

TELEVISION: SERVANT OR MASTER OF THE FAMILY

by

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## INTRODUCTION

No longer is it a dream, a potential to be realized at some distant point in the future. Television is here, and with it all the problems, implications, and changes which can result.

The American public, as a whole, has welcomed television with open arms, a fact which is substantiated by the high percentage of set ownership and the record of ever-growing sales. Still, there are some who have not yet placed television alongside of the telephone, electric light, and automobile; they want more assurance of its value to their lives.

It has been said that the advent of the automobile broke up the home, that television is reestablishing those home ties. There are, however, those who question whether a family, grouped in silence around a television set, is in any true sense favorably affected in terms of family relations. There are those who wonder if it is desirable recreation, or if it is stifling the more constructive recreational interests. The concern of the American public is television's effect upon the family, of the possible controls of such a device. Television: servant or master of the family?

## The Problem

Statement of the Problem. It is the purpose of this study to ascertain inductively evidence of variation in (1) the television viewing habits of the family and in (2) the effects of television upon recreation habits, as a permanent adjustment is made to the presence of a television set in the home; and (3) to determine a recommended pattern for making television a tool for better family living.

Importance of the Study. The hope that television can serve as a tool for better living has long been an aim of its promoters. Many people have bought television sets and put them in their homes, with little or no thought of control. There have been evidences of drastic changes in family habits, and, not always for the better. This study has been made with the realization that the habits of television viewers change rapidly, change with the length of set ownership, with changes in program offerings, and with other outside factors. Therefore, the study is valid only in terms of the television situation in Greater Kansas City as of December, 1951, when the survey and most of the program materials were collected. However, it is hoped that the study will serve to show how certain pitfalls of television in terms of its audience can be avoided and utilization of the medium to the highest possible degree be obtained.

## The Materials Used and Groups Studied

Three basic sources of information have been used in writing this thesis--(1) review of literature, (2) a personal-interview questionnaire, and (3) a television-viewing study.

Review of Literature. A review of periodicals within the last four years was made through study at the Kansas State College Library and through the reading of current newspapers and personal magazines. This was to gain information on past studies and general observations and opinions of television and its effect on the family. The study of recreation as a frame of reference also involved the consulting of several books. A complete list of these materials can be found in the Literature Cited section of this thesis.

Personal-interview Questionnaire. A personal-interview questionnaire was constructed in an attempt to discover evidence of variation in the viewing habits of the family and in the effects of television upon recreation habits, as a permanent adjustment is made to the presence of a television set in the home. The sample for the survey was drawn from the metropolitan area of Greater Kansas City so as to include 50 families in the television audience. Details of the survey and sampling can be found under Report of the Study in this thesis, and a copy of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

Television-viewing Studies. The author spent approximately 80 hours in concentrated viewing of television in Greater Kansas City. The information thus gained helped her recommend certain programs, and the experience served as a laboratory for devising viewing activity suggestions for recreational enjoyment.

#### Organization of Remainder of the Thesis

After a statement of the problem and an explanation of the materials used and groups studied, the thesis is concerned with the solving of the stated problem. A discussion on the philosophy of recreation is used as a frame of reference, for the interpretation of the data collected on television rests upon this. The data include a review of literature, both of previous studies and general observations, and a complete report of the survey, accompanied by charts and figures to facilitate understanding. The author then attempts to justify television as a desirable form of family recreation. Accompanying this discussion is a report of viewing studies by the author and suggested ways television can be used as a constructive tool of the family. A summary restates the findings of the whole study and conclusions of the investigation.



## RECREATION AS A FRAME OF REFERENCE

## Philosophy of Recreation

"Recreation is what you do when you don't have to," a little boy is supposed to have said. Recreation authorities seem to agree that recreation has two essentials, (1) that it is engaged in because of voluntary desire to do so and (2) that the activity brings immediate and direct satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> But recreation is a word used by everyone, and in most cases its primary objective is fun and enjoyment.

Today recreation is looked upon with favor, indeed, it is looked upon as a necessity of life. "Recreation is needed because a man is a whole being, and he is not complete without recreational activities."<sup>2</sup> "There is possibly no better way to enjoy life and to achieve happiness than to engage in wholesome recreation activities."<sup>3</sup>

"It's love that makes the world go round,"  
Said some old chap long since deceased,  
But I might add and quite as sound,  
"It's fun that keeps the axles greased."

The place of fun in living was appreciated by Sir Walter Scott in his poem, The Guardian, and it might lead one to believe that fun and recreation have always been more or less

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<sup>1</sup> George D. Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Helen and Larry Eisenberg, The Pleasure Chest, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Martin H. Neumeier, Leisure and Recreation, p. 122.

accepted. But it has not been so. In the history of our own country, we know that our Pilgrim fathers looked upon leisure and play as evil--perhaps a necessary evil for the child, but certainly not a proper activity for an adult. And in the generation or two following, the people continued to hunt, fish, weave, and build to make an existence for themselves, and they had little free time. But the natural desire of people to get together and enjoy themselves began to exert pressure. In grandmother's day play was still looked upon as "foolishness", but social activities were held, masked under such "work" names as "husking" bee, "quilting" bee, and "spelling" bee. Today recreation is a recognized part of living. The government believes in it--there are city, state, and national parks, community centers and playgrounds; the schools believe in it--play periods, college courses, specialist and consultation services are offered; the churches believe in it--new buildings are including recreation rooms, while old as well as new churches have planned programs. Recreation is truly a part of living.

Realizing that the main motive of recreation is the activity itself,<sup>1</sup> it must be remembered that a recreational activity is not consciously performed for any reward or value. But for the student of recreation, it is necessary to realize the importance of recreation and the values of such activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin H. Neumeyer, Leisure and Recreation, p. 158.

First, in the field of personality, every human being has five chief needs: the need for achievement--to do things, to make things and to accomplish jobs; the need for recognition--to feel that what one does and is merits the approval of others; the need for a sense of personal worth--to feel that what one is and does comes up to inner standards; the need for independence--reasonably to order one's own life and make decisions; and the need for emotional security--to live in reciprocal warm regard with one or more human beings and to feel that one is a desired member of a group. All these personality needs find abundant fulfillment in creative forms of recreation. The needs for achievement, recognition and self-esteem find rich satisfaction through handicrafts, art, photography, dramatics, music and sports of all kinds. Vast numbers of people satisfy their need for independence through recreation. Their work is routine but in recreation they find a chance for initiative and choice. And finally, family recreation is one of the finest ways of building emotional security in the members of the family. Sharing in hobbies and games creates bonds of comradeship and understanding which very often are built up in no other way.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to being a personality-builder, recreation can help the individual physically and mentally. Everyone has had the urge for physical activity, as a relaxation from work

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<sup>1</sup> S. R. Laycock, "Recreation Guidance," Recreation, November, 1946.

or tension. Activity in recreation can develop us physically. But in addition to this, it has a mental value.

For years psychiatrists have used recreation in the treatment of the mentally ill. Hobbies, crafts, and occupational therapy proved extremely beneficial in restoring these men and women to health. Having found these methods helpful in treating the ill, psychiatrists feel confident that recreational activities can play a large part in preventing mental illness, in maintaining good health, and in promoting a sense of well-being in all of us.<sup>1</sup>

There are also certain by-products of recreation which are important in any person's growth and happiness. These are the development of skills, attitudes, appreciations, and knowledge. Skills are developed in sports, in acting, in singing, in writing, in drawing, in problem solving, in making friends. Attitudes developed include those of good sportsmanship, of cooperating with others, of courtesy. Development of appreciations include appreciations of art, drama, music, athletics, literature. And finally, knowledge is gained through pursuit of hobbies and various recreation interests.<sup>2</sup> Recreation is indeed important to every child and adult.

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Menninger, M. D., Enjoying Leisure Time, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Laycock, "Recreation Guidance," Recreation, November, 1946.

## Family Recreation

Even though the recreation movement in America has promoted playgrounds, community centers, parks, amphitheatres, lakes--it has never minimized the importance of the home. Most activities taught in recreation centers and on playgrounds are activities which can be carried back to the home, because it is realized that here is the most important unit of the community. Parents and home life greatly influence the formation of recreation habits in the child, and in many cases represent the center of recreation for the family.

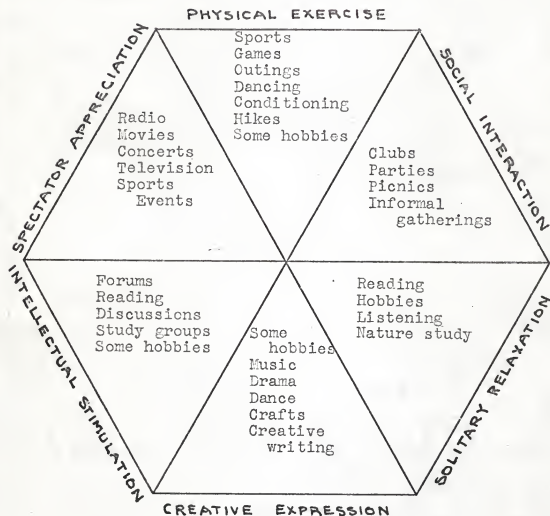
In the early history of the United States, when pioneer life offered little leisure time, the family developed a sense of togetherness because they depended so much on each other. Today the people in the family need each other just as much as ever, but they do not have that struggle for existence to hold them together. Play activities can help the members of the family learn that sharing is really the way to live a full life. There is no short cut to a sense of togetherness in the family--it comes only from doing things together.<sup>1</sup>

In emphasizing participation, it must also be remembered that parents do not have to do everything the child does for recreation--their interest in his activities will stimulate his activities and will guide them. The impossibility of all the members participating in all the recreational activities

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<sup>1</sup> Helen and Larry Eisenberg, The Family Pleasure Chest, p. 9.

of the family is shown by the following diagram,<sup>1</sup> which indicates the most important ingredients which go into a well-balanced program of recreation activities.



<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

By this chart it can be seen that recreation is a complex term and that many activities can be called recreational--the attitude of the participant is the keynote. It can also be seen that a rich and full recreational life, both for the adult and the child, must contain a variety of interests and activities. Marvin Rife, of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin, has said, "Recreation is not just for children. It is a necessity for all the people, all the year around. Everyone, from nine months through 99 years, needs balance and variety in the recreative use of his free time."<sup>1</sup>

#### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written in regard to the impact of television on family life, for television caught the imagination of the American people and they accepted it, almost overnight. Studies were made, but the rapid growth of television dated many of them immediately. A great many articles expressing personal opinions and observations on the subject also appeared, most of which had little or no supporting research. Those studies and observations closely related to the problem of this thesis are herein summarized.

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<sup>1</sup> Helen and Larry Eisenberg, The Family Pleasure Chest, p. 12.

## Previous Studies

Television's Effects on Family Recreation Habits. From a study of matched groups of television-owning families, Coffin<sup>1</sup> found that total participation in out-of-home activities was 24 per cent less for television-owning families than for those without sets. He further concluded that television's influence was more strongly felt among middle-income than higher income classes.

For a public relations firm, Allredge<sup>2</sup> asked questions in 400 Washington, D. C. homes. He concluded that television keeps families together at home, as husbands reported spending 42.8 per cent more of their leisure time at home, wives 39.7 per cent, and children 41.3 per cent. Concerning specific recreational activities affected by television, he concluded that adult attendance at movies dropped 72 per cent, child attendance 46 per cent. Adults spent 29.1 per cent less time reading books, 22.6 per cent less time reading magazines, 4.7 per cent less time reading newspapers. Attendance at wrestling and boxing matches dropped 44.7 per cent, at football games 40 per cent, and at baseball games 36.7 per cent. Radio listening dropped from an average of 3 hours, 42 minutes to a mere 24 minutes.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas E. Coffin, "Television's Effects on Leisure-Time Activities," Journal of Applied Psychology, October, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Allredge, "Stay-at-Homes", Time, February 13, 1950.



A consumer panel survey conducted by Good Housekeeping<sup>1</sup> concentrated on television's effects on other recreational activities. Radio listening was most affected; 82 per cent less time was spent listening to the radio. Movies followed with a 70 per cent drop, record listening 50 per cent. The drop in book reading and "going out" was 47 per cent in each case. Other drops were: theater attendance 42 per cent, sports events attendance 35 per cent, magazine reading 35 per cent, newspaper reading 9 per cent. The only marked increase was the 21 per cent increase in home entertaining.

Junior high school pupils were studied in a Stamford, Connecticut survey.<sup>2</sup> Movies were affected to a great extent, 150 out of 200 pupils reporting a decrease in attendance. Outdoor exercise, sports events attendance, and church attendance were not noticeably affected.

A University of Southern California Study,<sup>3</sup> which matched 800 families of TV and non-TV classifications, was most concerned over the drop in family visiting. Two-thirds of the families with television reported less visiting, while only one-sixth of the non-TV families reported such a change. Such data offer "a good insight into a decrease in basic family interaction through conversation.... It has been noted that

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<sup>1</sup> "TV Set Owners", Broadcasting, November 5, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> "Guinea Pigs for TV," Senior Scholastic, March 22, 1950.  
<sup>3</sup> Frank Riley and James A. Peterson, "The Social Impact of Television," The Survey, November, 1950.

TV families are visiting less and now it is observed that within the home conversation has been decreasing.... In the evening in many homes the TV set is making the family an audience rather than an intimate group characterized by spontaneous talking and confiding."

The American Booksellers Association in the Fall of 1950<sup>1</sup> reported negligible differences in retail book sales between TV and non-TV areas; but other surveys have shown some need for concern. A Detroit Survey<sup>2</sup> reported that 40 per cent of the 200 TV owning patrons of the library did less library book reading, 53.8 per cent the same amount, and 6.2 per cent more. To the Saturday Review Readers<sup>3</sup>, 33.9 per cent questioned said TV had affected their book buying habits.

Television's Effects on Children and on Schoolwork.

The fact that children are avid TV fans was set forth in several studies. In a Stamford, Connecticut, survey of junior high school pupils,<sup>4</sup> it was determined that 4 out of 5 of the children viewed television regularly, that the average number of hours spent per week was 27 if viewed in the home, 18 if in a neighbor's home. A survey by Dr. Paul A.

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<sup>1</sup> "Effect of Television on Reading Is Estimated in Recent Surveys," Publishers' Weekly, April 21, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Brecher, "TV, Your Children and Your Grandchildren," Consumer Reports, May, 1950, p. 231.

Witty<sup>1</sup> in 1950 found that the average grade school pupil in Evanston, Illinois, spent 3.12 hours daily watching TV in his home, 1.69 hours if he watched in another's home. A second survey by Dr. Witty<sup>2</sup> was made a year later, and he found that these grade children spent an average of 19 hours weekly watching TV, 2 hours less than the average for the same group in 1950. Furthermore, he determined that viewing dropped 12 per cent after the first year of set ownership and another 2 per cent after the second year. This is one of the few studies recognizing the time factor.

The effects of this prolonged viewing, which represents as many hours as the child spends in school, have been reported in various surveys. Findings in a Roselle, New Jersey, survey of junior high school pupils<sup>3</sup> shocked many parents and teachers. The marks of children in television homes fell 15 per cent below what they had been previous to TV. In Stamford, Connecticut,<sup>4</sup> the previously cited junior high survey reported that 8 pupils felt that television interfered with home work often, 55 once in a while, 60 seldom, and 99 never. In Dr. Witty's survey,<sup>5</sup> one-third of the children said television helped them in their studies, two-thirds said that the temptation of TV was detrimental to their

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Riley and James A. Peterson, "The Social Impact of Television," The Survey, November, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> "Telestatus," Broadcasting and Telecasting, March 3, 1952, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Brecher, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> "Guinea Pigs For TV", Senior Scholastic, March 22, 1950, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> "Telestatus," op. cit., p. 76.

studies. But a recent survey contradicts all of these studies. The Xavier Study,<sup>1</sup> directed by Dr. Raymond F. McCoy, sampled 1,000 grade school children in the Cincinnati area. In comparing the achievement of the children who had TV sets in their homes and those who did not, it was found that there was no appreciable difference between the two. It was also found that parental control of televiewing habits makes no difference in the children's work. This study did back up previous studies on hours spent by children before the TV set. The children polled spent more time watching television each week than in going to school.

#### General Observations

There have been widespread differences in opinion concerning the effects of television on its audience. In a baccalaureate address,<sup>2</sup> Boston University's President, Dr. Daniel L. Marsh, warned his listeners that "if the (television) craze continues with the present level of programs, we are destined to have a nation of morons." About the same time, however, a school principal in Essex, Maryland, expressed a very different opinion.<sup>3</sup> He praised television and said that it knit families more closely together, reduced street accidents, improved adolescent behavior, sped up

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas City Star, December 28, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> "Morons and Happy Families," Time, June 19, 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

housework by wives eager to get at their sets, cut down on movie going, radio listening, and "idle conversation". There have been diverse opinions of the effects on the family, but many more observations were made concerning effects on the children.

Effects on the Family. The time element, or length of set ownership, was recognized and discussed by John Crosby.<sup>1</sup> He said that fathers happily reported that they were seeing their daughters for the first time in months, as they brought their boy friends home to watch television. But it was only temporary, for soon they drifted back to their jukeboxes and ice cream sodas. The young children, however, still loved TV. Average daily viewing was 4 hours at first, but soon dropped to 2 hours. The effect on conversation was also reported as temporary, as the whispering during early television revolved into complete ignoring of the program during interested conversation.

Effects on the Children. The importance of television was recognized at the 1950 White House Conference, as both a work group and a panel were set up to discuss the effect of radio and television on the development of children and young people.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Robert Saudak, Vice-President in charge of Public

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<sup>1</sup> John Crosby, "What's Television Going to Do to Your Life?", House Beautiful, February, 1950, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Edward A. Richards, "Media of Mass Communication", Proceedings of the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, 1951.

Service, American Broadcasting Company, made the following observation:

My answer is that if you parents, pediatricians, psychologists, and teachers are sufficiently conscious of the content of the public service programs on radio and television, then you are letting radio and television contribute to the development of your children. If, on the other hand, any one of you is so myopic that all you see on the screen or hear on the loud speaker is trash, then you are the kind of negligent and lazy trustees of your children who must also be allowing them to eat candy when there is milk in the house; read dime novels when there is the Book of Knowledge in the house; and play with matches when there is a chess board in the house. For you who take the trouble to know what is good on the air and to guide your children to it, radio and television are like a new and most exciting library at home. For the others, I have nothing but pity.

Much has been written of the concern over horror programs, programs of poor taste, the interference of television with eating habits and other activities. For example, the Southern California Association for Better Radio and TV<sup>1</sup> recently noted that the average child in the TV home sees death inflicted by violence more than 40 times a week. They explained that some children as a result are upset emotionally, while others actually become immune to death and injury from seeing it so often.

There have been some answers to these charges. Concerning the programs of violence, Josette Frank<sup>2</sup> agreed that in

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Coy, "Television: Friend or Foe?", Recreation, September, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Josette Frank, "Is Television Good or Bad for Children?", Woman's Home Companion, November, 1950.

large and continuous doses such programs were bad for children. But most children thrive on a certain amount of it, as they want the thrill of coming close to danger while at the same time feeling safe and protected. "Television, like radio, movies, and books, provides this," stated Miss Frank. Dorothy Diamond and Frances Tennebaum<sup>1</sup> suggested that for children under six years of age horror programs be kept off the diet, but that older youngsters develop few anxieties from them. "There is some evidence," it was stated, "that for well adjusted children, horror programs may perform a valuable service; they may help a youngster blow off aggressive steam or learn to pooh-pooh fear."

As for television programs of "poor taste", Miss Frank<sup>2</sup> suggested that the parents watch the programs with the children. Only then can they hope to influence the child's choice. And if a better program can be suggested, it is more successful than forbidding the one they are watching.

Some people dislike the "nite club atmosphere" of eating while watching television. The Misses Diamond and Tennebaum<sup>3</sup> suggested limiting such occasions two days a week, or perhaps treating the family to dessert before the video screen.

As for television monopolizing so much time, Jack Gould,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Diamond and Frances Tennebaum, "Should You Tear 'Em Away from TV?", Better Homes and Gardens, September, 1950, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Josette Frank, "Is Television Good or Bad for Children?", Woman's Home Companion, November, 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Diamond and Frances Tennebaum, "Should You Tear 'Em Away from TV?", Better Homes and Gardens, September, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Radio Editor of the New York Times, said, "Video, after all, is only something to see; it is not a way of bringing up children." He suggested that families set up viewing schedules. As for scheduling, Mrs. Helen Steers Burgess<sup>1</sup>, vice-president of the Child Study Association of America, said, "You'll have better success in calling a child away from TV if you suggest something else that's fun to do. But don't leave him in front of the set for a long time and then tell him to shine his shoes or take a bath." She says that if you look at TV all the time yourself, naturally your children will ape your pattern. "But in a home where a child hears interesting discussions, where books are read, where the child is well adjusted and enjoys going out to play baseball or football, television won't make any difference."

A high school teacher went so far as to set up seven rules for television viewing, as an effort to control children and TV.<sup>2</sup> They are as follows:

1. Watch with the children.
2. Place a time limit, plan your schedule together.
3. Have time-outs--popcorn, toys.
4. Fit TV time table to the children's sleeping habits.
5. Keep TV away from meals.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> C. Howard Smith, "Seven Rules for TV", Parents' Magazine, September, 1951.



6. Homework must be done before television.
7. Remind them that chores come before play.

This author concluded that television has much to offer in the way of education and recreation. "A little homemade planning in terms of your own TV program schedule will help you win their(children's) confidence in your judgment."

#### Value of the Literature

Most of the previous literature studied is of little value. First, most of the authors have approached their topics subjectively, with no research to back up their statements. Second, they have not properly considered the time factor as families went through an adjustment period. And third, the attempts at research which have been made have not been competently organized, except for perhaps the Xavier Study and the combined Witty Study.

#### REPORT OF THE STUDY

From the review of previous literature, there has been a slight indication that television-viewing habits vary in relationship to the length of ownership. Most of the previous studies have not considered this time factor. The following independent study, utilizing intensive personal-interviews, has been aimed in this direction with the purpose

of making a more realistic appraisal of the problem today.

### The Television Survey

Objectives of the Survey. An attempt was made in this survey to ascertain inductively evidence of variation in the television viewing habits of the family and in the effects of television upon recreational habits, as a permanent adjustment is made to the presence of a television set in the home.

The Questionnaire: Collection of Data. A personal-interview questionnaire was constructed to meet the objectives of the survey. It included 51 questions, 26 concerned with the viewing habits of the television owner, 25 with television's effect on the recreational habits of the family. It was pretested among the same population from which the sample was drawn. A copy of the questionnaire is in the Appendix.

The data were collected by the author through personal interviews, which were completed in the period December 22 to 29, 1951. There were 102 families contacted, resulting in 50 personal interviews. These interviews averaged from 30 to 45 minutes in length, and approximately 50 hours were spent by the interviewer in obtaining the data.

The Audience: The Sample.<sup>1</sup> The sample for this survey was drawn from the metropolitan area of Greater Kansas City. It was determined that a minimum of 10 to 15 families in the high income area, 25 in the middle income, and 10 in the low income area would provide a proper distribution. Estimating that approximately 10 to 15 families in a square block own television sets, two square blocks were selected at random in the middle income area of Kansas City, one square block in each of the other areas. These income areas were assigned according to the interviewer's personal knowledge of the city.

The interviewer called upon every house in the blocks selected. The only change made in the original plan was the addition of one block to the high income area, necessary because of the comparatively few homes in a square block in this area. Every house in the additional block was also contacted.

When the interviewer found no one at home, this fact was noted and call backs were made. After two call backs, the house was listed as "not at home." When the house had a television set but would not consent to an interview, it was listed as "non-cooperative." Table 1 shows the survey record.

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<sup>1</sup> The method of selection of the sample was devised in consultation with Henry Tucker, Statistical Laboratory, Kansas State College.

Table 1. Record of television survey by author.

Income: area	:	No. of Block:	:	Have set		:	Not at home
		families	:	Recorded:	Non-coop.:		No set
H	1	13	:	7	2	:	3
H	2	10	:	6	1	:	3
M	1	30	:	8	3	:	13
M	2	31	:	19	1	:	8
L	1	18	:	10	0	:	6
Total		102	:	50	7	:	33
			:			:	12

Comparison of the totals of each of the income areas is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Income comparison in survey.

	:	No. of	:	Have set		:	Not at
		families	:	Recorded:	Non-coop.:		No set
High income		23	:	13	3	:	6
Middle income		61	:	27	4	:	21
Low income		18	:	10	0	:	6
Total		102	:	50	7	:	33
			:			:	12

The survey indicates a high percentage of television sets owned by families in Greater Kansas City. Of the families contacted, 63 per cent own television sets; 73 per cent of the high income families have TV sets, 60 per cent of the middle income families, and 62.5 per cent of the low income families.

Differences in response can be noted among the three income

areas. No non-cooperators were found in the low income area visited, where the interviewer found the families most willing to answer questions. Families in the middle and high income were less willing to cooperate. Difficulty in finding people at home was most evident in the middle income area, where perhaps both adult members of the family were working. The interviewer was more assured of finding someone home in the high and low income areas.

#### Characteristics of the Audience

Length of Ownership. The 50 families with television sets who were interviewed reported an average set ownership of one year, eight months.

Table 3. Length of set ownership by family.

Set ownership	: No. of families
Less than 6 months	12
Six months to a year	9
Over 1 year to 2 years	19
Over 2 years to 3 years	10

There was no marked difference in the length of ownership of the three income groups, although the length of time showed a small increase from low to high income. Families in the low

income area had owned a television set for an average of one year seven months; families in the middle income one year eight months; and families in the high income one year nine months.

Habits of Criticism. Questions concerning attitudes of criticism were asked of the interviewed families in an effort to ascertain indirectly their interest in television quality and the value of their replies to TV questions. The answers received showed a definite interest in television; 49 families stated that they often criticized television, 35 that they criticized newspaper articles, 29 movies, and 29 radio.

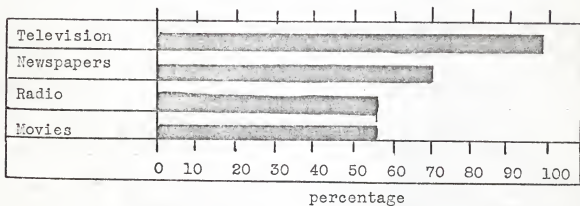


Fig. 1. Percentage of family criticisms.

Criticisms of Television. Most of the criticisms given by the housewives of the families interviewed, and these criticisms were distributed over several points. Those receiving

the largest number of criticisms were Variety Shows and Mystery and Crime Plays. Another popular criticism was that the area was served by only one channel, giving the viewer no opportunity for choice of programs.

Table 4. Adverse criticisms of TV, as given by the 50 families interviewed.

Programs criticized	:	No. of families
Advertising and commercials		5
Personality shows		0
Variety shows		20
News telecasts		0
Sports		3
Quiz shows		1
Disc jockey shows		1
Children's shows		0
Mystery and crime plays		12
Complete dramas (not mystery)		3
Discussions and forums		1
Homemaking programs		0
Religious programs		0
Hillbilly and western programs		4
Serials		2
Other:		
Poor timing		5
Only one channel		7

The relatively high criticism of Variety Shows was attributed primarily to the following two factors: dancing and comedy. "Too much dancing" was a comment often received by the interviewer. Others specifically stated that they felt the dancing viewed on TV Variety Shows suggestive, and especially poor program material for young people. It must be remembered, however, that most criticisms were given by the

housewife, and whether other members of the family would agree is another factor to be considered. Criticisms on comedy included "slapstick" and "too silly." Families viewing comedians-regularly found that they soon tired on the antics of many.

Most often the criticisms of mystery and crime plays were from the standpoint of the children and a hypothetical set of morals designed for them; as adult entertainment they received little adverse criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Although the full length dramas other than mystery received relatively few criticisms, it was rather significantly pointed out in three cases that these dramas often left their audiences "in the air." This was the only criticism made of this otherwise quite popular type of program.

Five families specifically stated that they felt the time arrangement poor--in other words, some adult programs were given when children would be watching, and on the other hand, some rather juvenile programs were given when adults formed the large viewing audience.

#### Pattern of Viewing

Average Viewing Hours. As commonly expected, the evening

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<sup>1</sup> This fact is substantiated by the comparative great number of studies and observations concerning children, which are discussed in Review of Literature in this thesis.



easily held the greatest number of viewing hours; the afternoon and morning followed in that order.

Table 5. Viewing hours per day by families.

Time	: Morning	: Afternoon	: Evening
None, don't listen	38		17
Up to 15 minutes	1		
16 to 30 minutes	6		5
31 to 60 minutes	5		8
Over 1 hour to 2 hours		5	3
Over 2 hours to 3 hours		11	8
Over 3 hours to 4 hours		4	21
Over 4 hours to 5 hours			18
Over 5 hours to 6 hours			

The average number of viewing hours as reported by the 50 families interviewed was approximately 10 minutes in the morning,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours in the afternoon, and 4 hours, 10 minutes in the evening for each family.

A definite relationship was seen when the average number of viewing hours was compared with the income area--families in the lower income area showed a consistently higher average of viewing hours over the averages of the middle and high income families.

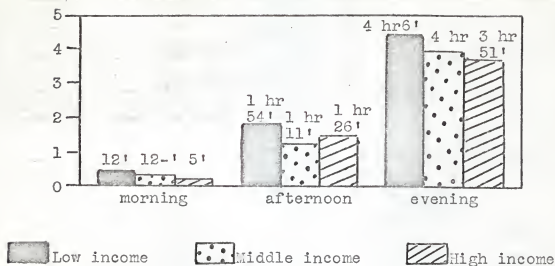


Fig. 2. Relation of income to average viewing hours.

Changes in Pattern. New owners of television sets as well as owners of long standing were interviewed and asked if their pattern of viewing had undergone any changes. There were 26 families who reported no noticeable change, for a total of 52 per cent; while there were 24 families, or 48 per cent, who reported such a change.

Length of set ownership seemed to be a definite factor in determining whether a family changed its viewing habits, as 80 per cent of those owning sets two to three years reported a change and only 25 per cent of those owning sets less than six months reported a change.

Of the 24 families reporting a change in pattern, 22 said that they watched television less than they had when the set was first purchased, while 2 families had noticed an increase. A most common reply received by the interviewer was, "At first we watched everything on the screen, but now we pick our programs".

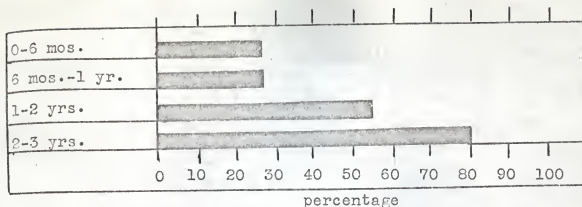


Fig. 3. Percentage of families who reported a change in viewing hours.

#### Program Selection

Reference to Listings. With nearly 50 per cent of the families reporting that they "pick" their programs, it was not surprising that 100 per cent of the families were aware of the TV program listings in the local newspapers and that 84 per cent referred to these listings every day. Twelve per cent of the families reported that they referred to them two to three times a week, while only 4 per cent reported a reference less often than that.

Knowledge of special TV columns also ranked high, as 72 per cent reported that there was a special column of TV news and gossip in their newspapers. Fourteen per cent said there was no such column, while the last 14 per cent said they did not know if there was one or not. Of the twenty four families reading the column, 66  $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent of them read the column each week while the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  seldom or never read it.

Magazines offered little additional TV information to their readers. Thirty-four families read magazines regularly

but only eight said that the magazines included TV columns which they consulted.

New Programs. When families were asked if they made special effort to find out about new programs on television, 18 per cent said "yes", 80 per cent "no", and 2 per cent "I don't know". However, answers to the questions, "How do you usually learn about new television programs?", revealed that new programs were discovered through several popular sources. The newspaper led the field.

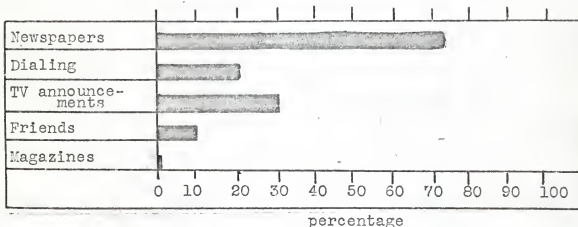


Fig. 4. Media and percentage of families gaining information on new programs from each.

Choice of Program Types. In an effort to determine the types of programs people prefer to watch on television, questions were asked concerning the family's attitude toward entertainment and educational values. Although 12 per cent watched television almost entirely for entertainment, 86 per cent liked to watch both educational and entertainment programs. Thirty per

cent of the families interviewed specifically stated that they wished there were more educational programs offered.

Choice of Programs. A list of 14 types of television programs was handed to each member present of the families interviewed. They were asked to check the programs they enjoyed watching in the daytime and those they enjoyed in the evening. They were further instructed to check as many programs as they chose.

In the afternoon, children's shows and personality shows far outranked the other programs, perhaps due to the high percentage of juvenile viewers at this time.

Table 6. Afternoon program choices  
by families.

Children's shows	16
Personality shows	15
News telecasts	9
Disc jockey shows	8
Homemaking programs	6
Complete dramas	1
Westerns	1

The complete drama proved most popular for evening listening, with sports presentations and mystery plays close behind. The news telecasts and discussions and forums also ranked high, in keeping with previous indications of interest in educational television programs.

Table 7. Evening program choices by families.

Complete dramas	38
Sports presentations	35
Mystery and crime dramas	33
Quiz and audience participation	33
News telecasts	31
Discussions and forums	31
Variety shows	24
Western programs	22
Special events	21
Children's shows	19
Personality shows	18
Religious programs	18
Homemaking programs	9

When a weekly list of television programs typical for the period immediately preceding the time of the interviews was compiled, a definite relationship was established. The two high-ranking choices for afternoon viewing were the two shows also ranking highest in hours on the screen, with comparable distances above the remaining shows. The remaining shows also compared well with each other. The evening shows were comparable, but with one major exception. Variety shows offered more hours to the television viewer than any other type, but they ranked in the middle of the list of choices. Outside of this, the evening choices for shows ranked in approximately the same order as the number of hours these shows were available.

Table 8. Program hours available to the audience.

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Afternoon:		
Children's shows	9	(16)
Personality shows (Home M.)	6	(15)
Serials	6	( 6)
Quiz and audience part.	5	
Disc jockeys	3	( 8)
Westerns	3	( 1)
Variety shows	3	
News telecasts	2	( 9)
Discussions and forums	2	
Complete dramas	1	( 1)
Sports	1	( 1)
Evening:		
Variety shows	8	(24)
Complete dramas	6	(38)
News telecasts	5	(31)
Mystery dramas	4	(33)
Personality shows	4	(18)
Quiz and audience part.	3	(33)
Sports	2	(35)
Discussions and forums	1	(31)
Special events	1	(21)
Serials	1	
Westerns	Less than 1	(22)
Children's	Less than 1	(19)
Religious	Less than 1	(18)
Homemaking	Less than 1	( 8)

Number in parentheses represents  
number choices

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### Viewing Habits

Use of Television Viewing Time. An observation often given of television is that the activity demands all the attention of the viewer, leaving no opportunity for dual use of time. The 50 families interviewed were asked if they ever engaged in

other activities while watching television. There were 31 families who reported that they did, while only 19 said that television required the undivided attention of all members of the family.

The activity most often combined with television viewing was sewing, which was reported by 15 women. The homemaker again signified a popular activity for television viewing time when 12 women reported other homemaking tasks, including ironing, dishwashing, and food preparation. Reading was third high, with 9 families reporting the activity. Entertaining friends was combined with television viewing by 4 families, and there were 3 reports that members in the family watched television while doing homework, school or business. Other activities engaged in while watching television were eating and children's play.

Television as a Tool for Other Activities. There were 41 families, or 82 per cent, who reported that television was strictly a spectator activity. Television is not an end in itself with everyone, however, as 9 families reported that it was sometimes used as a tool for other activities. These activities were both entertainment and educational in type.

As entertainment, television parties were often mentioned. In these cases, friends were invited into the home for an evening of television viewing. Refreshments were served and sometimes actual games were also planned in the evening's activity. The observation was made, however, that these



parties were given less often as other families began to have sets of their own.

Of special interest was a TV party given during the NCAA Tournament when one of the games was telecast from Kansas City. Students and fans of a particular team met in a home to watch the game over television and spur their team to victory. They simulated the actual audience situation as much as possible, designating cheerleaders, popcorn vendors, and cowbell tollers. It was said that the recreation that evening could hardly have been termed passive.

Upon arriving at one home, the interviewer found the children watching a western show over television. Here was another example of using television as a tool. The children were dressed in cowboy suits, loaded down with holsters, and toting six-shooters. When the "badmen" appeared on the screen, shots were heard around the room--not from the screen, but from the guns of the children. The mother said that the youngsters nearly always "played" the game right along with the television story.

Television was reported as being used as a tool for education as well as recreation, or perhaps it could be termed educational recreation. Families often indicated that television was used as an aid for discussion, as many topics touched by TV programs stimulated discussions among members of the family. Television was also used as partial fulfillment of certain class assignments by the school children. One

housewife reported that her husband was an avid sports fan and that on television he observed techniques and strategy, which he often discussed with some of his sports-minded friends.

Prospects of oncoming elections influenced one homemaker to express her plan of using television to better acquaint herself with political candidates and thereby become a more intelligent voter.

### Television and Recreation

Effects of Television on Recreation Habits. With so many hours a day being spent before the television set, it follows that other activities and other types of recreation must have suffered. The 50 families were asked how much time they spent on various popular forms of recreation prior to the purchase of their television set. Then it was determined whether or not those habits had changed, and if so, in what way.

The recreational activities affected most were radio listening, movie attendance, and "going out", in that order. In each there was a definite decrease in the participation of the activity. The reading of newspapers was hardly affected at all, and the playing of cards, reading of books, and attendance at sports events showed little change. Special hobbies listed by individuals also showed little or no change. The only activity which showed noticeable increase in partici-

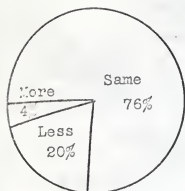
ation was entertaining at home.<sup>1</sup>

Table 9. Changes in other recreational habits of the family.

Activity	: More	: Less	: Same
Attend movies	0	35	7
Read books	0	16	22
Read newspapers	1	2	47
Listen to the radio	0	44	5
Attend theater and concerts	0	0	11
Attend sports events	0	3	23
Listen to records	0	11	17
Entertain at home	7	0	39
Play cards	0	6	29
"Go out"	0	22	24
Others:			
Cello	0	0	1
Piano	0	0	5
Bowling	0	0	3
Square dancing	1	0	0
Woodworking	0	0	1
Choir	0	0	1

Comparison of Recreation Types. When the recreation activities were classified as to participation or spectator type, it was determined that the activities of a participating nature were much less affected than those of a spectator nature. It was further discovered that the only activities showing an increase were in the participating group.

<sup>1</sup> The findings of this study correlate with most of the studies discovered in Review of Literature.



Participation

Entertaining at home  
 Playing of cards  
 Going out  
 Music participation  
 Sports and dances  
 Hobbies  
 Reading books  
 Reading newspapers



Spectator

Movies  
 Radio listening  
 Attending theater  
 Attending sports events  
 Record listening

Fig. 4. Comparison of recreation changes in participation and spectator activities.

Relationship of Set Ownership to Changes in Recreation

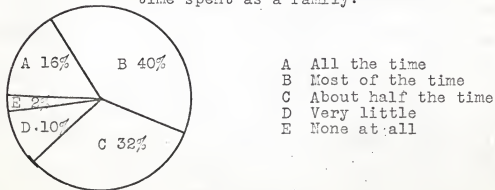
Habits. The inductive nature of certain aspects of the survey became apparent at this point of the study. Quantitative differentials are not perceptible, but the interviewer came to certain conclusions. There was some indication that the degree of the habit change had a relationship with length of ownership. Owners of less than a year reported more drastic cutting in their time devoted to other recreational activities than those owners of longer periods. One owner of less than six

months stated that movie-going in her home had been cut 80 per cent, that her weekly book reading had dropped to almost no book reading at all. In comparison with this, an owner of two years reported that her three books a month had not been affected by television. And an owner of three years stated that her family had even taken up new activities which took them out of the home more often than before television. Specifically speaking, the activity was square dancing; which showed that a participating activity, one of actual "doing" attracted a TV owner of long standing away from the television set.

Television and the Family. Television has been a factor in keeping the family at home in 58 per cent of the interviewed cases, and with no family was there a reported decrease in family time spent in the home.

Television-watching has been a family activity to a marked extent, as 88 per cent of the families stated that they spent 50 per cent or more of their TV watching as a family group. The greatest percentage chose "most of the time" as the amount best describing the habits of their family.

Fig. 5. Percentage of television-watching time spent as a family.



Examples of Television's Influence. Comments given spontaneously by members of the interviewed families pointed out certain opinions and attitudes concerning television's effect on their lives.

Concerning the children, housewives showed few serious objections. They felt that some of the programs were not appropriate for young audiences, but they had found certain values in television which outweighed these faults. "Television is a wonderful quieting agent after school," said one housewife. "TV is my baby-sitter," explained the mother of a two-year-old. And educationally speaking, several expressed the opinion that children were more alert from having had television in the home, that they were more aware of current affairs. Homework was not a problem in most cases; the lessons were prepared before television could be watched.

The housewife found values for herself, too. "TV helps me let off steam. I can sit down for a few minutes, then be completely relaxed." Others said that from television they had been stimulated in sports in which they had never before been interested.

The elderly particularly enjoyed their television sets. When the interviewer called upon one house, she found a man and his wife, 79 and 84 years old, respectively. They discussed intelligently national and political problems of the day and looked forward to the educational programs. At another house the grandmother proved to be the boxing and wrestling fan of

the family. Still at another house lived a 79 year old widow, who had lived alone for the last 10 years. She expressed appreciation for television, and explained that she watched all programs regularly. On a table beside her rocking chair the program listing, carefully clipped from the paper, helped substantiate the statement.

Television had affected the whole family at one home in a very particular way. This family was a quiet one and the housewife explained that sometimes the whole evening would go by without interested conversation. Since the television set had been purchased, discussion had resulted from stimulating programs viewed on TV. She expressed deep appreciation for that aid to family happiness and solidarity.

On the subject of selection, a few interesting comments were received. Most homes seemed to be aware that television could be overworked. "When guests arrive, we turn TV off. It spoils conversation," stated one housewife. "When there are other places to go, we leave our television sets," said many. And an example of selection procedure was so outlined: "First we turn on TV--if no good, we try the radio--if neither satisfied us, we play records."

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

## Is Television Recreation?

It has been shown that recreation is a fundamental need of everyone and can be a unifying influence for the family; also, that television is monopolizing a great amount of the family's time. Is this poor use of leisure time? Can television be classified as "re-creation", or is it "wreck-reation"?

In Relation to Definition. Referring to an earlier section of this thesis, Recreation As A Frame of Reference, it was stated that recreation is an activity engaged in (1) because of a voluntary desire to do so and (2) because it brings immediate satisfaction. Except for the times when children tune in for homework purposes, the author's survey indicates that a great percentage of people voluntarily choose to spend many hours viewing television. It is also probable that any satisfaction this viewing brings them is immediate. But the part of this definition which might be challenged is the qualification that it be an "activity".

Television is often classified as an amusement, amusement applying to the "gazing at or seeing of spectacles".<sup>1</sup> George Hjelte at the 1950 White House Conference pointed out that the

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<sup>1</sup> Kimball Young, An Introductory Sociology, p. 305.



amusement is passive, as opposed to recreation which is active.<sup>1</sup> However, Martin Neumeyer has recognized that recreation can involve forms of activity which are relatively passive. "As a matter of fact," he says, "the line of demarcation between amusement and active recreation is not rigid. For some people amusements are re-creative, while for others they turn out to be nothing more than passive entertainment."<sup>2</sup> So it appears that much depends upon the individual and the situation. Perhaps John Harmon has summed it up with his statement, "Recreation is the combination of an activity and an attitude and defies definition."<sup>3</sup>

In the author's survey, 18 per cent of the families interviewed used television as an active form of recreation. It would seem, then, that for the remaining 82 per cent, television is merely passive entertainment. According to Martin Neumeyer,<sup>4</sup> this is not necessarily true. Recreation involves activity, it is so; but some forms can be relatively passive. There can be mental and emotional responses, as well as physical. In other words, when television stimulates to action or provides relaxation to the individual, it is fulfilling the requirement of recreation. Only when no participation is involved, either active or passive, does it cease to be recreation.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward A. Richards, "Leisure Time--Its Potential Contribution to Healthy Personality Development," Proceedings of the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Martin H. Neumeyer, Leisure and Recreation, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> John M. Harmon, Jr., "Television and Leisure Time Activities of Children," Education, October, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Neumeyer, op. cit.

In Relation to Values. In realizing the importance of recreation to the individual, the values of recreation have previously been discussed. These values are fulfillments of personality needs, physical needs, and mental needs.

Personality needs which can be satisfied through recreational activities are satisfied to a limited extent by television viewing. Perhaps the greatest contribution of television in this area is toward emotional security of the family. John Wylie's survey<sup>1</sup> of 504 families over the nation, made in 1949, indicated that families considered recreational activities within the family group a most unifying influence in family living. The survey of this thesis shows that 88 per cent of the families watch television as a family group at least half of the time, 56 per cent of this total watching it together all or most of the time. Television is a family-centered recreation.

The author received information from her interviews concerning certain examples of television fulfilling physical needs; i.e., the children going through the action of the cowboys, the young people cheering their team to victory through dramatization of the game situation. But these are only isolated cases, and television does not ordinarily fulfill physical needs.

Mental needs, however, can be realized. Recreation

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<sup>1</sup> John Wylie, "Education for the Family's Use of Leisure an Imperative Social Need," Education, October, 1950, p. 82.

authorities<sup>1</sup> agree that such responses can result from relatively passive activities. Through survey, the author learned that many people receive relaxation from their work by watching certain television programs. It must be realized, however, that prolonged viewing, viewing under strain, and other factors could produce the opposite effect upon the viewer. Again, the attitude and situation are important.

The by-products of recreation--development of skills, attitudes, appreciations, and knowledge--can be fulfilled through television. The development of these by-products, however, is indirect. (A discussion of these values in relation to definite television programs follows in the next section.) Until television programming is developed with these goals in mind, or unless audiences consciously strive to use television as a servant in these fields, the viewer will probably follow the line of least resistance, passive spectator activity. Wayne Coy, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, offers a challenge in this direction, a challenge to the recreation movement of America. "Television," he says, "can be one of the mightiest instruments ever developed for furtherance of wholesome, constructive recreational activity for both adults and children. Television can bring us leaders in sports, handicrafts, nature study, discussion techniques, playing of musical instruments, camping, and other hobbies.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin H. Neumeier, Leisure and Recreation, p. 221.

It is mainly employed as another spectator activity."<sup>1</sup>

As A Spectator Activity. As a spectator activity, however, television has a place in the recreational life of the family. Helen and Larry Eisenberg<sup>2</sup> include it as an ingredient of a well-balanced program of activities, and it seems that here rests the important consideration of television as recreation. As long as television represents another type of spectator appreciation and does not dominate recreational living to the exclusion of activities in the other areas--social interaction, physical exercise, solitary relaxation, creative expression, and intellectual stimulation--it is sound recreation practice. Some of these areas may be touched by television, as explained earlier, but not always are they adequately covered. This is the most important aspect of the television habit--the control of balance in recreational activities. If television-viewing is used only as spectator activity, it is absolutely necessary for recreational fulfillment.

Quality of selection, however, is another aspect of the television habit. Certain types of programs can make the viewer a participant, can develop skills, appreciations, and understandings. Then television is fulfilling requirements for constructive recreation. The viewer needs to be able to recognize the programs which can do these things to evaluate

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Coy, "Television: Friend or Foe?", Recreation, September, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Helen and Larry Eisenberg, The Family Pleasure Chest, p. 12.

television programs. "Now and again, a director with imagination or a company with courage offers a thrilling show, the subject matter of which is so challenging and the theme so colossal that the spectator becomes a participant."<sup>1</sup>

### Evaluation of Television Programs

The author engaged in approximately 80 hours of concentrated television-viewing in Kansas City. The purpose of this work was to provide information for the selection of television programs which serve to demonstrate certain values and by-products expected of constructive recreation. The programs discussed in this section do not necessarily represent the only television programs which can serve the individual and the family; they act as examples. Occasionally programs with negative values are cited, so that there can be a better understanding of the desired outcomes.

Spectator Enjoyment. In most cases, the primary objective of recreation is fun and enjoyment; furthermore, this enjoyment can come from spectator activity to television. If a television program is entertaining, if it is in good taste, and if its audience receives a feeling of satisfaction after having viewed the show, that program has fulfilled an objective of recreation. All of the programs favorably discussed in

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<sup>1</sup> Jay B. Nash, Physical Education: Interpretations and Objectives.

this section of the thesis can provide enjoyment and satisfaction to the viewer, but some are grouped under other values which are particularly noteworthy. Other programs are especially entertaining and relaxing to the viewer, and therein provide their greatest value.

"Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" is a delightful puppet show which is entertaining to adults as well as children. The imaginative appeal of this program, as well as its everyday approach to problems, has helped it become a favorite of audiences; the annual Motion Picture Daily-Fame Poll chose "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" the best children's program of 1951.<sup>1</sup> In addition to its entertainment value and its aid to the development and retention of imaginative qualities of the individual, the show has the power to cultivate interest in puppets and puppetry as a worthwhile hobby. When a form of spectator entertainment can stimulate activity, it establishes itself as constructive recreation.

Another show valuable chiefly for its light entertainment qualities is "I Love Lucy," a relatively new television program on WDAF-TV. It is a clever story, well-written and fast moving, capable of relaxing tired minds and bodies, perhaps, but possessing no hidden values.

Variety shows are valuable primarily as entertainment, with certain individual acts possessing additional recreational

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas City Star, February 3, 1952.

qualities. "Toast of the Town," ranked second in variety shows,<sup>1</sup> recreationally offers more to the television viewer than the number one variety show, "Your Show of Shows."<sup>2</sup> In the first place, the talent is more carefully selected and is presented with better taste. Secondly, the program has greater variety, making it more suitable and challenging for continued viewing. The need for greater variety was recognized by the author when several interviews brought to light the fact that people had grown tired of the comedians who appear regularly on "Your Show of Shows." Vaudeville acts need to vary considerably to remain stimulating to an audience.

Participation Opportunities. Certain television programs lend themselves more readily to participation by the television audience than others. The quiz program is probably the most obvious. "You Bet Your Life" with Groucho Marx is a snappy program, ranking tops in the previously mentioned poll. Such a program offers opportunity for members of the family to sit at home and test their own knowledge along with that of the television contestant. It develops quick thinking and a certain amount of knowledge.

"Beat the Clock" is an audience participation show which provides ideas for tricks and stunts, many of which can be used by members of the family right in their own homes. If

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas City Star, February 3, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



used, these stunts sometimes develop workmanship, often develop balance and coordination, and always indicate an interest in creative fun. The fact that audiences are using these stunts has been indicated by personal experiences of participants on the television show.

Other shows occasionally offer opportunity for audience participation, and it is the duty of the viewer to recognize such opportunities. An example is a recent production of the "All-Star Revue" with Ed Wynn. Mr. Wynn, with the aid of a cast, dramatized his recommendation for the outstanding moving picture of 1951. This skit was a challenge to the imagination of the audience.

Development of Skills. The first by-product of recreation, development of skills, can be realized in several fields through the medium of television.

From the original afternoon "Kate Smith Show," the homemaker often received instruction in flower arrangements, table decorations, and other homemaking helps. The show has recently been cut for Kansas City viewers, however, and unrelated vaudeville acts are just about all that remain of this program which was voted the best daytime program of 1951.

Discussion techniques can be observed in such programs as "Community Forum" and "Meet the Press". The development of skill in group discussion is an aid to the individual not only educationally but socially as well, and members of the family can learn through regular observation. "Meet the Press" was



chosen the best educational program of 1951 and is popular with older children as well as adults. Its educational possibilities are limitless.

The televising of sports events indirectly helps to develop certain skills, especially with the beginner; but the teaching of skills in sports and recreational activities is scarcely touched upon.

Development of Attitudes. Attitudes, desirable and undesirable, can be indirectly developed through television programs. A healthy attitude toward family living is desirable, and the family show, "Fairmeadows, U.S.A.", accomplishes this indirectly by showing the solidarity of family life. Attitudes of cooperation, respect, and loyalty, taught through entertaining episodes of family living, are more valuable than any lecture by a specialist.

Good sportsmanship is another attitude which should be developed, but the sportsmanship sometimes displayed in various televised sports events is questionable. Youngsters will never learn the fun of sportsmanlike playing by watching the faked antics of professional wrestlers or from emulating the tactics of underhanded advantage as practiced by the roller skaters. John J. Considine, Superintendent of Detroit's Park and Recreation Department, opposes such phony sports contests and has said, "The things these clowns pass off as sport do more to teach children dirty playing than we can do to teach

them clean sportsmanship."<sup>1</sup>

Development of Appreciations. Television offers opportunity for the development of the appreciation of drama; and since study shows that dramas are most popular with the Kansas City viewing audience, the programs of this type should be evaluated. The three best dramatic programs of 1951 as chosen by the fame poll are available to the Kansas City viewer. "Studio One," "Television Playhouse," and "The Robert Montgomery Program" rank one, two, three, respectively. Another dramatic show of special merit is "Hall of Fame," which is presented by Miss Sarah Churchill. The dramatic sketches on this program are often historical and timely, many times inspirational. Some of the lives of famous people have been used by Miss Churchill, including Dolly Madison, Florence Nightingale, and the Englishwoman who founded the Girl Scouts. Her programs are always in good taste. Occasionally books are dramatized, and this could encourage individual or family reading.

Family discussions as to the merits of plays will soon enable the members to recognize inferior presentations. They would have recognized the slighting of morals in a certain "Big Town" production, in which a sales girl stole a necklace, yet remained the heroine of the story and unpunished. They would have quickly agreed that the evening of horror and crime plays over WDAF-TV leaves much to be desired. Special

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<sup>1</sup> "TV Programs and Youth," Recreation, June, 1951.

study could help develop appreciation of other qualities, such as dramatic plan, production, and presentation.

The development of an appreciation of music can begin with music listening. If children grow up within surroundings of good music, they will more likely tend to appreciate it in later life; and adults can learn to appreciate such music, too, for through audio and video aid it is easier than ever before. A Kansas City viewer, after seeing the face and hands of Arturo Toscanini directing the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra on television, stated, "I have seen the backs of many conductors at concerts and the somewhat self-conscious faces of more at the movies. But never until this morning did I hear and see music coming to life under the hands of the maestro himself".<sup>1</sup>

A program of classical music recently made available to Kansas City viewers is the "Voice of Firestone," rated number one in its classification. The "Fred Waring Show," rated number one in popular music, is very good family entertainment. The program material is in good taste, presented in such a way that the audience understands that it has meaning and purpose.

Development of Knowledge. Most educators agree that television is potentially the most powerful educational instrument yet devised. This is primarily because it combines

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas City Star, January 13, 1952.

sight and sound and does so in the intimate atmosphere of the home. To be really educational, however, a television program must entertain. There are several programs on WDAF-TV which demonstrate this principle.

"Today," a 2-hour early-morning "communications" program, was launched on WDAF-TV some time after the author's interviews with Kansas City families. The format of the program depends largely upon news, but it is presented in various ways and interspersed with entertainment. Dave Garroway acts as its communicator. Its value to the American family is its design for going-to-work and going-to-school viewers, rapidly changing audiences. But should the housewife or shut-in desire to see it in its entirety, the show is interesting enough to hold such full-time attention.

Once a week in the late afternoon, "Zoo Parade" can bring fascination to children and adults alike. Marlin Perkins, director of the Chicago Park Zoo, conducts viewers on what is essentially a private tour of one of the nation's great zoos. The program is very entertaining and is also considered one of the top educational features of the airwaves. Education through entertainment is this program's chief value. It could also encourage the choice of various forms of nature study as hobbies.

"Meet the Press," voted the best educational program of 1951, offers the audience opportunity to gain knowledge on various subjects, depending upon the guest for the day.

### Suggested Television Activities

Any family having radio and television can plan for the good offerings and shut off the machine when there is nothing good on the air. Also, any family should remember that at best most of this kind of activity is a spectator activity. Families get more fun doing things together. TV can be a time thief because you can do practically nothing while the program is on.<sup>1</sup>

It is the contention of the author that television can serve the family as "doing" activity as well as spectator activity. From the television studies set forth in this thesis, certain recreational activities have been brought to mind and are now suggested to the family.

Children's Play. Studies have shown that the most avid fans of television are children. Parents are concerned over the long inactive hours they spend before a television set. They have seen how it can be a master. How can television serve these children?

Children welcome new ideas for play and fun, and with a little encouragement from parents they can discover that "playing" ideas they view on television can be just as much fun as watching them. An example was given earlier in this thesis of youngsters playing cowboy right along with the TV cowboys. They need little encouragement, after the program is over, to go on with the game themselves; but the spark of enthusiasm was produced by the television show. Similarly,

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<sup>1</sup> Helen and Larry Eisenberg, The Family Pleasure Chest, p. 37.

play ideas involving inter-planetary rocket ships, circuses, and zoos can be encouraged. Children may also be inspired by television's puppet characters to make their own plays modeled after their favorite programs. This kind of activity turns television into a creative experience. Some children are not so enterprising as others, however, and many times they need a little encouragement from the parents.

After visiting the local television station, a Texas youngster with his playmates constructed a "play" television studio, complete with props and scenery. They used shoe boxes, mop handles, even discarded cooking utensils, and had an enriching experience. They then proceeded to reproduce television programs they had seen on their family sets.<sup>1</sup>

Pre-school children could occasionally be entertained with a television party, planned around a program such as "Howdy Doody." A few neighbor children could be invited in to see the television show. When it was over, the set would be turned off and milk and cookies served. This would offer early social training to the children, as they learn the responsibilities and techniques of entertaining.

Television Parties. There can be parties planned for children and adults, as well as for the youngsters. A television party might be planned around a certain program, such as the NCAA Basketball Tournament as discussed earlier in this

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Bob Russell, "Television At Play," Recreation, November, 1950, p. 342.

basis. In this case, a situation simulating as much as possible the actual activity--bleachers, cheer leaders, popcorn vendors, and cowbells--was set up. Other parties planned around program themes might be Wild West Parties, a Circus Party, or any theme of a particular drama to be televised. A television party needs all the planning of a regular party, even more. For it must be adapted to the TV program of the evening, as well as to the interests of the guests. Invitations can be sent, the room can be decorated a little, prizes are often desirable, and refreshments are almost a necessity.

Family television parties, as the term implies, would be strictly family affairs. An evening which offers programs of interest to all members of the family would be selected. In addition to refreshments and television viewing, certain recreational activities could be adapted for the evening. They might put on an "All Star Revue" of their own, or merely include some of the following games:

Each guest is given a list of television stars and opposite this list, in incorrect order, names of the shows of which they are a part. This paper and pencil game would involve pairing of the correct star with the television program in the shortest time.

Another quiet game is Observation. This must be played after a telecast. While the show is going on, the host secretly writes down things about the show--such as the sponsor, number of men and women in the show, how many commercials



appeared, how many people sang, and so on. After the show, the set is turned off and the host asks the guests the prepared questions.

More active is the game of charades. If the group is large, it can be divided into smaller groups and each one dramatizes a TV program. A small party might use the impersonation of television stars by individual guests.

Additional Activities. Many programs lend themselves to actual participation by the audience. Members of the family can gather around the television set and play the game along with the contestants in such programs as "Twenty Questions", "What's My Name?", and other quiz shows. Sometimes they can even perform the stunts in such programs as "Beat the Clock".

Following television information with map study can be a fascinating activity. For example, during newscasts of the war a person might mark on a map of the world movement of troops or supplies. Or another might have the hobby of studying weather and work out weather maps and predictions of his own, while watching weather reports on television.

With so many discussion groups active on television programs, families can be encouraged to form parlor forums of their own as a follow-up to TV discussions. The problem could be discussed in light of the family and new issues be raised. These parlor forums could also choose subjects presented on programs other than definite discussion programs. A discussion of techniques and strategy displayed in a basketball



er football game would interest the men and older children of the household. A little outside effort could also bring others into the discussion, for television can stimulate a desire to learn more about such a subject. A radio television company recognizes this and has issued a guide which gives a brief background and the fundamental rules of seven sports sometimes produced on television. "Surveys have shown that many persons, particularly women, would enjoy sports more if they really knew and understood them a little better. We offer this sports guide strictly for the pleasure of the amateur viewer."<sup>1</sup> Other discussions might involve the interpretations of a modern dance or the dramatic criticisms of a play.

Television can actively stimulate recreation by encouraging reading. A Family Reading Group might take advantage of interest aroused in other members of the family when a historical drama or the dramatic adaptation of a book is televised. They could arrange the reading of the book or play as a family group activity, or make arrangements to have the book available for individual enjoyment.

Housewives may choose to follow-up household hints given over television programs. Clubs could be organized for the purpose of exploring television suggestions--testing the recipes, trying the labor-saving hints, making the

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<sup>1</sup> "Crosley TV Sports Guide," Avco Manufacturing Company.

table favors. Members of the club would meet later to discuss their finds, endeavoring to glean out the acceptable aids to household management.

Another activity suggestion is the formation of a Family Viewing Council. This is an opportunity for the parents to help the children understand what is worthwhile in television-- why the bad program is bad and good program good, how they can vary their own viewing habits. A discussion about favorite programs helps to establish standards. When a person has to explain why he likes a certain program, he begins to think a little about it and develop definite criteria. Furthermore, the encouragement of selective viewing will greatly increase the pleasure and satisfaction received from the television set.

Religion is merely touched upon in television programming in Kansas City. This type of program could act as a valuable inspiration for worship periods in the home. Certain members of the family could be responsible for a scripture reading, a prayer, a thought for the day, giving religion its proper place in the home. "The family needs religion to draw it together. A full life cannot be lived in any family where religious practices are not a vital part of family life."<sup>1</sup> Five minutes of religious programming per week is available to Kansas City viewers.

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<sup>1</sup> Helen and Larry Eisenberg, The Family Pleasure Chest, p. 7.

This gross lack of religious content suggests a final television activity, a community-wide project--the formation of a television and radio council. Such a council would be similar to the Family Viewing Council, but serve a larger area and have for a major goal the betterment of television in the community. It would be composed of parents, educators, religious leaders, and other interested persons and would view programs regularly, circulating lists of the best available programs. "Good programs will stay on the air only if there is an audience for them."<sup>1</sup> This was seen in Kansas City recently when the "Arthur Godfrey Talent Show", with its comments in poor taste, was replaced by a program of the classics, "Voice of Firestone." Unfavorable listener response was responsible for this action. So much more could be accomplished with an organized group. There are national groups in several larger cities--Los Angeles, Detroit, Washington--<sup>2</sup> who are working for the betterment of radio and television. But careful thought should be given concerning group action in regard to reference to higher authorities. James A. Wylie has expressed such a word of caution. He states that protests should not be made to federal authorities but directly to the individual station and sponsor, where it is most effective. "Organizations which attempt to boycott programs

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<sup>1</sup> Josette Frank, "Is Television Good or Bad for Children?", Woman's Home Companion, November, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> "Everybody Wants to Clear Up TV," Pathfinder, December 12, 1951.

only call attention to those that are not a force for the good--witness censored movie!"<sup>1</sup> Careful thought and planning would be necessary in the formation of policies for such a group.

### Servant or Master?

Television has a powerful impact on family living. Some people advocate it as an invention of merit, a tool to happier living. Others condemn it as a menace to integrated development. What is the answer? Is television a servant of the family, or is it a master?

The answer seems to be an individual one. It depends upon how the family uses the television medium. If members of the family watch television all evening, waiting until the programs are over so they can go to bed, they leave the set exhausted, mastered by an ogre called television. If they force guests in their home to sit in mute silence, if the children stop enjoying softball, if Father leaves his bowling team, if Mother never finishes that hooked rug, their living has been dominated by one type of entertainment. This miracle of entertainment called television can be a master.

Television can be a servant of the family. This can be

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Wylie, "Television," Recreation, January, 1950.

accomplished in one of two major ways. The first is by recognizing it as a type of spectator activity, one ingredient of a well-balanced recreation program. There are spectator values in television-viewing, and as long as the television does not exclude other forms of creative entertainment it can serve as a more activity of enjoyment to the family. This implies that the family will advocate selective viewing. It may also mean that they will want to set up certain time limits, if the reported early excess in viewing does not decrease at its normal rate.

Even greater value in television can be received through the second method of making television a servant of the family. This is by using it as a springboard for other activities. It has been shown that television programs can stimulate interest in various activities, thereby providing many values in addition to the spectator value. If television is used as a tool for social gatherings, discussions, and learning, it becomes a "doing" activity, involving opportunities for development in various skills, attitudes, knowledge, and appreciations. Television is serving the members of the family by developing individually more integrated personalities and collectively more solid family relationships.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

## Summary

The purpose of this television study was to ascertain inductively evidence of variation in (1) the television viewing habits of the family and in (2) the effects of television upon recreation habits, as a permanent adjustment is made to the presence of a television set in the home; and (3) to determine a recommended pattern for making television a tool for better family living.

Before answers to the above objectives were sought, the term "recreation" was defined and its importance in family living established. With television qualified as a recreation activity, the author proceeded to a review of previous literature, a study of 50 television-viewing families, and a concentrated viewing-schedule before the video screen.

The study set forth certain patterns of viewing in regard to viewing hours per day, selection habits, program choices, and family uses. Due to conflicting and unreliable answers given by the interviewed families, no facts concerning a variation due to the television adjustment period were established. There is definite indication, however, that owners of long standing choose their programs, thereby spending less time before the television screen.

Television's effects on other recreation activities were

obtained. The interviewed families reported changes in the recreational habits since their purchase of television sets. Again, quantitative differentials due to the time factor were not perceptible, but there is some indication that the degree of these habit changes was in relation to length of set ownership.

The use of television as a tool for better family living was discussed through selective viewing suggestions and through television activities. It was shown that television can be a servant of the family in two ways, (1) by recognizing it for its spectator values and preventing it from excluding other activities necessary for a well-balanced recreation program, and (2) by using it to stimulate other activities, such as discussions, special parties, creative play, and hobby groups.

Conclusions drawn from these three areas follow.

#### Conclusions

The conclusions which are concerned with television-viewing habits of the family are:

1. Television-viewers are critical of TV.
2. On the average, the family spends approximately ten minutes viewing TV in the morning, one and one-half hours in the afternoon, and four hours and ten minutes in the evening.
3. Families of the low-income group show a slightly higher average of viewing hours than do the other two income

groups.

4. In reporting changes in viewing habits since they first owned the set, most of the 48 per cent reported decrease.

5. Of those reporting decreases in viewing time, 80 per cent have owned sets over two years; only 25 per cent of those owning sets less than six months reported such a change.

6. There were 84 per cent of the families who reported that they refer to program listings regularly.

7. Both educational and entertainment programs are enjoyed by 86 per cent of those interviewed.

8. Children's shows and personality shows are the most popular afternoon programs.

9. Dramas, sports presentations, quiz shows, and news telecasts are the most popular evening programs.

10. The number of shows available is comparable with the reported choice of program, except for variety shows, which are not so popular as their occurrence rating.

11. Doing other things while watching TV is common to 31 per cent of the families. Sewing was the activity most often reported.

12. Television is regarded as strictly a spectator activity by 82 per cent of the families.

The conclusions concerned with the effects of television upon recreation habits are:

1. Recreational activities most affected are radio listening, movie attendance, and "going out".



2. Recreational activities of a participating nature are affected by television to only a small degree.

3. TV is a factor in keeping the family at home, according to 58 per cent of the families.

4. At least half of their TV watching time is done as a family group reported 88 per cent of the families.

5. Television can stimulate some recreational activities. Conclusions which are concerned with making television a tool for better family living are:

1. Television is a form of spectator recreation.

2. Individuals and families need a well-balanced program of recreation for complete living.

3. Spectator appreciation is only one ingredient of a well-balanced program of recreational activities.

4. Specific TV programs offer opportunities for spectator enjoyment, participation, and development of various skills, attitudes, appreciations, and knowledge.

5. Television can stimulate additional recreational activities--in children's play, television parties, and various family and community activities.

6. Television can be a servant to the family in one of two ways: (1) by recognizing it as a spectator activity, making it only one part of a balanced program so that other desirable recreation activities are not excluded, or (2) by using television as a springboard for other activities, thereby providing opportunities for full physical, mental, and social

development.

With this summary and set of conclusions, the study is brought to a close. As with any inductive approach, conclusions reached are subject to severe analyses. Therefore, the author wishes to emphasize that no sweeping observations of television-viewing habits can be made from those obtained in the survey; also, no real induction can be made concerning the effects of television upon recreation habits as the permanent adjustment to television is made in the home. The principal contribution of this study seems to be the recommended living pattern for television owners; that is, selection of TV programs capable of providing desirable spectator response, and the use of TV programs to stimulate various activities which can meet the recreational needs of the individual and of the family. It is submitted as an area for future study.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## APPENDIX

## SURVEY ON TELEVISION

The survey is composed of two parts--the first part is concerned with the habits of the television owner, the second part with television's effect on the recreational habits of the family.

## Viewing Habits

1. Do you have a television set in working order? \_\_\_\_\_
1. (If "yes") How long has your family owned this set?
  - Less than 6 months \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6 months to a year \_\_\_\_\_
  - Over 1 year to 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - Over 2 years to 3 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - Over 3 years \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you have a radio in working order? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you usually read a newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_
  1. (If "yes") Is there a listing of TV programs in the paper?
 

Yes _____	No _____	Don't know _____
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    - a. (If "yes" to C1) How often do you refer to the program listings in the newspapers?
 

Every day _____	2 to 3 times a week _____	Less than that _____	Seldom or never _____
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    2. (If "yes" to C) Is there a special column in the paper which gives you news and gossip about TV? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_
      - a. (If "yes" to C2) How often do you read this column?
 

Every day _____	2 to 3 times a week _____	Less than that _____	Seldom or never _____
-----------------	---------------------------	----------------------	-----------------------
4. Do you read any magazines regularly? \_\_\_\_\_
  1. (If "yes") Is there a TV column in any of your magazines?
 

Yes _____	No _____	Don't know _____
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    - a. (If "yes" to D1) How often do you read this column?
 

Every day _____	2 to 3 times a week _____	Less than that _____	Seldom or never _____
-----------------	---------------------------	----------------------	-----------------------
5. Do you ever feel like criticizing.....
  1. When you read your newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. When you see a movie? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. When you listen to the radio? \_\_\_\_\_



When you watch television?

1. (If "yes") What are some of your main criticisms of television?

- Advertising, commercials \_\_\_\_\_
- Personality shows \_\_\_\_\_
- Variety shows \_\_\_\_\_
- News telecasts \_\_\_\_\_
- Sports \_\_\_\_\_
- Quiz shows \_\_\_\_\_
- Disc jockey shows \_\_\_\_\_
- Children's shows \_\_\_\_\_
- Mystery and crime plays \_\_\_\_\_
- Complete dramas (not live) \_\_\_\_\_
- Discussions and forums \_\_\_\_\_
- Homecoming programs \_\_\_\_\_
- Religious programs \_\_\_\_\_
- Hillbilly and western shows \_\_\_\_\_
- Others \_\_\_\_\_
- General criticism \_\_\_\_\_
- Nothing in particular \_\_\_\_\_

On the average week day, about how many hours do you spend watching TV?

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
None, don't listen	.....	.....	.....
Up to 15 minutes	.....	.....	.....
15 to 30 minutes	.....	.....	.....
30 to 60 minutes	.....	.....	.....
Over 1 hour to 2 hours	.....	.....	.....
Over 2 hours to 3 hours	.....	.....	.....
Over 3 hours to 4 hours	.....	.....	.....
Over 4 hours to 5 hours	.....	.....	.....
Over 5 hours to 6 hours	.....	.....	.....
Over 6 hours	.....	.....	.....

Has your listening pattern changed since you first became a regular TV viewer?

1. (If "yes") How?

Do you usually make a special effort to find out about new programs on television? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

How do you usually learn about new television programs? \*

- Newspapers \_\_\_\_\_
- Not by dialing \_\_\_\_\_
- Television announcements \_\_\_\_\_
- Friends and relatives \_\_\_\_\_
- Magazines \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't find out \_\_\_\_\_

\* More than one answer permitted

1. Here's a set of cards listing different kinds of television programs. Would you mind looking through those cards, and telling me the types of programs you like to watch in the daytime?
2. Now which types of programs there do you like to listen to in the evening?

	AFTERNOON	EVENING
News telecasts	-----	-----
Sports presentations	-----	-----
Personality shows	-----	-----
Variety shows	-----	-----
Children's shows	-----	-----
Quiz and audience participation	-----	-----
Fisc jockey shows	-----	-----
Mystery and crime dramas	-----	-----
Complete dramas (other than first)	-----	-----
Discussions and forums	-----	-----
Special events	-----	-----
Honoring programs	-----	-----
Religious programs	-----	-----
Hillbilly and western programs	-----	-----

Which one of these statements best describes the way you yourself use television?

- A. I watch television mostly for the entertainment and very seldom watch serious or educational programs. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. I like to watch both serious and entertainment programs and I'm satisfied with what I get now. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. I like to watch both serious and entertainment programs, and I wish there were more serious programs. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. I don't know. \_\_\_\_\_

While watching television, do you or others in your family sometimes engage in other activities? \_\_\_\_\_

(If "yes")

Sew \_\_\_\_\_

Read \_\_\_\_\_

Homemaking tasks \_\_\_\_\_

Homework (school or business) \_\_\_\_\_

Entertain friends \_\_\_\_\_

Other activities \_\_\_\_\_

Of course, most people who have TV sets use them primarily as spectator activity. Does your family use television in any other way--as a tool for other activities? \_\_\_\_\_

(If "yes") How? \_\_\_\_\_

Television's Effects on Recreation

about how often did you and others in your family participate in the following activities prior to the purchase of your television set? Have these habits changed? (If "yes") How?

Activity	Participation Before TV	Participation Today
Watch movies		
Read books		
Read newspapers		
Listen to the radio		
Attend theater and concerts		
Attend sports events		
Listen to records		
Entertain at home		
Play cards		
"Go out"		
Others		

How much of the family's television-watching time is spent with the family sitting down together?

None at all \_\_\_\_\_  
Very little \_\_\_\_\_  
About half the time \_\_\_\_\_  
Most of the time \_\_\_\_\_  
All of the time \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel that your family stays at home more, less, or the same now that you have a television set in your home?

More \_\_\_\_\_ Less \_\_\_\_\_ The same \_\_\_\_\_

Can you give any additional specific examples of television's effects on the recreational habits of members of your family?

TELEVISION: SERVANT OR MASTER OF THE FAMILY

by

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It has been said that the advent of the automobile broke up the home, that television is reestablishing these home ties. There are, however, those who question whether a family, grouped in silence around a television set, is in any true sense favorably affected in terms of family relations. There are those who wonder if it is desirable recreation, or if it is stifling the more constructive recreational interests. The concern of the American public is television's effect upon the family, of the possible controls of such a device. Television: servant or master of the family?

#### Statement of the Problem

It is the purpose of this study to ascertain inductively evidence of variation in (1) the television viewing habits of the family and in (2) the effects of television upon recreation habits, as a permanent adjustment is made to the presence of a television set in the home; and (3) to determine a recommended pattern for making television a tool for better family living.

#### General Method

Before answers to the above objectives were sought, the term "recreation" was defined and its importance in family living established. With television qualified as a recreation activity, the author proceeded to a review of previous

literature, a study of 50 television-viewing families in Kansas City, and a concentrated viewing-schedule before the video screen.

### Conclusions

The conclusions are grouped under the three major objectives of the study, as set forth in the statement of the problem. Those concerned with the television-viewing habits of the family are:

1. Television-viewers are critical of TV.
2. On the average, the family spends approximately ten minutes viewing TV in the morning, one and one-half hours in the afternoon, and four hours and ten minutes in the evening.
3. Families of the low-income group show a slightly higher average of viewing hours than do the other two income groups.
4. In reporting changes in viewing habits since they first owned the set, most of the 48 per cent reported decreases.
5. Of those reporting decreases in viewing time, 80 per cent have owned sets over two years; only 25 per cent of those owning sets less than six months reported such a change.
6. There were 84 per cent of the families who reported that they refer to program listings regularly.
7. Both educational and entertainment programs are enjoyed by 86 per cent of those interviewed.
8. Children's shows and personality shows are the most

popular afternoon programs.

9. Dramas, sports presentations, quiz shows, and news telecasts are the most popular evening programs.

10. The number of shows available is comparable with the reported choice of program, except for variety shows, which are not so popular as their occurrence rating.

11. Doing other things while watching TV is common to 31 per cent of the families. Sewing was the activity most often reported.

12. Television is regarded as strictly a spectator activity by 82 per cent of the families.

The conclusions concerned with the effects of television upon recreation habits are:

1. Recreational activities most affected are radio listening, movie attendance, and "going out."

2. Recreational activities of a participating nature are affected by television to only a small degree.

3. TV is a factor in keeping the family at home, according to 58 per cent of the interviewed families.

4. At least half of their TV watching time is done as a family group reported 88 per cent of the families.

5. Television can stimulate some recreational activities.

Conclusions which are concerned with making television a tool for better family living are:

1. Television is a form of spectator recreation.



2. Individuals and families need a well-balanced program of recreation for complete living.

3. Spectator appreciation is only one ingredient of a well-balanced program of recreational activities.

4. Specific TV programs offer opportunities for spectator enjoyment, participation, and development of various skills, attitudes, appreciations, and knowledge.

5. Television can stimulate additional recreational activities--in children's play, television parties, and various family activities.

6. Television can be a servant to the family in one of two ways: (1) by recognizing it as a spectator activity, making it only one part of a balanced program so that other desirable recreation activities are not excluded, or (2) by using television as a springboard for other activities, thereby providing opportunities for full physical, mental, and social development.

As with any inductive approach, conclusions reached are subject to severe analyses. Therefore the author wishes to emphasize that no sweeping observations of television-viewing habits can be made from those obtained in the survey; that no real induction can be made concerning the effects of television as made in the home. The outstanding contribution of this study seems to be the recommended viewing patterns for television owners, that is, selection of TV programs capable of providing desirable spectator response, and

the use of TV programs to stimulate various activities which can meet the recreational needs of the individual and of the family.