

# Children's and Parents' Perception towards TV Programs and the Practice of Parental Mediation

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship among the variables: socio-demographic profile, perceptions of TV programs, practice of parental mediation, and TV exposure.

A survey of 300 children (aged 8-13 years old) and 300 parents from international and local Thai schools in Bangkok reveals that regardless of age, sex, and ethnic origin, children have high TV exposure (more than 2 hours a day and almost daily). Most make their own program choices and only half claimed their parents set rules on their TV viewing. Type of school attended and the presence of fathers at home influence children's level and frequency of TV exposure.

Children's sex, ethnic origin, and school influence perceptions towards some TV programs; and, their school, age, sex, and family relations affect mediation style.

Parents co-view at least for an hour to 2 hours on weekdays; and, higher on week-ends (more than 2 hours); their sex, ethnic origin, number of children, and children's school influence perceptions towards certain programs; while, family relations and children's school influence mediation style.

Both differ in perceptions towards action programs, restrictive mediation, and family relations; but they concur that active mediation and co-viewing are more often practiced. Both were uncertain whether most TV programs contain positive or negative content.

## RATIONALE

Parents, academicians, and pediatricians in different parts of the world have raised issues on the effects of TV viewing on children since the 1970's. The Bangkok Post archive reveals the issue hit the headlines in Thailand in the late 90's.

In summer of 2003, ABAC Polls released survey data indicating Thai children are getting glued to TV for as much as 3 to 6 hours a day during the school break. A large number of these children, 64% of 1,477 admitted that they like to imitate their favorite TV cartoon characters. Parents were reportedly alarmed that 45% of the children showed aggressions after viewing some TV programs, thereby expressing opinions that some concrete actions must be taken to protect their children (Hutasingh, 2003).

Concerns about the negative effects of TV stemmed from research findings that children are exposed to some TV programs that contain sex, violence, profanity, and objectionable contents (Assavanonda, 1997; Bruce, 2001; CMPA, 1996; Lichter, Lichter & Amundson, 1999; Tansubhapol, 1997). In the United States alone, an evaluation of programming for two years showed 61% of the shows featured interpersonal violence, much of it depicted it in an entertaining or glamorized manner. The shows normalize carrying and using weapons; and glamorize them as a source of power. What is further shocking is that the highest proportion of violence (100%) was found in children's shows or animated/cartoon programs. Hence, a child is estimated to have seen 200,000 acts of violence on TV before reaching the age, 18 (Bar-on, Broughton, Buttross, Corrigan, et al., November, 2001).

As Gerbner's Cultivation theory cautions, the children's high exposure to TV can render the medium greater access and time to mold the youth's attitudes and actions than their parents and teachers. TV replaces the latter as educators, role models, and the primary source of information about the world and how to behave in it. But limiting TV exposure or restricting TV viewership is not the only means to buffer the negative effects of TV. Austin, Bolls, Fujioka & Engelbertson (1999), Buckingham (2002), and, Nathanson (1999, 2001) espoused for parental involvement in their child's viewing.

Hence, this research sought the opportunity to investigate TV viewing habits of children, parents' and children's perception towards TV programs, and the practice of parental mediation. It explored the relationships among these variables and also examined the influence of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their levels of family relations on their perceptions towards TV and practice of parental mediation.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.) To determine how the socio-demographic profiles of parents or children influence TV exposure.

2.) To determine the typical parental mediation style by parents and as reported by children.

3.) To determine the relationship between the parents' or children's socio-demographic profile and their perception of TV programs and practice of parental mediation;

4.) To determine the relationship between the parents' or children's perception of TV programs and their practice of parental mediation, and vice-versa.

5.) To compare the children's and parents' perceptions of TV programs and parental mediation.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.) Does the parents' or children's socio-demographic profile influence their level and frequency of TV exposure?

2.) What are the parents' and children's perceptions towards the contents of TV programs?

3.) What are the typical parental mediation styles used by parents and reported by children?

4.) What is the relationship between the parents' or children's socio-demographic profile and their perception of TV programs; and, practice of parental mediation style?

5.) What is the relationship between parents' and children's perception of TV programs and their practice of parental mediation, and vice-versa?

6.) Are there any differences between children's and parents' perception towards TV programs and parental mediation?

## METHODOLOGY

Data were gathered using a self-constructed questionnaire to determine perceptions towards TV programs (Likert-type) and Valkenburg, Krmar, Peeters & Marseille's instrument (1999) measured the parental mediation.

To measure perceptions to TV programs, respondents were made to identify the degree of agreement to 16 statements for each of eight (8) genres of TV programs (action/adventure; cartoons; educational; drama; comedy; MTV; and news). A scale of five (5) – Very true, true, not sure, untrue, and very untrue was used to indicate whether they have negative or positive perception of the program.

To measure parental mediation styles, five (5) statements for each of the parental style was given and respondents were made to indicate frequency of

practice of each style by indicating always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never.

The instrument written in English and Thai were administered by school administrators and teachers, and children brought home the questionnaire for their parents to answer.

Three hundred children and 300 parents were sampled using convenience sampling. To test the hypotheses, chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test, Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used.

Children respondents were mostly 12-13 yrs old (51%); female (74%); and predominantly Asians (90%). Most parents were aged 41-50 (59%); mothers (75%); Asians (94%), very highly educated (57%); working, married, and living together with their spouse (94%); and, have at least 1 kid under 14 yrs old (45%).

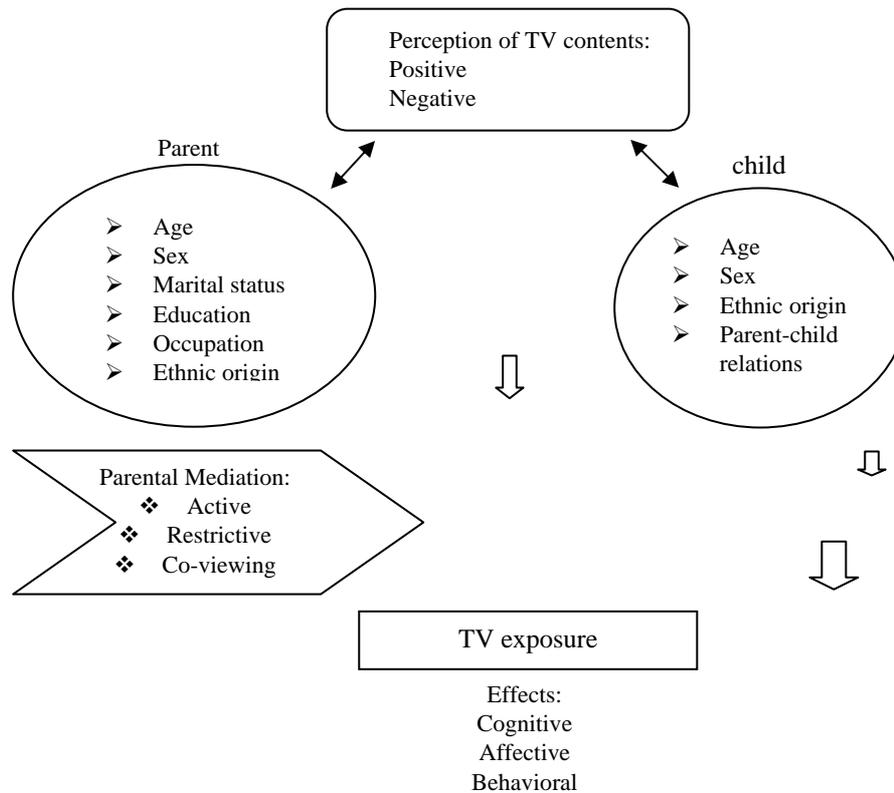
## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study investigated the relationship between the independent variable, perception of TV programs and the dependent variable, parental mediation. At some point of the analysis, the variables were switched – perception towards TV programs became the dependent variable, while parental mediation became the independent variable. Intervening variables such as the socio-demographic profile of parent and child, level of TV exposure, gratifications sought/received from TV, parents' co-viewing patterns were identified.

The kind of mediation that a parent will use on his/her kid depends on several factors. First is, the parent's perception of whether TV programs are positive (educational and instrumental) or negative (causes aggressive or anti-social behaviors). Perceptions of parents about TV programs will also be mitigated by their age, sex, education, occupation, ethnic origin, marital status, children's school, number of children below 14 years old, and family relations; while for children, his/her age, sex, ethnic origin, parent-child relations, and the school he/she attends will influence what he/she thinks of TV programs.

Second, parental mediation will determine the level of TV exposure; what TV programs children watch; and, the kind of effect it will have on the kid's cognition, feelings, or behavior.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



## FINDINGS

### Descriptive data

More than half of the children (64%) own more than two (2) TV sets and most reported that they watch TV in the living room (44%). A little over half of them (52%) have high level of TV exposure (more than 2 hours a day), but majority (77%) watch almost daily.

Furthermore, half of the children reported that they watch TV together with the other members of the family, whereas some (37%) watch TV alone or with other siblings unsupervised. Majority (68%) makes their own program choices; and, half have TV rules, of which, 75% of them obey the guidelines on ceiling hours for watching TV, avoid programs with objectionable content, and doing homework before watching TV. Perceived as primary reason for TV rules is that parents wanted them to concentrate on their studies; second, to protect them from harmful content of TV violence and sexual materials. Children primarily watch TV for relaxation.

Children reported that their parents' co-view moderately on weekdays (1-2 hours) and longer on week-ends (more than 2 hours); and, that moderate family relations exist as joint family activities were mostly shopping, watching TV and movies, and eating out.

Meanwhile, parents' data revealed differences from children's responses. Parents reported strong family relations; more than half set TV rules (55%); and there is low (less than an hour/day) to moderate (1-2 hours/day) levels of co-viewing.

### Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1a that predicted parents' profile influence children's level of TV exposure was accepted. The type of school a child attends influenced level of TV exposure and frequency of exposure ( $\chi^2 = 6.84, p < .05$ ;  $\chi^2 = 7.66, p < .05$ , respectively); and, father's occupation influenced kids' level of TV exposure ( $\chi^2 = 7.78, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, hypothesis 1b that predicted children's profile influence their level and frequency of TV exposure was rejected. Regardless of age, sex, school, ethnic origin, and family relations, children have a high level and frequency of TV exposure.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b that predicted that parents' and children's profile influence perceptions towards TV programs were accepted. Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance revealed that type of school children attend ( $F = 2.73, p < .05$ ); parents' ethnic origin ( $F = 3.52, p < .05$ ); number of children ( $F = 2.35, p < .05$ ); sex ( $F = 2.29, p < .05$ ); and the interactive effects

of number of children-marital status ( $F = 2.33, p < .05$ ) influenced perceptions towards TV programs. Parents with one child aged below 14 years old rated drama highest; Non-Asians rated drama higher, but Asians rated MTV higher; parents from international schools rated dramas higher, but rated MTV lower; and, while still being uncertain whether cartoon programs contain positive or negative content, mothers rated it higher than fathers. However, results revealed that a parent's age, education, neither parents' job, nor family relations influence perceptions towards TV.

The results for children indicated that the type of school, gender, and ethnic origin of the child influenced their perception towards TV programs ( $F = 4.90, p < .05$ ;  $F = 2.93, p < .05$ ; and  $F = 2.36, p < .05$ , respectively). Those from local Thai schools perceived educational programs more positively; but children coming from international schools gave higher ratings for drama and comedy. Boys perceived comedy and drama more positively than girls. Non-Asian children rated drama higher, but both children though remain uncertain whether drama and comedy TV shows depict positive or negative contents as the computed means fell under the range of "Uncertainty".

Hypotheses 3a and 3b that predicted respondents' perception of TV programs influence the parental mediation used were accepted. Parents' perception of cartoons ( $F = 1.36, p < .05$ ); news programs ( $F = 1.50, p < .05$ ); drama ( $F = 1.40, p < .05$ ); and, drama-comedy ( $F = 1.50, p < .05$ ) were tested to have influenced specific types of parental mediation used by parents on their children. Those who perceived cartoon programs as very negative yielded highest practice of co-viewing; and, those with negative perceptions of news practiced more of active mediation. Means revealed that those who held very positive perceptions practiced active mediation most; those with very negative perceptions practiced restrictive most; and those with negative perceptions towards drama, used co-viewing most.

Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance indicated four main effects between children's perception towards TV programs and parental mediation. These perceptions are towards cartoons ( $F = 1.30, p < .05$ ); news ( $F = 1.40, p < .05$ ), educational ( $F = 1.40, p < .05$ ), and comedy ( $F = 1.34, p < .05$ ); and two interactive effects of perceptions towards action x cartoon ( $F = 1.45, p < .05$ ) and educational x comedy ( $F = 1.69, p < .05$ ) on parental mediation. Children who perceived cartoons very negatively reported that parents used active mediation most, while those who held very positive perceptions towards news reported that their parents used active mediation most. Co-viewing on the other hand, was reported by children who held positive perceptions towards news; by those who held very positive views about educational programs; and by those who held very negative views about comedy shows.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b that predicted parental mediation influence perception towards TV programs were accepted. Active mediation ( $F = 2.47, p < .05$ ); restrictive mediation ( $F = 2.58, p < .05$ ); and co-viewing ( $F = 2.14, p < .05$ ) influence perceptions held by parents toward specific program types. Three interactive effects were also found to have influenced perceptions: active x restrictive ( $F = 2.32, p < .05$ ); active x co-viewing ( $F = 3.11, p < .05$ ); and restrictive x co-viewing ( $F = 2.56, p < .05$ ). Results showed that those who exercised active mediation very strongly held the lowest mean towards cartoon programs and those who showed a very weak presence of active mediation displayed better perception of cartoons. Those who practiced a moderate level of restrictive mediation perceived cartoon the lowest; and an average practice of co-viewing mediation resulted to a better perception. Meanwhile, it was noted that a very strong active mediation resulted to the lowest of the positive orientations towards TV news; a weak presence of active mediation resulted to the highest perception towards comedy; a weak presence of active mediation is related to a better perception of action programs; and, a very strong presence of restrictive mediation resulted to second lowest perception towards comedy. Also, better perceptions of MTV resulted from weak presence of restrictive mediation; and, a very weak presence of restrictive mediation resulted to the most positive perception towards news. Also, weak co-viewing of drama and comedy were found to be related to better perceptions.

Findings for children also showed that the three parental mediation styles, and a blend of these mediation styles have a positive influence in the perception of most TV programs: active mediation ( $F = 2.47, p < .05$ ); restrictive ( $F = 2.58, p < .05$ ); co-viewing ( $F = 2.14, p < .05$ ); active x restrictive ( $F = 2.32, p < .05$ ); active x co-viewing ( $F = 3.11, p < .05$ ); and, restrictive x co-viewing ( $F = 2.56, p < .05$ ). Those who cited very strong presence of active mediation held better perceptions of comedy programs; and, the highest mean or better perceptions for comedy resulted from a very weak presence of restrictive mediation and very weak presence of co-viewing. Those experiencing very strong presence of active mediation held more positive perceptions towards news. Meanwhile, the lowest mean was recorded from those who experienced strong presence of restrictive mediation. Furthermore, those who experienced a very strong presence of restrictive mediation indicated the lowest mean for perceptions of MTV.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b that predicted respondents' profile influence parental mediation were partly accepted. Among parents, kid's school ( $F = 3.29, p < .05$ ), marital status ( $F = 2.93, p < .05$ ), number of children below 14 years old ( $F = 2.85, p < .05$ ), and family relations ( $F = 4.41, p < .05$ ), yielded significant influence on the parental mediation style used.

Moreover, there were three (3) interactive effects: kid's school x family relations ( $F = 2.40, p < .05$ ); kid's school x marital status ( $F = 2.26, p < .05$ ); and, number of children below 14 x mother's job ( $F = 3.33, p < .05$ ) influencing parental mediation. The computed means indicated that parents from international schools practiced co-viewing mediation more often; parents with 3 or more children below 14 years old exercised restrictive mediation; those with only 1 child have more time to co-view; and, widowed or separated parents practiced active mediation more frequently, whereas single parents only have an average level of active mediation. Still, the widowed or separated parents recorded higher means signifying stronger presence of co-viewing. Among the three marital status categories, single parents consistently showed least parental involvement with their children's TV habits.

Meanwhile, parents who claimed very strong family relations also most often practiced active, restrictive, and co-viewing stronger than the rest; while those with very weak family relations showed an average or moderate practice of restrictive and co-viewing mediation.

Data culled from children revealed that the child's type of school ( $F = 3.29, p < .05$ ); age ( $F = 2.55, p < .05$ ), sex ( $F = 3.28, p < .05$ ); and family relations ( $F = 2.67, p < .05$ ) influenced the parental mediation reported. Additionally, one interactive effect was noted between age x ethnic origin ( $F = 2.57, p < .05$ ). Ethnic origin however, was the only variable which tested to have no significant influence on parental mediation ( $F = .668, p > .05$ ). The child's school predicts the use of restrictive mediation; age is related to restrictive and active mediation; family relations and sex influenced the use of the three mediation styles: active, restrictive, and co-viewing; and the interactive effect of age and ethnic origin predict active and restrictive mediation.

Hypotheses 6a and 6b that predicted respondents' attitude or perception towards TV programs influence how much time and how often a child will be allowed to watch TV were partly accepted. Using chi-square, the number of hours children spent watching TV in a day was tested to have been significantly influenced by their parents' perception towards drama ( $\chi^2 = 17.69, p < .05$ ); comedy ( $\chi^2 = 21.75, p < .05$ ); MTV ( $\chi^2 = 16.14, p < .05$ ); and news ( $\chi^2 = 16.73, p < .05$ ). As to the frequency of exposure of children to TV programs, results revealed that parents' perception of cartoons ( $\chi^2 = 16.93, p < .05$ ), comedy shows ( $\chi^2 = 16.95, p < .05$ ) and TV news programs ( $\chi^2 = 34.76, p < .05$ ) are related to how often children watch these programs in a week. Among these programs, only news was perceived positively since computed means of cartoons and comedy shows fell under the range of

uncertainty, meaning, parents do not perceive positive nor negative content in these programs.

Meanwhile, chi-square tests revealed that no relationships exist between hours children spent watching TV in a day to their perceptions of all TV programs, but their frequency of exposure is related to perceptions towards cartoons ( $\chi^2 = 40.06, p < .05$ ); comedy ( $\chi^2 = 16.76, p < .05$ ); and, news ( $\chi^2 = 15.17, p < .05$ ). Those who have high frequency of TV exposure were those who were uncertain whether comedy and news contain positive or negative content; and those who perceived cartoon, comedy, and news positively.

Hypothesis 7 that predicted differences between parents' and children's perceptions towards TV and parental mediation was partly accepted. The Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance revealed that there is one main effect: parents' perceptions towards TV and parental mediations reported by both parents and children ( $F = 1.43, p < .05$ ), and an interactive effect between parents' and children's perceptions ( $F = 1.18, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicated that there is no correlation between parents' and children's perception towards TV ( $r = .039, p < .05$ ). Yet, there is a negative and low correlation between parents' perception and the children's report of restrictive mediation ( $r = -.203, p < .05$ ); there exists also a negative and slight correlation between children's perceptions towards TV and parents' report of restrictive mediation ( $r = -.177, p < .05$ ); and a positive but slight correlation between children's perceptions towards TV and children's reported active mediation. The negative correlations meant that while parents' perceptions may be getting negative towards a TV program, the higher the children's report of the presence of restrictive mediation. Meanwhile, the positive correlation between children's perception towards TV and active mediation meant that altogether, as the perception gets better; the practice of active mediation gets stronger.

Two moderate and positive correlations were also found between parents' active mediation and restrictive mediation ( $r = .435, p < .05$ ) and between children's active mediation and restrictive mediation ( $r = .428, p < .05$ ). Meanwhile, three low and positive correlations were established between parents' report of active and co-viewing mediation ( $r = .395, p < .05$ ); kid's active and co-viewing mediation ( $r = .333, p < .05$ ); and, children's restrictive and co-viewing ( $r = .293, p < .05$ ). Lastly, a slight and almost negligible relationship exists between parents' restrictive mediation and co-viewing ( $r = .145, p < .05$ ).

**Table 1: Comparative Means of Perception towards TV Programs**

Program	Parents			Children		
	M	SD	I	M	SD	I
Action	2.52	.614	Negative	2.64	.557	Uncertain
Cartoon	2.98	.622	Uncertain	3.04	.443	Uncertain
Educational	4.08	.517	Positive	3.87	.506	Positive
Drama	2.61	.550	Uncertain	2.85	.449	Uncertain
Comedy	2.77	.585	Uncertain	2.98	.483	Uncertain
MTV	3.01	.589	Uncertain	3.11	.542	Uncertain
News	3.54	.562	Positive	3.51	.495	Positive
<b>Average</b>	3.07	.589	Uncertain	3.14	.329	Uncertain

Note. I – interpretation

**Table 2: Summary of Means for Active Mediation**

Program	Parents			Children		
	M	SD	I	M	SD	I
Action	3.80	.831	S	3.60	.981	S
Cartoon	3.82	.835	S	3.62	.986	S
Educational	3.79	.845	S	3.61	.992	S
Drama	3.80	.846	S	3.60	.985	S
Comedy	3.79	.840	S	3.59	.988	S
MTV	3.79	.818	S	3.59	.997	S
News	3.82	.830	S	3.62	.982	S
<b>Average</b>	3.80	.589	S	3.60	.980	S

Note. I – interpretation S - strong

**Table 3: Summary of Means for Restrictive Mediation**

Program	Parents			Children		
	M	SD	I	M	SD	I
Action	3.61	1.04	S	3.13	1.23	A
Cartoon	3.63	1.02	S	3.14	1.22	A
Educational	3.63	1.04	S	3.14	1.23	A
Drama	3.60	1.05	S	3.12	1.22	A
Comedy	3.59	1.06	S	3.10	1.22	A
MTV	3.61	1.04	S	3.18	1.22	A
News	3.61	1.05	S	3.14	1.22	A
<b>Average</b>	3.61	1.05	S	3.14	1.22	A

Note. I – interpretation S – strong A - average

**Table 4:** Summary of Means for Co-viewing Mediation

Program	Parents			Children		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>I</i>
Action	4.05	.798	S	3.90	.986	S
Cartoon	4.06	.802	S	3.91	.987	S
Educational	4.04	.816	S	3.90	.985	S
Drama	4.04	.812	S	3.89	.982	S
Comedy	4.04	.821	S	3.90	.993	S
MTV	4.04	.821	S	3.90	.995	S
News	4.07	.797	S	3.91	.984	S
<b>Average</b>	4.05	.808	S	3.90	.980	S

Note. I – interpretation S - strong

**Table 5:** Correlation Test Results between Perceptions of TV Programs and Parental Mediation

		PP	KP	P AC	P RES	P COV	K AC	K RES	K CV
<b>PP</b>	<i>r</i>	1.000	.039	.048	.099	-.005	-.043	-.203	-.106
	Sig.	.	.500	.404	.087	.929	.463	.000**	.067
	<i>N</i>		300	300	300	300	300	300	300
<b>KP</b>	<i>r</i>		1.000	.034	-.117	.035	.166	.056	.105
	Sig.			.562	.043*	.550	.004**	.331	.070
	<i>N</i>			300	300	300	300	300	300
<b>P AC</b>	<i>r</i>			1.000	.435	.395	-.068	.009	-.057
	Sig.				.000**	.000**	.243	.880	.326
	<i>N</i>				300	300	300	300	300
<b>P RES</b>	<i>r</i>				1.000	.145	-.079	.028	-.058
	Sig.					.012*	.175	.625	.315
	<i>N</i>					300	300	300	300
<b>P COV</b>	<i>r</i>					1.000	-.042	-.018	.027
	Sig.						.472	.759	.636
	<i>N</i>						300	300	300
<b>K AC</b>	<i>r</i>						1.000	.428	.333
	Sig.							.000**	.000**
	<i>N</i>							300	300
<b>K RES</b>	<i>r</i>							1.000	.293
	Sig.								.000**
	<i>N</i>								300
<b>P CV</b>	<i>r</i>								1.000
	Sig.								.
	<i>N</i>								300

Note. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

PP – parents’ perceptions towards TV

KP – children’s perceptions towards TV

P AC – parents’ report of active mediation

P RES- parents’ report of restrictive mediation

P COV - parents’ report of co-viewing mediation

K AC – children’s report of active mediation

K RES – children’s report of restrictive mediation

K CV children’s report of co-viewing mediation

**Table 6:** Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance on Parents' Profile and Perception towards TV Programs

Variables	Test	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
school	HT	2.73	7	188	.010*
age	WL	1.26	21	431	.193
sex	HT	2.29	7	186	.029*
Ethnic origin	HT	3.52	7	189	.001*
education	WL	1.09	21	486	.354
Mother's job	HT	1.07	7	187	.387
Father's job	HT	1.06	7	187	.395
Marital status	WL	.607	14	370	.859
Family relations	WL	1.11	28	754	.315
Status/number of children	WL	2.33	14	352	.004*

Note: \*  $p < .05$ 

HT – Hotellings' Trace

WL- Wilk's Lambda

**Table 7:** Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance on Children's Profile and Perception towards TV Programs

Variables	Test	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
school	HT	4.90	7	246	.000*
age	WL	1.10	14	492	.350
sex	HT	2.93	7	240	.006*
Ethnic origin	HT	2.36	7	249	.024*
Family relations	WL	.824	21	684	.690

Note: \*  $p < .05$ 

HT – Hotellings' Trace

WL- Wilk's Lambda

**Table 8:** Parents' Perceptions towards TV Programs vis-à-vis Parental Mediation Style

Programs	Active		Restrictive		Co-viewing	
	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Action	1.03	.477	1.21	.298	1.14	.365
Cartoons	1.11	.360	.988	.518	1.65	.047*
Educational	1.65	.068	1.47	.125	1.30	.217
Drama	1.46	.099	1.12	.346	1.38	.138
Comedy	.882	.673	1.17	.298	1.58	.058
MTV	.894	.650	1.13	.354	1.48	.108
News	2.41	.006*	1.90	.030*	1.88	.043*

Note. \*  $p < .05$ **Table 9:** Multivariate Test Results on Children's Perception towards TV Programs vis-à-vis Parental Mediation

Program	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Action	.972	177	121	.572
Cartoons	1.30	159	136	.033*
Educational	1.40	189	136	.020*
Drama	1.05	186	127	.392
Comedy	1.34	168	124	.043*
MTV	1.17	177	106	.187
News	1.40	195	148	.015*
Action x Cartoon	1.45	360	120	.009*
Education x comedy	1.69	315	119	.001*

Note. \*  $p < .05$

**Table 10:** Multivariate Test Results on Parental Mediation by Parents

Parental Mediation	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Active	2.47	98	66	.000*
Restrictive	2.58	154	71	.000*
Co-viewing	2.14	105	70	.001*
Active x restrictive	2.32	105	70	.000*
Active x co-viewing	3.11	42	46	.000*
Restrictive x co-viewing	2.56	84	63	.000*

Note. \*  $p < .05$

**Table 11:** Multivariate Test Results on Parental Mediation Reported by Children

Parental Mediation	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Active	1.67	140	71	.009*
Restrictive	1.63	182	73	.009*
Co-viewing	1.44	133	70	.048*
Active x restrictive	2.10	63	57	.003*
Active x co-viewing	2.93	49	50	.000*
Co-viewing x restrictive	1.86	77	61	.006*

Note. \*  $p < .05$

**Table 12:** Multivariate Tests for Parents' Profile vis-a-vis Parental Mediation

Profile	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
School	3.29	3	279	.021*
Age	.710	9	667	.700
Sex	.615	3	274	.606
Ethnic Origin	.829	3	284	.479
Mothers' occupation	.605	3	281	.612
Fathers' occupation	.074	3	281	.974
Education	.877	9	635	.546
Number of children	2.85	6	526	.010
Marital status	2.93	6	558	.008
Family relations	4.41	12	738	.000*
School x family relations	2.40	9	833	.011
School x status	2.26	6	558	.036*
No. of children x mother's job	3.33	6	522	.003*

Note. \*  $p < .05$

**Table 13:** Multivariate Tests for Children's Profile vis-a-vis Parental Mediation

Profile	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
School	4.18	3	288	.006*
Age	2.56	6	574	.019*
Sex	3.01	3	284	.031*
Ethnic Origin	.668	3	290	.572
Family relations	2.67	9	696	.005*
Age x Ethnic Origin	2.57	6	576	.018*

Note. \*  $p < .05$

The computed means showed in Tables 1-4 support the findings that there are no significant differences between the parents and children in terms of how they perceive TV programs and practice parental mediation. From the computed means of perceptions towards programs, the only difference lies in the perception towards action programs where

parents rated it negatively, whereas children were uncertain whether the program contains positive or negative content. Both perceive that educational programs and TV news programs contain positive content. But both remain uncertain whether cartoons, drama, comedy, and MTV contain positive or negative content. Over-all, the average mean towards

the programs yielded means that signify they are uncertain whether TV programs contain positive or negative contents.

Moreover, both parents and children concurred that there is a strong presence of active mediation for all types of programs, with parents reporting higher means (see Table 3). The trend is the same with the report on co-viewing where the average mean for both fell under "strong presence" of co-viewing. However, the children differed from parents when their means yielded average or moderate presence of restrictive mediation, whereas the parents recorded higher means indicating strong presence of restrictive mediation. Basing on the means, the most-oft practiced mediation is co-viewing, followed by active mediation, and least practiced is restrictive mediation.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This research showed that TV is indeed an attractive medium that commands audience attention and loyalty, which is translated into the high levels and frequency of exposure. However, the research also proved that not all audiences are passive who have simply become receptacles of the idiot box, as what the Powerful Media Effects (Noelle-Neumann, 1973) and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1980) warned. Rather, some children and parents are capable of selective exposure -- choosing only programs they think are consistent with their values and answer their needs. Likewise, some children appear to remain unperturbed by the media violence or objectionable content since they exercise selective perception and they come from families with a relatively secure family attachment. Thus, they enjoy watching the thrills in an action movie but not necessarily imitating it as the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1994) predicted. Furthermore, results validate the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, et al., 1973) that parents and children seek programs they believe provide them entertainment function (cartoons and MTV), or catharsis (action, drama, or sitcoms), and instrumental function (intellectual enrichment from National Geographic Channel, Animal Planet, and TV news).

From the foregoing research findings about TV exposure and perceptions towards TV content, it appears there is a lack of public awareness and information dissemination on the issues of objectionable TV contents and harmful TV effects. While TV stations and UBC cable channels actively promoted its programming, it has not provided avenues for warnings nor discussions on the issue. There is either no initiative because of the station's priority of profit over community responsibility; or perhaps because government also failed to give importance on the issue.

On the level of family communication, this research has shown that there are different ways a parent can communicate his love and concern for a child's development. Other than co-viewing, it is necessary to engage the children in activities that

foster closeness, thought-sharing, and cooperation such sports, outings and discussion of opinions. This could deter the child from doing vicious or spurious activities and keep them from aping other "undeserving" people as role models (Kobe Bryant, wrestlers, as examples). A child develops self-confidence, good sense of responsibility, and communication competence if the family he/she grew up with encourages open communication and warm display of care and love. A Secure Family Attachment (Bowlby, 1973) through active and co-viewing mediation will help the child process what is right and wrong in what he/she is viewing, and learn to cope realistically with social pressures and expectations.

Also, this research has pointed to the possibility of desensitization occurring among respondents. Their high exposure to programs with violence or objectionable content created a numbing effect hence, they did not perceive anything wrong with fighting, shouting, ridiculing, insulting or getting even. As results revealed, children and very few parents perceive anything negative about TV content.

On the quality of parental mediation, this research affirmed Warren, et al.'s (2002) assertion that demographics and perceptions are not the sole predictors of TV's impact on children. Parents' accessibility and engagement in children's activities build a more stable buffer against the ill effects of TV sex, violence, and profanity. Despite the heavy demands from work, parents must seek ways to improve family relations by relegating time to enjoy the company of the family, other than the regular routine of eating-out, watching movies and shopping on week-ends.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

This research would have been able to draw more comparisons on TV viewing habits, perceptions towards TV, and parental mediation if it was able to draw a bigger sample with diverse ethnic origin and wider age groups. The scope of this research also did not include study of effects on kids and a content analysis of local TV programs watched, which could have generated better interpretations on their perceptions towards TV programs and parental mediation. Since the parents were aware that the questionnaires were to be returned to school administrators, there is a possibility that responses were aimed at making a good impression on parental involvement. Hence, saving face, a strong Asian cultural value, may have affected the truthfulness of responses.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Further Research**

This study should be replicated using bigger and different samples (more children representing various economic stratum; different age levels to include teenagers and pre-adolescents; private, state and

vocational schools; and it may survey teachers and school administrators for its own awareness and attitudes towards media education). To achieve greater validity and reliability of results, the instrument used can be further improved (especially on length). Also, the parental mediation scales can be further enriched or modified to make measurements of co-viewing more distinguishable from active mediation. Moreover, since most Thais patronize local TV programs, a content analysis can be done to determine the values projected in the stories and find out if these are positive or negative. In other words, to make the study more in-depth, triangulation can be considered as a research method to include focus-group discussions.

#### **For families, school administrators, government and TV/cable stations**

Findings of this study may be used as a benchmark for an active media education/literacy program for children and parents in schools, and in local communities. Perhaps, even teachers need to be equipped with knowledge of the issue so they can integrate media literacy and critical media use in some of their class discussions.

Schools can also consider sponsoring activities that promote family closeness and involvement through quarterly family activities like family sports day, family stage shows, or family art competitions. As the study revealed, there is still a great need to push for stronger family relations so as to keep the children from dangerous influences and spending their time unproductively.

Meanwhile, the government could consider institutionalizing and strongly implementing Broadcast Codes for programming. Together with the academe and broadcast programming specialists, they can draw up guidelines on how TV should treat disabled or people with physical deformities, cultural minorities, children and women; respect for law enforcement authorities; crime scenes or gory details of news events; language and cultural sensitivities, among others. Government could also issue guidelines requiring local TV stations and UBC to classify all programs as PG (Parental Guidance needed), or family-oriented.

Broadcast stations and UBC can take the initiative, or with government's prodding, to declare a family hour programming. Since the study found out that parents watch TV with their children, TV and cable programmers can schedule wholesome shows from 6 PM – 9 PM. With this enforced, scriptwriters will be challenged to write scripts void of foul language and steamy plots. Advertisers can also join the crusade by endorsing and supporting family-oriented programs.

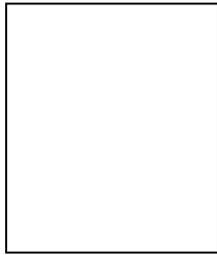
Along with this, non-government organizations could be created as media watchers to check excesses of media, and to help promote public media literacy.

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