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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine (1) how often television was used as a surrogate parent; (2) the reasons leading to its use as such, and (3) the correlates of using television as a babysitter. Telephone interviews were conducted with 226 mothers who had children between the ages of 2 and 12. The respondents answered questions that addressed their attitudes toward television and its use by children, the amount of television they believed their children watched each day, their policies governing the use of television by their children, their reasons for using television as a babysitter, and the frequency of such use. Results showed that the mothers used television as a babysitter primarily so that they could take care of household chores. While confirming that this practice also gave them time to relax, the mothers denied using television so that they could socialize. Nearly half of the respondents reported using television as a babysitter for at least 1 hour each day. Mothers of younger children and those with less formal education tended to use the practice more frequently than did those with older children and more formal education. These mothers also generally approved of television viewing for children and watched a great deal of television themselves. Television as a babysitter was not used appreciably more often by single mothers or by those who also worked outside the home. (FL)

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Television the Surrogate Parent:  
Uses and Correlates of Television as Babysitter

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Television The Surrogate Parent:  
Uses and Correlates of Television as Babysitter

Researchers studying television in the context of the family have looked at family viewing behaviors, communication behaviors while viewing, parental rules and policies governing their children's uses of TV, and intrafamily conflicts generated by the presence of television. Almost in passing, television has been mentioned as a babysitter, serving to temporarily replace parental interaction with the child. How often is television used as a surrogate parent? What are the reasons leading to its use as such? What are the correlates--how does television's babysitting function vary with the age of the child being cared for, parental attitudes about television, parental policies governing how their children use TV, and parental demographic attributes such as level of education and marital and work status? The study being reported here examined those questions.

Television's babysitting function was introduced into the research literature over thirty years ago. Maccoby<sup>1</sup> found that many in her sample of Cambridge, Massachusetts mothers used television as a "pacifier," keeping their children off the streets, quiet and out of trouble; a majority indicated that television made it easier to care for their children at home. A decade later, Hess and Goldman<sup>2</sup> reported that nearly all in their sample of Chicago mothers agreed with the statement "television keeps the children quiet." At the same time, Steiner<sup>3</sup> examined TV viewing and the family in an omnibus national survey of adults' uses and perceptions of television. Most of those interviewed felt that children were better off with TV; parents were more likely to take that position than those without children. TV's virtues were thought to outweigh its vices. The advantages most

frequently associated with television were its educational impact and its role as babysitter; one in four spontaneously mentioned TV's babysitting functions, noting how television kept their children company, out of trouble, quiet and helped them kill time. Bower's update<sup>4</sup> provided some support for Steiner's findings. Most of Bower's sample felt children were better off with television, parents again being most likely to take that position. Fewer, however, spontaneously noted television's role as surrogate parent. Moreover, Steiner and Bower differed in their interpretation of their data sets. Steiner regarded his data as a "conservative underestimate" of TV's role as babysitter; Bower did not, indicating that parents had altered their perceptions of television for children. Said Bower, "One gets the impression that the American parent has fired the baby-sitter and hired instead a nanny whose major assignment is to teach the children."

It is difficult to assess the actual magnitude of television's use as a babysitter. Researchers such as Maccoby, Hess and Goldman, Steiner and Bower introduced the term in their reports without measuring it directly in their surveys; their conclusions were based primarily on open-ended responses to questions not directly related to TV as a babysitter. Moreover, television's babysitting function, however clear on the surface, is ambiguous. What motivations and viewing situations are encompassed by television's babysitting function? What are the underlying factors leading to its use as such? Is television a babysitter when the parent merely sits and watches with the child? Is television a babysitter, every time the child watches without the parent? Is television a babysitter any time the parent actively encourages the child to view alone? Steiner and Bower suggest television serves as a babysitter when it replaces adult supervision;

television would not be a babysitter then when the parent watches with the child. Steiner and Bower also suggest TV serves as a babysitter when the benefits primarily are for the parent; television would not be a babysitter then when the parent encourages viewing because of program/content considerations. The following perspective emerges: television serves as a babysitter when the parent actively encourages the child to watch TV or permits the child to continue to watch without the parent primarily because of benefits, unrelated to program content, the parent will derive. Such a perspective provides the parameters surrounding TV's use as a babysitter incorporated in this study. Use of it, however, is likely to result in a conservative estimate of television's supervisory role. First, parents may not be willing to admit their use of the medium as a substitute for adult supervision. Second, the perspective excludes situations where the child's TV viewing is encouraged or permitted primarily because the parent expects the child to derive valued gratifications from the content viewed. Third, this conceptualization narrows television's babysitting function by excluding all joint (parent-child) viewing, even when it represents the easiest default option of interacting with the child. Finally, the perspective assumes a more active parental role than may be the case. In some houses and/or at some times children watch without the parents' knowledge. Parents, then, may be unaware of all the times TV serves as babysitter.

#### METHODS

Interviews were conducted with 266 mothers who had children between the ages of 2 and 12. The interviewing of only mothers is consistent with previous research efforts in the area; it is generally believed that women, likely to be home more often during the day, can provide more accurate

information about their child's use of television than their spouses.

Respondents resided in a major metropolitan area in the midwest. Their phone numbers were selected at random from the area's most recent telephone directory using a systematic random sampling procedure. Most (82%) of those reached who had children between the ages of 2 and 12 agreed to be interviewed; in several cases, the man who answered refused on behalf of the woman without asking if she was interested in responding. Interviews were conducted on weekday evenings in April, 1981. Interviewers were undergraduates enrolled in the author's course on media effects; all were trained for the specifics of this interviewing task. Most respondents were married (87%); 13% said they were single, divorced or separated. Almost all (94%) lived in households with at least one other adult. Most were in their 20's (29%) or 30's (55%). Nearly half (46%) had at least some formal post-high school education. About half (52%) were employed outside the home, 72% of those who worked outside the home held full-time jobs. Most (88%) were white. These women watched a fair share of television themselves, averaging 2.4 hours daily; nearly half (45%) reported watching at least 3 hours a day. At the time of the evening interview, respondents reported having already watched nearly 2 hours of TV that day.

Respondents were told the interview was designed to examine the role of television in the lives of their children. Those with more than one child (82%) were told to consider only one child when answering the questions. Interviewers determined which child was to be focused on; their choice was based on an attempt to get an even representation of children between the ages of 2 and 12. As a result of this procedure, 37% of the children focused on were between the ages of 2 and 5, 34% between 6 and 9, and 29% between 9 and 12.

The interview schedule itself consisted of close-ended items assessing (1) mother's attitude about TV and children, (2) the amount of TV (the mother believes) the child watches, (3) parental policies governing the child's use of television, (4) parental reasons for using TV as a babysitter and (5) frequency of use of TV as a babysitter. The lists of policies and reasons for using TV as a babysitter were derived from survey items and responses in investigations cited previously.

Mothers' attitudes about TV and children were assessed with three questions. The first, taken from Steiner and Bower, asked, "There has been a lot of discussion about the possible effects of television on children. Taking everything into consideration, would you say that children are better off with or better off without television?" A majority of mothers (57%) felt their children were better off with TV; 36% said better off without TV, 7% didn't know. The second and third items assessed how many hours a day mothers felt it was okay for a child to watch TV during the week and during the weekends. More hours per day was interpreted as greater acceptance and/or tolerance of television for children. The average response for weekdays was 2.8 hours; for Saturday or Sunday, the average response was 3.2 hours. (Either there is some flexibility in each mother's attitude or some degree of inability/unwillingness to enforce the attitude; on the average, mothers reported their child watching 3.3 hours of TV daily during the week and 3.5 hours daily over the weekend.)

Twelve TV viewing policies ("things parents do with their children about TV") were assessed. These addressed parental limitations on the amount of TV the child watched, restrictions on the type of programs watched, and parental permissiveness, primarily in terms of the child's use of television in conjunction with other activities. At least for these

respondents, mothers' TV policies for their children appeared to be more restrictive than permissive. (See Table I) Mothers claimed to help decide what their child watched on an almost daily basis. More days than not, mothers said they changed the channel when they found a program objectionable, forbade their child to watch certain shows and restricted the amount of time their child watched TV. Mothers less often told their child to shut the set off because the child had already watched too much and infrequently forbade their child from watching TV if there were no children's shows on or limited TV viewing as a form of punishment. Mothers said television was almost never watched before chores were completed, used as a reward or permitted while the child did his/her homework. Children were, however, allowed to watch TV a few times a week while they ate lunch or dinner as well as permitted to stay up later than normal at least occasionally to watch a TV show.

Parental use of television as babysitter followed the policy items.

Because prior research suggested mothers might be uncomfortable admitting their use of TV as a babysitter, they first were told TV's use as babysitter was widespread and acceptable--"In just about all homes where there are televisions and children, television serves as a babysitter. There are many reasons for this." They then were asked to indicate how many days a week "you tell your child to go watch TV or let your child continue to watch TV" for each of the twelve reasons read by the interviewer. When tied with each reason, this operationalization of TV as babysitter is consistent with the parameters described earlier--television viewing tolerated or encouraged in order to permit the parent to do other things.

Factor analysis of responses (SPSS, varimax factor solution with iterations) revealed three underlying factors (eigenvalues at least 1.0)



leading to TV's use as a babysitter, accounting for 60% of the variance in responses. (See Table II) Traditional loading criteria for exploratory factor analyses were utilized; in order to be considered an essential component of the factor, the item needed a minimum loading of .5, with the loading at least twice as great as its loading on any other factor. The first factor appeared to center on the mother's need to work unimpeded around the house; here, TV was used to keep the child out of the mother's hair, giving her time to relax, prepare meals and do housework. The second factor appeared to be primarily respite, where TV was used because the mother didn't want to play with the child anymore, was too tired to play with the child, needed a break from her child and would like to be with her spouse. The third factor had only one item that met loading criteria-- because the mother didn't want the house messed up. Three items did not meet loading criteria; these involved keeping the child busy, safe and out of trouble and so the mother could be with friends.

The final sets of questions about television's use as babysitter addressed the extent of its use (hours/day in general, the previous day and on the day of the interview), and the mother's awareness, if not selection, of the content viewed when TV served as babysitter.

## RESULTS

Frequency of Use: For each reason assessed, most mothers said they turned their child to television less than once a week. Motivations related to housekeeping appeared to most frequently cause TV's use as a babysitter. Two of those motivations led to such use, on the average, more than once a week: to give the mother some time to relax and so the mother could prepare meals. The other two motivations representing that factor were utilized, on the average, slightly less than once weekly and were cited by fewer

respondents. One other item--to keep the child safe and out of trouble--led to TV's use as a babysitter, on the average, once weekly. The remaining motivation items were acknowledged infrequently and apparently used quite sparingly: (See Table III)

Some mothers (39%) claimed that none of the motivations ever led to their use of television as a babysitter. A handful of respondents (3%) acknowledged that each of the motivation items led to their use of TV as a babysitter at least once weekly. On the average, respondents indicated that three of the motivation items precipitated their use of TV as a babysitter at least once a week. Whatever the reason or because of however many of the reasons, nearly half the sample (46%) said TV generally served as a babysitter for their child at least one hour each day; 28% said one hour, 11% two hours, 8% at least three hours. Fewer respondents claimed to have used TV as a babysitter the previous day; 11% said one hour, 9% two hours, 5% at least three hours. On the day of the interview, one in three (30%) claimed to have already used TV as a babysitter; 17% said for one hour, 9% for two hours, 4% at least three hours. Even when used as a babysitter though, most respondents (78%) said they "very often" knew what the child was watching; a smaller majority (65%) said they "very often" helped select what the child watched at the time.

Correlates of TV's Use as Babysitter: Respondent attitudes about television, use of it and demographic attributes frequently related to their use of the medium as a babysitter. (See Table IV) Mothers who felt children were better off with television were more often motivated to use TV as a babysitter so they could relax, cook, have a break or keep their child out of their hair. Mothers who felt children should watch comparatively more television (than other mothers felt) were more often

motivated by all but one of the babysitting motivations and reported using TV more often as a babysitter in general, "yesterday" and on the day of the interview. The respondent's own use of TV was directly related to her use of TV as a babysitter. Those who watched more television themselves reported being more frequently motivated to use television as a babysitter for nine of 12 motivations assessed; they also used TV as a babysitter more hours daily in general, "yesterday" as well as on the day of the interview.

Level of education was related to three uses of TV as a babysitter. In each case, less educated mothers used TV to babysit more often. They also reported using TV as a babysitter more often in general, the previous day, and on the day of the interview. These behaviors may have been a reflection of the respondents' own use of television and attitudes about television for children; less educated mothers watched significantly more television themselves and held a less restrictive view on the number of hours of TV okay for children to watch. Statistical controls for education somewhat attenuated the relationship between mothers' attitudes about television for children, the amount of television they watched and their use of TV as a babysitter. These relationships remained, however, statistically significant:

Work and marital status had little bearing on TV's use as a surrogate parent. Work status first was examined by comparing mothers who also worked outside the house with those who didn't. One motivation difference emerged; those who didn't work outside the house more often used TV as a babysitter in order to talk with their spouse. The impact of work status then was assessed by comparing those who held full-time jobs with those with part-time employment. Mothers who worked full-time outside the house reported making

more use of TV as a babysitter that day; they also felt it was okay for children to watch more TV. Married mothers less often were motivated to use TV as a babysitter because they just didn't feel like playing anymore. There were no significant differences in terms of actual use of TV as a babysitter based on mother's work or marital status:

Underlying the examination of mother's marital and work status was the assumption that if the mother worked and/or was unmarried, there would be fewer adults watching the child which, in turn, would predicate more frequent use of TV as a babysitter. It is, of course possible to be unmarried and/or working and still have other adults at home. Only a handful of those interviewed indicated that no other adult lived in the household (6%) or regularly helped raise the children (12%). Respondents living in homes where they were the only adult present were not more frequently motivated by any of the babysitting motivations; nonetheless, they reported using television as a babysitter for twice the time, both in general as well as on the day of the interview. Mothers who had no other adult help on a regular basis more frequently were motivated to use TV as a babysitter in order to keep their child safe and out of trouble; they didn't report using television as a babysitter any more often though.

Finally, age of the child was related to eight of the 12 motivations for using TV as a babysitter.<sup>5</sup> Mothers with younger children reported being more motivated to use television as a babysitter so they could clean, cook, relax or be with their husband; television let mothers get their younger children out of their hair when the mother just didn't feel like playing anymore. Mothers with younger children also used television as a babysitter more often in general as well as the day before the interview.

TV policies and use of TV as a babysitter were only marginally related. (See Table V). Mothers with more restrictive TV policies for their children (e.g., limiting the amount of time the child watched TV) more often were motivated to use TV as a babysitter for several of the reasons assessed (e.g., so they could do some housework); nonetheless, they reported using TV as a babysitter fewer hours per day. Mothers who were less restrictive (e.g., extending bedtime for TV) somewhat more frequently were motivated to use TV as a babysitter; they also reported using TV as such more hours per day.

#### DISCUSSION

Among its many functions is television's service as babysitter. From the mother's perspective, it is used primarily as a vehicle enabling her to take care of household chores. Although it also gives her some time to relax, mothers claim it is not used so they can socialize.

Television serves as a babysitter more frequently for younger children and is used more frequently by mothers with less formal education, who think TV basically is okay for the child and who watch more television themselves. These differences make intuitive sense. Younger children are less independent; they make more demands on the mother's time and resources. With younger children, TV gives the mother the break she gets with her older children when they play with friends or by themselves. Television's increased use as a babysitter among those who have more positive attitudes about the medium is a natural and logical extension of those attitudes; if television is thought to be benign, if not beneficial, why shouldn't children be encouraged or permitted to view it without supervision? Since the less educated make more use of television and have more generally positive attitudes about it, they are likely to feel more comfortable using

TV to help them supervise their children.

TV as babysitter does not appear to be used appreciably more often by single mothers or by mothers who also work outside the house. This similarity of usage patterns despite differences in marital and/or work status may be the result of two counteracting forces. Working and/or single mothers may feel more of a need to use TV as a babysitter so they can relax and recover from the day's tasks at work or with the child. Nonetheless, they also may feel compelled to spend more time with their child as compensation for their lack of interaction during work hours or as compensation for the interaction not provided by the missing spouse.

Parental policies guiding the child's viewing behaviors appear unrelated to television's use as a babysitter. This lack of interaction may, again, be the result of countervailing factors. Tight parental controls over the child's television diet might suggest lack of its use as a babysitter, where the benefits are primarily for the parent. This interpretation, however, assumes a passive parent using television as a babysitter. What seems more likely is that parents who restrict their child's TV diet take a more active role in their child's use of television than do parents who don't impose restrictions. When the child of restrictive parents is permitted to watch television even for babysitting purposes, the restrictive parent may be comfortable with that activity, having helped select what the child was going to watch. In essence then, for the restrictive parent, the use of television as a babysitter may be as supervised an activity as others.

Social critics of television seem to believe that using TV as a babysitter has deleterious effects on parent-child interaction. That may not be true; the answer may depend on how the child is introduced to the viewing situation and what happens when the babysitter leaves. If the

parent actively helps select the program, he or she may follow with a discussion about it. Television could then serve as a stimulus for subsequent parent-child interaction even though it was originally used to free the parent from the child. Similarly, even if a parent doesn't pick the show, a parent may ask about the program or the child may initiate a conversation anyway. Alternatively, it may be obvious to some children that watching television is not always a reward but sometimes is a vehicle used by the parent to get rid of the child. Such a situation indicating parental indifference might minimize the likelihood of post-viewing conversations. How and how often television is used as a babysitter and what happens afterward may mirror the more general patterns of communication between parent and child. Chaffee and McLeod's family communication typology<sup>6</sup> may have predictive value here. In their pluralistic family, where television programming is used to comment on issues confronting the family, television's use as a babysitter may trigger post-babysitting interactions between parent and child. On the other hand, a laissez-faire family is more likely to use television's babysitting service without following up on the content in any meaningful way.

What are the other effects of using television as a babysitter? If television is used as a babysitter so the mother can do housework and related chores, are they done? Are the chores performed more efficiently? Is the house cleaner, the food better prepared? If TV is used as such so the mother can relax, does she in fact get to relax and feel relaxed? How does the child feel about all this? Do children even realize they sometimes are told to watch TV so the parent can have some time without the child underfoot? What happens when the babysitter is turned off? Are the participants' batteries sufficiently recharged so that the quality of

subsequent interaction is more satisfying to parent and child? Answers to questions such as these should tell us much about the consequences of television's babysitting function. From that, we may be able to offer suggestions about its use as such.



TABLE I  
Frequency Television Policies Are Utilized

Policy Item	Number of Days Per Week Television Policies Are Utilized								$\bar{X}$
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Help decide what programs your child can watch	11%	1%	5%	5%	3%	6%	6%	63%	5.5
Change the channel when you think a program is objectionable	14	6	12	5	4	17	1	42	4.5
Forbid your child to watch certain shows	20	12	8	6	13	4	1	36	3.8
Restrict the amount of time your child watches television	34	0	4	4	6	18	2	31	3.7
Tell your child to shut the TV off because he/she's watched too much	32	7	12	13	4	6	0	27	3.0
Let your child eat lunch or dinner while watching TV	36	9	11	15	5	6	2	16	2.5
Not let your child watch TV if there are no children's shows on	55	5	11	5	3	4	1	16	1.9
Let your child go to bed later than normal to watch a TV show	39	30	25	3	1	1	0	2	1.1
Not let your child watch TV as a punishment for something	61	17	15	0	0	0	0	7	1.0
Let your child watch TV before finishing some chores you want him/her to do	74	8	8	2	2	2	0	4	0.8
Let your child watch TV as a reward for something	83	7	4	1	0	1	0	3	0.5
Let your child do schoolwork while watching TV	88	3	4	1	2	2	0	1	0.4

TABLE II  
Underlying Factors of TV's Use as Babysitter<sup>a</sup>

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
	Work Unimpeded Around the House	Respite <sup>c</sup>	Maintain Clean House
So you can have some time to relax	.79*	.24	.00
So you can prepare meals	.70*	.05	.07
To keep your child out of your hair	.62*	.31	.30
So you can do some housework	.61*	.17	.22
Because you just don't feel like playing anymore	.15	.80*	.22
Because you're too tired to play with your child	.08	.68*	.12
Because you need a break from your child	.24	.53*	.19
So you can be with your husband	.26	.51*	.24
Because you don't want the house messed up	.03	.20	.85*
To keep your child safe and out of trouble	.22	.19	.35
To keep your child busy	.44	.30	.35
So you can be with your friends	.22	.31	.34
Percentage of Variance Accounted for	38.2	12.6	8.6

<sup>a</sup>SPSS, varimax factor solution

\*Primary factor

TABLE III  
Frequency of Use of Television as Babysitter

Reason for Using TV as Babysitter*	Number of Days Per Week Television is Used as Babysitter								$\bar{X}$
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Work Unimpeded Around the House:</b>									
So you can have some time to relax	55%	12%	15%	6%	3%	4%	0%	5%	1.3
So you can prepare meals	64	6	11	5	2	7	0	5	1.2
To keep your child out of your hair	68	11	9	4	3	2	0	4	0.9
So you can do some housework	74	7	9	3	1	3	0	3	0.7
<b>Respite:</b>									
Because you need a break from your child	78	8	9	2	0	2	0	0	0.5
Because you just don't feel like playing anymore	77	9	9	2	3	1	0	0	0.5
Because you're too tired to play with your child	79	8	7	5	0	0	0	0	0.4
So you can be with your husband	80	6	9	3	2	0	0	0	0.4
<b>Maintain Clean House:</b>									
Because you don't want the house messed up	84	6	5	2	1	1	1	1	0.4
To keep your child safe and out of trouble	73	6	6	4	2	2	0	6	1.0
To keep your child busy	74	5	11	4	1	4	0	2	0.8
So you can be with your friends	90	3	4	1	1	0	0	1	0.2

\*Order of the factors presented based on variance accounted for in the factor solution; within factor order based on frequency of use.

TABLE IV  
Demographic and Attitudinal Correlates of TV's Use as Babysitter

Reasons for Using TV as Babysitter	Mother's Attitudes About and Use of TV				Mother's Education	Mother's Work Status		Mother's Marital Status		Child's Age
	Children Better Off		Amount of Hours OK for Children to Watch	Amount of TV Mother Watches		Employed Outside Home	Not Employed Outside Home	Single/Divorced	Married	
	With TV	Without TV								
Time to relax	1.5	1.0 <sup>a</sup>	.11 <sup>c</sup>	.19 <sup>d</sup>	-.01	1.1	1.5	0.9	1.3	-.17 <sup>d</sup>
Prepare meals	1.6	0.7 <sup>b</sup>	.16 <sup>d</sup>	.16 <sup>d</sup>	-.04	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.2	-.19 <sup>d</sup>
Keep child out of hair	1.0	0.6 <sup>a</sup>	.17 <sup>d</sup>	.15 <sup>d</sup>	-.07	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.9	-.17 <sup>d</sup>
Do housework	0.8	0.5	.17 <sup>d</sup>	.06	-.08	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7	-.21 <sup>d</sup>
Need a Break	0.6	0.3 <sup>a</sup>	.16 <sup>d</sup>	.13 <sup>c</sup>	-.08	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.4	.11
Don't feel like playing anymore	0.5	0.4	.21 <sup>d</sup>	.14 <sup>c</sup>	-.07	0.4	0.5	0.9	0.4 <sup>a</sup>	-.12 <sup>c</sup>
Too tired to play	0.4	0.5	.13 <sup>c</sup>	.02	-.07	0.4	0.5	0.9	0.4	.04
Be with husband	0.4	0.4	.07	.09	-.06	0.3	0.6 <sup>b</sup>	0.3	0.6	-.13 <sup>c</sup>
Don't want house messed up	0.5	0.4	.25 <sup>d</sup>	.12 <sup>c</sup>	-.19 <sup>d</sup>	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.4	-.05
Keep child safe and out of trouble	1.0	0.8	.21 <sup>d</sup>	.17 <sup>d</sup>	-.22 <sup>d</sup>	0.9	0.9	1.6	0.8	-.09
Keep child busy	0.8	0.7	.13 <sup>c</sup>	.20 <sup>d</sup>	-.14 <sup>c</sup>	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.7	-.12 <sup>c</sup>
Be with friends	0.3	0.2	.19 <sup>d</sup>	.14 <sup>c</sup>	-.08	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.2	.01
<b>Amount of Use of TV as Babysitter</b>										
Hrs./day - general	0.8	0.7	.29 <sup>d</sup>	.24 <sup>d</sup>	-.22 <sup>d</sup>	0.7	0.8	1.2	0.7	-.13 <sup>c</sup>
Hrs. used - previous day	0.5	0.4	.25 <sup>d</sup>	.28 <sup>d</sup>	-.20 <sup>d</sup>	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.4	-.11 <sup>c</sup>
Hrs. used - day of interview	0.5	0.4	.26 <sup>d</sup>	.19 <sup>d</sup>	-.19 <sup>d</sup>	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.4	-.04

<sup>a</sup>t-test, p<.05  
<sup>b</sup>t-test, p<.01  
<sup>c</sup>Pearson r, p<.05  
<sup>d</sup>Pearson r, p<.01

TABLE V  
Relationship Between TV Policies and TV's Use as Babysitter

Reasons for Using TV as Babysitter	TV Policies											
	Help Decide Shows Children Watch	Change Channel With Objectionable Shows	Forbid Watching Certain Shows	Restrict Time Child Watches TV	Shut Off TV if too Much Watched	Permit Eating While Watching	Forbid If No Children's Shows On	Extend Bedtime For TV	Use TV as Punishment	Allow TV Chores Are Finished	Use TV as Reward	Allow TV While Doing Schoolwork
Time to relax	.10	.05	.12 <sup>a</sup>	-.05	.13 <sup>a</sup>	.08	.05	.10	.01	.13 <sup>a</sup>	-.03	.00
Prepare meals	-.02	.13 <sup>a</sup>	.09	.07	.07	.00	.04	-.02	.05	.05	-.01	-.08
Keep child out of chair	-.01	.04	.03	-.03	.09	.15 <sup>b</sup>	.05	.15 <sup>b</sup>	.01	.10	.03	-.07
Do housework	.00	.12 <sup>a</sup>	.12	.02	.10	.07	.08	.18 <sup>b</sup>	.03	.04	.09	.06
Need a break	-.02	-.11	-.03	-.06	.03	-.05	-.01	.07	.06	.04	.15 <sup>b</sup>	-.02
Don't feel like playing anymore	-.06	-.03	.06	-.11 <sup>a</sup>	.03	.04	.04	.23 <sup>b</sup>	.05	.10	.10	-.01
Too tired to play	.00	-.04	.02	-.10	.11 <sup>a</sup>	.02	.05	.20 <sup>b</sup>	.04	.07	.17 <sup>b</sup>	.02
Be with husband	-.09	-.09	.03	.08	-.05	-.02	.00	.05	.08	.04	.10	.00
Don't want house messed up	-.12 <sup>a</sup>	-.09	-.11	-.15 <sup>b</sup>	-.07	.16	-.05	.09	.03	.01	.06	.01
Keep child safe and out of trouble	-.09	-.01	.00	-.05	-.02	.06	-.07	.16 <sup>b</sup>	.16 <sup>b</sup>	.22 <sup>b</sup>	.20 <sup>b</sup>	.15 <sup>a</sup>
Keep child busy	.08	.06	-.04	-.10	.02	.04	.04	.03	.03	.03	.10	.03
Be with friends	-.05	-.08	-.10	-.10	-.04	.05	.00	.07	.03	.06	.12 <sup>a</sup>	.07
Amount of Use of TV as Babysitter												
Hrs./day - general	-.08	-.01	-.01	-.15 <sup>b</sup>	-.01	-.06	.00	.13 <sup>a</sup>	.12 <sup>a</sup>	.09	.11 <sup>a</sup>	.06
Hrs. Used - previous day	-.03	-.12 <sup>a</sup>	-.14 <sup>a</sup>	-.08	-.10	-.07	-.09	.02	-.03	.02	.09	.03
Hrs. Used - day of interview	.05	.05	.01	-.08	.02	.08	-.01	.14 <sup>a</sup>	.02	.03	.18 <sup>b</sup>	.04

All figures are Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients

<sup>a</sup><sub>p</sub> < .05  
<sup>b</sup><sub>p</sub> < .01

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert T. Bower, Television and the Public (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

<sup>2</sup>Robert D. Hess and Harriet Goldman, "Parents' Views of the Effects of Television on their Children." Child Development 33: 411-426 (1962).

<sup>3</sup>Eleanor E. Maccoby, "Television and Its Impact on School Children." Public Opinion Quarterly 15: 421-443 (1951).

<sup>4</sup>Gary A. Steiner, The People Look at Television (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>Child's age and mother's age were strongly correlated ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Correlations using child's age instead of mother's age are presented because child's age seemed the more sensible predictor of mother's use of TV as a babysitter.

<sup>6</sup>For an initial effort, see Jack M. McLeod, Steven H. Chaffee and H. S. Eswara, "Family Communication Patterns and Communication Research," presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, 1966. For updates relating family communication patterns and media related communication, see, for example, James Lull, "Family Communication Patterns and the Social Uses of Television," Communication Research 7: 319-334 (1980) or Thomas R. Lindlof and Gary A. Copeland, "Television Rules of Prepartum New Families," presented to the International Communication Association, 1982.