

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

COMMENTS FOR EDITORIAL OFFICE

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Manuscript Number SC1445

Manuscript Title "Television and Violence: ..."

Author(s) Brandon S. Centerwall, MD

JAMA Editor Bruce B. Dan, MD

Date Sent to Reviewer 12/13/91

PLEASE RETURN BY 1/3/91

RECOMMENDATION	QUALITY	VALUE	YES	NO	UNCERTAIN	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> Accept as is	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	Material original?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accept if suitably revised	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	Data valid?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Revise and reconsider	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	Conclusions reasonable?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Reject	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	Information important?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PUBLICATION TIMING	PRIORITY	Writing clear?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Routine (Low)	1 2 3 4 5 (High)	General medical interest?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> ASAP		Tables/figures appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Fast track		If not, explain.				
CONSORTIUM MANUSCRIPT?		Editorial needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Am J Dis Child</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Neurol</i>	If yes, I volunteer to write such, or I suggest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Dermatol</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Ophthalmol</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Gen Psychiatry</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Pathol Lab Med</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Intern Med</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Surg</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arch Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg</i>						

GENERAL COMMENTS FOR EDITOR

See general comments.
Thanks for kind words.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC COMMENTS OF REVIEWER TO AUTHOR

JAMA

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Author(s) Brandon S. Centerwall, MD

Manuscript Title "Television and Violence: ..."

This is important work. It deserves to be called to the attention of the medical community. However, the manuscript presents some problems that undermine its effectiveness.

1. It is not clear what the original information is, if any. Most of the findings have been published. If the 1987 data are new and unpublished, that should be pointed out and made more prominent. If not, the article should clearly state that it is a summary of previously published research.

2. As 50-60 million viewers a day are exposed to frequent violence on television, the "epidemic" of an estimated 10,000 homicides a year attributable to viewing suggests a slight (if tragic) effect. (About 3 percent of the effect of tobacco, which only a minority use.) That does not make it less important, but it suggests placing the results in perspective. The available research suggests that violence has more than one lesson. The cultivation of a sense of danger and insecurity is another, and much more pervasive (and debilitating), consequence of exposure. Some mention should be made that this study is concerned only with one, though perhaps the most feared, effect of television violence.

3. The recommendations are simplistic. They ignore the massive amount of research about family viewing patterns, the effect of parent participation, and the opportunities afforded by selective and discriminating viewing. "Turning it off" as the solution lacks social insight: the heaviest viewers will not turn it off because they tend to be lower income and less educated viewers for whom television is an opportunity to share in mainstream culture.

4. Such advice also implicitly condones indiscriminate viewing because it suggests that television is like a faucet rather than like other media to be used selectively.

5. It is contradictory to advocate turning it off because industry will never reform and then to suggest programs to educate about television.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Refer to Page para.

Table with 2 columns: Page, para. (Empty)

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SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Refer to Page para.

6. Compulsory locks on TV sets is so far out that it shakes the reader's confidence in the author's judgment. Is there any evidence that (a) locks work, and (b) work to exclude violence? Research shows that, left to themselves, children in general watch less television than their parents. What will locks do and to whom?

Specific comments:

P. 2, para. 2: In fact, a ten-year update to the 1972 Report summarized much of the more recent research. It is: David Pearl, Lorraine Bouthilet, and Joyce Lazar (Eds.) *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the 80's*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Resources Publication No. (ADM) 82-1196, 1982. Reference to its conclusions will help establish general findings, in addition to (or instead of) the few studies cited later plus reference to previous summary by author.

P. 3, para 2. It is incorrect to imply that violence is the only behavior seen -- and learned -- on television, especially in infancy. Much research also shows learning of cooperative and other skills, including verbal and writing skills. More specific claims will help this article gain in credibility.

P. 7, para.3. These are already published findings.

P. 8, para 2. Are these new and/or unpublished data? This is not made clear. They are from 1987 (why not more recent?) but the Figures 2 and 3 stop at 1975.

P. 11, para. 2. The comparison of television with the tobacco industry is problematic. Television is licensed to operate on the public airways " in the public interest, convenience, and necessity" -- which makes its betrayal of public trust even more glaring. Tobacco has no redeeming features; television does and could have more. It contains the best as well as the worst of culture, even if much more of the latter. The comparison should be limited to industry intent, not content.