

Ginger or Mary Ann? Time to Choose, Professor

Television is bad.¹⁻⁷⁸ Television is sinisterness wrapped in evil surrounded by bad.⁷⁹⁻¹¹⁹ Nowadays one cannot even find the switch to turn such a device on without a flashlight and some tweezers. Unless of course you have the remote, but that is nowhere to be found and has an array of buttons that would intimidate all who are not familiar with such an array and some of those who push those same buttons on a daily basis. Television is the sole cause of obesity and bilious temper in children and all depravities in adults, leading to the notion that television should be cornered, beaten, and shot in a dark alley or maybe just corralled and put in a cage for circus or museum viewing. We, at the Hospital for Children Who Do Not Feel So Well, have decided to address this ubiquitous challenge to healthy living in a novel, unique, and wholly unprecedented manner. We have been thinking outside the box, aligning our objectives with our core competencies, going forward in a value-added way, going off the beaten path to pick some high-hanging fruit, and demonstrating ownership of this onerous axis-of-evil-in-itself, while not harming the business interests of our friends in the entertainment industry. It has become possible, through new technology developed by a joint venture of ourselves and Mysterious Incorporation X, a company in which we have an almost undetectable financial interest, and funding from numerous foundations of spotless repute and generous nature, to slow the spinning of the earth to lengthen each and every day, allowing time for a goodly amount of television viewing in addition to other more high-minded pursuits. We intend to show what effects television has on children once and for all. This article highlights our efforts and heaps more glory upon our Glorious Leader, which is our cargo ship, the whereabouts of which can be found in real time.[@]

SETTING

This study was undertaken at our superb hospital located in the middle of it all, the flagship institution for all health care entities good, wholesome, and profitable. We have several beds (some of which are reserved for patients); the aforementioned vessel; a housekeeper who speaks several languages; at least 5 kinds of tape; dial-up Internet access during business hours; a well-trained, mildly tempered monkey; and a limitless supply of intravenous immunoglobulin, which we have found efficacious and cost-effective in the treatment of just about every malady of childhood (Maloney and Srivastava, 2012*).

ETHICS

What?

I was *not* asleep. I was just letting my eyes rest.

AUTHOR

Jeffrey Robert VanBlarcom, MD

Division of Inpatient Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah

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Address correspondence to Jeffrey Robert VanBlarcom, MD, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Inpatient Medicine, University of Utah, 100 N. Mario Capecchi Dr, Salt Lake City, UT 84113. E-mail: jeffrey.vanblarcom@hsc.utah.edu

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METHODS

The study was quite complicated, but we will endeavor to water our report down for general consumption. Core project team members were chosen on the basis of their appearance and credit score. You will understand that the method for slowing the earth's rotation cannot be divulged without serious damage to our financial interests, but you could not possibly understand such devices in any case. No attempts were made to alter the earth's axis, which would have catastrophic consequences the likes of which you are just not prepared to deal with. A process of thought slowing, to hide the slower spinning of the earth to nonsubjects, was developed and is described elsewhere.⁹⁶ Outcomes measures were loosely defined during an exhaustive committee meeting without doughnuts or coffee. These were: some measure of achievement in the field of productivity, some measure of social skills, and a measure of girth, most likely centimeters, although it was agreed that the English system has its merits. Our stretch goals were elimination of death and poverty, although this was not a quality improvement project.

The study was conducted worldwide April 1, 2012, through December 21, 2012, which was the end of the Mayan Long Count and not the widely anticipated fiery apocalypse, now scheduled for June 15, 2017.

Study arms were identified, as noted in the following discussion. Subjects were chosen at random, by using the hospital's clandestine network of plainclothes thugs, although only children having gender-neutral names with unusual spellings were considered. Unattended children were widely

available, captured mostly without serious injury, and forcibly compelled to give their consent for participation. Transorbital probes were implanted in the brain matter of all subjects by our monkey to ensure compliance with the study's stipulations. Inclusion in arms 1 through 5 was restricted to children 5 to 10 years old of normal development and disposition. Inclusion in arm 6 was compulsory and included everybody else—literally—other than the project team and select members of their friends and family, who were productive or not so productive, depending on their natural tendency toward advancement or sloth, during the term of the study, but that is a result and I will say no more about that in the Methods section. Exclusion criteria for the subject arms were: classic spelling of any first name, those not meeting inclusion criteria, and children injured in the recruitment process, who were treated at our hospital, properly billed, and then returned to their natural habitat.

Thought slowing was applied worldwide 00:01 April 1, 2012. With a slight delay due to the enormous power required to run both technologies simultaneously, the earth's spin was slowed. Subjects were allowed their usual freedoms, activities, and diet. Subjects in arms 1 through 5 were required to watch 4 hours of television in the mid-to-late evening with programming as follows:

Arm 1: Restricted to documentaries concerning penguins and African wildlife and propaganda videos from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Arm 2: Restricted to *Gilligan's Island*, *M*A*S*H*, and *Family Feud*.

Arm 3: Restricted to *Project Runway* and *What Not to Wear*.

Arm 4: Restricted to "reality television."

Arm 5: Unrestricted viewing.

Arm 6: Everyone else (referred to as nonsubjects).

Viewing of advertisements was not restricted within the study arms, such exposure being an integral part of the television experience. Subjects were measured about the belly, and achievement and social skills were assessed before and after the intervention. All interventions and processes were discontinued 00:00 December 12, 2012. Data were recorded on paper towels, provided individually and on-demand by our attractive and reasonably compensated nursing staff. Brain probes were removed by our monkey without virtue of sedation or stuffed animal companionship in the generous provision of a memorable character-building experience for study subjects.

RESULTS

Our results are scant, but we did spend a lot of time on our methods, and our conclusions are robust. We regret that we forgot to measure the girth of the study subjects after our intervention, so we have no data for that outcome measure. Arm 3 was shut down in late April 2012 after each and every subject experienced developmental regression, although each subject's ability to assemble a smashing ensemble improved. Arm 2 subjects showed a remarkable increase in intelligence, social skills, and knowledge of a broad range of topics useful for everyday existence. Arm 4 subjects showed an increase in bickering and belligerence. One subject of arm 1 inadvertently stepped on a spider on

the day the study ended and promptly arrested, thankfully in the parking lot at our facility and in the presence of the core project team. Plan-Do-Study-Act methodology was applied, and after a lengthy discussion of potentialities and a logistical quagmire, an automated external defibrillator was procured, and the child recovered. Several children in arm 6 promptly lost their remotes and were forced to watch whatever channel had been on previously, mainly ESPN. This subset of subjects subsequently had an increase in their interest in automobiles and male performance enhancement.

Thought was given to the analysis of data by using multinomial probit models, imaginary numbers, and strategy, but these methods were jettisoned given their time-consuming nature and the extraordinary intellectual requirements required for their comprehension. Note that multinomial probit models are not to be confused with multivariate probit models, but you already knew that.

Stretch goals were not met, but our monkey received a commendation from the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgeons and a new target to improve his throwing accuracy.

DISCUSSION

This is indeed a discussion, but you will not be invited to contribute. Why are kids so mesmerized by images on a screen? Perhaps because we are averse to both boredom and any kind of exertion, physical or mental, and because kids are lacking in self-discipline (with all due respect). Are we inherently lazy? Is laziness bad? A recent survey (Van Blarcom, 2013[^]) strongly suggests that laziness is not felt to be a desirable trait, or at

least random people universally react negatively when accused of possessing a generous measure of it by the surveyor. Or do we crave novelty and knowledge, and television is the fastest way to be exposed to the most? Probably some of all of this. It is the lack of policing oneself that requires parental intervention. Once you are an adult, you have no one but yourself to blame for the persistence of the vices and indulgences that ensue from a lack of oversight, whatever kind of parenting or lack thereof that you had the fortitude to endure.

All groups need to be governed in some way, including children. Take, for instance, your feral beagles.⁺ Dare we say it? Inadequate parental governance is the heart of the issue, right? Are we too nice to be blunt? In Utah, yes, but does it have to be that way everywhere? That same survey also suggests that the amount of television viewing by the average child in the United States smacks of lazy parenting or even neglect (not my words). It also could be that parents have too much to do because they are busy saving the world from the scourge of television or other such noble pursuits (my words). Does everyone know what good parenting is? What bad parenting is? Parenting styles and their valuation may vary, but we can agree on some things: keeping a loaded gun accessible to a toddler is not good, not establishing a proper bedtime is dubious, and dessert only after the consumption of a parentally determined amount of sauerkraut is wholly appropriate. We all need leisure activities, but letting a child watch 4 hours of television a day?[&]

UNORIGINAL PONTIFICATION

Parents should be told that excessive and unsupervised television viewing

is not a substitute for human interaction, particularly if you want your children to interact productively with other humans. There is little doubt that excessive television viewing is not helpful in getting a leg up in the world as an individual and is not conducive to the furtherance of human endeavor in general, both of which are worthy causes. We tell our children that they can be president, and the road to the White House probably does not begin with a dose of *Phineas and Ferb* and some Cheetos, delightful though they both are. However . . .

CONCLUSIONS

Many conclusions can be drawn from this study. Chiefly, *Gilligan's Island* is the pinnacle of television entertainment, and its viewing is necessary for the advancement of the human race. Viewing *Family Feud* increases cocktail party conversation sustainability in 5- to 10-year-old children. Children should not be subjected to *Project Runway*. These conclusions are unavoidable and irrefutable after a review of our data.

Our research suffers from a number of severe limitations, including but not limited to: unfounded opinions, unsound reasoning, lack of institutional control, use of the phrase "value-added" only a single time, and excessive granularity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A COMPELLING LIST OF INTERESTING ITEMS

1-119. A list of such studies, pared down to the last 5 years, can be found in PubMed by typing "television unhealthy" in the appropriate box.

@http://www.marinetraffic.com/ais/default.aspx?mmsi=309108000¢erx=32.61768¢erx=-29.06623&zoom=10&type_color=7

*This study was suppressed by the AAP and the only existing copy is somewhere lost in the files in Dr Maloney's office, but he might be able to track it down if you ask nicely.

®Pleacher MN. Thought slowing processes and their application: an adaptation of Zeta technology. *Am Tech Jour.* 2010;8(4): 1-2133.

^Van Blarcom JR. Parenting, television, laziness and a quest for unsupervised candy in

the hospital. Unpublished study, not even committed to paper, April 2013. Call for instructions on performing a similar survey of your own.

+<http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/story?section=news/local&id=7251306>.

®This may anger you: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2009/television-and-beyond-a-kids-eye-view.html>.

*Explanation of everything ever: Zetatalk.com.

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