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Children's Use of Television in the Selection of Role Models

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CHILDREN'S USE OF
TELEVISION IN THE SELECTION
OF ROLE MODELS

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of Teacher Education
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Nancy Luke

April 1995

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
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requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University
of Nebraska at Omaha.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if children use electronic media, specifically television, as a source in their selection of role models. Subjects were fifth grade students from five schools within the Omaha Public School System. Approximately 100 students were asked to fill out a questionnaire specifically designed for this study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous and both child and parental permission to survey was acquired from all students surveyed. The results showed that slightly more than half (53%) of the children surveyed used television in their selection of role models. Analysis of relationships between independent variables and television use in role model selection showed that there were no strong differences in gender, socioeconomic level or overall ethnicity. There was a statistically significant difference between white male and nonwhite males subjects' use of television in the selection of role models. Nonwhite boys tended to use television in role model selection to a greater extent than their white counterparts. A large percentage of both white and nonwhite boys named sports figures they saw on television as role models. The majority of subjects fell into the heavy users of television group with no significant relationship existing between amount of television watched and use of television in role model selection. Television and family were determined to be the primary sources for subjects in their selection of role models. There was no significant difference found between children's use of television as a source in role model selection and their attitude toward school. Particular role models chosen by children were listed and grouped in specific categories with a score of how frequently children listed these individuals.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Research in the area of media is far reaching and extensive. With media research comes discussion of a variety of topics such as television, movies, video games, magazines, music and other expressions of popular culture. Media, especially electronic media, factors into the development of children both in early childhood and throughout adolescence (Murray, 1993).

Research studies of television's value to society are diverse and numerous. Prevailing theories concerning the effects of television are as abundant as the programs available. There are also many layers to the television controversy. Issues include racism, sexism and ageism in programming as well as discussion about television advertising, newscasting content and amount of television violence.

Narrowing the view to children and television still leaves a vast amount of information to explore. In a single research study, it is essential to further tighten the focus. This paper describes an investigation into children's use of television as a source in the acquisition of role models and the factors that may influence this use.

Background

A report of children's television usage (A.C. Nielson Co., 1989) indicated that children age 2 to 5 watch an average of 25 hours and 13 minutes of television a week while 6-year-olds to 11-year-olds engage in approximately 23 hours and 17 minutes of television viewing weekly. Postman (1985) claims that by the time the average child begins school he or she will have watched almost 6,000 hours of television. Other studies assert that television

viewing occupies more time in a child's life than any other single activity except sleeping (Isenberg, 1987).

Psychologists (Children's Television Resource and Education Center, 1992) suggest that children have three sources of reality: what they learn at home, what they learn at school, and what they learn on television. Adults have a greater number of life experiences to aid in filtering out television messages which are erroneous or inappropriate. Young children, on the other hand, take in much of what they see on television as real and truthful. These messages can form, in part, their representation of reality unless strong mediating factors convince them otherwise (Signorelli, 1991).

Purpose and Importance of the Study

Children who watch a great deal of television are more likely to perceive the content viewed on television as a reflection of reality (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976). As Fitch, Huston & Wright (1993) state "Children learn a lot about social reality from both factual and fictional television" (p.48). Children's perceptions about social roles can be influenced by television (Murray, 1993) and television is a compendium of modes of behavior (Comstock, 1993).

This study is important as it could help those working with children to better understand what influence television may have on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of children. The purpose of the study is to examine to what extent children use television as a source in their selection of role models and what factors are related to this use.

Statement of the Problem

To what extent do children use television in their selection of role models? What, if any, relationships exist between children's use

of television as a source in the selection of role models and the variables gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitude about school? To be more specific:

- Does gender influence the frequency of reliance on television as a source?
- Do subjects from a particular ethnic group use television as a source for role model selection more than those from other groups?
- Does socioeconomic status affect the degree to which children use television as a source for role model selection?
- Do heavier television viewers tend to use TV to a greater degree than light or moderate viewers as a source in their selection of role models?
- Does a relationship exist between children's attitude toward school and use of television in role model selection?

Statement of the Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis

- Children will use television as a source in their selection of role models.
- There will be statistically significant relationships between children's use of television in their role model selection and gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitudes about school.

The Null Hypothesis

- Children will not use television as a source in their selection of role models.

- There will be no statistically significant relationships between children's use of television in their role model selection and gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitudes about school.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to fifth grade students in Omaha, Nebraska; generalization to larger populations is not appropriate due to the nonparametric nature of the results. Further study would be needed to allow for generalization. As in much television and media effects research, external factors such as the home environment and background of the subject can play an important role in affecting resulting data. Factors that may influence the subject's response such as prior experience and family history are impossible to isolate. This study was limited to identifying and isolating the variables of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitude about school.

Definition of Terms

- Role model is defined in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1991) as "a person whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others" (p.1021). For the purposes of this study, a role model was defined as a person admired and whose behavior might be imitated as indicated by responses to questionnaire items.
- Socioeconomic level is assessed by whether the subject attends a Chapter I or non-Chapter I Omaha Public School. OPS designates a school as Chapter I based on the number of children receiving free or reduced cost lunch which is in line with federal poverty indicators (Cathy Schwarting, assistant director for Chapter I Omaha Public Schools, personal communication, March 31, 1995). Children attending Chapter I schools are

considered of lower socioeconomic status and children attending non-Chapter I schools are considered of higher socioeconomic status.

- Heavy television user/viewer is defined in this study as a child watching greater than 23 hours of television per week.
- Moderate television user/viewer is a subject watching below the national average (Nielson Report, 1989) from 11 to 22 hours per week.
- Light television user/viewer is designated as one viewing 10 hours or less per week.
- Attitudes about school is based on a subject's like or dislike of school.
- Schemata is defined as the cognitive framework children develop throughout their lives based upon the information they absorb through life experiences including television. This framework is the filtering agent children use to accept appropriate or reject inappropriate messages from outside sources such as family, school, friends, or television (Williams et al., 1988).

Summary

This study examines the potential impact television makes on children in their selection of role models. It is predicted that there are relationships between children's use of television as a source in role model selection and the independent variables gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week and attitude about school. The reliance on television for role model information for certain groups may subsequently influence the ways in which they imitate the traits, characteristics, or behaviors of those they see and admire on television.

In order to assist children in healthy development, educators and those concerned with the socialization of children need to be aware of the implications that television may have on acquisition of role models and,

tangentially, on imitated behavior. The results of this study may be helpful to those involved with child development in assessing television's impact on children's growth, behavior, and learning.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Overview

The review of literature considers information related to how children learn about the world around them and the role of television in this process. This chapter includes an explanation of the ways in which children take in and synthesize information as they develop schemata. The developmental stages in cognitive growth are examined as well as the relationship between television viewing and children's socialization patterns. The concept of socialization is defined as it relates to children and their development of attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about society.

Social learning theory is presented as support for children's imitation of symbolic and real models. Studies specifically investigating the link between violent television viewing and aggressive behavior in children are discussed. The concept of social reality is introduced as it relates to children's perceptions of television content.

Gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and amount of television viewed are discussed as factors in children's use of television.

Children's Cognitive Development and Formation of Schemata

Scientists studying child development and the way children take in information would agree that real-life, hands-on experiences best contribute to intellectual growth and development (Forman & Kushner, 1983). This is especially true for very young children in the first years of life. Young children take in information about the world around them and use this information to adapt or accommodate existing schemata or develop or assimilate new ones (Beard, 1969; Fitch, Huston & Wright, 1993).

Assimilation is defined as "the incorporation of new experiences into existing

cognitive structures" (Keil, 1990, p.282). Accommodation, on the other hand, is also an integral part of the child's developing an understanding of the world around him. It occurs when already existing cognitive structures are reorganized or changed based on new information (Keil, 1990).

Schemata can be seen as a type of information house. Young children build a house of knowledge using the available resources in the environment. These resources might be parents, peers, school, church, or television. Children construct this foundation in early childhood and then build upon it with more information which is drawn from the world around them. They begin to frame their house, add walls, floors, and a roof based on the initial foundation formed as young children. As children grow into adults, they are more selective of input that is consistent with the rest of the construct. In other words, human beings use the knowledge, values, and perceptions from their existing basic schemata structure to select new information believed to appropriately fit. Adults add furniture, paint, and accessories to the knowledge house that has been built up to that point. Depending on the needs and perceptions of the individual, the structure may be altered if the new information is compelling enough (Keil, 1990). Generally, adherence to what is familiar and maintenance of the existing internal structure or schemata is the norm for adults (Beard, 1969; Fitch, Huston & Wright, 1993).

Children are most susceptible to changes in schemata since they have fewer life experiences on which to structure their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. Further, there is less screening of potentially inappropriate information by children than by adults due to children's still developing cognitive structures or schemata (Williams et al., 1988). Keeping this in

mind, television's messages may be used by children to assimilate new schemata which may be unsuitable for them.

What we know of child development, according to Piaget, (Beard, 1969) is that children learn most effectively by hands-on, active learning at their early stages of development. Experience is the best teacher and maximizing real, concrete, experiences seems to maximize positive cognitive growth. Children who have an information bank higher in experiential assets stand a better chance to internalize messages from TV consistent with their prior experiences. If positive, prosocial learning has taken place previously with real life experiences, then positive, prosocial learning from TV may be much more likely to occur (Williams et al., 1988). For the developing child, healthy schemata will probably best be created by direct involvement in an environment rich in positive learning experiences.

In addition to direct individual experiences, there are also powerful mediating factors such as parents, teachers, and peers which influence the child's development of schemata. As Williams et al. (1988) point out, "because schemata tend to ignore discrepant information or process it incorrectly, they are most susceptible to influence when they are initially being formed. Thus early childhood would be particularly important for the development of attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes" (p.3).

Children's Viewing Characteristics

Children watch television by cultivating images and synthesizing information differently from adults. Signorelli (1991) states that, unlike adults, children's comprehension of television content drives their attention to viewing. When children understand what they are seeing on television, based on their knowledge and experience, they attend more acutely to what they are watching.

Children acquire television experiences and filter this data with information they already possess, as stated earlier in the discussion of schemata. Children can better make sense of what they see on television when they have internal information stored from a variety of sources. Signorelli states "comprehension of TV progresses developmentally and is an active process with children making judgments, inferences, and interpretations according to their own experiences" (p. 31).

Television and Childhood Socialization

Socialization is a term that refers to the process by which children construct their social view of the world or social schemata. This can include a personal code of ethics, a set of guidelines for appropriate behavior in society and an internal framework for understanding the social world (Durkin, 1985; Ruble, Higgins & Hartup, 1983). Researchers may hold different opinions about television's effects on children but most recognize television's powerful role in the socialization of children (Berry & Mitchell-Kernan, 1982; Comstock, 1993; Gerbner, 1977; Graber, 1993; Isenberg, 1987; Signorelli, 1991). Winn (1985) has described television as a plug-in drug. She and Parenti (1992) believe that TV contributes to passivity, emotional withdrawal, self-centeredness and decreased imagination. Children are exposed to societal information on television related to gender stereotypes, occupations, political structures and families (Signorelli, 1991). This television information may influence how children develop a view of the social world around them (Berry & Mitchell-Kernan, 1982; Comstock, 1993; Gerbner, 1977; Graber, 1993).

Berry and Mitchell-Kernan (1982) describe television's importance in socialization by stating "through its potential to transmit the values of the culture, television becomes a meaningful agent in the socialization of the

young child alongside the family, the school, religious institutions, the peer groups and other community-based institutions" (p.2). Berry and Mitchell-Kernan say further that what children see on television shapes not only what they know and believe, but also how they behave and interact with others.

* Social Learning Theory, Modeling and Imitation of Aggression

Social learning theory is an explanation of human behavior based on a person's "continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants" (Bandura, 1977, p. vii). In other words, human beings are involved in continual interactions with their environment and base these interactions on learning, codes of behaviors and external environmental factors. Social learning theory holds that learning by observation is a powerful factor in children's transaction with television. Children can imitate modeled behavior from both live and symbolic sources. There are factors which influence a child's imitation of a real or symbolic model such as the child's motivational state, his perceived reality of the event and his existing schemata based on competing information or experience (Bandura, 1977). Comstock (1980) also cites factors influencing a child's imitation of behavior viewed on television. These factors include the social acceptability of the potentially imitated behavior, the level of success the model reaches in the behavior, the relevance of the behavior to the child and the degree to which the behavior arouses the child viewing the behavior.

In Bandura, Ross and Ross' (1963) landmark study which formed a foundation for social learning theory, symbolic modeling was delivered in the form of film. In their classic bobo doll study one group of subjects (children) was exposed to a real person engaged in hitting a plastic bobo doll and a second group saw a filmed person hitting a bobo doll. Subsequent to this exposure to the model, the subjects in both groups were placed in a room

containing a variety of play materials including prosocial toys and potentially violent toys such as guns and a bobo doll. The hypothesis for this study was that since filmed or symbolic aggression is further from reality, children would be less inclined to imitate the symbolic (filmed) model. What the researchers found instead was that the subjects imitated the aggression toward the bobo doll subsequent to exposure to the model's violent actions in both real and filmed form. In fact,

Filmed aggression, not only facilitated the expression of aggression, but also effectively shaped the form of the subjects' aggressive behavior. The finding that children modeled their behavior to some extent after the film characters suggests that pictorial mass medias, particularly television, may serve as an important source of social behavior (Bandura et al., 1963, p.9).

Social learning theory was further investigated in a related study by Eron (1963) in which both mothers and fathers of third grade children reported the violence rating of their children's most frequently watched programs. This data was compared to the children's aggressive behavior as reported by the children's peers. The data indicated that there was a significant relationship between favorite programs rated higher in violence and increased aggression. This relationship was most significant with boys' level of aggression as compared to their mother's scoring of the violent programs watched. There was only weak significance among girls with either mother's or father's reporting of violent content. What this indicates is that possible gender differences with modeling and imitation of aggression may exist. This study further supports the validity of social learning theory as it relates to the effects of viewing violent television on children's imitative responses.

Potts, Huston & Wright's (1986) study was also related to children's viewing and imitation of televised aggression. The study focused on the presence of violent or prosocial toys in the mediation of boys' interaction with others after viewing violent content. Subsequent to watching a cartoon containing violence, boys were more apt to play aggressively when they selected toys such as guns and to play prosocially when they chose prosocial toys.

* Social Reality

Adolescents often use television to define what is real and true about the world. As they cultivate perceptions of truth in their world, these realities are frequently indistinguishable from those presented on television. This tendency can be offset somewhat when alternative information or messages are taken in, contradicting the images presented on television (Morgan & Rothschild, 1983). It would seem to follow then that young children, especially those with limited access to information other than that found on television, are more susceptible to television's influence. Children having fewer real life experiences to counteract television's messages may more often synthesize and internalize these images as real.

Researchers examining the degree to which children see television's content as realistic have focused on certain independent variables that may have a relationship to children's perceived reality. Studies have found evidence to indicate that children from "economically disadvantaged homes, black children, younger children, female children, and those with a higher frequency of watching have all indicated more belief in the true-to-life nature of TV entertainment" (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976, p.88).

Greenberg & Reeves (1976) investigated children's perception of television reality and the effect certain variables had on children's view of

fictional television as real. Their study found that factors such as socioeconomic status and gender had no relationship to perceived reality. The score differences were significant between children with high versus low IQ, children who were light as opposed to heavy television viewers, and children from different grade levels. The results indicated that younger children, those with lower IQs, and children who were heavy television viewers saw the portrayals of certain characters and content on fictional television as an indication of real life.

Dorr, Kovaric & Doubleday (1990) found that children from 6 to 16 years of age perceived that almost 50% of real-life families match the representations of families found on the subjects' most watched television programs. Further, the children surveyed felt that television families were most like real life families in the ways in which they handled their emotions. This study, in addition to Greenberg and Reeves' (1976), tends to indicate that television can be a powerful source of social learning for children and adolescents and that further study is needed in this area.

* User Demographics and Knowledge Deficits

It is important to recognize that 90% of what children see on television is programming designed for adults (Bradley & Greenberg, 1976; Signorelli, 1991). Thus, much of the information absorbed by children is data not developmentally designed for them. The hours on television referred to as prime time are so designated as the time of day when most viewers watch television. Frequently, children are among these viewers sometimes watching with an adult, but often taking in TV's messages alone. These children do not always have the benefit of an adult to mediate the information received.

Low income families, particularly those of color, tend to watch a greater than average amount of television (Signorelli, 1991; Berry & Mitchell-Kernan, 1982) and, in fact, use electronic media far more as a source of information than print media (Dervin & Greenberg, 1972). Dervin and Greenberg (1972) suggest that print media and not electronic media is the most effective agent of communicating information to the public about current and world events. It follows then that the economically disadvantaged may have fewer assets in their information bank about current and world events since they rely predominantly on television for information.

This knowledge deficit is further compounded by the reality that because of fewer resources and opportunities, disadvantaged adults and children have less variety in their real life experiences through which to filter their television experiences. What this implies, especially for poor children, is that access to knowledge of what is real is often limited to television. This situation creates a knowledge gap between disadvantaged children and their nondisadvantaged counterparts when they turn to television programs for increased cognition or accurate portrayals of those in the world around them. This view is acknowledged by many who study the effects of television on children (Comstock & Paik, 1991; Signorelli, 1991; Cook et al., 1975). Tichenor, Olien & Donohue (1987) suggest that, "differential access to external media [and external experiences]...may be a major factor in maintaining knowledge gaps within communities" (p.336).

Based on the discussion of schema theory, social reality and knowledge gaps, it seems likely that children in higher socioeconomic groups with parents of higher educational level are in a better position to effectively filter the information they view on television. They may also be less inclined to

interpret characters and situations on television as reflective of social reality. Conversely, children who rely predominantly on TV for information to develop their understanding of the world may be more accepting of content on television as true, appropriate and worthy of imitation.

In addition to the study of television's potentially negative effects on children is research documenting television's possible prosocial impact. A study was conducted at an all-white preschool to examine the effects of watching SESAME STREET on children's play partner preferences. The preschoolers exposed to SESAME STREET included nonwhite play partners among their preferences two out of three times as opposed to the control group of preschoolers not exposed to SESAME STREET who made selections of nonwhite play partners one out of three times. The implication seems to be that when exposed to nonwhite ethnic groups, interest and familiarity is heightened in white preschoolers perhaps easing and even encouraging interaction (Gorn, Goldberg & Kamingo, 1976).

*Gender Issues as They Relate to Television

On television, male characters outnumber female characters three to one. In children's programming the proportion is five to one (Children's Television Resource and Education Center, 1992). Further, women appear less often in starring roles or as the primary character upon which a series focuses (Durkin, 1985). In regular television programming, men are shown 75% of the time actively involved in a profession, whereas women shown working outside the home (in about 50-65% instances) are cast in stereotypically lower status jobs such as secretaries, telephone operators and waitresses. Women who work are depicted as rarely able to mix career and family with success (Seidman, 1992). Female characters on TV are presented as emotional,

affectionate, nurturing, dependent and fearful. They also appear most often as victims of terrorism or crime (Signorelli & Lears, 1992).

Children develop their concepts about appropriate gender roles based on the information they take in from a variety of sources including school, home, and television. Cordus, McGraw and Drabman (1979) studied children who had been shown a movie depicting a nurse who was male and a doctor who was female. Only 22% of the children could identify both roles correctly and over half reversed the roles to make the physician a man and the nurse a woman. Two possible explanations for the children's recall discrepancy are that they either didn't notice the genders of each role or they altered their memory to match their existing gender schemata which may have included sex-role stereotypes.

Signorelli and Lears (1992) concluded that among 3-year-olds to 6-year-olds, heavier TV viewers are more likely to stereotype occupational roles. Considered with the above data about images of women on television, the possibility arises that as children turn to TV for information, they often see unrealistic and perhaps inappropriate sex-role stereotypes. As Signorelli and Lears (1992) found, children (especially heavy viewers) may internalize these nonrepresentative images and traits of women as not only reflective of reality but as acceptable and genuine. This can continue to fuel the cycle of gender stereotypes.

...no longer will it suffice to say that the reality in children's lives will shape their attitudes about gender issues...the reality of many children's lives is television and the social issues it presents to them...when that reality continues to reflect a sex stereotyped world, it is not surprising that children's views and behaviors in relation to male and female roles continue to reflect stereotypes (Signorelli & Lears, 1992, p.169).

Davidson, Yasuna, and Tower (1979) exposed subjects to a television program in which sex-role stereotypes were not included and nontraditional roles for both girls and boys were included. Subjects in another group viewed a neutral program with no sex-roles depicted and a third group watched a program gauged high in sex-role stereotypes. The researchers found that the girls who watched the reverse stereotype program used fewer stereotyped descriptors than those watching the neutral or high stereotyped program. There were no significant findings for boys. This implies that prosocial, nonstereotyped responses may result from viewing television content that attempts to present reverse stereotypical roles.

Ethnicity and Television

Berry and Mitchell-Kernan (1982) found that among racial minorities, African-Americans receive the most air time, however, they are still under represented on television in comparison to white, European-Americans. Other nonwhite groups such as Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans and Native-Americans are seen in far fewer instances on television programs. Graves (1993) states that nonwhite ethnic characters are depicted on television segregated into their own racial groups and are rarely presented making cross-cultural connections with those of other ethnic distinctions. Graves goes on to say that in contrast to European-American characters, African-American characters are more often shown in a "highly stereotypical manner...in terms of occupational level, social role assignments, and behavioral characteristics" (p.179). Further content analysis studies have shown that African-Americans are found appearing most often on situation comedies where all of the characters are black or as either the perpetrator or the victim of crime (Estep & Macdonald, 1983). The data suggest that there is little opportunity for

children to turn to television to see examples of nonstereotyped racial roles or positive inter-racial interactions.

Strohman (1991) reports that some African-American children watch over 40 hours of television a week. Graves (1993) states that black children as a group tend to watch a greater amount of television than their white counterparts. When asked, African-American children replied that one of the reasons they turn to television is to learn (Strohman, 1991). Strohman's study also found that 89% of the girls and 87% of the boys reported situation comedy as their program preference. In light of the amount of time black children spend viewing television coupled with the data about the African-American images that are being presented, further discussion and study is warranted to discern what implications may exist for the minority child using television as a source of information in developing attitudes and role models.

Summary

The review of the literature clearly shows the influence of television in the lives of children of both genders and of diverse ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. Research reveals that children use television to help to construct their ideas about the world around them. Children can turn to television to gain information about social norms and gender roles. Thus the need arises to investigate to what extent television is a factor in the acquisition and development of children's role models and what variables affect this use.

CHAPTER 3

Research Procedures

Research Methodology

Survey research was the type of methodology chosen for this study. A specific demographic group was selected: fifth grade students in the Omaha Public School System. Certain variables were targeted for study. These independent variables were gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, hours of television viewed per week, and the subject's attitude about school. The dependent variable was children's use of television as a source for their selection of role models.

The dependent variable was analyzed using chi square statistics with each of the independent variables. An examination of the data was conducted to determine if statistically significant relationships existed between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables.

Population

The population selected for this study consisted of fifth grade students attending public school in a midwestern metropolitan area stratified by socioeconomic level.

Sample

The sample consisted of a portion of the fifth grade children attending selected schools in the midwest city of Omaha, Nebraska. Only fifth grade students were potential subjects. The total number of fifth grade classes involved was 17.5. The subjects varied in gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, but were all fifth grade students which placed them between 9 and 11 years of age.

Specific Procedures

After conducting a review of literature related to the study of children, television viewing, and media effects, research questions were developed asking to what extent do children use television in their selection of role models and what, if any, relationships exist between children's use of television as a source in the selection of role models and the variables gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitude about school?

A survey instrument was then designed that addressed these questions. The survey was piloted and recommendations for changes were noted and made where appropriate.

Permission was obtained from necessary sources to proceed with the study and guidelines were followed per the request of the governing boards and offices within the University of Nebraska at Omaha and Omaha Public Schools.

A total of five OPS schools were selected for the study. Three schools were picked randomly from a list of Chapter I schools and two schools were picked randomly from a non-Chapter I list. The principals of each of the five schools were contacted by phone and an in-person appointment was set up by the research investigator to discuss the study in greater detail. After meeting with the principal, the researcher met with the fifth grade teachers (in four out of the five instances) to discuss what the study would entail. With the exception of only one school, the teachers preferred to administer the survey to the students themselves. In the remaining school an outside survey administrator was used.

Instrumentation

To answer the research questions, a survey instrument was developed that sought to obtain demographic information related to gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level and hours of television viewed per week. Another component focused on information related to role model selection. A specific question requiring a yes or no response along with open-ended questions comprised this section. A third component sought data about attitude toward school through means of a Likert scale. (See Appendices A and B).

Pilot Study

After the development of the survey, a pilot study was conducted for validity, age appropriateness, and time needed for completion. The survey was administered to subjects outside of the Omaha Public School System ranging from fourth to sixth grade. Their answers on the survey were completed and their responses addressed the question of role model selection. The mean time for completion of the survey was fifteen minutes. When pilot subjects were asked if the survey was clear and easy to understand they responded affirmatively. One respondent suggested that the racial identification section be made optional and this recommendation was followed. Otherwise the instrument was not altered from its original form after the pilot subjects took the survey.

Data Collection

The teachers who opted to administer the survey themselves received materials that were necessary to proceed with the study. This bundle of materials included, in addition to the actual survey, a cover letter that clearly outlined procedures to follow (Appendix C), a packet for each student to take home containing a letter of explanation of the study as well as both parent and child consent forms (Appendices D, E and F), an envelope in which to

place the returned consent forms (Appendix G), a set of survey directions to be read orally to students participating (Appendix H), and an envelope for returning the completed surveys (Appendix I).

For the school that selected the option of an external administrator, teachers received a different cover letter (Appendix J) and only consent packets and the envelope for the returned forms. The administrator gave the survey to the students who had returned both signed consent forms. The completed surveys were then collated and placed in appropriate envelopes for storage until data analysis was to be performed.

For the other four schools administering the survey themselves, the process of the consent forms being returned and the survey given to those agreeing to participate was carried out by the classroom teacher. Once completed, the individual teacher called the investigator to pick up the surveys and consent forms.

To insure that the surveys for a particular school could be attributed to that school, three procedures were put into place: the students wrote their school name on each individual survey, teachers placed the surveys into envelopes labeled with the school name, and each school's surveys were coded by color.

Treatment of the Data

Once all surveys were collected, they were numbered and the data was entered into an electronic spreadsheet. The quantitative data was processed and frequency distributions were generated for student responses to the questions concerning role model, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitude about school.

Chi square values were computed by comparing the response to the role model selection to gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of

television use, and attitudes toward school. These results were used to determine if statistically significant relationships existed at the $\leq .05$ level between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables.

In addition to quantitative analysis, the open-ended responses were examined and qualitatively scrutinized.

Summary

The next section delineates the findings of the study based upon the resulting survey information. Using the data collected and processed as support, the research questions are addressed.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Introduction

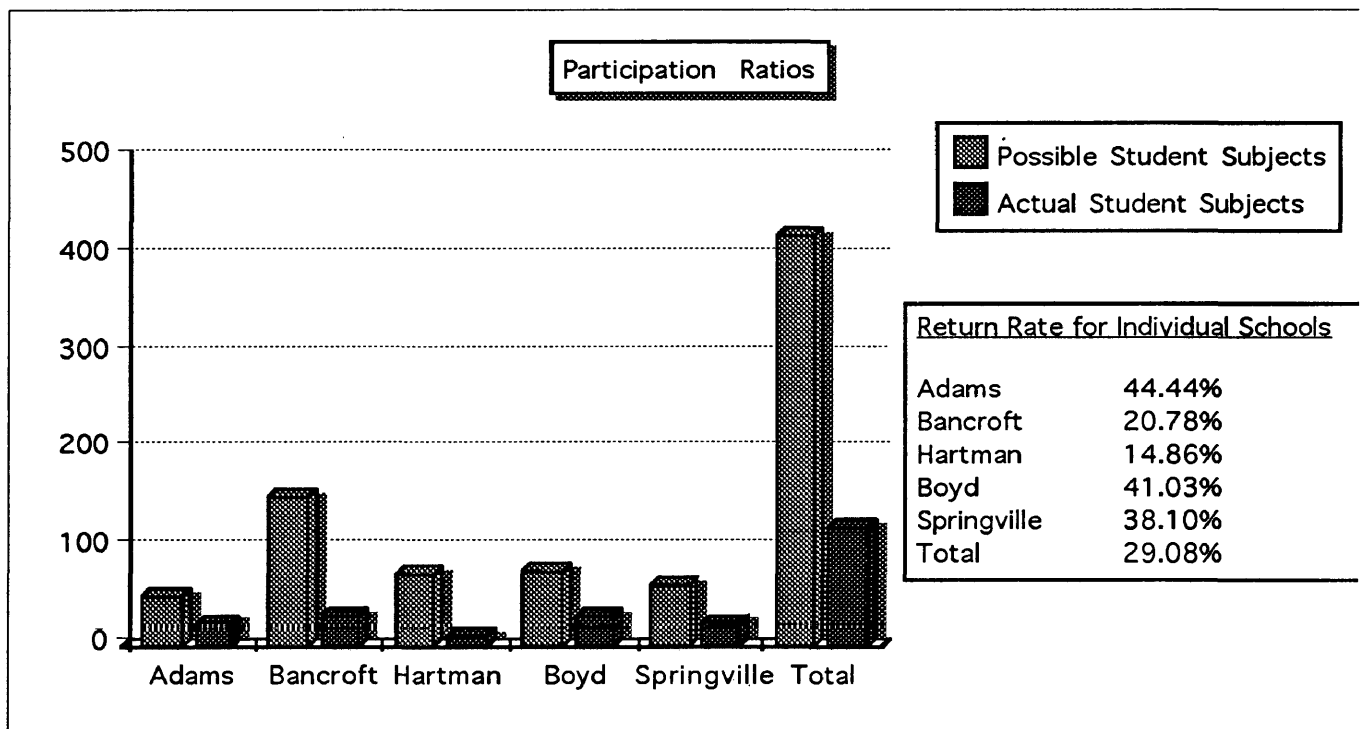
This study sought answers to the following questions: To what extent do children use television in their selection of role models? What, if any, relationships exist between children's use of television as a source in the selection of role models and gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitude about school? The population for the study consisted of students in elementary schools in the Omaha Public School System. A sample of fifth grade students from the following schools were asked to participate in the study: Adams, Bancroft, Boyd, Hartman, and Springville. Both Springville and Boyd are classified as non-Chapter I schools and Adams, Bancroft and Hartman are Chapter I schools. From a total of 423 students eligible to take part, 124 students actually completed the survey resulting in a total response rate of 29.08%. Individual school returns ranged from 44.44% at Adams to 14.86% at Hartman. The return rate for each school is included in Table I.

The raw data from the student surveys were coded and analyzed. In a few cases, subjects left specific sections of the survey incomplete. Thus the total N was not always 124 for some of the comparisons that were made. This failure to answer occurred most often in the ethnicity section. The question addressing use of television in the selection of role models was also left blank in less than 5% of the cases. For these subjects, a determination about the use of television as a source was based on the answers given in the open-ended section of the survey instrument.

Subjects listed up to three people they considered their role models in the open-ended section of the survey. The subject's lists of role models were

analyzed and sorted into categories by source: family, friends, school, television, other media, and sports. For the purposes of the study, sports figures were a subset of the larger television category since most subjects reported that they knew the sports role models from TV. The questions that asked subjects about their attitudes toward school and learning using a Likert scale were scored and frequency of response for each question was recorded and examined.

Table I

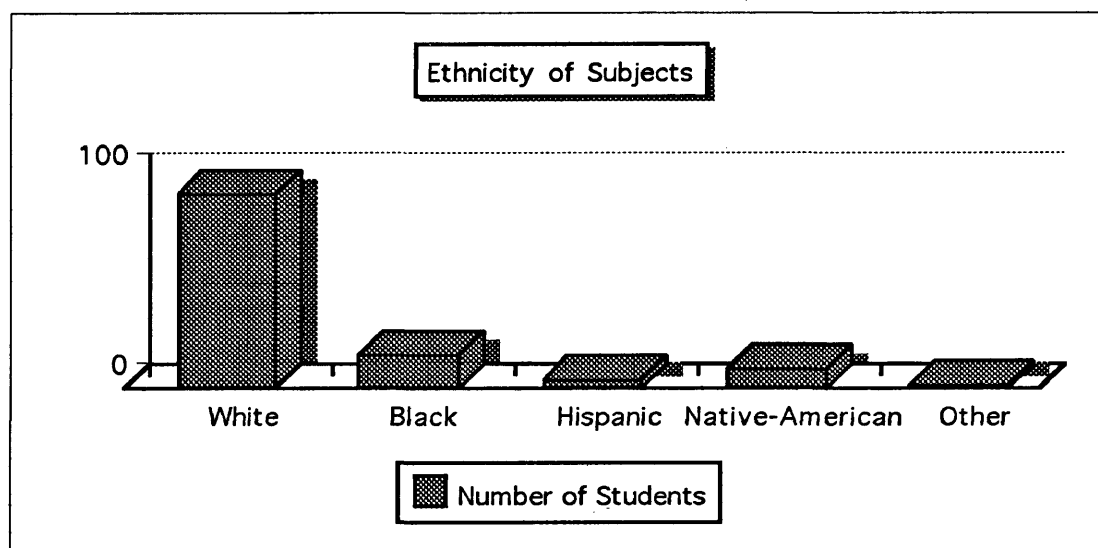


Demographic Information

Seventy five percent of the subjects who participated in the study designated themselves as white with the remaining subjects falling into nonwhite ethnic groups such as Black (13%), Hispanic (3%), Native-American(7%) and Other (<1%) as shown in Table II. An almost evenly matched number of males to females took the survey, 57 boys and 67 girls. The total number of subjects from Chapter I schools was 67 students and from non-Chapter I schools, 57 students. As the data indicates, both genders and

socioeconomic levels were almost equally represented within the sample surveyed. The number of nonwhite subjects for both genders was less than one fourth which made comparisons between these variables and the dependent variable problematic.

Table II



Results Related to TV Use in Role Model Selection

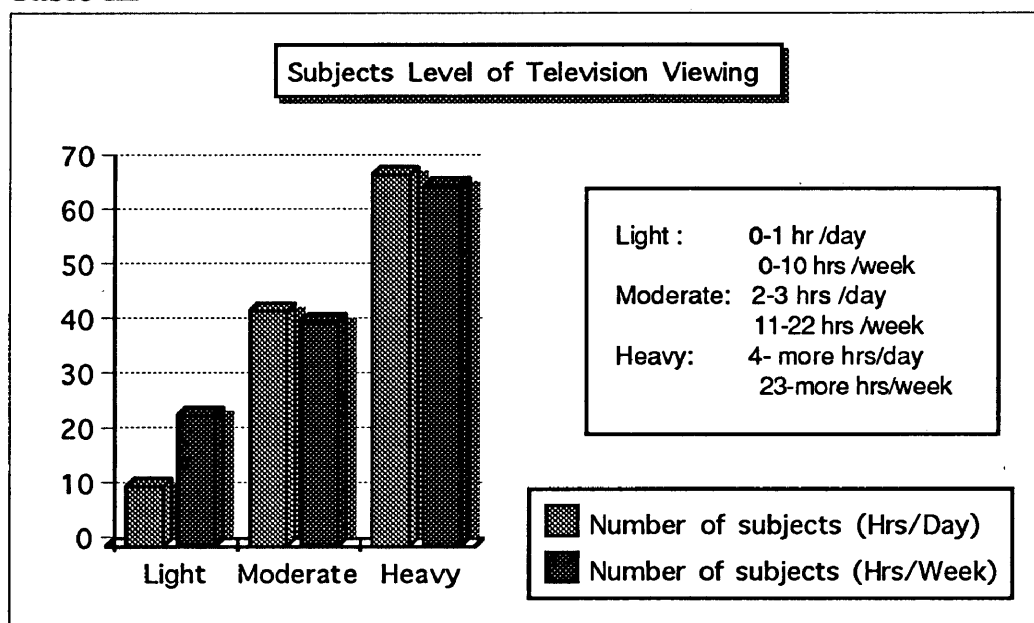
The responses to the question that asked the fifth graders if they admired or would like to be like any characters on TV were almost evenly divided. Sixty nine subjects answered yes to the question and 55 subjects answered no. The results showed that overall there was not a large gap between those children who reported using television as a source in role model selection and those that did not.

Subjects' Amount of Television Viewed

Children who watched more than 23 hours of television per week were labeled heavy viewers with moderate viewers watching between 11 and 22 hours per week and light viewers 10 hours or less per week. Fifty three percent of the students surveyed fell into the heavy TV viewer. Moderate viewers comprised the next largest category (33%) and light viewers the

smallest at 14%. (See Table III). The reported range of hours viewed by subjects was from 0 to 24 hours per day and 0 to 100 hours per week.

Table III



It is interesting to note that the number of subjects reporting themselves to be light daily viewers was less than half that of those labeling themselves light weekly viewers. The gap between daily and weekly use for moderate and heavy viewers minor (less than 5%) in comparison.

The results of the series of questions addressing attitudes about school and learning revealed that of the children surveyed, 21.14% reported that they always like school and 8.94% reported that they never like school. Most of the students fell into the middle category with 69.92% reporting that they sometimes like school.

Results Related to the Relationship Between the Dependent and the Independent Variables

Subjects were categorized by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week and attitude about school and chi-square tests were run to determine if differences existed in the use of

television as a source in role model selection with each of these variables. A .05 level of significance was established as the decision making point. Chi-square values were also determined for the responses to the role model question for white and nonwhite boys and white and nonwhite girls in two separate tests. No significant differences were found when responses to the role model question were compared on the basis of gender, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week and attitude about school. No significance was found for the role model question where white and nonwhite responses (boys and girls combined) were compared. A significant difference at the .05 level was found between white boys and nonwhite boys in their use of television in the selection of role models. The data were limited in that the number of nonwhite male respondents was less than 20. Between white girls and nonwhite girls use of television in the selection of role models no significant relationship existed. Comparison between the role model question and attitude about school had a chi-square value of .617 resulting in no significant relationship. No significant difference existed between socioeconomic level and use of television in role model selection; the chi-square value was determined to be .7125. (See Table IV). When compared, amount of television viewed per week and the role model question had no significant relationship, which is interesting in light of previous study conducted in the field. The chi-square tables with specific numeric values are listed in Appendix K showing that among all variables tested, the only difference found to be significant at the .05 level was that between use of television in role model selection and white and nonwhite boys.

Table IV

| Chi-square results for Dependent and Independent Variables | |
|--|----------------------|
| | x ² Value |
| Gender | 1.882 |
| Ethnicity | 3.696 |
| Ethnicity/Girls | .825 |
| Ethnicity/Boys | 5.202 * |
| Socioeconomic level | .7125 |
| TV Hours Per Week | 1.723 |
| Attitude About School | .617 |

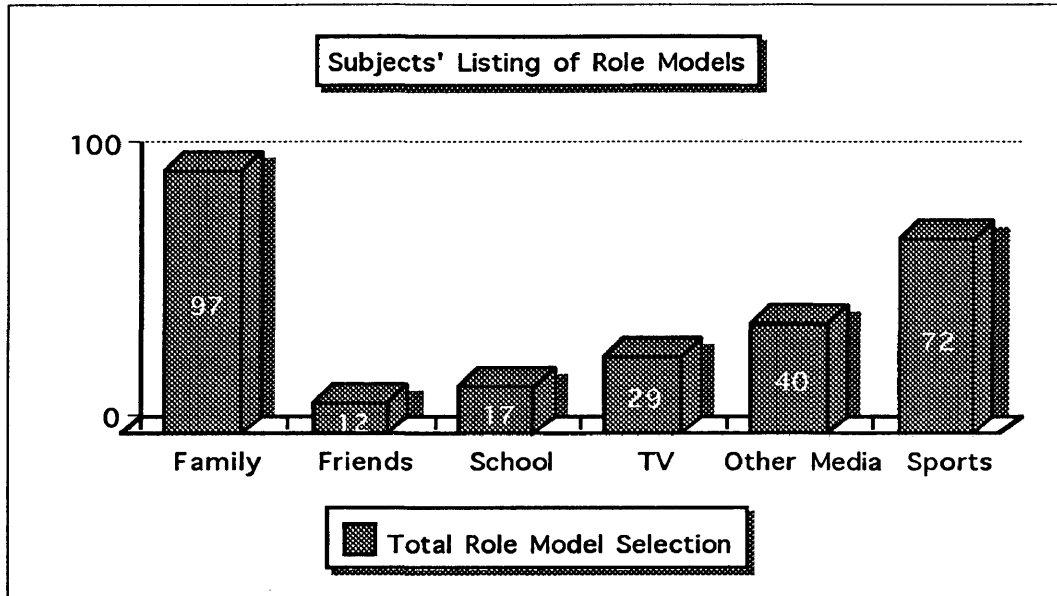
* significant at the .05 level

Role Model Analysis from Open-Ended Subject Response

The subjects were asked in the open-ended section of the survey to list three people they admired or respected. They were also asked to report what qualities they admired in the role models they selected and from where they knew the people they listed. Subjects were also given the opportunity to add any other thoughts they may have had about role models and/or television.

The responses to the first part of the open-ended questions led to a breakdown of the types of role models subjects chose and from what sources these role models were drawn. (See Table V). Thirty six percent of subjects listed family members as people they admired and hoped to be like when they grew up. It is interesting to note that other media (15%) captured a greater part of the subjects' total role model choices than television (11%). Subjects listed role models from other media to include musicians and singers, magazine celebrities, movie stars, and characters in books. Other media was dominated by female singers (Appendix L) and accounted for most of the role model choices for girls. The number of references to figures in books was less than five.

Table V

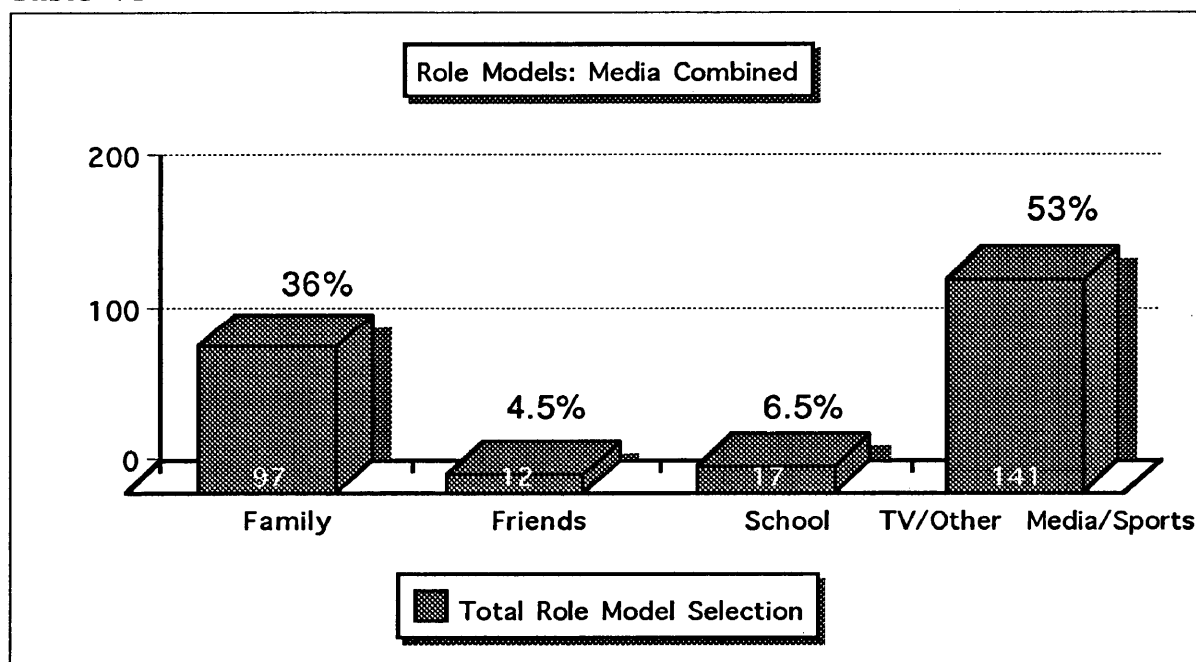


The next largest category after family members for source of role models was sports figures (27%). When asked where the students knew these figures from, the majority of the respondents (over 90%) listed television as the source of exposure to sports role models. Other sources for sports figures, as reported by subjects, were radio broadcasts, sports cards, and live competitions. Combined, these sources amounted to less than 10%. When television and sports figures were combined, the percentage of role models obtained from television increased markedly to 38%. Total media (53%) as a source was greater than family members (36%) and in fact, total media (television, other media and sports figures) was greater than all other categories combined. (See Table VI).

Teachers formed the largest part of the school category (71%) including the subjects' classroom teacher as well as specialists such as Physical Education, Music and Art teachers. Fewer than five subjects listed their principal as a role model. Bus driver and cafeteria worker were each listed once. Those persons in the friends category were split down the middle

between same age peers and adult friends of a family member, usually a parent.

Table VI



The series of questions asked about school and learning addressed a variety of attitudes ranging from "I like to watch TV" to "The best source of learning is school". The majority of subjects fell into the sometimes category in most of the 15 questions asked. (See Table VII). It is interesting to note that all subjects reported that they liked to watch television at least part of the time and that when they do they sometimes or always watch with parents. Almost half (49%) of the subjects responded that they always watch television on Saturday mornings and 46% of children surveyed said that they always watch television after school.

The category containing the largest number of never responses (38%) was friends not being the best source of learning. This should be considered with the fact that the subjects had just finished a six-week drug awareness program (DARE) that stressed the importance of thinking as an individual and not giving in to peer pressure. Although the children surveyed reported

that they always or sometimes watch television and the majority fell into the heavy users category , only 7% of subjects responded that television is always the best source of learning.

Table VII

Frequency of Responses to Questions Concerning School and Learning

| | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|--|--------|-----------|-------|
| a. I like to watch TV. | 34 | 88 | 0 |
| b. I watch TV with my parents. | 10 | 113 | 0 |
| c. I watch TV before school. | 46 | 54 | 21 |
| d. I watch TV on Saturday mornings. | 60 | 54 | 9 |
| e. I watch TV with my friends. | 11 | 93 | 19 |
| f. The best source of learning is TV. | 8 | 80 | 34 |
| g. I like to read. | 35 | 83 | 5 |
| h. I watch TV by myself. | 15 | 99 | 9 |
| i. I would rather read than watch TV. | 19 | 70 | 33 |
| j. The best source of learning is parents. | 21 | 94 | 8 |
| k. I enjoy school | 52 | 82 | 13 |
| l. The best source of learning is friends. | 3 | 76 | 38 |
| m. I watch TV after school. | 56 | 56 | 10 |
| n. I would rather watch TV than read. | 27 | 81 | 11 |
| o. The best source of learning is school. | 72 | 47 | 4 |

A listing in Appendix L shows the frequency of occurrence for individual role models by name. The data indicate that sports personalities figure prominently in children's role model selection as do family members. In many instances, subjects listed the female characters from FULL HOUSE as role models. Selected exclusively by girls, DJ and Stephanie Tanner were admired as role models because they are "cool", "pretty", "funny", "nice", or "awesome". Of the reasons given for choosing a particular role model, girls relied often on physical attributes, "Cindy Crawford because she is a model and she is skinny," or on emotional characteristics such as being "kind" or "helpful". Boys listed athletic ability of

the sports figures they chose, "Greg Olson is a great pitcher," as a reason for selecting a certain role model. Boys also listed being intelligent, "My dad is smart and hardworking," far more often than girls as the reason they chose the role model that they listed.

Additional comments subjects made about television and role models were varied. Most of the subjects opted not to share other thoughts about TV or role models in the open-ended section of the survey. Some subjects who chose to add additional comments wrote:

TV is wonderful. Most of the stuff OK. Except one show Beavis and Butthead on MTV.

TV is fun to watch but shouldn't be your whole life.

They shouldn't put so many swear words on channels that kids watch.

I choose my role models by their characteristics. Like if they're smart, friendly, they stayed in school. I admire the good qualities of a person or what he did.

I do not want to be like anybody on TV because some are jerks in real life.

I wouldn't mind being any of the bridge crew of the Enterprise or a Power Ranger.

They're [his role models, an athlete, his father and a family friend] a good example. I believe if I follow these people's foot steps, I will do good in life.

I think TV is very violent. I think there should be more shows for kids.

I think TV sometimes drains your brain. People watch it too much. They think that everything that happens on TV is real and they try doing it.

Summary

The data revealed that 56% of the children surveyed used television as a source in the selection of role models. Significant differences were found at the .05 level between white and nonwhite

male respondents in their use of television as a source in the selection of role models. No significant differences were found between use of television as a source and gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week, and attitude about school.

Additional examination of the data revealed that 53% of respondents watched greater than 23 hours of television per week and selected role models from a variety of sources. Of the role models listed, 36% came from family sources and 38% came from television. Sports figures were listed often by boys for their athletic ability and actresses and singers were listed most often by girls because of their physical attributes or emotional qualities.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

This study investigated the extent to which children use television in their selection of role models. Additionally, the study looked at what relationships exist between children's use of television as a source in the selection of role models and the variables gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week and attitude about school. A survey instrument was specifically designed to address these questions. The survey was piloted and adjustments were made where appropriate. A total of 124 fifth grade students in five Omaha Public Schools from both high and low socioeconomic levels were surveyed. Both genders were equally represented and the sample was predominantly white (75%).

Schools were contacted and permission to proceed was received first from the district, then principals and fifth grade teachers. Letters of consent were obtained from both the child choosing to participate and this/her parent. In four out of five schools, teachers administered the survey to their students who gave consent. The fifth school arranged to have an outside administrator give the survey to the subjects. The surveys were administered throughout the month of February 1995.

Once the surveys were administered and compiled, data were organized into frequency distributions and statistically analyzed using chi-square procedures. The dependent variable was children's use of television in their selection of role models. Independent variables were gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, amount of television viewed per week and attitude about school. One statistically significant relationship existed between the dependent variable and the independent variable, ethnicity.

There was statistical difference between white subjects' and nonwhite subjects' use of television in role model selection at the .07 level. When the difference between white boys and nonwhite boys use of television in role model selection was examined, a strong statistical significance was found at the .05 level. It must be noted that some constraints existed for this relationship since the sample of nonwhite boys was small.

Analysis of frequency distributions showed that 53% of the subjects were heavy users of television and watched greater than 23 hours of television a week (above the national average). Evaluation of role models chosen by subjects revealed that 53% of their role models listed were acquired from media including television, movies, magazines, music recordings, radio and books. Sports figures comprised 27% of the total role models recorded. Sports personalities were reported heavily by boys and actresses, singers, and media celebrities such as fashion models were most often reported by girls when media was the selected source of a role model. Family members comprised 36% of the role models listed by subjects and the remaining 11% of role models listed came from friends and school.

Conclusions

The results show that over half the subjects surveyed use television in the selection of role models and also greater than half watch more than 23 hours of television per week. This indicates that the children in the study turn to television as a source in role model selection and spend a great deal of their available time watching TV. The literature on the subject of children and television indicates that television is a powerful agent in the socialization of young children and contributes to children's information about how they understand the world around them.

There were no marked differences between genders, socioeconomic levels, amount of television watched and attitudes toward school and children's use of television. However, ethnicity was a factor differentiating children's use of television especially for boys. The data indicated that nonwhite children in the study, particularly nonwhite boys, rely on television to a greater degree than white children surveyed.

An analysis of the sources of role models indicated that while 36% of the subjects in the study list a family member, 38% of those children surveyed list a television figure. These findings indicate a reliance on both family and television as major sources for the subjects in role model selection.

Sports celebrities figure prominently in the lives of the fifth grade boys and to a much lesser degree to the fifth grade girls in the study. Children also listed friends and teachers as role models but to a much lesser degree than family members and TV personalities. Male subjects tended to select role models based on athletic or intellectual ability while female subjects chose their role models based on physical or emotional attributes.

Results of the series of questions focusing on children attitudes about school and learning reveal that children tend to watch with parents and think school and parents for the most part are the best source of learning. These results may indicate that although these children watch a great deal of television and use television as a source for role model selection, parents and school are still seen as the preferred source of learning. Because 100% of the children sometimes or always reported watching television with their parents, parents can play an important role in mediating the information about role models that children obtain from television.

The data also showed that children often watch television after school and heavily on Saturday mornings. The types of messages about role models

that are being transmitted during these viewing times may have implications for attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that children develop. More study and content analysis would be needed to address this issue.

Recommendations

In many instances, it was problematic to have children self-report the hours of television viewed per week as many of the subject's responses may have included inconsistent or unrealistic data. There was no means to verify the hours of television per week viewed by each student, so measuring whether a subject was a heavy, moderate, or light user was difficult. Further replication and adjustment of the study may be necessary to attempt to alleviate this problem. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the study's focus was fifth graders and their perceptions about television. Although the reported hours of television viewed may not reflect reality, it does reflect the student's perception of the amount of television they view per week.

In depth study of a smaller sampling of subjects using a personal interview procedure might bring to light more information about the attitudes about school as related to children's use of television. Personal interviews may also give greater understanding to gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic implications associated with television use and role model selection.

The data from nonwhite subjects were small in number and although the data indicated a significant relationship between the ethnicity of these subjects and their use of television in the selection of role models, subsequent study targeting a larger nonwhite sample would be needed for further understanding.

The results of the questions targeting attitudes toward school and learning indicated that children watch a great deal of television both after school and especially on Saturday morning. Further study is warranted to investigate factors related to children's use of television during these two peak times. A content analysis of the programs aired at these times may also contribute to understanding the effects television may have on children's development of role models.

The breakdown of individual figures listed as role models (Appendix L) lends itself to additional analysis such as the nature of the sports or other media figures chosen. In other words, what qualities do these role models possess that deem them attractive to children?

Commentary

St. Peters (1991) found that children, especially young children, are influenced by the choices their parents make in viewing and tend to watch what their parents suggest or more often what their parents themselves watch. Strohman (1986) asserts that intervention by parents is the most effective way to "mitigate the socializing influence of television." (p.322) When parents watch television with their children and explain the messages that are being presented on the screen, children's understanding can be clearer. Parents can help their children to develop values, beliefs and perceptions that are consistent with the values held by their parents.

The implication for teachers and those concerned with child development is apparent. Educators and parents can help children garner appropriate, positive information from television and help them to use it to their advantage. Children can be helped to see TV for the powerful tool that it is and ultimately, helped to develop real and healthy role models.

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Appendix A

SURVEY OF TV USE BY STUDENTS

A. YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE

School: _____

Gender Boy Girl (circle one)

I consider myself: (Optional, circle one) White African-American
Hispanic-American Asian-American Native-American
Other (please explain) _____

B. YOUR ROLE MODELS

List three people you admire and hope to be like when you grow up.

What do you admire or like about the people you listed?

Where do you know these people from?

Are there any characters on TV that you admire or would like to be like?
(circle one) Yes No

If you said "yes" who are they and what do you like about them?

Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about TV or role models?

Appendix A (continued)

C. YOUR TV PROFILE.

I watch about: ____ hours of TV a day ____ hours of TV a week.

My three favorite TV shows are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Any others? _____

Please circle **sometimes**, **always** or **never** to each of the following questions:

- | | | | |
|--|--------|-----------|-------|
| a. I like to watch TV. | always | sometimes | never |
| b. I watch TV with my parents. | always | sometimes | never |
| c. I watch TV before school. | always | sometimes | never |
| d. I watch TV on Saturday morning. | always | sometimes | never |
| e. I watch TV with my friends. | always | sometimes | never |
| f. The best source of learning is TV. | always | sometimes | never |
| g. I like to read. | always | sometimes | never |
| h. I watch TV by myself. | always | sometimes | never |
| i. I would rather read than watch TV | always | sometimes | never |
| j. The best source of learning is from parents. | always | sometimes | never |
| k. I enjoy school. | always | sometimes | never |
| l. The best source of learning is from friends. | always | sometimes | never |
| m. I watch TV after school. | always | sometimes | never |
| n. I would rather watch TV than read. | always | sometimes | never |
| o. The best source of learning is school. | always | sometimes | never |

Appendix B

THESIS QUESTION:

Do children use television as a source for selecting role models? (Section B)

SECONDARY QUESTIONS:

- A. Do heavier television viewers tend to use TV more as a source in their selection of role models? (Section C-Open Ended)
- B. Does gender affect the frequency of reliance on television as a source? (Section A)
- C. Does socio-economic status enter into children's use of TV as a source for role model selection? (Chapter I school?-coded)
- D. Do subjects from a particular ethnic group use television as a source for role model selection more than those from other groups? (Section A)
- E. Do relationships exist between attitudes toward school and learning and use of TV in role model selection? (Section C-Likert scale)

Appendix C

Dear Teachers,

Thank you very much for participating in this study, your cooperation is greatly appreciated! I have tried to break down the process in rational steps that will minimize any inconvenience for you and will least interfere with your instructional time.

1. Send home the packet containing the parent cover letter, parental consent and child assent form with each student in your class. Ask the children to return it within a four to seven day time frame. Making sure that both the parent and child forms are signed, place them in the envelope provided and list the child on the cover of the envelope as a participant who will be taking the survey.
2. On a day and time convenient for you and your students, follow the set of directions for administering the survey at a site within the school (your classroom, school media center, multi-purpose room, etc.) Remember that the survey has to be done at school and cannot be sent home with the student. Also, the student must take the survey individually and is not permitted to collaborate with peers or adults.
3. After the survey process is complete, contact me at your convenience at either number (W) 554-3653 or (H) 597-3510 so that I can come to your school to pick up the surveys and consent forms. If I cannot be reached, please leave a message.
4. If you have any questions or need any further assistance please don't hesitate to contact me.

Again, I am extremely grateful for your help and would welcome the opportunity to provide resources or results related to the study.

Thank You,

Nancy Luke

Appendix D

Dear Parents,

My name is Nancy Luke and I am a Master of Arts student in Teacher Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am also involved in Omaha Council PTA and serve as their Media Awareness Chairperson.

Currently I am doing research into children's use of television in the selection of role models. I would very much appreciate if you could take the time to consider allowing your child to participate in this study.

Your child will be asked to fill out a survey that will take between 15 and 20 minutes. Your child will only have to take the survey once. It will be given in either January or February. Every effort will be made to make sure this study will not interfere with your child's instructional day.

Your child's participation in this study may help in finding out how children use television and the impact TV may have on them. Their responses on the survey will be anonymous and confidential. If you agree to have your child participate, please read through the attached consent forms and return them to your child's classroom teacher.

If you have any questions or would like further explanation, please don't hesitate to contact me, Nancy Luke at 554-3653.

Many Thanks,

Nancy Luke

Appendix E

PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM IRB #143-95

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

CHILDREN'S USE OF TELEVISION IN THE SELECTION OF ROLE MODELS

You are invited to permit your child to participate in a research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to allow your child to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Your child is eligible to participate in this study because he is a fifth grade student in an OPS school.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether children select role models from what they watch on TV.

Your child will be asked to complete a written survey that will ask questions about his or her television use, people he or she admires and general questions about TV, school and sources of learning. This study will take between fifteen and twenty minutes for your child to complete. The survey will be filled out at a prearranged location within your child's school and will be done only once in the month of January or February.

There are no known risks associated with this research.

The information obtained from this research may help to develop a better understanding of how children use television and the impact TV may have on them and their acquisition of role models.

Any information obtained during this study will be kept strictly confidential. The survey your child completes will be anonymous and coded only by the school he or she attends. Your child and his teacher's identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank You for Your Time and Attention.

Appendix E (continued)

IRB #143-95

Page 2 of 2

Your child's rights as a research subject have been explained to you. If you have any additional questions concerning your child's rights, you may contact the University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board (IRB), telephone 402/559-6463.

You are free to decide not to allow your child to participate in this study or to withdraw your child at any time without adversely affecting their or your relationship with your child's school, the investigator or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE CERTIFIES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

DATE

IN MY JUDGMENT THE PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN IS VOLUNTARILY AND KNOWINGLY GIVING INFORMED CONSENT AND POSSES THE LEGAL CAPACITY TO GIVE INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR

Nancy Luke, B.S.

Office: 554-3653

Approved: Dec 2, 1994

Appendix F

**INFORMED ASSENT FORM
IRB #143-95**

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

CHILDREN'S USE OF TELEVISION IN THE SELECTION OF ROLE MODELS

1. You are invited to take part in this study. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a fifth grade student in an Omaha Public School. Your school was selected randomly.
2. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. Your parents will also be asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study.
3. If you have any questions at any time, please ask.
4. In this study we will try to find out if children use TV as a source when they choose role models.
5. You will be asked to fill out a form that will ask about your role models and will also ask what you think of TV. It will probably only take you fifteen or twenty minutes to fill out the survey
6. There are no known risks associated with this study.
7. Your information may help uncover some of the effects TV might have on children.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO BE IN THIS STUDY. SIGNING THIS FORM MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ ALL THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS ASSENT FORM TO KEEP.

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT

DATE

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

INVESTIGATOR Nancy Luke

Office: 554-3653

Approved: Dec 2, 1994

Appendix H

Directions For Administrator of "Role Models" Survey

1. Pass out the survey and tell the students not to begin writing until all the directions have been read to them. They should use a pencil in case they wish to change an answer.
2. Say to the students: **"You are going to fill out a survey that will ask you some questions about television. The first part of the survey, part A, asks some information about you."** Check to make sure that the children notice section A as you refer to it. Then continue orally, **"The next section, section B, asks you to answer in your own words questions about role models. A role model is a person you admire and might want to be or act like. Please answer these questions honestly and to the best of your ability. If you aren't sure about an answer, write what you think the answer should be to each particular question."**
3. Have the students turn the survey over to the other side. Say to them, **"After turning your survey over, look at part C. This section asks you to answer some questions about how much TV you watch and some questions about what you think about television in general. Remember to answer honestly and the best you can. When you have finished the survey, please go back and look over your answers to make sure they tell what you really think."**
4. When the students have completed their surveys, place the forms in the manila envelope provided. As soon as is convenient, contact me at 597-3510 (H) or 554-3653 (W) and let me know that I need to come pick up the packets of surveys and consent forms.

Thank you very much!!

Appendix I

COMPLETED "ROLE MODEL" SURVEYS

SCHOOL: _____

DATE ADMINISTERED: _____

Appendix J

Dear Teachers,

Thank you very much for participating in this study, your cooperation is greatly appreciated! I have tried to break down the process in rational steps that will minimize any inconvenience for you and will least interfere with your instructional time.

1. On February 6th, send home the packet containing the parent cover letter, parental consent and child assent form with each student in your class. Ask the children to return it by February 13. Making sure that both the parent and child forms are signed, place them in the envelope provided and list the child on the cover of the envelope as a participant who will be taking the survey.
2. On Monday, February 13 I will arrive at Bancroft accompanied by my colleague, Kim Hilbers, who will actually be administering the survey. We both will be present during the entire time needed to give the survey to all fifth grade classes participating.
3. If you have a preset room in your school you know of that can be used to administer the survey, let me know. Otherwise, I can discuss with your principal, or whomever is the appropriate person, to arrange an available room for the day. Also, if you will have some idea by the 13th as to the most convenient time for those of your students participating to take the survey, it may help make the process go more smoothly. At any rate, both of us will plan on staying on site at your school the whole day if it is needed for us to do so.
4. If you have any questions or need any further assistance please don't hesitate to contact me at 554-3653.

Again, I am extremely grateful for your help and would welcome the opportunity to provide resources or results related to the study.

Thank You,

Nancy Luke

Appendix K

| | Boys | Girls | |
|-----------|------|-------|-----|
| TV Use | 34 | 35 | 69 |
| No TV Use | 33 | 22 | 55 |
| | 67 | 57 | 124 |

Chi-Square 1.882

| | White | Nonwhite | |
|-----------|-------|----------|-----|
| TV Use | 48 | 21 | 69 |
| No TV Use | 44 | 9 | 53 |
| | 92 | 30 | 122 |

Chi-Square 3.696

| | White Boys | Nonwhite Boys | |
|-----------|------------|---------------|----|
| TV Use | 24 | 11 | 35 |
| No TV Use | 20 | 2 | 22 |
| | 44 | 13 | 57 |

Chi-Square 5.202
Significant at the .05 level

| | Lower SES | Higher SES | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|-----|
| TV Use | 36 | 34 | 70 |
| No TV Use | 31 | 23 | 54 |
| | 67 | 57 | 124 |

Chi-Square .7125

| | Heavy Viewer | Moderate Viewer | Light Viewer | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-----|
| TV Use | 39 | 17 | 12 | 68 |
| No TV Use | 24 | 17 | 12 | 53 |
| | 63 | 34 | 24 | 121 |

Chi-Square 1.723

| | Always Likes School | Sometimes Likes School | Never Likes School | |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| TV Use | 14 | 50 | 6 | 70 |
| No TV Use | 12 | 36 | 5 | 53 |
| | 26 | 86 | 11 | 123 |

Chi-Square .617

Appendix L
Subjects' Role Models by Name

| Family Figures | |
|------------------|----|
| Fathers | 30 |
| Mothers | 38 |
| Siblings | 8 |
| Aunts and Uncles | 22 |
| Grandmothers | 19 |
| Grandfathers | 0 |

| Friends and School Figures | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Teachers | 30 |
| Principals and Staff | 5 |
| Peer-age Friends | 14 |
| Adult Friends | 10 |
| Subjects Themselves | 2 |

| Miscellaneous Figures | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Historical Figures | 5 |
| Bill Clinton | 2 |
| R.L. Stine | 1 |
| Chuck Norris | 2 |
| Steven Segal | 5 |

| Sports Figures | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Micheal Jordan | 9 |
| Deion Sanders | 7 |
| Joe Montana | 6 |
| Shaquille O'Neal | 5 |
| Emmet Smith | 5 |
| Other Sports (Male) ~ | 42 |
| Other Sports (Female) ~ | 6 |

~ Individuals Listed Fewer than 5 times

| Television Figures | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Stephanie or DJ on FULL HOUSE | 10 |
| Other TV Figures (Male) ~ | 6 |
| Other TV Figures (Female) ~ | 9 |
| Other TV Figures (Animated) ~ | 3 |

~ Individuals Listed Fewer than 5 times

| Female Singers | |
|------------------------|---|
| Mariah Carey | 8 |
| Janet Jackson | 5 |
| Other Female Singers ~ | 8 |

~ Individuals Listed Fewer than 5 times