HIGHLIGHTS

of

VIOLENCE PROFILE NO. 10

Trends in network television drama and
viewer conceptions of social reality

1967 - 1978

by

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Violence in weekend children's and late evening programming rose to near record levels in the fall of 1978. All three major networks programmed more violence during weekend-daytime (children's) hours than last year. The new findings also continue to show that young people who watch more television are more apprehensive about their own safety and are more likely to think that people are mean and selfish.

The Violence Profile is part of Cultural Indicators, a continuing research project, studying trends in network television drama and the conceptions of social reality that viewing tends to cultivate in the minds of viewers. The Profile is a set of multi-dimensional indicators consisting of the Violence Index which measures the prevalence and rate of violence in network television drama, and Cultivation Analysis, which isolates viewer conceptions by comparing the responses of light and heavy viewers in the same general population groups.

The tenth annual Violence Profile focuses upon fall 1978 network dramatic prime-time and weekend-daytime (children's) programming. The definition used in this research is that of unambiguous physical violence -- hurting or killing a person or the credible threat of hurting and killing, in any context.

This update, incorporating the analysis of network dramatic programming from 1967 through 1978, shows an increase of violence over last season's weekend children's and late evening programming (9-11 p.m. EST), but a decrease in the prevalence and rate of violence in the former "family

hour" (8-9 p.m. EST).

New children's programs jumped 52 points over last year's Index for new children's shows, the largest increase in this analysis. Continuing children's programs became more violent by 31 points. By contrast, continuing prime-time programs remained at about the same level and new prime-time programs decreased in violence by 21 points.

The Violence Index is made up of specific components measuring the prevalence and rate of violent actions and violent characterizations.[*] The overall level of weekend-daytime (children's) programs containing violence climbed to nearly 100 percent. The rate of violent incidents in children's programs zoomed from 15.6 per hour in 1977 to a near record level of 25.0 per hour in 1978 (more than five times the prime-time rate). Both ABC and CBS boosted the violence saturation of children's programs to 26.3 and 26.8 incidents per hour, respectively -- a record high for both networks. NBC's rate went up to 20.6, its third highest level. Characters involved in violence in children's programs climbed from nearly eight to almost nine out of ten.

The late evening (9-11 p.m. EST) increase in violence was due primarily to NBC's increase in violent programming, followed by ABC, but not CBS. However, NBC also led in reducing early evening prime-time (8-9 p.m. EST) violence by 116 Index points, to its lowest level on record; CBS followed with a 30-point reduction, also to its lowest level in that time period. Unlike the other networks, ABC increased its violent

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[*] The formula for the Index is: percent of programs containing any violence plus twice the rate of violent incidents per program plus twice the rate of violent incidents per hour plus the percent of characters involved in any violence plus the percent of characters involved in killing.

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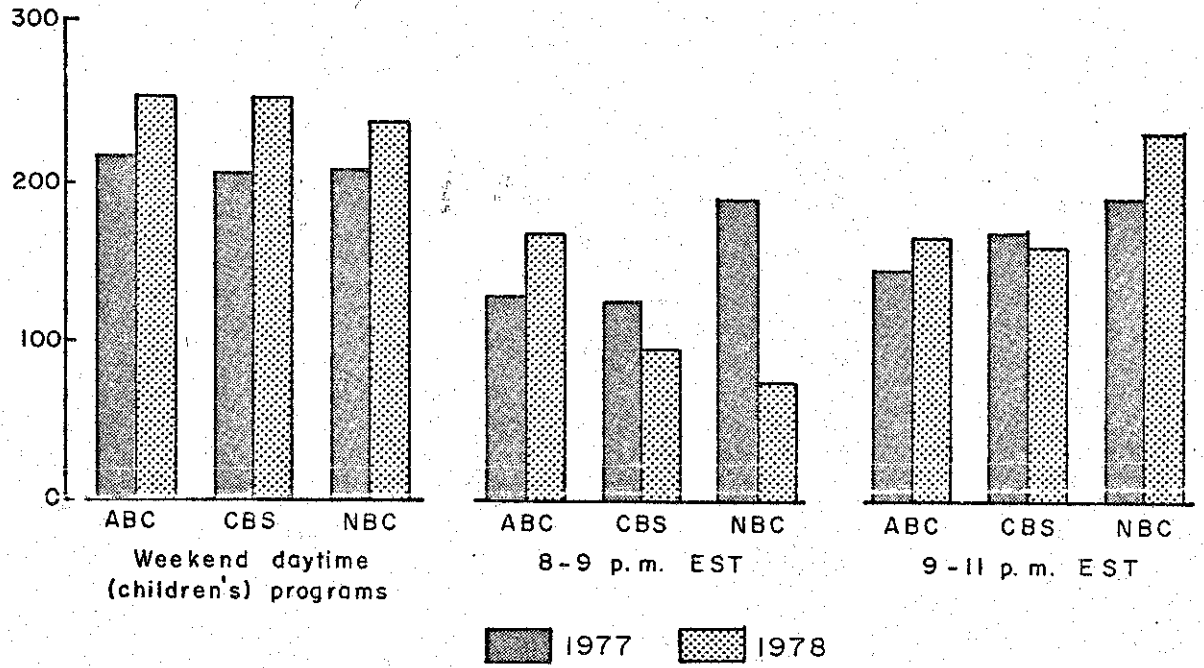    Provile No. 10." Journal of Communication, Summer 1979.

FIGURE I: CHANGES IN VIOLENCE INDEX BY NETWORK AND
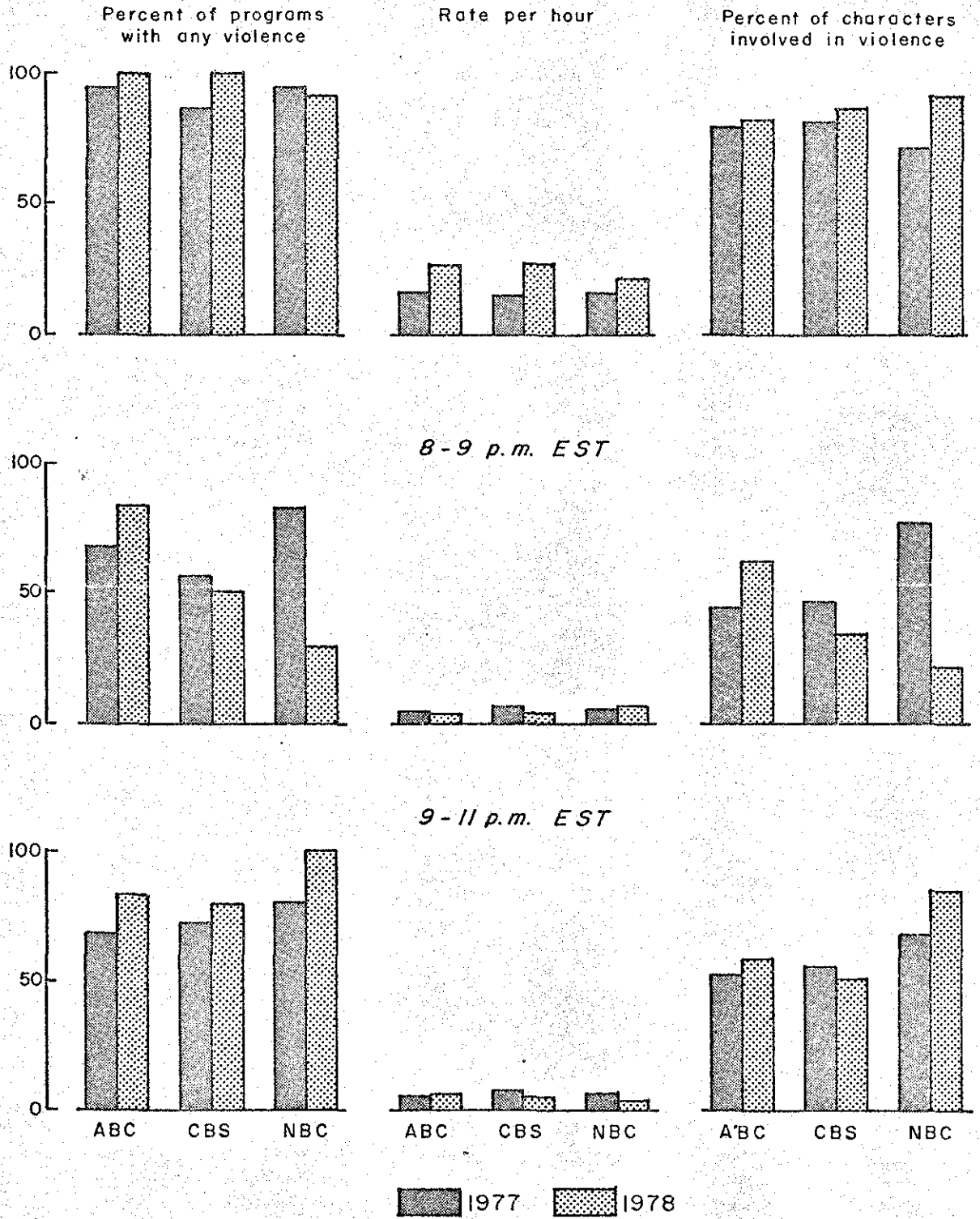PROGRAM TIME 1977-1978

FIGURE 2: CHANGES IN VIOLENCE INDEX COMPONENTS BY
NETWORK AND PROGRAM TIME 1977-1978
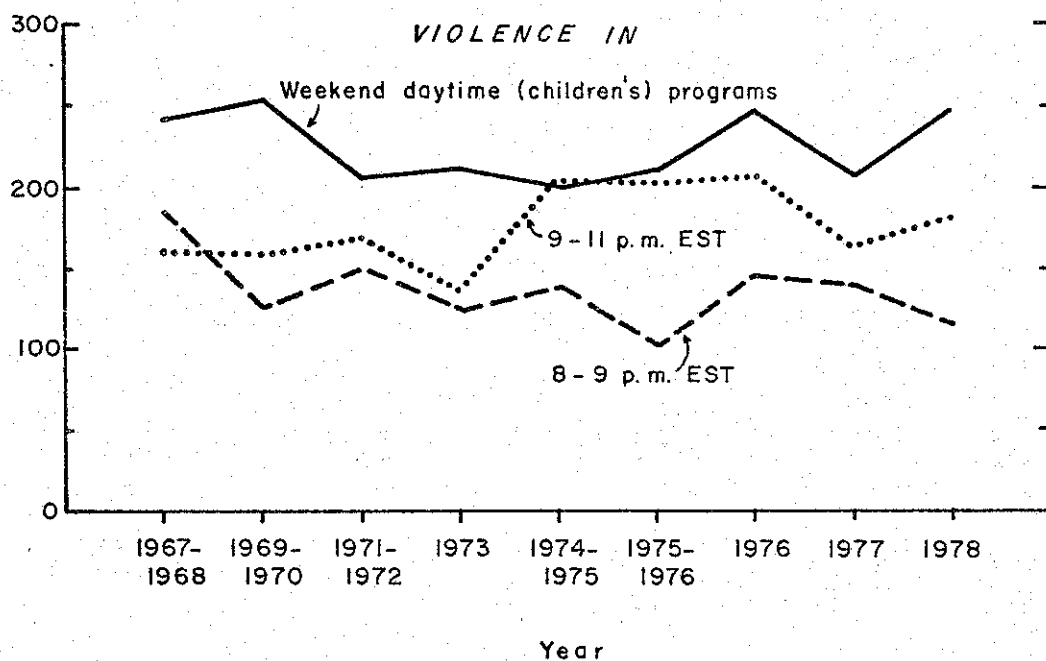
FIGURE 3: VIOLENCE INDEX IN CHILDREN'S AND
PRIME TIME PROGRAMING, 1967-1978

All programs

250
200
150
100

NBC
ABC
CBS

Weekend daytime (children's) programs

300
250
200
150

NBC
CBS
ABC

9-11 p.m. EST

300
250
200
150
100
50

NBC
CBS
ABC

8-9 p.m. EST

200
150
100
50

ABC
CBS
NBC

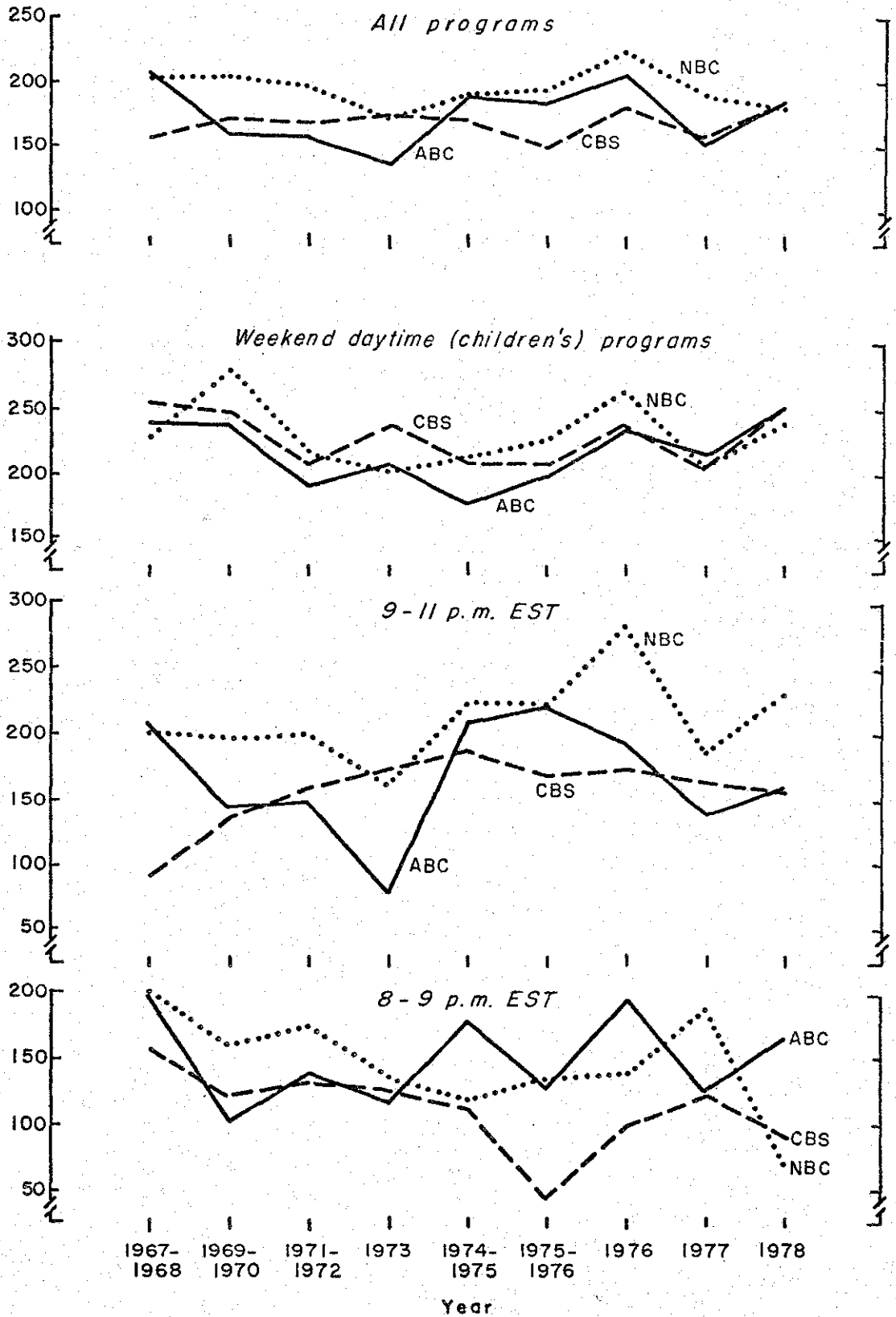1967-1968   1969-1970   1971-1972   1973   1974-1975   1975-1976   1976   1977   1978

Year

FIGURE 4: VIOLENCE INDEX BY NETWORK AND PROGRAM TIME
1967-1978