

From: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
Organization: System Server
To: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
Date: Mon, 6 Apr 1998 08:09:30 EST
Subject: Re: Family Futures magazine
X-Confirm-Reading-To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
X-pmrc: 1
Priority: normal
Status:

FAX 803 777 1120

RATING

*Source (Sent) Home address
Called 4/14/98 Commit*

Dr. Gerbner,

Sorry, I was unable to call over the weekend. Are you going to be available this week? My office phone is (803-777-5510). I'm here most days other than around lunch time. If you can't call during the day, please give me an evening phone number and best time and date to reach you. If I can't call you at that time, I'll have my assistant editor, Carl Holman call you. We really would like you to write an article for our magazine.

for (with arrow pointing to the phone number)

If voice communications fail, maybe we can work it out via e-mail. In the meantime, if you'll give me an address, I'll overnight some sample copies of our magazine and a copy of our author guidelines. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Maureen Lee

*May 15
6-10 pages*

Date: Fri, 3 Apr 1998 20:17:08 -0500 (EST)
To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
From: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
Subject: Re: Family Futures magazine

*See
Donnelly M
E-mail*

If you can't reach me, give me a number to call.

>Dr. Gerbner,

>
>Thank you for your reply. I will try to reach you on Saturday at >610-642-3061. I will not be able to call you this evening (Friday) or >Sunday. If I fail to reach you on Saturday, I will try again the >first of the week. Thanks.

>
>Maureen Lee
>Managing Editor
>Family Futures

George Gerbner
Bell Atlantic Professor of Telecommunication
Temple University, Philadelphia. Tel/fax 610 642 3061
E-mail: ggerbner@nimbus.temple.edu

The data collected from field research is valid, suggestive and descriptive of patterns of behavior. Interview data can more easily be compared between participants, as well. This helped to identify the behaviors of regular viewers in different contexts, and whether they mimicked Letterman's attitudes and behaviors.

2), continued...In what order will you conduct the four studies, and why? What are the advantages of using not just one but all four methods to explore this research topic?

First, we conducted the survey and content analysis simultaneously in order to acquire a basis of data for design of the experiment, observation and interview (field research). The experiment was then conducted and yielded additional information about the effects of the Letterman programs. Observation and interviews were conducted last and their design was partially based on all the data gathered prior to that time.

Using all four types of studies has its advantages. Researchers can play off the strengths and weaknesses of each method. *Content analysis* is unobtrusive, is an economic form of research, is easy to repeat, and allows researchers to study something over long periods of time.

Surveys are well suited for describing the characteristics of large populations, make large samples feasible, are flexible and is strong in measuring the same concept with many people.

Observations/interviews (field research) are valid and flexible. They show how people interact with one another, how they discuss the research topic, and how they are influenced and behave over time.

Experiments allow researchers to isolate the variable, gauge its impact over time, and conclude that the change of characteristics is attributable to the experiment's stimulus. Because they're limited in scope, experiments can be replicated with many groups thus



INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES IN SOCIETY
A USC -COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FOR
FAMILY ENHANCEMENT

April 7, 1998

Dr. George Gerbner
234 Golf View Road
Ardmore, PA 19003

Dear Dr. Gerbner:

I'm sorry I haven't been able to ask you by telephone whether you would write an article for *Family Futures* magazine. I hope that this letter describing the type of article I would like you to write, a draft table of contents for the "Families and the Information Age" issue, some sample magazines, and our author guidelines will help convince you to write for our magazine.

As I said in my e-mail to you, *Family Futures* (circulation 5,000) is a cooperative effort of the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina, the Center for Children, Families, and the Law at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University. The magazine, which is in its second year of publication, is published by Erlbaum Publishing. We have a staff of two—me and my assistant, Carl Holman. We are unable to pay authors to write for *Family Futures*. However, we have been very fortunate to have distinguished scholars contribute articles to our publication.

We organize each issue of *Family Futures* around a theme and then seek authors to write articles related to various aspects of that theme. The magazine issue that we would like you to write an article for is on "Families and the Information Age."

We would like you to consider writing an article for our Alternative View section about the television program rating system. The Alternative View section of the magazine features "think piece" type articles that provide a novel perspective on an issue or problem related to the magazine's theme.

As I told you in my e-mail, I saw an article you wrote for the Philadelphia Inquirer (Jan. 30, 1997) in which you outlined the four fatal flaws of the television rating system. I'd like you to write an article for *Family Futures* that would discuss these flaws in depth, address the issue of violence on television, discuss the control that global media companies have on television programming, and finish with suggestions for families and citizens to try and change this steady diet of violence on television.

I have another author who has agreed to write an article for the Alternative View section on the V-Chip. The article will argue that the best way to combat the impact that television violence can have on children is for parents to watch these violent type shows with their children and discuss the contents of these programs with them.

I hope you will agree to write an article for *Family Futures*. I'm certainly open to discussing any other ideas that you may have for an article. I'm enclosing the draft table of contents for this issue. We have secured many of the authors for this issue and are in negotiations with others. I hope to have all the authors lined up by next week so they will be able to meet the May 15 deadline for this issue.

Once we receive the articles, we edit them to fit the magazine's style and do some minor rewriting, if necessary. Occasionally, we have to ask authors to rework the articles. When we finish editing the articles we return them to the authors to review. This process usually takes about 4-6 weeks. Once we send the issue to the publishers, it can take 4 or 5 months before it is published. I'm enclosing a set of author guidelines and a publication agreement that would have to be submitted with the article (if you agree to write one, of course).

I look forward to hearing from you soon either by telephone (803-777-5510), e-mail (maureend@ss1.csd.sc.edu), or fax (803-777-1120). I hope you will decide to share your ideas with those who read *Family Futures*. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maureen Lee".

Maureen Lee
Managing Editor, *Family Futures*

From: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
Organization: System Server
To: ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu
Date: Mon, 13 Apr 1998 14:35:46 EST
Subject: Family Futures magazine
X-Confirm-Reading-To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
X-pmrc: 1
Priority: normal
Status:

Dear Dr. Gerbner,

By now I hope you've received the package of sample issues of Family Futures that I sent you. I also hope you've had time to consider my request to write an article for the issue of Family Futures on "Families and the Information Age." Would you be willing to write this article?

I will be in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday and most of Thursday this week. I can call you if you give me an idea of the best time to catch you and also the best telephone number for me to reach you.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Maureen Lee
Managing Editor, Family Futures

*Left message
asking status
5/14/98
11:40 pm.*

From: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
Organization: System Server
To: ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu
Date: Mon, 18 May 1998 11:22:23 EST
Subject: Family Futures article
X-Confirm-Reading-To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
X-pmrc: 1
Priority: normal
Status:

Hello Dr. Gerbner,

I got you voice mail message. I just returned from vacation and this is my first day back at work. As far as your article for Family Futures -- yes, I'd like you to write a 5-8 page article that focuses on the flaws that you see in the television rating system.

I'd like you to discuss the four (or maybe there are more now than when you wrote the piece for the Philadelphia Inquirer last year) flaws in depth, address the issue of violence on television, discuss the control that global media companies have on television programming, and finish with suggestions for families and citizens to try and change this steady diet of violence on television.

Also, please add a one or two sentence bio. to your article and a list of references or suggested readings.

The deadline was last week -- May 18th. I can give you another two weeks (June 3, 1998) because I have plenty of other articles to begin editing. I sent you a copy of our publication agreement. I will need that signed and returned with a hard copy of the article and the article on disk or via e-mail. If you have a photograph of yourself that we could borrow until the article is printed, I sure would appreciate it. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Sent.
Hard copy of pic
mailed
5/21/98*

From: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
Organization: System Server
To: ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu
Date: Mon, 18 May 1998 11:22:23 EST
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X-Confirm-Reading-To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
X-pmrqc: 1
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2076 w/o bio

Charlie 202 332 1820

From: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
Organization: System Server
To: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
Date: Fri, 22 May 1998 08:49:44 EST
Subject: Re: Family Futures article
X-Confirm-Reading-To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
X-pmrqc: 1
Priority: normal
Status:

Thanks so much!

Maureen

Date: Thu, 21 May 1998 17:38:25 -0400 (EDT)
To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
From: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
Subject: Re: Family Futures article

Found Publication Agreement, will mail together with hard copy, picture. gg it

Thanks Dr. Gerbner. I will review the article tomorrow. And no, you
>did not return the publication agreement. I will send you another one
>in case you can't find the first one. Thanks.

>

>also, I got your fax with the tables. I believe we can reproduce
>these as I could not get them off the e-mail.

>

>thanks again. I'll be in touch!

>

>Maureen Lee

>

>

>

>

>Date: Thu, 21 May 1998 00:46:46 -0400 (EDT)
>To: "Maureen Donnelly" <maureend@SS1.CSD.SC.EDU>
>From: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
>Subject: Re: Family Futures article

>

>DEAR MS. DONNELLY:

>

>YOU WROTE:

>

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>>

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>>than when you wrote the piece for the Philadelphia Inquirer last year)
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>>sent you a copy of our publication agreement. I will need that signed
>>and returned with a hard copy of the article and the article on disk
>>or via e-mail. If you have a photograph of yourself that we could
>>borrow until the article is printed, I sure would appreciate it. I
>>look forward to hearing from you.

>

>Did I return the publication agreement? With travel and heavy traffic, I do
>not remember.

>

>In any case, below is a draft of my piece. (Graphic figures will not come
>through e-mail.I am also attaching it, maybe that will help.)

>

>Please let me have any editorial suggestions you may have before I e-mail
>final copy and hard copy by mail. gg

>

>

>

>DEADLY CHOICE: VIOLENCE OR ALCOHOL

>Uses and Abuses of TV Ratings

>

>By George Gerbner

>

>The much-ballyhooed television program rating game is on. Signs like TV-G,
>TV-PG, TV-K and TV-M have been flickering on the upper left corner of your
>screen since January 1, 1997. If you haven't noticed, you're in good
>company. The movie-style rating system is an uninformative scheme that
>deceives the public and protects industry from parents rather than the
>other way around.

>

>If you have been puzzled about what these "advisories" mean, or lax about
>following them, or slack about providing parental guidance when you see
>TV-PG flashed on the screen, or just blinked and missed it, don't feel bad.
>That is just how the rating system is supposed to work.

>

>The Chicago Tribune reported on March 18, 1998:

>

>"Yes, the hodgepodge of letters and numbers, instituted by the television
>industry under pressure from Congress and parent-advocacy groups, has been
>both ignored and derided since its debut in January 1997 and refinement
>last fall.

>

>"One recent study, conducted by the Associated Press, found that 7 of 10
>adults were paying it little or no mind. Many major newspapers, including
>this one, have not been publishing the ratings in their television
>programming guides.

>

>"Parents at a congressional hearing in Peoria last spring ripped into the
>original ratings, which only labeled shows movie-style, based on
>recommended ages for viewers. When the rest of the industry agreed after
>Peoria to add content indicators to the age-based ratings, the most popular
>network, NBC, refused to do so.

>

>"But all of that has a chance to change with the news last week that the

>FCC has given the ratings ... official seal of approval..."

>

>Well, fat chance. Most parents don't know about the ratings, or don't use
>them, or, if they did, don't know what they're getting instead. In any
>case, they assume that broadcasters, rather than the public, own the
>airways and that they air whatever is most popular.

>

>Wrong again.

>

>Mindless TV violence is not an expression of artistic freedom or of any
>measure of reality or popularity. On the contrary, it is the product of a
>de facto censorship: a global marketing formula and rating system imposed
>on program creators and foisted on the children of the world.

>

>The political process that rammed through the business-as-usual rating
>system was orchestrated by Mr. Jack Valenti, President of the Motion
>Picture Association of America, Inc., one of the top Washington, D.C.
>lobbyists, and creator of the motion picture ratings that he cloned onto
>television.

>

>The process included a series of "consultations" with parents' and
>children's advocacy groups. I attended one of these meetings as President
>of the Cultural Environment Movement, a coalition for equity and fairness
>in media.

>

>All organizations present urged Valenti to design a system that provides
>reasons for the ratings so that parents can make informed decisions. Mr.
>Valenti first stonewalled; months later he gave in under pressure. But then
>syndicators rebelled and refused to label cartoons, where of course most of
>the violence is.

>

>The system that has now thus been patched up and rammed down the public's
>throats has four fatal flaws.

>

>First, it confuses the choices made in movie-going with the very different
>decisions of television viewing. You select a movie and go out to see it,
>or pick a video to bring home. By contrast, television comes into the home
>an average of seven hours a day. It is watched more by the clock than by
>the program. To monitor your child's viewing you have to be a full-time
>television watchdog. Opening credits (when the ratings flash on) are not
>the decisive choice points in television viewing.

>

>Second, it results in inconsistencies in rating. With the number of
>programs on television, producers will rate their own programs. Therefore,
>inconsistencies are inevitable. "Tonight Show with Jay Leno" was given a
>TV-14 but "Late Show With David Letterman" a TV-PG. Without a common
>standard, "none of it will mean anything," says Warner Brothers network
>head Jamie Kellner. "A WB 'PG' will be different than a Fox 'PG,' and that
>will be a disservice to everybody."

>

>Third, ratings designed by the industry and programmed into the V-Chip is
>like letting the fox (no pun intended) guard the chicken coop. Perhaps the
>best feature of the V-Chip is that no one knows how it works, and some of
>those who know think that it doesn't work well at all. One of these is
>Barry Diller, former ABC Vice-President, Fox CEO, and Home-Shopping QVC
>Chairman. "The whole idea of the V-Chip," he says, "is an absurd concept.
>It's simply unworkable. But it's nice to talk about, it's good to get a
>bunch of people to Washington and have their photo taken. It's good to
>stand there and say we're doing something for America. In fact, it won't

>work. But other than that, it's a lovely idea."

>
>Fourth, even if the "family" (G) rating cuts down one one deadliy
>substance, it open the door to another: happy, risk-free alcohol.

>
>As shown in Figure (1) and Table (1), G-rated shows still expose viewers
>to an hourly average of 2.4 acts of violence and 2.5 scenes of alcohol.

>Figure 1. AVERAGE NUMBER OF ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE SCENES

	TV-G	TV-PG	TV-14
--	------	-------	-------

>However, TV-PG rating increases the frequency of alcohol scenes to 3.4 per
>hour, and TV-14 rating increases the frequency of alcohol scenes to 4.4 per
>hour. There is more alcohol than violence in the most violent shows.

>Table 1. AVERAGE NUMBER OF ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE SCENES

Rating label	TV-G	TV-PG	TV-14
% of sample with rating	18%	64%	18%
Alcohol scenes per hour	2.5	3.4	4.4
Violence scenes per hour	2.4	4.1	3.6

>If age-grading is a mixed bag, content labeling has its problems as well.
>In response to lobbying by citizen action groups throughout 1996 and 1997,
>content labels are used in the ratings of most network programs . Shows
>are marked for violence (V), language (L), sex (S), and adult themes (D).

>
>Prime time dramatic programming with a "V" label present scenes of violence
>every 11 minutes, compared to every 38 minutes for shows without any
>content label.

>
>In Figure (2) and Table (2), shows are grouped into those with no content
>label, those with D or S or L (but no V), and those with the V (violence)
>label. (NBC, which initially opted out of content labelling. is not
>represented.

>
>It can be seen that depictions of alcohol on prime time appear to be
>coupled with adult themes, adult language, and sex.

>Table 2. ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE SCENES BY CONTENT LABELS

Content labels	(none)	D,S,L	V
% of sample with label	41%	30%	30%
Alcohol scenes per hour	3.3	5.0	2.9
Violence scenes per hour	1.6	2.4	5.3

>What shall we make of all that?

>
>Our children are growing up in homes where television tells most of the
>stories. Before they go to school, which used to be the first time they
>encountered the larger culture, they are integrated into a television view
>of the world. That is not the view of parents, schools, communities or even
>countries. Neither is it the view of creative people with something to
>tell. It is the view of a handful of conglomerates with something to sell.

>
>That radical change has altered the socialization of children, transformed
>the mainstream of the cultural environment, and surrendered the public
>airways to a marketing operation. Paying for all that is a markup for all
>advertised goods and services, a form of taxation without representation.
>
>Our Cultural Indicators (CI) research project has monitored and analyzed
>the world of prime time and Saturday morning television since 1967. This
>report about some features that ratings are supposed to reflect is taken
>from that database of more than 3000 programs and 34,000 characters.
>
>Humankind may have had more bloodthirsty eras, but none as filled with
>images of violence as the present. We are awash in a tide of violent
>representations the world has never seen. There is no escape from the
>massive invasion of colorful mayhem into the homes and cultural life of
>ever larger areas of the world.
>
>We found prime time television saturated by an average of five scenes of
>violence per hour. Over twenty scenes of violence per hour fill Saturday
>morning cartoon programs.
>
>Violence, whether serious or humorous, is essentially a demonstration of
>power. It shows who can get away with what against whom.
>
>The ratio of violence to victimization defines the price to be paid for
>committing violence. When one group can commit violence with relative
>impunity, the price it pays for violence is relatively low. When a group
>suffers more violence than it commits, the price is high. In general,
>women, children, young people, lower income, disabled and Asian Americans
>are at the bottom of the television violence "pecking order."
>
>We have also found that those who watch more television in every group
>express a greater sense of apprehension, mistrust, and insecurity than do
>light viewers in the same groups. We call this the "mean world syndrome."
>Whatever real dangers lurk outside people's homes, viewing violent
>television cultivates fears and dependencies that make some groups more
>vulnerable than others to exploitation and victimization. Ultimately,
>therefore, marketing mayhem contributes to domination and repression.
>
>Ratings cannot alleviate the human, social, and political fallout of the
>"mean world syndrome." Can they at least keep viewers from flocking to
>violent programs? Wrong once again. Another well kept secret is that
>violence on television is not popular. Many studies have found that even
>though audiences are desensitized to violence, they don't like it. Our CI
>project has documented the fact that violence depresses the Nielsen
>ratings.
>
>Why, then, all that violence? Here is the final secret, and challenge to
>conventional wisdom. What drives violence on the airways is not popularity
>but global marketing. This is how it works.
>
>What you see on TV is not what the people want. What you see is what the
>advertisers think will attract an audience at the least cost. "Cost per
>thousand" is the unit of measurement, where the size of the audience is
>divided by the dollar cost of the time the advertiser pays to insert the
>commercial message. Viewers are the fish, programs the bait.
>
>Production costs are climbing above what domestic advertising markets can
>support. Producers and syndicators reach for the global market.

>
>What is the dramatic ingredient best suited to the global market? It is one
>that needs no translation, that is image-driven, that speaks "action" in
>any language, and that fits into any culture. That ingredient is violence.
>
>What global programmers may lose domestically by saturating programs with
>violence, they more than make up by selling it cheap to many countries.
>When you can dump a Power Rangers on 300 million children in 80 countries,
>shutting out domestic artists and cultural products, you don't have to care
>who wants it and who gets hurt in the process.
>
>What shall we do?
>
>Media watch groups, children's and parents' advocates, and other public
>interest organizations should make their voices heard on the real issues.
>They are issues of gender equity and general diversity in media ownership,
>employment, and representations. They are issues of marketing-driven media
>monopolization, homogenization and globalization. In the last analysis, let
>us not get bogged down in rating system trivialities. Citizens own the
>airways. We should demand that it be healthy, free, and fair, and not just
>"rated."
>
>
>George Gerbner is Bell Atlantic Professor of Telecommunication at Temple
>University and Dean Emeritus of The Annenberg School for Communication,
>University of Pennsylvania.
>
>For further reading:
>
>Books
>
>Invisible Crises: What Conglomerate Media Control Means for America and the
>World. With Hamid Mowlana and Herbert Schiller (eds.) Boulder, CO: Westview
>Press, 1996.
>
>Violence and Terror in the Media: An Annotated Bibliography. With Nancy
>Signorielli. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988.
>
>Papers, reports, articles, chapters
>
>"Stories of Violence and the Public Interest." In Kees Brants, Joke Hermes
>and Liesbet van Zoonen (Eds.) The Media in Question; Popular Cultures and
>Public Interests. London: Sage, 1998.
>
>"TV Violence and What to Do About It." Nieman Reports, Fall 1996, pp. 10-12.
>
>"Alcohol in American Culture." In Susan E Martin, (ed.) Alcohol and the
>Mass Media: Issues, Approaches and Research Directions. National Institute
>on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, U.S. Public Health Service, Washington,
>D.C., 1995.
>
>"Television Violence: The Power and the Peril." In Gail Dines and Jean M.
>Humez (eds.) Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Text-Reader.
>Sage Publications, Inc.: 1995. French translation ("Pouvoir at Danger de
>la Violence Televisee") in Les Cahiers de la Securite Interieure, Paris,
>No. 20,2, 1995.
>
>"The Politics of Media Violence: Some Reflections." In Mass Communication
>Research: On Problems and Policies. Cees Hamelink and Olga Linne (Eds.)

>Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1993.

>

>"Violence and Drugs on Television; the Cultural Environment Approach to
>Prevention." A research report to the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention,
>U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services,
>Washington, D.C., 1993.

>

>"Stories That Hurt: Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Mass Media." In
>Youth and Drugs: Society's Mixed Messages. OSAP Prevention Monograph-6,
>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 1990.

>"Violence and Terror in the Mass Media," Reports and Papers in Mass
>Communication, No. 102. Paris: Unesco, 1988.

>

>"Health and Medicine on Television." (With Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and
>Nancy Signorielli). The New England Journal of Medicine, October 8, 1981.

George Gerbner

Bell Atlantic Professor of Telecommunication

Temple University, Philadelphia. Tel/fax 610 642 3061

E-mail:ggerbner@nimbus.temple.edu