_ 50%

\_\_\_\_\_ less than 75% \_\_\_\_\_ 75% \_\_\_\_\_ more than 75% \_\_\_\_\_ less than 100%

\_\_\_\_\_ 100%

11. What percentage of your students can carry on a meaningful conversation with adults?

\_\_\_\_\_ less than 25% \_\_\_\_\_ 25% \_\_\_\_\_ less than 50% \_\_\_\_\_ 50%

\_\_\_\_\_ less than 75% \_\_\_\_\_ 75% \_\_\_\_\_ more than 75% \_\_\_\_\_ less than 100% \_\_\_\_\_ 100%

# AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

## CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

TITLE: TELEVISION VIEWING AS IT RELATES TO THE COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS OF FOURTH GRADERS IN CHRISTIAN COUNTY, KENTUCKY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Flora Schaller

FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Dr. Reece Elliott

PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION: This study is to see if there is a correlation between increased television viewing and the decline in the ability of fourth graders in Christian County, Kentucky schools to communicate orally as well as in writing. The investigation will also compare the teachers responses to the responses of the parents in the two surveys that are attached.

HYPOTHESES: 1. The more television parents report their children watching the lower that child will score on the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey.  
 2. The teachers will think their students on the average watch more television than their parents think they watch.  
 3. Parents will estimate their children spend more time in meaningful conversation than the teachers will estimate.  
 4. Teachers will estimate a stronger negative effect of television on children's communicative skills than will parents.

SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE PROJECT: Principle investigator will pay all costs.

**RECRUITMENT AND COMPENSATION PROCEDURES:** Superintendent of Christian County Public Schools, Dr. Jim Jury has granted permission for me to conduct this survey and has allowed me to ask the Assessment Co-ordinator, Mr. Scott Harper, to assist in comparing student scores without me knowing the names of those students. I will be asking the help of the 11 elementary school principals and the 30 fourth grade teachers as well as the parents of the 518 students to complete the survey. A letter of permission from Dr. Jury is attached.

**RESEARCH PROCEDURES:** A letter will be sent to each of the 11 principals explaining the survey and making arrangements for a personal visit to further explain and to give them their schools packets. Packets containing a teacher survey and enough parent surveys to cover each classroom census will be given to the principal of each of the schools. The packets will be label. For instance, Belmont School has three fourth grade teachers and classes therefore the label would be Belmont A, Belmont B, Belmont C. The principal will give those packets to the teachers and he would know which packet went to what teacher. The teachers would be asked to fill out their survey and mail it back to me. Their surveys would be coded 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, and so forth with each of the numbers matching the alphabetical order of the schools and the a,b,c, or d referring to the number of fourth grade teachers in a particular school.

The parent surveys will be sent home with the students. The teachers will be asked



To send the surveys home with the students in alphabetical order or order of their classroom roster. Each survey will be coded 1A1, 1A2, 1A3, and so forth until all students in a class has a parent survey. There will be no questions asked of the students. These surveys are meant to be answered by the parents. Letters explaining the procedures will be attached to the surveys for the teachers and parents. Copies of the letters, surveys, and coding page are attached. -

A deadline for returning the surveys will be set in order to facilitate completion of the project. The teacher will return the packet of surveys to the principal by the deadline so that he can randomly select 16 to be used to compare with the Comprehensive Battery Test Survey. From the codes on the surveys , the teachers and the principals will fill in the list to be sent to Mr. Harper. Sample of this form and instructions are included. Postage paid envelopes addressed to Mr. Harper will be given to the principals when the packets are delivered. The remainder of the surveys will be picked up from the principals the day following the deadline. After Mr. Harper has placed the CBTS communication skill scores on the parent surveys he will destroy the 11 lists and then those 176 surveys will be picked up from him.

**POTENTIAL RISKS:** There will be no questions asked of minors and parents will be told that their participation in the survey implies consent to use their

survey for statistical purposes only. They will also be told that 16 surveys will be compared to the communication portion of the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey. At no time will there be any names of teachers or students given to me, therefore, anonymity will be maintained.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:** Suggested guidelines could be given to parents based on the findings of this survey. Teachers would also be able to determine if there is a correlation between increased television viewing and lack of communicative skills in their fourth graders. This survey does not attempt to say there is a cause and effect. Also this survey should present some interesting comparisons between the responses of the teachers and the parents.

**INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT:** In the letters to the teachers and the parents they will be told that their participation in answering the survey is informed consent. By answering the questions on the survey they are giving permission to use the information for statistical purposes only. Letters are attached.

This is to certify that the only involvement of human participants in this research study will be as described above.

  
Principle Investigator Signature

  
Faculty Supervisor Signature

Austin Peay State University  
Institutional Review Board

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February 11, 2000

Flora Schaller  
C/O Reece Elliott, Ph.D.  
Department of Speech, Communication, and Theatre  
PO Box 7244  
Austin Peay State University  
Clarksville, TN 37044

RE: Your application dated November 24, 2000 regarding study number 00-021:  
Television Viewing and the Decline in Communication Skills of Fourth Graders in  
Christian County, Kentucky Public Schools (APSU)

Dear Ms. Schaller:

Thank you for your response to requests from a prior review of your application for the  
new study listed above.

This is to confirm that your application is now fully approved. The protocol is approved  
through one calendar year. You must obtain informed consent from all subjects;  
however, signed written consent is not required. This approval is subject to APSU  
Policies and Procedures governing human subjects research.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as most recently described effective  
immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before December 3, 2000,  
unless closed before that date.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and  
reviewed. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full  
board review.

Sincerely,



Dr. Parris R. Watts  
Chair, Austin Peay Institutional Review Board



I am a graduate student in the Speech/Communications/Theater Department at Austin Peay State University. As part of my thesis research I would like to survey teachers and parents of fourth grade students about the television viewing habits of these students. I am planning to correlate the findings of these surveys with the language skills scores from standardized tests administered to these same students last year. Dr. Jim Jury has granted me permission to ask for your school's participation in this study. Please see the attached letter. he also indicated that he would call to explain further about this study. Assessment Co-ordinator, Mr. Scott Harper, will access the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey language skills scores without me ever seeing the names on the tests.

The purpose of this letter is to explain the details of the procedures and, if you agree to participate, to set up a time when I can meet with you to deliver the survey materials and further explain the survey procedures.

If you agree to have your school participate, I will bring packets for each fourth grade teacher that contain a teacher survey and enough parent surveys to cover the census of each of the fourth grade classes in your school. Each packet will have an identifying code. I am asking you to handout the surveys and keep a list of what teacher receives which packet. The teachers will need to hand out the coded parent surveys by his or her class roll. When the surveys come back to the teacher from the parent, the teacher will return all surveys to you. I am asking you to randomly select 16 surveys from all surveys returned and create a list (on the form provided) of those surveys by code and by student name. This will allow the correct survey to be matched with the correct Comprehensive Test Battery Survey language skill score. At no time should you or the teacher open the envelopes and read the surveys returned by the parents as this would breach the confidentiality of the survey response. After selecting the 16 surveys and preparing the list, I am asking you to deliver those to Mr. Harper. Mr. Harper will then match the surveys to the language skill scores. Once matched, Mr. Harper will destroy the list. I will personally pick up any remaining surveys that were not sent to Mr. Harper.

The teachers will also be given an opportunity to fill out an anonymous survey about their perceptions of their student's television viewing habits. If the teachers agree to participate they may mail their surveys back to me in a stamped self-addressed envelope provided in the packet.

Thank you for reading this letter of explanation. I will follow up with a phone call. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants you may call the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs at Austin Peay State University-931-221-7881.

Sincerely,

Flora Schallier



## CHRISTIAN COUNTY PUBLIC

BUSINESS OFFICE 502X-6000 • 200 GLASS AVENUE • HENDERSONVILLE, KY 42424



## SCHOOLS

PHONE 502-602-1200

January 18, 2000

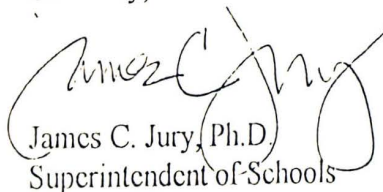
To Whom It May Concern:

Ms. Flora Schaller has my permission to conduct her study in the Christian County Public Schools. At no time will she be privilege to confidential information.

Principals have been given advance notice of this study and any decision to participate will be made at the building level.

If there is additional information that you require, please contact my office.

Sincerely,



James C. Jury, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

JJ:slp

To the Principals

Please list the names of the students that match the 16 parent surveys that were randomly selected from your school and send this list and those surveys to Mr. Scott Harper. A stamped addressed envelope is provided.

NUMBER	CODE	STUDENT NAME
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		

MR. SCOTT HARPER WILL DESTROY THIS LIST AFTER HE MATCHES THE COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS SCORES OF THE CTBS TO THE PARENT SURVEYS THAT HAVE BEEN SENT TO HIM.

Dear Teacher,

I am a graduate student in the Speech/Communication/Theater Department at Austin Peay State University. As part of my thesis research I would like to survey teachers and parents of fourth grade students about the television viewing habits of these students. I am then planning to correlate the findings of these surveys with language skills scores from standardized tests administered to these same students last year. Dr. Jim Jury has granted me permission to ask your school's participation in this study. Assessment Co-ordinator, Mr. Scott Harper, will access the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey language skill scores without me ever seeing the names of the students.

The purpose of this letter is to explain the details of the procedures. If you and your principal agree to participate, I will bring packets for each fourth grade teacher that contain a teacher survey and enough surveys to cover the census of each of the fourth grade classes in your school. Each packet will have an identifying code. Your principal will give you a specific coded packet. You are being asked to hand out the coded parent surveys according to your class roll. When the surveys come back to you from the parents you will need to return them to your principal who will randomly select 16 to be compared to the Comprehensive Test Battery Survey language skill scores. He will create a list matching the parent survey to the child. At no time should you or the principal open the envelopes and read the surveys returned as this would breach the confidentiality of the survey response. After selecting the 16 surveys from all surveys returned and preparing the list, I am asking that your principal send the surveys and the list to Mr. Harper. Once matched, Mr. Harper will destroy the list and I will never see the names of the students. I will pick up the remaining surveys not used in the CTBS comparison.

In addition I am asking if you would complete a confidential survey about your perceptions of your students' television viewing habits. If you agree to participate you may mail the completed survey back to me in a stamped self-addressed envelope provided in the packet.

Thank you for reading this letter of explanation. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants you may call the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs at Austin Peay State University-931-221-7881.

Sincerely

Flora Schaller



Dear Parent,

I am a graduate student in the Speech/Communication/ Theatre Department at Austin Peay State University. As part of the work I must do for a masters degree, I would like to survey teachers and parents of fourth grade students about the television viewing habits of these students. I am then planning to compare the findings of these surveys with the students' language skill scores from standardized tests given last year. I will never see the names connected with specific scores or surveys. The information collected will be published in a thesis that may be found at Austin Peay State library. The findings from my research will also be shared with the Christian County School Superintendent and principals of the participating schools.

If you agree to participate, please complete the enclosed survey, seal it in the envelope provided and have your child return it to his or her teacher tomorrow. Do not put your name or your child's name on the survey or on the envelope. **Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. There will be no penalty to you or your child if you choose not to return this survey.**

By answering the survey you are giving permission for the information to be used in my masters research project.

Thank you for reading this letter and for helping me in a project that is very important to me. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants you may call the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs at Austin Peay State University-931-221-7881.

Sincerely,

Flora Schaller



## VITA

Flora Manire Schaller was born in Haley's Mill, Kentucky, and attended Christian County Public Schools. After graduation, she went to Western Kentucky State University and then transferred to Brigham Young University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication with an English minor in 1969.

She re-entered Western Kentucky State University where she took classes toward a teaching certificate. She completed her teaching requirements at California Polytechnical College at Pomona and currently holds a California Teaching Certificate. She substitute taught in several California school systems while rearing her four children. She also had an Oklahoma Teaching Certificate and substitute taught there and in Kentucky.

She is the mother of three daughters and one son. Two daughters have graduated from college and the other two children are presently attending college. She returned to school at Austin Peay State University in the fall of 1998 where she is scheduled to earn her Master of Arts Degree in Speech and Communication in the year 2000.

She has served as a volunteer director of a Family History Center for the past seven years and has been a Boy Scout leader for more than twenty years.