

STUDIES IN MASS COMMUNICATION

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# EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF MASS CULTURE

• GEORGE GERBNER

*Here is a perceptive analysis of the challenge of our present popular culture to education and of issues that might be studied in a university course on the social aspects of mass communication. George Gerbner is associate professor in the Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois.*

**F**OR ABOUT the last 10 years, the study of mass communications and popular culture has come to be regarded increasingly as an educational responsibility. Attempts to meet this responsibility resulted in some useful publications. However, they made few inroads into the curriculum, and have scarcely been reflected in the preparation of teachers.

Perhaps the time is ripe to ask in what ways the educational response to the challenge of mass culture might bear fruit in the classroom. Our purpose is to pose this question by sketching the background of educational and scholarly attention, and by describing the assumptions, aims, and ideas guiding one approach to the study of the social aspects of mass communications.

## BACKGROUND OF ATTENTION

The lessons of two world wars and the history of the 1930's impressed us with the power of "propaganda." More rigorous study and sober reflection showed, however, that the most potent sources of influence stem from the popular cultural context of a time and place rather than from single messages, campaigns, or personalities.

The myth of one man's "power to mold men's minds" gave way to the conception of a more complex, subtle, and more pervasive role of mass communications and the popular arts in human life.

In that broadened context we attempted to sharpen and deepen our understanding of the cultural sources of our consciousness and actions. "Know thy communications to know thyself," a modern Socrates would have said, probably adding that "the unexamined culture is not worth living in."

Three-fourths of 100 basic references on research in mass communications compiled by Wilbur Schramm (9) were published since the end of World War II; half of them between 1948 and 1951. It was in that period that Gilbert Seldes proposed "a revaluation of the popular arts in terms of physics rather than aesthetics, in terms of social effects rather than private pleasure" (10). And it was then that Dallas W. Smythe (12) called attention to the

... ironic paradox that our teaching is so heavily—and worthily—weighted with critical evaluation of literature and drama which occupy a minuscule part of our population's attention, while the real 'literature' and 'drama' of our culture, as measured by the proportions of our resources which go into them, consists almost entirely of the content of radio, movies, magazines, newspapers—and now television. Is the educational objective for 'complete living' being served? Whose 'complete living' is to be attained: that of the teachers, or of the students?

Since that time "mass culture has reached into the Academy both by its pervasive influence and as a subject of serious study," Bernard Rosenberg observed in the recent successful compendium on *Mass Culture; The Popular Arts in America* (8). *Mass Culture* and its companion volume *Mass Leisure* (6) are themselves part of this trend. Gilbert Seldes writing in the *Saturday Review* now calls for its extension all the way to the kindergarten (11).

The new type of academic attention devoted to mass-produced culture has also been noted in show business. The entertainment trade journal *Variety* devoted most of page 2 of its January 15, 1958, issue to the voices of the Academy. It cited Patrick D. Hazard of the University of Pennsylvania suggesting that "the college teacher is an important factor in the new equation of show biz . . ." And it observed with William D. Boutwell, director of Teenage Book Club: "If education is a process of preparing young people to do what they are likely to do anyway, isn't it the duty of the schools to teach the coming generation how to be masters, not slaves, of the mass media?" . . .

### THE COURSE OF A JOURNEY

Parents of youngsters often wondered how they spent their time "before children." Today they are equally apt to ask, "What did we do before television?" Their children hardly believe there even *was* such a time.

Television is only the latest of a snowballing series of cultural developments. The older discontinuity of cultural experience between first and second generation Americans may give way to a new and even more pervasive gulf between successive generations. The peer group and popular culture appear to gain importance in the primary context of socialization. The mass media of communications emerge as ever more authoritative socializing agencies.

As a nation we now devote more time to the consumption of mass-produced communications than to paid work, or play, or anything except sleep (and the "late show" is cutting into that, too). Television alone, only 10 years old as a mass medium, now demands one-fifth of the average person's waking life. Comic books, 20 years old, can sell 1 billion copies a year at a cost of 100 million dollars—four times the budget of all public libraries, and more than the cost of the entire book supply for both primary and secondary schools. Movies, developed within a lifetime, reach 50 million people who still go to theatres each week, the same number who stay home and watch them on TV *each night*—a total of 400 million a week. Almost one-tenth of national income is invested in "leisure."

How do we manage that investment? What are the returns? What are the patterns, uses, and consequences of the mass-produced daydreams we share in common? What is the meaning of growing up, learning, and living in the new American culture?

These questions launch us on a curious journey. It is more exploration and discovery than "coverage" of a well-charted academic preserve. It brings together subjects traditionally separated. It touches closely upon some matters that have transformed the quality of life within a generation, yet have almost come to be taken for granted.

The main burden of the journey consists of ideas, reasons for holding them, and evidence supporting them. Activities include readings, discussions, demonstrations, and a group project involving joint study of a single subject such as science fiction, the Western, the image of Asia, or the portrayal of adolescents in the mass media. Individual student projects provide opportunities for probes in other directions.

The student does not require (nor should he expect to acquire) specialized skills in the manipulation of equipment, materials, or people. He will not prepare himself to "elevate" his tastes by criteria that never worked in the past, or to perform professional services required under conditions of employment in mass communications. He will be asked, rather, to *examine* conditions, to develop a way of *observing* circumstances of cultural mass production and consumption. This, we hope, will help him derive some insight into certain aspects of information, entertainment, and persuasion, and lead him to consider the formation of tastes, values, standards, and ways of professional conduct. Consideration of the role and functions of cultural industry in the life of a society might also enable him to speculate about what kinds of cultural aims can be fulfilled under what kinds of conditions.

We try to go beyond superficial or snob-classifications, such as hard cover vs. soft, slick vs. pulp, classical vs. popular, A vs. B movie, spectacular vs. daytime serial, and so on, on the assumption that any representation of life to which millions expose themselves deserves serious study.

Respect for time, skills, energies, and lives spent in creating and consuming cultural products of all sorts should mean two things: On one hand, it should help us avoid the pose of sitting in judgment over people; on the other hand, it should encourage scrutiny of the circumstances of cultural creation and consumption undaunted by critical acclaim, popular clamor, or opprobrium: it should point the way to examination of sources, production, content, and social implications in terms of human values and uses.

The outcome of the journey can, perhaps, be measured most meaningfully in terms of progress toward three types of self-direction: (a) consumer self-direction—making choices in the light of considered interests and values; (b) professional self-direction—making choices in the light of the responsibility of the professional or producer in popular culture for providing the choices for the consumer; (c) self-direction as a citizen—making choices in the management and control of social institutions, in the creation of the conditions upon which the choices of both consumer and professional or producer depend.

Now for a descriptive outline of the journey itself. In a sentence, the course is designed to help develop ways of observing the mass media as social institutions producing images of man, life, and the world, and to reflect on the uses we make of them.

This nutshell description identifies four phases of the course. The first has to do with the development of observing "familiar" things in ways different from casual, everyday observations. The second involves the observation of the mass media of communications as social institutions and of popular culture as a function of society and of human development. The third phase of the course deals with that body of representations and points of view which provides the cultural time-space context and value orientation of behavior we consider characteristically human. The fourth phase explores the uses we make of our investment in "leisure time" and the range of alternatives that meet the criteria of democratic society.

Let us take a passing glance at each of these phases and note some of the problems and considerations that mark the course of the journey.

*"To develop ways of observing . . ."*

Analysis is acute observation from consciously varied points of view. It begins with awareness of one's position in relation to the thing observed, and goes on to search for the most valid point of view from which it can be observed to yield insight into its qualities and functions.

Assumptions, context, point of view, are key concepts in the discussion of observation and perception. They are involved in the ways we look at things, name things, use things; and, consequently, they are involved in the ways in which we *represent* things.

The analysis of communications is, therefore, compounded ob-

servation: In looking at a picture, for example, we do not merely observe a "thing"; we observe an observation.

What's in a picture? A "thing" viewed from a "built-in" point of view, in a certain context, and probably on the basis of some implicit assumptions about the nature of the object or event portrayed. For example, the angle of the camera and the position of the lights used to take a photograph (and used to convey, implicitly, a point of view) are just as much objective elements of the picture as is the "thing" portrayed. If we are unaware of the fact that we are observing the picture *through the eye of a camera* (or of an artist), we have lost some of our own power of observation; we fall in, unwittingly, with a "given" point of view.

Communication thus functions in several dimensions and on several levels. The terms of perception (the way people, life, and the world are "looked at") become built-in attributes of the way people, life, and the world are depicted through communication.

Each medium has its own terms of "perception" and system of observation. This is partly defined by the technical nature of the medium and partly by the social and institutional structure of the enterprise. The mass media of communications are not merely "windows" to a world of reality and dreams; they are active creators of synthetic images and observers of both reality and dreams from points of view, contexts, and assumptions historically structured, socially and technologically determined. To become analytical observers of these communications, and of the patterns of culture they weave, we need to study the position of the mass media in society, and the points of view their position imparts to their messages. Then we need to define and validate the position from which *we* observe their observations.

*"The mass media as social institutions . . ."*

The dreams of sleep are individual and private in any society. But the popular daydreams of our industrial culture are privately mass-produced for a public market of shared desires. How did this arrangement come about? What are the communication requirements of mass production and the production requirements of mass communication? Are the media private business or public art?

Cultural (or any other) industry exists to produce at a profit. Regardless of the nature or quality of the product, if this bedrock requirement is not met, the enterprise goes out of business and investment goes elsewhere to seek returns. In the nature of commercial "free" enterprise, this is within the realm of private deci-

sions. Any investor, corporation, large or small business, may decide to produce or underwrite the production of almost any cultural product. This right is protected under the assumption (born of an age before mass communications) that spontaneous, private competition in the marketplace is the best way to assure cultural diversity, the availability of all points of view, and freedom of speech essential for self-government.

By entering the cultural marketplace, the entrepreneur may or may not be governed by, or even concerned with, the original reasoning that protects his access to the facilities which now dominate that market. But he must be concerned, and governed, by another set of considerations. He has acquired a stake in the *popularity* of his product. He has risked his capital on the assumption that a certain market is large enough, or can be *made* large enough, to make mass production of his commodity profitable.

So far this is still a private matter.

Now there is no formula for popularity, but neither is popularity entirely accidental when the stakes are high. "At BBDO there is no room for guesswork in planning the TV special," announced the giant advertising agency in a trade paper (1). And it went on to explain:

Everything begins with a marketing concept: a one-cent sale, a line introduction, a seasonal reason, a corporate profile to be etched indelibly in the public mind. This is the backbone of the event.

Next comes selection of the right property. . . . Then there's the clearance of the right time spot. . . . Trade and consumer campaigns must be coordinated. . . . Product and program promotion must be tied together. . . .

While this is all going on, one of the largest staffs of trained TV-research people helps us chart the show's course—they pre-test copy, analyze results and set ground rules for delivery of the next special.

The strategy of private enterprise mass production is geared to careful assessment, cultivation, and exploitation of marketable desires. A detachment of intelligence specialists probes public fancy; reconnaissance brings in the sales charts, cost-per-thousand figures, consumption statistics; corporate headquarters issues a series of battle orders; an army of popularity engineers prepares compelling messages designed to make the public want what it will get. Then vivid images of life roll out of the "dream factories," produced to exacting specifications to "give the public what it wants." These are the images and messages through which millions see, and judge, and live in the broader human context. They affect the tone of living and the pattern of society. They cater to an in-

satiable search for imaginative and informative representations of the human condition, for dreams that heal and restore, soothe and thrill, and bind men together across vast distances of space and time. They inevitably, and often unwittingly, help infuse life with direction, meaning, value.

*This is a public matter.*

*"Producing images of man, life, and the world . . ."*

At the private end of the transaction we observe problems of media ownership, control, and support, and we note market research gathering information about audiences and conditions of sale. At the public end we view social functions and controls and consider critical research inquiring into content. Then we see the two intertwined in the eyes of the beholder. We find the conditions of sale implicit in the content and quality of the dreams.

Beneath the overt forms of theme, plot characterization, reporting, description, even of light repartee, there are the covert elements of time, context, assumptions, point of view. In massive industrial enterprises such as the major communications media these elements are likely to be social rather than individual. A creator of mass cultural products who only wants to "express himself," a prominent screenwriter commented, "better go off to some other field where millions of dollars are not riding on his personal aspirations" (13).

Social content of media products becomes more discernible when large systems of output are studied and compared. Mass is part of the energy equation, and so is velocity. The atmospheric pressure of popular culture, as of gases, does not depend on the behavior of a single molecule. The laws of cultural dynamics, whatever they might be, will emerge from careful observations of the ways in which industrial and market conditions and the corporate positions of cultural enterprises—including their relationships to investors, agencies, sponsors, and their consequent approaches to audiences, to society, and to the world as a whole—implicitly shape the assumptions, contexts, and points of view imbedded in mass media products.

These covert elements of content are the "hidden messages" of popular culture—pervasive, subtle, yet obvious upon scrutiny. They spring from historical relationships and concrete circumstances of mass production. They are reflected in an ideological undertow expressed often through patterns of selection, omission, juxtaposi-

tion, through just the way things are looked at. Unwitting commitments to values, and to ways of perceiving, emerge from conditions of cultural production and consumption; they affect our assumptions about heroes and villains, love and sex, classes and professions, youth and old age, cooperation and conflict, past and future, ends and means. From these assumptions spring more mass-produced images of man, life, and the world.

*"And to reflect on the uses we make of them."*

One way to measure the usefulness of a civilization is to trace the time it allows, and the provisions it makes, for activities that relate directly to a diversity of human aspirations.

Judged by the criterion of time, ours has been a useful civilization. The historic compromise between time committed to necessary labor on behalf of a ruler, an employer, or a society, and time spent on behalf of one's chosen aims, seems to be rapidly changing. But the change is a perplexing one.

Our industrial order was once attacked for subjecting man to wage-slavery. It is now charged with operating a corporate "welfare state," exploiting the leisure-time markets it has brought into being, leaving little choice for individual self-direction between the dire alternatives of surfeit and boredom.

The building of markets *has* been among the prominent social uses of popular culture. Mass production requires mass markets. Mass markets are gained through mass audiences. Mass media of communication build mass audiences and, in the jargon of the trade, "deliver" them to mass producers through their ability to inspire and cultivate consumer desires for all types of goods and services.

But when consumer desires (or pocketbooks) appear to be drained, we find it difficult to flex our productive muscles to capacity except in war or in preparation for war. And we find it equally difficult to define creative tasks for the popular-culture arm of our industrial system.

So we use much of the leisure time gained through mass production to preach the gospel of more consumption right up to (and beyond) the limits of our ability to buy, use, or endure. And we tailor an increasing share of our popular cultural resources to the demands of salability, often irrelevant to creative purpose. This makes our machines more productive and our investments more profitable. To what extent, in what ways, and under what conditions can it also make *lives* more productive, and "leisure" time more creative?

"Pure entertainment" and "art for art's sake" are disguised merchandising slogans we use to evade examination of the human significance of what we want to sell, or buy. The uses of a pill are not disclosed in the taste of its sugar coating. The functions of cultural products are not revealed in the likes and dislikes that determine our selection from what is available. Our choices have far-reaching consequences beyond those registered at the box office or on the cash register. Study of these uses and consequences touches upon the terms of our own self-direction, and upon some hidden paradoxes that blur our vision of the good life.

Not least among the paradoxes confronting "people of abundance" "killing time" in the "affluent society" is the shadow of *want*, rather than boredom or surfeit, in our own midst and around the world. Some government reports speak of as many as 1 out of every 5 American families living in stubborn pockets of permanent poverty. Poor people, poor customers, are the forgotten people of our public arts. Out of sight in the selective mirror of the mass media, hidden from public consciousness, without power and without a voice, they are overlooked when the uses of popular culture are discussed.

All in all, the majority of human lives around the world are still spent in brutal labor not only machines but animals could do as well, if not better. Saving rather than spending, boosting production to build the foundations of a more human existence rather than titillating lethargic consumers—these are the world-wide material and cultural imperatives of our age.

The means that glut us (and at what price?) could also make human want obsolete. The alternatives we present thus involve the fate of others. But never "only" of the "others"; the American "way of life" as we know it today rests on the active (or at least passive) cooperation of half the world's peoples. Our decisions cannot long conflict with the needs and aspirations of the "others" without destroying the bases of any assumed benefits to us. The morality and usefulness of the alternatives we present, and of the decisions we make, can thus scarcely be shrugged off as a purely private matter of individual whim, taste, or enterprise.

Nor is that all of the paradoxes. The notion of self-government was predicated upon the existence of autonomous publics making conscious decisions in a cultural context of vigorous social criticism. This freedom and diversity was to be subject to no law, but guaranteed by law. The rise of cultural mass production, creating audi-

ences, subjecting tastes, views, and desires to the laws of markets, and inherently tending toward the standardized and the safe rather than the diversified or critical, creates new problems in the theory and practice of self-government.

Considered in such a perspective, the value and uses of time, resources, and energies invested in mass communications take on new dimensions. Are thirsts exploited or quenched? Are sensibilities dulled or sharpened? Are vital resources spent in anxious, unreasoning drift, or invested in relevant exploration? Are the choices we make based on the real alternatives of our time presented in a representative context of all pertinent evidence? By what criteria and by what methods do we judge the market value of leisure time and the survival value of popular culture?

\* \* \*

The journey ends, as it began, with a sense of discovering questions rather than of "covering" the answers. The issues explored do not require, or even permit, easy "solutions" arrived at in a classroom. They are permanent problems of personal judgment, professional conduct, communications research, social theory, and national policy. They have emerged as continuing responsibilities and challenge educational planning as the study of English or citizenship or science does. We have tried to indicate one possible response and to suggest that perhaps the time is ripe for more systematic planning. A good way to begin might be a series of experimental teachers workshops. The initiative could come from a number of fields. There are good reasons of past interest, current concern, and future professional orientation to suppose that it might come from those involved in the study and teaching of communications problems in education.

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All things move but only humans act. The setting that cultivates the capacity for action is an environment of symbols -- things that signify something else -- in which behavior takes on human meaning. Accidental mold can grow on any slimy surface, but the culture that makes action possible is different from that which supports other growth. Acting like humans can be learned only in a culture whose essence is a context of symbols patterned in functional ways by communities that exist through communication.

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Meaning is to the brain what breathing is to the lungs: an exchange with an element of the environment common -- and vital -- to all humans. The ways in which people reflect on things and relate to one another are rooted in the human ability to compose images, produce messages and weave complex systems of symbols. A change in these processes transforms the nature of human affairs. We are in the midst of such a transformation. It stems from the mass production of symbols and messages, which represents a revolution in information and popular culture. Of all the changes in what has come to be called the quality of life, none has had a larger direct impact on human consciousness and social behavior than the discharge of technologically mediated mass produced communications into the mainstream of the common symbolic environment.

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Selectivity and control, inherent in any communication, dominate the mass-communication process. The right to acculturate a nation and to shape the public agenda has never been open to all; it is one of the most carefully guarded powers in any society. The real question is not whether the organs of mass communication are free but rather: By whom, how, for what purposes and with what consequences are the inevitable controls exercised?

Not long ago, the story goes, a sealed bottle drifted onto the shore. There was an unfinished manuscript inside the bottle. The manuscript turned out to be a report from one of our researchers sent to survey the cultural habits, program preferences, and market potentials of a far-away country. The people of this country appeared to be the proud possessors of a flourishing culture much like our own with but one difference: they practiced cannibalism.

This combination of circumstances might have accounted for the fact that their most popular program was called "People are Yummy." Their all-time best-seller was a book entitled How to Serve Your Fellow Men.

The inhabitants of this thriving market were reported puzzled to hear that some other countries have so little regard for people that they would not consider eating them, no matter how well prepared. It was noted with some astonishment that nations considering themselves democratic did not even permit free and open discussion on the subject.

They said (according to the report), that their system of chefs and balances was obviously the only truly pluralistic political system. Why, some of our best friends -- said conservatives and radicals alike -- believe in exactly opposite methods of preparation. So we clash, and we argue, and we carefully digest the matter. We let our party recipes compete for popular flavor. And we let the potato chips fall where they may -- through free elections, of course. Our standard of living is high. Supply and demand are never far out of balance. Hunger, needless to say, is unknown in the land. Few are so misguided as to think of subverting this happy order of things.

This is where the manuscript breaks off. We assume that its author has been absorbed into the attractive cultural perspective which tends to consume its consumers.

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The consumer's choice is to select the method by which he is prepared for the market. "To buy or not to buy" is a question that impales him on the horns of the consumer's dilemma. If he buys, he is researched, rated, branded, processed, bought or bartered at every turn. If he resists or rebels, there is a market for expensively frayed attire and for revolution in paperback; sooner or later he, too, serves the "common good."

This is the double bind of modern mass cultures, the paradox to which we shall keep returning. Until relatively recently people could not be considered responsible for such things because the control worked one way: you were born into a culture and had little or no effect on it. The symbolic environment that nurtured one generation was pretty much the same as that which shaped the next. But that has changed. Centralized collective control over increasingly large and critical portions of the common symbolic environment has brought with it increasing responsibility for what we discharge into it.

### The first million years

The simplest organisms take energy from their immediate surroundings. They need little information except what is contained in a fixed hereditary code. Higher organisms have specialized senses to receive information and complex brains to process and store it. They can reach out, search a larger area, pick up signals from a distance, accumulate impressions over a period of time, relate to one another, assume different roles and engage in behavior based on a sharing of learned significance. Only man, however, acts primarily in terms of symbol systems.

The means of mass communication are not surveyors but organizers of real. They weave much of the new symbolic fabric in which behavior becomes humanly meaningful action. Their function is not to purvey elite intelligence or to transmit the "Cultural Heritage" but to reveal and rehearse symbolic patterns that cultivate the perspectives of a social order.

The institutions of mass communication are not just extensions or traditional publishing, the theater, and other means of utilitarian or aesthetically oriented communication activities. Their historical continuities are not so much with trade reports or high art or classical literature as with the common myths, legends, rituals, and cults of all times. Television, for example, is not even a new medium but it encompasses and organizes all other media and spreads a pattern of knowledge and values to all members of a nation or a tribe. It is a new religion. But it is a religion beyond the dreams of emperors and priests because its ministrations are subsidized by a levy on the price of all goods and are invited to entertain every home in the land.

Just as knowledge can be said to confer power so power can generate and use knowledge for its own ends. In a centralized mass-production structure of the kind characterizing modern communication, "freedom" is the right of managers to decide what alternatives the public has a "right to know" and in what light. The ultimate question then becomes whether further enlightenment can liberate men and women from the shackles of mind and body that still oppress them or whether only liberation from those shackles can lead to further enlightenment. It is the question of the perplexing relationship between communication, action and culture, and the responsibilities pertaining to it.

Meanings are the product of an exchange between the brain and the symbolic environment, which is to the brain what air is to the lungs. The exchange is the reason one can say that although all organisms behave, only humans can act. Action is behavior that derives its distinctively human meaning from the symbolic context in which it is embedded or to which it is related.

The exchange by means of the symbolic environment is what I define as communication. It is interaction through messages. Even when people interact face to face, they usually do it partly or wholly through the patterned exchange of messages. By messages I mean formally coded symbolic or representational patterns of some shared significance in a culture. Indeed, culture itself can be regarded as a system in which messages cultivate and regulate the relations between people. In one form or another such processes appear in all types of life and in all social systems, but it is in human culture and in the conduct of human life and society that communication plays its most complex and distinctive part.

Only humans produce complex symbol systems in endless varieties of novel combinations. Symbols and images, rather than mainly the threats and gratifications of the moment, animate human thought and imagination. The sharing of messages makes it possible to encompass, perpetuate, and utilize experience beyond the scope of one's activity.

Even the most primitive peoples have employed shapes and images for symbolic and representational purposes and have erected imposing symbolic structures of religion, statecraft and play. Through communication they have performed elaborate rituals, observed intricate kinship systems and conducted the affairs of the tribe or nation. Today systems of messages that can be

recorded and widely transported enable man to bridge vast reaches of space and time and to cultivate values of collective survival. They also facilitate spasms of mass destruction, a distinctively human trait. How did this come about?

Man's first million years ended an era of perhaps 200 times that long during which a mild climate covered long stretches from the Arctic Circle through what is now the Sahara desert to the Antarctic. Arboreal existence in lush forests freed the forward limbs of one group of mammals from having to carry the burden of the body and shaped them into strong, sure, delicate instruments. A subsequent descent to the ground further enabled the forearm to explore, create and manipulate. Much of human evolution is compressed in the word "comprehend": it stems from the expression "grasp with the forehand." Exceptionally deft manipulation required an exceptionally large and complex control system--the brain. The ability to grasp with the hand and with the mind literally developed "hand-in-hand."

The last million years robbed pre-humans of their "paradise." Invasions of glaciers, great floods, and geologic convulsions scattered the roving bands into all parts of the globe. The featherless and furless but warm-blooded hominoids were hard-pressed to develop their unique resources of collaboration and community through communication.

Only the hominoid brain could regulate the body, respond to the immediate environment, and still retain the capacity and stability to hold an image long enough to reflect on it. This ability to integrate images into frameworks of symbolic knowledge and to make them available in novel combinations was the prerequisite for human consciousness and communication. In its broadest "humanizing" sense, communication, then, is a source and extension of imagination in forms that can be learned and shared. It is the production, perception, and grasp of messages bearing man's notion of what is, what is important, what is right, and what goes with what.

The Paleolithic hunters who survived the last glaciation appeared to have succeeded in building the cultural foundations on which civilization was to be built: the naming of things, visual representation, coherent organization of messages, the ability to discuss, plan, instruct, celebrate, reflect upon and pass on accumulating lore and imagery.

Specialized occupations such as weaving and pottery required enlarged vocabularies. The change from food-gathering and hunting to food-raising and cultivation brought about a more settled life, greater social stratification, surpluses (and wars over them), and thus civilization.\*

Speech, tool-making, singing and designing are related activities. Rhythm is a system of measurement and an aid in marching, chopping, chipping, and performing many repetitive tasks. Design is part of weaving, tooling,

\* The word civilization comes from the Latin "civis," meaning city. The civility of civilian citizens is often compared to the savagery (from the Latin for dweller of the forest), or plain boorishness (from the Anglo-Saxon word for peasant), or outright villainy (from Latin "villa," meaning farm) of their rustic neighbors ("neigh boor" meaning the nearby peasant). Crowds ("polis" in Greek) can be cosmopolitan (from the Greek "cosmos," meaning worldly), can gather in the metropolis (mother of cities, capital, seat of a bishop, in Greek), can dabble in politics, and must be policed.

Such proliferation of related words marks the rise of civilized and civic (i.e. citified) polity and policy (other related words meaning government and planned conduct, but also wisdom, as well as record as in "insurance policy.")

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weaponry, basketry, and pottery. The craftsman can use his skills and implement to give concrete shape and form to what animates his mind, and the imagination of his tribe. The flowering of the visual and plastic arts among the late Paleolithic people (also versed in ceremonial dancing and the verbal arts of epic lore and poetic litany) left its mark on the caves of Europe and the rocks of Africa and the Arctic, and scattered its figurines and ornaments in the graves and campsites found in many parts of the world.

For a long time the messages and images which composed the fabric of popular culture were largely woven by tribe and village out of the same homespun yarn of everyday experience which also gave rise to folkways of rearing, teaching, preaching and ruling. The process was interpersonal. It was slow-moving and fixed as long as the local and limited circumstances which governed it were fixed.

It was perpetuated via the oral tradition. This was adjustable to time, place, circumstance, and function, yet it could span a century in one telling of a tale heard from one's grandfather and told to one's grandchild. The common culture in which Homo Sapiens learned to think and act human was like the air in which a bird learns to fly.

Slowly things began to change. More and more people became increasingly aware of cultural influences not of their own tribe or village. It became apparent that the common culture was not an act of God or nature but a man-made system of messages and images, that the system itself cultivated ways of ruling, rearing, teaching and preaching.

## The slow revolution

Rulers and priests accumulated private property which needed branding, marking, and counting. The builders and keepers of temple-observatories had to record the movement of the heavens to predict the rhythm of seasons, birth, life, and death -- and thus become "holy." Calendars, seals of property, and precious metals stamped with the mark of trading value -- money -- became the first forms of sign or picture writing. The more schematic and phonetic forms of writing that could be broken down into interchangeable parts and combined into novel patterns had to await a new and different style of life.

It took the new civilization about 3,000 years to spread from the East to Western Europe. Until the latest stage in the history of communication -- the industrial revolution in the production of messages -- writing served to mostly supplement the dominantly oral mode of social communication. Records and books laboriously inscribed and jealously guarded embalmed tradition, even if they made it somewhat more transportable. An Egyptian or Babylonian "publisher" would extol his wares not as a "new and revised edition" but as a faithful copy of a fabulously old and therefore authoritative text.

Cheap parchment replaced rare papyrus. Aristotle noted the change from oral instruction to the habit of reading. The Hellenistic empire established great libraries to offset the influence of the Egyptian priesthood. Poetry became more cosmopolitan, prose and drama addressed to a more sophisticated and literate city public. The social and technological ferment gathered momentum through such inventions of the later Middle Ages as glass and candle (making reading indoors and after working hours possible), new machinery, and the printing press. The principal change in the history of human

consciousness came when the making of the symbolic environment moved out of the handicraft stage and became a standardized, rationalized, centrally planned and corporately conducted manufacturing process. That change related social structure and industrial organization to the mass production of symbols and thus directly to the process of humanization.

Francis Bacon listed three "inventions unknown to the ancients": the compass, gunpowder, and movable type. Printing, the first technology of mass-production, had ushered in a revolution that "changed the appearance and state of the whole world," said Bacon, while the other two inventions led to the rise of new empires.

The increasing speed and decreasing unit-cost of printing from movable type made production for an enlarged market commercially attractive. The "wisdom" of the priest, the king, the scholar, the lord of the manner, and eventually the entire land-based ruling class and its generation of elders could be challenged when others gained access to the same sources of "wisdom" -- and power.

An abundance of "packaged" knowledge shipped or smuggled through previously impenetrable barriers undermined the hegemony of the church, of feudalism and of abolition of slavery. But not all printed knowledge served liberating ends. The waves of obscurantism that led to popular rejection of the Copernican doctrine and to an epidemic of witch trials have been attributed, at least in part, to publishers who discovered that there was an excellent market for books on magic and witchcraft. Some great humanists had to become their own printers and publishers, often at the risk of their lives, to combat the tide of newly manufactured ignorance.

The development of a new class of readers created a market for romantic literature, sensational newspapers, and consumer products. The intellectual controversy about "mass culture" started in 18th century England, and has been raging since.

The sale of books was combined with the peddling of drugs and nostrums. The growing public of readers and consumers made cultural mass production possible; advertising made it profitable. By 1759 Dr. Samuel Johnson could say that "the trade of advertising is now so near to perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvement," a remark which has not failed to amuse later generations.

Increasing production costs also forced the press to seek new sources of revenue. Advertising subsidy and dependence on a market replaced patronage. Newspapers, always organs of commercial as well as political intelligence, now had to sell and entertain as well as to inform general publics. They became part of the cultural drill introducing all classes into the prevailing and dominant social orientations.

### Conquering time and space

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The conquest of signaling time means speeding a response or compliance at a distance (the Greek word for which is tele); thus it increases effective control over space. Signaling time is, therefore, closely related to power. Its margin holds games, business deals, battles, lives, and empires in its balance.

Rapid signaling at a distance began with hand signs, smoke signals, flags, drumbeats, hornblowing, flashing mirrors and lanterns, cannon shots, beacons, carrier pigeons, and signaling positions (semaphors) of various kinds. Napoleon spanned a thousand miles with a relay of 224 semaphore stations. In the last conflict among distant enemies of the pre-telegraph era, the U.S. Congress declared war in 1812 not knowing that the British had already revoked their offending ban on "neutralist" shipping to French-held Europe. Andrew Jackson's men shot nearly 2,000 British soldiers storming New Orleans, not knowing that the Treaty of Ghent had been signed two weeks earlier.

Men had for centuries sought some magic substance that could speed signals through the air. In his Natural Magick, published in 1553, Battista Porta described a kind of lodestone that, when used in two compasses, would make the needle of one "obey" the movements of the other as if by the distant command of a mysterious force. The search for the right kind of lodestone ended with the invention of electric generators and the discovery of electrical magnetism and radiation, all within six decades of the twentieth century.

The first telegraph built in 1844 on a government grant tapped out Morse's historic message: "What hath God wrought?" Soon telegraph and then telephone wires spanned continents, sped traffic, and coordinated the movements of businessmen and armies.

Radio waves had been the subject of intense speculation since Hertz demonstrated that they could pass through solid objects. Marconi used his understanding of Hertzian waves and the Morse code to send the first wireless message in 1895. Popov reported a similar experiment in the same year. Fessenden, a Canadian who had worked for Edison, first transmitted the human voice by radio in 1906. Lee de Forest invented an improved vacuum tube which made "wireless telephony" a sensation. When a Westinghouse researcher named Frank Conrad sent out test signals of music and his own patter (what would later be called a disc jockey program), he was impressed by the "audience response" he received. Soon a department store began to advertise the sale of radio receivers for "those who want to tune in to Dr. Conrad's popular broadcasts." Westinghouse stumbled into the future.

While some worked on shrinking time and space others tackled the problem of preserving sound and image. The phonograph was an instant success in the penny arcades. When photographic galleries opened in New York and spread over the country, one didn't have to be rich any more to immortalize one's likeness or send it to the "folks back home." Before the end of the century, nickelodeon peepshows and vaudeville "flickers" thrilled a movie audience endowed with many tongues and, as a contemporary account put it, "below the reach of even the yellow journals."

Recorded image followed signal and sound in instantaneous transmission when, in 1904, the first wirephoto was sent from Munich to Nuremberg. Regular television broadcasts began over the General Electric station in Schenectady in 1928, but television reached its highest development before World War II in Great Britain. After the war it swept the U.S. and Europe, and in less than

30 years it spread to over 60 countries, many of them impoverished and illiterate.

Even lighter and cheaper videotape recorders, telephones equipped to provide sight, sound, and even a permanent record at the push of a button, and cables and cassettes linked to computers capable of retrieving image, sound, and text, closed most technological gaps that fragmented communication since human imagination was first recorded on a cave wall.

Time, space, imagery and motion can now be ordered at will into configurations to serve a given purpose and function. Montaigne could say four centuries ago that "The only good histories are written by those who had command in the events they describe." But today command over the description of events gives a large measure of command over the events themselves. The prize for the dominant description is power in the age we purport to represent.

Margaret Mead has called attention to a new dimension of learning: the lateral transmission to every sentient member of society what has just been discovered, invented, created, manufactured, or marketed. Instead of the slow filtering down process we have the almost simultaneous introduction of ideas and products at all levels of society. The distant and strange becomes familiar and the "new" commonplace. The flow of influence appears lateral because everybody can be exposed to the same currents in the common symbolic environment.

Satellites fly and spy overhead. We are wired together so tightly that a short circuit can fry most of us. A "hot line" is needed to make sure that if humankind seems about to exterminate itself, the deed is purposeful rather than the result of error. When most people can be exposed to the same sources of power at the same time, the shape and pace of history have changed.

### The mass production of symbols -- and publics

Long ago, the development of writing and the invention of portable records shifted control over knowledge and social power from tribal priests, oracles, story-tellers and other oral myth-makers to the inscribers and keepers of records. The Book reigned supreme as long as it was rare, old, and precious, and required the interpretation of a literate ministry of scribes and priests.

Printing, the first mass production process, sped ideas and commands to all who could read. The rise of literacy which the scribes and priests opposed broke their monopoly and spread a variety of images and messages to far-flung communities that never before shared symbols in common. This prepared the ground for the mobility of ideas necessary to speed the movement of people from the land into cities and factories. Industrial culture requires cultural industry to uproot people from ancient symbolic moorings and rivet them to standardized imagery of universal reach, mythic power, interchangeable parts, and instant gratifications.

Institutional developments in mass communication have not only extended to human ability to exchange messages but have transformed the common symbolic environment and are continuing to alter it. The Scottish patriot Andrew Fletcher once said: "If a man were permitted to write all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of the nation." The mass production of all the ballads is at the heart of the cultural transformation now in progress. The ballads of an age are powerful myths depicting its visions of the invisible forces of life, society and the universe. They are blends of fact and fiction designed to reveal how things are or ought to be. They compel attention for their own sake. They inform as they entertain. They make entertainment-- the celebration of conventional morality-- the only collective drill in which most members of a culture engage with pleasure. Today's popular entertainment in news, drama and fiction has become the universal source of public acculturation.

The significance of mass communication does not stem only from the numbers of people involved. Large groups of people were reached by other forms of communication long before the advent of the modern forms. The modern concept of masses is groups so large and dispersed that only technologically based production and distribution can reach them with the same message in a short period of time. The significance of the mass media therefore lies in their ability to mass-produce messages that create mass publics: heterogeneous social aggregates that never meet face to face and may have nothing in common except the messages they share. The biggest of the mass media form the only common bond among all the groups in an otherwise fragmented society. As an official of a broadcast network said recently, television is "the only mass entertainment and information medium that does not disfranchise the rural and urban poor." They are therefore the first poor people in history who share much of the culture of the rich, a function that only the church served in earlier times. Modern mass communication encompasses and extends all previous public-making processes, just as the church did in medieval times. In fact, the industrialization of symbol-production and publication signals the rise of the new universal corporate religion of modern times, entering into the same range of uneasy relationships with the state as did church at the height of its powers. Its power lies in its authority over the creation of publics in society.

"Public making" in mass-produced cultures is also not only a question of numbers. Private knowledge whispered to thousands is still private knowledge. Knowledge transmitted with full understanding that it is being shared with millions, like the weather, is public knowledge; it can become a part of the common symbolic environment and create a basis for collective thought and action among anonymous and distant people. The process by which private knowledge is transformed into public knowledge is, of course, the process of publicity and publication.

Publication as a general social process (including all forms of mass communications) is the creation of shared ways of selecting and viewing events and aspects of life. Mass production and distribution of message systems transforms selected private perspectives into broad public perspectives, and brings mass publics into existence. These publics are maintained through continued publication. They are supplied with selections of information and entertainment, fact and fiction, news and fantasy or "escape" material which are considered important or interesting or entertaining and profitable (or all of these) in terms of the perspectives to be cultivated.

Mass "public-making" is the instrument of social cohesion and control over large areas, and heterogeneous populations. The period beginning about 1770 and ending about 1850 witnessed the introduction of printing as the first truly mass-cultural and political instrument of the Western world. It was a period of revolutions and the rise of modern nation states. Film played a part in the establishment of the Russian, and television of the Cuban revolution, especially when the tasks of ideological transformation proved more difficult than those of political and economic takeover. Murals and posters were important weapons of agitation among the multi-lingual masses of Mexico and China. It was significant that the struggle of rival forces contending for leadership in modern China went under the name of "cultural revolution." When rebels

take over the radio station, when election candidates demand "equal time," when advertisers buy space or time in which to deliver their message, what is bought (or fought for) is not just time or space but the chief services of modern media: access to the publics they have created.

Publication is thus the basis of community consciousness among diverse groups of people too numerous or dispersed to interact face to face or in any other personally mediated way. The great significance of publication is its ability to form new bases for collective thought and action quickly, continuously and pervasively across boundaries of time, space and class. That is why the organs of public communication have a special place in all modern states which through legal or economic mechanisms confer the right to control large presses, motion-picture and television studios, and postal and wireless communications<sup>etc.</sup> on government agencies or on private holders of licenses, patents, franchises or properties.

\*

Mass communication is the mass production and distribution of the most broadly shared continuous flow of public messages industrial societies. The media of mass communication are ways of selecting, recording, viewing, and sharing man's notions of what is, what is important, what is right, and what goes with what. Products of technology, corporate organization and mass markets, the mass media are the cultural organs of the industrial order from which they spring. They create and cultivate the perspectives, publics, and common consciousness across boundaries of time, space, and status that is characteristic of modern cultures..

Nearly every stage of human development and type of society from stone age to "post-industrial" still exists today. As communication brings people closer in time and space it exposes glaring inequalities. The closing of the communication gaps reveals widening gaps of life-chances within and among nations. Communication content introduced through new technologies also cultivates those systems of thought and social organization that use the technologies.

As technologies become more complex and costly to build, the systems they sustain become more centralized. Giant private, public, and mixed complexes of international scope, combining all forms of message-transmission and publication dominate world communications. Control and perspective comes from those who already hold a wide lead on the rest of mankind.

A change in the relation of people to the common culture marks the transition from one epoch to another in the way that members of our species are "humanized." The increasing rate of this change and the lengthening span of life mean that different generations living side by side can now be humanized in different ways, so that they live in essentially different (but overlapping) cultural epochs. Distant storytellers mass-produce

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new tales steadily and : tell them to millions of children, parents and grand-parents simultaneously. As a result the traditional process of socialization has been altered. Never before have so many people in so many places shared so much of a common system of messages and images -- and the assumptions about life, society and the world that the system embodies -- while having so little to do with creating the system. In sum, the fabric of popular culture that relates the elements of existence to one another and shapes the common consciousness of what is, what is important, what is right and what is related to what else is now largely a manufactured product.

With the ability of industrial societies to produce the material requirements of subsistence and welfare, the strains and stresses of a social system come to be transferred to the mass-cultural sphere. The struggles for power and privilege, for participation in the conduct of human affairs for more equitable distribution of resources, for all other forms of social justice, and, indeed, for survival in a nuclear age, are increasingly shifting from older arenas and methods of struggle to the newer spheres of attention, control and contest in public communications.

Mass-production and distribution of communications to scattered, heterogeneous national and world communities means potential enrichment of cultural horizon and increased life-chances incredible by all previous standards. But in an age of mass-produced abundance and mounting "surpluses" hunger and ignorance and want are no longer "natural" conditions of man's existence. Similarly, the controlled and selective mass communication of shared fact and value becomes part of a planned and directed manufacturing process.

Man's first million years is a story of survival and change through communication. The process of communication transformed hominoids into Homo Sapiens. The industrial revolution in communications changed the traditional ways in which members of our species learn to act like humans. Command of mass communications gives some groups an ever larger measure of control over society, and challenges conventional theories of self-government.

What kind of a process is communication? The existence of anything can be said to "communicate" its own existence, so we cannot use the term in such a broad sense without blurring the special significance it should have for a workable definition. We should find some ingredient, some special event embedded in this process we are to call communication, that sets it apart from other processes. That special ingredient is the message or statement.

I look out the window and see a tree; that is not communication (at least by the definition I am proposing). But when I look at a picture of that tree or hear someone say "there is a tree outside the window" that is communication simply because the process included a message or statement as an essential ingredient. A technical definition would be: A message or statement is a specialized, formally coded or symbolic or representational cultural event which makes possible inferences about states, relationships, processes not directly observed.\*

The message is what distinguishes communication from other types of social interaction processes, but its exis-

tence alone is not sufficient for communication. Let us consider this article. It is a message or statement. Its code is the English language in one of its printed forms; its content (as we shall argue later) is the relationship of this form to the act of communicating. Yet these words on this paper do not add up to communication. They are only one event in a pattern which involves my thinking and writing and your reading and thinking, among other things.

I just referred to two distinguishable dimensions in the process. My principal relationship to the statement is that of producer; your principal relationship to the statement is that of reader. Let us visualize what we have so far by drawing circles for events (broadly interpreted), lines for relationships, and using the vertical and horizontal for our two dimensions. (See Figure 1.)

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\*For a more detailed statement see Gerbner, G., "On Content Analysis and Critical Research in Mass Communication, Audio-Visual Communication Review, 6:85-108. Spring 1958.

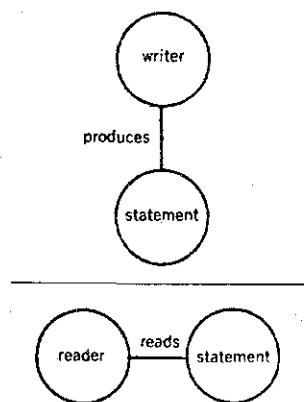


Figure 1

Although the paper and type I use and the paper and type you read are not identical, the "statement" links what I do and what you do in a pattern we call communication.

The processes and consequences of this pattern are different from those of other relationships between people. Most of the differences rest in the nature of the message.

Messages have form as do all other objects and events; but they have content unlike that of other events. This content can be defined only in relation to things not in the message but temporally, culturally, or causally related to the message. These other things may include the state of the source of the message, how the message came about, how the message might be interpreted, and what the message is "about." This last type of relationship--about events and subjects symbolically, or iconically (pictorially) related to the message--requires some elaboration.

If what I write here is "really" only a reflection of my personality, mood and skill (or lack of skill) but has no demonstrable relevance to the communication process as it exists independently of my wishes, then for most practical purposes it is a useless statement (unless you happen to be interested in my personality, skill or wishes, all of which are irrelevant to our present purposes). If this statement is "really" only about me and my use of words, you could only evaluate its expressiveness, its grammar, its pleasing sensory qualities, its efficiency in conveying my thoughts. You could not assess its adequacy or accuracy in the light of independently existing observations and criteria about the process I am trying to describe. If you asked "Why is this so" and I answered "Because I think so" you would have no recourse. A more objective appraisal would be possible only if we specified at the outset that the nature of what we are talking "about" outside of thoughts and wishes is germane to the pattern of communication.

While this might seem an obvious contention, it is an important departure. It is at this point that many conceptions and models of communication, useful as they are for specialized analytical purposes, fail to meet our criteria for a framework in which to study communication. These models lack reference to an event, subject matter, etc., to a segment of reality outside the communicating agents themselves, to the event the communication is "about."

If we omit from our scheme that element of the process which is encoded, symbolized, represented, or "talked about"--no matter how remote it may seem at times--we have limited the range of uses and consequences we can attribute to communication or to its study. Specifically, we have excluded any analysis of statements or of the process in terms other than form, design, structure, subjective associations and the like. We have no way of relating the message, its production, and its uses, to anything existing outside of the mind, the nervous system, the machine, or the institution that comprises the communicating agent or agency. Thus we have no way of explaining, evaluating, or even understanding the message and its functions in the light of independently existing events and points of view; we cannot ask questions about its truth or validity; and we cannot inquire into consequences other than its success in achieving aims and gratifying desires of the communicating parties.

We shall come back later to the significance of being able to establish such relationships and to ask such questions. Now let us apply the argument to our diagram of the communication process. We tried to establish the point that as your attention is directed to the words you are reading, and in them to the events and concepts these words are "about," my attention in writing these words is directed to the events I am trying to describe. That is, the producer

of a statement "reads" (i.e. inquires into) events as the receiver of the statement reads the message. So we have two somewhat similar relationships along the horizontal dimension joined in a pattern through the common element, the statement, as illustrated in Figure 2.

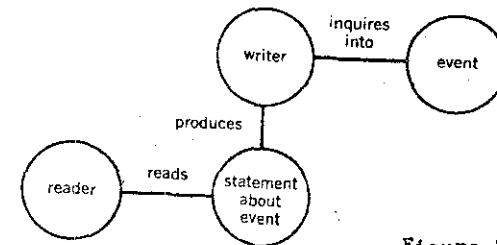


Figure 2

This does not mean that you, the reader, cannot inquire directly into the nature of the events I am describing (although most of our communication involves things not directly observed or observable by most parties in the process). What it does mean is that as you read my statement you observe my way of inquiring into and describing the event. Nor does my statement get directly transferred to your mind; you are observing in your own particular way my way of seeing and describing things. I perceive an event in my own way and produce a statement about it; you perceive my statement about the event in your own way--and react accordingly. Thus we need one more element in our diagram to stand for the particular way in which communi-

cating agents inquire into, perceive, interpret events and statements. Let a smaller circle inside communicating agents stand for events and statements "as perceived," as shown on Figure 3.

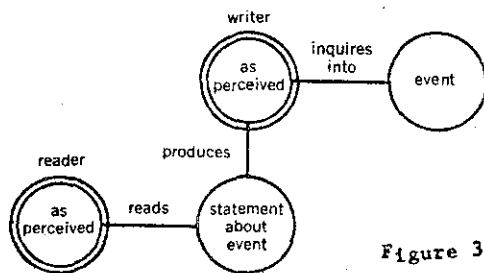


Figure 3

We can, of course, extend the diagram indefinitely.\* We can put in any number of communication sources and receivers, indicate multiple statements, or events, etc. But the basic elements and relationships remain the same. So instead of complicating things at this point, let us reduce our diagram to the minimum necessary to a communication act, and give each part a generalized name. Then let us indicate a few other important aspects that play a part in the process but are not easily visualized.

\*Such extensions and a variety of applications can be found in Gerbner, G., "Toward a General Model of Communication," Audio-Visual Communication Review, 4:171-199, Summer 1956.

We have identified two basic relationships in our scheme. The horizontal line stands for our relationship with the world of events and statements. No single term can do justice to the complexity of this relationship; it involves ways of observation, conception, inquiry; it implies selection in a certain context. Let us call it the perceptual dimension.

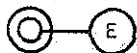
The vertical line represents another type of response to our environment: a reaction that produces a change in the state of affairs outside of ourselves. If the product of this change is a communication event (message, statement), we have the ingredient that distinguishes communication from other processes. Communication events are created when someone uses some means (channels, media, facilities) in some controlled (i.e. non-random) fashion to produce a signal. Let us then call this vertical "production" dimension the means and controls dimension.

We also have three kinds of "events" represented by circles in our diagram: non-communication events, communication events, and communication agents or agencies. Let us define each of these in general terms.

Non-communication events germane to a communication act can be those perceived by communication sources, or those produced by communication receivers. Let these be single circles marked E in our generalized diagram. Thus an event

perceived could be schematized as on Figure 4, and an event produced as on Figure 5.

Figure 4



Event (E) perceived

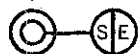
Figure 5



Event (E) produced

Communication events are messages or statements about events. Let us represent them by divided circles marked SE for "statement about event." Below we have diagrammed a message perceived (Figure 6) and a message produced (Figure 7).

Figure 6



Message (S/E) perceived

Figure 7



Message (S/E) produced

Communication agents or agencies are represented by two concentric circles. These stand for sources, receivers, and their terms of "perception." Let us mark communicating agents M (for man or machine--although they can also represent institutions), and indicate the terms of perception by attaching

a prime (') sign to whatever is perceived or attended to as the object of the communication. Thus we have diagrammed in Figure 8 a communication act in which someone ( $M_1$ ) perceives an event and makes a statement about it which is perceived by someone else ( $M_2$ ).

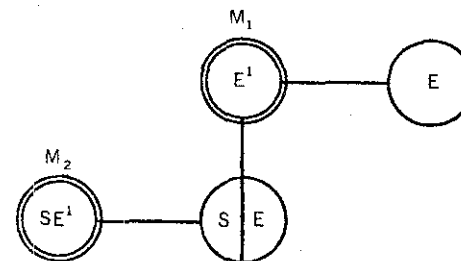


Figure 8

Event (E) is perceived by  $M_1$  as ( $E'$ ); he makes statement (S, which is in turn perceived by  $M_2$  as ( $S/E'$ ))

Awkward as it is, the following verbal "model" of communication has the virtue of noting in a single sentence ten basic elements of the process identified in our discussion:

1. SOMEONE 2. PERCEIVES AN EVENT (OR STATEMENT) 3. AND REACTS IN A  
4. SITUATION AND 5. THROUGH SOME MEANS 6. TO MAKE AVAILABLE MATERIALS  
7. IN SOME FORM AND CONTEXT 8. CONVEYING CONTENT 9. WITH SOME CONSEQUENCE. 10.

In the next section we shall review and describe each of these elements in a more systematic fashion.

### A model

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We shall use a dramatized diagram of a communication act to trace the ten steps of our verbal model. Then we shall review each of the elements in the process, and cite examples of questions that direct attention to each as a variable for study. We shall also develop a truncated form of the basic diagram to indicate the place of most characteristics of communication within its scope.

Assume that someone notices a house burning across the street and shouts "Fire!" to someone else. This act of communication is illustrated on Figure 9 with each aspect of the process indicated on the diagram.\*

Step 1 of our model is illustrated on the diagram as a human head representing someone. This is the M of the generalized diagram, here a communication source.

Next comes the event and its perception. The event, here a burning house, is shown as circle E. Its perception is indicated as Step 2, a line leading horizontally from circle E, the event, to a circle inside M; the inside circle is labeled E'--event E as perceived by M.

In step 3 of our model, M reacts to having perceived the event. (If this reaction involves use of some means to produce a message, it will be represented under Step 5.)

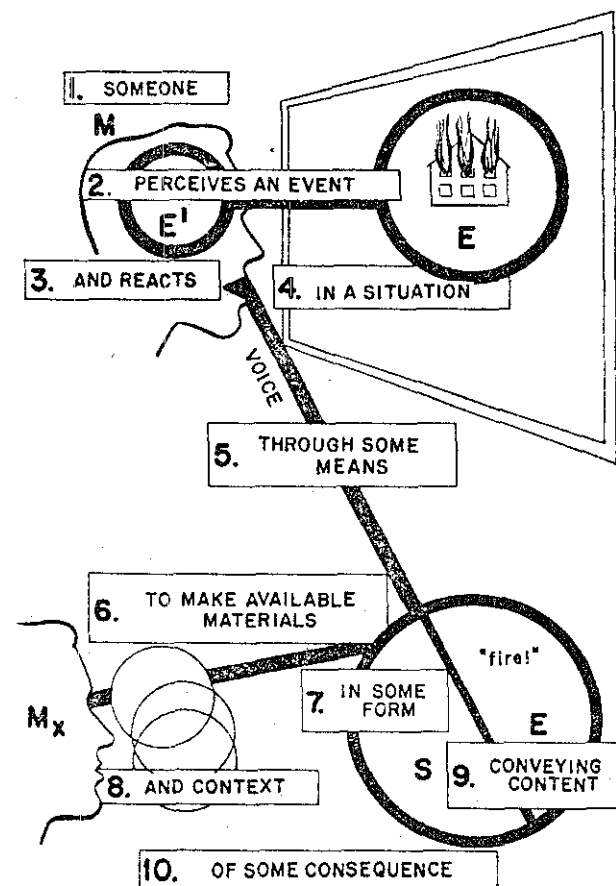


Figure 9

\*This illustration is from my earlier article "Toward a General Model of Communication," op. cit.

Step 4 makes note of the fact that all perceptions and reactions occur in a situation. M is shown observing E from behind a window, indicating one feature of the situation. It is usually impractical to schematize a situation on a generalized model.

Step 5 marks the communicative nature of the reaction. It designates the means, the mediating channels and controls transmitting a signal (here "voice"), as a line leading down-ward from the communicating agent, M, to the communication product, SE.

The means serve to make available materials to X designations. Availability for perception is shown as Step 6, a line leading horizontally from the communication product to another person, M<sub>x</sub>.

Use of some means becomes a signal only if it is not random; that is, if it is in some form. Step 7 indicates the formal characteristics of the use of the means. It is represented as a half-circle attached to means, labeled S for signal or statement. (Here form might be denoted as a certain language sequence.)

Every signal exists in a context of other signals and statements. The three circles of Step 8 along the horizontal, perceptual, dimension denote context. Again, it is often impractical to schematize context except by considering it an ever-present feature of the perceptual aspect.

The content qualities inherent in M's use of means in

S form are marked E to denote those qualities of SE, the communication product, which reflect, represent, symbolize, or refer to the event. Thus the total communication product means signal or statement S about event E, in this case: "Fire!"

The consequences of this communication event can be appraised only in terms of all other aspects plus time; Step 10, therefore, cannot be adequately visualized.

Now we are ready to characterize each aspect more fully, and to crystallize the basic diagram.

1. "Someone" -- the communicating agent (source or receiver) may be a person, organization, etc., in any communication transaction. The M of our diagram stands for the general physical and social characteristics of the parties involved in the communication process -- senders or destination of messages, communicators and their audiences. When we say "She looked so sincere that they believed her story," or "He is too young to understand that picture" we are pointing to this variable as an important element in the process. When we discuss the structure, history, or method of operation of a communication industry or enterprise, or the nature of its audiences, we are dealing with M.

2. "...Perceives an event (or statement)" -- the perceptual -- cognitive (horizontal) dimension of our diagram involves the relationship between events (and statements) and the way these might be recognized, perceived, approached. Perception is selective; we must select from what is avail-

able and do so in a certain context of other things also available for perception.

What we perceive depends on what is available for selection and in what context. How we perceive depends on the assumptions we have formed through learning and experience, on the context of our situation and knowledge, and on our point of view. These terms of perception and cultivation will be shown in a smaller circle inside the communication party (M).

In its most general sense, this dimension represents man's cultural orientation to his environment.

3. "...And reacts." Overt reaction to the perception of an event or statement has been assigned to the vertical dimension of our diagram. If this reaction leads to the production of a message, we have SE at the bottom end of the "means and controls" dimension; if it is some other kind of reaction, we can represent its outcome by a non-communication event, E.

When we are dealing with a communicative reaction, we have, of course, the production of a statement. But when we examine the reaction of a communication receiver, we are dealing with communication effects. We usually measure these against the aims of communicators or satisfactions of receivers. (When measured by other criteria, we shall call them "consequences.")

4. .... "In a situation"--All perception and reaction takes place in a situation. Some elements of the situation

are physical. Others are social and cultural. Still others are procedural or temporal.

5.... "Through some means,"--the means and controls (vertical dimension of our diagram. Here we deal with choice of channels and media, and with techniques (as well as institutional arrangements) of producing (or mass-producing) messages. New media and new techniques stimulate much discussion and research about relative values. There is no evidence to support claims for the general superiority of any one medium, channel, or mode of perception over all others. But there is evidence to indicate that the choice of means has implications for the meanings of messages, as well as for their perceptual qualities, distribution, and availability.

6. "...To make available materials." Availability is one outcome of the use of means and controls to produce messages. We have assigned it to the perceptual dimension to emphasize that the technical, legal, administrative, political, etc. functions in communication need to be viewed in the light of what they make available for selection. While the "means and controls" dimension calls attention to production and distribution systems, the "availability" aspect emphasizes administrative and other arrangements determining freedom of access to materials.

7. "... In some form." The form of the communication event is represented on the diagram by the S (for signal or statement) portion of SE, the message. Analysis of form may be structural, logical or psychological. Structural and logical analysis of form have to do with such internal relationships as design, style, organization, syntax, sequence, code, statistical properties, etc. Psychological analysis has to do with such external re-

relationships as conventional usage, connotations, associations, feelings or attitudes evoked in users.

8. "... And context." Context is another aspect of the perceptual dimension. It is the spare-time composition of the field in which a particular event or statement is selected for perception. In other words, it is what comes before and after the message, or what surrounds the message in a particular communication situation. The study of context focuses attention not on the general physical and social aspects of the communication situation, nor on the general sequence of activities followed in a presentation, but specifically on the effect of other messages upon the perception of the message selected.

9. "... Conveying content." If we take SE as standing for "statement about event E," then we can interpret the E aspect of message SE as those temporal relationships of the statement which have reference to what the message is "about" (i. e. subject matter) or to other events and functions inferrable from messages taken as objective records of specific communication acts. This view of content is an unusual one, especially for those accustomed to looking at messages only in terms of the structural, logical and psychological aspects of form.

Whether we intend it or not, or are aware of it or not, a specific message is not only a vehicle of signs and symbols but also an objective cultural event. It is not only a report but also a record. As such, its content includes the imprint of historical, social, personal circumstances and points of view which may be unintended and unrecognized but which are nevertheless functional qualities of the communication transaction. Messages viewed as objective cultural events may be a source of inference revealing (at least to the analyst) some things about

the process that produced them and about a range of consequences quite apart from what sources and receivers intend or "mean" by them.

We may analyze a photograph not only to study subjective responses to the conventional forms reported in it but also to determine possible consequences of the objective "points of view" recorded in it (e.g. by means of camera angle or ways of lighting), whether or not the subjects responding to the photograph are aware of these "points of view." We may study a series of whiskey ads not to appraise their design qualities, measure their effects on sales or on ideas about whiskey, but to make inference about some more subtle social relationships recorded and reflected in them (such as the frequency with which their image of the "good life" involves the services of Negro waiters or Filipino houseboys.) Or we might analyze magazine policies or television programming to see how they reflect--regardless of intentions, likes or dislikes,--the state of the industry and the approach of the business to the world of events it communicates about.

Content as a record of objective, unique, temporal-causal relationships is not primarily a matter of skill, talent, craftsmanship or showmanship. It is primarily a matter of where we actually stand in relation to the events, subjects, ideas we communicate about, and of what we actually do in specific communication transaction.

10. "... With some consequences." The intention of the previous category was to broaden the scope of inquiry about communication content. The intention here is to call attention to an area of "effects" outside the scope of those desired, anticipated or recognized at any one time.

The need for this category arises in part from our view of

content as an objective cultural event. Once such an event is brought into being it makes some contribution to certain irreversible processes. The full "meaning" of this contribution rests in the actual consequences inherent in the sum total of changes brought about.

Frequently we are only interested in finding out how changes in behavior, ideas, attitudes, etc. consequent to the perception of a message relate to purposes of communicators, objectives stated in messages, or to needs and desires of receivers. We have classified this type of effect analysis under study of "reaction." Study of the full range of consequences in communication includes the consideration of often unintended or unrecognized effects. We should ask not only "Was I successful," but also "What else has changed, or is likely to change" as the result of the communication. There are no communication "failures" except in terms of specific objectives. Every communication act has consequences; these are never limited to specific objectives; and the parties involved in a communication transaction are often unaware of the full range of significant consequences.

If we analyze a communication "failure" in this light, we might find that we have "succeeded" in communicating an actual relationship to our subject which conflicted with our stated purpose. For instance, some wartime films, in order to emphasize the danger unwittingly glorified the Nazis had such "boomerang" effects. The same can be true of communication "successes." Some can deliver a 4th of July speech

about democracy in such an authoritarian manner that when the eloquent words are forgotten only a relationship of threat and fear remains. There are teachers who feel that their communication was effective if students pass a rigid examination yet develop a dislike of the subject or even of learning. Absorbing an avalanche of information may narcotize rather than energize people.

Here we are concerned not only with effectiveness but also with the total price to be paid for certain effects. Long range effects are often different from short range; behavior is sometimes in conflict with ideology, or not rationalized at all; no apparent effects may have serious consequences; desired effects, such as making people do the "right things" by manipulative propaganda, may impoverish the bases of self-direction--a consequence too costly for some but serving the purposes of others. Effects, then we shall associate with the assessment of explicit intentions. Other changes or the selective cultivation of existing tendencies consequent to communications we may call consequences. And those consequences that (although they may be unintended or unrecognized) do in fact work out in the interests of the institutions or cultures producing them we shall call symbolic functions.

These terms of presentation, perception, and production, as shown in the diagram below, will lead us to ask about associated values, and to construct a scheme for the analysis of message systems. They also provide the basis for our definition of communication as the exchange through messages bearing notions of what is (assumption), what is important (an element of order or context), what is right (point of view), and what is related to what (another element of context).

Our summary diagram of communication appears below in Figure 10. It includes all those elements of the process which could be assigned to any one aspect or dimension.

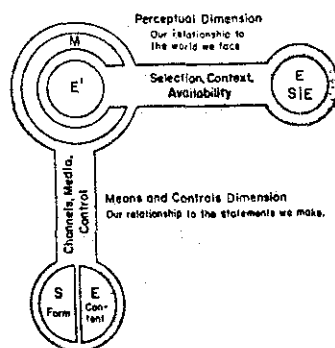


Figure 10

The construction of a framework for the study of communications involves critical choices. We have contended, among other things, that the acts of abstraction, recognition, and representation carry within them--often unwittingly--the seeds of judgment. If I only look up from my chair and gazing upon an object remark "I see a chair," I have done more than simple "sensing." I have abstracted certain characteristics of the object, recognized and named them, recorded a relationship and a vantage point, and thus assigned to that object an approximate role, function, and value in the context of our culture.

Our task would be incomplete without an effort to germinate the seeds of judgment inherent in the much more complex task of building a conceptual framework for the study of communication. We begin with the basic assumption that communication is a

cultural "humanizing" process. "Humanizing" Homo Sapiens involves learning about and judging a real world; "humanizing" the environment involves changing reality in the light of changing conceptions of the requirements of survival and welfare.

We can derive certain standards from these premises if we can establish the ideal "humanizing" qualities of communication in social life. And we can arrive at some judgments by applying these standards to communication functions, institutions, and practices.

#### The structure of freedom: administrative responsibility

The perceptual dimension of our model represents the process of inquiry, the selection and perception of events and statements in some context of availability. The ideal state of affairs in this dimension of communication is, I think, freedom. What we usually ask for along this dimension is the availability of a diversity of events, statements, and points of view, so that we might select in a representative context of pertinent evidence.

But the quality of freedom along the perceptual dimension is neither an absolute quality nor an end in itself. It is physically, socially, and psychologically structured and determined. Its purpose is not merely to provide exercise in choosing, but primarily to provide the setting most favorable for the making of correct choices. Let us then consider how the structure of freedom is determined and what the "rightness" of choices might mean.

The purpose of freedom in communication is to assure public availability of statements and points of view pertinent to decision-making and self-government. The popular definition of this freedom as "the right to say what I please" can lead to its negation if I have access to a loud-speaker but others don't. Freedom to talk might abolish the freedom to be heard. That is why we have assigned freedom to the horizontal dimension of inquiry and perception, and not to the vertical dimension of the use of means, channels, facilities for the production of statements.

The structure of freedom is organized diversity whether it pleases or not. It is determined through the systematic use of means, channels, media, and other facilities for the production (and mass-production) of statements. If these means and facilities are to produce a structure of freedom, they must be organized and used to that end. Freedom to use of facilities (the vertical "production" dimension of our diagram) on behalf of other ends, private or public, serves--other ends. Thus if the structure of inquiry and perception along the horizontal dimension is to be freedom, the essential quality along the vertical production dimension has to be control. Control of means and facilities to promote diversity of availability and freedom of selection is therefore a major administrative and governmental responsibility in communications.

The determination of the structure of freedom in industrial culture as an administrative and governmental function is illustrated on Figure 11

as the social relationship between the production and the perceptual dimensions of our communication model.

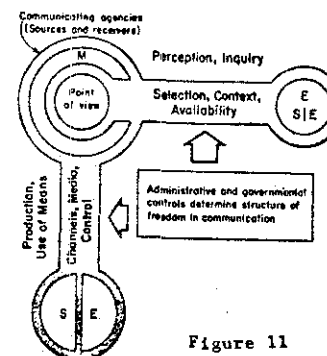


Figure 11

The social responsibility to promote freedom in communications through the organization of means and facilities to that end does not imply that the structure of freedom is an absolute quality, or that it is diversity for its own sake. Freedom of public communications in any society can be considered an index of the extent to which the state of affairs in communications permits public insight to penetrate relevant realities of existence. It is an index of the complexity and diversity of a communications structure organized to enhance opportunities for learning, judgment, and decision-making serving the "humanizing" ends of survival and welfare.

What are standards for judging the quality of those opportunities and the service of those ends in communications? What institutional functions and responsibilities are involved in the cultivation of those standards?

Let me advance a proposition: Communication can help human insight to deal with realities of existence to the extent that its products are true, valid and believable. Now let us develop the meanings and implications of this proposition.

Assessment of truth and validity: science

Truth in communication is a relational attribute of content. It is not a "thing" that exists independently of statements. The truth of a statement is a measure of qualities of correspondence, adequacy and coherence of its relationship to the event the statement is "about"--a relationship asserted or recorded in what we defined as its content. To judge the truth or falsity of a statement (or the proposition for which it stands) we need to examine its correspondence to the event (in the conventional forms of a culture), its adequacy in emphasis, intensity, etc., and its coherence with other statements about the event known to be true or false. The truth quality of a single specific proposition is dichotomous. Such a proposition can only be true or false, in the sense that the proposition 2 plus 2 equals 5 cannot be considered partially true or almost true, but only false. The truth quality of complex statements or of a body of statements can be expressed in terms of the qualities of single specific propositions contained in them.

Truth quality is provisional only in the sense that we might be unable to assess it or might assess it erroneously at any one time. Otherwise it can only be an absolute quality because both events and making statements about events are unique and irreversible occasions whose relationships to one another--with all their qualities--are likewise unique and irreversible.\*

We can illustrate this conception of truth as an objective relationship between statements and events on our diagram (see Figure 12).

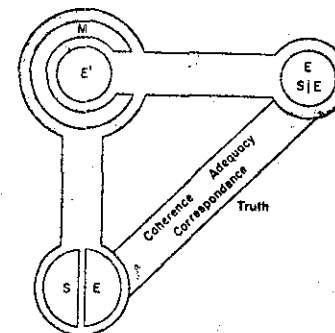


Figure 12

\*It might be well to deal here briefly with some misconceptions which often arise at this point and lead to such questions as: "Is this an argument for 'absolutism?'" and "Who is to determine this 'truth quality?'" I think this position is the only ideological defense against "absolutism." For if truth is itself a subjective judgment rather than an objective quality of statements to be appraised more or less successfully, then absolute power over such judgments--i.e. "thought control"--could actually remake reality rather than only our consciousness of reality.

The content of statements, as we defined it, records not only a relationship but also a vantage point from which events are viewed. The judgment of that aspect of content is concerned with validity. The question of validity focuses attention not on the fidelity or accuracy of a statement but on the value attributes imparted through the particular approach or "point of view" apparent in the message. One can photograph the same face in ways that make equally "true" likenesses appear "good" or "evil" (e.g. by making a light cast shadows down or up); one can make two equally factual accounts of murder give the impression of either crime or heroism; one can omit reference to events or claim no factual basis (as in purely persuasive or fictional statements) and still imply an approach to events. Judgment in such cases centers on the question of validity.

The development of standards for the assessment of validity, as of truth, is a social process. The appraisal of the validity of approaches and the truth quality of statements in the light of current standards of reason and evidence is the activity we call science. The "humanizing" function of science in communications is the formulation of true statements about, and of valid approaches to, reality.

Thus it is the relativistic position that becomes an argument for "absolutism" as a viable social order. Our conception of the truth quality of statements as a unique and objective (and only in that sense "absolute") relationship to changing realities of existence makes the structure of freedom a necessary condition for assessment. Assessment by whom? By anyone who satisfies certain criteria for the verification of statements.

#### Believability: art

Who communicates the human relevance of scientific beliefs to the layman? Who transforms true and valid perceptions of the human condition into moving, imaginative, dramatic representations, into forms most people can grasp, enjoy, believe? That, I think, is the social communication function of art. The "humanizing" role of art in communications is to sensitize us to the perception of relationships and points of view whose appraisal science makes possible.

The summary diagram (Figure 13) illustrates ideal qualities and functions in social communications.

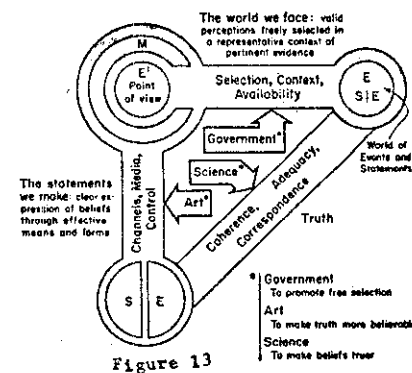


Figure 13

Along the horizontal dimension we see the ideal process as valid perceptions freely selected in a representative context of pertinent evidence. Adding "beliefs" as a controlling factor

in human actions, we find the ideal quality along the vertical dimension as clear expression of beliefs through effective means and forms. Combining these with the hypotenuse of our triangle representing truth, we formulate the ideal qualities in communication as true beliefs reflecting valid points of view freely selected in a representative context of pertinent evidence and clearly presented through effective means and forms. Condensed into a briefer proposition: True beliefs freely acquired and believably presented.

Focusing on institutional responsibilities, we might review our analysis by asking this question: What organized and institutionalized forms of human activity have tended historically to be concerned with the optimization (at least for their purposes) of the values attributed to the different aspects of the communication process?

Along the perceptual (cultivation) dimension, selection, context, and availability are cultural and technological features that require authoritative social organizations to arrange in functional ways. Such organizational functions are performed by managements or administrations or governments which, as communication activities, are primarily concerned with the distributional, contextual, and selection aspects of the cultural field. In order to do that, governments (public or private) exercise production and distributional controls. In other words, the application of controls to that end will determine the extent of any government's or management's ability to promote free selection in a representative context of equitable availability.

This can be represented on our model by showing regulation of means along the vertical dimension to promote the values of the horizontal dimension:

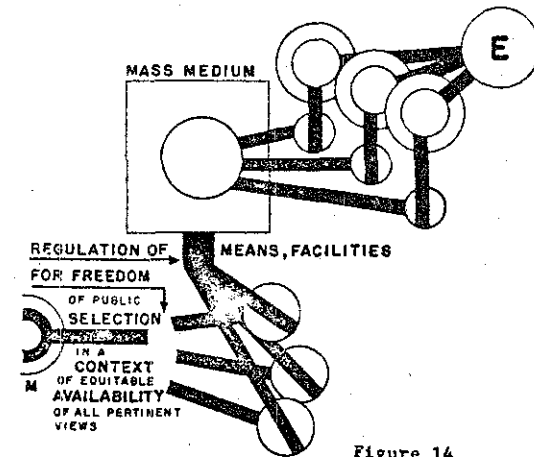


Figure 14

The diagram illustrates the observation of an event by three communicating parties with presumably different points of view. These views are reflected in the statements they produce for the mass medium. The means and facilities by which the medium produces its statements may continue to reflect a diversity of points of view, or homogenize them, or only select for the message-production assembly line what is profitable for the institution and its clients. Much rhetoric to the contrary, there is no historical or empirical evidence for any institution acting in any other but a self-aggrandizing way, even if often in a shortsighted fashion. Whether recent, current, or future media policies are more successful in exercising the control mechanisms for other ends remains to be seen. One task of Cultural Indicators, the scheme of analysis we shall discuss later, is to provide a measure of cultural values actually realized by the institutional exercise of communicative means and controls. At any rate, it should be clear that since any mass production is a highly structured and closely regulated enterprise, the lack of public

controls in the field of message mass-production means not "freedom" but control by authoritative social agencies that are not publicly accountable.

So the real question is not regulation vs. freedom but what kind of regulation can best promote the perceptual organization of message systems (the horizontal dimension) that we associated with "freedom." If wide choice is desirable, controls must be exercised to that end. Otherwise the result is not "freedom" but such absence of meaningful choices as to permit virtually nothing but "desirable" behavior while maintaining the illusion of freedom. Remember that the "researcher's report" from the cannibal country spoke of the free selection of different methods of preparation in the context of all available evidence pertaining to the many ways in which citizens could serve their fellows, and everybody -- including the recalcitrant -- could serve the common good.

The social activity that tends to maximize the values of the vertical dimension (effectiveness, believability, skillful or moving performance, etc.) is art. This statement evokes instant objection from those who think that I want to classify all art in that way. No; I want to say that artfulness has historically been associated with making people respond to, understand, believe, or enjoy symbolic structures whether these were graphic or mathematical, dramatic or musical or other statements or gestures. Statements of artistic intent (or even content) need not be artfully communicated, and statements of strictly prosaic and technical matters may be.

What matters from the point of view of enhancing the values of the vertical dimension of any statement is that special attention, skill, talent be brought to bear upon its production so that it may be as effective, believable, or compelling as possible, regardless of whether the producer is an amateur, a scientist, or an artist.

Finally, the organized communication activity whose specialized task is the assessment of truth qualities of certain types of propositions is called

science. So the historical function of science is to make beliefs truer. Art as a normative communication activity should make statements more generally believable. Government (or any organization acting as a government) should promote equitable availability and free selection in a representative context. Although this idealized scheme has mostly been honored in the breach, nevertheless every advance in standards and expectations of human development requires a corresponding advance in the freer acquisition and more believable presentation of a truer set of beliefs. In the normative institutional scheme, government, science, and art complement one another in optimizing their communications value-functions if they make knowledge freer, belief truer, and truths more believable.

# A Theory of Communication and Its Implications for Teaching

GEORGE GERBNER

Is there a "communication approach" to human problems? If the answer is yes, what is it? What are reasons for taking such an approach? What are reasons for the development of it? What can such an approach contribute to understanding and judgment? And what implications can be derived for teaching and for the curriculum?

These are the questions I would like to reflect upon with you.

Let me define communication as social interaction performed through messages. Messages may be defined as formally coded or symbolic or representational events which are of some shared significance in a culture, and which are produced for the purpose of evoking significance.

My distinction between the "communication approach" and other approaches to human behavior rests, therefore, on the extent to which (1) messages are germane to the process studied, and (2) concern with the production, nature, and uses of messages is central to the approach employed. If there is a "communication approach" or theory or discipline, it can be distinguished from others in that it makes the nature and role of messages in life and society its central organizing concern.

There are many reasons for studying the

nature and role of messages in life and society. Some are traditional. Certain familiar reasons include the acquisition or improvement of communication skills, appreciations, tactics, and the knowledge itself which messages and message systems signify and convey. The same reasons underlie our studies of language, composition, rhetoric, literature, art, and various other modes of verbal and non-verbal expression.

Another and less familiar reason exists for studying the nature and role of messages in life and society. Although applicable to all ages, this new reason is the outgrowth of the historical and cultural circumstances of the twentieth century. As the industrial revolution has transformed man's relation to society, the communication revolution — an extension of the industrial revolution to the mass-production of messages — has transformed man's relation to culture. This transformation has brought about the need to re-examine basic assumptions about the nature and role of messages in life and society, to inquire into the humanizing potentials of communications and of communication systems. That need is, in my view, the basic reason and historical rationale for the emergence of a

"communication approach" to human problems.

This approach is primarily analytical and critical. It does not necessarily take the objectives of communicators or existing institutional goals as its point of departure or standard of value. Rather, it attempts to raise questions about all these components as parts of total communication situations to be assessed in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the humanizing potentials of messages in communication, and of communications in culture. A by-product of this effort might be the improvement of skills, appreciations, and tactics. But the end result should be an improvement of standards.

It is in this way that I would like to approach a theory of communication and its implications for teaching. First, we shall consider, in a very brief outline, a view of communication as a humanizing process. Then I will sketch the development of a theory and model of communication not inconsistent with the demands placed upon theory in our view of the humanizing functions of communication. Our model will help illustrate some operational elements and relationships in communication on the process level; it will help answer the question: What happens when we interact through messages?

Next we shall ask: What should happen when we interact through messages? What are the desirable qualities of our operational elements and relationships in the light

of our view of communication as a humanizing process? What communication and teaching functions serve these values?

After discussing communication and its implications for teaching on the value level, we shall conclude with some suggestions on the institutional level. The question there is: What happens when industrial institutions mass-produce message systems making up much of the popular culture in which all educational enterprises operate? What are some roles and responsibilities of formal education in the new cultural situation?

## COMMUNICATION, A HUMANIZING PROCESS

How did *Homo sapiens* become human?

A hundred million years of evolution is compressed in the word "comprehend." It stems from the expression "to grasp with the forehand." The ability to grasp with the hand and with the mind literally developed hand-in-hand.

Life in damp tropical forests freed the forearms of a certain group of primates from the burden of carrying the body, and made them into hands — strong, sure, and delicate instruments. Exceptionally deft manipulation required an exceptionally large and complex control system — the human brain. The needs of hand-brain coordination made it possible to develop the brain capacity necessary for holding an image long enough to reflect on it, store it,

and retrieve it. This capacity is the prerequisite for the production and use of messages, and thus for human communication.

The invasion of glaciers robbed hominoids of their arboreal paradise and forced them to taste the fruits of a new type of knowledge. Huddled in cold valleys, flooded even during the warm spells, hard-pressed to develop resources of collaboration, community, and communication, *Homo sapiens* transformed himself into what we would recognize as human. He emerged from the Ice Ages a pretty accomplished artist, scientist, and organizer.

Communication played, and plays, a unique part in the human transformation. The original "wisdom" of *Homo the "sapiens"* stems from his symbolizing ability which arose, along with his tool-making talents, from marvelous hand-brain coordination and development put to communal uses. This symbolizing ability is the capacity to produce messages; to record, represent, and re-create aspects of the human condition; to encode, share, and decode significance; and thus, to extend the scope of consciousness beyond the reach of the senses, and to create a vision of human potentialities and requirements beyond that of any living species.

Communication infuses the other humanizing processes of collaboration and community with our most uniquely human characteristics. It does that by performing

certain specialized functions in society and culture. I call these the humanizing functions of communication.

### HUMANIZING FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS

The shaping of sounds, forms, images, and stories into language, magic, legend and ritual arose from the needs of survival through living and working together. One function of these communication activities was to make work easier, life meaningful, ways of looking at life and the world convincing to those born into a culture. Let me call this the *art* function of communication as a social enterprise. Man the communicator as artist informed and inspired, frightened and entertained as he helped all to bear the hardships, share the joys, avoid the dangers, and celebrate the accomplishments of communal life. He made the truths of the tribe — or of the culture — believable and compelling.

From the taming of fire to the sowing of seeds man learned not only the arts of making truths believable, but also the importance of making beliefs truer. Man reached out, got burned, and fled in panic. But not always. For he could also reflect, and so he could contemplate an abstract proposition: Which end of a burning stick could be seized with impunity? Let me call this the *science* function of communication as a social enterprise. Man the communicator, as scientist, undertakes to assess the

validity of propositions. His function is, therefore, to make beliefs truer.

The art of moving men and the science of moving mountains confer the power to move men to move mountains. The distribution and use of this power is the third social function in communication. It is the organizing or administrative, or governmental function. Man the communicator as organizer is responsible for the structure of conscious reflective choices. He deals with the production, availability, and selection of messages. He decides the balance of representations available; he stacks the decks of any message system; he controls the purpose, nature and extent of freedoms built into those systems. As the humanizing role of the communicator as scientist is to make beliefs truer, and as artist to make

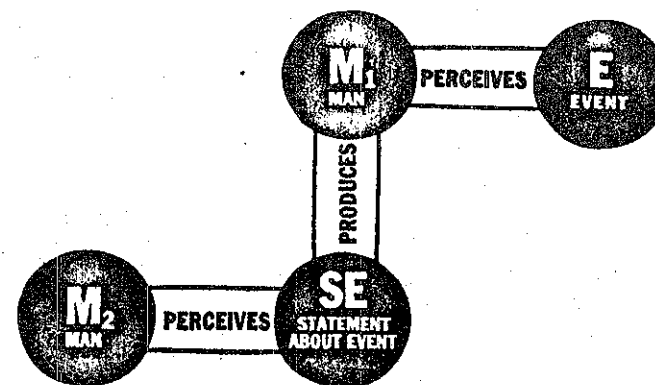
truths more believable, his responsibility as administrator is to organize the energy and power of message systems to promote liberating ends and to make knowledge freer.

This is my view of communication as a humanizing process. I submit that theories and models of communication become useful in a general way if they have some relevance to problems of conceptual organization, judgment, and action in the humanizing process.

### A COMMUNICATION MODEL: THE PROCESS LEVEL

If communication is interaction through messages, we must be able to produce messages, and we must be able to perceive messages. In other words, we must be able to perceive events in a special way, and

FIGURE 1



produce events in equally unique ways reflecting that special type of perception.

If we draw circles for elements and bars for interactions between the elements, a diagram can be made of a communication act.

Figure 1 is the skeleton of a basic communication act. A man perceives an event (horizontal dimension) and produces a statement about it (vertical dimension); another man perceives the statement (horizontal dimension).

Let us now look more deeply into this process, first along the perceptual (horizontal) dimension. Events (including statements) must be *available* to be perceived; you can't play the game without cards. (But the kind of cards available will, of course,

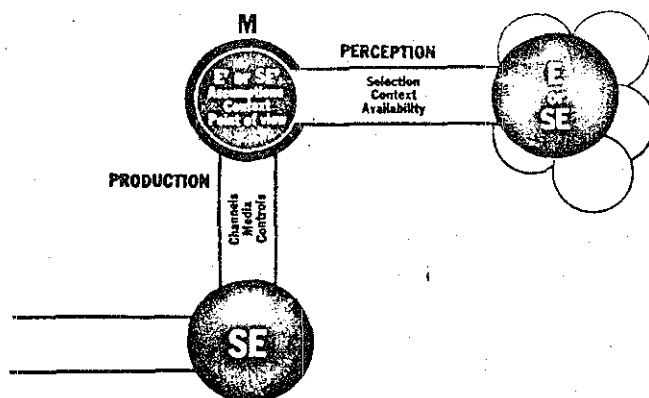
determine the kind of game played.)

Secondly, the event (or statement) must be *selected* for perception. We cannot attend to all things; attention is selective. Choices depend upon availability of items. But choices also depend upon a third element of the perceptual field: context.

Context describes the method in which parts of a whole are woven together in time and space. It is the way the deck is shuffled. It affects chances of selecting any one event in a series or field of events. In addition, the context of presentation (structure of the outside field) and the context of interpretation (structure of the inside field) affect the meaning we attribute to perceptions.

Availability, context, and selection lead us from the world outside to the world in-

FIGURE 2



side. Let us draw a smaller circle inside "man" (M) standing for the event (or statement) "as perceived" (E' or SE'). If we also write in some of the terms of perception, the horizontal dimension of our model takes on certain changes.

As Figure 2 shows, I am suggesting that we perceive in terms of prior assumptions, that we fit our perceptions into a context of our own, and that we can only perceive (or conceive of) something from where we are

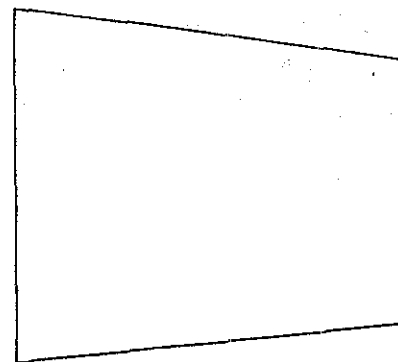


Figure 3

— from a point of view. Let me illustrate.

If I ask you the shape of Figure 3, chances are you will say it is a trapezoid. If I ask you the shape of a window, chances are you will say it is rectangular, even if you see it from a side view. Yet, if you see the window from a side view, its shape might look something like Figure 4. And the shape of Figure 4 is the same as the

shape of Figure 3.

Why does that happen? We live in a world of rectangular shapes (some would say squares); but trapezoids are rare. So when we see a trapezoid in a familiar context, we assume that "really" it is a rectangular object seen from a point of view which makes rectangles appear trapezoidal.

We learn to perceive things in this way. We learn this unconsciously; but we learn

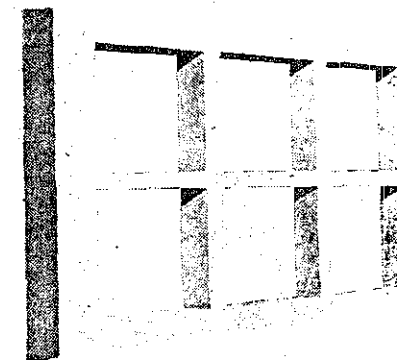


Figure 4

this way of perceiving so well that sometimes we see a rectangle in perspective, even when looking at a shape we know is really trapezoidal. The assumptions, contexts, and points of view which have formed the terms of our perceptions make it difficult to see some things as they "really" are. Figure 5 shows that our "window" is not, in fact, rectangular. But it is easier

to assume that the yardsticks are cheating, or even that the hands holding the "window" in Figure 6 are of different size, than to see a trapezoidal window. Every perception, therefore, is a judgment based on past experience and present expectation.

Figure 5

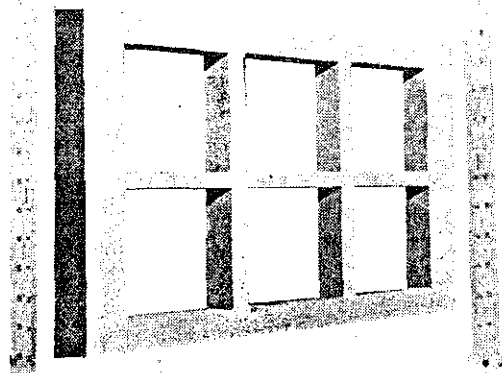
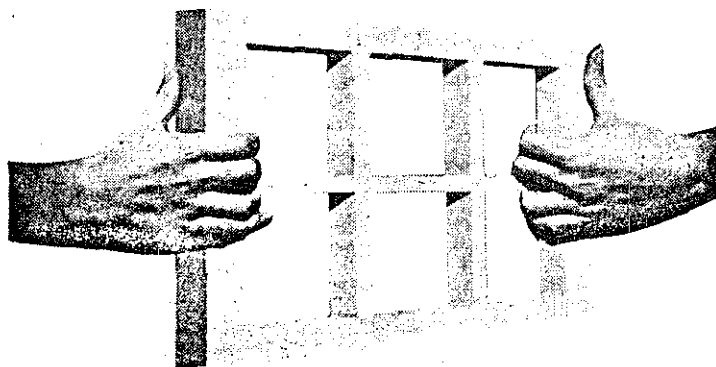


Figure 6

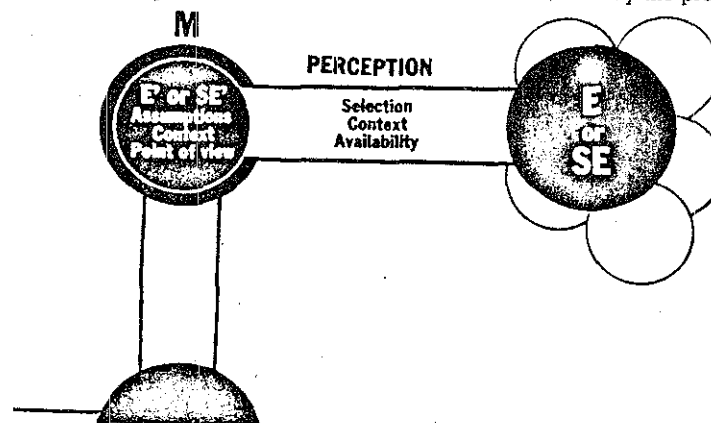


The significance of these statements for communication is two-fold. First, the messages we produce reflect the terms upon which we perceive. (The history of perspective drawing, for example, shows a growing awareness of these terms.) Secondly,

the way we perceive messages will be determined both by the terms of perception built into messages, and the assumptions, contexts, and points of view brought to the

he uses some means and controls (channels, media, etc., as I am using language and print on this paper) to produce a statement about the event. In this way the proc-

Figure 7



perception of messages.

We can now complete our basic diagram of a communication act.

Figure 7 shows that an event (or statement) available in a certain context is selected for perception in terms of the perceiver's assumptions, context, and point of view. The perceiver is also a communicator;

ess continues.

Failure to understand terms implicit in our messages may leave us in the dark about what happens, and why, as the exchange goes on. For example, look at the photographs of the same face in Figure 8.

There is more in these pictures than features and poses. Subtle but inescapable



Figure 8

parts of the message include the position of the camera and of the lights. A host of assumptions about the person portrayed are invoked in the perception. Analysis of such messages helps us understand our response to them, and perhaps also the photographer's perspectives.

The pictures in Figure 9 were clipped from newspapers. They appeared in the context of crime stories, but they all portray a suspect; they were all taken before a trial. Yet, in that context, with the flash-gun held low and shadows cast upward to put the face literally in an evil light, the verdict of the photographer — and of the unreflecting reader — is hardly in doubt.



Figure 9

In communication we usually do more than we mean to do. Sometimes we do the opposite of what we intend to do. The pictorial statements in Figure 10 illustrate meaning on different levels.

The first statement (A) means to sell liquor. But the picture also conveys (and cultivates) some assumptions about the "good life." It does that from the point of view of the market for high-priced liquor. How refined and jovial it is when everyone knows his brand — and his place.

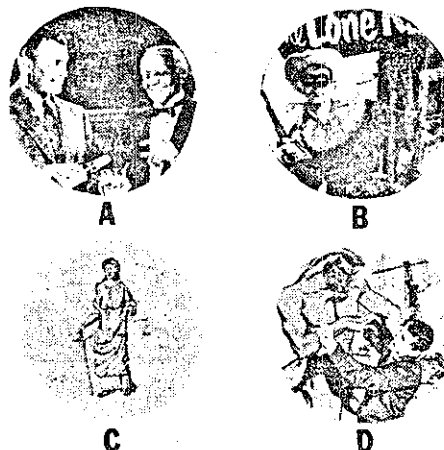


Figure 10

The next image (B) means only to entertain. But no image of the human condition can fail to reveal something about man. A lone, strong, masked man is holding a long gun with gloved finger on the trigger; even if we didn't know him well, a look in his

eyes would tell us that he metes out justice. But so does another figure of Justice (C) wearing a different kind of mask and deriving her strength from different instruments of arbitration. Each image has meaning in terms of its own mythology. We interact with the message as we meet — and cultivate — the assumptions inherent in it.

Look at the beast from another planet (red beast at that, in the original), ready to sink its claws into the flesh of its more human adversary (D). Fantastic, yes. But in a climate of fear, a faked radio documentary reporting an invasion from Mars did trigger large-scale panic among its listeners. In terms of assumptions usually cultivated, nothing could be as fantastic as a landing of Martians bearing lollipops and cookies.

#### THE JOB OF THE TEACHER

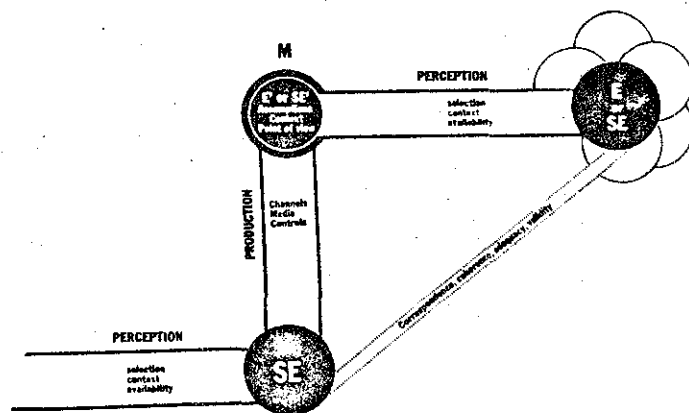
What is the job of the teacher? Is it to cultivate existing assumptions, whatever they might be, in order to put across the desired "message"? This is, in effect, what some lists of "helpful hints" on "effective communication" tell us. This is what much narrowly conceived and superficially interpreted research on communication "effects" tells us. But cultivating existing assumptions in order to put across the desired "message" is manipulation, not education.

Often the teacher cannot honestly convey his message without challenging cherished assumptions. And, at times, unexam-

ined assumptions implicitly reflected in messages counter and negate the explicit "lessons." Therefore, the analysis of messages in teaching first leads to self-analysis: What am I communicating besides what I think I am teaching? Am I talking about "a government of laws and not of men" — but from a Lone Ranger point of view? Do I need monsters to make a unit on space travel or on life on other planets more believable? If so, I may be an "effective" communicator, but I should not be in the classroom. I should not be in the classroom for the simple reason that successfully manipulating people, even into the "right" conclusions, only impoverishes the bases of self-direction and, therefore, negates the aims of education.

People learn best not what their teachers think they teach or what their preachers think they preach, but what their cultures in fact cultivate. We "teach" many things, most of them short-lived. But we cultivate the assumptions, contexts, and points of view in terms of which we communicate all things. These terms are likely to be the most lasting and least examined parts of our lessons. So the questions I ask as I reflect on teaching as a communication process are these: What approach to the subject and to learning itself did I cultivate when I only meant to transmit a few "facts"? What perspectives on man, life, and the world did I present when I only meant to teach English or geography or

Figure 11



math or physics?

### THE VALUE LEVEL

These questions bring us to the level of values. That teaching has elements of art, science, and organization is no news to anyone. It should not be surprising, then, that teaching has the values of these activities as humanizing functions in communication.

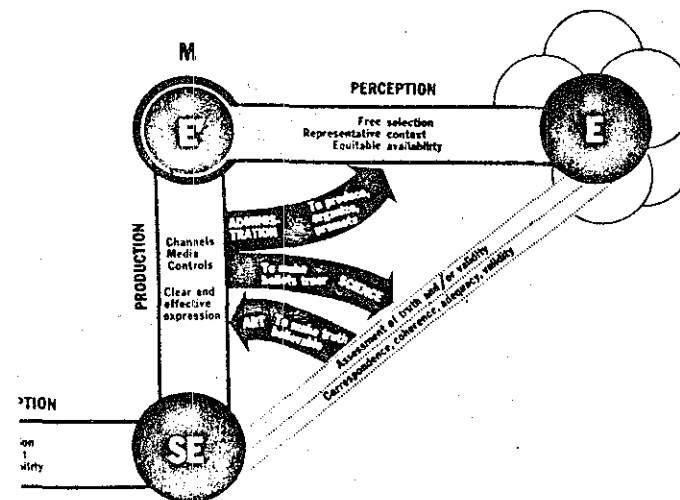
Let us develop a value-oriented version of our communication model. First, we shall supply a dimension missing from the operational version of the model, but present in every real communication situation: the relationship between the statement (now conceived as a single specific proposition) and what the statement is "about." This is the hypotenuse of our model, shown in Figure

11. This relationship may be characterized by the presence or absence of qualities of correspondence, coherence, adequacy, or validity attributed to the message.

Now let us ask the question: What should happen as we interact through messages? What are the desirable, the humanizing qualities of each of the three dimensions of our communication model? And how do the functions of organization, science, and art serve these qualities?

Along the perceptual dimension we have selection, context, and availability as operational elements. What do we ask of these? We ask that selection be as free as possible, that context be as representative as possible, and that availability be as equitable as possible. So the ideal (even if troublesome) criterion of value along this

Figure 12



dimension is free selection in a representative context of pertinent evidence.

The hypotenuse of our model is the relationship between statements and what statements are "about." Here we consider it desirable to assess qualities of truth and validity built into our messages.

The production dimension relates the terms of our perception and cognition—our "beliefs"—to the statements we make. Here we want skillful use of channels, media, controls, etc. to reflect these "beliefs" in effective forms. We want to produce clear and believable messages.

Figure 12 shows these qualities of the

three dimensions. It also indicates how the functions of administration, science, and art serve these qualities.

The teacher as administrator and organizer of communication activities uses means, facilities, and controls to promote free selection in a representative context of pertinent evidence. The teacher as scientist assesses the truth qualities of information and the validity of assumptions, contexts, and points of view implicit in statements. The teacher as artist uses his skills and materials to express true and valid beliefs in clear and convincing forms.

Combining the humanizing functions of

administration, science, and art in communication, the teacher thus strives to make choices freer, beliefs truer, and truths more believable.

Scrutiny of communication in the classroom is analysis of messages and processes. It leads, on one hand, to self-analysis, and, on the other, to a concern with the full range of consequences implicit in communication as a humanizing process.

#### THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Finally, we come to the institutional level. Concrete historical developments give our concern with communication processes and values its urgency and relevance. If it is true that most people learn best what their cultures cultivate, a revolution in culture has brought about a transformation in learning and altered the position of the teacher and the school in society.

The industrial revolution has shifted into the communications phase. Message-systems which provide many of the raw materials of our consciousness (and of the terms of our perceptions) have become mass-produced, institutionalized commodities. Bigness, fewness, and costliness in cultural, as in any other, mass production brought centralization of control, standardization of product, streamlined efficiency of technique. These changes meant increasing penetration of influence into many spheres of life and across many previous boundaries of place, time, and social status. We

can safely say that never before could so many people in so many places know and talk so much about the same things at the same time.

The shape of human affairs has changed. Instead of the slow filtering-down process, we have the almost simultaneous introduction of information, ideas, and products at all levels of society. Mass production and distribution of communications to scattered, heterogeneous audiences means potential enrichment of cultural horizons incredible by all previous standards. But it also means that the assumptions, contexts, and points of view which cultivate our perceptions of what is real, what is important, and what is right, now roll off the assembly line bearing a brand name, a corporate image, a marketing approach.

The words of Andrew Fletcher, uttered in 1704, reverberate in the halls of the Academy and, at times, of Congress. "I believe," he said, "that if a man were permitted to write all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of the nation." For ours is a revolution in the writing of all the ballads.

The mass media have increasingly taken over democratic national responsibilities for transmitting the cultural heritage, for illuminating the realities of today, and for setting the agenda of tomorrow.

How did the mass media fulfill that responsibility? As well as could be expected,

perhaps even better. Being free from public control but lacking guarantees of public support in using that freedom, the mass media must, on the whole, merchandise such gratifications as can be profitably cultivated under the circumstances.

How does formal education find its place and its responsibilities in the new cultural situation? I think we have only begun to diagnose the situation. There is little doubt that we can and should find ways of using the riches available to all for the first time in the history of cultures. It has often been pointed out that we should also help make some order out of the distortions, confusions, and general cultural chaos characterizing the new situation. But all these worthy activities do not go to the heart of the problem.

The new situation is a radical transformation of the ways members of our species became human. Seen in that light, the problem is not only that of tastes, appreciations, discriminating consumership. The problem is also the organization of culture, with all its humanizing functions, both as a public and a private matter. The task is one of citizens' building and molding social institutions for democratic human purposes. We have opportunities to exercise policy choices in the field of popular culture, or to let these choices go by default. The difference is likely to affect our survival as a nation; and, if we survive, it is certain to de-

termine the outcome of our experiment with self-government.

A role education can play in communication on the institutional level is to prepare itself, and the new generation of citizens, to exercise such choices. It makes little difference whether we think about such studies under the heading of Social Science or Citizenship or English or Mass Media. It is more important that they be conceived as part of general education on all levels rather than only as training in the specific applied skills of communication or of consumership.

Such studies should develop ways of observing modern cultural institutions mass-producing images of man, life, and the world, and of the uses we make of them. They should examine circumstances of cultural production and consumption, and consider what kinds of humanizing aims can be fulfilled under what kinds of conditions. These considerations should result in the development of standards for the citizen as well as for the consumer.

I might now summarize my attempt to present a theory of communication and its implications for teaching as follows: The reasons for the emergence of a "communication approach" rest, I believe, in the trends and developments of the last century. Such an approach or theory or discipline makes the nature and role of messages in life and society its central organizing concern. It attempts to analyze

what happens in communication as a teaching process, and to assess the values of what happens. Then the approach turns to the institutional developments from which it sprang. It uses the insights of process and of value to find the place of the school, the role of education, and the responsibilities of the teacher in the new culture in which both we and our students live and grow and learn.

#### FOR FURTHER READING

Certain aspects and topics in this paper have been developed in greater detail (although in earlier formulations) in the following articles:

Gerbner, George. "The Individual in a Mass Culture," *Saturday Review*, XLIII (June 18, 1960), 11-13, 36-37. Also (abridged) in *The Executive*, IV (1960), 14-16, and *The National Elementary Principal*, XL (February, 1961), 49-54.

"Education and the Challenge of Mass Culture," *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, VII (Fall, 1959), 264-278.

"Content Analysis and Critical Research in Mass Communication," *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, VI (Spring, 1958), 85-108.

"Toward a General Model of Communication," *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, IV (Summer, 1956), 171-199.

The following sources may be useful to those interested in further exploration of the perceptual aspects, especially the "window" and other similar demonstrations.

Cantril, Hadley. *The "Why" of Man's Experience*. New York: Macmillan, 1950.

Kilpatrick, Franklin P. (ed.). *Explorations in Transactional Psychology*. New York: New York University Press, 1961.

# ON CONTENT ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL RESEARCH IN MASS COMMUNICATION

• GEORGE GERBNER

*In this paper George Gerbner has presented an approach to content analysis which raises basic issues regarding its relationship to critical research. The author is assistant professor in the Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois.*

CONTENT IS the coin of the communication exchange. Its nature, functions, and study should be the subject of lively technical and philosophical debate. But they are not. Or perhaps it depends on one's focus; in the broader scope of social and physical sciences the issue of *what* is involved in observation and communication lies at the heart of fundamental controversies. But in the newer specialization that straddles this social-scientific battleground, in content analysis, the outstanding issues appear to have been settled by the authorities.

So one is compelled to tread warily for fear of either adding to the din of battle in the larger context, or of appearing to be bent on disturbing the dignity of established procedures in the specialized field. What prompts us to proceed, nevertheless, is our experience that (a) in both teaching and research it is necessary to raise—and ultimately impossible to avoid—the basic issues of social science within the field of content analysis, and (b) that established procedures tend to limit content analysis to administrative research.

When theory appears to rationalize advances in methodology rather than build a framework for critical discussion of aims, the time is ripe for a consideration of aims without prior commitment as to means. We propose to do that by advancing an approach to

content analysis which raises basic issues through tackling them from its own vantage point, and by summarizing the case for critical research.

## AN APPROACH TO CONTENT ANALYSIS

Any process may be viewed as a patterned exchange between systems. We make inferences about the nature of processes through observation of stages, or outcomes, or consequences of the exchange. We call these occasions *events*; they make it possible for the observer to infer some things about the states of systems engaged in the exchange, and about their relationships to one another.

If a party to an exchange records, represents, or encodes in conventional (social) forms some aspects of the pattern of the exchange between itself and other systems, an event has been produced which has special qualities. A hot cup of coffee is in the process of exchanging energy with its surroundings. We infer the pattern of this exchange through observation and measurement (or by taking a sip). Coffee cannot produce a formally coded communication event, isolated from that exchange, but encoding the pattern of the exchange, and expressing its own state and relationship in the exchange, such as the words "I am losing heat." We, however, can produce such an event indicative of our relationship in the exchange; we can say, "The coffee is getting cold." From that statement one can make inferences both about the process in the cup, and about the process that gave rise to the statement, i.e., our relationship to the coffee.

A *communication* is, then, a specialized, formally coded or representative social event which makes possible inferences about states, relationships, processes not directly observed. The *process* of communication is the transmission of such events and sharing of certain inferences. The *content* of communication is the sum total of warranted inferences that can be made about relationships involved in the communication event.

These inferences can be of two kinds. The first kind is the conventional associations we make when we view the communication as a generalized form or code. This is the conventional, formal meaning, such as we might find in a dictionary.

Underlying the "formal message" with its denotative and connotative associations and differential response capabilities, we see

in content the basis for inference about specific functional relations between the communicating agent or agency and other events or systems, and about actual or potential consequences. The conventional face value of a dollar bill is not the same as its actual role value in a specific exchange. The latter will reflect the objective relationships of producer, product, buyer and seller in the exchange, and some consequences of these relationships, whether or not the parties engaged in the exchange are aware of them. Similarly, the statement "It's hot here" is a linguistic type or "form" which can be isolated from its behavioral context, recorded, recoded, etc., with little or no distortion of its formal, conventional meaning. But it is not only that; once uttered—whether pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, real or fancied—it is also a unique and irreversible event reflecting, perhaps unwittingly, an objective set of underlying relationships which prompted its utterance. The advertising slogan, "Smoke X cigarettes; they're milder," whether valid or invalid, true or false, effective or ineffective, implies a particular set of social and industrial relationships whose expression in that form leads to consequences fully understandable only in terms of these relationships and not of the explicit message alone.<sup>1</sup>

### "Micro" and "Macro" Analysis

The "micro" analyst of communication content is interested in gathering information about persons and making predictions about their behavior. In his search for the hidden dynamics of individual behavior he utilizes communication content either as fruitful material expressive in some form of the state of an organism, or as a necessary source when information about a person is restricted to the messages produced by that individual (30).

The analyst who views content as a social event goes beyond individual behavior. His search is for the social determinants and possible consequences of both personal and institutional dynamics reflected in cultural products. His focus may be the autonomous creations of great art—whether mass reproduced or not—or it may be the everyday commodities of cultural industry.

From the former focus comes a clear statement of those tasks of content analysis which have been sidestepped in the preoccupa-

tion with methodologies. It is from the introduction to Leo Lowenthal's *Literature and the Image of Man* (28):

Creative literature conveys many levels of meaning, some intended by the author, some quite unintentional. An artist sets out to invent a plot, to describe actions, to depict the interrelationships of characters, to emphasize certain values; wittingly or unwittingly, he stamps his work with uniqueness through an imaginative selection of problems and personages. By this very imaginative selection . . . he presents an explicit or implicit picture of man's orientation to his society: privileges and responsibilities of classes; conceptions of work, love, and friendship, of religion, nature, and art. Through an analysis of [his] works . . . an image may be formed of man's changing relation to himself, to his family, and to his social and natural environment. . . .

. . . . The specific treatment which the creative writer gives to nature or to love, to gestures and moods, to gregariousness or solitude, is a primary source for a study of the penetration of the most intimate spheres of personal life by social forces.

The analyst of literary content, as a social scientist, "has to transform the private equation of themes and stylistic means into social equations," writes Lowenthal. "In fact," he asserts, "most generalized concepts about human nature found in literature prove on close inspection to be related to social and political change." And: "Man is born, strives, loves, suffers, and dies in any society, but it is the portrayal of *how* he reacts to these common experiences that matters, since they almost invariably have a social nexus."

The "macro" analyst of mass media content deals with broad regularities in large systems of mass-produced cultural commodities. As the "micro" analyst assumes that the underlying laws of human dynamics find expression in communicative behavior, the "macro" analyst assumes that institutions, societies, and cultures manifest laws and order beyond that apparent to large numbers of people at any one time, and that systems of artifacts express objective, even if subtle or implicit, manifestations of this order. In his quest for the *system* behind the facts and forms of mass communication, the media analyst regards content as expressive of social relationship and institutional dynamics, and as formative of social patterns.

### Some Tasks of the Mass Media Content Analyst

His task, analogous in certain respects to that of the cultural anthropologist, cannot be merely descriptive of his or other people's subjective impressions. For example, the anthropologist does not

<sup>1</sup> It is evident that our distinctions are in contrast with those of the semioticians and "sign theorists" who see content as having reference *only* to semantic and syntactic characteristics of symbols. However, Kaplan (19) recognizes that content analysis "may, and indeed must take account of [pragmatic characteristics] in determining which aspects of content will be analyzed and in what ways."

see an ax handle only as a stick one could put a blade on and start chopping. To him the meaning of a cave painting is not only that it has reference to buffalos, or even that it implies certain technical skills and individual attitudes, desires, or fantasies. The major significance of artifacts is that they reflect historical human approaches to certain events; that they signify and regulate social relationships in ways their users or creators may not consciously recognize.

Egyptian mythology of a certain period may be traced to reflect the conquest of the upper Nile Valley by the people of the Delta who superimposed upon the water-gods the theological primacy of their Sun. Ancient Mesopotamian culture and religion may be seen to record and facilitate in symbolic forms a system of social relations based on the need for elaborate irrigation networks. Movable type was made possible by a long chain of technological and social revolutions; the printing of the Gutenberg Bible was a social event reflecting cultural relationships and paving the way for future revolutions.

Communications media can be regarded as historical systems of social control, conferring monopolies of knowledge through built-in "biases" (18). Some go even further in claiming that new media are inherently revolutionary in their implications, "each codifying reality differently, each concealing a unique metaphysics" (8). Distinguished analysts of mass media content cite a legal historian to the effect that, "The greatest and most far-reaching revolutions in history are not consciously observed at the time of their occurrence" (23). Be that as it may, it prompts the analysts to remark, "It is by the investigation of style that we may gain more insight into the currents of history which are usually below the threshold of consciousness."

Our contention is not so much that inherent physical characteristics of media as such, or that formal elements of style, vocabulary, syntax, are themselves of profound and direct significance. Rather it is that the nature and consequences of these elements and characteristics can be understood best if content is viewed as bearing the imprint of social needs and uses.

In the words of Leo Lowenthal (27), "... objective elements of the social whole are produced and reproduced in the mass media." And: "The stimulus in popular culture is itself a historical phenomenon . . . ; the relation between stimulus and response is pre-

formed and prestructured by the historical and social fate of the stimulus as well as of the respondent."

The historical and social fate common to large bodies of mass media content is that they are selected and designed to be mass produced for a market. They spring from complex technological production and market relationships; they are products of an exchange between systems in which the decisive communicating agent is a modern business enterprise. Van Den Haag (38) writes:

Unlike any other type of culture, popular culture—a full fledged style of living with a distinct pattern of feeling, thinking, believing and acting—was made possible and in the end necessary by mass production. Unless the requirements and effects of industrialization are fully grasped, popular culture does not become intelligible.

Even more specifically, unless the requirements and effects of a specific system of industrial and market relationships (such as the corporate structure) are fully grasped, mass media content analysis remains superficial. Their intimate ties to the specific industrial marketing system from which they arise give mass media materials their institutional autonomy, their implicit role-value or consequential meaning, and their underlying frame of reference.

Aside from the formal, conventional "message," mass media content bears the imprint of concrete circumstances of its creation. This includes such things as external outlook and the internal dynamics of the producing industry; its relationship to competitors; its control over resources, facilities of production, and distribution; the position of its decision makers in the industrial structure; their relationships to audiences, markets, advertising sponsors. Out of these come a set of managerial assumptions—both implicit and rationalized—reflected in large systems of content, and preforming some aspects of its perception. The social determinants of cultural industry thus find their way into the consequential meaning of the material. They are expressed not so much in conventional forms and "messages" as through patterns of selection, omission, juxtaposition, through just the way things are "looked at."

Of course, it is necessary to classify and clarify conventional meanings and widely recognized consistencies in formal content. But the full meaning of such analysis emerges through procedures which combine investigation of the objective social origin and role of the stimulus with that of the response; which search for manifestations of processes whose consequences do not depend on con-

scious intentions and perceptions. The primary tasks of the mass media content analyst lie in his attempts to *scientifically gather and test* inferences about content that may involve generally unrecognized or unanticipated consequences, to isolate and investigate consequential properties of content which escape ordinary awareness or casual scrutiny, to bring to awareness those hidden regularities of content which record and reflect objective mechanisms of a social order. The classical role of cultural scholarship as a testing ground of critical social theory is to be strengthened, broadened, and deepened—not abolished—in the analysis of mass media content through the newer, more systematic and refined methodologies.

#### SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Berelson (5) defines communication content as "that body of meanings through symbols (verbal, musical, pictorial, plastic, gestural) which makes up the communication itself. In the classic sentence identifying the process of communication—'*who says what to whom, how, with what effect*'—communication content is the *what*." His definition of content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool (23) speak of "symbol" as a technical term for words that "stand for (symbolize) the attitudes of those who use them, as distinguished, for example, from 'signs,' which are words that point to (signalize) objects external to their user." In their "symbol studies" they define content analysis as "quantitative semantics" which aims at achieving objectivity, precision, and generality through the use of statistical methods.

This approach has stimulated a growing volume of output and increasing recognition. Our purpose here is not to attempt a detailed critique. The "straw man" elements in the restrictive use of quantitative versus qualitative and manifest versus latent dichotomies have been challenged elsewhere (22, 33) as resulting neither in objectivity nor necessarily in precision but quite possibly in fundamentally uncritical "scientism." The present task is to extend the theoretical underpinnings of this approach beyond the limitations of its phenomenalist framework, to harness its methodological insights to more critical social uses, and to amplify the role of the content analyst in a broader conception of the communication process.

The Lasswellian formula, "who says what to whom, how, and with what effect" proved useful for many practical purposes. But it is too restrictive and too one-directional for a general theoretical communications model, or for a framework for critical research. For example, it places content (the "what") in a severely limited sequence. It has been amply demonstrated that *what* is said by the *who* depends also on his role as a *whom*; i.e., the communicator builds into his statement consciously and unconsciously his terms of perception as a receiver of communications, which, in turn, reflect his relationships with events of his world. Even symbols stand for attitudes, feelings, inner experiences *about* (or expressed in terms of sensory experiences of) events of an objective world. This causal thread from systems of subject-object relations to systems of content and consequences leads through the communicating agent or agency, but not necessarily through his awareness, or that of the receiver. When it comes to measuring "effects," the criterion of effectiveness in the light of conscious intentions or explicit objectives becomes insufficient except for administrative purposes. From the point of view of critical research, more interested in understanding normative aspects of the communication exchange than in appraising effectiveness on behalf of taken-for-granted objectives, a model of communication should be broadened to include certain additional features.

#### A General Model of Communication

The construction and some uses of such a general model was the subject of a previous *AV Communication Review* article (13). It is summarized here for the purpose of facilitating discussion in that framework. The model makes provision for (a) portraying the communicating agent in a dynamic role as both sender and receiver; (b) designating his relation with the world of events as the ultimate source of his perceptions and statements; (c) making the distinction between formal properties of the communication product, and other inferences about content; and (d) specifically designating the study of consequences (aside from effectiveness in terms of overt intentions or objectives) as an area of research.

The model has 10 basic components, some of which can be illustrated graphically. The 10 components, forming a sentence identifying the essential aspects of a communication act or sequence, appear in capital letters below, accompanied by a brief

description. The graphic model (Figure I) illustrates appropriate aspects of the verbal description.

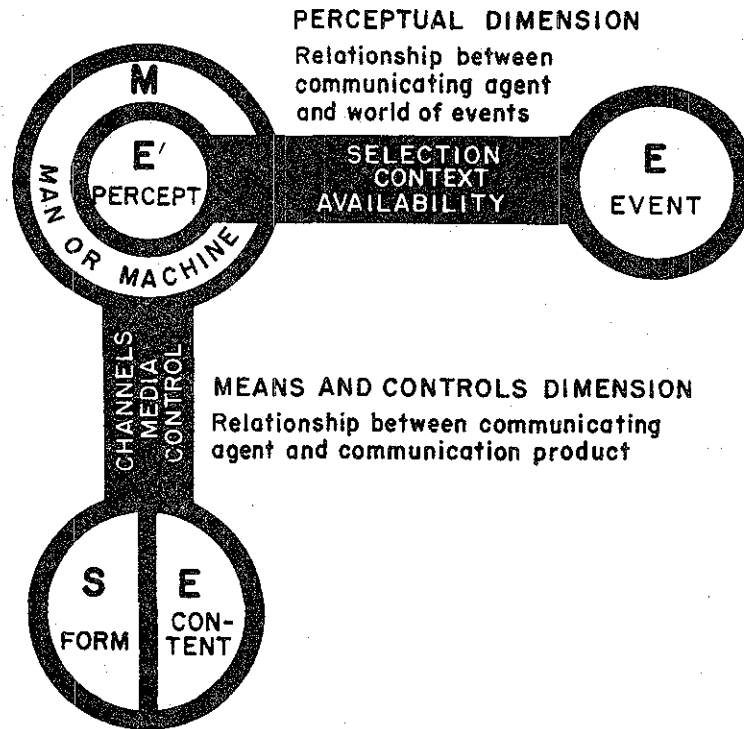


Figure I

The graphic model, illustrating certain aspects of the verbal model

(1) **SOMEONE** (the communicating agent or agency M engaged in an exchange with events of his world)

(2) **PERCEIVES AN EVENT** (the exchange—for our purposes primarily perceptual—between systems M and E; horizontal dimension of the graphic model leading from “event” E to “event as perceived” E’; including such critical consideration as M’s *selection* in a certain *context* from what is *available* for perception either directly or through the mediation of communication events)

(3) **AND REACTS** (M’s general response, not on graphic model)

(4) **IN A SITUATION** (social and physical setting, not on graphic model)

(5) **THROUGH SOME MEANS** (communicative facilities, vehicles, controls, used to produce communication event; vertical dimension of the graphic model)

(6) **TO MAKE AVAILABLE MATERIALS** (part of the horizontal dimension)

(7) **IN SOME FORM** (formal state of the communication event; signal system created by nonrandom use of means; conventionalized structure, representative or syntactic patterns; designated as the S—signal—portion of the communication events SE)

(8) **AND CONTEXT** (field or sequence in which a communication event is perceived; part of horizontal dimension)

(9) **CONVEYING CONTENT** (the social event portion of the communication SE; those inferences from content which reflect objective relationships independent of intentions, conventional meanings, conscious perceptions)

(10) **WITH SOME CONSEQUENCE** (the actual role of the communication event in its further exchanges with other M’s; objective outcomes as measured by criteria independent from intentions, overt perception, or “effectiveness” in terms of objectives of the communication; not represented on graphic model).

#### *Investigation of Content*

The investigation of content focuses attention on SE, the communication product. It proceeds as a relational analysis on two levels. Both “formal” and “content” aspects of the communication product are studied with respect to all other elements of the communication sequence of which SE is a part.

Study of the formal continuities traces the flow or configurations of conventional (“arbitrary”) systems of signs and symbols through classification and measurement. It relates the state of specific signal-systems to that of others for comparison, or to intentions, desires, behaviors of the source, or to the “effectiveness” of the responses they elicit, or to technical use of communicative means.

Study of the consequential continuities represented in content includes the above, but is not limited to it. Here the communication

scious intentions and perceptions. The primary tasks of the mass media content analyst lie in his attempts to *scientifically gather and test* inferences about content that may involve generally unrecognized or unanticipated consequences, to isolate and investigate consequential properties of content which escape ordinary awareness or casual scrutiny, to bring to awareness those hidden regularities of content which record and reflect objective mechanisms of a social order. The classical role of cultural scholarship as a testing ground of critical social theory is to be strengthened, broadened, and deepened—not abolished—in the analysis of mass media content through the newer, more systematic and refined methodologies.

### SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Berelson (5) defines communication content as "that body of meanings through symbols (verbal, musical, pictorial, plastic, gestural) which makes up the communication itself. In the classic sentence identifying the process of communication—'*who says what to whom, how, with what effect*'—communication content is the *what*." His definition of content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool (23) speak of "symbol" as a technical term for words that "stand for (symbolize) the attitudes of those who use them, as distinguished, for example, from 'signs,' which are words that point to (signalize) objects external to their user." In their "symbol studies" they define content analysis as "quantitative semantics" which aims at achieving objectivity, precision, and generality through the use of statistical methods.

This approach has stimulated a growing volume of output and increasing recognition. Our purpose here is not to attempt a detailed critique. The "straw man" elements in the restrictive use of quantitative versus qualitative and manifest versus latent dichotomies have been challenged elsewhere (22, 33) as resulting neither in objectivity nor necessarily in precision but quite possibly in fundamentally uncritical "scientism." The present task is to extend the theoretical underpinnings of this approach beyond the limitations of its phenomenalist framework, to harness its methodological insights to more critical social uses, and to amplify the role of the content analyst in a broader conception of the communication process.

The Lasswellian formula, "who says what to whom, how, and with what effect" proved useful for many practical purposes. But it is too restrictive and too one-directional for a general theoretical communications model, or for a framework for critical research. For example, it places content (the "what") in a severely limited sequence. It has been amply demonstrated that *what* is said by the *who* depends also on his role as a *whom*; i.e., the communicator builds into his statement consciously and unconsciously his terms of perception as a receiver of communications, which, in turn, reflect his relationships with events of his world. Even symbols stand for attitudes, feelings, inner experiences *about* (or expressed in terms of sensory experiences of) events of an objective world. This causal thread from systems of subject-object relations to systems of content and consequences leads through the communicating agent or agency, but not necessarily through his awareness, or that of the receiver. When it comes to measuring "effects," the criterion of effectiveness in the light of conscious intentions or explicit objectives becomes insufficient except for administrative purposes. From the point of view of critical research, more interested in understanding normative aspects of the communication exchange than in appraising effectiveness on behalf of taken-for-granted objectives, a model of communication should be broadened to include certain additional features.

### A General Model of Communication

The construction and some uses of such a general model was the subject of a previous *AV Communication Review* article (13). It is summarized here for the purpose of facilitating discussion in that framework. The model makes provision for (a) portraying the communicating agent in a dynamic role as both sender and receiver; (b) designating his relation with the world of events as the ultimate source of his perceptions and statements; (c) making the distinction between formal properties of the communication product, and other inferences about content; and (d) specifically designating the study of consequences (aside from effectiveness in terms of overt intentions or objectives) as an area of research.

The model has 10 basic components, some of which can be illustrated graphically. The 10 components, forming a sentence identifying the essential aspects of a communication act or sequence, appear in capital letters below, accompanied by a brief

description. The graphic model (Figure I) illustrates appropriate aspects of the verbal description.

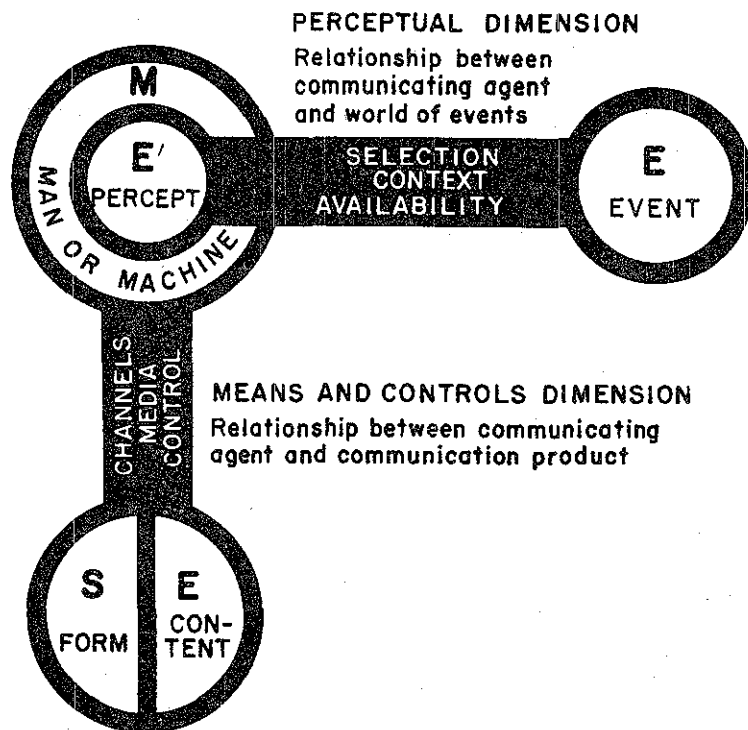


Figure I

The graphic model, illustrating certain aspects of the verbal model

(1) **SOMEONE** (the communicating agent or agency M engaged in an exchange with events of his world)

(2) **PERCEIVES AN EVENT** (the exchange—for our purposes primarily perceptual—between systems M and E; horizontal dimension of the graphic model leading from “event” E to “event as perceived” E’; including such critical consideration as M’s *selection* in a certain *context* from what is *available* for perception either directly or through the mediation of communication events)

(3) **AND REACTS** (M’s general response, not on graphic model)

(4) **IN A SITUATION** (social and physical setting, not on graphic model)

(5) **THROUGH SOME MEANS** (communicative facilities, vehicles, controls, used to produce communication event; vertical dimension of the graphic model)

(6) **TO MAKE AVAILABLE MATERIALS** (part of the horizontal dimension)

(7) **IN SOME FORM** (formal state of the communication event; signal system created by nonrandom use of means; conventionalized structure, representative or syntactic patterns; designated as the S—signal—portion of the communication events SE)

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Study of the consequential continuities represented in content includes the above, but is not limited to it. Here the communication

product is viewed as a specific social event whose consequential meaning may be constant through variation in form, or may vary when form is held constant.

What we are discussing here is *not* the fact that words have different denotative or connotative meanings; that the sounds "horse" may refer to an animal, or to a condition of the vocal cords; that situation and context alter conventional meanings; that individual responses vary; or even that words (or other signals) may be used for strategic reasons to mask rather than reveal intentions. Rather, we are discussing the fact that a communication event may reveal something about the systematic exchange that produced it, quite apart from what we think it means, or what we intend it to mean.

We may analyze a photograph not to get responses to its conventional forms, but to determine the position of the camera or angle of lighting recorded in it. We may study a series of whiskey advertisements, not to determine their effects on sales, or on ideas about whisky, but to make some inferences about more subtle social relationships recorded and reflected in them (such as the frequency with which their image of the "good life" involves the services of Negro waiters or Philippino busboys).

Content as an expression of objective relationships may be implicit in selection, omission, context, juxtaposition, point of view, etc., or it may be inferred through circumstantial or situational association. In that sense, consequential meaning is far from being an "arbitrary" convention. It is the property of a specific event or system of events. Every utterance of the English word "horse" (animal) is a unique event, socially determined through a long chain of associations in certain cultural context with a certain type of animal which became domesticated at a certain point in history, and has continued to be one of the events people communicate about. In doing so they express an objective historical relationship toward it. Semanticists and semioticians notwithstanding, there is, in this sense, something "horsy" about the word "horse." The "map" is not the "territory" but a map does involve a mapmaker's relationship to territory, determined socially and historically in terms of the territory as well as of the individual mapmaker.

Consider the study of a system of mass media products, e.g., male adventure magazine covers. Suppose formal analysis has indicated that the patterns of violent struggle with nature in juxtaposition with sex fears dominate most covers. Significant questions of content analysis might then be derived from our model by relating this communication event (SE) to the other aspects (see also Figure II):

position with sex fears dominate most covers. Significant questions of content analysis might then be derived from our model by relating this communication event (SE) to the other aspects (see also Figure II):

In what ways does this material reflect *physical and social qualities* of communicating agencies (publishers), and their relationships to other systems such as markets, advertisers, audiences,

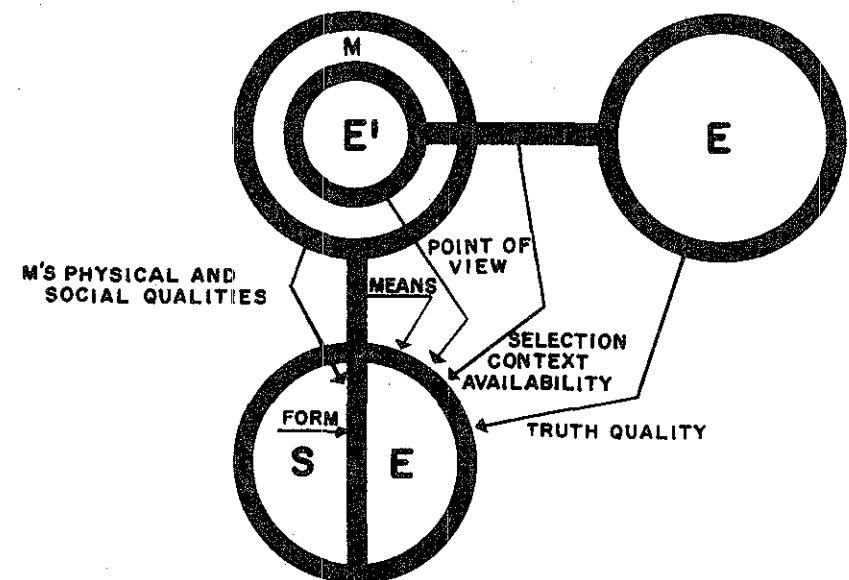


Figure II

Illustration of some of the relationships involved in content analysis

and their world of events? What *points of view* about life and the world as M sees them are implied and facilitated? What social arrangements of ownership and control of communicative *means* and facilities are revealed by the prevalence of this material? What patterns of *selection, context, and availability* are inferable from this body of content? How valid, adequate, and coherent is the correspondence of these representations to any actual system of events (*truth quality*)? What might be the *consequences* (aside from sales, likes and dislikes, conventional meanings, or "effective-

ness" in terms of conscious objectives) of social relationships and points of view mediated through this content as a social event system? And so on. Each of these questions represents a way of relating the communication event system to other elements or relationships in the model; some of these can be illustrated on the graphic model as shown in Figure II.

### *The Role of the Content Analyst*

Let us sketch the role of the analyst in our scheme, and contrast it with that in some form-oriented approaches for the purpose of highlighting some distinctions. Systematic classification of units of material into categories for the purpose of description and measurement is a pivotal phase of the analyst's work. Form and conventional-meaning oriented analysis begins with the setting up of units and categories on the basis of explicit signal characteristics. This makes coding and classification a semiclerical task of relatively high face validity and reliability. It places the burden of analysis on design for measurement and on the precision of the means employed for testing the nature and significance of differences.

Consequential meaning-oriented content analysis begins elsewhere and in a different perspective. It begins by defining the position of the analyst in relation to the communication system with which he is to deal.

In terms of our diagram, the analyst may be viewed as communicating agent  $M_2$  whose approach to the communication product SE, as analyst, is different from that of an  $M_1$  producing it, or of an  $M_2$  receiving it, or even from his own casual perceptions. The analyst as scientist must be distinguished from the analyst as subject. This requires the development of some philosophical awareness. As Hans Speier (34) has pointed out, "All theories of the relation between ideas and the world we call social have philosophical implications." The analyst is forced into the philosophical area at least twice. When he formulates his hypotheses, "he in fact formulates a tentative philosophy which provides him with a frame of reference for his research. . . . Again, when he comes to develop generalizations on the basis of his findings, he is taking a philosophical stand." The crucial issue is whether or not he is *aware* of the stand he is taking.

Awareness of one's own stand means that we react to our "naive" perceptions of explicit manifestations in terms of a qualitatively different (more "objective") consciousness. As subjects we laugh when the hapless comic slips on the banana peel; as analysts we react to our own (and other subjects') laughter by tracing our own position (spatial, temporal, cultural, personal) in the exchange with that communication event, and by tracing the social history of the product. Our awareness of the known relationships in these two dimensions (along the horizontal and vertical axes of our model) suggests some of the most pertinent and least apparent questions to ask about unknown relationships in content.

Tentative answers to these questions may be thought of as the hypotheses of the analyst, usually stated in the form of content elements, categories, systematic functional relationships which may escape ordinary scrutiny.

Self-conscious hypothesis-making brings into content analysis a concern with the correctness of the analyst's entire approach to his material, with his philosophical stand, with his appraisal of the process out of which the material emerged—in other words, with the validity of a critical social theory implied in his hypotheses. Few of these hazards—and rewards—confront formal or administrative research in which ultimate goals and values are either given or assumed, and are not at stake in the research.

If the development of hypotheses through a scientific self-consciousness and critical value orientation is the first task of the content analyst, the second is the testing of his inferences through the un-self-conscious method and self-critical temper of science. Here critical, formal, and administrative researchers join in common concern over the development of research design and methodology sensitive to functional relationships of different types.

But before we advocate this union in methodology, it is necessary to explore further some crucial distinctions in aims and scope.

### CRITICAL RESEARCH IN MASS COMMUNICATION

Paul Lazarsfeld (24) gave a lucid description of the distinctions between administrative and critical research in communication in an article written in 1941.

During the last two decades, he wrote, the media of mass communication have become some of the best known and best documented spheres of modern society. The reason for the rapid rise of

## CONTENT ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL RESEARCH

communications research, he felt, was the notion that modern media of communication are tools handled by people or agencies for given purposes. As the communications investment of these agencies—both commercial and governmental—grew in size, and as the competitive stakes became higher, empirical research was called upon to help make administrative choices in communications strategy and method.

The objection of critical research is not directed against administrative tasks as such, but against limiting the theoretical scope of communications research to the aims which prevail in the majority of current studies, Lazarsfeld wrote. He summarized as a basic notion of critical research the contention that:

... one cannot pursue a single purpose and study the means of its realization isolated from the total historical situation in which such planning and study goes on. Modern media of communication have become such complex instruments that wherever they are used they do much more to people than those who administer them mean to do, and they may have a momentum of their own which leaves the administrative agencies much less choice than they believe they have. The idea of *critical research* is posed against the practice of administrative research, requiring that, prior and in addition to whatever special purpose is to be served, the general role of our media of communication in the present social system is to be studied.

*Some Questions and Hypotheses*

Lazarsfeld sketched the approach of the critical student. He will ask such questions as: "How are these media organized and controlled? How, in their institutional set-up, is the trend toward centralization, standardization, and promotional pressure expressed? In what form, however disguised, are they threatening human values?" He will feel that the prime task of research is "to uncover the unintentional (for the most part) and often very subtle ways in which these media contribute to living habits and social attitudes. . . ."

Lazarsfeld then indicated some steps in the formation of critical research hypotheses "by visualizing how a student would be trained to make observations in everyday life and to try to interpret them in terms of their social meaning." Note how these examples distinguish the role of the analyst as social scientist from his role as a subject:

You sit in a movie and look at an old newsreel showing fashions of ten years ago. Many people laugh. Why do those things which we admired just

## AUDIO-VISUAL COMMUNICATION REVIEW

a little while ago seem so ridiculous now? . . . Could it be that by laughing at past submissions, we gather strength to submit to the present pressure upon us? Thus, what looks to an ordinary observer like an incident in a movie theater, becomes, from this point of view, a symptom of great social significance.

Or you find that a large brewery advertises its beer by showing a man disgustingly throwing aside a newspaper full of European war horrors while the caption says that in times like these the only place to find peace, strength, and courage is at your own fireside drinking beer. What will be the result if symbols referring to such basic human wants as that for peace become falsified into expressions of private comfort and are rendered habitual to millions of magazine readers as merchandising slogans? Why should people settle their social problems by action and sacrifice if they can serve the same ends by drinking a new brand of beer? To the casual observer the advertisement is nothing but a more or less clever sales trick. From the aspect of more critical analysis, it becomes a dangerous sign of what a promotional culture might end up with.

Could it be that the mass-produced portrayal of violent means for their own sake reflects social alienation and facilitates cynicism and apathy; that the "evil scientist" is an image of the hired intellectual, "neutral" in matters of human concern; that, as has been suggested, "Peeping Tomism" is a "form of protest literature in prosperity"; that, as has also been suggested, conventional news values and front pages mirror market-orientation, a loss of historical perspective, and discontinuity of experience harmonious with positivistic science and philosophy? Neither administrative nor purely formal analysis will provide the answers to these and other questions striking at the roots of our uneasiness about popular culture in an age of mass production.

*Content and Social Reality*

Franklin Fearing (12) expressed this view: "The hypothesis that the mass media reflect value-systems, satisfy needs of society, whether consciously or unconsciously held, furnishes the theoretical basis for extensive research in which the content of films and other mass media are analyzed in order to discover what the value-belief patterns of a given society are." But one cannot fully "discover" value-belief patterns without tracing them to their existential bases in the world of objective events, and without shedding some light on *what* and *whose* needs they really satisfy. Prewar German films, seen as reflecting "not so much explicit credos as psychological disposition—those deep layers of collective mentality which extend

more or less below the dimensions of consciousness" (20), also reflect a system of concrete social and cultural operations which gave rise to Nazism. "Hollywood's Terror Films" can be seen not only in terms of their creating an "all-pervasive fear that threatens the psychic integrity of the average person. . . ." (21) but also in terms of a broader setting in which market-oriented social mechanisms of cultural industry shape this implicit function, and "need" such psychic consequences. In the last analysis no "state of mind" can be fully understood until its "discovery" is driven through to the objective social determinants that produce and require it.

Inner and external reality share common ground in content. Individual and institutional "perceptual frameworks" with their implicit assumptions, need-value systems, experientially and historically developed vantage points, represent one side of the subject-object relation, structured in systematic unity and opposition with the other side—the events talked about, the social circumstances that shape our experience of meanings. Content arises out of the dialectical relation of subject and event. The nature of this relation depends on the realities of man's existence in, and struggle with, society and nature. Implicitly recorded in content, this relation becomes the property of a social event on whose terms the exchange continues.

Science is the penetration of human consciousness into the realities of existence. Content analysis can share in this enterprise through a critical awareness of social processes that shape both communication products and their perceptions and uses. Its hypotheses arise from the background of awareness of prevailing trends in cultural mass production. Specific studies focus on how content systems express these trends, and how they contribute or run counter to them. They culminate in the investigation of the range of implied consequences, in Lazarsfeld's words, "stamping human personalities in modern industrial society . . . , scrutinized from the viewpoint of more or less explicit ideas of what endangers and what preserves the dignity, freedom, and cultural values of human beings."

*Education, Mass Media, and the Challenge of  
Critical Content Analysis*

In the analysis of consequential meanings, educational research and content analysis have joint responsibilities. These re-

sponsibilities involve bringing to awareness mechanisms of psychic management masked in righteous overt forms; increasing conscious insight into tensions generated by the exposition of correct "facts" in an implicit structure which serves as an extension of the social process the "facts" purport to illuminate.

World War II Army orientation films come to mind as a fruitful subject for research from that point of view. There is already some evidence suggesting that perhaps the notable "boomerang effect" of some educational material was not so much a "failure" of communication as the implicit communication of built-in relationships superimposed upon formal content, expressing assumptions, points of view, etc., running counter to the explicit message.

A study of the home-front propaganda film, "Don't Be a Sucker" (9), found, for example, that despite the "learning" of specific points by specific target audiences, the majority of the viewers identified with the German Hans rather than with the American Mike. A closer examination of the implicit content of the film revealed under the rather pedantic presentation of an anti-Nazi, pro-tolerance "message," the subtle imprint of a point of view from which fascism appeared dynamic, and democracy an invitation to weakness.

Another anti-bias film entitled "No Way Out" was subjected to searching content analysis (39). It was found that while on the level of verbal argument the film appeared to be a moving document, on a deeper level the producers could not escape the approach of an operationally racist society. The analysts wrote:

There is of course no doubt of the good intentions of the makers of this film. But in order to show how wrong race hatred is, the film makers had to create a plot and characters and elaborate upon them in detailed images; here their fantasies from a less conscious level come to the surface: the Negro becomes a terrible burden that we must carry on our backs; a sacrifice of white corpses is required for his preservation; the image of the violated white woman forces its way to the screen; and so on. There is an effort to deny these unacknowledged nightmares about the Negro by locating race hatred exclusively in an exceptional, pathological character, but this attempt at denial remains, at bottom, ineffectual. The very title of the film, extremely puzzling in terms of the plot, expresses the basic ambiguity; though the Negro-hater is supposed to be defeated and the falsely accused Negro saved and vindicated, the title seems to state a deeper belief and draw a contrary "moral": there is no way out.

The Payne Fund studies of the early thirties represented the first concerted attack by a group of investigators on broad social

problems involved in cultural mass production. "Perhaps the most important conclusion concerning these data," wrote Edgar Dale (11) in his summary of the content analysis portion of that project, "is the fact that in large measure the characters, the problems, and the settings are removed from the lives of the persons who view [motion pictures]." And perhaps the most significant statement revealing the social implications of the "escapist" trend of overt themes was Dale's conclusion, "The good life is no longer a dream which can only be wished for. We now have at hand the machinery for making it a reality. This machinery for changing our current civilization is not commonly shown in the movies. . . ."

### *Social Relations in Mass Media Content*

In the absence of continuing large-scale investigations the evidence concerning the implicit consequential meanings of mass media content is necessarily fragmentary. Berelson and Salter's (6) analysis of magazine fiction involving minority groups finds, under the overtly egalitarian "messages," the expression of stereotyped relationships and views of life that "serve to activate the predispositions of a hostile or even an indifferent audience." Smythe (34) observes similar implicit patterns in his study of television drama.

Head (17) concludes his study of television drama with the additional observation that as a conserver of the status quo television may be a prime contributor to growing cultural inertia. Lowenthal (26) notes in his study of magazine biographies an emphasis upon the private lives of "idols of consumption," indicating a shift from concern with social problems of production to uniformly individualized pressures of consumption. Implicit class bias is observed in the Bush and Bullock study of "Names in the News" (7); in Sussman's analysis of "Labor in the Radio News" (37); in Auster's "Content Analysis of 'Little Orphan Annie'" (4); and in the Spiegelman, Terwilliger, Fearing research on comic strips (36). An audit (10) of 995 movies reviewed in *Variety* between 1953 and 1957 finds four of the five films dealing with organized labor presenting an unsavory view of unions (with the fifth banned from major theaters across the country).

Hamilton (16) traces the rise of pessimism in widely-circulated Protestant sermons, especially in regard to the solution of social problems. Albigh (3) finds similar value judgments implicit

even in the current trend of opinion research, reflecting a "denigration of the average individual, a belaboring of his obvious lack of knowledge and information, and therefore, a skepticism concerning many aspects of political democracy."

Saenger (31) finds the undercurrent of hostility a dominant note in "Male and Female Relations in the American Comic Strip," and suggests the implicit message, "Love is dangerous because it leads to marriage in which . . . men lose their strength." Legman (25) wonders "whether the maniacal fixation on violence and death in all our mass-produced fantasies is a substitution for a censored sexuality, or is, to a greater degree, intended to siphon off—into avenues of perversion opened up by the censorship of sex—the aggression felt by children and adults against the social and economic structure. . . ."

Adorno (1) sees popular music joining in a response "manipulated not only by its promoters, but, as it were, by the inherent nature of the music itself, into a system of response-mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society. . . ." In another connection (2) he writes: "Mass media . . . consist of various layers of meaning superimposed on one another. . . . As a matter of fact, the hidden message may be more important than the overt since this hidden message will escape the controls of consciousness, will not be 'looked through,' will not be warded off by sales resistance, but is likely to sink into the spectator's mind." He finds that the underlying "'message' of adjustment and unreflecting obedience seems to be dominant and all-pervasive today." His analysis of popular fiction concludes that:

. . . . The ideals of conformity and conventionalism were inherent in popular novels from the very beginning. Now, however, these ideals have been translated into rather clear-cut prescriptions of what to do and what not to do. . . . True, conflicts of the nineteenth century type—such as women running away from their husbands, the drabness of provincial life, and daily chores—occur frequently in today's magazine stories. However, with a regularity which challenges quantitative treatment, these conflicts are decided in favor of the very same conditions from which these women want to break away. The stories teach their readers that one has to be "realistic," that one has to adjust oneself at any price. . . .

Schramm's (32) quantitative analysis of the "World of the Confession Magazine" substantiates the observation of a punitive, puritanical code hidden in overtly rebellious themes. "It is very interesting," he notes, "to see how 'romance' magazines basically

advise young women to shake the dew out of their eyes and the dreams out of their heads."

*Consequential Meaning: From Market Position to Cover Girl*

A recent study by the present author (15) attempted to trace the consequential meaning and social role of the "confession" magazine from industrial structure to content and cover design. The social mission of that magazine was found to be determined from the outset by its competitive position in a wage-earning reader market. This circumstance led to the development of an editorial prescription designed for working class women with presumably middle class pocketbooks, anxieties, and "behavior problems."

The social appeal of the "confession" story pivots on the heroine's human frailties in an inhospitable world she cannot fully understand. The "truth" of this world is brought home through an inevitable encounter with sin, crime, suffering, and the final coming to terms (but never to grips) with the stern code of society. In the context of the unyielding hazards and fears of pseudo-middle class life, the heroine's "sinful" acts become irrelevant as acts of protest. The safety valve of individual adjustment and social unrelatedness furnishes the antidote for the social appeal of sympathy for simple human beings facing their brutal world.

The ingredient of unrelatedness seems to be further manifested in the implicit structure of the "confession" cover design. Shaped by both editorial requirements and the pressures of super-market distribution, the "confession" cover design generally features a wholesome, innocent-looking, radiantly carefree cover girl, wholly unrelated to the fear-and-sin-ridden world of verbal titles surrounding her on the cover.

An experimental study (14) of subject responses to the image of the cover girl seemed to indicate that her unrelated juxtaposition serves well the requirements of the "confession" market and distribution. While the cover girl's involvement with the social issues of her verbal context is outwardly as unconscious as that of the heroine is inwardly unreflecting, her implicit association with the verbal context of the cover safely enhances, as if by contrast, some of the perceived attractions of her image.

*The Challenge for Critical Analysis*

"The knowledgeable man in the genuine public is able to turn his personal troubles into social issues, to see their relevance for

his community and his community's relevance for them," wrote Mills (29) in comparing the individual in a community of publics with members of audiences created as markets for cultural mass production. "The individual," he wrote,

understands that what he thinks and feels as personal troubles are very often not only that but problems shared by others and indeed not subject to solution by one individual but only by modifications of the structure of the groups in which he lives and sometimes the structure of the entire society.

Men in masses are gripped by personal troubles, but they are not aware of their true meaning and source. Men in public confront issues, and they are aware of their terms. It is the task of the liberal institution, as of liberally educated man, continually to translate troubles into issues and issues into the terms of their human meaning for the individual. . . .

The case for self-government is predicated upon a community of publics. The dissolution of publics into markets for mass media conceived and conducted in the increasingly demanding framework of commodity merchandising is the cultural (and political) specter of our age. This fear is now joined by a growing concern over the trend of social science research, especially in the field of communications. More and more of this research is seen to succumb to the fate of mass media content itself in being implicitly tailored to the specifications of industrial and market operations. Concern "with questions of ethics in relation to the formation and effects of public opinion," wrote William Albig (3) in his review of the research of two decades, ". . . was largely absent, or at least unexpressed, in the writings of . . . contributors to opinion research in the past 20 years." Albig continued:

Since 1920 a large professional class has developed to man the expanding activities of press, film, radio, television. At the same time, commercial and academic analysts of the communication process have proliferated. To a marked extent these professionals discuss this vast communications activity in terms of process, technique, stimuli, impact, effects, and semantic analysis, but not in terms of the ethical and value problems of communications content and effect.

It is, then, in this context of fragmentary evidence about the consequential meaning of mass media content, and of growing public and professional concern about its implications for a community of publics (including social scientists) that the challenge emerges. The challenge for mass communications research is this: to combine the empirical methods with the critical aims of social science, to join rigorous practice with value-conscious theory, and thus to gather the insight the knowledgeable individual in a genuine

# CONTENT ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL RESEARCH

public must have if he is to come to grips (and not unconsciously to terms) with the sweeping undercurrents of his culture.

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TEACHER IMAGE IN MASS CULTURE;  
SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS OF THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM"

by  
George Gerbner

"The figure of the schoolteacher," wrote Richard Hofstadter in Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (1963, p.309) "may well be taken as a central symbol in any society." But a symbol of what? Searching for an answer is like opening Pandora's box with its host of evils. My examination of the evidence suggests that teachers, schools, and scholars project a synthetic cultural image that helps to explain -- and determine -- the ambivalent functions and paradoxical fortunes of the educational enterprise in American society. The clues that point to that disquieting conclusion (which also raises questions about anticipated extensions of the present structure of culture-power) have led me to new reflections. These concern the illusions and reality of schooling, the nature of symbolic functions, the lessons of national and cross-cultural research on the teacher-image, and the role of that "hidden curriculum" in social policy.

The basic features of American schools, as of our society, have been fixed for more than a century. Spectacular changes transformed the "quality of life" through unfolding and extending those features into every aspect of existence. Among the most dramatic of the changes has been the rise of institutions of cultural mass-production -- the mass media-- exempt from the laws of public but not of private corporate development and authority. These institutions have taken over many functions performed in the past by the parent, the church, and the school. The media's chief impact stems from their universality as the common bond among all groups in our culture. The media manufacture the shared symbolic environment, create and cultivate large heterogeneous publics, define the agenda of public discourse, and represent all other institutions in the vivid imagery of fact and fiction designed for mass publics. Teachers and schools no longer enjoy much autonomy, let alone their former monopoly, as the public dispensers of knowledge. The formal educational enterprise exists in a cultural climate

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dominated by the informal "curriculum" of the mass media.

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Those who would correct the evils of the world slowly and painlessly have long argued for educational extension, improvement, and reform. Children raised for a just society will build a just society, it was prophesied. And, for more than a century, schooling has been extended, improved, and reformed. Yet it is still compulsory, unequal, class-biased, racist, and sexist. From the Coleman report on Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966) through the Jencks report on Inequality (1972) study after study demonstrates that the schools, even when "equal," tend to justify rather than rectify the child's fate as defined by the culture of the home, the street, and the television.

Eminent public figures declare schools a "disaster area" and "a pathological sector of the economy," meaning that even money can't cure what ails them (although that remedy has been abandoned before ever being tried on a large national scale). A few call for their abolition. Instead of becoming the social corrective that idealistic reformers sought and democratic rhetoric promised, the more schools change the more they streamline their induction of young people into their places and roles in the existing social structure. The Mason-Dixon line has been abolished between the States, but its modern equivalent now rings every city and the few bridges busing children across it may be dismantled. Schools still provide custodial drill for the poor, enrichment for the rich, and equal instruction only for those with equal economic or political clout.

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Historical images

We are just beginning to understand that these harsh facts result from no accidental aberration or cultural lag. A new generation of "revisionist" historians has exploded "The Great School Legend." Colin Greer's (1972) book by that title shows how the perennial "crisis" of the schools, like the perpetual "problem" of the slums, is in fact more functional to the existing social order than would be its elimination. Michael B. Katz's book on Class, Bureaucracy, and the Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America (1971) documents the recurring phenomenon of school reform movements that engage the zeal and energies of those who would attack the iniquities of society, only to find each wave of "reform" harnesses their schools to the dominant interests of the times.

Nearly 20 years after the Supreme Court ordered school desegregation "with all deliberate speed," feeble efforts at enforcement bog down in political controversy, just as before that the parochial school aid controversy was used to defeat proposals for massive federal financing. Busing is claimed to threaten the fiber of society when it brings children of different races and social classes together, but not when used to keep them apart, its traditional use. If "campus unrest" is followed by recession and cutbacks, who is to blame? The schools that should redeem us teeter at the edge of bankruptcy. It seems that when citizens consider what they believe to be nearest and dearest to them, like their children, they are most vulnerable to the deceptions of their culture.

"The figure of the schoolteacher," wrote Richard Hofstadter in Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (1963, p.309) "may well be taken as a central symbol in any society." A symbol of what? Searching for an answer is like opening Pandora's box with its host of evils.

The image of schools and scholars is that part of the "hidden curriculum" in which all members of society learn about learning itself. Its symbolic functions relate images of learning, and of the formal institutions of learning, to basic human values and to the locus of power in society.

When he is not the Ichabod Crane of literature (scared out of town by the virile males of the community, with a pumpkin smashed over his head), the typical teacher in American novels is "stooped, gaunt, and gray with weariness. His suit has the shine of shabby gentility and hangs loose from his undernourished frame." (Foff, 1956, p.21) That is, until class is out and memory rings the school bell when we say a tearful "Good Morning Miss Dove," or bid a nostalgic "Goodbye Mr. Chips."

In his study of the college professor in the novel, Michael Belok (1958) noted that American fiction uses teaching to "unsex a woman." Even being a teacher's wife may be unenviable. Theodore Dreiser characterized Donald Moranville Strunk, A.B., Ph.D., Professor of History, as having had "one of the homeliest women for a wife I ever saw." College students responding to a survey (O'Dowd and Beardsley, 1960) characterized the school teacher as a person "who cannot even command an attractive wife." Love eludes even the attractive, eager "Our Miss Brooks" and the owlish but smart "Mr. Peepers"; sex degrades the neurotic fascist Miss Brodie and destroys Professor Rath of "The Blue Angel."

For Americans, the prestigious title "professor" resounds with mock deference. The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia for 1899 gave as one definition of professor "... any one who publicly teaches or exercises an art or occupation for pay, as dancing-master, phrenologist, balloonist, juggler, acrobat, boxer, etc." From there it was not too far to the piano player in a brothel, or as Henry L. Mencken euphemistically recorded in The American Language (Supplement II), "a house musician." In time the usage mellowed to permit any prominent orchestra leader to be called Professor, as those who remember Kay Kyser will recall. (Cf. Coard, 1959) Recent media fare is replete with such phenomena as the movie "The Nutty Professor," TV's "Professor Backward," the cartoon "Professor Wimple's Crossword Zoo," and Pat Paulsen's Laugh-In "Professor."

Belok could find only about 200 novels since 1900 in which college professors appeared as characters. Major American novelists, wrote Lyons (1963), either have avoided the Academy or wrote novels that are basically anti-intellectual. An English review of the American scene observed, however, that the college novel is now a "cottage industry." "And so it seems," commented Charles Shapiro (1963, p.37) noting the entry of writers into the universities, "as book after book assaults us with tales of assorted hypocrisies committed under the name of higher education."

Hofstadter has also observed that the American teacher has not become an important national figure, worthy of emulation. Historical reasons may partly account for the fact that the scholar, as Dixon Wecter also noted in his The Hero in America (1941), "has never kindled the American imagination."

Until the industrial and national revolutions that changed the map of Europe, teachers were likely to be recruited from among the misfits of society. When the common schools were established in Russia, the theological seminaries dumped their "undesirables" to be the teachers. In the Prussia of Frederick the Great, it was the army that disposed of its invalids by appointing them schoolmasters.

"The low opinion of the rank-and-file schoolmaster in Europe spread to the New World, and a seventeenth-century Rector of Annapolis recorded that on the arrival of every ship containing bondservants or convicts, schoolmasters were offered for sale but that they did not fetch as good prices as weavers, tailors, and other tradesman." (Wittlin, 1963, p. 750)

The national revolutions of Europe had a popular cultural character. Many of the leaders were writers and poets rising through the ranks of the intellectuals closest to the people, the teachers. W. G. Cove, the British teacher, strike leader, union president and member of Parliament, once wrote that "At the head of every continental revolutionary movement, or near the head of it, stands an ex-teacher."

Until perhaps the emergence of the black liberation movement which, for reasons peculiar to American culture seemed to propel clergymen rather than teachers

into leadership, there has been no comparable historical force to add a heroic dimension to the traditional image of the American teacher. The forced pace of industrialization in the nineteenth century and the consequent pressure for extending public education created the monitorial schools, according to Wittlin "to fit the early state of industrial civilization."

"Pupils were cheaply mass produced, down to \$1 per year. The scholars, who first learned their lessons from the teacher, conveyed exactly the same lesson to other children, ten to a monitor . . . In 1916 a book appeared in Boston on Public School Administration, by E.P. Cubberley, in which it was stated that ' . . . the schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw materials are to be shaped into products to meet the various demands of life.' According to this philosophy the educator was allotted the modest role of the copyist of patterns." (Wittlin, 1963, p. 751)

During the next 50 years, the cultural forces that shape the common images of society became largely mechanized, centralized, and commercialized. Teacher-power emerged as an organized force, and education became a political battleground. But the social function of the teacher image in the new culture remained the traditional one: to cultivate mistrust of the intellect on the loose.

#### Teacher and school in U.S. media

There are 2.5 million teachers in the public schools in the United States. They range from 22 to over 65 years of age, and come from all states, classes, religions, and ethnic groups. Of course, they have some characteristics as a group: they average 39 years of age, 12 years of professional experience, and about \$9,000 a year. Two out of every three are women. Teaching is the largest profession; its members run the gamut of human types.

But not in popular fiction and drama. The raw facts of life are not the truth of social and institutional purpose. Frequency of symbolic representation is not the reflection of census figures. The casting of the symbolic world has a message of its own.

Studies of occupational representation among mass media characters (e.g. DeFleur, 1964; Gerbner, 1969), celebrities (Winick, 1963; Hazard, 1962),

and even movie titles (Verb, 1961) agree that teachers, the largest profession in life, rank among the smallest in the media world. About 2 to 3 percent of all identifiable professional references or characterizations go to media teachers. DeFleur's classification of television occupations found the same number of educators as taxi, truck, and bus drivers.

Most of the literary studies delineate a teacher image created for elite audiences. Except when mellowed by misty memories of childhood, it is generally cruel and unsympathetic, as if in revenge for the intellectual and social pretensions of the hired hand. Much of that image found its way into the mass media, somewhat relieved by the populist fantasy of the "good" if not too enviable teacher.\*

Schwartz's study of Hollywood movies found that the presence of a teacher tips the odds 3 to 1 in favor of the movie being a comedy. Mass media teachers, creatures of private industry depicting public agents, suffer from

\* Studies of media images were conducted by a group of researchers at the University of Illinois; the work is continuing at the University of Pennsylvania. For a number of years, our focus was the portrayal of teachers, students and schools in the mass media. Some studies dealt with one medium, like Schwartz's (1963) study of Hollywood movies and Brown's (1963) study of magazine fiction; others ranged more widely. The U.S. Office of Education supported my analysis of over 1,400 feature films, television and radio plays, and popular magazine stories featuring 2,800 leading characters in the mass media of 10 countries (Gerbner, 1964, 1966). The National Science Foundation, UNESCO, and the International Sociological Association jointly sponsored a study of the "Film Hero" involving one year's feature film production in 6 countries (Gerbner, 1969). I draw on these and other studies to piece together the image of the "teacher" in mass cultures.

signs of a cultural power conflict in which the media have the upper hand. The study's comprehensive review of research concludes:

Teachers in books, drama, magazine cartoons, and films were depicted as tyrannical, brutal, pedantic, dull, awkward, queer, and depressed. The few attractive teachers remained in the profession only long enough to find a mate. Teachers had a difficult time getting and staying married. One investigator noted that two-thirds of the teachers were portrayed as emotionally maladjusted. Another writer noted that "to succeed as a teacher one must fail as a man or woman." (Schwartz, 1963, p.4)

#### Love and the teacher

Love and sex are dramatic symbols of vitality and power. How a profession fares in love in the mass media is a good measure of its symbolic stature.

The mass media teacher pays a price for professional success. The price is impotence, and worse. The "schoolmarm" image hits women especially hard. Love and marriage are women's chief media "specialties" and typical reasons for existing in the stories at all.

Female characters in the world of mass fiction and drama are limited to a narrow range of parts. That is why media males not only dominate media females (except in the home where males prefer to be incompetent) but also vastly outnumber them. The average ratio is 4 men for every woman. But the proportion varies by theme. Love, marriage, and bringing up children are themes that utilize women characters in parts that do not require special explanation.

Studies of school-related stories in all media (Gerbner, 1964) found both women teachers and love playing prominent parts -- but rarely together. Almost half of all media teachers are women; this is a high female ratio for the media, but still lower than the two-thirds of all real-life teachers who are women. The school stories are more likely to feature romance than are stories in general. But the romance rarely involves the teacher, and least of all the woman teacher.

Typical is Miss Dove who is so devoted, so selfless, so excruciatingly good, that she passes up her opportunity to marry in order to pay back \$11,430 her dead father has "borrowed" from the bank where he worked.

Nearly half of all media adults but only 26 percent of male teachers and no more than 18 percent of female teachers are married. Despite all the romance and happy endings in the stories, teachers rarely inspire love or fail in love, especially with each other. The most common condition of love is that the teacher find a partner outside of education. The typical pattern has her quitting a New England high school and a biology teacher fiance to "find herself" and a man in New York. Or it has him leaving a dull musical chair at a Western college, along with a straight-laced professor girlfriend, to be taught something about music and love in Tin-Pan Alley.

Failure in love and defeat in life permit most media teachers to be fully dedicated to the profession. The media teacher leaving for another specific occupation knows the road to success in the media world. Five times out of six the road leads to show business.

#### Poverty is rare, extracurricular, and remediable

In the film study, 25 of the 470 movies portraying some aspect of education were found to show the financial plight of the schools. The deficiencies are usually in extracurricular activities such as entertainment and sports. There is never a need for more teachers or laboratories or classrooms. Profits from sport events, successful musical shows, and unexpected bequests of the rich are the usual solutions to academic poverty. Only two films showed schools to be public responsibilities publicly financed. Both are far from a typical neighborhood school. One deals with support for West Point, and the other depicts the building of a school in a remote New Zealand village.

Only one film showed the financial problem as one of low salaries for teachers. A wealthy Texas rancher is shocked to find his son trying to raise

a family on the meager salary of an instructor. He secretly negotiates with a local butcher to sell his son meat at half-price. He also tries to prevent his son's promotion, confident that he would return to the ranch. When he does not, the father solves the problem by donating enough money to the school to provide a pay increase for all teachers. (Schwartz, 1963, pp. 49-50)

An analysis of teacher characters in Saturday Evening Post fiction found them in more frequent financial pickle. This was usually explained by showing that they strive less than the other characters. About one-third of the magazine's teachers solve their financial problems by quitting the profession. No teacher is ever given a salary raise. No student is supported on a public scholarship. No community takes the initiative to raise taxes or to build or improve the schools. When there is a suggestion of improvement in the poverty of the schools it is likely to be a private solution such as finding a rich donor or holding a fantastically successful show or sports event. (Brown, 1963)

#### The school sports story

School sports is an arena of "early male socialization." (Booth, 1972) Extensive friendship ties are linked to participation in games. The winning team is also a symbol of an institution's ability to attract talent and display power. Winning scores have been found to relate to legislative appropriations and certainly to alumni giving. An article in the Philadelphia Magazine (May 1972) quotes the head of the Alumni Society as saying that "The Alumnus in Oregon or Texas is going to read about Penn's basketball team in his home town paper, not some professor's finding old ruins in England."

There is no doubt that the most frequent appearance of schools and colleges in the American Press is on the sports page. The magic words of American higher education are Ivy League and Big Ten. Saturday Evening Post readers loved the stories of George Fitch. The first of these, published in 1908, began:

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Yes, sir, it's been seven years now since old Siwash College has been beaten in football...We've shut out Hopkinsville seven times -- pushed them off the field, off the earth, into the hospitals and into the discard. We've beaten six State universities by an average of seven touchdowns, two goal kicks, a rib, three jawbones and four new kinds of yells. We put such a crimp into old Muggledorfer that her Faculty suddenly decided that football developed the toes and teeth at the expense of the intellect and they took up intercollegiate beanbags instead. And in all those seven years we've never really been scared but once...

The school sports story, with its violent terminology, strong group spirit, and concern over the rules of the game, is the most likely vehicle for community enthusiasm, teamwork, and the mixing of different classes and races in a common cause. It generally demonstrates the ethics of skill and power among those who achieve equal status. (This can be contrasted with the symbolic functions of the crime or spy story displaying the game of power among those of unequal status or those who do not play by the same rules.)

A sketch of boys' sports fiction (Evans, 1972) described its symbolic functions as integration into the virtues of unquestioning participation, hero worship, inviolable hierarchy, sorting winners from losers, and a sharp sense of authority, belonging, and superiority. The school becomes society and the game the system at its dramatic best. As the novel of life at Rugby by English author Thomas Hughes (1854), Tom Brown's School Days, that introduced the genre to American boys in 1870, pointed out quite explicitly: "Perhaps ours is the only little corner in the British Empire which is thoroughly, wisely, and strongly ruled just now." A 100 years and several new media later, the functions are the same, even if the tactics a bit more sophisticated.

The film study shows sports to be the central theme in twice as many movies as deal with study, science, or research, and to depict virtues never seen in a portrayal of scholarly activity. The school sport story serves its

symbolic functions in three ways: (1) as the means by which youths from different walks of life find acceptance in the group; (2) as the chief symbolic unifier of students, faculty, parents, and alumni; and (3) as teaching the importance of passing a realistic test of social and ethical "maturity."

The largest single group of stories concentrates on the third, the socio-ethical lesson. The films warn that romantic illusions lead to cynicism and despair. They counsel realism and vigilance lest "alien" ideologies take advantage of and subvert "our" flexible rules for "their" purposes.

"The most common presentation of sports," reported Schwartz (1963 p. 59), "was that it was a much less glamorous and honest activity than student-players were at first led to believe...For the sake of victory, schools were shown to sacrifice their honor by depending upon extra-collegiate sources for both personnel and financial support. This dependence upon outside sources was not portrayed as unethical in all films dealing with sports -- in fact, several films portrayed this dependence in a vein of lighthearted comedy which, if not condoning the practice, did not take the unethical aspects of the situation seriously. However, in the films to seriously treat the unethical practices of the sport and their demoralizing consequences for students, the portrayal of school sports was likened to a rites de passage. Sports were shown as analogous to the battleground upon which a young initiate experienced teamwork and struggle, despair and disillusionment, victory and defeat."

The typical school sports story is a morality play that shows a sort of pragmatic "democracy in action." The rules will bend within reason, and anyone can play, as long as the game is just a game and the prime source of power is clearly understood. Abuse the rules and the tone changes. In a group of films

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gangsters try to manipulate players and even faculty to reap large gambling profits. In another, radicals "disguised as students" (described in a contemporary New York Times review as "namby-pamby, bushy haired, and wearing tortoise-shell glasses") plan to overthrow capitalism, beginning with the college football team. The local hero falls briefly under their spell, but recovers in time to win the "game of the year" and the respect of "normal healthy Americans."

#### Community and power

When they cannot relate to "the game," in which students play the lead, teachers usually do not "belong" at all. Typically presented as alien to the community in which they live and work, and often in conflict with its values, teachers may be seen as well meaning and kindly if impotent, or dangerous and evil if powerful, but rarely both good and effective.

Studies by Bowman (1938), Boys (1946) and Springer (1951) trace community conflict and antagonism through 50 years of magazine publishing, general fiction, and Broadway drama. Brown's (1963) study of Saturday Evening Post fiction found that teachers "act differently" even when trying to conform. The film research concluded that all but 6 of the 28 films touching upon relations between school and community portray a teacher as the target of hostility, ridicule, or ostracism. The offending teachers are usually shown as "outsiders...with their own set of values often aiding in isolating them from the community." (Schwartz, 1963, p. 40)

Nonconformist media teachers usually come to see the error of their ways. One movie depicts a socialistically inclined economics professor striking it rich. He changes his mind about radical causes and returns to his job as a millionaire.

Most instances of unreconciled conflict between teachers and community involve the cardinal sins of trying to change society rather than the schools (usually labeled "Communism") or of finding a source of wisdom outside the approved community context (usually represented as "atheism"). Sex often appears as a malignant obsession when sought by such unlikely characters as teachers. A cynically explicit portrayal in a 1937 movie shows a southern mob lynch a "yankee" teacher convicted of assaulting an attractive student. The district attorney does not believe the teacher guilty, but prosecutes vigorously because of the political value of the case for his own career.

In casting about for occupations to delineate hero types who are both right and mighty, mass media authors rarely pick teaching. Smythe's (1953) analysis of television drama found teachers outstanding among all TV occupations in being the "cleanest" and the "kindest." But they were also rated the "weakest," the "softest," and the "slowest."

The more potent teacher risks turning into that symbol of evil intellect -- the mass media scientist. On television, the scientist was rated as the most "deceitful," "cruel," and "unfair" of all professional types.

Personality ratings used to assess students' images of real-life teachers tapped mass-cultural stereotypes. O'Dowd and Beardsley (1960) found that the student image of the school teacher is that of an unselfish, uninteresting, unsuccessful and effeminate person. The scientist, on the other hand, presents the image of the cool, cruel, hard-driving intellectual and often a loner who cannot be trusted.

Similarly, Gusfield and Schwartz (1963) concluded that the teacher image presents "the sharpest contrast between elements of esteem and status, on the

one hand, and those of power and income on the other". The teacher ranks as the most "honest" and second most "useful" of 15 occupations, and also the "weakest" and "lightest." The scientist again appears to be cool, tough, and anti-social as well as "irreligious" and "foreign".

#### Publish AND perish

It is not surprising that the dramatic uses of scholarship and research contrast sharply with those portraying sports and other entertainment. Academic research leads to murder in nearly half of the 25 films found to portray teachers conducting it. Film teachers invent poisons, revive prehistoric monsters, or train other creatures to do away with suspected enemies. One famous movie of the 1950's shows a psychology professor hypnotizing gorillas to murder the girls who rejected his advances. The typical plot has some obsession drive the demented intellect to invent an instrument that gets out of control and destroys its maker to the relief of all mankind.

In a group of nine films dealing with research, the experimenting teacher or professor falls victim to his own delusions and exposes the stupidity or hypocrisy of scholarship. Typical is the movie in which the professor of Egyptology incorrectly deciphers an ancient tablet and the false message sends him on a series of comic adventures.

Research and experimentation fare better in the hands of amateurs. Student scholarship is usually foolish but never evil or selfish. Incidentally, classroom scenes hardly ever exhibit learning or scholarship. They are used to display problems of authority and discipline.

The teacher struggling for discipline in the school is often brutal and sadistic. In films of more recent vintage, students (as if representing the avenging forces of society) strike back in kind. The "class struggle" is one in which the teacher rarely comes out on top.

#### Images across cultures

Through a series of cross-cultural comparative studies we tried to understand our own images better by comparing them with those of others. (Gerbner, 1964, 1966) Four countries of Western Europe and five countries of Eastern Europe (including the Soviet Union) provided our comparisons. A plot sketch from each country's sample will give something of the flavor of the material.

"Red Castle" is what townspeople call the new headquarters of the Teachers' Recreation Center. It was a baron's palace before the revolution. A priceless collection of jewels is still stored in the Castle. One day a precious stone is missing. The shadow of suspicion falls on Professor Zach, a frequent visitor at "Red Castle." But the clever deductions of his students (turned amateur detectives) vindicate the Professor, and the real culprits are caught. (Czechoslovakia)

Word gets around that the attractive new teacher is carrying on with the well-known high school jock. And in the locker room, too. She is nearly ruined before it develops that the student, himself the victim of a psychopathic, scandal-mongering father, only tried to rape her in an unguarded moment. (U.S.)

The tactlessness of a dry and dogmatic school director drives one of the students of the elementary school of Borsk into the clutches of a religious sect. The teachers' collective is dismayed. A timid young instructor is drawn into the struggle against the sect. Emboldened

through her efforts to demonstrate that religious dogmatism defeats the goals of free education, she realizes the great role of the teacher in public life. (U.S.S.R.)

The humane methods of the new teacher in an East End slum school lead to disaster. "Spare the rod..." gloat the hardened old disciplinarians. The teacher is about to give up and leave when a glimmer of student response at the end of the term gives him second thoughts. (England)

The impoverished peasants of a village refuse to work for starvation wages on the Count's estate. But the gendarmes have a firm grip on this treasonous activity. The peasants are ordered to the railroad station to welcome the arriving Count. They come. But they come to pay respects to the departing teacher who is being run out of town as the chief troublemaker. (Hungary)

A utopian idealist teaching in a lycee becomes so involved in his pacifist schemes that he neglects his family. Reality finally deals him a tragic but sobering blow: his daughter has a lover, has taken part in a robbery, and is about to run away. (France)

Orphaned, hungry, and demoralized, a gang of boys terrorizes the countryside at the end of the war. A former partisan leader, now teacher, turns them into useful citizens. (Poland)

#### Teacher goals and fates

We found that the Russian and other socialist media teachers are depicted as more "learned," "democratic," and "manly" than those of the West. Eastern mass media stories of schools and teachers stress the ideals of service to community and nation more than three times as frequently as U.S. and other Western media.

U.S. media portray a higher proportion of women teachers on all levels of education than do the media of other countries. Our media also depict a composite image of the teacher as less professional and less likely either to

advance or to slip on the social ladder than the media teacher of other countries. The U.S. media teacher is more easily frustrated and victimized by the much higher level of violence and illegality prevalent in her world than is the media teacher of the other countries.

Teachers are quitting the profession in about 28 percent of U.S. and Western and 14 percent of Eastern media stories. The main reasons for giving up teaching in Western media are the frustrations and conflicts of the job, and marriage. Eastern media teachers leaving the field of education are most likely to be fired, retired at the end of their service, or advanced to positions of higher leadership.

Teachers stand out everywhere in seeking intellectual values more often than do the other adult characters in the same fictional environment. But Eastern European media characters, and especially teachers, are different from those of other countries in their much more frequent pursuit of goals of social morality (justice, honor, public service, a better world).

We analyzed the barriers that stand in the way of achievement and found that the one major difference between the problems of U.S. media teachers and those of the other countries lies in the teachers themselves. Only in U.S. media are teachers more likely than other adults to be depicted as handicapped by their own weaknesses and fears.

The fears may be justified. Over one-third of all U.S. media teachers commit violence and nearly half fall victim to it. This is low by U.S. media standards, but it is roughly twice the mayhem found in Western media and about six times that found in the media world of education in Eastern Europe.

A happy ending is symbolic insistence that justice triumphs despite all troubles. American media stories are the most insistent. Conditions of success, however, are more indicative of its functions than frequency alone. We compared the goals of unambiguously successful characters with those who clearly fail.

Only in American media are successful teachers depicted as less likely to pursue aims of social morality than are teachers marked for failure. Many U.S. media teachers who do tackle social goals are naive, comic, and even mad, and most are crushed by some misfortune fictional fate throws in their paths.

#### The role of students

Being a student is a long and varied stage in life. The range of opportunities for portrayal is great. The institutional and social forces that shape the representation of teachers in the mass media also affect the depiction of students. But the potential diversity of the student image leads to extraordinary differences in scope and function.

American mass media are unique in not earmarking significant resources to young people. They treat children as a low-income, high-profit, quick-turnover market where the message of social power (police, violence) can be sold in its cheapest and crudest forms. As if to underline the analogy to the slum, the trade journals call the children's program segment on television the "kidvid ghetto."

Market considerations also account for the fact that children and youth (as well as old people) in leading roles make the product a "specialty story." They presumably fragment audience appeal and need special exploitation. American youths become universally employable for dramatic purposes (as otherwise) when they leave school.

An international study of the "film hero" (Gerbner 1969) classified students as an occupational group. Entertainers head the list of occupations with 18 percent of all leading characters. Students are next to the last with 4 percent. (The last were laborers.) The Western European pattern is similar, although students are more numerous than in U.S. films.

The films of Eastern Europe offer striking contrast. Students are in first place on the same list of occupations, with percentages ranging from 20

percent in Poland to 24 percent in Yugoslavia and 28 percent of all leading characters in Czechoslovakia

The diversity of the portrayals permits few generalizations. Focus on childhood and adolescence in American media requires specialized story values. They are often found outside the regular social context. Several stories are about mentally ill, retarded, and physically handicapped youngsters. One revolves around a little boy "playing Cupid." Another deals with a sadistic teenage gang leader. A sociology student's research requires her to pose as a prostitute. Youngsters complicate life for attractive widowed fathers or mothers. A hard-boiled manager of a gambling house finds himself the guardian of a six-year-old orphan. A good-hearted mute befriends a homeless prostitute and her little daughter. Six homeless waifs camp out in an unused shack on the Connecticut estate where a glamorous but exhausted star seeks peace and quiet.

Students in the media of Eastern Europe are not only more numerous but also move in the thematic and moral mainstream of their symbolic world. This is a world in which a mountain youth pressed into hard labor by the lord of the manor joins the outlaws to fight injustice -- as his father had done before him. A crippled and lonely student finds amusement in shooting birds from his wheelchair, until he downs a homing pigeon awaited by a little girl and her fishermen friends, and begins the slow, painful road to recovery for both the pigeon and himself. Three boys on a school outing steal away into the woods and come upon a partisan hide-out; their teacher demands an explanation for their absence, but he is the local commander of the native fascist militia! A theft of puppets from the school theater sends a group of youngsters on a wild chase involving an unpopular boy who plays detective, unaware that his schoolmates suspect him of the crime. A school girl's vacation love affair, her first, sets her on a course of competition and conflict with her attractive aunt. A school boy longing for a bicycle stumbles

upon lost money -- and discovers the difficulty of making a moral choice. A group of classmates decide to expose the hypocrisy and stealing going on at their collective farm -- but what to do when they find some of their own parents among the culprits? A student poses as a German sympathizer in order to obtain information for the Resistance; the anti-fascist patriots are out to kill him, but his mission demands that he maintain silence. A young pupil is falsely accused of having stolen his classmate's pencil, and confesses to escape the ridicule of his accusers -- only to make matters worse.

In these stories, school is often the center of social and moral struggle. Behind the authority of the teacher stands the power of the state. Analysts rated the media schools of Eastern Europe as "related to real life" and learning as "of immediate benefit" about twice as frequently as in the media schools of the West. Eastern European media students are shown as "interested in knowledge," as "leaders and organizers," and as "participating in community affairs" from two to three times as often as those of the West. Eastern European media students are depicted as taking examinations three times as frequently as U. S. media students, but the latter were observed "dominating classroom activity" four times as frequently as the former.

#### Knowledge and its control

An episode of the television serial "Wild Wild West" features a geology professor who, imbued with noble if (naturally) impractical ideas, goes West in the employ of a rich prospector in order to alleviate his own genteel poverty. But the prospector lets him down. Feeling betrayed (with some justification), he becomes obsessed with thoughts of revenge. His knowledge, now out of control of an employer becomes a menace to society. He plots to destroy the state through a ser-

of earthquakes triggered by dynamite blasts at critical points in the fault line he mapped through the area. "I have turned the tide," he cries. "Employed nature for my own use -- now I want my reward." Brawny agent West and his brainy side-kick (!) make sure that he gets it. We last see him scrawling equations on a chalkboard as he holds "class" alone in his jail cell.

All societies suspect what they need but cannot fully control. Symbolizing such uneasy symbiotic relationships are ambivalent images of oracles, eccentrics, witches, alchemists, and others "possessed" of independent knowledge, as well as teachers. The teacher image is likely also to fall short of the Mandarin ideal or to suffer from the human tendency to denigrate "outgrown" authority.

Beyond such similarities, however, differences in mass-mediated symbolic functions reveal and cultivate significant social distinctions. As we go from West to East, teachers stand out in their own fictional environments as more distinguished in learning and in qualities of personal and social morality. The terms of this morality are not necessarily comparable across cultures. The ethic of individualistic liberalism is not the same as that of socialist morality or the Soviet concept of "the moral development of the child," even if some of the same terms are used. Nevertheless, the image of the teacher in the socialist media reflects a happier fate and more stable, purposeful, and socially meaningful existence in its own fictional "world" than it does in the West.

Differences in social organization account for some of these distinctions. Mass media are cultural organs of industrial society. Their ownership, management, and clientele -- extending the institutional order into the cultural sphere -- shape their outlook and functions. The organizational and client relationships of Eastern European media interlock with other public institutions, including the schools, the party, and the state itself. The "hidden curriculum" serves the same institutional interests as the overt one; both are agencies of planned social

transformation. This places media images of schools, scholars, and the knowledge they symbolize in the mainstream of the symbolic world undergoing a cultural revolution. In performing their symbolic functions, socialist media can take advantage of their legacy of intellectual leadership in nationalist and proletarian movements in which teachers have had a prominent place for centuries.

Organizational and client relationships of American media also reward development of a particular selection from prevalent cultural patterns. The selection manifests the dual character of private-enterprise views on public enterprise. On one hand, schools are a necessary cost factor whose value is limited to its direct usefulness to the investment in current products, practices, and outlooks. On the other hand, schools represent political capital and popular aspirations for mobility, equality, and social reform. The concept of knowledge and its role in and control by society are caught in the cross-fire. The most enduring and pervasive images of teachers in American mass culture are those that humiliate and depress them. Failure in love and impotence in life permit them to be "good." Or they can be vigorous but evil or perhaps only ridiculous.

Poverty is normal and probably desirable for a dependent institution that should not develop a strong power-base of its own. When cut loose from corporate, military, law-enforcement or other established power, even the "miracles of science" turn into "mad scientist" horrors.

No school, or culture, educates children for some other society. Giving teachers a messianic mission and having schools soak up all the dreams and aspirations citizens have for their children doom the enterprise to failure. No social order can "afford" to make good such a promise. The illusion itself contains the seeds of the "noble but impractical" image. It becomes only "reasonable" and "realistic" to show teachers full of goodness but sapped of vitality and power. Turn on the power and the impotent figure becomes a monster, only confirming

the doubts and suspicions inherent in the ambivalent image.

Unlike the army and the police, the schools do not appear to be a major public responsibility at all. They are shown as places of controversy and conflict, except when the goal is winning for "the team." The school sports story provides a dramatic framework for learning the rules of order and life in a community dedicated to skills directly applicable to competitive power.

American media scholars symbolize the promise of learning on behalf of noble and idealistic goals, and undercut that promise by being strange, weak and foolish, and generally unworthy of the support of the community. The "hidden curriculum" cultivates the illusion of social reform through education and, at the same time, helps pave the way for the perennial collapse of its achievement. As things work out in the symbolic realm, the bankruptcy of the schools is their own fault. The invidious distinction between teaching and "doing" is maintained. The promise of a productive society to place the cultivation of a distinctly human self-consciousness highest on its scale of priorities is again betrayed.

American media are cultural arms of private enterprise in the public sphere. The images they project have a dual character. They attempt to be servicable (or at least not inimical) to the commercial and other interests of private enterprise and, at the same time, represent those public ideals that give them universal attraction, currency, and credibility. That is why the study of capitalist mass media and their symbolic functions present a particularly complex and challenging task. The task is to discover the actual laws of symbolic behavior in a field of conflicting institutional interests, and to assess their real contributions to the cultivation of human conceptions and social policy.

I doubt that the nature of education, the role of knowledge, and the prospect for real changes in school policy can be fully grasped until that assessment is well underway. New developments in communication technology have the potential of altering social patterns of knowledge, as did the "old" developments. The question is whether

they will merely extend even further the scope and reach of the existing structure, or begin to change them. That, of course, is not a technological but an institutional question. Institutions use technology in communications and culture for their own purposes. The image of the schoolteacher in the "hidden curriculum" of the mass media may continue to be a useful indicator of those purposes.

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SIN, SUFFER, REPENT: THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE  
CONFESSIONS MAGAZINE

All mass media are market oriented, but confession magazines must also be supermarket oriented. Depending for the bulk of their circulation on single-copy sales through food, drug, and variety chains, they have a special task of supermarket salesmanship via magazine cover.

The first confession magazine ever published featured on its cover the swooning faces of a young man and woman and bore the title: "And Their Love Turned to Hatred." Since then, this basic structure of outward pictorial bliss and stark verbal reality developed into a standard formula for confession magazine cover design. The pictorial emphasis shifted almost exclusively to the radiant image of the confession-type cover girl, while the verbal context became ever more lurid and shocking. A casual glance at today's confessional displayed on the magazine rack reveals a striking contrast between the pictorial image and the apparently unrelated verbal meanings.

Struck by the incongruity, and intrigued by what appeared to be the ambivalent social role of the confessions -- provocative yet puritanical -- we conducted a series of studies. We also surveyed other evidence designed to find out what forces shape the unique and consistent cover and, in fact, editorial formula, and how they might function in the lives of their readers.

We began our studies with a sample of all covers available on a newsstand. We also wrote to confession magazine art editors. Then we surveyed the trade and scholarly literature, examined the content of the magazines over a 15-year period, and conducted a small experiment to learn how well the cover design might perform its symbolic functions. Some of the covers studied in 1957



can be seen on Figure 1, above.

It is evident that all cover girls displayed appealing features, flashing smiles, cosmetic perfection, and eye-contact with the viewer. But the verbal context surrounding the image of the radiantly poised, wholesome cover girl was anything but trouble-free. The story titles and blurbs spoke of women "attacked," "frightened and shamed," confessing "The Most

Shameful Night of My Life," exclaiming "Oh, God, Don't Let Me Hurt Him," admitting that "We Didn't Know Our Love Was Abnormal," and so on.

About one out of every three cover titles dealt with sexual problems varying from apparent nymphomania to frigidity, and from taboos to sex-tests and tips. Another third reflected mainly marital and parental troubles such as adultery, bigamy, illegitimacy, miscegenation, etc. The remaining third focused on other forms of anguish, shame, terror, illness, and crime.

This is the dark and turbulent verbal world into which confession publishers insert, as a matter of policy, the glowing image of clean-cut all-American girlhood. "There is virtually no relationship between the pictorial element and the titles," explains the art editor of one confession magazine. "The blurbs or cover titles have no relationship to the subject," writes another. They all agree that each element serves its own purpose. Combined, they help satisfy the multiple functions and requirements of specialized distribution and sales.

#### Mechanics of distribution

Most confessions are sold from the magazine rack. Some outward manifestation of glamor helps the confessions match their slick rivals, the women's service magazines', bright facade of supermarket cheer.

But all cannot be sweetness and light. The basic appeal of the confession must also find expression on the cover. This appeal is the feminine counterpart of the stark cover themes of its brother magazine, the detective mystery, a subject we shall come to in Chapter 00. But the confessions cannot afford to follow the pictorial design of their counterparts.

The outwardly sadistic appeal of the crime-detective magazines (usually the portrayal of brutality against women) got that group

into difficulty. By the mid-fifties only five detective magazines carrying advertising reported a single-copy circulation of over 50,000, with total monthly sales of less than a million and a half. Their fate could hardly inspire the 18 confession magazines in the same circulation class, still selling seven million copies a month over food and drug chain counters. "Regulations enforced by these managements," wrote one art editor, "result in penalties to a publisher from banning one issue to losing forever the racks of that chain. Local censorship and religious black lists are also important in establishing format, for local magazine wholesalers and distributors are held accountable for prosecution and penalties."

The economics of magazine display space and the rivalry among titles impose further requirements. Chain stores average about 60 magazine titles; but roughly 80 percent of the dollar volume comes from the top 20. Their total yearly sales from all general magazines put together just about equals that of the chewing gums; but the magazines take up more space.

Claims that confession readers spend more on some staples than others may attract advertisers but have little effect on retail store managers who consider the magazine display space a customer convenience, not a major profit-maker. Although many of the racks are owned and serviced by the wholesale distributor, the floor manager on the spot often rules the display. His judgment, guided by customer comment, may result in preferential treatment for the magazines whose outward appearance conforms to the widest variety of clientele sensibilities. Offenders, especially in the women's field, suffer by being hidden from sight -- and sale -- behind their rivals on the crowded rack.

The cover design developed by the confessions relegates the explosive social appeal to a relatively abstract -- verbal -- form. Counterpointing this appeal is the dominant pictorial image of the

cover girl, unrelated to the surrounding verbal context.

Art editors conceive of the romance-confession cover girl as a projection of the reader's self-image, "a composite of our reader type." Her function on the cover appears to be analogous to the inside heroine's function of identification. To take our analysis of the cover further, we must first look deeper into the development, mission, editorial specification and social functions of the magazine itself. After that look, we shall come back to the cover and to the experiment we conducted to test its appeals.

Empire: the selling of women of 'Wage Town'

The confession magazine grew out of readers' first-person accounts of intimate problems and true experiences written to Bernarr Macfadden's Physical Culture magazine. It sprouted out of the ferment in morals and manners following World War I, contributed to the daytime serial, came to full flowering in the decades of mid-century, and withstood the tidal wave of television better than most popular magazines.

"Broken-hearted women sent us letters. . ." wrote Mary Macfadden (1953) "after they had done two hundred knee bends, twice a day, and had thrown away their corsets, only to find that the Greek gods wouldn't give them a tumble. . . There were girls who confessed their sexual mistakes and thought they were fallen women until they had taken up dumbbells (the iron kind) and gone in for carrots which had given them bright eyes. . .

"These are true stories," she claims to have told Bernarr Macfadden. "They come from the following you have attracted . . .

out a magazine to be called True Story, written by its own readers in the first person. This has never been done before. The idea has a correlative force. I studied correlativity in school . . . It's the kind of thing that helped to make the British Empire."

It was. By the second half of the century, some forty titles in the romanceconfession field tried to lure advertising sponsorship with a guaranteed circulation of 16 million. The first 18 titles reported an average sale of over 7 million copies per issue. Still, the same number of slick women's service magazines attracted more than twice as much advertising support. But while most big slick consumer magazines collapsed when, even at the peak of their readership, their sales power per advertising dollar was eclipsed by that of television, the confession group managed to stay in business. Cheap product performing a special service in a clearly delineated target area saved the confession magazines from the fate of the others.

The confession was first written by what the Saturday Evening Post once termed "Macfadden's anonymous amateur illiterates." For some time Bernarr insisted on stories from "the common people," and had the thousands of manuscripts pouring in screened by amateur "consultants." If a narrative sounded too highbrow, he might ask the elevator man to read it. If it was over his head, it went back to the author. A wag on the editorial staff had written a

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piece for barroom reading entitled: "How I was Demoted to Editor of True Story and Worked My Way Up to Elevator Man Again!"

In the course of time, blatant amateurishness changed into a smoothly running fictional assembly line creating the illusion of homely authenticity. Typically, white males prescribe, select, edit, and publish for a lower-class female public the work of a "hard-core" of semi-professional free lance middle-class housewives. Reader response is slight and generally ignored in favor of a more empirical test. "When we see our sales figures dropping, that's when we try to change some format and content, and we do that until sales figures pick up again," explained one editor. The fictionalizing of authentic-sounding stories, and male direction, assure the publishers and their business sponsors total editorial control. Editors describe the main tasks of the magazines as the cultivation of conservative and traditional values of middle-class society adjusted to a working class readership. Even the few black oriented confessions strive to "develop ideals suitable to young blacks. . . By and large, we are not different from middle-class white morality." (Sonenschein, 1972) By claiming that they are authentic "confessions" of ordinary Americans, the stories implicitly establish the "reality standard" to which readers may relate their own lives.

The editorial formula attracted, from the beginning, persons who had never before read magazines and still read little else. This is a public with little education or purchasing power, neglected by other publishers because they were not the sort that

advertisers were especially interested in reaching. Only some 10 percent of the titles are addressed to black women.

Reader research and distribution data indicate that small towns, the South, and the Midwest furnish more than their share of romance-confession readers. Indicative of the composition of the readership is that, for example, 64 percent of True Confession's readers come from the homes of labor which about one in three own. More than half are young women with children under six. One in four has children under two. Sixteen percent also hold down an outside job. Five percent attended college, but 18 percent never finished high school. Seven out of ten own automobiles, but only six out of ten have telephones, and almost as many own sewing machines.

Comparable figures for slick women's service magazines like Ladies Home Journal show seven out of ten owning their homes; one out of ten having children under two; 30 percent having attended college; nine out of ten owning automobiles, but only 13 percent sewing machines.

Readers with less money to spend hold little attraction to advertisers. Sonenschein's (1970) study found one-third of all confession magazine advertising of the dime-store mail order variety, and two-thirds self-improvement through weight reduction,

breast expansion, cosmetics, loans, patent medicine, and religion. The confessions' editorial recipe must, therefore, bear a double burden; it must be appetizing for its lower class women readers, but it must also be spiced with ingredients worthy of business sponsorship.

Rather than trying to gloss over the working class status of their market, confession publishers make it the basis of their appeal. Class lines, they declare in the title of a booklet written for the trade, are The Invisible Wall -- The Social Factor in Mass Selling. "Wage Town," confession publishers claim, comprises half of all families in America. "Wage Town millions," the advertiser is told, "speak a different language and respond to different stimuli."

In an office memorandum "On the Subject of Social Class and its Relation to Magazines," the director of research for Macfadden Publications, defines the Family Behavior Magazine (as the trade prefers to call the confession) as the magazine of Wage Town. "These people can be reached effectively only in terms of their interests . . . When one of our editors got off the track and began running some stories which would have been excellent and fitting in . . . Ladies' Home Journal, the readership of those stories was the lowest in years . . . That editor was given his walking papers . . . In this America of ours there is no iron curtain, but there are distinctions of interest as different as those of the Texas cowboy and the Boston aristocracy."

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A booklet entitled The Invisible Wall informs advertisers that "fundamentally. . . Behavior Magazine reading is largely a matter of class status. . ." and "Essentially the people who read Behavior Magazines are working-class people -- in both the occupational and social sense of the word." Businessmen are requested "to ponder the point that a different market requires a different media approach and a different kind of magazine concept" in order to "move your goods and services -- in ever increasing quantities through The Invisible Wall!" He is then reminded that wage earners "marry younger, start earning faster (because they leave school earlier), have larger families, more children, thus spend more."

The social mission of the confession magazine

Confession publishers regard their magazines as performing an economic service, a cultural task and a social mission. Perhaps the most lucid statement revealing a management view of this multiple function, seasoned with a bit of individual philosophy, appeared in a booklet entitled The Woman That Taxes Made; An Editor's Intimate Picture of a Large but Little Understood Market, by Fred Sammis of True Story.

Mr. Sammis dedicates his appeal in the hope "that my brief picture of these particular Women That Taxes Made will help the men who run American business to a better understanding of how to sell them." In it, he develops a thesis calculated to attract advertising.

Briefly, it is this. The post World War II "redistribution

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of wealth through high taxes and bulging payrolls" has created a revolution in marketing. The classical image of the working class has, at least for merchandising purposes, given way to that of a new middle-class market, with anxieties and aspirations to match. The new "woman that taxes made" no longer cries herself to sleep with problems like "the roof leaks," or "I can't pay the doctor bill," or "we can't afford this new baby." Hers is no longer the life of "family labor" with few tools to help. "But she does not default in her vital role as heroine of the family. She simply takes on new problems." The problems that "fill her mind by day and worry her thoughts at night" are more likely to be "Nancy is going around with a wild crowd," or "Johnny will get killed in his hot rod," or "they say Jim is dating a girl on the swingshift."

These new women from the homes of labor find "moving up" strange, uncomfortable. Uncertain, often bewildered in their new roles, they have a burning interest in "reading how other women like themselves solved their problems." They form a "huge and responsive market of young labor families who need everything American business can tell them about."

"Remember," writes Mr. Sammis, "these women never were, and never will be, the avid readers of textbooks nor the patients of psychiatrists . . . They cannot and do not often read the conventional woman's magazines. They read very little that is not written in their conversational language . . . Their interests are almost entirely in people . . . The abstract is seldom discussed. "Except for daytime serials (. . . which

can handle only One behavior problem at a time over a period of several weeks) no other medium deals in the problems, lives, or language" of these women, the more than 10 million that we have gathered together with one careful editorial formula . . ." Thus, writes Mr. Sammis, "there is no comparable way of reaching this great mass of women who spend more than thirty billions of dollars annually!"

A note of warning about this reader adds the element of urgency to the magazines' appeal for business support: "She is exposed, far more than her white collar sister, to demagoguery, labor agitators and radical philosophies! Yet American business, rarely, if ever, runs its institutional messages in the magazines read by these women . . . I believe it is an economic sin to default in the enlightenment of the more than ten millions of women who live and learn by our behavior magazines."

Such, in broad outline, are some managerial assumptions with which the "behavior magazines" approach what they conceive to be their economic, cultural, and social mission. Implicit in these assumptions is a double-barreled editorial formula. It is tailored to a "feminine" psychology in a working-class setting, with fears, anxieties (and pocket-books) raised to unaccustomed levels. Of special interest to advertisers is the fact that economic grievance has been minimized as not befitting the market status of "the woman that taxes made;" that the appeal of social resentment has been structured to revolve around "behavior problems" usually

within the family; and that "economic enlightenment" can diagnose today's ills as the price paid for "the redistribution of wealth through high taxes."

Depth studies help publishers define their targets. They trace the "invisible wall" that separates confession readership from that of white collar magazines. They spell out social issues in terms of personal troubles. They help condense internalized conflicts into editorial policy capsules.

A study by Social Research, Inc. explains that the confession reader does not feel as much the center and prime mover of the family as does her white collar sister. She is more emotional about her role as a mother, and is torn by a conflict between that job and her role as wife.

The confession publisher illustrates the difference by contrasting "Built in Baby Sitter" with the confession story, "I Killed My Child." The former, taken from a white collar woman's magazine is a "superficial problem, which does an excellent job of entertaining. But inherent in its situation, its manners, its artwork, is a social sophistication that is not to be found in Behavior Magazine stories.

"'I Killed My Child' is a stark title. It is also the true story of a young mother who saw her child killed by an automobile. Because she had taken the child with her when she left home in a fit of anger after an argument with her husband, she could never thereafter escape the sense of personal guilt she had for her child's death."

The confession reader, claims the report, looks upon men as more powerful, dominant, sexually active and demanding than does her white collar sister. "Since she sees her husband as more independent and self-sufficient, she does not seem to feel, as white collar magazine readers do, that her mother role will necessarily stably tie her man down . . . [Her] family is based on two rather separate sets of relations -- that of woman to man, or wife to husband; and that of mother to child. . . This split in her own social personality can give her trouble." She finds her troubles reflected in stories like "Torn Between Duty and Desire," "He Locked Me Out," and "The Devil in My Man," which has the subcaption "Facing the truth at last I knew my husband was destroying my children and me, but he was my lover, and I could not let him go."

The need for identification and realism "is one reason why editors employ the techniques that are the hallmarks of the Behavior Magazine format," the advertiser is told. Instead of "To Catch a Man," or "The Lover I dreamed Of," a confession story in the same vein is titled, "I Want You." "Photographs instead of the more idealized techniques of oil, tempera, or water color. The 'I did' or 'I was' type of headline rather than fancier, more subtle ones." "And," businessmen are reminded, "importantly, the factor of self-identification. . . seems to carry over with equal force into advertising."

#### Editorial prescription

Although most of the actual writing is done by a handful of semi-professionals, the need for fresh material makes it desirable

to publicize editorial specifications. This is done mostly through writers' magazines and market publications. Out of a survey of this material consisting of articles such as "I Sell Confessions," "How to Hit True Story," "The Truth About Confessions," and out of editors' own descriptions of their market needs in the yearly, Writer's Market, emerges a more detailed picture of the editorial prescription and social role of the romance-confession magazine.

Identification through the first person point of view and the flavor of authenticity requires settings congruent with that of the target audience. "Central characters must come from workshirt backgrounds," runs through all market advice. "Our heroines are waitresses, wives of mechanics, file clerks -- not heiresses or glamorous career women," and "usually not college girls." And: "People in our stories take out the garbage, have linen problems, need to wash the floors. . . ." One writer warns the aspirant that "If you cannot identify yourself with a workshirt character, you shouldn't be trying this field."

The goals, motives, horizons appropriate to the "workshirt background" of that machinist's wife or file clerk, and befitting her "new status" on the consumer market, are spelled out in detail. She is, the writer is told, "a homemaker whose idea of decor extends as far as the large flowers on her wallpaper and no further. The woman's wants and ambitions are small ones: appliances to make her home comfortable; a freezer full of food because it's food that represents security; chintz and linoleum rugs and net curtains. A steady job with regular pay is all she requires of her husband -- that and fidelity."

Empathy is strengthened through sympathy. Editors are as reluctant to use unsympathetic leading characters as art directors would be to run unattractive girls on the cover. "Who," writes one of them, "wants to be identified with a bitch?"

Sympathetic characterization must be combined with the requirements of coming "realistically" to terms with sordid situations. The problem in the confession story is how to get basically decent persons into these messes," explains one writer. Understanding the heroine's motives, even when mistaken, or deeds, even when wrong, does not mean that she should gain insight into herself too soon or too broadly. We writers and readers, "have to know why she is hungry for love, or why she sticks by a brutal husband, why she doesn't escape from what she thinks is an impossible situation."

Even if readers do "turn to our magazines for entertainment and escape," another editor remarks, "the story must give them more. This then is the mission of our writers: to give our readers what they want plus constructive instructions on how to be happy."

The romance-confession path to "happiness" is long and rocky. And it leads through hell. The agony of the journey is made plausible only by the underlying assumption that is the norm, that life can be bearable if we grant that society is a hostile jungle. The empathetic reader travels this path through the eyes of the first person narrator standing for the norm to be demonstrated.

the "I" sins and suffers, stumbling inevitably in the booby-traps of common nightmares and universal fears placed along the road. Yet the story should be told "with the warm breathlessness of a girl confiding to a friend across the kitchen table," says one successful writer describing the genesis of her first big sale, a sleeping pill story -- "Side Door to Hell." "I wrote it straight across the kitchen table . . . In the breathless rush of words, grammar, syntax, correct antecedents went overboard. Where they didn't, I went back and threw them out. The story sold . . . And then I knew I had it -- the thing every published confession story shares with every other. That's the manner of telling."

Warm-hearted characterization and breezy, conversational intimacy counterpoint visceral themes of human misfortune. Summed up in the words of practicing writers and editors, "one simple formula underlies three-fourths of all published confession stories -- a simple, trustful human is faced with a complex, real and brutal world." And: "Characters make their discovery by bumping up against bad trouble as they rush headlong down the line of least resistance."

The protest inherent in this appeal is no secret to writers. In one of her stories, an author explains, "a girl contends with ignorance that calls her cerebral palsied sister an idiot. In another, a girl unknowingly marries a homosexual. Her contention is not with him as villain but with the fact of his nature, and indirectly, with society which has molded that nature. In 'I Lived

With Evil,' the third story, an idealistic girl finds out that her grandmother is running an abortion hospital. But it is society, not the grandmother, which makes abortion mills profitable."

The editorial formula capitalizes upon its appeal to discontent by turning protest into adjustment. Aside from such "economic enlightenment" as can be imparted breathlessly across the kitchen table (or through service features and institutional ads), the formula is in making the "simple, trustful human" remain simple (even if not so trustful) till the end; in making her act of defiance a crime or a sin; in making her, not society, repent and reform; in permitting her only to come to terms, and not to grips, with the "brutal world" in which she lives.

"Usually," explains the expert, "this basic formula -- simple trustful human versus brutal world -- dovetails neatly with the old sin-suffer-repent standby formula. In fighting back against brutality surrounding her, the heroine first sins, then suffers, then repents. In the cerebral palsy story . . . when the pressure of society becomes too great, the heroine runs away, changes her name, deserts her family, suffers, and finally repents."

Analyzing why some of her stories didn't sell, a writer discovered that in the rejected stories, "my heroine was trying to wrest events about to suit herself, instead of dazedly watching them go by. The story lacked the theme: trustful, confused, human against the world."

Buffeted by events she cannot understand and is not permitted to "wrest about to suit herself," the heroine's headlong flight "down the line of least resistance" leads to her inevitable "sin." As she has no conscious relatedness to the larger social context with which she must, in fact, contend, her act becomes irrelevant as social protest. It only brings calamity to her and to those she loves. Her suffering is a spine-tingling object lesson in bearing up under relentless blows of half-understood events. Through her agony comes not insight into the circumstances of her act, transcending the immediate causes of her misfortune, but, if anything, a remote glimpse of such "happiness" as might be had in coming to terms with an unbending, punitive, and invisible code. Responding to hidden authority rather than being permitted to be self-directing, her "problem-solving" becomes an unreflecting drift toward adjustment.

#### The world of the confessions

Wilbur Schramm (1961) analyzed a sample of 100 confession stories. "It proved unnecessary to read that many," he wrote. "The results stabilized by the time 30 had been read. Indeed, the consistency and sameness of these magazines is one of their outstanding characteristics."

"Basic to the formula. . ." Schramm noted, "is the deliberately induced sense of reality. . . In effect, the reader of one of these stories is being invited to eavesdrop or peep on a very personal scene which would otherwise be hidden from him."

The style of the confessions has much to do with the style of news. Creating the illusion of representative authenticity and "normality" is the key to the norm-setting functions of both. The difference is that while news is a legend of things that happen to others, the confession story, even more than other forms of drama and fiction, (except perhaps the daytime serial and family situation comedy aims to hit home for most readers.

Occupational trends in the world of the confessions remained fairly stable with only the number of housewives declining somewhat and the proportion of professionals (mostly men) increasing. The pattern from several studies shows most employed characters in skilled, clerical, or sales work. Wealth comes into the picture rarely, as when a heroine happens to find (or lose) a rich man. Hardship is more frequent, but usually in the background or the past. The typical narrator is a pretty (but "average") woman in her late teens or twenties. She has an even chance to be single or married, and may work as a clerk or salesgirl, unless she is just finishing school or is already a housewife. She lives in (or comes from) a small town, confesses to the Christian belief in God, and has problems with money, housing, health, and job, in that order. But most of her troubles come from people and not from things. Her typical antagonist is an older stronger male in skilled work, sales, or lower management. It is the figure of a lover, husband, father in various combinations or just a man who will finally come to "tame" and dominate her. (deSagasti, 1971; Sonenschein (1970).

Economic striving in the world of the confession magazine is not the Horatio Alger type; it consists of stretching the paycheck to meet the monthly payments. Schramm found that where economic advancement was the goal (in about 15 percent of the stories) it had a 50-50 chance of involving the character in crime. (My maxim that "crime is the ruled acting like rulers" translates in the confession to "crime is women acting like men.")

Another study by Johns-Heine and Gerth (1940) sheds some light on the consequences of economic striving. The authors contrasted the fate of the career women in Ladies Home Journal with that of True Story fiction. They noted that the heroine model of both magazines suffers for her success. But "in True Story, contravention of the moral code results in extraordinary suffering," they wrote. "In the one the positive symbols of safety and security predominate; in the other, negative and harshly punitive symbols. It is the difference between threatened loss of social position ('what will people think'), of such vast symbolic import for the middle-class reader, and threatened physical injury where not status but physical and moral integrity are imperiled."

Schramm found these perils of life involving the characters in endless trouble and misery, most of it focused on family life. While "the most frequently stated goal in these stories is a happy and secure family life," he observed, "Family life. . . is -- to put it mildly -- troubled. Broken homes played significant parts in the family history of 38 percent of the narrators, and 44 percent of them reported their own marriage . . . on the verge

of breaking up. . . 21 percent of the narrators remembered unpleasant scenes in the marital relationship of their parents."

Heli de Sagasti (1972) also studied the goals of confession magazine characters and found that while women overwhelmingly sought marriage, twice as many males as females sought just sex. Appropriately, then, women used sexual arousal of men as their most frequent means to an end. Heli de Sagasti compared the years 1955 and 1971, and found that the narrators were even younger and more tightly clustered in the twenties, and pre-marital sex was more frequently portrayed and occasionally even condoned as a means toward the still principal goal of marriage. An editor commenting on the change said that "We assume as a matter of fact, the nonvirginity of the narrator. . . and, of course, now we assume the nonvirginity of a lot of our readers. Where we used to use a line that said 'Virgin in Sin Town,' now we would have to put something like 'Teasing is Not Enough' to entice the reader." (Sonenschein, 1972).

Violence is always around the corner, and illness strikes frequently in the world of the confession magazine. In his 100 stories Schramm counted 25 accidents (17 fatal), 16 fistfights, 14 murders, 12 violent quarrels, 8 rapes, and 4 suicides, and about 30 cases of serious illness.

#### Pious pornography

To shoulder the burden of guilt privately and individually, the characters must be dominated by some inner, personal and uncontrollable urge that drives them to violate some code of conduct. Schramm found that to be the sex drive. "Typically

described as 'overwhelming' and 'overpowering' the erotic scenes "usually described with gusto even though covered over with later shame" numbered 40 cases of adultery, 32 of premarital relations, and 4 of prostitution, plus the 8 rapes mentioned above. Historically, this kind of cultural preoccupation with sex is a puritanical one; its object is to bring the punitive inner and external mechanisms of society down upon the subject of domination and terror destined to suffering by nature. One sentence Schramm quoted as typical could have come from the Salem witchhunt: "Once the devil has the soul of a woman, only violence and death can set her free."

Pious pornography is in the forefront of the counterattack (or perhaps only preventive strategy) against women's liberation. The social content of most pornography makes objects of women, but in the confessions the increasingly explicit sexual descriptions are used as weapons to heighten the sense of sin, shame, punishment, and remorse. The other prong of the pincer movement is the ultimate power-put down of the female as female by the male as male -- rape. Along with what confession editors call "God stories" and plumbing stories" (religious and medical themes, respectively, the "bad girl story" and, as if in sequel, the "rape story" are perennial (and, according to Sonenschein's [1972] study, increasing) favorites.

In contrast to male-oriented erotica, concluded Sonenschein (1970) it is trauma rather than just sex, which lurks around the corner. "In those relationships where sex occurs, the results for people involved were destructive. . . 54% of the relationships worsened because of the event. . . Guilt, anxiety, and personal

difficulties for the narrator. . . are the costs of misusing or even just having sex." Heli de Sagasti observed that the fear or fact of sexual inadequacy -- always on the part of the husband or other male partner -- haunts one out of every six heroine narrators. To lose sex is to lose power and such access to power as the heroine may have through the male.

The "sex-love-marriage dynamic" of the confessions thus affects men and women differently. Heli de Sagasti studied this dynamic and described its symbolic functions as "the reinforcement of notions of sex as power and as the basis for interaction." Outside of marriage the male is "free" and usually takes the initiative. Marriage, however, represents a relative shift of power. While the husband is still dominant, some of his power is shared with the wife. "Within the marriage situation," writes de Sagasti, "it is the female who is the aggressive initiator and the male who is passive." The man's freedom of sexual initiative has been passed on to the wife as the symbol of her success.

Sex and violence are related in that the social content of both demonstrates power relations. Interpersonal violence in the confessions almost always finds a male as aggressor and a female as victim. But there is a further difference. When males are victims, they usually suffer an accident, die in a war, or a fire, or fall victim of a variety of impersonal hazards, but never of women and rarely of other men. On the other hand, when a woman is victimized, is usually by a man and as a female. Sex becomes an instrument of male violence aroused by women and directed against women. The results are traumatic unless and until legitimized, partly shared in marriage.

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The sex code, concludes de Sagasti "has been polarized into becoming both the good and the evil of the moral dynamic. It is this which becomes natural law, by which all men and women live, and by which the deviant is defined and disfranchised.

. . . Whatever else the confession magazines may do, they systematically and lucidly cultivate certain perspectives of sex as power.

. . . They cultivate notions that this differential power between male and female is both the fact and potential of existence and the basis for interaction. It is on the unquestioned assumption of inequality that the entire structure and dynamic is based, and it is this notion which is constantly reinforced."

"As might be expected," observed Jerzy Kosinski (1973), "the magazines do not attempt to present anything but what he defines as the most conventional relationship between the sexes. . . Man is the agent of rationality. . . occasionally victimized by the demands of his own sexual instincts. Woman, on the other hand, is the agent of passion. . ." The pattern of social domination emerges as the rule of rationality, savage though it may be. Kosinski's analysis found all new trends and changes reduced to vindications of male dominance and the shaming, if not crushing, of any feminine grasp for power, money, and even sex on her terms.

#### Marriage as power structure

The final goal is, of course, marriage and family conveled as the conventional sexual and social hierarchy, as Albrecht (1956) also found in his comparisons with "upperclass" magazine fiction. But, wrote Kosinski, "although marriage is a social

necessity for women, it is not always an ultimate good. . . . It is assumed that marriage inevitably leads to sexual boredom. . . . When the tamed wife periodically renews her image as sex kitten, she goes to premarital lengths not for her own pleasure but to renew her husband's 'orgasmic' energy. . . .

"But sexual incompatibility and boredom are only secondary, predictable problems; a woman's relative 'failure' in the world and her disillusionment with marriage is as often due to financial, as to sexual, inadequacy:

So, if there were stars in my eyes when I married Larry, I had a reason. Everything was magic, things had to go right for us and work out just perfect. When he took the job at the gas station, I didn't mind living on a mechanic's salary. I guess I expected him to own the station in no time.

But it didn't work out that way. Larry's appealing shyness and modesty about how terrific he was carried over into the job area, too. He was too easy-going to be pushy the way you have to when you want to get ahead, and he was perfectly happy to on "making do" on a mechanic's salary forever.

A good marriage is thus a solvent marriage, Kosinski notes, even if sex destroys itself in it. A good shopping spree can compensate for any difficulty:

. . . I lay snuggly against Ken's warm back and stared at the ceiling. The romance that was lacking in my marriage was mostly my fault. . . .

I will buy myself some new clothes, I vowed. I'll

also buy the velvet sofa and redecorate my whole house.

I drifted into a peaceful sleep, thanking God I was lucky enough to have a husband like Ken.

The world of the confessions operates under a stern code of justice which, Schramm observes, demands punishment for every transgression, but will accept repentance, and reward it with peace. . . The goal of self-respect and marital happiness. . . can only be attained by making peace with a puritanical judge, who is neither spiritual nor legal, but seems to operate through the structure of social relations. This is the most common dynamic of the stories."

"Who administers the code?" Schramm asks. "There is very little reference to an ultimate source of wisdom"; the way in which things are looked at, and the manner of telling does not permit the perception of institutional, social processes. "In general the private services. . . appear in a somewhat whiter light than the public services," but neither is portrayed as organized social activity subject to judgment, as well as to acceptance. Implicit in the findings of this content analysis is the reflection of the pattern of basic irrelevance, of the lack of conscious relatedness between the individual torn by built-in conflicts and the social dynamic of her anxiety and trouble. "The impression is given," commented Schramm, "that this is the pattern of a behavioristic universe; this is how society works; this is the law of human behavior." [Some concluding remarks on marriage as power structure.]

#### How society works

One story was picked by the simple expedient of taking the

first piece that happened to be on top of my collection. It was an anonymous story entitled "How Can I Face Myself? I Let Him Cheapen Me," in Revealing Romances.

Narrated by the daughter of a plumber's family, the story opens in the shadow of recent tragedy. Father and brother had been killed in an accident which wrecked the new family car and the neighbor's kitchen. Mama and Marilyn (the heroine) are left with nothing but grief and payments, plus a debt of thousands of dollars for funerals, hospital, and damages. Morrison, owner of the department store where Mama is cashier and Marilyn salesgirl, discovers that Mama embezzled \$450 to help pay the debt. He forces Marilyn to submit to his sexual assault by threatening to send Mama to prison. Marilyn feels she's being made a "tramp" to save her mother, and strikes her in a moment of bitter passion. Mama, ashamed and broken decides to give herself up. But Mama's new resolution gives Marilyn courage not to give in to Morrison again. Marilyn is tortured by her sin, but decides, "I'd bought my soul back" and marries her only suitor, a gruff junkyard operator.

The story illustrates the basic formula, "simple, trustful humans" with cards stacked against them from the outset. The father figure is killed by impersonal forces depriving the heroine of protective male domination. But one must shoulder the blame, says the heroine, and take the consequences rather than look for "excuses" in the conditions of life. "I keep wanting to say that terrible thing happened because we still had to pay for the funerals and the accident," Marilyn says. "When you've done wrong, you can't help but look for excuses. My mother was a weak person and -- there I go, excuses."

Life is cruel and dull, Marilyn asserts repeatedly. About the only thing you can figure is the monthly payment. "Life had been so cruel to Mama. . . Life was dull. . . Dad had always worked hard. . . But like a lot of people, our family always owed more than we had. If we wanted something and could figure the payments, we got it."

Sex comes to Marilyn as another of all the "sharp deals" her society metes out to its prey. "You're doing this only for your mother's sake," says Morrison, whom she describes earlier as "a thin nice-looking, gentle guy, not quite as tall as I." Sex turns him into a beast; shocked, helpless Marilyn into a broken-down tramp. "I let him hold me and kiss me. Passive, I let his hands go where he wanted them to. I saw the awful lust come into his face, making him look like an animal. Then I stiffened myself and closed my eyes for the shock of what followed." Even though when Morrison "made a sharp deal he never talked about it," Marilyn now feels that "I had come to the end of the road, the end of endurance. I, too, had broken down, a weak thing. A tramp! I felt so sick and bitter I couldn't even cry."

In loneliness and debt and grief, Mama also turns bitter against the world. She cries out in protest: "Jack Morrison's got plenty of money -- he's not always honest. Lots of people aren't, and I'm tired of being made to pay for things I'll never have -- other people's things I never even saw. I'm tired, Marilyn. I hate -- I -- hate the whole world."

But she cannot fight back. The only act of defiance available to her is crime; Marilyn's line of least resistance is sin.

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Torment and lament are their only choice until Mama "rises" to an act of self-sacrifice and offers to accept the punishment of the code. It is now found that society -- personalized in the owner, Jack Morrison -- can be met on its characteristically contractual terms:

"You're going to work and you're going to work for me," Morrison tells Mama and Marilyn. "And I'm going to take the money out of your check, so much each week." Marilyn gasps. "She is not going to trial?" "Well, you'll never pay it back in prison. . . She can go to trial any day I want her to." Morrison snaps.

The social appeal of the story pivots on the heroine's human frailties in a bewildering and punitive world she cannot fully understand. The "truth" of this world is brought home through the inevitable encounter and the final coming to terms -- resigned or tragic -- with the code of male-dominated society. The flame of rebellion is first kindled and then defined as illegitimate and doused in jet streams of remorse, sacrifice, and compromise.

#### The cover girl experiment

The heroine -- simple, trustful human against a brutal world -- sins, suffers, and repents, without consciously grappling with the social meaning of her difficulties. The cover girl, in suspended animation, her eyes gazing confidently into those of the viewer, appears pointedly innocent of insight into the tragic meanings around her.

Our experiment was conducted to answer this question: how is the contrast and apparent lack of relationship between the cover

girl and the sordid blurbs surrounding her resolved in the perception of the viewer? We wanted to gain some insight into the dynamics of identification with the idealized reader-heroine image in a stark social context. (For a more detailed and technical account, see my article on "The Social Anatomy of the Romance-Confession Cover Girl.")

The experiment focused on the influence of the verbal content on cover girl image. Actual confession magazine covers were prepared in three different forms, and shown to three different groups. One group saw a form of the cover showing only the verbal material; the cover was cut out and replaced by a white sheet of paper. Another group was shown only the cover girl's picture cut out of the verbal form, and pasted on cardboard. The third group was shown the cover without any alteration.

Figure 2 illustrates the three different forms of one cover.



Our respondents (a total of 538 people) were asked for their views and feelings about the girl's picture before them. Those who had the girl cut out from the cover were instructed to respond on the basis of their mental image of the picture that they think might go on the cover.

We found that the blurbs alone make the viewers conjure up a mental image that is most unattractive. When the actual cover girl picture is seen, even (or, as we shall see, perhaps especially) in the contrasting verbal context, she is judged

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on adjectival (semantic differential type) scales as significantly more "good," "kind," "fine," "wise," "successful," "powerful," "active," "important," and "beautiful." The picture of the cover girl succeeds in overcoming the provocative but negative impression created by the super-charged verbal context of the cover. In fact, her juxtaposition with the clashing background makes the cover girl's image conform to the editorial and market specifications more than she would by herself. This is as if the verbal context with which she appears to have no meaningful connection would, by contrast, make her appear at once more vulnerable and more sympathetic, and no less attractive.

When asked to write a personality sketch, those who saw only the verbal context wrote the least about the cover girl's personality, and most of that was unfavorable. Those who saw the picture alone wrote more, and most of that was favorable. But those who saw the confession cover girl in her "natural" verbal habitat, on the actual cover, wrote most and came to her defense with the highest number of positive assertions. That this defense was felt necessary in view of her verbal setting is evident from the fact that in that setting she received more critical comment than in the absence of that setting (although not nearly as many as in the absence of her picture).

For a number of respondents (who were not necessarily readers) the confession-type cover girl appears "too good" for the confessions. As one put it, "She has a smile on her face that shows contempt at the thought of the type of magazine that she appears in." Wrote another: "What I can't figure out is what a pleasant, clean-looking American girl is doing on the cover of a scandal sheet." In these cases the threatening

implications of the verbal context did less to implicate the cover girl -- seemingly oblivious of her setting -- than to make her appear perhaps vulnerable but the more virtuous by contrast.

In the personality sketches, some respondents attempted to dispel the shadow of verbal suspicion cast upon the cover girl. Such protestations were unnecessary in the group that saw only the picture. In fact, the cover girl's glowing image standing by itself was, for some subjects, too good to be true; they had to invent something to be "behind the scenes." As some phrased it, "Looks innocent, but I doubt it." "Feigns innocence, but after a few drinks will tell off-color stories."

The cover formula appeared to permit the viewer to eat his cake and have it too. It presented a respectable yet promising image. As one respondent stated, "She is supposed to be the 'ideal' companion who appeals to sexual emotions while remaining the type most men would be proud to be seen with."

The findings of the experiment, as far as they go, suggest that the image of the cover girl, and her juxtaposition with the contrasting verbal context, serve well the editorial and distribution specifications. She resolves her apparent conflict with the lurid titles of the cover -- suggestive of the brutal world of the confessions -- to her favor. The dominant image exhibits the human appeals of the heroine menaced by male society. Her implicit involvement in the torrent of troubles verbally raging around her enhances, as if by contrast, some of her qualifications. Her posture, outwardly unconscious of the issues of her world,

mirrors graphically the heroine's prescribed inability to come to conscious grasp with her society.

On the whole, the market position and social mission of the confession industry seem to dictate from the outset its role among the "new" women of Wage Town. The essence of this role appears to be the underlying message of social unrelatedness. The solid goals -- like meeting the monthly payments, keeping the family together and out of trouble -- are in constant double jeopardy. They are menaced both by the bewildering code of an inscrutable universe and by the necessary human resistance to it. Wage-town protest -- in forms disguised, submerged, and disoriented -- becomes senseless individual sin, sexually defined and socially de-fused in the world of the confessions.

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The elusive ideal of broad-based self-government is predicated on an historically startling notion. It is that the symbolic environment, or at least those parts most relevant to public policy-making (what the framers of the American constitution called "the press") can be isolated and protected from the structure of power that runs the rest of society. By exempting beliefs, speech, and the press (though not action, of course) from "due process of law," so the argument goes, cultural production will free consciousness from arbitrary restraint, cultivate the capacity for genuine choice and action, shape spontaneous publics acting in their own enlightened interests, and curb and control the exercise of inequitous power. The power pre-industrial national liberators had in mind was the power of distant government. So in the very first amendment intended to make the constitution a democratic document, Congress was unequivocally and unconditionally directed to "make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press . . ."

The world in which the levers of power go unattended does not exist. The industrial order grew into a system of giant private governments, making authoritative decisions in the public sphere. The "press" and other media of mass communications became the cultural arms of the industrial order. The umbrella of First Amendment protection enabled these private governments to take total control of public communications and devote it to the creation and cultivation of mass publics as their markets for products, ideas, and votes. While forbidding the use of a public taxation to support religion, the First Amendment opened the way to the establishment of a secular religion which--with its televised myths, rituals, legends, and cults--performs the symbolic social functions of all religions. It is supported by private taxation without representation, a levy on the price of all goods. It is run by a new priesthood of

media managers on behalf of a new set of corporate investors, patrons, and sponsors.

An arrangement that works miracles for its clients must be considered sacred. The cultivation of mystery and the frequent incantation of expedient articles of faith help avoid deeper scrutiny. That is why there is no area of significant social policy in which far-reaching decisions are made with as little reliable, systematic, cumulative, and comparative information about the actual trends and state of affairs as in the sphere of the mass production and distribution of the most broadly shared messages of our culture.

We are only vaguely aware of the fact that decisive policy-making is going on, and that cultural politics is as much a part of the fabric of modern life as economic, welfare, or military politics. Abstract conceptions of "censorship" obscure the realities of direction, constraints, and controls in any mass production. Formal aesthetic categories derived from other times and places ignore the the social functions and institutional power that lie at the heart of the cultural policy process.

We know very little about trends in the composition and structure of the mass-produced systems of messages that define life in our societies. We know no more about the policy making processes that compose and structure those systems. Our notions on how people respond in specific situations lacks insight into the dynamics of the common symbolic context in which and to which they respond.

Despite all the talk and research, no generally accepted approach exists for the critical analysis and realistic understanding of the mass-produced symbolic environment and its social functions. Even the development of such an approach is a threat to any culture. Most research on media effects is not only unenlightening (except perhaps for marketing or other "behavior modification" purposes) but also tends to support and shield from deeper scrutiny the overall structure within which marketing and other (mostly consumer behavior type) choices

are imposed on the making of private and public decisions. Scientific and academic processes are not much more immune from social pressures than are mass communications. Yet those processes can claim the same protections and do provide such institutionalized sources of critical self-consciousness as we have. Bootstrap operations they may be, so is jet-propulsion. A human power not based on privilege is the power of thought to use the friction of the universe -- including society -- as its leverage.

Social regularities cannot be understood in isolation from regularities in the symbolic environment. And when the symbolic environment itself is changing, as when navigating on turbulent waters, the quality and direction of social behavior can only be assessed if we know which way the cultural wind blows and the cultural tide flows.

The industrial transformation created societies whose specialized parts relate to each other and to the whole less and less through personal experience and face-to-face contact and more and more through mediated information. The more complex and interrelated a system becomes the more information it needs -- and generates -- to maintain stability and control. Systems of great specialization and complexity require indicators about the interplays of qualitative and quantitative processes that signal their value-state or "well-being" as well as their being.

The need for sophisticated and sensitive indicators of social well-being has been established. But the industrial transformation and technological intervention that created that need for information in the management of societies has also brought about profound changes in the management of information itself. Therefore, a comparable and related need is for information about changing patterns of information. I am using information now not only in its technical meaning but also in its broadest sense of "culture" as the shared messages that cultivate concepts and relationships in a social system.

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The mass production of messages creates new symbolic environments that reflect the structures and functions of the institutions that produce them. To go McLuhan's well-known half-truism one better: Society is the message. Corporate and other collective processes of message mass-production short-circuit former networks of social communication and superimpose their own forms of collective consciousness -- their own publics -- upon other social relationships. The purpose of a scheme of Cultural Indicators is to address itself to those aspects of our system of generating bodies of broadly shared messages that are most amenable -- and most relevant -- to public policy decisions, and to take the pulse and measure the tempo of their transformations.

We need to know general trends in the cultivation of assumptions about existence, priorities, values, relationships before we can interpret individual and social response. It means little to know that "John believes in Santa Claus" until we also know in what culture, at what point in time, and in the context of what public message systems cultivating the reinforcement or inhibition of such beliefs. Interpretations of public opinion (i.e. responses to questions elicited in specific cultural contexts), and of many media and other cultural policy matters, require the knowledge of Cultural Indicators similar to the economic indicators compiled to guide economic decisions and to other social indicators assembled to inform social policy-making.

The reliable observation of regularities in the production, composition, structure, and image-cultivation characteristics of large message systems is a specialized research enterprise. Selective habits of personal participation limit even the sophisticated practitioner to risky extrapolation about the cultural experience of different or heterogeneous communities.

The areas and terms of analysis leading to cultural indicators stem from a conception of communication and its institutionalized role in society. They were developed through prior studies (most of which are listed under my name in the bibliography). The studies demonstrated that the mass cultural presentations of many aspects of life and types of action teach lessons that serve institutional purposes. People do not have to accept these lessons but cannot escape having to deal with the social norms, the agenda of issues, and the calculus of life's chances implicit in them.

I have defined communication as interaction through messages bearing man's notion of existence, priorities, values, and relationships. Codes of symbolic significance conveyed through modes of expression form the currency of social relations. Institutions package, media compose, and technologies release message systems into the mainstream of common consciousness.

How is this massive flow managed? How does it fit into or alter the existing cultural context? What perspectives on life and the world does it express and cultivate? How does it vary across time, societies, and cultures? Finally, how does the cultivation of collective assumptions relate to the conduct of public affairs, and vice versa?

The questions designate three areas of analysis: how mass media relate to other institutions, make decisions, compose message systems, and perform their functions in society are questions for *institutional process analysis*; how large bodies of messages can be observed as dynamic systems with symbolic functions that have social consequences is the question of *message system analysis*; and what common assumptions, points of view, images, and associations do the message systems tend to cultivate in large and heterogeneous communities, and with what public policy implications, are problems for *cultivation analysis*.

## INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS ANALYSIS

How do media managers determine and perform the functions their institutions, clients, and the social order require? What is the overall effect of corporate controls on the basic terms of symbolic output? What policy changes do, in fact, alter those terms and how?

Mass media policies reflect not only a stage in industrial development and the general structure of social relations but also particular types of institutional and industrial powers and pressures. Mass communicators everywhere occupy sensitive and central positions in the social network. They have suppliers, distributors, and critics. Other organizations claim their attention or protection. They have associations of their own. They have laws, codes, and

policies that channel and constrain them. And they have patrons who, in any industrial production, supply the capital, the facilities, and the authority (or at least opportunity) to address mass publics.

## Decision Making

Any enterprise may appear free to those who run it. But in a more objective sense, all mass production, including that of messages, is managed. Only a small portion of all potential messages can be formulated and even fewer can be selected for mass distribution. Therefore, research cannot realistically focus on whether or not there is "suppression"; selective suppression is simply the other side of the mass communication coin. The analysis must consider all major powers, roles, and relationships that have a systematic and generalized influence on how messages will be selected, formulated, and transmitted.

Some studies (e.g., Gerbner, 1961b, 1964) suggest that systems of messages produced by any institutional source, commercial as well as overtly partisan, have some ideological orientation implicit in selection, emphasis, treatment. Other research, such as that by Warren Breed (1960), Pool and Shulman (1964), David Manning White (1964), and Walter Geiber (1960, 1964), show that most newsmen respond more to the pressures and expectations of the newsroom than to any generalized concept of audience or public interest. A study of newsroom decisions (Bowers, 1967) found that three out of four publishers are active in directing news decisions, with their influence greatest in news of the immediate market area, and in subjects that affect the revenue of the paper.

The systematic exercise of powers resides in institutional roles and in relationships to centers of power. A scheme designed to analyze this process needs to identify the power roles, suggest some sources of their powers, and specify those functions that affect what the media communicate. Power and its application become relevant to this scheme as they affect what is being communicated to mass media publics. Figure 1 outlines nine types of power roles or groups, and briefly notes the types of leverage and typical functions attached to each role.

1. *Authorities* possess legal powers to enact and enforce demands or impose sanctions on communicators. Legislative, executive, judicial bodies, regulatory commissions, public administrators, the police, and the military may have such authority. Authorities may assume rights patrons ordinarily have, and may impose sanctions (such as for seditious or criminal acts) that patrons cannot. Authorities may also depend on the support of communicators for much of their authority: the "regulated" have been known to regulate the regulators.

2. *Patrons* are those who directly invest in or subsidize media operations in exchange for economic, political, or cultural benefits. Their clients are the media that provide such benefits in exchange for discretionary patronage. Media patrons may be banks, advertisers, other corporate or civic organizations, religious or military bodies, or governments. The principal types of

| Power Roles (Groups)                                                 | Types of Leverage                                               | Typical Functions                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <b>AUTHORITIES.</b> Make and enforce legally binding decisions    | Political and military                                          | Arbitrate, regulate, legitimize power relations; demand service   |
| 2. <b>PATRONS.</b> Invest, subsidize                                 | Control over resources                                          | Set conditions for the supply of capital and operating funds      |
| 3. <b>MANAGEMENT</b>                                                 | Control over personnel                                          | Set and supervise policies; public relations                      |
| 4. <b>AUXILIARIES.</b> Supplement and support management             | Access to specialized services                                  | Provide supplies, services                                        |
| 5. <b>COLLEAGUES</b>                                                 | Solidarity                                                      | Set standards; protection                                         |
| 6. <b>COMPETITORS</b>                                                | Scarcity                                                        | Set standards; vigilance                                          |
| 7. <b>EXPERTS.</b> Talent, technicians, critics, subject specialists | Skill, knowledge, popularity, prestige                          | Provide personal creative, performing, technical services, advice |
| 8. <b>ORGANIZATIONS</b>                                              | Pressure through representation, boycott, appeal to authorities | Demand favorable attention, portrayal, policy support             |
| 9. <b>PUBLICS.</b> Groups created or cultivated (or both) by media   | Individual patronage                                            | Attend to messages; buy products                                  |

Figure 1 Major power roles, types of leverage, and typical functions directing the formation of mass-produced message systems.

patrons and the major client relationships determine the role of media management in the power scheme of every society. The client relationship also affects the institution's approach to most issues and problems, and permeates the climate of communicator decision making.

3. *Management* consists of executives and administrators who make up the chain of command in the organization. They formulate and supervise the implementation of policies intended to fulfill the terms of patron and other power group support. They engage and control all personnel. Management's chief functions are (a) to cultivate client relations and (b) to conduct public relations. From the management's point of view, the messages that the institution produces must serve these two functions.

4. *Auxiliaries* provide supplies and services necessary to management's ability to perform its tasks. They are distributing organizations, networks, agencies and syndicates; suppliers of raw materials, talent, artistic properties, and logistical services; wholesale and retail outlets; related manufacturing and trade concerns, associations, unions; and the holders of patents, copyrights, or other property rights.

5. *Colleagues* are communicators whose status, sense of direction or standards, and solidarity with one another can exert leverage on the formation and selection of messages.

6. *Competitors* are other professionals or media whose claims on scarce resources or ability to innovate can force the institution to exercise vigilance and either innovate or emulate in order to maintain its relationships with patrons and publics.

7. *Experts* possess needed personal skills, knowledge, critical abilities, or other gifts. They are writers, editors, creative talent, technicians, critics, researchers, subject matter specialists, consultants, and others who can give (or withhold) personal services necessary for communication.

8. *Organizations* are other formally structured or corporate groups that may claim attention, protection, or services. They may be business, political, religious, civic, fraternal, or professional associations. Inasmuch as some sort of public visibility has become a virtual requirement for organizational viability and support, the competition for attention is intense. Large organizational investments in public relations through the media exert pressure on media content and make media dependent on freely available (and self-serving) organizational resources.

9. *Publics*, finally, are the products of <sup>mass</sup> media output—groups created and cultivated through the messages. They are loose aggregations of people who may have little in common. But the symbols they share cultivate a community of meaning and perspective despite other differences. Management's task of "public relations" is to develop this sense of community into material value for the institution and its patrons.

### The Exercise of Power

Institutional power is exerted through the leverage built into power roles. Authorities can apply political or policy pressure; patrons can provide or withdraw subsidy; managements can hire and fire; auxiliaries can work overtime or quit servicing; colleagues can strike; competitors can raid, scoop, or corner the market; experts can refuse to serve; organizations can support, protest, or boycott; and publics can patronize or stop reading, viewing, buying, or voting.

These are forms of leverage rooted in the structure of institutional roles and relations. Power applied to communications usually involves the demands that such and such be (or not be) communicated or altered in certain ways.

The demand may be ad hoc, that is, pertaining to a particular message, subject, or policy. When a system of "do's" and "don'ts" is to be regularly applied, it is usually *codified* (as in codes, regulations, and laws). The force or weight behind the leverage is a measure of institutional power. The test is what happens if the demand is not obeyed or the code not observed. That test is applied in what I call a critical incident.

If nothing happens, there has been no power, or at least no display of force to indicate power. (The ability and willingness to display force by applying

sanctions is taken as an indication of institutional power.) Sanctions are *substantive* if they pertain to the substance or content of the communication itself, as in the order to revise or omit (or print) a story, add or delete a scene, withhold necessary information, or jam a broadcast. The force behind a substantive demand or sanction is procedural. Sanctions are *procedural* if they pertain to the procedure by which communication is created. Revoking a license, firing or blacklisting, denying equipment or raw materials, discriminatory taxation or rates, strikes, boycotts, and imprisonment are procedural sanctions.

While analytically distinct, neither power roles nor types of leverage are in reality separate and isolated. On the contrary, they often combine, overlap, and telescope in different configurations. The accumulation of power roles and possibilities of leverage give certain institutions dominant positions in the mass communication of their societies.

Institutional process analysis seeks, through interviews, participant observation, and the study of records, to amplify this scheme of power roles, functions, and leverage, and to apply it to the investigation of decision making in communications. (Gerbner, 1958a, 1958b, 1959, 1969a, 1972b.) Critical incidents (a clash of powers, when things "go wrong") may set the lines of powers and influence for more routine control of media content. The investigation contributes to cultural indicators in account of the interplay of roles and powers that direct the formation of mass-produced message systems. These directions can then be related to the analysis of the message systems and to their cultivation functions. For example, how does management respond to the pressure of authorities or organizations concerning some sensitive aspects of content, and how does that response affect the frequency and symbolic functions of that particular content configuration across media and over time?

## MESSAGE SYSTEM ANALYSIS

The material for analysis is taken from the massive flow of symbols produced by mass media for large and heterogeneous (usually national) audiences. Unlike most social science data, these are not symbols used to make inferences about largely hidden processes. They are visible and manifest sources of public acculturation. They provide direct access to the specific imagery, context, and content of a relatively centralized and institutionally managed release of symbolic materials into the common cultural environment.

### The Systems

The most popular products of mass-produced culture provide special opportunities for the study of socially potent message systems. In these systems—popular fiction, drama, and news—aspects of life are recreated in significant associations with total human situations. An area of knowledge or the operation of a social enterprise would appear only when dramatic or news values—that is, social symbolic functions—demand it.

Dramatic and fictional entertainment especially exhibit ritualistically repetitive social symbolic mechanisms that reveal conventionally cultivated

approaches toward people and life. Unlike life, the bulk of popular fiction and drama is an "open book." Facts do not get in the way of its reality, which is the reality of values. Characterizations are usually apt, motivations are transparent, problems and conflicts are explicit, and the interplay of forces that determines the outcome, and outcome itself, are usually clear. Of all the products of mass-produced culture, these appeal to the widest and most heterogeneous publics. Most people, especially the young and the less educated, encounter most subjects and ideas in the form of "incidental" treatment in the course of their relatively nonselective leisure time entertainment. In that way, "entertainment" can force attention to what most people would never seek out as "information."

The symbolic composition and structure of the message system of a mass medium defines its own synthetic "world." Only what is represented exists. All that exists in that "world" is represented in it. "Facts" reflect not opaque reality but palpable design. Focus directs attention, emphasis signifies importance, "typecasting" and fate accent value and power and the thread of action or other association ties things together into dynamic wholes. The "world" has its own time, space, geography, demography, and ethnography, bent to institutional purpose and rules of social morality. What policies populate, actions animate, fates govern, and themes dominate this "world"? How do things work in it, and why do they change from time to time?

The "system" in message systems is that of institutional design and purpose. The systematic functions of and trends in the composite "message" can be made visible through the "decomposition" of the presentations into units and categories relevant to investigative purpose, and their "recomposition" in the form of social symbolic functions.

### The Analysis

The analysis is designed to investigate aggregate and collective premises presented in samples of material. It deals with the "facts of life" and dynamic qualities represented in the systems. Its purpose is to describe the symbolic "world," sense its climate, trace its currents, and identify its functions.

The results make no reference to single communications. They do not interpret selected units of symbolic material or draw conclusions about artistic style or merit. The findings represent what large and heterogeneous communities absorb; they do not necessarily resemble what specific individuals or groups select.

The premises defining life in the symbolic world provide common imagery and a basis for interaction among separate and disparate groups. That common basis forms the agenda of public discourse and a starting point for individual conclusions and interpretations. The analysis of message systems pivots on the determination of those common terms and is limited to clearly perceived and reliably coded items.

The reliability of the analysis is achieved by multiple codings and the measured agreement of trained analysts. If one were to substitute the perceptions and impressions of casual observers, no matter how sophisticated, the value of

the investigation would be reduced, and its purpose confounded. Only an analysis of unambiguous message elements and their separation from personal impressions left by unidentified clues can provide a baseline for comparison with the intentions of policy makers and the perceptions or conceptions of audiences. No such relationships can be established as long as the actual common terms and their symbolic functions are unknown, are derived from unexamined assumptions, or are inferred from subjective verbalizations of uncertain and ambiguous origin.

### Dimensions and Measures

The study of a system *as system* notes processes and relationships expressed in the whole, not in its parts. Unlike literary or dramatic criticism, or, in fact, most personal cultural participation and judgment, message system analysis observes the record of institutional behavior in message mass-production for large and heterogeneous communities. The reliable observation of that record of institutional behavior reveals collective and common instead of individual and unique features of public image formation and cultivation. The scheme and methods of analysis are designed to inquire into selected dimensions of the process composing and structuring message systems.

These dimensions stem from aspects of communication that we have previously identified as the cultivation of assumptions about *existence*, *priorities*, *values*, and *relationships*. Figure 2 summarizes the questions, terms, and measures of analysis relevant to each dimension.

| Dimensions:                     | EXISTENCE                                                               | PRIORITIES                                                                      | VALUES                                                                        | RELATIONSHIPS                                              |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assumptions about:              | WHAT IS?                                                                | WHAT IS IMPORTANT?                                                              | WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG, GOOD OR BAD, ETC.?                                    | WHAT IS RELATED TO WHAT, AND HOW?                          |
| Questions:                      | What is available for public attention?<br>How much and how frequently? | In what context or order of importance?                                         | In what light, from what point of view, with what associated judgments?       | In what overall proximal, logical or casual structure?     |
| Terms and measures of analysis: | ATTENTION<br>Prevalence, rate, complexity, variations                   | EMPHASIS<br>Ordering, ranking, scaling for prominence, centrality, or intensity | TENDENCY<br>Measures of critical and differential tendency; qualities, traits | STRUCTURE<br>Correlations, clustering; structure of action |

Figure 2 Dimensions, questions, terms, and measures of message system analysis.

The dimension of assumptions about existence deals with the question "What is?", that is, what is available (referred to) in public message systems, how frequently, and in what proportions. The availability of shared messages defines the scope of public attention. The measure of attention, therefore, indicates the presence, frequency, rate, complexity, and varying distributions of items, topics, themes, and so on represented in message systems.

The dimension of priorities raises the question, "What is important?" We use measures of *emphasis* to study the context of relative prominence and the order or degrees of intensity, centrality, or importance. Measures of attention and emphasis may be combined to indicate not only the allocation but also the focusing of attention in a system.

The dimension of values inquires into the point of view from which things are presented. It rates certain evaluative and other qualitative characteristics, traits, or connotations attached to different items, actions, persons, groups, and so on. Measures of *tendency* are used to assess the direction of value judgments observed in messages.

The dimension of relationships focuses on the more complex associations within and among all measures. When we deal with patterns instead of only simple distributions, or when we relate the clustering of measures to one another, we illuminate the underlying *structure* of assumptions about existence, priorities, and values represented in message systems.

The four dimensions, then, yield measures of attention, emphasis, tendency, and structure. One or more of these measures can be applied to any unit of analysis. We have studied trends in the distribution of *attention* devoted to the subject of mental illness, of education, and of violence (Gerbner, 1961a, 1966b, 1972a). *Emphasis* was measured in the investigation of comparative press perspectives in world communication (Gerbner, 1961a). Research on political tendencies in news reporting and on the characterizations of violent acts and victims in television drama focused on measures of differential *tendency*. The study of the "film hero" utilized all dimensions of analysis (Gerbner, 1969c).

The analysis may record topics, themes, persons, and types of action represented in the material. It may touch on the history, geography, demography, and ethnography of the symbolic "world." The symbolic population and its interpersonal and group relationships may be observed. Themes of nature, science, politics, law, crime, business, education, art, illness and health, peace and war, sex, love, friendship, and violence may be coded. The roles, values, and goals of the characters who populate the symbolic "world" may be related to the issues with which they grapple and to the fates to which they are destined.

The scheme provides a conceptual framework and practical instrumentation for the systematic gathering and periodic reporting of comprehensive, cumulative, and comparative information about mass-mediated message systems. Content indicators can include measures specific to given issues, policies, or symbolic functions, such as the television "violence index" (Gerbner, 1972a).

Or they can deal with general features of the symbolic world—census figures ranging over time, space, personality types, and social roles. Indicators can also trace the presentation of heroes and villains, victors and victims, fair means or foul, or the configuration of certain themes, actions, and values over time and across cultures.

Content indicators tell us not so much what individuals think or do as what most people think or do something *about* in common. They will tell us about the shared representations of life, the issues, and the prevailing points of view that capture public attention, occupy people's time, and animate their imagination. They will help us understand the impact of communication media development and social change on the symbolic climate that affects *all* we think and do. We can then inquire into the institutional aspects and the cultural consequences in sharper awareness of the currents that tug and pull us all.

### CULTIVATION ANALYSIS

The most distinctive characteristics of large groups of people are acquired in the process of growing up, learning, and living in one culture rather than in another. Individuals make their own selection of materials through which to cultivate personal images, tastes, views, and preferences, and they seek to influence those available to and chosen by their children. But they cannot cultivate that which is not available. They will rarely select what is scarcely available, seldom emphasized, or infrequently presented. A culture cultivates not only patterns of conformity but also patterns of alienation or rebellion after its own image. Its affirmations pose the issues most likely to be the targets of symbolic provocation or protest.

The message systems of a culture not only inform but form common images. They not only entertain but create publics. They not only satisfy but shape a range of attitudes, tastes, and preferences. They provide the boundary conditions and overall patterns within which the processes of personal and group-mediated selection, interpretation, and image-formation go on.

Cultivation analysis begins with the insights of the study of institutions and the message systems they produce, and goes on to investigate the contributions that these systems and their symbolic functions make to the cultivation of assumptions about life and the world. Style of expression, quality of representation, artistic excellence, or the quality of individual experience associated with selective exposure to and participation in mass-cultural activity are not considered critical variables for this purpose. What is informative, entertaining (or both), good, bad, or indifferent by any standard of quality are selective judgments applied to messages quite independently from the social functions they actually perform in the context of large message systems touching the collective life of a whole community. Conventional and formal judgments applied to specific communications may be irrelevant to general questions about the cultivation of assumptions about what is, what is important, what is

right, and what is related to what.

Message systems cultivate the terms on which they present subjects and aspects of life. There is no reason for assuming that the cultivation of these terms depends in any significant way on agreement or disagreement with or belief or disbelief in the presentations, or on whether these presentations are presumably factual or imaginary. This does not mean, of course, that we do not normally attach greater credibility to a news story, a presumably factual report, a trusted source, a familiar account, than to a fairy tale or to what we regard as false or inimical. It does mean that in the general process of image formation and cultivation both "fact" and "fable" play significant and interrelated roles.

### The Problem of Effects

The bulk of experimental and survey research on communications "effects" has contributed little to our understanding of the mass cultural process. The reason is that most of it stemmed from disciplinary and theoretical perspectives that did not consider that process the principal criterion of relevance.

Mass communications research should be concerned with mass communications and not with assorted tactics of manipulating behavior. The preoccupation with such tactics is itself a reflection of manipulative pressures in a culture in which the "behavior" that ultimately counts (and pays most of the research costs) is that at the cash register, box office, or ballot box. But the concern with tactics at the expense of strategy has been self-defeating. It has neglected the steady cultivation of issues, conceptions, and perspectives that gives meaning to all ideas and actions. All animals "behave" but only humans *act* in a symbolic context. The tactical preoccupation has generally ignored that context and obscured the basic functions of communications—to cultivate, conserve, support, and maintain. The "effects" of communications are not primarily what they make us "do" but what they contribute to the meaning of all that is done—a more fundamental and ultimately more decisive process. The consequences of mass communications should be sought in the relationships between mass-produced and technologically mediated message systems and the broad common terms of image cultivation in a culture. If the citizens of a self-governing community do not like those terms, they cannot satisfy themselves by injecting a few messages of a different sort. They must attend to the structures and policies that produce most messages in ways functional to their institutional purposes.

### The Question of Change

The principal "effect" of mass communications is to be found in coming to terms with the fundamental assumptions and premises they contain, and not necessarily in agreeing or disagreeing with their conclusions or in acting on their specific propositions at any one time. Communication is the nutrient culture and not just the occasional medicine (or poison) of mental life. The

most critical public consequences of mass communications are in defining and ordering issues, and not just in influencing who will buy what in the short run.

Change can be evaluated and even noticed best in light of the massive continuities that systems of communications typically cultivate. "No change" may be a startlingly effective result of communications sustaining a belief against the cultural current. One cannot really compare a person swimming upstream with another drifting downstream and yet others straining in other directions. To compare and measure their "progress," all speeds and directions must be related to the current itself. If that were to change, all directions and even the meaning of "progress" would change without any change in "behavior" on the part of the swimmers. Similarly, the meaning and measure of communication "effects" are relative to the general flow, composition, and direction of the message-production and image-cultivation processes.

A culture cultivates the images of a society. The dominant communication agencies produce the message systems that cultivate the dominant image patterns. They structure the public agenda of existence, priorities, values, and relationships. People use this agenda—some more selectively than others—to support their ideas, actions, or both, in ways that, on the whole, tend to match the general composition and structure of message systems (provided, of course, that there is also other environmental support for these choices and interpretations). There is significant change in the nature and functions of that process when there is change in the technology, ownership, clientele, and other institutional characteristics of dominant communication agencies. Decisive cultural change does not occur in the symbolic sphere alone. When it occurs, it stems from a change in social relations that makes the old patterns dysfunctional to the new order. Such a change changes the relative meanings and functions of the existing images and practices even before these are actually altered. When altered, the new cultural patterns restore to public communications their basic functions: the support and maintenance of the new order.

The strategic approach to mass communications research considers an understanding of the mass cultural process, instead of other aspects of human behavior, the principal criterion of relevance. Institutional process and message system analyses generate the framework of terms and functions for cultivation analysis. Short-terms or campaign-type "effects" studies, responses to messages elicited in unknown or uncertain symbolic contexts, or research concerned with "success" or "failure" of preconceived communication objectives are not adequate to the task. The dynamics of continuities, rather than only of change, need to be considered in the examination of mass-produced message systems and their symbolic functions. Such examination is necessarily longitudinal and comparative in its analysis of the processes and consequences of institutionalized public acculturation.

In a general sense there are no communication failures, only failures of intentions and campaigns. All systems of communications may cultivate terms and assumptions implicit in them whether or not those were intended or consciously recognized. We usually communicate more than we intend or know about, and often not what we wish. Many "communication failures" can be interpreted as the success of the receivers to understand the messages better than those who designed them, but in ways they did not intend. Message systems perform symbolic functions that may be apparent to none of the parties engaged in the communication. Communications research attempts to reconstruct these functions. Cultivation analysis seeks to discover their contributions to knowledge and meaning.

### *Symbolic Functions*

We are keenly aware that messages intended to persuade usually serve the purposes of those who create and disseminate them. Less obvious, but perhaps even more crucial, are the purposes served by news, fiction, drama and other storytelling, designed with no other obvious or conscious intent than just to inform or to entertain. The social tasks to which presumably "objective" news, "neutral" fiction or "nontendentious" entertainment lend themselves are what I call symbolic functions. They are the consequences inherent in the way things work in the symbolic world of storytelling.

These functions usually do not stem from individual communications or campaigns, but from the general composition and structure of the bulk of the symbolic environment to which an entire community is exposed. The consequences typically are not those of change, but of continuity and resistance to change. Given a stable social order, the functions are usually to selectively cultivate existing tendencies, and perhaps to deepen and sharpen them.

Symbolic functions differ from those of nonsymbolic events in the ways in which causal relationships must be traced in the two realms. Physical causation exists outside and independently of consciousness. Trees do not grow and chemicals do not react on purpose, although human purposes may intervene or cause them to function. When a sequence of physical events is set in motion, we have only partial awareness and little control over

the entire chain of its consequences.

The symbolic world, however, is totally invented. Nothing happens in it independently of man's will, although much that happens may again escape individual awareness or scrutiny. The reasons that things exist in the symbolic world, and the ways in which things are related to one another and to their symbolic consequences, as in a play or story, are completely artificial. That does not make their production any more arbitrary or whimsical than the events of the physical world. But it means that the laws of the symbolic world are entirely socially and culturally determined. A character in fiction dies not because he has lived but because it serves a purpose to have him die. Intended or not, that purpose is the only reality of the story. The causal link is not between life and death but between a creator's or producing organization's position in life and society and the significance of that death. No T.V. badman ever dies a natural death, nor can the hero of a western serial be cut down in the prime of life. To be true to life in fiction would falsify the deeper truth of cultural and social values served by symbolic functions.

Whatever exists in the symbolic world is there because someone put it there. The reason may be deliberate and planned, or circumstantial, such as an unrelated marketing or programming decision, or a vague feeling that it will improve the story. Having been put there, things not only stand for other things as all symbols do, but also do something in their symbolic context. The introduction (or elimination) of a character, a scene, an event, has functional consequences. It changes other things in the story. It makes the whole work "work" differently. Dynamic symbol systems are not maps of some other "real" territory. They are our mythology, our organs of social meaning. They make visible some conceptions of the invisible forces of life and society. We select and shape them to bend otherwise elusive facts to our (not always conscious) purposes. Whether we know it or intend it or not, purposes are inherent in the way things actually work out in the symbolic world. Even when men and institutions lie, they cannot do so without giving off signs of the purposes of their lying, at least in the long run; otherwise why lie? More problems

arise from communicating hidden purposes than from failing to communicate at all.

How things work out in mass-produced symbolic systems, as in all collective myths, celebrations and rituals, is indicative of institutional interests and pressures. Various power roles within and without the institution enter into the decision-making process that prescribes, selects and shapes the final product. In the creation of news, facts impose some constraints upon invention; the burden of serving institutional purposes is placed upon selection, treatment, context and display. Fiction and drama carry no presumption of facticity and thus do not inhibit at all the candid expression of social values. On the contrary, they give free reign to adjusting facts to the truth of institutional purpose. Fiction can thus perform social symbolic functions more directly than can other forms of discourse.

That is why in fiction and drama there is no need to moralize. The moral is usually in the facts themselves. For example, if a social inferior (lower-class, "native," black, et cetera) usurps the place of a superior (through marriage, business deal, combat, et cetera), he or she can have an unfortunate accident, thus avoiding overt bias and yet performing the symbolic function of enhancing the superior life chances of "superior" characters. Violence in the mass media—unlike life—is usually among strangers, permitting the lessons of social power (what types stand to win or lose in a conflict) to emerge unhindered by close human ties. Fiction can act out purposes by presenting a world in which things seem to work out as they "ought to," regrettable or even terrible as that might be made to appear.

Characters come to life in the symbolic world of mass culture to perform functions of genuine social import. These functions need not be planned or perceived *as such*. They need not even conform to any overt rationalizations or moralizing. The functions are implicit not in what producers and audiences think they "know," but in what they assimilate of what the characters of the symbolic world in fact *are* and *do*.

The facts of life in the symbolic world form patterns that I call the "hidden curriculum." It is the framework that makes the notion of "effects" sensible as those changes that can be observed within a stable structure. The *prior* preoccupation with "effects" is misleading, however. It only betrays greater concern with marketing tactics than with the basic allocation of values in our society. The post World War II movement within social science reflected more concern with buying or voting behavior than with the meanings that govern *all* behavior. Now social scientists are taking another look at the relationships between social structures and those general frameworks of knowledge and values that in turn shape the meanings and determine the efficacy of particular messages. As humanists have always known, no society designs its religions, or its customs, or its schools on the basis of a comparative assessment of the effects of various factual or philosophical statements. That would put the cart of tactics before the horse of basic aims and functions. Any assessment of effects must assume the existence of a standard of measurement against which different or changing quantities and qualities can be measured. That standard is implicit in the value structure of a culture. Should that be immune from inquiry? The contention that the existence or meaning of an action or communication should not be assessed until its effects are established is tantamount to the assertion that the structure of a culture should not be investigated; only its tactics are to be subjected to scientific inquiry. Far from being scientific, this is itself a symbolic tactic attempting to define what is scientifically reasonable and respectable in a way that serves only the most dominant, pervasive and taken-for-granted social interests.

The hidden curriculum is a lesson plan that no one teaches but everyone learns. It consists of the symbolic contours of the social order. One cannot sensibly ask what its effects are any more than one can ask about the effects of being born Chinese rather than American. Culture-power is the ability to define the rules of the game of life that most members of a society will take for granted. That some will reject and others will come to oppose some of the rules, or the game itself, is obvious and may

on occasion be important. But the most important thing to know is the nature and structure of the representations that most people will assume to be normal and inevitable. Having established some features of the hidden curriculum, one can then ask how its specific lessons are internalized and which of its functions serve what purposes.

Every culture, as any school, will organize knowledge into patterns that cultivate a social order. The fundamental lessons of the curriculum are not just what pupils learn in math, history or physics, et cetera, but also the fact that *those* are its commonly required subjects, and not basketweaving, harmony or Marxism-Leninism (except where *that* is required). One cannot ask about the effects of that pattern of required learnings except by comparing it with the functional dynamics of other patterns. The structures themselves and most of their symbolic functions are inevitably assimilated if there is to be anything like a relatively stable social order. Culture *is* that system of messages that makes human society possible. After grasping the implicit agenda of discourse, scale of priorities, spectrum of valuations and clusters of associations that most members of a culture come to assume as the overall framework for most of their thinking and behavior, we can begin to observe the fluctuations and reversals within that structure. Only after that can we ask the "effects" question.

The question of effects, properly phrased, inquires first into individual and group selectivities by dipping into the currents and crosscurrents of the cultural stream. Secondly, "effects" research can investigate the contributions that particular types of messages make to the processing of particular conceptions within given frameworks of values and knowledge. We are a long way from being able to answer the second question. The answer will be of strategic significance once we know more of what the game is about.

The prior need is to examine the framework implicit in the hidden curriculum. We must first go beneath the explicit and fragmented significance of individual images available to casual personal scrutiny, and find the symbolic patterns and functions that entertain (in every sense of that word) the collective morality and the dominant sensibilities of the social order.

Symbolic functions are intimately involved in and govern most human activity. The human meaning of an act stems from the symbolic context in which it is embedded. The significance of a person's life or death rests in some conception of role, personality, goals, and fate. When the symbolic context changes, the significance of acts changes. A structure may shift to accommodate the change and to preserve—or even enhance—the symbolic functions of the act. For example, in the TV violence study we found that as the proportion of violent characterizations was cut, the imbalance in the risks of victimization between groups of unequal social power increased, thereby strengthening the symbolic function of violence as a demonstration of relative social powers (Gerbner, 1972). Such observations enable us to ask questions about what *that* message might cultivate in public conceptions and behavior. Thus we would relate the viewing of television violence to the cultivation of certain conceptions of goals, values, people, and power, instead of only to notions about “violent behavior.”

In another study (Nunnally, 1960), the opinions of experts on 10 information questions concerning the mentally ill were compared with mass media (mostly fictional and dramatic) representations of mentally ill characters. The mass media image was found to diverge widely from the expert image. The “public image,” as determined by an attitude survey along the same dimensions, fell between the expert and the media profiles. Thus, instead of “mediating” expert views, the media tended to cultivate conceptions far different from and in many ways opposed to those of the experts. What may be seen in isolation as “ineffective” communication was, on the contrary, powerful media cultivation “pulling” popular notions away from expert views. The reason is not necessarily ignorance or intentional obscurantism, but instead the difference between semantic labels for a certain type of behavior (such as “mental illness”) and the symbolic functions of the dramatic representations of that behavior. The symbolic functions of mental illness in popular drama may be primarily those of indicating a dramatically convenient resolution of certain problems or of designating a morally appropriate “punishment” for certain sins. The dramatic associations with the personality traits that define mental illness in the plays should provide a basis for the further investigation of what that implicit message might cultivate in viewer conceptions.

The study of specific message structures and symbolic functions reveals how these communications help define, characterize, and decide the course of life, the fate of people, and the nature of society in a symbolic world. The symbolic world is often very different from the “real” world. Symbolic behavior usually bears little resemblance to everyday actions. The power and significance of symbolic functions rests in the *differences*. Fiction, drama, and news depict situations and present action in those realistic, fantastic, tragic, or comic ways that provide the most appropriate symbolic context for the emergence of some human, moral, and social significance that could not be presented or would not be accepted (let alone enjoyed) in other ways.

## The Cultivation Process

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Symbolic structures cultivate certain premises about the world and its people and about the rules of the game of life. These premises are not necessarily embodied in overt prescriptions (which may, in fact, be quite different), but are implicit in the way things are presented, and in the way they function in the symbolic context. The same premises may lend themselves to a range of conclusions, depending on who draws them, why, when, and how. But the range of conclusions is held together by the definitions implicit in the premises. Should the premises change, the range and complexion of conclusions might also shift.

The cultivating effects of common communications patterns are typically those of selective maintenance on a certain level. General cultural patterns do not “cause” but support or weight or skew tendencies also functional to other (but not necessarily all) aspects of the social and institutional order.

Cultivation analysis starts with the patterns found in the “world” of public message systems. The common structures composing that world present images of life and society. How are these reflected in the expectations, definitions, interpretations, and values held by their “consumers”? How are the “lessons” of symbolic behavior derived from other times and places, and pre-

sented in synthetic contexts, applied to assumptions about life? In order to investigate the relationship between message systems and the views and expectations of audiences it is necessary to evolve and adapt a set of measures and investigative techniques.

The principal approaches employed in the cultivation analysis are projective techniques, depth interviews, and periodic questions on sample surveys. Adult and child panels provide subjects for projective and interview work. Projective techniques can structure situations in which respondents tend to reveal views, expectations and values of which they may not be consciously aware, or which they would not verbalize if asked directly. Techniques of depth interviewing can isolate and highlight views, expectations, and values, and relate these to media exposure patterns and to demographic and other characteristics. Questions selected from the projective tests and interviews and others designed especially for survey use are to be submitted periodically to a national adult probability sample of respondents.

The impact of television and of its further development by cable and other technologies is of special concern, as is the cultivation of social concepts among children. For most people television is popular culture. Social symbolic patterns established in childhood are the most easily cultivated throughout life. Longitudinal and cross-cultural research is needed to follow the lead of message analysis into the living laboratory of popular cultures.

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## INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES UPON MASS COMMUNICATORS

*George Gerbner*

**E**very decision to communicate something is, at the same time a decision to suppress everything else. What comes out is a result of competitive pressures breaking through structured inhibitions.

Mass media communicators live in a climate of intense competitive pressures. These are personal, situational, social, institutional. When only a minute fragment of all available and plausible messages can be selected for transmission, analysis cannot realistically focus on whether or not there is suppression involved but must consider the question of what systems of pressures and inhibitions determine what communicators select from among all available and competing messages.

The purpose of this paper is to look at some of these systems of pressures and inhibitions from the communicators' point of view. The basic data are interviews conducted with mass communicators involved in the reporting of schools and education in the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Beyond citing representative or authoritative views of these specialised communicators, we have attempted to illuminate something of the nature of institutional relationships in mass communication about another social institution, and something of the flavour and climate of mass communicator decision-making in different social systems. The more distant goal of these studies is the development of a scheme and terminology for the more systematic analysis of communicator decisions within the framework of a theory of mass communication. That ambitious task can only be outlined in this paper.

We shall begin with some general observations about studies of mass communicators and of the complex web of institutional pressures and constraints upon them. The bulk of the paper will draw on a series of studies (cited in the bibliography) using the material as concrete examples of mass communicator pressures, mostly as seen from their own vantage points and expressed in their own words. Finally

we shall conclude with some suggestions for a scheme for the systematic analysis of the process of institutional decision making in mass communication.

*Mass communicators: the institutional context*

Mass communication is the mass-production of messages, and their rapid distribution to large and heterogeneous publics. Mass media are technologies employed by industrial organisations for the production and transmission of message systems in quantities obtainable only by mass-production and rapid distribution methods. Mass media are the chief cultural arms of the industrial order from which they spring. They bring into existence, and cultivate, a new form of common consciousness — modern mass publics. These are collectivities, 'crowds,' that never meet face-to-face. They are created and sustained by the process we call publication.

Publication is the basis of community consciousness and government among groups of people too numerous and too dispersed to interact in any other way. That is why 'the press' has a special place in the constitutions and laws of all modern states. The revolutionary aspect of modern mass communication is its 'public-making' ability: that is the ability to form historically new bases for collective thought and action quickly, continuously, and pervasively across boundaries of time, space, and culture.

Mass media policies reflect not only stages of industrial development and the general structure of social relations but also particular types of institutional and industrial organisation and control. Corporate or collective organisation, private or public control, and the priorities given to artistic, political, and economic policy considerations govern their overall operations, affect their relationships to other institutions, and shape their public functions.

Mass communicators — executives, artists, administrators, craftsmen — are the custodians of this process of modern mass public-making. The conditions that shape the collective fabric of their 'personal' decisions include history and traditions, markets, creative talent, competitors, the size and location of operation, sources of supply, control over distribution channels, financial dependence, and other pressures from within and without the organisation.

In the publication field, reporter, author or staff writer, editor, artist, photographer, art editor, and the 'front office' with its pub-

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lisher, managing editor, or research director leave their imprint on the final product. News agencies, wholesale distributors, retail outlets exercise indirect controls. Local and national pressure groups, civic, professional, trade, and other special interest organisations compete for attention. Censors appear to pay more attention to cover than to content, and, with notable exceptions such as horror comics and sex books, concentrate on movies and television.

In the U.S. motion picture industry decision-making occurs on many levels in response to world-wide audiences and far-flung chains of command. Studio staff writers collaborate or rotate on scripts. Production executives and 'front office' chiefs set policy. Literary agencies shape, buy and sell 'property'. Story analysts sift and judge incoming material. Banks and releasing organisations scrutinise proposals for financing or distribution. The Production Code Administration of the Motion Picture Association suggests changes in script before the cameras begin to roll (often before the property is even purchased), and at every stage of production and publicity from selection of title through costumes, song lyrics, dances, dialogues, to poster and newspaper ad. Studio censors attempt to ensure acceptability of the film from Alaska to Zanzibar. Releasing organisations set strategy for exploitation and publicity. Theatre owners have what at times amounts to veto power over exhibition. Government censors, pressure groups, and special interest organisations may bring about changes both before and after release.

In American television the process is further complicated by government-station, station-network and producer-sponsor relationships. Advertising agencies also produce and 'package' programmes or have the right of 'policy and taste approval.' National syndicates select, edit, and distribute filmed programmes on a market-by-market basis. The National Association of Broadcasters maintains its Code Review Board. The networks have their own codes and departments of 'Standards and Practices.'

In other countries the climate of pressures may differ because history and traditions differ, but the system of decision-making is fundamentally different where the institutional relationships composing that system are fundamentally different. Mass communicators everywhere occupy sensitive and central positions in social network. They have suppliers, distributors, and critics; they have associations of their own and they have to deal with representatives of or professional counter-

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parts working for other institutions which claim attention or protection. They have laws, codes, policies which channel or constrain them. And, above all, everywhere they have clients who, as in any industrial production, supply the capital, the facilities, the jobs, and the authority (or at least opportunity) to address mass publics. How the system works depends on the meshing of all these roles and relationships and on their cumulative impact on the mass communicator. That is what the analysis of institutional pressures upon mass communicators should illuminate.

*The Studies*

To illustrate one aspect of such analysis in a more concrete way, I will draw on a series of studies of and conversations with mass communicators. The studies inquired into the nature of the relationships between the press and its twin cultural institution, formal public education, in the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. The purpose was to discover how these institutional relationships affect the ways in which specialised media personnel (such as education reporters and editors) communicate about schools and education to the general public. Beyond that immediate purpose, we were interested in a more accurate understanding of the systems of pressures and constraints each society imposes upon its mass communicators and communications.

Concrete developments and instances in mass communication take place in concrete social and historical settings. It will be necessary, therefore, to sketch these settings and, occasionally, to describe some specific relationships or events to which the views of communicators refer.

The interviews were conducted between 1960 and 1963, and are cited here more as illustrations of the dynamics of communicator relationships and of institutional pressures than for their specific information about events. In the United States, written responses to an open-ended request for specific items of information were received from one-third of education editors and reporters working for daily newspapers of over 100,000 circulation. Follow-up personal interviews were arranged with about half of the respondents. Public information personnel working national organisations and federal agencies and for schools and colleges were also interviewed in cities where reporters were interviewed. In Great Britain and France, interviews were conducted

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with press officers of the respective Ministries, the unions, and representative organs of the national press. In the Soviet Union, editors and members of the general and the education department staffs of three national newspapers, edited in Moscow, were interviewed. All interviews did not necessarily cover the same ground, as indeed they could not; the ground was not everywhere the same. The conversations revolved around both the routine and the most prominent aspects characteristic of the system of pressures impinging upon communicators of the particular countries. The standard procedure was to assure the anonymity of sources. Readers interested in greater methodological or substantive detail may find them in the references listed in the bibliography.

*The United States: Newsmen and Schoolmen*

Specialised coverage of education news began with the advent of *Time* magazine in 1923. *Newsweek's* education department followed 15 years later. The *New York Times* hired its first school reporter in 1937, and elevated him to education editor in 1941. Veteran newsmen recall that at that time most reporters regarded education a 'woman's field.' But through the postwar rise in concern, attention, and controversy, education news emerged as more than only a local service feature. Schools were found to involve not only learning but also community power and the allocation of local and national resources. School news took on some of the significance of reporting business and politics.

The Education Writers' Association, composed of working newsmen, was organised in 1947. Old-timers in education reporting consider the late forties and the early fifties as the time of the 'professionalisation' of educational journalism, at least on larger papers. It was during that troublesome era, they recall, that reporters steeped in the ethos of the trade replaced cubs and amateurs (often students or educators writing school news) to bring more concentrated attention and undivided loyalties to bear upon the increasingly newsworthy field.

The prevalent view is that the rise in the visibility and significance of education reporting paralleled an increase in the number of reporters and editors specialising in education news. Figures compiled by *The Working Press of the Nation*, a directory published by the National Research Bureau of Chicago, indicate that the number of

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such assignments has indeed risen. But there is no evidence that the proportion of education assignments has increased in relation to all editorial assignments reported. Society editors were more than twice as numerous as school reporters or as science and stamp editors combined. The general pattern of assignments remained fairly stable.

Although more than half of U.S. metropolitan dailies claimed to have created a full-time editorial post devoted to education, nearly half of these provided no staff or other assistance for their education 'editors'. In fact, most newsmen who cover education for the American daily press are general assignment reporters or work a 'school beat' under the direction of the City Desk.

'Were I really an education editor,' a big city staffer wrote us, 'I probably would have answered your letter before this, for I would have had a secretary to do the typing. As it is, with no assistance and a big beat to cover, I neglect my correspondence.'

'You flatter me with the education editor title,' reflected a Texas newsmen. 'I have been called many things in connection with school reporting, but never editor.' There is no such animal on our paper. Coverage of the public school system here is on a beat assignment basis.'

'Any title sounds pretty silly in my case,' said a young woman reporter for a large midwestern daily. 'I spend part of my working day writing obituaries, taking office notes, rewriting police items. Our city staff is short-handed and younger members and women are assigned to what we refer to as 'the junk.''

Much of the time actually spent on school and education news is also devoted to 'the junk'—education style. Any reporter whose name appears on one of several lists of specialised newspaper personnel receives hundreds of releases, publications, personal and organisational publicity items from national, state and local sources. 'Too much of what I do is to open envelopes and process news releases,' said one school reporter, echoing the sentiments of many. 'If I had an assistant,' commented another, 'or at least a filing cabinet to keep all this mail until I have a chance to open it, I could cover some news myself. But the newspapers don't seem to be organised that way.'

'Status' in the news room appears to increase with the length of time the position has been in existence and the tenure of the reporter holding the position. There were, however, relatively few old-timers. The average tenure on the job was about 2½ years.

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Studies of newspaper work suggest, and our interviews confirm, that within the broad outlines of journalistic convention and management policy the American reporter responds primarily to the social structure and pressures of the newsroom. The newsroom, with its own code of conduct, cultivates the proverbial 'nose for news,' an intangible but real order of priorities. Knowledge of that order of priorities, and skill in applying the patterns of selection inherent in them, are among the chief qualifications of the reporter. He is warned not to get 'too close to news sources' lest he adopts a system of priorities more in conformity with that of the news source than of the newspaper. Most newsmen feel that teaching experience or professional work in education is not a necessary qualification for an education reporter. They tend to agree with the reporter who said 'the non-teacher is likely to approach the subject much more objectively.'

The qualifications demand detachment from the 'news source' and loyalty to the value system of the press. The role of the press as the private-enterprise watchdog over the affairs of public enterprise is taken for granted.

*Relations with Schoolmen*

Newsmen were asked what they considered to be the major problem areas in their personal contacts with schoolmen. One education reporter, writing from the Southwest, listed nearly all of them:

(1) Overcoming the fears of certain school administrators that newspapers can't be trusted to report accurately news of education. (2) Dealing with the 'ivory tower boys' who haven't come down to earth since they began their professional education work. (3) The tendency of entrenched school leaders to think of their school systems as their own little countries. (4) Lack of news sense on the part of many school administrators. They flood the paper with junk news and ignore really interesting copy. (5) A tendency in some districts to withhold information to which the public has a right.

Generations of public administrators have been trained to fit into the scheme of community power of which the press is both organ and interpreter. But the fit has never been snug. School public relations have developed in response to the need of the schools to adjust to the requirements of the press, ease the friction and tension built into the machinery or organised contacts between the two institutions, and develop, whenever possible, alternate ways of reaching the public.

Most school and college public relations services and information programmes were first set up for tax elections, bond votes, building fund campaigns, or as the consequence of their failures. As school dis-

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tricts consolidated and educational institutions grew larger, their need for public information (and their ability to provide it as a specialised service) increased. Educational public relations became a recognised speciality in the field of institutional publicity and fund-raising.

Most education reporters find school public information services indispensable to their work. Although they complain about the volume of press releases and 'junk' pouring into editorial offices from all over the country, they find the stream of information from schools and colleges essential to their coverage. 'Professional public relations people have a sense of news value,' commented a Seattle area reporter. 'Educators,' he added, 'often don't recognise news when they see them.' Another respondent said:

The colleges, without exception, have public relations people and so does the city school system. I work closely with them. In fact, I depend on them for the routine stories. They frequently suggest feature stories. And I find them valuable, to start from at least, when a major story breaks.

'When a major story breaks' the issue is usually crime, violence, controversy or money. In a crisis situation, the publicist's task is to make his client's views heard and to try to channel the news in the least damaging direction. This is most difficult when basic institutional interests are at cross-purposes.

### School Board Coverage

A sensitive area of press-school relations is the news coverage of school board meetings. School boards, usually composed of lay citizens of the local district, must see to it that the schools are run on a financial and administrative basis that the local tax and power structure will support. The nature and extent of that support depends largely on how the school's needs and policies are presented to the community. This is a process in which the press is both the interpreter and an interested party. The raising and allocation of tax resources and the spending of public monies affect business interests of the press and of its advertiser clients.

The issue involved in the reporting of school board deliberations is who should decide just what and how much the public has a 'right to know.' Most board members feel that boards have the right to arrive at their policies and present them to the community as they see fit. This usually means a minimum of public controversy or open disagreement among board members. They feel that little serious busi-

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ness can be done in public meetings. They know that controversy splits community support and endangers the all-important tax election, bond issue, or legislative appropriation. Except when a dissident minority wants to mobilise public support for its cause, board members prefer to settle their disagreement in private and present a united front at open meetings.

Newsmen, on the other hand, jealously guard the public's 'right to know' — what the press wants it to know. Newspapers are usually willing to co-operate, but on their own terms. These include full knowledge of board deliberations and the right to decide what is 'responsible reporting' and in the 'public interest.'

'If the school administration is not open, the newspaper won't have the background knowledge to be responsible even if it wants to,' stated a reporter. 'Besides,' she added, 'the schools have no alternative except to co-operate with the press. Putting it baldly, the press can hurt the schools but the schools have no effective club over the press.'

Another education reporter for a big-city daily complained:

Although my own relations with the publicists employed by the Board of Education are good, the board itself operates in ways that destroy public confidence. Its monthly public meetings are a joke. Everything is neatly arranged in advance. The board meets privately to decide what it will do in public. It then goes through its paces like seals in a circus act. Its public meetings are a complete waste of time.

Rules and customs of board meetings press coverage, and board-press relationships in general, vary widely across the country. Most education reporters have a realistic understanding of the institutional and power issues involved in board meeting coverage. The following responses indicate typical circumstances and views on the subject.

Our school district follows the policy of advance notification and background information for any major story. I am frequently invited to attend committee meetings of the school board to hear reports of staff committees and to report on them as I see fit.

This close relationship is of considerable assistance to our paper. A year ago last spring, for example, the school board refused a request that the press be barred while the board discussed salary demands with the local AFT chapter.

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Concerning relations generally between the press and the board, I believe there is much suspicion and distrust of newspapers on the part of educators. This is not all misplaced by any means. There has been irresponsible and reckless reporting of school news. A couple of years ago there were rumours of a shortage in the school board budget. The business manager was hospitalised and unable to explain. A newspaper got one of the school board members to say that the reported shortage would be investigated. This gave the paper an eight-column headline about

suspected skulduggery. It could have checked out the report and found it baseless but that would have taken patience — and there would have been no story. The episode hurt press-school relations. On another occasion, the school board announced a \$20 million improvement programme. The afternoon paper got the news 'break'. The board did not specify how the programme should be financed but listed half a dozen possible taxes, any one or more of which might be considered as revenue raisers. The morning paper ignored the plans for improving the school system and said in big headlines that the school board was proposing six new taxes. Aside from actually misleading the public, the paper in question seemed to be adopting a spiteful attitude because it had not had the major story first.

Newspaper involvement in school board politics was lamented by a reporter who wrote that 'if you cover a big city school board you soon get so enmeshed in its political and often non-education manoeuvres that pure education news goes by the wayside in the crush of stories about scandals, unions, wages, etc.'

A New England survey (Gross, 1956), found 43 per cent of superintendents inviting the press, at least occasionally, to board meetings closed to the public. But the study also found that nearly all large and most small school boards do hold closed meetings, and that there is considerable disagreement between newsmen and schoolmen about the kind of business, if any, that should be considered in 'executive session.' The basic issue is rooted in the nature of the relationship between private and public institutions. It is a question of which set of institutional purposes should determine the selection, timing, and treatment of information.

#### *National News*

That basic issue also affects the space and treatment accorded to national news. The American newspaper's main constituency is its market area. Its influence is best exerted through the structure of decentralised local controls. It is sensitive to developments that make the schools more independent of that structure of controls, such as strong teacher unions, national organisations in education, federal supervision, federal aid.

The 'hard news, local angle' formula of American newspapers also makes the reporting of national developments highly sporadic unless some local 'tie-in' can be found. Few newspapers have any but local reporters. And, even though education is the largest public enterprise in the nation, and the National Education Association the largest professional association in the world, educational organisations and

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spokesmen rarely command the attention of the wire services which supply non-local news to most papers. The U.S. Office of Education, a bureau of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, is a relatively weak government agency with few functions and a feeble voice. Professional publicists manning the small press office of the U.S.O.E. confided that they found their jobs easier under a conservative administration whose actions did not arouse press sensitivities to federal action in the education field. The sprawling N.E.A., and the more aggressive teacher unions, conduct their press relations largely through local affiliates and concentrate their national publicity efforts on broadcasting networks, magazines, and the annual convention.

'I doubt that the name of any educator in the nation is known to more than 2 or 3 per cent of all Americans,' one education writer observed. 'Few people can see beyond their local school board and the local property tax,' commented another. 'There is some dim awareness of state school officials, even less of the U.S. Office of Education. As a working education editor,' he continued, 'I find that most laymen do not understand when I refer to the N.E.A. by its initials.'

Public awareness is, of course, a matter of press attention. Many of our respondents described differences in treatment between local and national education news, and commented not only on the amount but also on the kind of attention professional education organisations receive from the press.

'We are, of course, interested in local teachers' organisations,' noted the education writer of a New York state daily. However, the national organisation, she observed,

is not an organisation financed by taxpayers. It is a group trying to sell the needs of teachers. It is a lobbying organisation. It is not local. Some of its reports are news. Some are just one side of a story.

Another reporter commented:

There has been little difficulty working with the National Education Association. We generally handle their conventions . . . We realise their right to advocate federal aid, for example, and they realise our right to oppose it.

Most reporters used such terms as 'propaganda,' 'lobby,' or 'pressure group' in talking about the N.E.A. and its activities. The institutional vantage point and 'taxpayer' outlook of the average daily newspaper appears to sensitise reporters to see primarily the financial control issue involved in national organisational news in education. The following comments were typical:

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N.E.A. news releases make good statistical stories, but that's about all. Much of their stuff is propaganda for higher teacher pay. The N.E.A. is a lobby as I see it.

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There is a dearth of educational statistics and N.E.A. makes its own available . . . The education reporter must realise N.E.A. or other teachers' organisations will be propagandising for whatever they want. N.E.A.'s outpourings on federal aid get on my nerves sometimes.

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If the national and state teacher organisations are doing anything to help the local press relations of their local chapters, I have yet to see it. Indeed, the national and state organisations seem to spend most of their time reassuring teachers that they are underpaid and underappreciated but doing the best of all possible jobs. The public is yet to be convinced.

### Issues

Newsman's perceptions of headline issues in education reporting reveal the rising tempo of community conflict over basic problems of resource allocation. These headline issues are the right-wing attacks on education, the movement toward racial integration, and the rise of teacher and student militancy.

The right-wing attacks followed in the wake of postwar planning for solutions to the financial crisis in education. The controversies were usually couched in terms of textbooks, curriculum and 'subversion.' Their most telling effect, however, has been the reversal or slowing down of structural and financial reform, school leaders sought in order to improve, or at least maintain, the quality of education.

The basic problem of resources — whose solution required reforms that drew much of the right wing's fire — erupted in many forms in the mid-fifties and sixties. That period saw the official 'discovery' of poverty and the 'culturally deprived,' of 'slums and suburbs,' of the 'dropouts' and the growing number of unemployed and unemployable youth, of 'blackboard jungles' of juvenile violence and rebellion. Related to all of these and striking at the root of the resource problem was the growing militancy of the black power and student power movements.

One education reporter expressed the views of nearly every respondent when he said:

The major problem since 1955 has been integration. The percentage of Negro pupils increased from 19 per cent to over 30 per cent in the city schools. Most of the integrated schools are in culturally deprived areas. The paper has been hesitant to take an editorial position.

Newspapers, torn between recognition of the problems and the sharp and often violent reaction of some power groups in the com-

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munities they serve, began to assess their role in the conflict. The movement for integration, and for justice beyond integration, has become the No. 1 domestic news story in the American press. The new 'professionalised' education reporter found much of the story a part of his normal beat. This meant not only new events to report but also a new context in which to conduct the routine service coverage of the schools. As a reporter on a large midwestern daily explained:

Nearly half of our pupils are coloured. We have trouble with that. Often we have to play down pictures of coloured children or have to be careful to pick a school which is not too integrated.

The other day I had such trouble in a kindergarten class. I had the photographer taking a picture in the class and the teacher said to me, 'Don't you think you have too many chocolate drops in this picture?'

Our picture editor is very prejudiced. He claims it is impossible to take good pictures of coloured people. He says the pictures come out so dark that this poses a technical problem.

The slums and the slum schools are in the heart of the city. Many people are moving out to the suburbs, mostly whites. We have come to favour the more exclusive residential areas. They demand and get publicity. In the process we neglect the schools of the inner city.

Neglected schools of inner cities across the country burst into the headlines with news of demonstrations, boycotts, and suddenly publicised 'waves' of classroom terror and violence. 'Professionalisation' in education reporting has led both to focused coverage and to a tightening of news value priorities governing school news at a time of deepening crisis.

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In summary, the school system is the principal user of local taxes, goods, and services. In virtually reproducing the income and status hierarchy of the local community, the American school is a prime example of the financial and political effects of local control. The newspaper's stake in the system of local control stems from its client relationships and functions. The principal sustaining service of the American newspaper is the creation and cultivation of a reading public of consumers concentrated in a market area which provides the base for the profitable operation of the chief supporting clientele, the advertisers. These relationships and functions also shape the overall approach to the newspaper to other institutions and events, and affect the kind of attention it will pay to different publics. News and views are selected not only to be of broad general appeal but also to be of relevance and usefulness to the system of controls in which the press and its clients wield maximum influence.

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Newsman's views, schoolmen's observations, and the literature in the field of press-school relations suggest that newspapers are most sensitive to two types of challenge to this structure of local control. One is further professionalisation and organisation in the education field, making that vast public enterprise more independent of local direction and supervision. The other is any re-allocation of resources which might at least temporarily upset the present local bases of newspaper and other business operations.

The local orientation of the American daily paper assures a fair amount of community school news, and makes the newspaper sensitive to local interests, movements, and affairs. Its controlling institutional relations alert the press to any challenge to its prerogative to select and shape information by its own criteria of relevance to its own functions and publics. National agencies, organisations, and movements in education are usually perceived as special pleaders threatening the structure of local influence and control — a structure in which both school and press have a vital and at least partly conflicting interest.

*Great Britain: The National Scene*

The major centres of communication activity involving education in Great Britain are the Ministry of Education, the National Union of Teachers, the local Education Authorities, the broadcasting networks, and the national newspapers. Our interviews focused on the activities of the N.U.T.'s Publicity and Public Relations Department. Conversations were also held with Ministry, broadcasting, and newspaper personnel.

About 60 per cent of the cost of schools and 80 per cent of universities comes from nationally collected, allocated, and supervised tax funds. The Minister of Education, a cabinet member of the government party, reports to and is answerable in Parliament on all questions affecting education. However, his chief responsibilities are the disbursement of national funds under an equalisation formula based on local need, and the inspection of compliance with minimum educational standards. He also operates information services.

Although the unit of educational administration is the Local Education Authority, usually an arm of the county or borough council, the L.E.A.'s do not represent instruments of local control to the extent of the American schoolboard. Teacher representatives serve on most

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L.E.A.'s. Basic salary scales are developed nationally through a centralised bargaining group of representatives of the L.E.A.'s and the teachers' unions, whose awards the government usually accepts.

The crucial client relationships of British education are, then, national in scope. Vigorous educational debate and deliberation are prominent parts of the national political process. Education is a major issue in political platforms and campaigns, a frequent subject of Parliamentary debate and inquiry, and a focal point of social and political — as well as educational — reform movements.

Educational public relations, information services, and reporting are post-World War II phenomena in Great Britain. Press officers were appointed to government ministries during the war, and departments of information developed with the enactment of the social welfare legislation, including Education Acts, of the mid-forties and fifties. The Ministry's Information Department (often working through the government's Central Office of Information), assists the Minister of Education in representing the government's educational policy in the House of Commons and in interpreting it to the general public. Special tasks centre in government White Papers and the reports of Royal Commissions and Advisory Councils which stimulate public interest and legislative developments in education. Campaigns on special subjects are also conducted through releases, publications, and the facilities provided by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

*The National Union of Teachers*

The National Union of Teachers has a voluntary membership of over three-fourths of all teachers in Great Britain. Its information services were performed by a small press bureau until 1956. That year, a Public Relations Officer was appointed. A Department of Publicity and Public Relations was established in 1960.

This Department is concerned with public relations on the national level, internal N.U.T. publications, special conferences, and Parliamentary campaigns.

Radio and television are used extensively. Contacts are maintained between the Department and editors and producers of BBC and ITV. The Department has also built up personal contacts with the national papers and their education reporters.

N.U.T. information specialists consider their relationships with local papers more troublesome than with the national press. Our in-

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formants' comments on local press relations were similar to the views of many of their American counterparts. Education, one information officer said,

is the biggest single aspect of local government activity, so if it's true to say that local government is exposed to the winds of public opinion, the education part of it is probably even more exposed than the rest. We have to contend with the efforts of candidates for election to local councils who do not regard it as part of their job in the election campaigns to justify what they're spending through the rates, and demanding more to be spent, but seek rather to tell the public that if they're returned they will prevent the rates from rising any further and if possible will try to reduce them.

I think we also suffer from the attentions of the self-appointed vigilantes, the ratepayers' associations. I always wonder why it is that ratepayers' associations do not function in the way in which they might if they were really intent on the good health of local government.

N.U.T. publicists interviewed stressed the need for public relations in a public service profession, the problem of tension and suspicion between newsmen and schoolmen, the organisational competition for space in the national press, the conflict between informational and commercial requirements of news treatment, the necessity to adjust to the requirements of the press, and the discrepancy between having to 'strike a note of success' in public and the real feelings of teachers about their situation.

The struggle for organisational visibility was felt to require a high level of publicity effort:

Educational publicity is necessary for self-defence. We are living in a world of very high-powered public relations. The adman and the hidden persuaders are all about us; we cannot ignore their existence. Nor can we expect newspapers, the BBC, and the ITA to consider that our activities, our policies, our point of view, worthy of space purely on its own merits. We've got to make them aware of what we are doing in competition with the efforts of many other organisations spending much more than we could ever expect to spend.

It was felt that 'emphasis on the trivial and the sensational' still dominates much of the news coverage of some papers.

While there is increasing public interest in education, and the newspapers' handling of newsworthy activities is on the whole fair and full, there is unfortunately still too much emphasis on the trivial and the sensational. All you've got to do is send a girl home for wearing stiletto heels or a tight skirt, or a boy for wearing blue jeans or an 'American style' haircut, and you'll find yourself in the headlines.

The strategy of public relations was felt at times to conceal rather than reveal the 'true feelings' of teachers:

In the media we have to strike a note of success; in private and among teachers in general, there is a widespread feeling of frustration and failure, despite the strides made since the war. Much-publicised 'break-

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thoughts' in education conceal the true feelings of many in the teaching profession. When circumstances force us to point out the illusory nature of many of our 'successes' and of proposed 'solutions,' and when the feelings of teachers erupt in form of some dramatic development such as a strike, there is public confusion, shock, and resentment. This may well lead to further stagnation or even setbacks which the press, as a whole, has done little to avoid or to cushion.

## Education Correspondents

In 1950 only the labourite *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Mirror* had education correspondents, as they are called in England. By 1961 there were enough to form an association.

Education correspondents are normally long-time professional journalists rather than educators-turned-journalists. There is no tradition of women reporters or students or teachers writing school news. The national press does not provide much routine local service coverage.

It has dawned on executives, who easily get out of touch, [we were told] that the class context of education is changing, that working class boys go to the university, that higher and further education are becoming popular issues. It was found, further that reader interest is greater when education is regularly covered by a named correspondent.

An education correspondent with a byline is given considerable latitude even though his status is not as high as that of the industrial correspondent, for example. The prominent education writer is not expected to cover the trivial 'head bans lipstick' type story, or the sensational item on 'grammar school assigns *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for 6th form' — still the most typical 'school news' especially in the tabloid and evening press.

The relative independence of the education correspondent works both ways. When he is left alone to write his stories regardless of party line, he is likely to be ignored about the editorial position the newspaper is to take.

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In general, then, that the nature of organised relationships between newsmen and schoolmen in England has much in common with that in the United States, but the structure is different. The professional forces of organised education play a relatively militant and independent role on the national level. They can effectively — even if not always successfully — interact with government and the press where the major resource decisions are made. Government, too, is expected to exercise a vigorous role in informing the public of the state of education.

The national press represents the industrial establishment and political groupings of the country. Its growing interest in schools reflects the post-war reforms, stresses, and increasing acute political and

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economic stakes involved in educational issues. While reporters function much the same as their U.S. counterparts in catering to commercial need and reader interest, specialised education correspondents observe the national scene and are not as deeply embroiled in the local power struggle.

*France: Ideological Diversity*

Interviews were held with key personnel at the Ministry of Education, unions of teachers and students, and major Paris newspapers representing different orientations. Their views gave an indication of the complex interplay of institutional pressures in a context which is at once centralised and differentiated along lines of ideological and commercial policy.

The interviews reflected both the structure and the troubled history of institutional relationships. They also illuminated some of the background against which the role of communicators in the student-inspired 1968 rebellion may be seen.

*The Schools and the Press*

The Napoleonic Codes created a centralised public secondary and higher education system, but left primary schooling in the hands of the church. Throughout the 19th century, republicans continued to agitate for extending compulsory public into educational backwaters bypassed by the swift currents of secular and revolutionary sentiment. Their success has been a source of contention and strife ever since.

About one in every six children attends private schools. The predominantly Catholic private school system remained to contest secular republicanism in both the educational and financial realms. Petain's occupation law giving tax money to Catholic schools (and closing Normal Schools as 'hotbeds of radicalism') was revoked upon liberation. But a conservative majority in a Parliament reapportioned under the Fifth Republic voted to support parochial schools from public funds.

The new constitution reduced the power of elected deputies and changed the basis of representation to the detriment of the Parliamentary Left. Cabinet posts traditionally held by Left parties, including that of Education, went to the new government majority.

A national curriculum run by the Ministry of Education, manned by civil servants, revolves around national examinations of high

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academic and classical content. Competitive examinations keep eight out of every ten pupils out of secondary school. Few of those who pass the baccalaureat gain admission to a university. There they must prepare for further competitive state examinations mostly on their own; the huge classrooms where professors read their lecture notes to hundreds of students accommodate only a fraction of the student body. The structure and content of French education can only be affected through national pressure, legislation, and government action.

The design of French public education is, then, a centralised blueprint with both client and supervisory relationships leading to the seat of national power in Paris. In this context — buffeted by forces of clericalism and regionalism and torn by the tug-of-war of coalition governments — teacher and student organisations maintained their tradition of militant political activity dating back to the French revolution.

The law allocating public funds to Church schools (without the right of public inspection) revived talk of 'la guerre scolaire.' Militant students, who had condoned desertions from the army and agitated for an end to the Algerian war, now joined with teachers to spark mass protests against the government's new law. A petition signed by nearly 11 million (about 50 per cent of voters) opposed its implementation. Periodic teacher and student strikes also revealed general dissatisfaction and economic distress.

Each school year began with deeper crises and sharper conflicts. By the end of 1963 striking students and teachers, clubbed, punched, and sprayed with fire hoses as they fought police in the streets of the Latin Quarter, closed the Sorbonne and all of France's 23 universities. Education had become a centre of national controversy and a subject of intense public interest and concern. By 1968, it provided the spark for the explosion that paralysed France and brought it to the brink of revolution.

The press emerged from wartime ruin and illegality with temporary financial support from the national government. Within ten years after the liberation, economic pressures cut the number of Paris dailies to half the postwar figure. The transition from a primarily party or 'opinion' press to a largely commercial or 'independent' press was well under way.

Today both types of papers exist side by side. Their position on the secular vs. clerical range, on the left vs. right-wing political spectrum,

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and on the special readership vs. mass-audience-appeal commercial continuum largely determines their approach to other institutions and to the reporting of events.

### *The Ministry, the teachers, and the students*

Traditionally, the information functions of French Ministries of Education have been handled by personal press secretaries attached to — and changing with — individual Ministers. In 1961 a permanent information office was established. Most members of the staff are former teachers, selected through civil service examinations, and given four years of practical training with pay.

The main tasks of the office are to inform the public through the press and the government-owned broadcasting facilities, and to assist the Minister in his relations with the Deputies. 'We must tell the public and the Deputies about the policies of the Ministry, answer criticism — all of which is directed at the Minister in a centralised system such as ours — and try to anticipate future problems and criticism,' said a staff member. And he explained:

Nearly half million persons work under this Ministry. Their organisation are left-wing. Many of them are opposed to the Minister and his policies. This is an uncomfortable position.

Relations with friendly organs of the press are personal and intimate; with others, well, they only distort what we say. But education is of great public and political interest. The newspapers print our stories. They often attack it and distort it but they usually give it good play. In more difficult or controversial matters we sometimes get a friendly Deputy to ask questions in Parliament, and have our material delivered by the Minister whose speeches are always reported by the political journalists.

We are engaged in long-range education reforms. This is not an easy task under the best of circumstances. Schooling is being extended, districts are being consolidated, more teachers are urgently needed. We must try to convince parents especially in rural and working class areas that their children should stay in school longer. We must inform municipalities of their responsibility for the transportation of children. We have difficulty recruiting new teachers. There are strikes and attacks on education which are in effect political attacks on the government.

Defending state aid to confessional [Catholic] schools is one of our most troublesome tasks. Speeding up the school construction is another. The local communities must participate in this programme and that slows down everything.

The Fédération de l'Education Nationale (F.E.N.) is the major 'umbrella' organisation of unions of teachers. The F.E.N. maintains an active press bureau. Affiliated unions represent different levels of education and different groupings, ranging from the radical left through *syndicalisme a-politique* to the anarchists. Each union main-

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tains its own press relations. The F.E.N. concentrates on major issues and on co-ordinated campaigns which unite all or most of its affiliated groups. A press officer described its operation:

One example was the broad campaign for preserving secular education in 1960. That was when the newspapers became aware of our strength. When they saw that 25,000 people came in delegations from the provinces, a meeting at Vincennes gathered more than 300,000, the largest crowds across the country since the liberation, our bulletins were printed in all but perhaps the most reactionary papers.

We are calling attention to the fact that schools are reopening each fall under more and more disastrous conditions. The Ministry publishes much reassuring information and uses the state-owned broadcasting system to radiate optimism. But our material fares fairly well, too.

*Le Monde* is probably the only paper which runs our news in a good position, indicating its origin, but without much editing or distortion. Most of the others help themselves according to their opinions. We have a big play in *Humanite* and *Liberation*, especially when we oppose the government. *Figaro* will do the opposite. *France Soir*, and the rest of the 'independent' press is yet another matter. These people do not worry much about the real and serious problems of education. What they want is personal incidents, accidents, the sensational story. If a child cracks his head on a school playground, that's more important than all the problems of civil service, or the equalisation of teacher salaries on the various levels.

The union of students, Union Nationale des Etudiants de France, (U.N.E.F.) is heir to a long tradition of militant social and political action. It represents four-fifths of the over 300,000 university students. The editorial office of the organisation's newspaper, *Etudiants de France*, serves as the centre of information activities. A small permanent staff writes and edits releases and bulletins for the information of Parliamentary Deputies and the press.

News releases usually contain statements or resolutions on specific current issues. 'Actually,' we were told, 'every little vice president of every local student association affiliated with U.N.E.F. has a mania for releases. They pour them out all the time. We co-ordinate them and try to check the flow somewhat. We want to keep the value of U.N.E.F. news releases.'

U.N.E.F. press relations with the national papers vary according to the 'line' of each paper, the reporter in charge of education news, and the particular issue involved. Some thumbnail sketches from the students' point of view:

*L'Aurore* [right-wing]: We have no personal relations. Rarely publishes anything we send them, but frequently attacks us and our policies. Regularly publishes the releases of right-wing student organisations created to oppose the U.N.E.F.

*Figaro* [conservative 'prestige' paper]: Publishes some of our releases when we have organisational news, and sometimes even about conditions

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of students. But in the realm of politics, if they publish our views at all, they do so under a headline or editorial note expressing their disapproval. However, we have friendly relations with the staff.

*La Croix* [Catholic]: Contrary to *Figaro*, not a line of organisational activity but encouragement for certain policies such as struggle against the Algerian war. On such an issue we address ourselves directly to the editorial writer who has written some very conscientious pieces on our position.

*Paris-Presse* [commercial independent]: Never a line of what we send them, although much material denouncing us as 'reds' and 'traitors.' At the time of the peace demonstrations the front page carried the banner headline: 'UNEF SCANDAL.' We're in the news only when there is something sensational, violent.

*France Soir* [commercial independent]: The education reporter is very friendly but the editor stops or rewrites everything we send. So you have to use devious means. For example, when the U.N.E.F. took a stand on the Algerian war, we went directly to the man in charge of Algerian affairs who could get it through. Another time we had an economic conference but couldn't get our story published until we included the names of prominent industrialists who attended the meeting.

*Le Monde* [liberal 'prestige' paper]: Up in the clouds. Rarely uses our releases unless some government scandal is brewing. Writing theoretical pieces is more important for them than keeping up with day-to-day events.

*L'Humanité*, *Libération* [communist, socialist]: Jump at anything that is against the government. *Libération* especially is inclined to be even more sensational than some commercial papers.

## National newspapers — from Left to Right

After the liberation three of the some thirty daily papers in Paris had regular education sections (*Le Monde*, *Combat*, and *Figaro*). By 1960 most of the remaining fifteen papers had either a section or an editor specialising in education news.

At the beginning of the education reform programmes in the mid-fifties, the government stimulated the formation of an association of education journalists. But the association folded after a year of turbulent existence. Its president, who had been an information officer at the Ministry, became the education correspondent of the government news agency, Agence France Press.

Paris papers use AFP's domestic service more for their information than as a substitute to their own coverage. Each paper's political tendency, extent of commercial orientation, and the education writer's prominence and autonomy shape the overall perspective reflected in the coverage. The views of education writers that follow represent this range of institutional and personal orientations.

An education editor and his assistant handle school news on a major left wing paper. The education section was established after the 'anti-clericalisation' campaign of 1959. 'Think of it,' the editor said, '11

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million signatures in France — this had not happened for a long time. The public is very much moved by questions of education, of democratisation. The whole structure of secular education, the principle of French education, is at stake.'

Aside from the continued anti-clerical campaign, school news policy gives primary emphasis to the conditions of teachers and students and to general problems of workers' and popular education.

We maintain close relations with teacher and student unions and many individuals in education. Attend all Congresses of *instituteurs*, and give detailed coverage of their activities. Of course, for us the political problems come first; we feel that the solution of pedagogic problems depends on the prior solution of the political problems.

The recent strikes have demonstrated that the situation is desperate. The role of the teachers' colleges has been reduced, and teachers are hired with a simple bachelor's degree, and without any preparation for teaching, because salaries are so low.

The pressures are increasing. In the first year of secondary education only 13 per cent of the students are working class children. And the proportion among university students is 3 per cent! These are the problems we are stressing. Every time there is protest, any positive action, any new scandal — shortage of teachers, lack of buildings — we give it full coverage.

The education writer on an independent Left-of-centre daily said:

On our newspaper every writer has equal status. We have considerable freedom to develop and write on subjects that interest us. Our stories may be cut, but they are not revised by the editor. We have regular contacts with the teachers' unions and the U.N.E.F., and often carry their releases without comment.

Mail from readers is enormous. Among our readers there are many teachers and they write very much. We try to answer every letter. We rarely print letters to the editor, but prefer to write articles summarising and citing several correspondents.

The education writer of a 'prestige' paper expressed these views:

Many organisations turn out news on education. We try to include these in proportion of our estimate of the strength of the organisation. However, teachers are very touchy people. I try to humour them by occasionally picking out some releases on the basis of content rather than the strength of the organisation sending it. Still, as soon as somebody is displeased, he tries to go over my head and writes to the editor-in-chief — only to find his letter sent right back to me. Less than 10 per cent of what I actually write is discarded, usually for reasons of space.

We receive more mail than any other department except the editor-in-chief, and I answer all of it. Strictly speaking there are no editorials on school problems; however, I write brief signed commentaries printed above some news stories. I am free to write these as I please.

The 'social editor' in charge of education, health, and labour on a mass circulation commercial daily had a different story to tell:

The trouble is that I am completely under the thumb of editors. I sign very few of my articles because they are usually rewritten before they appear. This little 'procedure' as we call it is usually calculated to

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make the news more spicy, more interesting.

As to news sources, the Ministries are now full of civil servants rather than political people. Consequently they are too aloof, too bureaucratic. The unions are much more open, except on the extreme left which is closed to a journalist from my paper. However, I try to work with them behind the scenes. My contacts with the F.E.N. are the most frequent. The U.N.E.F. sends me reports which are 5 centimetres thick and take hours to read. I am also a professor of journalism and write for an economic weekly, have three hours of lecture per day, work a total of 14 hours a day — so you see I don't have time to read those long reports. Besides, we have a great deal of friction about the students. The rest of the staff does not recognise their right to political opinions.

Another commercially successful mass circulation daily has an education department with an editor and an assistant. All news concerning schools and education is channelled through the education editor. 'Of course,' she said, 'many of these stories end up with the political or labour editor, or in the wastebasket. Especially bulletins from the Ministry of Education, releases from teachers' unions — dull stories for us. Our world is governed by the competition for attention. News must be living, personal, vivid actuality served in an appetising way to hook a tired, lazy public!'

Our public is so varied [she continued] that I have no image of it. We are not like papers written for the working man or the business man, or intellectuals — we must appeal to all, from the professor to the street-sweeper or subway ticket puncher. So I must write for the subway ticket puncher; if I can interest *him*, I can interest the professor too.

I must find attractive and useful subjects and never be content only processing releases. If I receive something about the housing problems of students, I must also slip in something about the latest fad in college girl hairdo. News must be humanised, personalised: first names, pictures, individual cases.

The furor about parochial schools does not mean much to us. It's very simple: out of ten million pupils in France, only 1.7 million are in parochial schools. I write for the ten million.

A conservative newspaper once called 'the morning bible of the French upper middle class' prides itself on being 'the best informed on matters concerning education.' The education editor is also deputy editor-in-chief. Two full-time assistants help screen and follow up the day's education news, and maintain contact with organisations in the field. Their views follow.

Our doors are open to teachers and students, and we do not sacrifice education to sensationalism or commercialism. Politically we are right of centre, but this did not prevent us from supporting students who asked for draft deferment to complete their studies. At the same time, we don't confuse democratisation with demagoguery. We struggle to maintain high standards and oppose those who encourage youth to desert the Army.

We realise that students are restless and teachers dissatisfied. Reform

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is needed. We do not hold with the old generation of professors who defend to the death the teaching of Latin and Greek, or with those who fight for the 'freedom' of Catholic schools to receive public funds without public inspection. In our opinion the crisis of the universities and their lack of adjustment to the needs of the country are the leading problems in education today.

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With the client relationships of the educational system centred in the national government and those of the press clearly differentiated along ideological and commercial dimensions, a complex pattern of interaction is characteristic of the structure of school-press relationships in France. Next we turn to the Soviet Union where, as in the United States, a single overall perspective rather than ideological differentiation is characteristic of both education and the press.

### The Soviet Union: Interlocking Responsibilities

Interviews were conducted with newsmen responsible for representing Soviet education in the official organs of the central government, the Young Communist League, and the Young Pioneers. Their views follow a brief discussion of the schools and the press.

### The School and the Press

Public schooling is the primary responsibility of government ministries and local Soviets. But all major organisations, including the Communist Party, have specialised branches working with the public schools and conducting educational programmes of their own. The Young Pioneers and the Young Communist League (*Komsomol*) are largely educational organisations integrated with and nearly equal to the schools in scope and significance. The cultural and educational activities of the unions form another adult education system reaching all working people and their families. The organs of the government, the Party, and of other mass organisations comprise the press of the country and further promote educational objectives and planning. Interlocking responsibilities thus relate organisations to each other, to the press, and to the schools.

The Soviet press is composed mostly of official organs of mass organisations, including the government, designed to represent the views and interests of these organisations and to convey news relevant to their functions. 'Organ' is a literal expression of the Soviet concept of the press as the arm of revolutionary organisation, and itself, in

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Lenin's words, a 'collective organiser'.

The principal clients of Soviet mass communicators are, therefore, the organisations whose news, views, and interests the press is to express, and whose educational and organisational work it is to further. Editors of major newspapers sit on the highest councils of their organisations, and participate in policy-making. (When Khrushchev went, so did his son-in-law Aleksei Adzhubei, editor of *Izvestia*).

Striking changes in Soviet institutional life began in the mid-fifties. The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, meeting in 1956, released a wave of legislative and intellectual ferment. The press was given the task of 'unleashing the initiative from below,' and the schools of 'strengthening the ties between education and life.' The school reform law of 1958 expanded education on all levels, and made polytechnical training and work experience a part of all learning and a prerequisite for most aspirants for higher education.

The Third Programme of the CPSU adapted at the Party's Twenty-second Congress in 1961 gave a further boost to these reforms. The Third Programme declared socialism in the U.S.S.R. a reality and defined the main tasks of communist construction. Among these tasks were 'the shaping of a scientific world outlook,' 'the affirmation of communist morality,' and 'the elimination of substantial distinctions between mental and physical labour.' Responsibilities assigned the mass media and the schools were indicated in the following passage:

The moulding of the new man is effected through his own active participation in communist construction and the development of communist principles . . . under the influence of the educational work carried out by the Party, the state, and various social organisations, work in which the press, radio, cinema, and television play an important part.

Mass communicators came under increasing public and self-criticism. In the year of the Twentieth Congress, the theoretical organ *Kommunist* declared that 'The clichés and stereotyped patterns ever recurring in the press have a dulling effect on readers and thus increase their isolation from real life . . . Local papers are in the habit of passing over in silence all new problems until the papers of the capital have pronounced on them.' The Union of Journalists was set to work on 'strengthening the links between the press and the mass of the workers.' Its new organ, *Sovietskaya Pechat*, asked whether journalists served their readers or only wrote for the benefit of authorities. 'Just pick up a paper and see for yourself!' it admonished.

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The central organ of the Young Communist League, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, pioneered in revitalising the appearance as well as the content of newspapers, striking a critical and controversial tone in matters never before aired in public, and opening up one-third or more of its total space to comments, complaints, and contributions from readers. Its editor, Aleksei Adzhubei, next performed similar face-lifting on the staid government organ *Izvestia*. A few Western style dailies such as *Sovietskaya Rossiya* and *Vechnaya Moskva*, replete with news, cartoons, human interest stories and advertisements, began to compete for readers.

The schools departments of the revitalised Soviet press were called upon to assist in the educational effort. Numerous stories continued to point out that enrolments in rural schools lagged behind target quotas, that many who registered did not attend, and that schools were not easily accessible. Aside from exposing lags and gaps, newspaper editors became general trouble-shooters investigating complaints, exchanging experiences, debating different ways of solving problems.

The themes of individual initiative, participation, and joint press-school responsibilities in planning and carrying out common tasks ran through our interviews. A high trade union official summarised the official view:

The cultural revolution is a more difficult task than the political and even economic revolutions. Those revolutions create the material requirements, but the cultural revolution is the creation of a new morality which makes the new society a subjective reality for the masses of people.

As mass organisations overlap in their educational concern and interest in the public schools, all major newspapers have general educational functions as well as special departments. We interviewed general editors and education specialists of three mass circulation papers which are among the most active in this field. In the following we report their accounts of the role and functions of mass communicators on the government paper *Izvestia*, the leading youth daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, and the central organ of the Young Pioneers, *Pionerskaya Pravda*.

#### *Izvestia*

*Izvestia* is the organ of the government. The Supreme Soviet confirms its editors and approves its general plans. As the Party paper *Pravda* is the chief outlet for party organisational news and statements, *Izvestia* is the main vehicle of governmental (election, legisla-

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tive, and foreign) news.

The largest department is that of letters. It employs nearly half the entire headquarters staff. The foreign department, including overseas correspondents, is second in size. Other departments are Soviet administration (national and state), national economy, science, literature and the arts, sport news, relations with socialist countries, features, and education.

An editor of *Izvestia* described a major concern of the staff in these words:

We consider the press the principal medium for public airing of views, exchange of information and experiences, and for organisational work, aside from providing general information necessary for our tasks. We attempt to make our newspaper serve as a forum for the discussion and adjustment of many individual and social problems. That is why the Central Committee of the CPSU has given all organs the obligation and responsibility of being most attentive to letters and contributions from readers.

We have many regular reader-correspondents. An average of one-third of total space is devoted to letters and to articles stimulated by letters. We reply to every letter and spend much of our time 'trouble shooting' even if nothing appears about it in the paper. We air all kinds of problems and controversies except those dealing with foreign affairs and security matters. Such matters are not debated in the press; when we receive inquiries about them we refer the reader to statements of responsible Soviet or foreign authorities.

We receive an average of 1,000 to 1,500 letters a day from all parts of the USSR. These are registered and tabulated in the letters department, and answered from there or sent to other departments or to appropriate authorities for their action or comment.

The education department of *Izvestia* is headed by an editor, deputy editor, and a special correspondent. All had been trained as teachers and as journalists. They consider themselves educators in both capacities.

All material pertaining to education is channelled through the department. There is no regular amount of space allocated to education news. 'The space we get,' said one of the school editors, 'depends on the quality of our articles, the general situation in regard to important domestic events, and the significance of the problems discussed in the articles. At a time of great national debate such as before the school reform law, we have much more space than at other times.'

At least one member of the headquarters staff is usually 'on the road.' The staff writes probably less than half of all education news and articles. A network of reader-correspondents, including prominent persons and specialists in various fields, and the constant stream of letters to the editor are major sources of copy.

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We can help our readers in many ways [the editor said] because *Izvestia* is a large and respected newspaper. When I call the Minister of Education concerning a problem we consider important, he listens carefully because he knows that what we write affects him and his work. Besides the education editors of the major newspapers we are in certain respects the most experienced educators in the country. We travel a great deal and see conditions in all parts of the U.S.S.R. and in many other countries. Our opinion on educational problems is often requested and usually respected.

We asked the editor whether her opinion always coincides with the official view or the position of the Ministry. She laughed, and replied:

Of course not, not always. We have our battles. But we usually agree with the position of the Ministry and of the Party because official positions are developed after a great deal of discussion. Sometimes, however, this is not the case. Of course we are an organ of the government and are obliged to print official statements and letters from the Ministers. But we are not obliged to agree with them. If we feel strongly enough that we are right, we pursue the matter. In the end we usually win out because what we write is based on very close relationships with the people, our readers.

The education editors also work closely with organisations in education. They participate in planning meetings and campaigns. This makes it possible to stimulate national interest in advance for major legislative or professional events. It also gives the staff an opportunity to exert its own influence.

An example of such an event was a Conference of Workers of Colleges, Universities, and Higher Education Institutes held in Moscow and attended by delegations of prominent professors, deans, and rectors across the country. Long before the conference began, the education editors planned to direct public attention to problems in higher education as part of national preparation for the meeting. They published several letters, one of which evoked such public response that the resulting campaign continued long after the meeting. This, in the words of the editor, is how it happened.

One day we received a letter from a professor of education. The letter argued that our system of examinations was more a test of luck and endurance than of knowledge. He suggested a more flexible system. Why couldn't students take examinations any time they felt they were ready? We published the letter, and received a large mail response from scientists, professors, students, and parents, mostly in agreement. We followed up by publishing a letter from a student entitled 'To Take Exams — Does it Mean to Know?' — and our mail again multiplied. We published extracts from the replies and two long articles analysing the situation and calling it to the attention of the forthcoming conference and of the Minister of Higher Education.

The Conference discussed many problems and made many recommendations but the problem of examinations was not resolved. We called on the Minister and again emphasised that we considered the problem of

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examinations an important public issue. He agreed it was a serious problem. He said that it must be considered thoroughly and discussed on every level before a decision is made. We said we appreciated that, and we shall expect action in due time. But there has been no action. We are now about to publish an article entitled 'Two Questions to Two Ministers' (for we have separate ministers for schools and for higher education), reminding them that we have not forgotten and will not forget until the questions and problems of our readers are satisfied.

Teachers' living accommodations in rural, remote, and primitive areas had been a subject of critical attention. Cited as typical was a letter from the principal of a school attached to a collective farm in Siberia. He wrote:

I have a very good teaching staff, but the collective has been slow in building houses they have promised. This year three of our new teachers did not get their apartments and had to rent rooms on their own. I am afraid we will lose them because they can easily find other places with better housing. Can you help us?

Such a letter would first be registered for future reference and follow-up, and sent to the regional correspondent for checking. After that it might be referred to the Republic Ministry of Education, the District Party Committee, or the local Soviet, requesting an investigation and a reply.

Criticism can get a person into trouble, we were told. 'But,' the editors said, 'if our investigation finds a complaint justified, we appeal to higher authorities for protection, or expose any vindictiveness ourselves. We defend our correspondents.'

Mass communicators specialising in education on *Izvestia* (and on the other Soviet papers studied) exhibited first-hand knowledge of school problems, and deep involvement in educational advising and policy-making. Polytechnic education, school construction, and the problems of working students were prominent concerns at the time of interviews.

I am sorry to say [said the education editor] that despite the years of experience we have had with polytechnic education, the quality and organisation is still very uneven. We are preparing a number of critical articles on that subject.

We feel that the Pedagogical Institutes have fallen behind and have been too far removed from the everyday practical problems of polytechnic education. Still not every factory has a special shop for students. And not all shops are well organised to give a rewarding educational experience to students.

Last spring I visited the schools of Georgia, writing about well-organised 'pupil shops' where experienced master workers—who are also good teachers—were given special assignments to run the polytechnic programme.

Of course this is not easy to achieve. There are complaints of interference with production. Every manager wants to reach his goals, every

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worker wants to fulfil his quota and qualify for premiums. That is why special shops need to be organised, and the best workers put in charge, for extra pay. But provisions have to be made for taking these workers out of production, for making them co-operate with the schoolteacher who accompanies the students, for making them understand that the students are there to learn and not just help the plants achieve their goals.

A multitude of questions arising from the implementation of the new laws were pressed upon the Soviet newsmen specialising in education. For example: Only top students could enter universities directly from High School; the majority were accepted only after working a period of time in a factory or on a farm. But once in, they all faced the same competition. Shouldn't worker-students receive more pay, more attention, more time to catch up? Or: The increasing number of working students was forcing the expanded 'evening schools' to become 'midnight schools' and 'morning schools' in order to accommodate those on evening and night shifts. Should these be considered 'second class' students, content with inferior buildings, less adequate labs, smaller libraries, a second-string teaching staff? Should prominent professors lecture only when it is convenient to them, or should some of them also go on the night shift or the swing shift, and to the factories where it would be more convenient for the working students?

In raising and dealing with such questions both in the field and on the pages of the 8-million circulation *Izvestia*, education editors felt they had the opportunity to exercise great leverage in affecting the allocation of public attention and the course of educational planning.

A folder containing the day's crop of perhaps 50 to 75 letters lay on the desk and we asked to be permitted to pick a letter at random. The letter dealt with a problem which had attracted much attention in the Soviet press: the problem of 'overschooling.' It came from the mother of a second grader who wrote 'We adults have achieved the seven-hour work day, but my boy still works very hard for nine hours (at school and at home) every day. Please add my voice to those who feel that we must provide more free time for our children.'

A special feature of the newspaper is entitled 'After *Izvestia* Published an Article.' Under that heading, the editor said,

we keep track of problems mentioned in our columns. If the problem is unsolved, we remind those responsible for a solution. We print their letters too, and report their action or explanation.

For example, some time ago we received a report from one of our regional correspondents in Turkmenian Republic that some houses built

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for schools and kindergartens but taken over for other purposes during the war had still not been returned. The local authorities found it convenient to perpetuate the 'emergency'. We printed an article giving factual information about the case. It wasn't long before we received a letter from the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Turkmenian Republic announcing that the buildings were being restored to the schools. The letter was in the 'After *Izvestia* Published an Article' column.

### *Komsomolskaya Pravda*

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* is the daily newspaper of the Young Communist League. With a national circulation of 6½ million, it has been a pace-setter in the transformation of the Soviet press. It also takes a lead in the discussion of questions involving youth and education. The special task of the paper, said one of the editors,

is to assist in the education of the young generation in the spirit of Communist morality. Sooner or later all major problems confronting the youth of our nation, even such philosophical questions as the meaning of life, nature of morality, life under Communism, receive critical attention in our columns. We make a point of printing dissenting or minority opinions and comments by readers and specialists on these subjects.

The major editorial departments are propaganda, Komsomol life, (including local sections), education (including a section for primary and secondary schools and another for higher education), sports, literature and arts, international news, science and technology, and letters.

The department of letters is again the largest. The number of letters received was reported to be between 200,000 and 400,000 a year. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* prides itself on its ability to cut through red tape and 'get things done,' a deputy editor told us. He said:

When some of our readers write in to say that certain authorities in certain places are not attentive to the needs of young people, that's enough for us to send one of our correspondents to investigate the matter quietly. The purpose is to see what the problem is and to try to solve it. We write a story about it only if it is a common problem or if there is no other way to bring about a solution.

When we write a story it's not to create a sensation but to get results. We do that only after we've exhausted other avenues. Actually, the power of our paper is great and we seldom have to resort to exposure. But when we have to do it we will not be intimidated. We follow each case through to the end; this is our obligation to readers.

The education department unites its school and higher education sections under a single head. The work of a network of outside correspondents and contributors is co-ordinated by a headquarters staff of four newsmen in the schools section and three in the higher education section.

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'Our reputation is based on following through on all letters,' the editor told us. 'Many of these are, of course, stimulated by our own published letters or articles, or through correspondence. Some deal with the same subjects and problems. For these we prepare form replies. Others are kept for personal reply by a member of our staff, or for referral to a qualified specialist. Every writer has the right to demand a reply by a knowledgeable and responsible person, or an investigation by the press. This is a Party decision which we follow.' The editor cited a criminal case as a notable example:

We received a letter [said the editor] charging a school director in Kazakhstan with selling certificates to people who did not complete their courses of study. We sent our regional correspondent to investigate. Before we could receive his story, the school director sent us an indignant wire denouncing our correspondent as a liar. Next we sent one of our headquarters staff. An article was written on the basis of a thorough investigation and led to an official charge against the director. He was found guilty.

The editor also recalled an instance of opposition to official state policy involving the establishment of agricultural high schools. 'We argued that such schools should be attached to state farms,' he said. 'We saw no need to teach agriculture in city schools. The State Commission opposed us and argued its case through our pages. The Minister of Education visited us privately. But we persisted until the official policy was reversed.'

Not all published letters deal with weighty matters of state. A Club of Young Naturalists in a high school in Novosibirsk shared its 'secrets' of raising sweet corn with clubs of other schools (all of which have an experimental plot). A young woman from Moscow wrote that her husband resented the fact that while he was in military service she acquired a higher education. 'I have finally left my husband,' she declared. 'Tell me, am I not right?' Within a few days thousands of replies debated the pros and cons of her case.

The question of school reform had occupied much space and attention. An editor described the purposes of the discussion:

This discussion was essential because the law only set the general outlines; the details had to be developed from practical experience, and experiences had to be shared and discussed as broadly as possible. Not all schools were prepared for polytechnic education, and certainly not all places of work were prepared. There were problems of organisation, of training, of time and place, and of relationships between the school and factory or farm — many problems, many difficulties! We were the first to raise many of the questions, point out mistakes, and stimulate discussion.

*Pionerskaya Pravda*

*Pionerskaya Pravda* is the central organ and one of some 24 newspapers published by the Young Pioneers, an organisation of 18 million boys and girls between ages 10 and 15. A professional staff of nearly a hundred writes and edits the two-colour illustrated tabloid.

The major departments of the paper are Pioneer life; schools and education; Pioneer culture and sports; science and technology; literature and the arts; humour; illustrations; sport news; and letters. The last is again the largest department occupying the time of about one-third of the headquarters staff.

The department of letters is divided into regional sections headed by persons who know their area and maintain personal contact with many letter writers. The letters published in the newspaper deal with children's friendships, boy-girl relationships, family problems, and an endless variety of school and other experiences, difficulties, achievements. Said the editor:

I must say that it is sobering to have the day-by-day experience of selecting these letters and watching the response to them. Some time ago we published a letter from a boy in the Ukraine who wrote: 'When I look at the map and see that there are no more blank areas on it I get discouraged. What can we explore, what can we do that's really exciting when we grow up?' You should have seen the tongue-lashing he received from our readers. Another letter from a boy in the Ukraine asked, in effect, why study when we are guaranteed a job anyway? Over 6,000 replies came from children and adults. We selected the most interesting and varied responses for publication.

All letters receive some sort of answer. It is often a routine reply developed for certain types of common queries or comments. But many require special attention. These are sent to the departments most closely related to the problem raised, or sometimes to outside educators, psychologists, or other specialists who agree to reply to them.

The department of letters is also a centre of organisational work. It maintains contact with Pioneer groups and other youth clubs, and arranges programmes and visits with artists, with actors of the children's theatres, famous athletes, brigades of Communist labour, scientists, cosmonauts, etc.

As on other mass circulation newspapers, editorial work in the strict sense is only a part — and sometimes the smaller part — of the duties of the staff. The editor explained:

Last summer we sponsored vacation tours for 5 million children. We

also organised a meeting of 2,000 children from all parts of the country held in the Carpathian mountains. I am now going to Bulgaria to a meeting of editors of children's newspapers from various socialist countries to arrange an international sports competition. The best teams will go to Bulgaria to live in an international children's camp. We also visit schools and maintain contact with teachers' and parents' organisations.

If you asked me whether I consider myself primarily a journalist or an educator, I cannot answer easily. I am graduate of a pedagogical institute and my first profession was that of a teacher. Later I attended the Faculty of Journalism and worked as a journalist. Now I combine the two and see no conflict between them. But if you ask me to look deeper inside myself, I must say that I cannot help being basically a teacher. I think that's how we all feel, even those who are only journalists by training and have never taught school.

That feeling is simply an outcome of the way we conceive our work. True, the ability to write well and interestingly is a basic requirement. But most of our time is not spent polishing our style. Most of our time is spent with children, parents, teachers, Pioneer groups and clubs at the schools. That's why we feel we are organisers and educators rather than only journalists in the narrow sense. In general, our main task is to help youngsters choose the aims of life according to the best experience of our society. We want to show them the values of love of labour, of nature, and of deep personal friendships.

We asked the school editor for examples of specific editorial problems at hand. She opened some folders lying on her desk, and explained as she leafed through their contents.

Often a school would call and ask us to look into a problem. Here I was invited to a meeting of the teachers of a new boarding school, one that has not yet developed its own traditions. The reason they invite somebody from *Pionerskaya Pravda* is that they know we have as much or more experience in handling these problems as any pedagogical expert.

The problem is that there is too much friction at the school and the children have not developed friendship circles. I try to bring to these teachers the experience of other schools. First of all, I thought that the teachers' attitude itself was not friendly and warm, and without that nothing will succeed. Also, they have not involved the senior pupils in their planning.

Another 'case' is a scrap metal collection project the Pioneers have been conducting. Pioneer leaders wrote us that this would be much easier if they knew what this metal was going into so that the children would have a concrete idea of the usefulness of their efforts. We found out that some of the scrap metal goes into the building of a new railroad bridge on the Siberian railway. We reported the building of that railroad bridge in picture and story. It was a successful feature and made the Pioneer brigades very proud of their work.

The third file contains a letter from a worker who writes that when he asks children what communism means they say that it means that life will be free and easy and nobody will work any more. He writes that this disturbs him very much. Children should not grow up with this idea because there will still be many needs in our country and in the world and as long as people are in need anywhere work should be considered a noble and necessary part of life, not an evil thing. His style is poor, but he has good ideas. It is possible that in time he will become one of our regular correspondents. To be absolutely honest, however, I must tell you that the correspondents most popular with our readers are

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usually the great athletes and cosmonauts whose names are known to every school child.

Experience in teaching, skill in journalism, and familiarity with Pioneer life are qualifications not easily found in one person. A new staff member is usually assigned to an experienced colleague for an apprenticeship of a year or more. This, in the words of the editor, is what is expected of him:

There will be perhaps two or three missions before he is to write anything. Some of these will take him to distant parts of the country and may take several weeks. He observes and assists his experienced colleague. He learns how to interview children, learns about the problems of Pioneer life and about children and schools across the country.

After each mission he participates in a staff discussion. The lessons and experiences of the mission are discussed, evaluated: what are the problems, what are the prospects and difficulties, how could the newspaper help? He can write any time he is ready. But he is expected to keep in close contact with his senior colleague and with the people and the situations he writes about.

At one point during his first year the new staff member will decide on a theme or mission of his own. By now he is aware of the most urgent problems. We encourage him to develop his own theme and mission. In addition to the tasks of common concern, we encourage each staff member to develop a speciality — nature, study, animals, fairy tales, some aspect of science or art, etc. He can go anywhere and take as long as he needs. When he comes back he can have the time and assistance to do a good job.

What do we mean by a 'good job?' It's definitely *not* the number of stories or words written. I think I can best characterise it as a quality of involvement. His involvement in the lives and problems of children will have a 'multiplying effect' on the sense of involvement of our readers. It will evoke comments and contributions. It will lead to an exchange of ideas. Soon our new staff member develops a style of his own which helps readers to communicate with each other all over the country, which is the important thing. What he writes will be a *catalyst*, so to speak. I think that is what we mean by a 'good job'.

\*

Comprehensive planning, public management, and directed change are dominant features of Soviet institutional life. Schools and press are both educational instruments and agencies of reform. Client relationships centre in major public organisations. Resource-allocation functions are performed by government planning committees, regional economic councils, and the State Planning Commission. These organisations collect recommendations from all enterprises, reconcile local and national needs and special interests, and allocate monies in accordance with priorities embodied in Party programmes and approved by the Supreme Soviet.

The editors interviewed on Soviet papers were probably Party members and certainly trusted communicators for official organs.

### *Institutional Pressures upon Mass Communicators*

They spoke with the authority of personal involvement not only in media policy-making but also in the life of the institutions they were to represent in their papers, and in the lives of their readers. Press officers of educational organisations and teachers' unions were their regular correspondents. Officials of the Ministry and of the Party (or its specialised organisations) were their clients and supervisors in what appeared to be common effort.

A single overall perspective and a sense of mission was characteristic of the Soviet newsmen. Three major institutional factors appeared to mark their relationships to the schools. First, since economic conflicts are not reflected in special interests competing for attention in the press, a major aspect of work and coverage common to Western (especially U.S.) newsmen is absent from the Soviet press. Secondly, most media clients are public organisations related to one another through the Party and government, and have educational functions not divorced from those of the schools. Third, most media are authoritative organs involved in making as well as interpreting policy, and are charged with some responsibility for implementing policy. Therefore, some newsmen spend as much or more time on the field organising or trying to get things done as they spend in the newsroom.

### *Toward an Institutional Perspective*

These accounts of practices and views of mass communicators in four countries were intended to illustrate some types of pressures as seen by the communicators themselves. The illustrations were limited to the press, and focused on relationships involving another social institution, public education. These limitations directed attention to specific historical and social situations. Other media, other subjects, might have revealed different facets of institutional pressures. The final task of this paper is, therefore, to suggest an analytical scheme and terminology which might permit more systematic, diversified, and generalisable observations. Such observations could then form the basis of a theory of institutional behaviour in mass communication.

The reason for going about theory building in this way instead of adopting a ready-made scheme is the simple belief that we must try to get closer to the facts than normative theorists have done. A priori typologies have a built-in cultural bias which may prevent rather than enhance an examination of the premises and the often loaded termin-

# George Gerbner

ology upon which they are based. In *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, *et.al.* 1963), for example, the authors analysed mass media structures, policies, and purposes according to 'authoritarian,' 'libertarian,' 'social responsibility,' and 'Soviet communist' orientations. Another typology was developed by Raymond Williams (1962) who distinguished between 'authoritarian,' 'paternal,' 'commercial,' and 'democratic' press systems, the latter being free of all controls except those of the active contributors — writers, artists, journalists. Useful as these prescriptive labels might be for evaluative purposes, they are not necessarily the best instruments for the discovery of comparative power, value and function. Some studies (e.g. Gerbner 1961, 1964A) suggest that any message system produced by an institutional source, commercial as well as overtly partisan, has some ideological orientations implicit in selection, emphasis, treatment. Other research, such as that by Warren Breed (1960), Pool and Shulman (1964), David Manning White (1964), and Walter Gieber (1960, 1964), showed that most newsmen respond to the pressures and expectations of the newsroom (including 'what the boss will think') more than to any generalised concept of readership or public interest. A recent study of U.S. publisher influence on newsroom decisions (Bowers, 1967) found three out of four active in directing news decisions, with publisher influence greatest in news of the immediate market area and in subjects which might affect the revenue of the paper. Any enterprise may appear relatively 'free' from the point of view of those who run it. But in a more general sense, all mass production, including that of messages, is 'managed'; selective suppression is the other side of the mass communication coin. The question is by whom, for what aims, by what methods, and with what effects.

What we are really concerned with in such analysis is the institutional distribution and exercise of power. To be sure, individuals may possess power due to personality, talent, competence, conviction and other traits, but we may assume that these are similarly (even if not evenly) distributed in any large population. At any rate, we are concerned with the systematic exercise of powers that reside in institutional roles or relationships to centres of power. These roles and relationships form the network and flow of powers that define the scope of the mass communicator's tasks (his 'freedom'), guide his attention, and limit his choices. A scheme designed to analyse this process needs to identify such power roles (or centres), suggest some sources of their

## Institutional Pressures upon Mass Communicators

powers, and specify those functions that affect what media communicators communicate. (Power and its application becomes relevant to this scheme only as they affect, directly or indirectly, what is being communicated to mass media publics.) Such an attempt is summarised in the next section.

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## REGULATION OF MENTAL ILLNESS CONTENT IN MOTION PICTURES AND TELEVISION

BY

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The broadest avenues for the diffusion of scientific ideas to the public are the public arts. Our report is about the traffic police and their effects on the movement of ideas and images about mental illness along two of these avenues—American movies and television.<sup>1</sup>

Censorship, as we shall use the term, is not necessarily synonymous with all its general public meanings and connotations. It is a set of industry-wide controls regulating the nature of commercial cultural commodities primarily in the light of public relations and marketing considerations. The official term for these controls is 'self-regulation'; but the more common industry term 'censorship' distinguishes between controls by writers, editors, producers, publishers, or other industry executives, and those exercised by specially appointed 'gate-keepers' whose main function is to scrutinize and 'service' all output in respect to the enforcement of some public relations, moral, and marketing specifications.

The formal specifications guiding the functions of censorship in motion pictures and broadcasting are embodied in the codes. The informal working assumptions, arrangements, and operations will be examined in terms of the administration of the codes, the overall functioning of censorship, and the patterns of its 'gate-keeping' activities.

Our present slice in the mass media policy-forming process is a narrow one. Although within its microcosm it does reflect significant aspects of the total process, it needs to be placed into the perspective of our larger study of communications and mental illness.

The entire project undertook to study ways of changing popular conceptions about mental health and mental illness.<sup>2</sup> In order to understand what such conceptions were and how they changed, it became necessary to investigate everyday cultural sources of these images, and the context of mass communications which developed and nourished them. This led to a preliminary analysis of the mental health content of the mass media,<sup>3</sup> and to a comparison of expert views and public ideas with mass media presentations.<sup>4</sup>

The image of mental illness in the mass media was found, on the whole, far removed from both expert and public conceptions held by the populations studied. Instead of 'mediating' between science and the general public, the 'media image' might be expected to 'pull' public ideas away from expert views in the direction of bizarre, sordid, fearful, or frivolous portrayals of the subject.

This is a serious problem for all concerned with the public diffusion of new and more enlightened ways of looking at human behavior. The 'mass media phase' of the research undertook a three-pronged approach to the problem. The research consisted of (a) 142 scheduled interviews with professionals and executives in positions relevant to our subject, mostly in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles; (b) more intensive content analysis in all media; (c) field studies of control functions, documents, records, files, memoranda, and interoffice correspondence dealing with all aspects of the policy-making and selection relevant to our subject, and (d) case studies of certain productions.

The entire project is now in the process of summarization. Our further analysis of mass media content revealed widely divergent types of portrayals of mental illness, designed for different types of markets and audiences. Other studies indicate that the internal needs of the media, the presumed requirements of some dramatic formulas, and the pressures of specific markets all contribute to making mass-produced images of mental illness fit specifications other than the views of experts or even only the general public.

Our particular focus for inquiry here is: what is the specific contri-

- <sup>2</sup> The overall nature of the project will be contained in a book by J. C. NUNNALLY, presently in preparation.
- <sup>3</sup> TAYLOR, W. L., 'Gauging the Mental Health Content of the Mass Media,' *Journalism Quarterly*, 34: 191-201, Spring 1957.
- <sup>4</sup> NUNNALLY, J. C., 'The Communication of Mental Health Information: A Comparison of the Opinions of Experts and the Public with Mass Media Presentations,' *Behavioral Science*, 222-230, July 1957.

bution of internal media censorship to the portrayals of mental illness in motion pictures and broadcasting?

In reporting our explorations of that question, we shall rely on evidence found in the records of censorship operations we had opportunity to examine, supplemented by such observations derived from field studies and interviews as seems necessary to place the documentary material in perspective. In consideration for the people, interests, and confidences involved in all this material, we mention no names, titles, or organizations unless already a matter of public record, and even then only if such mention will not make identification of others possible through the process of elimination.

#### MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY CENSORSHIP

The fear of government censorship is a primary reason for the existence of all mass media codes and self-censorship. As in fighting with fire, there is a significant difference between the apparently similar functions of a government censor and those of an industry-appointed censor.

A government censor may be guided by political, moral, scientific, national or any other considerations that reflect the wishes of those who appoint him. An industry censor is paid first and foremost to help protect the interests of the industry, to cultivate its publics, and to preserve its markets. His function is similar to radar guiding a fleet. It is to spot storm and trouble ahead, to help calculate the paths of least turbulence, and to help impose these paths on all ships in the presumed interests of the 'Big Few' and of shipping in general.

The troubles which led to the adoption of the Hollywood Production Code in 1930, and to its more definite enforcement since 1934, were predominantly of a moral character. The rising storm of outside censorship and criticism over alleged 'blue material,' threats of religious boycott and of federal action, convinced the major movie producers, banded together in a trade association, that it was time to act.

The Production Code drew upon a prior list of 'Don'ts and Be Carefuls' which had attempted to codify the most damaging bans and deletions of government censors. It was supplemented by reasoning and explanations which bore the imprint of collaboration between Martin Quigley, prominent trade publisher and Catholic layman, and the Reverend Daniel A. Lord, 'a trained moralist with an interest in the theatre.'<sup>5</sup>

The resulting document, which, with minor changes, still guides the production and distribution of virtually all movies in the United

<sup>5</sup> *International Motion Picture Almanac*, N. Y.: Quigley Publications, 1957 p. 758.

States, was of a moralistic character. Forty percent of the lines of the code pertain to matters of sex. The balance remains to deal with crime, brutality, suicide, murder, drug addiction, religion, executions, liquor, surgery, childbirth, cruelty to animals, and respect for flags, institutions, and people of all nations and races.

The Production Code made no direct reference to mental illness. Indirectly, however, it reflected that fear of censorship on account of sexual allusions overshadowed other sensibilities. The wording of the Code in effect until 1956 contained the following proscription under the heading of 'Profanity':

No approval . . . shall be given to the use of words and phrases in motion pictures including . . . Nuts (*except when meaning crazy*). (Our italics.) In the 1956 revision the parenthetical note, along with many other 'sex examples', was dropped. The tendency implicit in it, however, remained. But that is a matter of administration.

#### *The Production Code Administration*

The actual meaning of a Code rests in its day-to-day enforcement. This is the responsibility of the Production Code Administration, a department of the Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. With a senior staff of about ten, a budget of a quarter of a million dollars, and headquarters in Hollywood, the Production Code Administration screens between 300 and 400 films a year, and processes about twice as many scripts. Working under a similar Code, the Advertising Code Administration services over 150,000 pieces of advertising and publicity material, and the Title Registration Bureau about 4,500 titles a year.

PCA 'business' is not limited to MPA members; about 25 % of its work involves U.S. non-member companies, and 12 % of foreign companies. Industry-wide agreements, and other pressures, make the PCA Seal of Approval a virtual, even if not legal, condition for profitable motion picture exhibition in major U.S. theater circuits.

The actual functions of the Production Code Administration transcend the application of the Code. Its 'radar' involves constant contact with civic, religious, and professional organizations, pressure groups, censorship developments at home and abroad, individual critics, and, of course, members of the industry. Unlike its counterparts in broadcasting, the PCA is rarely concerned with technical or scientific details of screen presentation. PCA files, however, give evidence of consultations with influential groups or persons, especially when potentially helpful in avoiding public pressure or criticism.

We found no evidence of such consultation with professional or lay organizations active primarily in the mental health field. Even those groups and individuals who made frequent and systematic

representations to television broadcasters, and who consulted regularly with network censors, were unknown at the PCA office. Movie censorship patterns and policies affecting the portrayal of mental illness evolved largely without the benefit of scientific or professional advice.

We were able to trace the general outlines of policy development through conversations with PCA staff, a study of studio censorship files, and perusal of some annotations to the Code compiled by a former attorney attempting to codify PCA decisions from 1934 to 1947.

The major influences that shaped (often tangentially) Code Administration policies toward mental illness appeared to be (a) its own appraisal of the general acceptability and market value of such themes; (b) its primary concern with the morality provisions of the code; (c) its policy regarding treatment of professions and professionals on the screen; and (d) the fate of mental illness themes at the hands of government censors around the world.

#### *General acceptability*

Under the heading of 'Insanity,' the annotations to the Code declare: 'Insanity is a dangerous and unpleasant subject for screen presentation, and warnings against the showing of insane persons are given by the PCA to producers.'

Following this statement, the annotations list 40 'leading cases' of script submissions, PCA action, and occasional indications of outside censorship.

The first mental hospital story submitted for PCA approval in 1934 was rejected. However, the producer finally obtained PCA approval and the film became a critical success.

Another case of rejection concerned a horror subject laid in an insane asylum replete with maniacs and monstrosities. Despite the producer's claim of historical authenticity, the PCA felt that this was a 'repellent subject.' However, the movie was given a 'crusading for reform' twist, and was finally released. In a third case a 'demented woman' in a comedy script was eliminated by the PCA.

The 40 'leading cases' list 26 instances in which the PCA cautioned producers against the portrayal of mentally ill characters—13 of whom were men, 7 women, and 6 unspecified. Sixteen warnings were issued about the depiction of *mental hospitals*. The remainder concerned miscellaneous 'insanity angles.'

The annotations include statements such as:

PCA warned producer about heroine being a girl who is suffering from some form of insanity.

PCA cautioned as to possible consequences in England due to showing King Henry VI as idiot.

PCA warned that leading character in this script not be shown as insane.

Case studies show that these warnings reduced the screen portrayal of mental illness, both in frequency and in the level of histrionics. Still, much of the output left by the PCA was, as we shall see, cut by government censors, and further chopped by network censorship upon release through television.

*Effect of morality provisions*

Primary concern with the administration of the morality provisions had an oblique effect on the portrayal of mental illness. 'The presentation of evil is often necessary for art or fiction or drama,' states the Code. This in itself is not bad, it continues, provided wrong is clearly shown as wrong, punished, and balanced by the right and virtuous.

One way to show wrong as wrong, and evil as repellent, is by showing it to be insane. The Code did not create this ancient literary device, but it does tend to make the medieval notion of mental illness as 'punishment for sins' a way out of the moral dilemma. Hortense Powdermaker noted in her study of Hollywood:

'The emphasis on punishment for sin practically amounts to a fetish. A film about a woman who loses her mind because of a philandering boy friend, and murders him, is acceptable, because the woman becomes insane. In this picture the MPAA indicated deletions on the following points: the slapping of a woman, references to venereal diseases and an illicit sex affair, and an undue exposure of a woman's leg. These, from the Code point of view, were more immoral and dangerous to an audience than murder, provided the murderer was punished by becoming insane.'

Another instance involves suicide. Suicide is sinful, according to the code, especially to solve problems or to evade justice. But, our evidence indicates, when associated with mental illness, suicide becomes more acceptable in terms of the practical administrative decisions of the Code Administration.

Preoccupation with the Code's standards of conventional morality enhances the probability of morbid, unsavory, and criminal associations attaching to the mentally ill on the screen.

This affinity for acts of crime, or shocking violence, exposes mental illness films to censorship on account of 'excess' brutality or gory details. PCA censors attempt to tone that down by warnings such as these:

We assume restraint will be exercised in showing G... as a maniac. The brutalizing of (mental patient) goes too far and we ask that at least one of these slaps be eliminated.

There are producers who expect to gain a few slaps in exchange for yielding on the conventional morality angles. The market value of

\* POWDERMAKER, H., *Hollywood, the Dream Factory*. N. Y.: Little, Brown, 1950, pp. 63-64.

shock in such a context is rated high in some trade circles. When the shock ingredient is missing, the film's chances are thought to be injured.

In connection with G—of the first example above, *Variety* remarked that he acted, 'not so maniacally as the story should have suggested.' And in the case of another film set in a mental hospital, it commented that 'the insertion of even one scene of shock or high violence that could be word-of-mouthed would have helped the film's general changes.'

*Treatment of professions*

The annotations to the Code specify that 'all of the professions should be presented fairly in motion pictures.' They go on to spell out some implications of this statement, and to apply the principle of 'compensating values' to the portrayal of professionals:

There should be no dialogue or scenes indicating that all, or a majority of the members of any professional group, are unethical, immoral, given to criminal activities, and the like.

When a given member of any profession is to be a heavy or unsympathetic character, this should be off-set by showing upright members of the same profession condemning the unethical acts or conduct of the heavy or unsympathetic character.

Surprisingly enough, the fair treatment provision has a questionable practical effect on the portrayal of the mentally ill and of related professionals.

The attempt to single out professionals for special treatment leads to a tendency to avoid showing mentally ill people as professionals. In our study of all identifiable mentally ill made characters playing significant roles in movies released since 1950, only 56 % were shown as having had any occupation at all. One-third of these were professional criminals, one-third had miscellaneous occupations, and one-third were professionals. Half of the professionals were 'mad' scientists—and psychiatrists.

When evil, inept, or unbalanced professionals are needed for a story, the line of least resistance is the easiest way out. In our comparison of the portrayal of mental and physical experts, doctors, and therapists in post-1950 movies, we found the 'physicals' twice as likely to be portrayed in favorable roles, and six times as likely to play romantic parts, as the 'mentals.' On the other hand, the 'mentals' were three times as likely to be mentally ill themselves as the 'physicals.'

When 'doctors' featured in film titles or ads are cast in evil roles, they often turn out to be psychiatrists, or mad, or both. 'The Mad Doctor' (Paramount, 1941) is the story of a Viennese psychiatrist whose hobby in America is to marry and murder wealthy women. He was permitted to commit suicide in the end of the film. The

'Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse' (Warners, 1938), is another psychiatrist who becomes a crook to study the 'criminal mind.' He wound up both criminal and insane. Dr. Callistratus of 'Blood of the Vampire' (Universal-International, 1958) conducted his fiendish experiments (aided by brutal guards, a misshapen mute, and a pack of murderous dogs) in a 'hospital for the criminally insane.'

#### Government censorship

Films containing themes, settings, or characters associated with mental illness run into a great deal of government censorship. This fact prompted the PCA to note that insanity was a 'dangerous' as well as unpleasant subject.

In most cases of warning about mental illness the PCA specifies outside censorship as the cause for caution. The annotations record that at one time 'England has served notice that she will cut all insane persons or scenes in mental hospitals.'

Case studies indicate that pre-World War II government censorship of mental illness films was heaviest (although by no means limited to) the British Commonwealth and Scandinavian countries. Since the war, official movie censorship in the U.S. has been confined to its last legal stronghold—sex; and the British are reported to have relaxed their ban on mental illness.

Our check of recent films found that 20 % of all movies portraying mental illness—in forms as diverse as 'I Was A Teenage Werewolf' and 'Three Faces of Eve'—still ran into censor trouble between 1950 and 1958. Most of these were cut, restricted, or banned in England and Australia; a few in such places as Eire, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brazil, India, and Indonesia.

Obviously, the reasons for 'censor trouble' in these films are no longer confined to the portrayal of mental illness *per se*. What is suggested is that the context which surrounds the portrayal, rather than the theme itself, evokes the ire of most government censors. On the whole, it cannot be said that government regulation today is a major factor inhibiting a serious and responsible approach to mental illness and related subjects in the movies. Neither can it be said that the Production Code or its administration prevents the production of such films, or has blunted the edge of those that have been produced in recent years.

What we might conclude is this:

Industry-wide motion picture trade censorship reflects a lack of contact with professional and scientific opinion in the mental health field. The paucity of consultation on an industry-wide level means that while some major producers avail themselves of the best profes-

sional advice, there is no suggestion to the lesser producers, and to the numerous small-budget productions, to do so.

This pattern of censorship, or lack of censorship, manifests itself more in the run-of-the-mill movies output than in the outstanding exceptions. The changing trends in acceptability and censorship of mental illness themes has led to a relaxation of general PCA opposition to the subject. But under the pressure of presumed requirements of markets for certain types of pictures, the specific applications of the Code tended to work at cross purposes with the PCA's own standards of desirable portrayal.

#### BROADCASTING INDUSTRY CENSORSHIP

The broadcasting codes, once modeled after the motion picture Production Code, have come to reflect the broad scope of radio and television in the life of the community. Sex and conventional morality is not their main preoccupation. They also contain sections on children's programs, 'community responsibility', public issues, political affairs, and the 'advancement of education and culture.'

All-industry codes were first adapted for radio in 1937 and for television in 1952. They were a composite of existing network codes. Both the all-industry codes of the National Association of Broadcasters and the network codes make specific reference to mental illness. The NAB Standards of Good Practice for Radio Broadcasters states:

When plot development requires the use of material which depends upon physical or mental handicaps, care should be taken to spare the sensibilities of sufferers from similar defects.

The NAB Television Code uses similar language:

In reference to physical or mental afflictions and deformities, special precautions must be taken to avoid ridiculing sufferers from similar ailments and offending them or their families.

The Television Code also states that 'Excessive or unfair exploitations of others or their physical or mental afflictions shall not be presented as praiseworthy.'

In regards to the professions, the Code declares that 'Legal, medical, and other professional advice, diagnosis and treatment will be permitted only in conformity with law and recognized ethical and professional standards.'

The network codes contain similar provision. They also make such flat statements as:

Insanity and feeble-mindedness are not acceptable subject for comedy routine.

The presentation in plot development of physical or mental maladjustment is permitted only when it is within the bounds of good taste.

Of course the bounds of 'good taste' and acceptability are, as always, what the censors say they are. Since the enforcement provisions of the national code are relatively toothless, and since the NAB exercises no pre-broadcast censorship, the censors who really count are those in the networks.

#### *Network Censorship*

Network censorship began in the mid-thirties. The departments were originally commissioned to make 'common sense' decisions regarding the acceptability of proposed broadcast content ('continuity'). Today all networks have departments of 'Continuity Acceptance' or 'Editing' to perform the functions of internal censorship, and each network has its own codebook of standard practices.

Although administrative arrangements differ, functions and policies of censorship are similar among the networks. In fact, in some places censorship staff members of different networks hold informal but regular joint meetings to iron out common problems that arise, and similar exchanges via the telephone are not uncommon. For these reasons, network censorship may be considered both fairly uniform, and industry-wide.

The task of the network censors, however, transcends the administration of codes. The codes are distant, general guideposts, not especially applicable to the highly specific activities of these arbiters of 'good taste.' In fact, one Continuity Acceptance executive mentioned that he wouldn't change his activities *at all*, if there were no NAB Code. The day-to-day activities of network censors are more a matter of practical navigation amid the cross-currents of the sea of public relations.

We found mental illness an area of special concern to network censors. One staff memorandum found in a network file expressed the feelings of one censor in somewhat florid but not overly exaggerated terms:

By comparison I think we, collectively, spend more time in the interests of MENTAL HEALTH than any other group or organization of its kind. This may be the result of any one of a number or combination of: (a) many officers of the Mental Health Association are those employed in the entertainment profession; (b) the media itself and our ability to come into intimate contact with all members of a family and all classes of society; (c) our conscious moral responsibility to the viewing public; (d) our lawful responsibility to the various Federal Agencies (and consequently to local agencies and their offspring); (e) our own personal reaction to the great human tragedy . . . Specifically we are more concerned with line and dialogue deletions as opposed to characterization because of the shorter length of the programs to which we are currently assigned. There is not too much of the necessities of story plot, action, and the fundamentals of story construction . . .

In particular our deletions and word substitutions are categorical: 'Crazy', 'Lunatic', 'Loco', 'Looney', 'Crackpot', 'Idiot', 'Nuts', 'Screwy', 'Bats', 'Bughouse', 'Goofy', 'Cracked', etc. their many slang derivations and synonyms.

Another staff memorandum addressed to the head of the censorship department of another network accounted for a different type of activity. In this case, a story editor, after consultation with a member of the Mental Health Foundation, not only made deletions in the script of a program, but added dialogue showing how 'Mental Health authorities have been working with Police Departments to educate them in treating mental patients as sick people—not criminals.'

We searched network files for documentary material that might yield a systematic picture of overall censorship operations. Space allows for the brief description of three types of material studied. The first is a selective subject matter file kept by one network for training and reference purposes. The second is a record of all film deletions and rejections by another network censor. The third covers the monthly reports of a network censor's office for a period of three years.

#### *The 'Mental Afflictions' training file; development of censorship*

Some network censors use a set of subject matter folders for training in addition to the general reference files. These files provide a guide to major policy problems, decisions, and to the 'state of a field' as presented to the public in the mass media. One network practice is to require new staff members to study the training file before starting a period of apprenticeship.

These training files do not generally reflect the range of censorship activity pertinent to the subject. They contain a veritable *pot pourri* of materials—some reflecting what the director and senior staff thought important to circulate, or clip and file, and others merely reflecting what happened to be available at some time or other. Their content of letters, memoranda, clippings, articles, etc., is somewhat indicative of evolving standards of acceptability, and of some aspects of policy development.

The content of the 'Mental Afflictions' file at one network dates to 1948. However, 1955 and 1956 yielded more material than all other combined. The flow seemed to taper off after 1956.

We were told that the main purpose of the file was to acquaint new staff with the 'touchy problems involved in the portrayal of mental illness.' In fact, the file itself stemmed largely from the memos written by a staff member who took exception to some scripts for somewhat personal reasons.

A 1948 commercial skit proposed to feature two comic characters:

Dr. Ludwig von McNutts, a psychiatrist, and Cranium Crackadome, his patient. A staff note objected that this was in poor taste. The writer of the commercial protested; everybody does it, he wrote, famous comedians thrive on this kind of humor, why pick on me? All very regrettable, came the reply; this kind of humor is improper and should be stopped. This was the first entry into the training file on 'Mental Afflictions.'

The same staff member objected, three years later, to a mystery program in which schizophrenia was part of the plot. 'Instead of trivial treatment,' he commented, 'I hope fervently that writers mature enough to forego the use of mental illness as a dramatic device will emerge on the broadcasting scene.'

Conversations with the department head indicated that the views and feelings of this staff member were instrumental in establishing some early landmarks of network policy toward the portrayal of mental illness. It also developed that the staff member's brother was in the Veteran's Administration mental hospital.

The file began to grow. Incidental items—mention of breast feeding in an educational film on emotional disturbance (approved), use of the word 'homosexual' in a lecture on poetry (deleted)—found their way into it. Newspaper stories and letters referring to the portrayal of mental illness on the air began to be noted.

Two specific script decisions date back to 1952. In a drama program about an 'escaped homicidal maniac' the phrase 'laughing crazily' was changed to 'having a menacing expression,' and 'raging madman' to 'escaped inmate.' The script also called for a mental hospital attached to the state prison as the scene of escape; this was changed to eliminate the association with the prison.

The other case involved the story of a murderer faking insanity. The court psychiatrist pronounces him sane; the fakery comes to light in other ways. This script was rejected and put in the file for the guidance of the staff as an example of objectionable material placing 'an entire profession in bad light.'

In the following years, the file paralleled the rising trend of popular literature on mental illness. Included in the training file are five articles from the *Reader's Digest*, a six-part series from *The Saturday Evening Post*, stories from Sunday supplements, *Today's Health*, *Variety*, and other publications. Among the authors were Leonard Engel, Stuart Chase, and John Bartlow Martin. Subject matter ranged from the emotional causes of stuttering, through tranquilizers, to such topics as 'My Daughter is Allergic to Me,' 'Facts About Mental Illness,' 'Heredity and Mental Illness,' the present state of psychiatry, how to deal with frustration, the 'open door' mental hospital, and 'tv's Quieting Effect on Mental Patients.'

## MENTAL ILLNESS CONTENT IN MOTION PICTURES AND T.V.

A number of memoranda, dated mostly in 1955 and 1956, reflect the activity of organizations and other networks in the mental health field. One memo to the staff reported on a major program featuring mental illness on another network. Another commented on a Veteran's Administration sponsored program; 'Although the entire script was stark and grim,' it was noted, it was acceptable because 'it ends on a note of hope.'

By 1956, special interest groups began to assert their influence. The American Psychiatric Association, state mental health groups, and the NABT Television Code Review Board all wrote letters, protests, and 'offers to help' to all networks on the subject of mental illness terms and jokes used on the air. The replies, duly noted in the training file, indicate a hardening of verbal rules, especially in comedy, 'Crazy,' 'idiotic,' 'imbecile,' 'nuts,' 'having loose marbles,' and 'off his rocker' were especially singled out for condemnation.

'We do our utmost,' asserted one reply, signed by the president of the network. 'We try to cut it down, but occasionally it does creep in,' acknowledged another in response to a complaint about more of the words. Both complaints and replies placed the blame on comedies and comedians' ad libs for many of the offending remarks. The staff was urged to increase its vigilance and pay greater heed to the sentiments expressed in these letters, replies, and memos.

The flurry of high-level activity apparently came to a peak with the circulation and filing of the 1956 annual report of the National Association for Mental Health, accompanied by a staff memo calling attention to certain pertinent portions. After that, the file gained only a few routine and incidental items.

Some strands of policy development reflected in the training file, and confirmed in our interviews, appeared to be a) postwar awareness of the problem of mental illness preparing the ground for later receptivity and close scrutiny; b) personal involvement and influence inside the organization leading to significant policy decisions; c) expressions of interest and concern from influential outside groups resulting in the search for some tangible censorship yardstick—such as a list of words and phrases to be deleted; and d) slackening of incidents in 1957.

Let us turn to an examination of the actual pattern of 'gate-keeping' activities at another network.

### *The TV film clearance file; patterns of censorship*

Censors keep a record of cuts, changes, and rejections of all film material telecast over network facilities. This record is the tv film clearance file. It contains cards on feature films (originally produced for theatrical release) and filmed tv programs.

The cards in this file contain information about the type of film or program, date and place of screening, story or subject matter, censorship action (if any), and reason for restriction, deletion, or rejection. This file records the censor's last shot at a filmed tv program. It also indicates the addition of the tv censor's 'living room' concern on top of the original 'box office' concern of the movie censor in the case of feature films to be telecast.

The file we studied dates back to 1948 and contained over 6000 cards. It is divided into two general sections: (a) old-time comedies, shorts, and cartoons and b) full-length features, filmed tv shows, and documentaries. We shall deal with the latter category.

Our search of the feature and tv film file yielded no reference to mental illness in theme, plot, or deletion prior to 1951 (years of relatively little screening). From 1951 to 1954 we found a total of only five films containing mental illness reference. The boom obviously started after 1954.

Table 1 shows the number of relevant films screened and cut by the censors. A film was considered 'relevant' if the card in the clearance file indicated that it contained a mental illness theme, reference, or character, or if the censor's comment had any relation to mental illness terms.

TABLE 1  
*Relevant Films Screened and Cut by the Censors*

| Year      | Screened | Cut |
|-----------|----------|-----|
| 1951-1953 | 5        | —   |
| 1954      | 27       | 6   |
| 1955      | 39       | 16  |
| 1956      | 124      | 81  |
| 1957      | 170      | 112 |
| 1958      | 73       | 38  |
| Totals    | 438      | 253 |

We can see that on the whole censors made deletions in more than one out of two films containing some reference to mental illness themes or terms. The rapid increase in relevant films cleared and proportion of films cut by censors from 1954 to 1957 can be attributed: (a) to increasing sensitivity of network censorship to mental illness themes and terms, and (b) to a high incidence of such material both in the pre-1948 movies purchased and screened during that period and in the various 'adult' trends in television programming.

The apparent decrease in 1958 is due to the lower number of feature movies acquired and screened that year and, according to the censors themselves, to the effects of tightened censorship on tv material;

writers of scripts began to pre-censor their own material, giving the censors fewer occasions for making cuts in the finished programs. However, censors still made deletions in one out of two relevant filmed network telecasts in 1958.

The number of outright rejections averaged only 3 % of all relevant films screened during the period.

Examination of the thematic elements and kinds of deletions made indicates a sharp rise in verbal cuts, and corresponding relative decline of mental illness themes as reasons for selecting relevant cards. However, the absolute number of thematic elements related to mental illness and noted on the cards more than doubled between 1954 and 1957.

Table 2 shows the percentage of cuts by major film types. Films are also divided into features, originally produced for theatrical release, and filmed television programs.

TABLE 2  
*Deletions by Kind of Film*

|         | TV-film | Feature |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Drama   | 47 %    | 67 %    |
| Mystery | 60 %    | 69 %    |
| Western | 65 %    | 88 %    |
| Comedy  | 74 %    | 100 %   |

We can see from Table 2 that comedies were most likely to suffer deletions on account of mental illness reference. They were followed by Westerns, Mystery, and general Drama. (The last line, for example, should read: of all relevant filmed tv comedies, 74 % were cut by the censor. The rest, while apparently containing mental illness themes or reference, were not cut. However, all relevant feature film comedies were cut by the tv censor.) It is also apparent from Table 2 that feature films (mostly pre-1948 vintage) led in every category of deletions.

A special check of the 27 documentary films indicated only two deletions and two rejections, possibly reflecting some carefully pre-release editing by the producers, and/or a more informed approach to the subject stemming from consultation with mental health organizations.

Mental illness themes or characters appeared more frequently in tv than in theatrical feature films. In addition, while such themes in tv films occurred most often in general 'drama' programs, mental illness themes in theatrical feature films occurred more frequently in horror and mystery films than in other types. This contrast points up a tendency to associate mental illness with the more bizarre aspects

of human behavior in feature films, while TV appears to emphasize mental illness for 'dramatic' purposes.

There was little relationship between the occurrence of a verbal deletion and a mental illness theme in the same film. In feature movies, only one in thirty verbal cuts involved a film actually dealing in any way with mental illness. In the TV films the corresponding proportion was one in seven.

Since feature films were the major offenders of verbal mental illness taboos, they offered a greater variety of censored words. In general, the most frequently deleted words were 'crazy,' 'idiot,' and 'moron.' These were followed by 'nuts,' 'screwy,' 'imbecile,' 'insane,' 'psychiatry,' 'feeble-minded,' 'lunatic,' 'looney,' and 'half-wit.' The last eight words occurred (or were cut) in feature films only.

Phrase deletions were often made necessary by the occurrence of a single objectionable word as in 'crazy about me,' 'crazy ideas,' 'like a drooling idiot,' etc. At times they combined several objectionable elements as in 'You think Orientals are crazy?' Still others contained such terms as 'schizophrenic,' 'neurotic,' 'psychiatrist,' 'insane asylum,' 'nervous breakdown.' Their use was considered flippant or otherwise inappropriate in the context of the film.

If we remember that these films and programs usually arrived to the final screening stage after going through prior censorship at different levels, and note that the word 'crazy,' for example, was still found misused 123 times in 338 films, we may well wonder how far censorship must go to adjust media output to current sensibilities. But that is no longer a matter of the clearance record; that question pertains to the matter of censorship theory and practice.

#### *Interoffice correspondence file; theory and practice of censorship*

One network censor writes and circulates a monthly mimeographed report of activities and reflections. These reports are a part of the network's interdepartmental correspondence. They are circulated, wrote the censor, in order to 'attempt to keep our appraisals along commonsense lines before those of our colleagues in any way are affected by them.'

The reports contain examples of deletions and changes called for by the department, of pressures, comments and criticism received from various sources, of problems that arise from time to time, and of the reasoning behind certain decisions. Implicit (and often explicit) in these reports is a philosophy and pattern of regulatory practice characteristic of network censorship.

Our research included a content analysis of a three year (1955-1957) file of these reports. Although the editor published only four letters of

complaint relating to mental health, the subject itself drew heavy comment as a result of the inclusion of statements from special interest mental health organizations, plus the editor's personal comments.

It is not the number of letters from audience members that is important, but rather the extremely sensitive way in which they are reported in the department bulletin. The following example of criticism stemmed from a single line of dialogue included in a comedy program, yet the importance of this criticism was underlined by the editor's comment. The criticism concerned the use of the exclamation 'What a schizophrenic, confused child!' which was explained in the script as being equivalent to the expression 'Crazy, mixed-up kid.' The letter writing critic was a 'simple postal clerk' whose eldest son is 'currently hospitalized, undergoing insulin treatment and seriously sick with some form of schizophrenia.' He contended that a medical term for so serious an illness was not suitable for comedy use any more than one would humorously use medical terms like coronary thrombosis, malignant cancer, etc. Commented the censor: 'There is a logic to that argument.' He also saw fit to add:

The complaint is not dissimilar from one we received from a mother whose child died of water on the brain and who saw nothing funny in its use on (another comedian's) radio show. The bitter family frustrations of some members of our audience make them very sensitive to any sort of humor based on these illnesses.

This type of complaint indicates the broadcast censor's main focus in the deletion and change of *specific* words and phrases. The word 'crazy' is a good case in point. The 'proper' use of the word was discussed frequently and at length in the reports analyzed. The following excerpt aptly summarizes this controversy:

Could I try to clarify for those who seem to be mis-understanding it, our policy on uses of the word 'crazy' and synonyms thereof? Of course, many of us in spontaneous speech use the word and it naturally enough crops up in radio and television scripts. Our feeling is not that it is totally taboo, but that where it is so persistently and often equated with mental and emotional illness, it approaches being mercilessly tactless. We are trying to discourage this. We do not take the position that we refuse to take the word 'crazy,' but urge substitutions for it wherever feasible. Very few plots are in any way damaged if a line 'you're crazy' or 'you're insane' is changed to 'you're a fool.' Semantically speaking it is the latter that is meant anyhow and it injures no one who is mentally disturbed. Let's not have our network in a position of bearing a stigma that we don't know anything about the prevalent problem of mental illness in our country.

Not to be overlooked in the foregoing is the indication of one of the prime motivating factors underlying censorial activity: Being branded

with the 'stigma' suggested in the final sentence would be at variance with the censor's responsibility to maintain network good-will and public relations.

These reports indicated, and our interviews confirmed, that some gate keepers are not entirely satisfied with merely deleting this word or changing that one. On behalf of what they consider to be worthy causes, they will attempt to exert a more positive influence. The circulation of these reports of their activities is in itself presumed to have a formative influence on production personnel and, hopefully, on writers as well. Occasionally, censors will also issue a call for certain types of material. For example, the monthly report requested radio and tv writers to submit scripts dealing with mental health 'as near Mental Health Week as possible, or any time for the whole year ahead.' It also plugged for the 'so-called canned pitches prepared by the National Association for Mental Health for slotting in anywhere time allows.' Some censorial 'radars' appeared so sensitively tuned to certain topics that occasionally the department itself appeared in the role of a 'special interest group,' boring from within the network.

In our conversations with this gate-keeper, he indicated a belief that network policies in regard to mental health are well motivated. But he felt that perhaps this 'do good' approach, as he calls it, is primarily a matter of self protection of the networks interests and relations with the public, the experts, etc.

In addition to network concern for acceptable mental health presentation, there appears to be a considerable amount of individual concern. It was not uncommon to hear of a personal or family experience ingredient which instilled in the individual a heightened awareness to the proper presentation of mental health. One advertising executive active in both broadcasting and motion pictures suggested less-than half jokingly that the best way to improve the portrayal of mental illness in the mass media would be to provide psychotherapy for all mass communicators—'so that they can understand human motivation.'

The combination of pressures appeared often to lead to a search for formulas, and to qualms about hypersensitivity. Censors turned to the professions for 'rules of thumb' they could apply with both firmness and unimpeachable logic. They were restive about the qualified and at times conflicting views of experts. As often insecure arbiters of standards in what appeared to some as cultural anarchy, they felt that at times they have allowed themselves to 'lean over backwards' too far in one direction, or to become too 'precious' in their concern over words such as 'crazy.'

In their more plaintive moods, censors felt like pawns in the hands

of outside forces, and wished to exercise their censorial function as little as possible.

Our basic approach as standards-keepers seems to boil down to 'He censors best who censors least.' Much of professional television censorship is very positive, as logical and defensible as telling a man he can't shout 'Fire!' in a crowded theatre. When it is an informed censorship it is 'editorial responsibility;' when it isn't, it is misguided and foolish. The confusion seems to sneak in relationship to pinning down just who is doing the censorship, my experience making me insist that much of it is from without—from the viewing side of the television screen, from viewers or groups of viewers, from spokesmen for this or that political or philosophic position, and from the promoters of goods and services who, viewing television, select it as a medium to advertise and sell their wares.

At other times censors become concerned over their possible role in the alleged trend toward blankness of broadcast fare. Is life as aseptic as our critics want it to seem? they asked. Should standards accommodate only sensibilities and tastes, or also possibly unpleasant or even offensive truths?

I think it's obvious . . . that we do try to maintain a fair regard toward anybody's special interest. But by the same token if every special interest were to constitute a new entry in a list of taboos, we'd have to go out of business. It seems therefore . . . our function continues one of calling the shots, censoring the malicious and consciously not censoring honest reflections of the troubled world in which we live.

This line of reasoning, it is easy to see, places censors into the uneivable position of having to decide who is malicious and who is honest. In practice it is easier and safer to be concerned with what is said, and who is hurt by what is said. All media censors have a stock reply to use in case of almost any kind of criticism of what is allowed to appear in public. The reply is 'But you should have seen what we cut out.' And this probably applies to mental health content as much as to any other.

#### CONCLUSIONS

We have reported some studies and observations probing into the effects of motion pictures and broadcast censorship upon the communication of ideas and images of mental illness. We did not attempt to elaborate here on the general idea of censorship, assuming simply that this kind of internal 'gate-keeping' activity in commercial production is in effect similar to the quality-control functions of any industry. Nor did we deal here with the total process of cultural production and media policy formation—such as considerations of 'good showmanship,' potential sponsors, etc.—in regard to the portrayal of mental illness. These and other factors are all involved in production and

content decisions in mental health and illness programming—as in any other program area—but have to remain for other reports.

In this report, then, our vantage point was limited to a level of controls in which neither the major creative factors nor the principal market functions governing mass communications could be viewed directly. However, we see our present slice of the control process as one which has rarely been studied, and which both *reflects and effects* the pressures and policies governing the mass communication of ideas and images.

Censorship reflects broad cultural developments. The postwar 'cycle' of psychological films, and the similar trend on television in the mid-fifties, reflect changing patterns of censorship and of changing cultural standards as well. Some motion picture taboos were relaxed, and some new sensitivities in television emerged. One result was an increase in outstanding dramatic productions in the mental health area; another was an increase of censorial activity with mental health references in peripheral programming (e.g., the 'crazy' controversy).

While some standards of acceptability changed, and while both humane and scientific awareness lead to closer scrutiny of material, the march of screen horrors, ghosties, ghoulies, and 'mad scientists' also continued, and today show signs of renewed vigor. Censorship files testify to the mounting concern over the side-effects of the dramatic association of horror, crime, and violence with the portrayal of mental illness.

Hollywood's morality code might have increased the probability of this association. Because of the nature and history of theatrical movie production, there appeared to be little contact between mental health organizations and the Production Code Administration. The treatment of mental health professionals on the screen suffered. Market pressures in an era of declining theatrical movie production appeared to make the application of changing conceptions of mental illness to the run-of-the-mill Hollywood product more difficult.

Faced with a desire if not a need to stem this rising tide, broadcasting networks reacted by placing a censorial finger in some of the leaks in the dike. This reaction developed under the pressures of close contact with viewers, professional and civic organizations, and out of personal involvement and conviction. In many ways, 'Mental Health' was a safe, respectable, and worthy crusade for public service minded and public relations conscious broadcasters to undertake.

Comedy was singled out for mental health censorship. But all programming areas were effected. By far the greatest volume of activity occurred in the form of verbal changes and deletions. The demands and volume of broadcast industry operation vitiated a more wholesale censorship of programming. There were some attempts by

the gate-keepers to stimulate more high-level production in the mental health area. Experts in the field were frequently consulted.

This report obviously is not the last word regarding mass media regulation of the portrayal of mental health and illness. It is not even the last word on the formal censorship of such content. The standards and 'rules-of-thumb' of this formal regulatory activity deserve more investigation—not only in regard to their origin and application, but also to the consequences of their application. And this raises a crucial point: Does it really make a difference in public attitudes and opinions whether the word 'crazy' is used or whether mental institutions are shown with or without barred windows? Studies of the effects of certain message variables on the presentation of mental health information are going on other fronts, (for example, other phases of the same project that spawned the present investigation). Similar empirical studies of the possible effects of the various content decisions made within the commercial context of the mass media are also required. Not least, the areas of possible conflict between the validity of dramatic or documentary presentation and the felt expediency to protect existing markets, tastes, and public 'good-will' deserve further scrutiny.

## MENTAL ILLNESS ON TV

**MENTAL ILLNESS ON TELEVISION:  
A STUDY OF CENSORSHIP**

By George Gerbner

*This study was part of a larger project directed by C. E. Osgood and J. C. Nunally of the University of Illinois, conducted under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. It is especially interesting, not only because of the current controversy over television program control, but for the light it throws on the operation of the network departments charged*

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SOMEWHERE along every production line stands a "gatekeeper" to see that products meet specifications. In cultural industry this "gatekeeper" is usually appointed by the industry itself as a matter of self-protection against "outside" or "political" control. He bears such titles as Code Administrator, Review Board Chairman, Continuity Acceptance Director or Network Editor. Only one office door (at a movie studio) bore the straightforward title: CENSOR.

In this article the term censorship is used to designate the functions of a "gatekeeper" appointed to screen mass media output through a sieve of public relations, moral, political, marketing, and other specifications. The purpose is to illustrate some aspects of the dynamics of network censorship in one area of national concern: the treatment of mental illness and the mental health professions on television.

**Network censorship and mental illness**

Every program and commercial to be broadcast over a network goes through the office of the network "censor." Each network has its own codebook of standard practice which provides the broad context of censorship operation. Although administrative arrangements differ, censorship policies are similar among the networks. In the course of protecting the interests of industry network censorship does, of course, reflect

moral, political, scientific and other considerations and may also express personal conviction or concern. "We're holding the line," one "censor" reported. "The airways would be drenched with blood and gore if we didn't." Another complained that "Some producers are out for newspaper headlines, but controversy and sensational publicity hurt the network. We're here to protect it." "We are the conscience of the industry," commented a third network "censor," and added: "Conscience in our case means a nose for trouble."

Mental illness was found to be an area of "trouble" for network "censors." All network codes caution against the exploitation of mental (or physical) affliction for shock or comic effects. Previous studies have traced the development of the portrayal of mental illness into a "sensitive area" of public and censorial concern. This study reports the findings of an inquiry into the effects of this concern upon censorship performance and upon the images of mental illness and mental health professionals available to the public via television.

The study was based on the film clearance file at one network, and on other evidence of network censorship (including interviews) at the three major networks. The network film clearance file contains a record of every film program screened for telecasting over the network and its owned-and-operated stations. This record, going back to 1948, includes brief synopses of TV films, documentary films, and feature films, and it notes deletions, restrictions to "adult" viewing hours, rejections, or approvals for "family viewing."

This clearance file of over 6,000 cards was searched for relevant material. Every card making reference to mental illness themes or terms either in the synopsis or in the "censor's" comments or deletions was copied on McBee Keysort cards, coded, and sorted for analysis.

The search revealed no relevant films cleared through censorship before 1951, and only five relevant films between 1951 and 1953, four of which were documentaries. The mental illness "boom" started in 1954.

Table I traces the rise (and fall) of the frequency of references to mental illness themes, portrayals, and terms noted

in the network film clearance file. It shows that the first advance ripple in 1954 was still dominated by documentary productions; this was the time of the "introspectaculars," as *Variety* termed them. They were soon swallowed up in a wave of feature films released for television and containing mental illness themes and terms spotted by increasingly sensitive "censors." Over the crest of this wave came in 1957 the swell of TV films apparently reflecting, among other things, the new "adult" or "psychological" programming concept in television drama. Relevant films dropped in 1958, with TV drama still increasing its share of the total.

TABLE I  
Films Containing Mental Illness Themes, Portrayals, or References  
As Noted in Network Film Clearance File

|                      | 1951-53 | 1954 | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1958 | 1951-58 |
|----------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Total relevant films | 5       | 27   | 39   | 124  | 170  | 73   | 438     |
| Percent of total:    |         |      |      |      |      |      |         |
| Documentary films    | 80%     | 55%  | 5%   | 2%   | 1%   | 1%   | 6%      |
| Feature films        | 20      | 37   | 54   | 67   | 43   | 30   | 48      |
| TV films             | ----    | 8    | 41   | 31   | 56   | 69   | 46      |
|                      | 100%    | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100%    |

Network censors rarely tabulate the contents of their own files. Their impressions of trends and of the application of their own standards are largely intuitive. "I have a mystic belief that censorship problems come in bunches," said the network "censor" when told of findings of a trend of mental illness material in the clearance file. "You see one extreme cleavage shot, you can be sure there will be two other Grand Canyons yawning at you very shortly; one 'hell' on the network seems to breed into five before the month is out. So, chances are that your marked increase is the result of purest coincidence plus the fact that more films were cleared in the first place."

Further analysis of the data, and the findings of concurrent studies shed some light on these informal hypotheses.

Trend studies in other media showed similar peaks of attention devoted to psychological and mental illness themes in popular magazines, motion pictures, and press coverage, with frequencies declining after 1957. No more likely than the "purest coincidence" theory is the possibility that the total number of films screened by censorship could account for the trends in the frequency of relevant films. Block purchases and screenings of old movies might have boosted the 1956 clearance figures but would not have produced similar trends in filmed programs for television. Yet the frequency of relevant TV films climbed from two in 1954 to 16, 39, and 96 in the three successive years. It dropped to 50 in 1958.

What does appear probable, however, is that actual changes in content, increasing censorial awareness of mental illness as a sensitive area, and consequently changing rates and forms of censorship applied to relevant films, all contributed to the trends found in the analysis of the clearance file.

#### Increasing Awareness

Increasing recognition of mental illness as a censorship "problem" appears to have contributed heavily to the frequency of relevant films. The effects of such recognition can be traced by comparing the number of films in which the mental illness theme was an integral part of the plot (as noted in the synopses) with those in which the relevant element was a minor or incidental reference not in the synopses but noted by the "censor."

Table II presents such a comparison. It shows that as the number of relevant films increased, the incidence of mental illness references spotted by the censor climbed more rapidly than did the incidence of mental illness themes mentioned in the synopses. With an overall decline of relevant films in 1958, major themes again predominated probably because of changes in the nature of the materials, as will be discussed below.

Discussions with network "censors" and the examination of some interoffice correspondence supported these evidences of rising censorial concern. "Censors" deplored the indiscriminate use of such terms as *crazy*, *idiot*, *moron*, and the frequent

#### MENTAL ILLNESS ON TV

TABLE II

Mental Illness Theme or Reference Noted in Synopses vs. Spotted By "Censor" But Not in Synopses

|                                        | 1951-53 | 1954 | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1958 | 1951-58 |
|----------------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Noted in synopses                      | 5       | 19   | 22   | 31   | 57   | 44   | 178     |
| Spotted by censors but not in synopses | 0       | 8    | 17   | 93   | 113  | 29   | 260     |
| Totals                                 | 5       | 27   | 39   | 124  | 170  | 73   | 438     |

dramatic association of mental illness, psychologists, psychiatrists with comic, violent, or eerie situations. These concerns arose partly out of personal involvement and conviction and partly under the pressure of viewer complaints and of professional and organizational activities in the mental health field. A 1957 memorandum, found in the files of a network other than the one whose clearance records were studied, expressed sentiments (or rationalizations) voiced by most "censors":

By comparison I think we, collectively, spend more time in the interests of MENTAL HEALTH than of any other group or organization of its kind. This may be the result of any one of a number or combination of reasons: (a) many officers of the Mental Health Association are those employed in the entertainment profession; (b) the media in itself and our ability to come into intimate contact with all members of a family and all classes of society; (c) our conscious moral responsibility to the viewing public; (d) our lawful responsibility to the various Federal Agencies (and consequently to local agencies and their offspring); (e) our own personal reaction to the great human tragedy.

#### Changing rate of censorship

If it is true that during the current decade mental illness became an increasingly sensitive area in network censorship, films portraying mental illness during that period would be subjected to heavier censorship than other films. Such, indeed, appears to have been the case. If, from all relevant films those that contain mental illness as a significant story element (as

noted in the synopses) are selected, thus eliminating those picked largely on the basis of censorship action in the first place, a conservative estimate of the level of censorship as applied to films portraying mental illness can be obtained. It was found that almost two out of seven such films (27 per cent) were either cut or rejected from 1951 to 1958. Comparing that with the network "censor's" own tabulation of all TV and feature films censored through 1954 (the last date for which such figures were available) less than two out of ten (18 per cent) of all films were cut or rejected.

When mental illness themes and references spotted by "censors," are combined for the entire period studied more than half of all relevant films (58 per cent) suffered one or more deletions, and three per cent were rejected entirely. Only 22 per cent of all relevant films were approved for family viewing without any cuts; the rest were restricted to "adult" viewing hours.

Table III shows trends in types of clearance for the years of significant activity. As mental illness themes and references increased in number, the proportion of relevant films subjected to censorship increased. A decline in frequency in 1958 did not bring about slackening of censorial scrutiny; the percentage of uncut and unrestricted films further declined.

The shifts in rate and type of censorship over time reflected changes in the material itself, as well as the application of developing standards of censorship. These changes can be examined by observing the different types of films separately as shown (with the exception of documentaries) on Table III.

#### Censorship by type of film

Documentaries accounted for only two cuts and two rejections during the entire period. It is interesting to note that the two documentaries rejected outright for national telecast at the beginning of the era of rising sensitivity were both non-commercial educational ventures circulated by the National Association for Mental Health and the Mental Health Film Board. Queried about the rejections, the "censor" had this to say:

#### MENTAL ILLNESS ON TV

You must remember that when one clears a film one does so with a specific time, day, audience and total program schedule in mind. Even though it would seem to bear the imprimatur of the NAMH I very much doubt if I would approve *Mental Hospital* for indiscriminate viewing without adequate explanation from an articulate expert. . . I cannot see that the cause of the NAMH is advanced, or public understanding broadened by showing closeups of patients receiving shock treatments. Indeed, I should rather imagine it would have the opposite effect. *Man to Man*. . . here again, it seems to me in dubious taste to show mentally disturbed patients in as many scenes as were apparently included in this epic. I'd be very interested in what officials of the NAMH have to say on this count. What sort of film would I approve of on the subject of mental health? Something like was done on *Hemo the Magnificent*, or something like the excellent films produced by the American Cancer Society. . . in which the audio was very strong, very forceful, even brutal, but in which the video was either abstract or representational.

Feature films were generally subject to more cuts and restrictions than were films produced directly for television. The higher overall censorship rate of old movies can be attributed to the absence of reference to mental illness in the Hollywood Production Code, to the difference in markets between the media, and to the different standards of acceptability at the time the movies were produced. "Times have changed," remarked the "censor." "A brand new film in 1933 might be quite innocent, but that same film in 1953 is socially malodorous."

A special tabulation of feature films by date of original release bore him out. Every relevant film produced before 1938 was either rejected or cut upon screening for television. The proportion of cuts and rejections decreased with the recency of the film's original release. "Now," said the "censor," "we are dealing with much later second-hand models including the more realistic European post-war productions." This change in the nature of feature film material passing through the censorship gate shows up in the increased percentage of "adult" classifications in 1958.

TABLE III

Types of Film Clearance Action as Percentage of Films in Which Network "Censor" Noted Reference to Mental Illness, 1954-58

|                                  | 1954<br>% | 1955<br>% | 1956<br>% | 1957<br>% | 1958<br>% | 1954-58<br>% |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Per cent of all relevant films   |           |           |           |           |           |              |
| cut*                             | 21        | 41        | 65        | 65        | 52        | 58           |
| restricted to adult viewing*     | 19        | 26        | 27        | 28        | 44        | 29           |
| rejected                         | 11        | 5         | 7         | 3         | 1         | 3            |
| approved for family without cuts | 64        | 36        | 20        | 19        | 16        | 22           |
| Per cent of feature films        |           |           |           |           |           |              |
| cut                              | 40        | 48        | 76        | 81        | 77        | 73           |
| restricted to adult viewing      | 40        | 38        | 30        | 29        | 41        | 32           |
| rejected                         | 10        | 9         | 2         | ---       | ---       | 2            |
| approved for family without cuts | 20        | 10        | 11        | 11        | 14        | 11           |
| Per cent of TV films             |           |           |           |           |           |              |
| cut                              | 50        | 31        | 46        | 56        | 42        | 48           |
| restricted to adult viewing      | 50        | 31        | 46        | 56        | 42        | 48           |
| rejected                         | ---       | ---       | ---       | 5         | 1         | 3            |
| approved for family without cuts | 50        | 56        | 28        | 24        | 16        | 23           |

\*Films may be both cut and restricted. Therefore, percentages do not necessarily add up to 100.

TV films were less likely to be censored on "mental illness" grounds than were feature movies, but the rate was rising. The steady increase in the total proportion of TV films censored indicates that censorial vigilance has not been relaxed; and the shift from deletions to "adult" restrictions marks the change in the nature of TV programming likely to involve portrayals of mental illness. As one "censor" pointed out:

In 1953 we had two Westerns; today we are lousy with Westerns plus other features of the so-called "adult"

variety. Now, you are going to have more censorship problems with sophisticated fare like *Wagon Train* than you ever had with innocent old *Hoppy*. Alfred Hitchcock will give you more borderline situations to be handled with care than will the old *Schlitz Playhouse*.

A check on the content indicated that the proportion of TV films portraying mental illness as significant plot element was rising, and that these major themes, accounting for most of the restrictions, were most likely to occur in general TV drama and mystery, while verbal deletions were most frequently made in comedy. The words most often deleted from all types of films were, in order of frequency: *crazy, idiot, moron, nuts, screwy, imbecile, psychiatry, feeble-minded, lunatic, looney, and half-wit*.

#### Effects of censorship

The proportion of deletions (mostly verbal) dropped in 1958. The "censors" thought that this drop, especially pronounced in TV films, was due to more frequent prior review of scripts, and to greater awareness and better understanding on the part of writers and producers of the reasons for the verbal policy line. One "censor" commented:

Obviously we would have avoided much time, trouble and expense had we reviewed more shooting scripts. In addition, fewer syndicated films would be floating around the country where they are shown unedited in the smaller markets, and where thoughtless and tasteless reference to mental illness are repeated and repeated.

Some "censors" explained their policies in the form of bulletins, reports, or interoffice communication circulated to pro-

# The Structure and Process of Television Program Content Regulation in the United States

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Television is a prime cultivator of common images and patterns of information among large and heterogeneous publics that have little else in common. These images and patterns form a major part of our symbolic environment. They help socialize members of society to the prevailing institutional and moral order.

Different societies organize their major symbol-making activities, and particularly their broadcasting systems, along different lines; each attempts to be functional to its own requirements. In the United States, three major commercial networks and their affiliates dominate broadcasting. Public television plays a minor complementary role: providing services that broadcasters consider worthwhile but not profitable.

## BROADCASTING IN FOUR COUNTRIES

The Preamble to the Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters (the chief industry organization) reminds station owners of their sweeping responsibilities under the law. Not only is the television broadcaster as license holder legally responsible for the programming of his station, the Preamble warns, but he is "obligated to bring his positive responsibility...to bear upon all who have a hand in the production of programs, including networks, sponsors, producers of film and live programs, advertising agencies, and talent agencies."

Going even further, the Preamble specifies the broadcaster's "accountability" for fulfilling the special needs of children's, community, educational, and cultural programming and for the "acceptability," "decency and decorum," and "propriety" of their choices for "every moment of every program":

Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect for the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for the advancement of education and culture, for the acceptability of the program materials chosen, for decency and decorum in production, and for propriety in advertising. This responsibility cannot be discharged by any given group of programs, but can be discharged only through the highest standards of respect for the American home, applied to every moment of every program presented by television.

How does American television fulfill the solemn and exacting responsibilities it has proclaimed for itself? No one can possibly know or easily discover. There is no definitive study, no theory based on objective investigation, no systematic surveillance, and no mechanism of accounting for the substance of the services for which "television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American people." Program content control and regulation are private affairs. They are protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution from government intervention and thus also from public scrutiny. Consequently, and rather shockingly, in probably no area of significant social policy are far-reaching decisions made with as little systematic, reliable, cumulative, and comparative information brought to bear on the decision-making (and on its public policy implications) as in the sphere of the common culture.

Such attempts as have been made to assemble the needed information have been stimulated mostly by Congressional, Presidential or other governmental inquiries into matters of special concern at a particular time. This study is no exception. But our purpose is merely to point the way toward a broader and more sustained comparative investigation. This report is an attempt to collect a few facts, observations, and suggestions based on public documents, published sources, and interviews with knowledgeable informants to provide the context in which recent research on televised sex and violence can be placed in a social and institutional perspective.<sup>1</sup>

## JOURNAL OF BROADCASTING

duction units. The following is one of several attempts to clarify the views of one "censor" on *crazy*, taken from an inter-office bulletin:

Could I try to clarify for those who seem to be misunderstanding it, our policy on uses of the word "crazy" and synonyms thereof? Of course many of us in spontaneous speech use the word and it naturally enough crops up in radio and television scripts. Our feeling is not that it is totally taboo, but that where it is so persistently and often equated with mental and emotional illness, it approaches being mercilessly tactless. We are trying to discourage this. We do not take the position that we refuse to take the word "crazy," but urge substitutions for it wherever feasible. Very few plots are in any way damaged if a line "you're crazy" or "you're insane" is changed to "you're a fool." Semantically speaking it is the latter that is meant anyhow and it injures no one who is mentally disturbed. Let's not have our network in a position of bearing a stigma that we don't know anything about the prevalent problem of mental illness in our country.

The rising percentage of restrictions to "adult" viewing hours marked the recent trend toward more "realistic" and "adult" presentations. Such restrictions are not necessarily uncomplimentary or harmful if the program does not aim at a daytime or family audience. Rejections, on the other hand, are a different matter. Commenting on the 1957 figure of five per cent of relevant TV films rejected, the "censor" said:

I think your figures indicate a lack of liaison between us and some film producers. Let's look at what might result (believe me it did!) from this poor liaison. A guy spends \$50,000 and three weeks producing a half hour film which utilizes some poor, mentally disturbed soul as the villain terrorizing the countryside. It is rejected by five major stations in markets over the country representing fifty per cent of the potential American buying public. He has virtually kissed fifty thousand bucks "bye, bye," and next time around, he will make darn sure his film is going to be acceptable *before* he starts producing it.

The following year the rejection rate dropped to one per cent.

## MENTAL ILLNESS ON TV

On the whole, network censorship tends to discourage the flagrant and overt exploitation of mental illness or of mental health professionals, and the careless use of mental illness terms for purposes of dramatic effect. While—again, on the whole—there was little evidence of censorship blunting the edge of serious and responsible dramatic productions, there were many instances of censorship action based on the presumed context of television viewing rather than on the scientific or dramatic integrity of the material. The overall effects of network censorship upon the portrayal of mental illness on the television screen appear to be calculated to soften the impact of the more bizarre or potentially offensive images.

It is not known whether the apparent decline in the number of relevant films in 1958 reflected fear of censorship or even a real change in programming. While numbers declined, the portrayal of mental illness as significant plot element became more frequent. Associated Press feature writer Cynthia Lowry complained in the fall of 1959 that "Psychotics replaced villains, and neuroses have succeeded unbridled badness as motivating forces even in low budget high cliché weekly action tales."

Crudity and flamboyance could be toned down at the "gates," but "censors" and their files testified to increasing concern over the more subtle association of horror, crime, and violence with portrayals of mental illness. Attempts to reduce the amount of obvious gore or the number of careless references by judicious cutting might help avoid offending some viewers, but could have little effect upon the basic validity of approach built into the portrayal. As one of the informants said, "Censors can clean up the language but they can't clean up the motives." Some "gatekeepers" go to (and even beyond) the limits of the public relations functions delegated to them in striving for what they consider responsible portrayals. But the methods of censorship are hardly adequate to the task.

## THE SCOPE OF AMERICAN TELEVISION

In the first quarter of 1971, 892 active channels telecast programs to over 60 million homes. A year earlier, there were 677 stations; sixteen years before, 411. All but about four percent of American homes have television and use it an average of over six hours a day. It has been calculated that the people of the United States already spend approximately half as many hours with radio and television as they spend in all kinds of paid work put together. The patronage—by which we mean guardianship and funding—that supports this service was divided between advertisers, who paid in 1971 about \$3.5 billion for sending messages over the air, and the public, who paid some \$3.8 billion in new sets alone for receiving them.

Table 1 shows that 78 percent of all active channels were private

Table 1: Active U.S. TV channels as of February 1, 1971

|                        | VHF             | UHF             | TOTALS           |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Private (commercial)   | 511 86%<br>73%  | 185 62%<br>27%  | 695 78%<br>100%  |
| Public (noncommercial) | 85 14%<br>43%   | 111 38%<br>57%  | 196 22%<br>100%  |
| TOTALS                 | 595 100%<br>67% | 296 100%<br>33% | 892 100%<br>100% |

commercial corporations; 22 percent were public corporations. Of all private stations, 73 percent were Very High Frequency serving large established markets, while only 43 percent of the public stations were VHF. Or, to look at it another way, of all VHF channels on the air (67 percent of all channels), 86 percent were commercial and 14 percent public, while of all Ultra High Frequency (UHF) channels (33 percent of all channels), 27 percent were commercial and 57 percent public.

The number of individual license holders reflects an FCC rule limiting the number of stations a single corporation may own. About 25 percent of all commercial stations are owned in groups of five or more. However, 82 percent of all commercial stations are owned by or affiliated with one of the three major networks. NBC owned and affiliated stations number 39 percent of the total, CBS stations 34 percent, and ABC stations 28 percent. This group of 572 network stations dominates commercial television programming in the U.S.

Public television stations, licensed as "noncommercial, educational" broadcasters, are interconnected by the Public Broadcasting Service; PBS distributes programs produced by a few major production centers, member stations, and foreign sources. All public channels are individu-

ally operated by local and state educational systems, colleges, universities, and community organizations. In addition to PBS, six regional networks provide interconnection or program exchanges for member stations. Twenty-one state networks also help stations exchange services and primarily instructional programs.

## SOME POWER ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

No established theory of organization, decision-making, or policy formation accounts for the complex interplay of forces governing television programming and the shaping of program content. I shall follow and develop earlier suggestions (Gerbner, 1969) for a classification of power roles and functions affecting content. It is evident that in cultural production, as in any other mass production and distribution involving high stakes and broad impact, the analysis of control processes must focus upon the distribution and exercise of power.

The groups which have some stake in and influence, authority, or power over the choice and shaping of content include: the authorities who confer licenses and administer or enforce the laws; the patrons who invest, subsidize, or otherwise fund the operation in return for services rendered; other organizations, institutions, and loose aggregations of people (publics) that require attention, services, protection, or cultivation; the corporate management that regulates, supervises, and develops programs; the auxiliary industry groups and associations that provide services, raw materials, and protection; the creative talent, experts, and technicians who actually form the symbolic content and transmit the signals; and the colleagues and competitors whose solidarity or innovation help set standards and maintain vigilance.

These groups represent roles that can exist in any combination of persons and whose functions and powers vary widely. We shall not analyze or describe them here further except to suggest that a full study of these functions and powers should systematically observe all critical incidents that require the exercise of leverage and the application of sanctions. It is these acts, sporadic as they may be, that set the lines of power and authority for the routine control and regulation of program content.

We shall briefly note the role of authorities, patrons, organizations and publics in the control process, and then examine in greater detail the formal structure and informal dynamics of two decisive management functions: program regulation and program development.

## Authorities

The Communications Act of 1934 established the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and authorized it to grant exclusive licenses

to broadcast in assigned geographical areas and to renew them for three-year periods if that still served the "public interest, convenience, and necessity." These terms were never clearly spelled out, and the FCC and the courts have been reluctant to use their contested powers to set program standards. The "fairness doctrine," upheld by the Supreme Court, sought to safeguard some diversity in the presentation of public policy issues, but no such doctrine exists for general programming. Antitrust laws and other devices have sought to maintain some multiplicity of forums, but with little success. Network domination, multimedia ownership, advertising concentration, and the trend toward conglomerates all tended to erode such multiplicity. Also, as Barron (1969) has observed, "diversity of ideas, not multiplicity of forums, is the primary objective of the First Amendment."

The Supreme Court's landmark *Red Lion* decision has held that "freedom of press from governmental interference... does not sanction repression of the freedom by private interests." But public authority has not yet found a way of holding private power in check in matters of general program content, except by stimulating industry self-regulation.

### Organizations and the public

The general public continues to view in ever-increasing numbers whatever is on the air. During prime time evening hours, over 64 percent of all American homes use television. An average home uses television six hours 18 minutes daily. In one day, television reaches almost 81 million adults—66 percent of all Americans 18 and older—and an uncounted number of children.

Every study shows that television is the most massive magnet of public attention in history. Berelson (1964) surveyed cultural content in various forms and found commercial television and fictional and dramatic material in the lead. Imaginative representations of life and the world in the form of plays, films, exhibition of talents and personalities, and documentary presentations form the basic appeal of television as a cultural medium.

For the services of this medium, viewers pay no fee or license. They have, however, invested many billions of dollars in receivers (43 percent of homes in color); in 1970 alone, \$3.8 billion was spent on new sets. In addition, viewers (and nonviewers paid an indirect television subsidy of about \$3.5 billion in 1970—that is, all consumers paid about \$3.5 billion more for the goods and services they purchased because of advertising costs to the companies they bought from.

The direct patronage of the viewing public in the form of payment for receiving sets does not confer upon the public the power to shape program content or to apply sanctions other than those of consumers. The indirect public subsidy paid through television advertising confers pow-

er over programming upon the advertising and broadcasting corporate managements. These managements' relations with the public are exactly what the terms suggest: public relations.

This means that there is active competition for public attention, favor, and program and product support without any allocation of power over programming to representatives of the public—in or out of the government. Nevertheless, during the past 20 years a number of civic and private organizations have brought pressure to bear on the shaping of program content. The National Association for Better Radio and Television has lobbied against violence and published program studies and critiques since the early 1950s. More recently, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting was formed to lobby on public policy issues, and Action for Children's Television (ACT) began to direct attention to programs and commercials aimed at children. The civil rights and consumer movements have generated both organizations and a growing sense militancy in urging scrutiny of television. The technological innovations of cable television offers the possibility of greater public access and selectivity in programming.

These and other pressures are reflected in the process of program regulation and development. But the main function of the public for the broadcasters is to serve as a commodity he can measure, package, and sell to the patrons who directly subsidize television broadcasting.

Competition among networks takes the form of management strategy for expanding the share of viewers or of markets of certain types for certain programs and products. For example, CBS recently produced for its advertisers a color wheel showing "Where the girls are." The wheel's perimeter lists 91 types of products. Inside, five little windows show product buying by demographic categories, indicating that women aged 25 to 64, for whom many CBS daytime programs are designed, buy more than do women in the 18 to 49 bracket, standard for other media statistics. NBC's management then pointed out that its daytime schedule attracts 2,960,000 women 25-64 (against 2,830,000 for CBS), winning a majority for eight out of its 12 daytime programs against their CBS competitors (*Variety*, February 24, 1971).

### Patrons and client relations

Media patrons are those who directly invest in or subsidize media operations in exchange for economic, political, or cultural benefits. Clients are media that provide such benefits in exchange for discretionary patronage. Media patrons may be banks, advertisers, other corporate or civic organizations, religious or military bodies, or governments. The principal types of patrons and the major client relationships determine the role of media management in the power scheme of every society. Patron-client relationships also delineate the mass media's approach

## MEDIA CONTENT AND CONTROL

to most issues and problems, and permeate the climate of communicator decision-making.

In U.S. television, the principal client relationship is between the large national advertisers and the networks. Television revenues come primarily from the sale of access to the airways to advertisers; television delivers to the advertisers the time and attention of the publics it has assembled through its programming. The rates for the delivery of public time and attention depend on the size (and often on the type) of the audiences delivered. The value of this service ultimately depends on how the purchases, good will, votes, and other economic, political, or cultural services obtained affect the patron's share of the market, his competitive position, and his future prospects.

U.S. advertisers paid, for all such services to all media, about \$20 billion in 1969. Television, second only to newspapers, received \$3.5 billion (18 percent of the total); magazines were a poor third with only eight percent, and radio fourth with 6.5 percent of the total.

National advertisers, footing nearly \$7 billion of the \$20 billion total media bill, provided 44 percent of all television revenues, compared with 21 percent of magazine, 16 percent of newspaper, and seven percent of radio income. Furthermore, the top 100 national advertisers provided 63 percent of all television income in exchange for the time and attention of TV's massive and heterogeneous audiences. The same group of national advertisers paid only 16 percent of magazine income and nine percent of newspaper income. Two-thirds of television advertising was accounted for by the manufacturers of food, toiletry, drug, soap, tobacco, and automotive products. The top 25 network advertisers accounted for 54 percent of all network television billings in 1969, with three giant soap companies alone claiming 14 percent of the total.

The advertiser's chief leverage is logistical. He can cut back or terminate his sponsorship, or shift to another time, program, station, network, or medium. The accumulated experience of such sanctions guides network executives in setting programming policy. Substantive demands of advertising patrons are codified by the network censor's office and sometimes by the sponsoring agencies themselves. Most of these comments and codes pertain to the commercial messages or to the protection of product or client interests in the programs. Some, however, are more sweeping. General Mills, one of the Big Ten network sponsors, ruled that "The moral code of the characters in our dramas will be more or less synonymous with the moral code of the bulk of the American middle class as it is commonly understood...." Other provisions in the 22-point General Mills code were: "Where it seems fitting, the characters should reflect acceptance of the world situation in their thoughts and actions, although in dealing with war, our writers should minimize the 'horror' aspects. . . . Men in uniform should not be cast as heavy villains or portrayed as engaging in any criminal activity." And: "There

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will be no material on any of our programs which could in any way further the concept of business as cold, ruthless, and lacking all sentiment and spiritual motivation" (*Variety*, October 26, 1960).

The FCC inquiry which brought to public attention the existence of advertiser leverage over program content also heard testimony from an executive of Screen Gems, the largest supplier of television films who said that "advertisers' contracts with the nets give them control over taste and policy. . . . If discussions did not resolve differences, the advertisers would have the final say" (quoted in *Advertising Age*, October 17, 1960). Some advertising agency officials testify to close supervision of program material from inception to final airing, while others claim a hands-off policy. In general, broadcasting executives interviewed say they work harmoniously with agency personnel in the common quest for large and quiescent audiences in the mood to support the sponsors' interests, activities, and products.

The basic cost of producing a prime time half-hour averages about \$100,000. A major one-minute commercial may cost as much or more to produce and air. Most advertisers are content to leave the responsibility for program content to the networks and stations, retaining "only" the power of the purse.

Limited advertising budgets and the growing standardization of television program production has tied the medium increasingly into an assembly-line operation with its principal client relationships serving as the main transmission belt. After hearing the testimony of many of those whom the television industry holds obligated to bring positive responsibility to bear upon the production of programs and whom the industry holds "jointly accountable to the American public," the FCC's Office of Network Study (1965) concluded:

... the policies and practices of network managers. . . tended to substitute purely commercial considerations based on circulation and "cost per thousand" for considerations of overall service to all advertisers and to the various publics, as the dominant motives in the plan and design of network schedules. In other words, network television became largely a "slide rule" advertising medium principally motivated by a commercial concept. . . .

One-sided as that indictment may be, and qualified as it should be by obvious exceptions, there is little or no alternative to this system in the present structure of American television—except perhaps in the public sector, which, however, provides more of a complementary than an alternative service.

Public television was traditionally supported by state, municipal, and educational funds and by foundation grants. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was created by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 to serve as a national organization acquiring and distributing both Federal and private funds throughout the public broadcasting system. The

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CPB supports the Public Broadcasting Service and provides program grants to several production centers.

In the first year of its operation, CPB received \$5 million in Federal funds; during 1970 it acquired \$15 million, and in 1971, \$23 million. Many CPB programming grants to production centers are coordinated with Ford Foundation program grants to the same centers and stations. Of the \$8.1 million PBS budget for 1971, \$1 million originated in a Ford grant to the CPB for network publicity.

In two decades, the Ford Foundation has spent over \$200 million on public broadcasting. In 1970, Ford distributed \$18 million, an amount roughly equal to that spent by CPB throughout the entire public broadcasting system for the same year. During 1971, as increased Federal funds were appropriated for CPB and as Ford began to withdraw from its leadership role, the Foundation will be surpassed for the first time and the Corporation will emerge as the major source of funds for public broadcasting.

Public patronage has been miniscule compared with private patronage. The client services performed by public television have been largely those that would not perform profitable consumer services for private corporate patrons. The mainstream of American television is commercial, and the main decisions affecting American culture are made by the corporate managements of the commercial networks.

## PROGRAM REGULATION

Fears of government-enforced standards of programming, of stricter public regulation of commercial message content, and of destructive internecine industry warfare are the chief reasons for self-regulation in broadcasting. Standards imposed from outside would couple authority with power to apply sanctions that might interfere with the present conduct of client relationships from which broadcasters derive their income. A recent FCC suggestion for more active and publicly supervised enforcement of the industry's own Television Code was greeted with an outburst of defiant opposition from the industry that adopted the Code.

On the other hand, codes administered by industry-appointed censors and industry-financed boards are flexible instruments. They help protect the common interests of the industry and its chief patrons, to cultivate its publics, and to preserve its markets. The function of the trade associations, the networks, and the various self-censorship boards is to act as radar guiding the fleet, to help spot storm and trouble ahead, to chart the currents, and to calculate the paths of least turbulence for the most and biggest ships.

The storms that led to the adoption of the Hollywood Production Code in 1930 and to its more definite enforcement since 1934 were pre-

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dominantly of a moral character. Just as, in the late nineteenth century, rapid mass printing led to the adoption of obscenity laws, so, in the 1930s, the movies (and, in the 1950s, television) became suspected of "vulgar" and other immoral influences. The rising storm of outside censorship and criticism over alleged "blue material," and threats of religious boycott and federal action convinced the major movie producers, banded together in a trade association, that it was time to act.

The Production Code drew upon a prior list of "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" which had attempted to codify the most damaging bans and deletions of government censors. The list was supplemented by reasoning and explanations which bore the imprint of collaboration between Martin Quigley, prominent trade publisher and Catholic layman, and the Reverend Daniel A. Lord, a trained moralist with an interest in the theater.

The resulting document—which, with minor changes, guided until recently the production and distribution of most movies in the United States—was moralistic in character. Forty percent of the lines of the code pertained to matters of sex. The rest dealt with crime, brutality, suicide, murder, drug addiction, religion, executions, liquor, surgery, childbirth, cruelty to animals, and respect for flags, institutions, and people of all nations and races.

Fear of censorship because of sexual allusions overshadowed most other sensibilities. The wording of the Code, in effect until 1956, contained the following proscription under the heading of "Profanity": "No approval . . . shall be given to the use of words and phrases in motion pictures including . . . Nuts (except when meaning crazy)."

The broadcasting codes, once modeled after the motion picture Production Code, have come to reflect the legal status and broad scope of radio and television in the life of the community—much different from the status of movies. Sex and conventional morality are not the codes' main preoccupations. They also contain sections on children's programs, "community responsibility," public issues, political affairs, and the "advancement of education and culture."

Network censorship began in the mid-1930s. The "broadcast standards" departments were originally commissioned to make common-sense decisions about the acceptability of verbal content ("continuity"). Departments of Continuity Acceptance, Editing, and finally Standards and Practices were established for each network and some larger stations to formally perform the functions of internal censorship.

The National Association of Broadcasters adopted industry-wide standards of practice for radio in 1937. The Television Code became effective in 1952. Both were composites of existing network codes. By 1971, the NAB Radio Code had been revised 16 times, the Television Code 15 times.

## NAB and network standards

The specifications that follow the sweeping declarations of the NAB Television Code Preamble are broad provisions whose application depends on current interpretations of such terms as "valid," "significant," "challenging concepts," "undesirable meanings," "excessive or unfair exploitation," "decency," "good taste," "delicacy," and "impropriety." The definition and application of these terms in concrete and specific communication situations is the day-to-day task of the Code Authority. If a violation occurs and neither numerous nor important people object to it, the terms may be defined in such a way as to do away with the violation by bringing the practice within standards of acceptability. One expression of this operational elasticity is the Code's intricately worded statement on advertising:

In consideration of the customs and attitudes of the communities served, each television broadcaster should refuse his facilities to the advertisement of products and services, or the use of advertising scripts, which the station has good reason to believe would be objectionable to a substantial and responsible segment of the community. These standards should be applied with judgment and flexibility, taking into consideration the characteristics of the medium, its home and family audience, and the form and content of the particular presentation.

Guidelines of "acceptability" boil down to assumptions of nonobscenity to "a substantial and responsible segment of the community." Within those limits, and subject to the qualifications of good faith and pure motives, the Code encourages the presentation of "adult themes."

It is in the interest of television as a vital medium to encourage and promote the broadcast of programs presenting genuine artistic or literary material, valid moral and social issues, significant controversial and challenging concepts and other subject matter involving adult themes. Accordingly, none of the provisions of this Code, including those relating to the responsibility toward children, should be construed to prevent or impede their broadcast. All such programs, however, should be broadcast with due regard to the composition of the audience. The highest degree of care should be exercised to preserve the integrity of such programs and to ensure that the selection of themes, their treatment and presentation are made in good faith upon the basis of true instructional and entertainment values, and not for the purposes of sensationalism, to shock or exploit the audience or to appeal to prurient interests or morbid curiosity.

## NAB Code provisions on sex and violence

On material relating to sexual expression, the Code contains the following provisions:

Profanity, obscenity, smut and vulgarity are forbidden, even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience. From time to time, words which have been acceptable, acquire undesirable meanings, and telecasters should be alert to eliminate such words.

Illicit sex relations are not treated as commendable.

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Sex crimes and abnormalities are generally unacceptable as program material. The use of locations closely associated with sexual life or with sexual sin must be governed by good taste and delicacy.

The costuming of all performers shall be within the bounds of propriety and shall avoid such exposure or such emphasis on anatomical detail as would embarrass or offend home viewers.

The movements of dancers, actors, or other performers shall be kept within the bounds of decency, and lewdness and impropriety shall not be suggested in the positions assumed by performers.

Camera angles shall avoid such views of performers as to emphasize anatomical details indecently.

A variety of Code provisions pertain to the presentation of murder, suicide, horror, cruelty, and morbid detail in news:

The presentation of murder or revenge as a motive for murder shall not be presented as justifiable.

Suicide as an acceptable solution for human problems is prohibited.

The use of horror for its own sake will be eliminated; the use of visual or aural effects which would shock or alarm the viewer, and the detailed presentation of brutality or physical agony by sight or by sound are not permissible.

Excessive or unfair exploitation of others or of their physical or mental afflictions shall not be presented as praiseworthy.

The presentation of cruelty, greed and selfishness as worthy motivations is to be avoided.

Good taste should prevail in the selection and handling of news:

Morbid, sensational or alarming details not essential to the factual report, especially in connection with stories of crime or sex, should be avoided. News should be telecast in such a manner as to avoid panic and unnecessary alarm.

As a special "Responsibility Toward Children," broadcasters are told:

Such subjects as violence and sex shall be presented without undue emphasis and only as required by plot development or character definition. Crime should not be presented as attractive or as a solution to human problems, and the inevitable retribution should be made clear.

Exceptional care should be exercised with reference to kidnapping or threats of kidnapping of children in order to avoid terrorizing them.

Material which is excessively violent or would create morbid suspense, or other undesirable reactions in children, should be avoided.

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Particular restraint and care in crime or mystery episodes involving children or minors should be exercised.

### Network codes

CBS uses the NAB Code without further amplification or modification. ABC reproduces the NAB Code (as well as pertinent statutes and government regulations) in its large loose-leaf handbook of Standards and Policies, and adds a 77-page section of its own provisions. Many of these duplicate or expand upon the NAB Code provisions. None refers to or gives additional detail about sex or violence in programming.

NBC publishes its own printed handbook of Broadcast Standards and Practices, supplementing the NAB Code. Struggling with the same creative and interpretive problems as did the framers of the NAB Code, the NBC censors developed similar language with respect to general guidelines, sex, and violence:

There are two general standards to be considered in judging programs for broadcast acceptability: (1) Is the subject matter acceptable? (2) Is the treatment consonant with good taste?

Recognizing the subjective nature of these two questions, the criterion used in reviewing programs is whether they would be regarded as acceptable in subject matter and treatment by a normal viewer under normal circumstances.

NBC believes that the proper application of these standards should not preclude the presentation of programs of genuine artistic or literary merit dealing with valid moral and social issues even though they may be challenging or controversial, or present realities which some people might wish did not exist. The test is whether such material is treated with dramatic integrity, rather than for purposes of sensationalism; and whether it seeks to develop genuine moral and artistic values, rather than to shock or exploit audiences or appeal to prurient interests or morbid curiosity.

*Aspects of Sex.* All of these—such as costuming, adultery and divorce—should be treated with intelligent respect and due regard for normally acceptable standards of behavior.

*Violence.* Whether in terms of human conflict or cruelty to animals, violence should never be presented for its own sake, for shock effect or as an audience stimulant and should never be carried to excess. Depictions of violence can be justified as an expression of conflict only to the extent essential to the advancement of plot or the depiction of characterization.

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE CODES

The NAB Code is the broadest of all television codes. But (except perhaps in its scrutiny of commercial claim substantiations) the NAB Code Authority is long on authority but short on power. It is dependent on voluntary subscriptions and cooperation. It cannot screen much material with its limited staff (smaller than that of any of the network cen-

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sors). Although it has the ultimate right to suspend (not used in nearly ten years) it lacks the power to enforce compliance.

The network censors can review and screen all broadcast material repeatedly from conception to airtime. They can exert influence and apply sanctions either directly or, if necessary, through the network's corporate structure. What network censors lack in formal authority they make up in power.

### How the NAB Code works

The National Association of Broadcasters' Television code is administered by a Television Code Review Board of nine members, appointed for two-year terms by the NAB President from among member station executives and subject to confirmation by the NAB general Television Board.

The Television Code Review Board is authorized and directed:

(1) To recommend to the Television Board of Directors amendments to the Television Code; (2) to consider, in its discretion, any appeal from any decision made by the Code Authority Director with respect to any matter which has arisen under the Code, and to suspend, reverse, or modify any such decision; (3) to prefer formal charges looking toward the suspension or revocation of the authority to show the Code seal to the Television Board of Directors concerning violations and breaches of the Television Code by a subscriber; (4) to be available to the Code Authority Director for consultation on any and all matters affecting the Television Code.

The actual implementation of the NAB Code falls to the Television Code Authority Director and staff. The Code Authority Director is also appointed by the President of the NAB, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. He is instructed:

(1) To maintain a continuing review of all programming and advertising material presented over television, especially that of subscribers to the Television Code of NAB; (2) to receive, screen and clear complaints concerning television programming; (3) to define and interpret words and phrases in the Television Code; (4) to develop and maintain appropriate liaison with governmental agencies and with responsible and accountable organizations and institutions; (5) to inform expeditiously and properly, a subscriber to the Television Code of complaints or commendations, as well as to advise all subscribers concerning the attitudes and desires program-wise of accountable organizations and institutions, and of the American public in general; (6) to review and monitor, if necessary, any certain series of programs, daily programming, or any other program presentations of a subscriber, as well as to request recorded material, or script and copy, with regard to any certain program presented by a subscriber; (7) to reach conclusions and make recommendations or prefer charges to the Television Code Review Board concerning violations and breaches of the Television Code by a subscriber; (8) to recommend to the Code Review Board amendments to the Television Code.

The NAB Code is also a membership organization. There are two kinds of membership, with two apparent degrees of adherence to the Code.

Anyone broadcasting or holding a station construction permit in the U.S. may become a regular subscriber to the Code by paying a fee and upon the approval of the NAB's Television Board of Directors. The Television Board grants "to each subscribing station authority to use the 'NAB Seal of Good Practice,' a copyrighted and registered seal to be provided in the form of a certificate, a slide and/or a film, signifying that the recipient thereof is a subscriber in good standing to the Television Code of the NAB." Such subscription remains in force as long as the fee is paid or until it is suspended by the Television Board of Directors upon charges preferred by the Code Review Board and after a lengthy and complicated quasijudicial procedure.

The other kind of membership is called "affiliate subscriber." Such membership needs to be approved only by the Code Review Board, which has the power to grant to each affiliate subscriber "authority to use a copyrighted and registered seal and declaration, in a manner approved by the Television Code Review Board, identifying the individual firm or corporation as an affiliate subscriber to the Television Code of the NAB. Such authority shall not constitute formal clearance or approval by the Television Code Review Board of specific film programs or other recorded material."

What, then, do the status of "affiliate subscriber" and its "seal and declaration" signify? The only hint the published rules and regulations give is that "the conditions and procedures applicable to subscribers shall not apply to affiliate subscribers." What appears to be a wide loophole permitting membership and seal without adherence to standards or clearance by the Code Review Board is explained by the Code Authority as applying only to film producers (mostly on the West Coast) whose completed products are subject either to network clearance or to subsequent review by the West Coast branch of the NAB Code Authority.

Another type of "second-class membership" under active NAB consideration would bring a number of nonsubscribing stations into the fold by permitting them more time to broadcast messages than is approved for the regular members. About 65 percent of commercial stations, including all network and large independent stations serving major markets, are regular subscribers to the Code. There are an additional 23-25 affiliate subscribers. It is the view of the Code Authority that most non-member stations do follow content standards but do not wish to or cannot afford to comply with commercial time limitations. Most of the non-subscribers are small independent UHF stations competing with large, network-affiliated VHF operations. Typically such stations have small audiences and weak signals. To remain solvent, they are forced to exceed Code commercial time standards, thereby failing to qualify for the Seal. The NAB director feels that it would be in the public interest, as well as that of the industry, to accord associate status to those stations

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that meet Code standards in all respects other than that of the regular commercial time limitation.

The director sees the Authority's chief task as urging and assisting members, affiliates, and other producers and advertisers to avoid violations of standards (most of which occur in the commercial area) and to ask for sanctions as a last resort. At any rate, there have been no suspensions in nearly ten years. In the last major charge preferred against members (in the matter of deodorants), the Board decided in favor of the subscribers' deviations and changed the interpretation of the Code.

#### The NAB Code Authority

The office of the NAB director is in New York. The Authority also maintains offices in Washington and in Hollywood. Besides the director and his staff assistant, the New York office consists of a manager, an assistant manager, five editors, and four secretaries. The Hollywood office has a manager, an assistant (both editors) and secretarial help. In Washington there are two managers—one for the radio code, the other for television, an assistant television manager, two or three television monitors, and three of four radio monitors. The work of the monitors is largely checking station observance of time standards.

While the Authority is responsible for reviewing programs and commercials on both radio and television, the majority of its work is with television, and the greatest portion of that work has to do with commercials. Because of the volume of broadcast material, the Code Authority can review or monitor only a small sample of programs and commercials, and mostly in a *post facto* fashion. The exceptions are in areas of unusual pressure or current sensitivity. For example, in 1971 all toy commercials were reviewed before they were broadcast. This procedure reflected pressures on the television industry by ACT and other groups protesting the use of children's programs for commercial purposes. In 1968, in the wake of the Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinations, the Television Code Review Board ordered the Code Authority to increase its scrutiny of the incidence and portrayal of violence in television programs. The authority had previously spent roughly 1-20 percent of its time on program matters; the percentage was increased to about 35 or 40 as a result of the Board's order. The increased attention to violence lasted for close to two years. Then, with the growth of interest in consumer rights and toy advertising, and given the same limited budget and staff, the Authority's involvement with commercials has returned to its former high level.

In areas other than its current "critical" concerns, the Code Authority lets the networks perform the active prior screening; it deals with problems brought to its attention after they are broadcast. Since the networks conduct day-to-day total clearance, the Authority prefers to

remain free to work on broader problems of Code interpretations and on the troublesome area of commercial regulation.

Since 1968, the Code Authority has been urged by Senator John O. Pastore and others to become more involved in active prebroadcast screening of programs. Both the Authority and CBS have resisted this suggestion, fearing that more power behind the Code Authority might hurt the long-run interests of the industry. ABC and NBC have not been as strongly opposed, and both have been submitting pilots of new series to the Authority for screening prior to the beginning of new seasons.

Most of the problems coming before the Authority, however, are still in the area of commercials. Private individuals and organized groups deliver a steady stream of complaints to the Authority. Advertisers often object to the claims of competitors. One network may complain about another, or seek the Authority's assistance with a problem it has been unable to resolve with an agency or a producer. Occasionally, too, a broadcast station group will call attention to network programs or commercials which it thinks questionable in light of the group's own standards.

The industry is always more beset with trouble pertaining to advertising than to programs. The clamor from advertisers and agencies to go beyond the limits of the acceptable, the legal, and the credible makes the review of commercials the Authority's chief task. While the validity of claims is studied with increasing care by the Authority, certain flexibility is developing with regard to the types of products which may be allowed. A few years ago feminine deodorant sprays, for instance, were banned. Today they are commonplace, and the Authority is considering proposals to advertise tampons and sanitary napkins. The director foresees the day when contraceptive commercials will be accepted.

The NAB finds it both necessary and convenient to be active in the commercial areas and to remain removed from program review. The Code Authority director, himself a former network censor, has often stressed the need to let broadcasters respond with great flexibility to the constantly changing tastes and tolerances of society.

## CBS Program Practices

The Columbia Broadcasting System's Office of Program Practices is headed by a vice president who reports directly to the president of the network. The office is independent of any other department of the network, and relates to other departments through the top executive of the corporation.

The Office has a staff of about 40 in two divisions—one for commercials, the other for general programs. A staff of editors in each division is responsible for day-to-day script and film screening. Most of the commercial editors work in the New York office; the majority of the

program editors are based in Los Angeles, where most programs are made.

All commercials and programs (excluding news and most sports) are scrutinized by the editors before broadcast. In fact, the editors are involved at every step of the production process, beginning with early program discussion and ending with the finished film or tape.

The process follows a regular pattern which has been in effect at CBS for over a decade. An editor is assigned to work with a given program. In preliminary discussion with the producer and writers, the editor will make suggestions about potential problems. The first draft of the script is submitted to the editor, who completes a blue form listing suggested deletions or changes. Each version of the script is read and thus annotated by the editor.

When a script is returned to the producer with a pink form, it is cleared for filming. When a rough cut of the show is available, the editor screens it and submits yellow evaluation forms to the producer until an acceptable version is cleared for broadcast.

Once a program is completed, the editor sends a synopsis to all CBS affiliate stations. A particular program may be previewed for a local station. The local station owner as license holder has the ultimate responsibility under the law for what is broadcast.

While the vast majority of editor criticisms are followed by appropriate script and film changes, some 10-15 percent of the issues raised by the editors are settled by the division supervisor or by the chief of the Office of Program Practices.

CBS follows the NAB Code and has no formal written guidelines of its own. The Office claims that it interprets the NAB Code more severely than the Code demands and that, accordingly, CBS feels little pressure from the NAB. Indeed, the vice president heading the Office sits on the NAB Television Code Review Board. Memoranda from the NAB most often are concerned with commercials and are directed more to the advertising agency preparing the commercial than to the network.

While the major pressure on editors has been the growing concern about commercial claims for products, a perennial problem in program content is "the aggregate of violence." Sex and other issues appear from time to time, but violence persists as the single greatest problem for CBS Program Practices editors: "The writers avoid sex, but go the violent route because of greater social tolerance [for violence]." Editors feel that there is a pattern permitting more violence, which runs in four-year cycles. The Office maintains a monthly record of the number of acts of violence, the treatment of various professions and minority groups, the amount of liquor, drug and tobacco use, and other sensitive subjects in network programs.

## ABC Policies

The American Broadcasting Company's Standards and Policies Handbook (March 1969 Revision) gives this description of the operation of that network's censors:

In exercising its responsibility, the Department of Broadcast Standards and Practices follows a detailed series of steps to assure conformity with the American Broadcasting Company's policies as well as standards set forth by the National Association of Broadcasters' Radio and Television Codes.

ABC maintains a staff of editors in New York and Los Angeles to read and screen all radio and television material for network broadcast except for News, News Documentary, and Sports Events which are under their own jurisdiction.

The Department of Broadcast Standards and Practices operates independently of the ABC Radio and Television Networks so that there is in effect a system of 'checks and balances' in determining the acceptability of program material.

Editors are trained and, when experienced and competent, are given the responsibility of applying the standards to each program broadcast. Theirs is the challenging work of reviewing and commenting on material which on the one hand will permit and encourage genuine, artistic and literary material which covers significant and controversial concepts involving adult themes while preserving the integrity of such programs and ensuring that the treatment and presentation are made in good faith on the basis of instructional and dramatic values.

... Programs of the public forum or question and answer type in the public information field and quiz and audience participation programs in the entertainment field for which continuity cannot be prepared before broadcast are subject to the same ABC policies and standards as are programs with written continuities, and the ABC Director or other designated representatives assigned to the program will be responsible for enforcing the policies on such programs. ABC reserves the right to cancel any program which does not comply with the accepted policies and procedures of the Company. All material used in pre-broadcast performances or "warm-ups" shall be in conformity with ABC policies and standards and the ABC Director or other designated representative will be responsible for enforcing such policies.

Although it is stated that Standards and Policies "operates independently of the ABC Radio and Television Networks," the office is, of course, an integral part of ABC's corporate structure, and acts through its executive hierarchy. Each of the office's three departments—Literary Rights, Script Routing, and Clearance—reports to the director, who is in turn responsible to the vice president of the Broadcast Division, who is the chief assistant to the executive vice president of ABC, Inc. The total editing staff numbers 41, with 27 based in New York and 14 in Los Angeles.

All commercials and non-news or sports programs are scrutinized by the Office of Standards and Practices. The process of program review at ABC is similar to that at CBS, with a series of colored forms guiding program development and acceptance.

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Fundamental program policy is governed by the assumption that "People don't want relevance; they want to be entertained. They want to take off their shoes and relax." The Office tends to encourage entertainment themes unencumbered by overt political, racial or moral issues.

## NBC Broadcast Standards

The National Broadcasting Company launched a Department of Continuity Acceptance in 1934. Its "standards of taste and propriety" were the first codified, and served as a model—along with the Motion Picture Code—for the NAB Radio Code. Now the Department of Broadcast Standards, it is described in the NBC booklet of *Radio and Television Broadcast Standards and Practices* as "still dedicated to the same goal: to maintain conduct befitting an invited guest in the home."

NBC's own account of that operation is contained in the introduction to its Standards and Practices codebook.

The direct responsibility of interpreting and applying these NBC Broadcast Standards and of proposing new or modified standards is assumed by the Department of Standards and Practices, which reports directly to management and is headed by a Vice President who supervises the Director of Broadcast Standards and the Director of Practices. The staff consists of editors and assistants in New York City and Burbank, California.

The broadcast Standards Department concerns itself with the actual content of all material—program and advertising—broadcast by NBC. (The only exception is programs produced by NBC News whose content is separately reviewed by the NBC News Division.)

Broadcast Standards enlists the expertise of other NBC departments as well as outside authorities for assistance in the application of specialized provisions of this Code of Broadcast Standards. A similar function for local originations of the NBC Owned Stations is performed by specially designated station personnel who maintain liaison with the Broadcast Standards Department and are guided by the same NBC policies.

The Practices Department is largely investigatory, concerning itself with background facts of reliability and fairness. For example, it is responsible for insuring that conditions under which contestants compete on game shows conform to the requirements set forth under Specific Rules And Practices. It assures that conformance by fact-finding prior to the actual program, monitoring during the broadcast, and spot checking after completion of the broadcast.

The Vice President in charge of the Department reports to the Executive Vice President who administers NBC's Corporate Information Division and who reports in turn to the President of NBC. As with the other networks, the Department of Broadcast Standards is independent of such major network offices as programming and sales.

The department is smaller than those of the other networks. It has a total staff of 28 editors, secretaries, and supervisors on both coasts.

While violence is considered a problem—"television glamorized violence," and "its consequences are not shown"—the major program concerns seem to be with language: "A single 'hell' or 'damn' gets hundreds of letters." The NBC editors operate under a philosophy that television must follow, not lead, that it cannot generally initiate greater cultural and moral flexibility in the society: "As cinema follows the novel, so must television follow film."

## Movies: the Trojan horse

If that is true, a sharp escalation in television violence may be around the corner. "NEW TIDE OF FILM GORE RISES" was the front page banner headline in the trade paper *Variety* on June 2, 1971. "Graphic gratuitous violence seems to have replaced sex as the newest film industry ploy to lure patrons away from their television sets," noted the report on new movies and those in production.

What will the television industry do to lure them back? Censors believe that the competition will be reflected in changing standards. The standards of television will remain stricter than those of the more selectively viewed and harder to control films, but they must change in the same direction. Movie trends pave the way for the acceptability of the same type of material for television at a later time. At any one time, films are subjected to the stricter standards of television, but they also test and stretch those standards. An editorial entitled "Comment on the Times," in the February 22, 1971 issue of the trade magazine *Advertising Age* observed signs of change—if indeed it is a change.

A movie called *Madigan* appeared on NBC-TV the other night. It was a chase film in which no character seemed—you should excuse the expression—virtuous; a film in which the cast was given to murder, adultery, "unusual" sex habits, brutality, bribery, you name it—and most of it portrayed or explicitly suggested right there on the screen. Not the kind of thing, you'd imagine, for the living room. But opposite of what you suppose: NBC-TV got not a single complaint.

Just what the trend is and why are graphically described in the *Variety* report cited above. The story also reflects filmmakers' views on what happens when their product gets on television, and the long-term business prospects for violence as "an integral part of American entertainment."

Explicit sex and violence are two things still taboo on U.S. television, but the major films companies are attempting to avoid the more graphic shores of sex and thus stay clear of the Motion Picture Assn.'s X rating. Despite denials that tag, in the vast majority of cases, is given on the basis of sexual content. No film in memory has been given an X because of violence, although *The Wild Bunch* was threatened with one and minor cuts were made. The majors are relatively safe with violence, however. . . . What happens when these films eventually turn up on television is another matter. When *The Dirty Dozen* was shown recently, so much of the brutality was cut that it was sometimes impossible to tell who was doing what to whom. And even *Ben-Hur* was trimmed of a few gory moments for its television debut.

Filmmakers usually excuse their overindulgence in gore by saying it shows the real effects of bullets, knives etc. and does not make brutality pretty. Admittedly the old style war films in which U.S. Marines died gallantly without shedding a drop of blood or even messing their hair painted a glossy indeed, but one has only to hear the audiences cheering and giggling at the spurting blood of late to wonder about all those good intentions. In a recent interview, director Sam Peckinpah said of the audience reaction to *Wild Bunch* violence, "I rubbed their noses in it. . . they loved it."

Psychologists, especially those dealing with children, find all this disturbing and ultimately symptomatic of a society weaned on a Puritan tradition of sexual repression. In many other countries, American films are censored more because of their violence than their sexual content. In this U.S. however violence is somehow more socially acceptable than overt sexual activity. Ask most middle American mothers whether they would prefer their sons to participate in a bar-room brawl or indulge in group (heterosexual) sex, and there's little doubt that the majority would answer, Violence as titillation thus seems an integral part of American entertainment now being capitalized upon by the major filmmakers and distributors. The MPAA in being lenient towards such films, merely reflects social attitudes.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The basic management power to select and develop programming rests with corporate executives in charge of network program departments and their subdivisions. The popular notion of television program directors on the search for ideas is deceptive. Program executives might just as well be called Vice Presidents in Charge of Suppression, not because they are against innovation (although many others claim that they are), but because they are inundated with ideas, most of which are not new or, if new, are too costly, impractical, or troublesome.

The few that are chosen represent an investment, a gamble, a fragile commodity to be sold to top management, sponsors, and stations. The program executives' chief tasks are to select as few new programs as possible; oversee their development, cost, treatment, and ratings as closely as possible; use them as widely as possible to realize all potential earnings from the investment; and keep them as long as they continue to hold their own in the competition for patrons and publics.

Creative people with something to contribute to the endless hours of television programming over hundreds of channels can sell to only three major ultimate buyers: ABC, CBS, and NBC. The networks usually buy all program rights, including syndication to independent and foreign stations, and they own or control the bulk of U.S. and much of world television programming—from choice of themes, writers, and actors, through all script revisions, to the actual filming or taping of the show.

In the 1950s, a time now referred to as the "Golden Age of Television," FCC figures record that over half of network evening fare was devoted to independently produced programs. Writers, directors, and

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stars of live and even filmed programs exercised influence virtually unknown today.

Today more than 93 percent of all prime time programming is reported to be under direct network control from conception to airtime. The economies of scale that result from assembly-line production, the apparent cost-effectiveness of ritualistic repetition of tried formulas, and the legal and political challenges facing broadcasters have forced the issue of supervision, power, and control of what goes on the air.<sup>2</sup>

### Writers' complaints

Even though the networks originate little in the way of program ideas or themes and depend almost entirely on outside talent, the creators of programs typically have no legal or financial leverage or responsibility in the decision-making process. Subject to the currents and cross-currents of management, production company, and advertiser relationships, writers generally do as they are told. At premium are the handful of "professionals" who "know" without even being told, and who turn out reliable and trouble-free scripts on the assembly line. One network censor was reported to have said to Steven Roberts of *The New York Times* (July 27, 1969):

There's a tremendous amount of self-censorship, not only by network executives but by writers and producers as well. They don't want to commit money to a property that might get into trouble, so they don't even bother with something different.

A writer of half-hour shows stressed the element of time (both playing time and time for writing) as precluding adequate development:

Okay, so you have 23 minutes to establish your exposition, to delineate your characters, work to your climax with as much action as possible, and bring your tale to a thrilling and moral conclusion. Oh yes, you must provide suitable breaks for commercials, too. You use as many shortcuts as possible: you want to paint a "bad" guy or someone outside the social norm quickly and simply. You fall back on a stereotype of some sort which presumably your audience will understand without full explanation. If shingles or hives connoted social aberration, I imagine they would be as common as escapees from prisons and asylums. The run-of-the-mill half-hour TV film is as stylized as the Japanese Noh Play.

Examples of positive prescription are rare because of the early involvement and totality of the supervisory process. The published hearings of the Dodd Committee on "Television and Juvenile Delinquency" (1965) record claims that sex and violence were injected into programs to boost lagging interest without boosting program cost or level of sophistication. But it is safe to say that seasoned writers rarely need such advice. In fact, a frequent complaint of the censors is, "Why can't those hacks write something different?"

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## NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Management practices related to program development and control are similar at the three networks. Nevertheless, shifts of emphasis and different ways of expressing similar policies become evident in the account each network gives of its own operation. These shifts and differences indicate the range of options and alternatives that the structure of American television provides for program development.

### ABC: "keep producers in line"

Nearly all program ideas emanate from the program suppliers. More than one hundred ideas are discussed seriously with the network's Program Development office each year. Of these perhaps 50 are eventually presented in the form of written proposals or outlines. After further discussion with the suppliers, the network may settle on ten to 15 of these program ideas to be scripted and produced as potential series for the new season.

In this process of program selection the networks are moving away from the pilot film concept. The reasons are primarily economic. It costs the network \$500,000-800,000 to produce a one-hour pilot. If (as often happened), as many as 15 pilots were prepared and then only five to seven were used, the networks would have thrown away six to eight million dollars from which it got little if any return. Instead, the network plans to use in some way most of the program ideas approved for scripting. Few are developed as disposable pilots. Rather, a one-to-two-hour movie is developed around each program idea. This movie is then viewed by network officials during the spring before the new season. If it is found suitable for expansion into a series, the company that produced it is given a contract to provide a full portfolio of episodes related to the program concept. If not deemed suitable for series development, the program is then scheduled for a single screening as a movie of the week. This screening may be used as a further test for the program's potential as a series. In any case the program is sold and screened, and some return on the original Development Office investment is made.

The network used to be somewhat removed from the process of production after the series was approved. Involvement was limited to simple determination of the program's ratings and the decision whether or not to continue the series. Now, however, the script of each episode is reviewed by the Nighttime Programming staff and discussed with the series producer. This procedure allows the networks to "keep producers in line" and to insure that the program concept bought in the spring continues to be developed in the fall.

The more creative producers and directors seek to develop new ideas and to enlarge on actor talents. Over a period of time they may wish to

mold a program in a direction different from that originally approved. A comedy, for instance, may become more serious or satirical; an action-adventure program may attempt to become more dramatically sophisticated. But, because "the way to succeed in television is to generate audience flow" (the maintenance of high audience ratings throughout an evening's schedule), the network programmers want individual episodes of particular programs to be generally the same week after week, so that the viewer will get what he expects. Too much variety within a series, it is felt, will lose viewers not only for the particular program, but for the entire evening.

The program executives at ABC feel little pressure from their Office of Broadcast Standards. "I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I received complaints from the Office last year . . . I can't say that it's one of my pressing problems." This seeming lack of pressure at the executive level is not meant to imply that the ABC Standards Office does not make its wishes known. But most of its efforts are handled at a lower level, between Standards Office editors and the production supervisors.

The few warnings that have come through to the higher staff level have had to do with excessive violence in the early prime time hours (when many children are assumed to be viewing), questions of taste, and sometimes questions of safe, exemplary behavior on the part of actors ("Are seat-belts fastened when characters get into automobiles?").

### CBS: conscious of Practices code

Of the hundreds of program ideas considered each year, ten to 30 are developed as pilots. For the past two years, CBS, like ABC, has attempted to insure that its pilot films will be usable whether or not they lead to full series.

The CBS Department of Programs employs more than 30 people. Three or four senior executives consult and make the major decisions in all areas of the department's interest.

The CBS Programs Department appears to be keenly conscious of the network's Program Practices Division. Memoranda and verbal comments flow constantly among the top executives as well as at lower echelons. The comments of the Practices Office are generally noted and usually followed. They are typically questions of tone: "That scene is questionable as to the plot needs of the sex" or "Is that much violence necessary at that point?"

The process of individual program creation is similar to those of the other networks. Once a series is scheduled, a program staff member reviews each script and works with the producer to get what the network originally saw in the program. The position of the program staffer during reviews of an episode is often that of mediator between the Program

Practices editor and the contracting company producer. While conscious of the network's legal and public relations interests in observing sex, violence, and other Code provisions, the programmers are usually ex-producers themselves whose jobs depend on keeping ratings high and costs low.

Except for ratings and the Program Practices comments, the Programs Department has little contact with the outside: "Letters to networks are a myth." Seldom are organized groups heard from or considered. The programmer's job is simply to create the most attractive schedule he can. His chief considerations are the relative size of the audience compared with the relative cost of the program.

### NBC: "the audience can have a love affair"

Like those of the other networks, the NBC Programs Department is split between the East and West Coasts. The work of the California office is largely devoted to the process of supervising the production of programs. The New York office carries the major administrative responsibilities, oversees program and schedule development, and coordinates the programming process with the sales department and the advertising agencies.

The process of program selection at NBC is no different from that of the other networks. Most new ideas originate with the production companies. About 18 months prior to a new season, several dozen written program treatments are considered. Shortly thereafter, 12 to 20 program outlines are approved for scripting. Like its competitors, NBC is no longer preparing many disposable pilot films. The network does not even solicit many more initial scripts than it is likely to approve for production; a script can now cost \$25,000. Program ideas going into production are generally made into television movies. Two-thirds of the new programs in the NBC 1971-72 schedule have come from the movie format, most of them having already been presented on NBC's World Premiere Movie program.

It is the view of the program staff that the movie format allows much greater control over subsequent series development. From the movie can be drawn a "bible" of characterizations, scene settings, plot conditions, and so on. These help the NBC program supervisors to oversee the work of the production company's producers, writers, directors and actors. With the original one- or two-hour movie and the related written program guide, the network finds it can elicit a greater consistency among the various episodes of the series. Consistency is closely allied with the condition that leads to the success of a program: "the ability of the producer, writer and actors to create a character or set of characters with whom the audience can have a love affair."

The NBC Programs Department maintains routine contact with the network's Office of Broadcast Standards. The vast majority of problems raised are settled without controversy. Program executives confirm that a special measure of scrutiny at NBC is reserved for language. In any case, few censorship problems rise above the level of the daily work of the individual program supervisors and editors.

At all three networks, the audience is blamed for the repetitiveness and banality of much network programming. But none of the program offices maintains much direct contact with the public or with any outside groups. Since most comments deal with issues of taste in programming or with the accuracy of commercials, they are steered to the Broadcast Standards offices. Few viewers offer comments on the substance of a program. In fact, the only time large responses are received is when a program of longstanding popularity is cancelled, or when the networks are embroiled in a political controversy. Vice President Agnew's 1969 remarks in Des Moines elicited 70,000-80,000 individual letters, calls or other responses to NBC alone (75 percent supporting Mr. Agnew). "Nobody writes to say what's good about Bonanza." The ratings assume the role of the only regular guide to audience response.

### SUMMING UP

A television executive said "There are only two types of audience demand: the cry that 'You throw Herbie Glotz off the air' and the demand that 'You carry more programs like that last one.' That's all." Surveys confirm that the majority of even well-educated viewers have few general complaints or creative suggestions to offer. Television is a medium of mass appeal, although the responsibility for program development and control is concentrated in relatively few hands.

The Federal Communications Commission and the NAB Code Review Board have authority but little effective power. Power stems from the chief client relationships between major national advertisers and the managements of the three national networks.

That basic structure determines the process of program control and development and shapes symbolic content. In a fictional world governed by the economics of the assembly line and the "production values" of optimum appeal at least cost, symbolic action follows conventional rules of social morality. The requirements of wide acceptability and a suitable environment for the sponsor's message assure general adherence to consumer values and to common notions of justice and fair play. The issue is rarely in doubt: the action is typically a game of skill and power.

Sex and violence play critical and somewhat antithetical roles in such a game. Sex gives a promise of human relatedness, even if the relationship may be exploitive. Violence signifies a break in human relatedness, and a risk to human integrity and purpose. It is the simplest and cheapest dra-

matic device available to indicate who is the better man in a clash of personalized forces.

With their emphasis on frequency and explicitness rather than on the substance of what violence demonstrates about life, the codes are public relations instruments whose applications protect and enhance the social and commercial functions of programming. The pressures toward standardizing and streamlining program production, with greater executive supervision over the creative process, also promote the ritualistic nature and institutional functionality of the representations. It is in that context that studies of the representations of sex and violence and their effects in cultivating norms of life can best be viewed.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Facts and figures are from the *Broadcasting Yearbook*, the *Television Factbook*, the FCC annual Reports, and various corporate annual reports unless otherwise specified. Views cited come from interviews, correspondence, or other recorded personal comments, unless otherwise specified. The assistance of Willard Rowland (who bears no responsibility for this report) is gratefully acknowledged.
2. A dramatic illustration of why and how the issue of control was forced in one celebrated instance, and an account of how it was settled, came from the former CBS senior vice president for programming—the man responsible for signing, supporting, and then cancelling the Smothers Brothers comedy program:

"I put the Smothers Brothers on the air. Tommy Smothers pioneered social satire and was a terribly important influence in the broadcasting world. No program hurt me more personally and professionally than the cancellation of that program, and I was part of the cancellation.

"Tommy was out in the vanguard. His neck was out. He was anti-Vietnam before it was popular. He was anti-Nixon before it was correct. But all that was not so bad. He had one big problem. Tommy blew it because of one thing. One thing ruined it for me, for the network, and for himself, and practically destroyed his career.

"A week before we cancelled we were in Washington. Senator Pastore, who was Chairman of the Committee in charge of the Federal Communications Commission, wanted to establish a system whereby everything would be submitted ahead of time to the NAB code, before it was put on the air. CBS was the one network which said no. We will decide what goes on our air. Now, I had problems with most of Tommy's shows. Tommy would stick in things that he knew wouldn't get by. I once left in a whole sketch where a guy got the tablecloth caught in his zipper. He really thought it wouldn't get by. I

## MEDIA CONTENT AND CONTROL

didn't think it was so bad. I got a million pieces of mail that thought it was disgusting. He said, "I thought you were going to take it out!" You know, it works both ways.

"The show was renewed on a Friday night at five of five when our option was up. But we told Senator Pastore that we would show the tapes to our stations ahead of time. It is the function of every local station to determine whether they want to carry the show. I called Tommy the following Wednesday morning and said, "Tommy, give me the tape because we have to show it to the stations." Wednesday afternoon I'm panicky. I said we have to show it. He said, "You tell the stations that if they don't want to carry it that's fine. But I don't want you guys to touch the tape."

"I'm not going to give up the right, the network will never give up the right to edit and be responsible for everything going out on our air. We have certain rules and regulations and we are going to live by them. Now at that point the lawyers are sitting by and that was one of the most depressing Thursday nights of my whole career. The President of the network said to me, "Where's the tape?" And I said, "I don't have it." And he said, "When are you going to get the tape?" And I said, "I don't know." And in that office at nine o'clock that night a wire went out and cancelled the Smothers Brothers.

"He crucified himself when he didn't have to. Certainly the conservative forces were fighting to keep the Smothers Brothers off the air. But we had renewed him on the Friday before so there was no question that we were looking for an excuse to dump him. But that was the one line if he stepped over he had to get hit. Because the stations will see those tapes ahead of time to decide for themselves, and we will not submit our tapes to the NAB in Washington. The affiliates shall have the final say in the decision-making process. And Tommy decided that he wasn't going to give us the tape. Now, since then Tommy has told me that he gave us the tape, that CBS saw it, he said a million things. And I tell you, as God is my judge, we never got the tape."

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## SCENARIO FOR VIOLENCE

by

George Gerbner

The debate over violence on television has settled in for a long run. It promises to outlast both "Kojak" and "Hawaii Five-0." While the partisans haven't yet come to blows, neither have they settled much. It may be they've been arguing over the wrong issues.

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Television culture has three seasons: starters, replacements and summer reruns. This fall, however, is the beginning of more than some 27 network programs. The industry's much-touted "family hours" plan is getting off to its shaky start, and along with it the perennial brouhaha about TV violence and sex (sex on television?) has been moved from its customary place in summer rerun time to the starter season. With two Congressional Committees getting into the act, and with our Violence Profile of the last starter season indicating an upswing in video mayhem, network promises are in for a thorough going-over. Or is it all a charade for public consumption? What are the issues behind the hearings, the reports and the research?

The way a culture depicts sex and violence is symptomatic of its definition of humanity and is indicative of the structure of its power. The conflict over that depiction goes beyond fads and fashions and becomes part of the general contest over who should define that which safely entertains (in both senses of the word) and that which threatens the established social order.

In our time, that contest revolves mainly around television. The symbolic representation of violence and sex in the mainstream of American culture has become a battleground in the larger struggle over the control of that mainstream.

Perhaps there is no more significant battleground than the depiction of vital human acts. But the battledust of clichés and oversimplifications clouds the issues and confuses experts and laypersons alike. Everyone is supposed to know what sex and violence mean; the debate is about how to deal with them. But they mean very different things in "real life" and on television. Real life violence maims and kills; television violence demonstrates, which is the essence of its symbolic functions. The question of what it demonstrates (the communication question) must be tackled before we turn to the question of how to deal with it.

Even many communication researchers set out to investigate only what they assumed or feared stories of violence might cause instead of first studying what they might mean. By limiting their focus to preconceived effects such as aggression, they have ignored the full range and diversity of symbolic functions (including fear of victimization and the cultivation of a hierarchically structured sense of risk and power) and thus may have actually obscured the real significance of the rise of a mass-produced, common symbolic environment largely ruled by violence. Politicians and bureaucrats have been simplistic for more understandable reasons. Sex and violence make "good issues" because they exploit fears about moral breakdown and the erosion of public safety and order. But behind the gestures and the jockeying is the unarticulated struggle for influence over television as the central cultural arm of the industrial order.

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## The contest revolves mainly around television. The symbolic representation of violence and sex in the mainstream of our culture has become a battleground in the larger struggle for control of that mainstream.

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From the vantage point of a communications researcher involved in the study of television violence for various commissions, I would like to sketch the progress of that struggle and then focus on what our research seems to say about the meaning of violence and how that should affect the issue of control.

"ANTIVIOLENCE BOMB UNDER MEDIA," cried *Variety's* front-page banner headline on January 29 of this year. Since then the industry's bomb-disposal squad, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), dampened the sputtering device by declaring a two-hour cordon sanitaire of evening "family programming." We are now witnessing the first round of that experiment. Even the Motion Picture Association of America—under its new code and rating administrator, communications professor Richard D. Heffner, who was pressed by complaints from some communities and especially from distributors abroad—gave its first X rating on grounds of violence alone—if one can call "violence alone" the offending scene in a Japanese martial arts movie entitled *The Street Fighter* in which the hero vividly castrates a 300-lb. black rapist.

It is too early to tell whether the new NAB code will stick and just how it will work. Independence may circumvent it, authorized exceptions may defeat it, time zones may confuse it, the kiddies may stay up later (more than 20 million of them already watch beyond 9 p.m.; 3 million still hang on at midnight!), the "adult" fare may become even more exploitive and the lack of definition may confound the whole effort. But, in any case, the "family hours" will not stem the tide of congressional and public concern.

The "antiviolence bomb" is not a passing phenomenon. It is, according to *Variety* analyst Morry Roth, a growing national mood and movement. Some cities (Chicago, for example) are drafting antiviolence statutes that will certainly wind up in the courts, and these are also affected by the new movement. "Unlike the antiporno

laws," writes Roth, "the antiviolence movement would have a large portion of the liberal intelligentsia on its side, a not inconsiderable factor. So, too, the blue-collar class that worried about porno undoing its daughters is increasingly beginning to believe that the media is [sic] creating the growing violence in the streets. A coalition between Archie Bunker and The Professor is not too wild a dream."

That coalition is no longer a dream. Conflicting pressures converge on TV as the most universally visible common scenario and symptom of an increasingly troubled society. In less than a quarter century, video has come to symbolize all that pagan rites, priestly mumbo jumbo, Machiavelli, the robber barons, Wall Street and Madison Avenue meant to former generations of crusaders and critics.

Violence, like pornography or crime, is largely a matter of definition. Most societies, including ours, define it one way for rulers and another way for the ruled. We are not as likely to decry as violent the force used in maintaining the established order as that used in transgressing or threatening it. Historically, concern about symbolic sex or violence arises when the "wrong" people are exposed to it. Obscenity became a legal concept when cheap printing made it available to the lower classes. The great 19th-century debates about pulp literature and the penny press set the stage for the controversy (and research) on the effects of movies and led to the adoption of the motion picture and broadcast codes of industry self-regulation.

Senator Estes Kefauver, whose crime investigations spread the "myth" of the Mafia and marked national television's coming of age (and his own rise to national visibility), chaired the first Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to inquire into the industry's inside workings. The next chairperson, Senator Thomas J. Dodd, made political hay of video lawlessness (before he himself was censured for real corruption) and added volumes to the archives on TV violence and children. Senator

John O. Pastore took up the cudgels a few years ago and, as chairperson of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, has wielded them longer and more skillfully than has anyone before him.

Televised hearings demonstrated what the medium could do for (and to) politicians and started the politicos thinking about what they could do with the medium. In the wake of a presidential assassination and the civil rights and antiwar turmoil, two months after the student takeover of Columbia University, a month after the uprising in France and five days after the shooting of Robert F. Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence and named Milton S. Eisenhower to head it. When the commission completed its work and released its findings, including *Violence and the Media*, the reports were buried and the recommendations quickly swept under the rug. That was not unusual; it happened to the Kerner Commission, the Pornography Commission, the Scranton "campus unrest" Commission. The creation of a presidential commission serves as a symbolic act that usually calms the populace and scares the target industry. The practical results are generally achieved within six months. The Eisenhower Commission, for example, was set up in June 1968. What effect its media investigations were to have was achieved by December of that year when network presidents were called on the carpet to tell the commission what they had done or intended to do. By the time the volumes of findings (including our own research report) came out, the political situation had changed, and another committee was already at work on the same problem.

That this other effort did not follow the pattern of presidential commissions was largely due to the skill and timing of Sen. Pastore. Using as leverage the anxiety that gave rise to the Eisenhower Commission plus the turbulent televised images of the Chicago Democratic Convention and

a new "law-and-order" administration. Sen. Pastore set in motion a government process that would be capable of follow-up and would provide fixed targets for future demands for action. He recalled how the smoking-cancer "link" had been established as a basis for official policy. So in March 1969 he wrote a letter to the new secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) requesting that he direct the U.S. surgeon general to appoint a Scientific Advisory Committee to conduct a study to determine if there was a link between TV violence and anti-social behavior such as might constitute a public health hazard.

The request was quickly accepted. However, following the precedent set by the surgeon general's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health, the industry (in this case television) was given the opportunity to black-ball seven from a list of 40 social scientists on grounds that they had already taken an affirmative position on the issue. No scientific groups were similarly invited to exclude proindustry representatives; after all, it was the cooperation of the industry, and not of the scientists, that was to be sought. Of the 12 committee members finally chosen, two were

network staff researchers, two were consultants to the networks and one was a former TV industry employee. The flap over stacking the deck in this way threatened the credibility of the work for a while but actually turned out to stiffen the backs and strengthen the hands of the drafters of an objective report. Two years, \$1 million, one extensive independent research program and five volumes of findings later, for the first time in the history of any media research, an industry-approved committee of scientists unanimously agreed that there "was some preliminary indication of a causal relationship" between exposure to television violence and violent behavior. The first press accounts misread the report, but, called to elaborate before Sen. Pastore's subcommittee, the surgeon general bared the teeth in it:

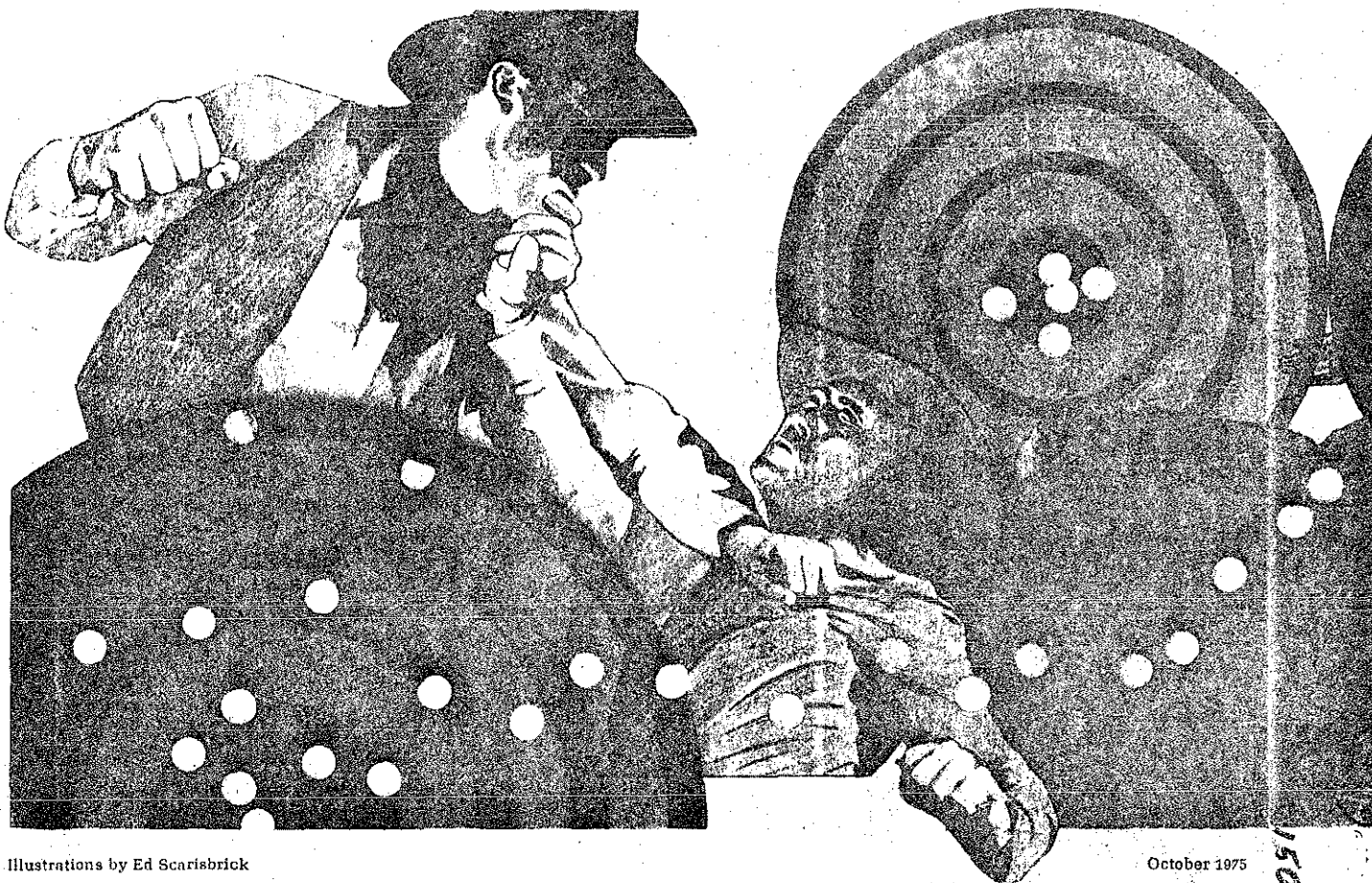
After a review of the committee's report and the five volumes of original research undertaken at your request, as well as a review of previous literature on the subject, my professional response today is that the broadcasters should be put on notice. The overwhelming consensus and the unanimous Scientific Advisory Committee's report indi-

cates that televised violence indeed does have an adverse effect on certain members of our society.

While the committee's report is carefully phrased and qualified in language acceptable to social scientists, it is clear to me that the causal relationship between televised violence and antisocial behavior is sufficient to warrant appropriate and immediate remedial action. The data on social phenomena such as television violence and/or aggressive behavior will never be clear enough for all social scientists to agree on a formulation of a succinct statement of causality. But there comes a time when the data are sufficient to justify action. That time has come.

At the end of the March 1972 hearings, Sen. Pastore declared that "what has taken place in the past few days is nothing less than a scientific and cultural breakthrough. For we know there is a causal relation between televised violence and antisocial behavior which is sufficient to warrant immediate remedial action. It is this certainty which has eluded men of good will so long."

I am not so sure that the "break-



Illustrations by Ed Scarsbrick

through" was as much scientific and cultural (previous reports contained similar evidence) as it was political. Pastore succeeded in using his position as chairperson of the committee that must pass on legislation affecting broadcasting licensing and other industry matters to vest responsibility for "his issue" in government agencies that could be prodded whenever the situation demanded it. In his breakthrough statement, Pastore immediately called upon the HEW secretary, the surgeon general and the FCC to establish a "violence index" that would yield annual reports "measuring the amount of televised violence entering American homes."

That was when the "antiviolence bomb" began to tick. Pastore knew there already was a violence index because I had developed it for the surgeon general's Scientific Advisory Committee and because it had been introduced into the record of the same hearing by Rep. John M. Murphy of New York. So he could just sit back and wait—but not too long.

The secretary designated the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) as the HEW agency carrying on after the Scientific Advisory Committee discharged its duties. NIMH convened a conference of research consultants in June 1972 to discuss

what to do about the senator's request. They recommended broadening the scope of the research and constructing a profile that would take account of the social relationships portrayed in the violence and their effects on viewers. Our research team, now including coinvestigator Larry Gross and other associates, received a NIMH grant for a broad-gauge project on television content and effects, called Cultural Indicators, including the development of the violence profile. Pastore was told that everything was under control and results would be forthcoming in two to four years.

Two years later, Pastore held further hearings. NIMH director Bertram S. Brown pleaded for another two to four years and advised the senator that a social science research council committee was reviewing research options and directions. I presented our newly developed violence profile. Network presidents also testified and Pastore congratulated them but warned that "we will keep your feet to the fire."

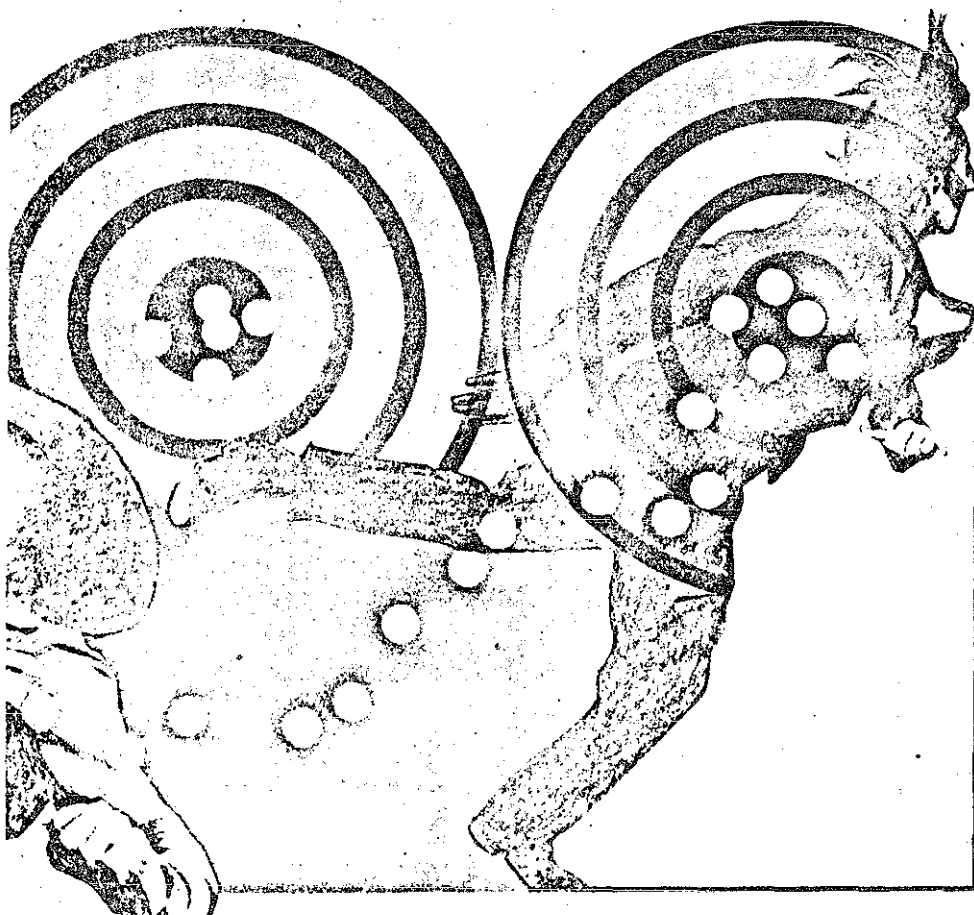
At year's end FCC chairperson Richard E. Wiley, prodded by Pastore and pressured by the Appropriations Committee, met with network presidents in a series of private sessions. Out of these sessions came the

NAB plan. In February, the FCC issued a report announcing what the networks already promised and praised them for their promises. Preoccupied with energy hearings and FCC nominations, Pastore called the plan "a wonderful idea," said he'd call hearings this fall and, at least temporarily, passed the cudgels to House Communications Subcommittee chairperson Torbert MacDonald. With his freshly streamlined, staffed and budgeted subcommittee geared up and ready to take its turn in the limelight, MacDonald blasted the FCC announcement as "like writing a letter to Santa Claus." He announced his intention to hold hearings of his own and gave clear notice that the "family hour" plan will not defuse the "antiviolence bomb."

TV Guide (February 8, 1975) carried a column by Kevin Phillips that revealed a deeper concern. "Demographics suggest that television violence has its greatest effect in low-income ghetto areas," wrote Phillips. "I hasten to say that the network impetus is not one of social disruption but private profit." He concluded that "as winter turns to spring and summer, unemployment is almost certain to rise to levels not seen since the 1930s. . . . Violent crime could reach unprecedented levels. . . . If a clear nexus can be found, measures must be taken to suspend or prohibit certain types of programming."

The "antiviolence bomb" plot seems to include mounting pressure on the networks as somehow responsible for exacerbating if not actually causing social unrest under worsening conditions. The scenario is well calculated to keep the networks' "feet to the fire." But is it not strange to claim that the modern corrupters of youth and inciters of the dispossessed are not some errant philosophers or reformist prophets or radical pamphleteers but the cautious cultural organs of corporate America? Would the business establishment incite costly social disruption just for the sake of profits derived from TV violence? I believe that it is both more parsimonious and more plausible to suggest that the social control functions of symbolic violence may—from the point of view of "law and order," if not mental health—outweigh the disruptive consequences.

Historically, symbolic violence in storytelling from tribal rites to fairy tales, pulps, news, movies and television served to instill awe of authority and to demonstrate preferred notions of how power works in the



**Our research shows that violence is central to the symbolic world of television drama. It shows who can get away with what and how. It teaches that the risks of victimization are high and unequal.**

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family, community, nation and universe. The individual mayhem such exhibitions inspire may be the price we pay, appalling as that is to increasingly more people, for the collective cultivation of a sense of danger and fear and ultimate acquiescence in a hierarchy of social controls. Those controls work when most people voluntarily submit to them most of the time. Assisting that process by symbolic means are the ritualistic demonstrations of power and authority through dramatic violence. Television raised that ritual to the assembly-line efficiency of more than seven acts of violence per prime-time hour and (our children obviously need more education) double that number per cartoon-time hour.

The rate of violence per dramatic program or cartoon play has been remarkably stable all through years of agitation, investigations and debates. Our research, now in its eighth year, shows that violence is central to the symbolic world of television drama. It shows who can get away with what and how. It teaches that the risks of victimization are high and unequal. TV's kill ratio (the number of victims divided by the number of violent acts in each group) defines the pecking order (but not crime statistics) of society. On top of the heap are mature white males; on the bottom lie the bodies of children, the old, the poor, the nonwhite and young or single women. Our research also shows that both children and adults who spend much of their lives in the "world" of television learn some assumptions of that world and project them onto social reality.

The chief social function of symbolic violence is in what it teaches about types of people and power. As we reported to the surgeon general in *Television and Social Behavior*, "Symbolic hurt to symbolic people and causes can show real people how they might use—or avoid—force to stay alive and to advance their causes. The ritual of dramatic violence demonstrates the relative power of people, ideas and values in a clash of personalized forces. . . . The

distribution of roles related to violence, with their different risks and fates, performs the symbolic functions of violence and conveys its basic message about people."

That message is one of social typing: different types of people possess different degrees of human violability. It is the message to which every homo sapiens must be subjected for a long time and in large doses before the notion of social violence—cool, calm, uniformed efficiency with which people are killed simply because they belong to a type called enemy—becomes conceivable, let alone practicable. Slight fluctuations in the massive release of that message into the common symbolic environment would make little difference so long as the inequity of the pattern remained, or even sharpened. (Some muting of violent characterizations that the networks offered Pastore and the public were accompanied by increases in the margin of victimization suffered by the already deprived groups in the world of TV drama.)

Symbolic violence can thus achieve some of the repressive aims of real violence and do it much more profitably and, of course, entertainingly. Fearful people want—demand—protection and will accept, if not actually welcome, oppression in the name of safety. Our research shows that heavy viewing of television cultivates a sense of risk and danger in real life. Fear invites aggression that provokes still more fear and repression. The pattern of violence on TV may thus bolster a structure of social controls even as it appears to threaten it.

We need a new approach to the social function not only of symbolic violence but also of television itself. Television is the universal curriculum of young and old, the common symbolic environment in which we all live. Its true predecessor is not any other medium but religion—the organic pattern of explanatory symbolism that once animated total communities' sense of reality and value, and whose relationship to the state is also governed by the First Amendment. Which brings us to the question of

controls. The problem cannot be avoided because television has never been without an imposed system of content controls. The question is what should be the proper purpose of controls and how could that purpose be best achieved?

The first requirement for transforming the power struggle into a more informed and responsible debate is the recognition of the repressive (rather than only incitive) social functions of symbolic violence, and of television itself as something like a corporate religion relating to the state as only the church did in the past.

The second requirement is the recognition that broadcasters' responsibility for long-run social goals and consequences depends more on a structure of supports and rewards than on the mechanics of controls. The exclusive dependence of commercial broadcasters on advertising budgets limits their scope and thwarts their exercise of broader responsibility. The formula that governs broadcasting is not social need, popularity or even audience wants. It is "cost per thousand viewers"—what enough people will buy at the least cost to the sponsor. Assembly-line violence that fits the conventional pattern of power is a dramatic commodity of only moderate acceptability but even lower cost. That is why it is as profitable as well as socially functional ritual of the TV religion.

There is not much to be gained from debating the controls, without also considering where the supports and rewards will come from if television is to serve social purposes broader than those that now sustain its prejudicial patterns of victimization. Ultimately, the job can only be done by TV's artists and professionals under arrangements that support rather than distort their own best judgments. Both Senate and House subcommittees announced public hearings for this fall. The challenging task of institutional remodeling needs the discussion of alternatives, and time for development. The new round of hearings on sex, violence and other vital functions could do no better than to begin that task.

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## SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS OF "DRUG ABUSE": A MASS COMMUNICATION APPROACH

GEORGE GERBNER

Communication research is typically concerned with systems of messages and the patterns of thinking, action, and policy that such systems tend to cultivate. "Image" is one of the most versatile terms of such research. It stands both for a mental construct and the cultural artifact that sustains it. The transaction that we might call "imaging" (imagining without its connotation of "unreality") is to the brain what breathing is to the lungs. Both involve an exchange of energies with environmental systems common—and vital—to all humans.

The environmental system we call culture is entirely artifactual and largely symbolic. Its common images—structures of words, pictures, sounds, movements, and other forms of expression or representation—create for most members of a culture the basic common assumptions that define the contours of reality and the range of issues to agree or disagree about. The ability to select, order, and weight these according to some perspective is the substance of human identity and integrity. The ability to do that on a mass scale for large and heterogeneous publics is the essence of culture power.

Mass communication is the mass production of images and their discharge into the mainstream of the common symbolic environment (Gerbner 1972a). The ability to print the Book and distribute it to laymen was necessary to break up a rigidly land-based religious order. The ability to mass-produce and disseminate a total symbolic link that binds far-flung communities together has loosened the hold of all traditional religions on mental life and has created a new religion out of the merger of technology and culture power. The critical culture nexus of modern governance is no longer church and state; it is mass media and state.

Study of the pictorial component is of course an integral part of the investigation of popular movies, comics, television, and other visual-verbal media products (Hansen and Parsons 1968:61-67). Such investigations provide fruitful opportunities for the discovery of definitional and assumptive patterns implicit in complex and dynamic message systems. The typical purpose of the investigation is to find the aggregate, repetitive, and cumulative patterns to which entire communities are exposed. These patterns are the sum total of all individual selections; they are not necessarily

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similar to any single individual selective pattern of media use. They form the symbolic links of community and the bases for interaction among publics that never meet face-to-face. They are the foundations of policy formation, maintenance, and control in modern societies. For example, our studies of the confession magazine cover design revealed how the the image of the radiant "cover girl" in the lurid verbal context served the symbolic functions prescribed for the working-class reader in a consumer society (Gerbner 1958a, 1958b). Cross-cultural studies of media portrayal of the formal educational institutions suggested the existence of different symbolic functions of the "teacher image" in different societies (Gerbner 1973). Our continuing analysis of violence in television drama shows how a differential pattern of victimization suffered by different sex, age, ethnic, and other groups demonstrates a structure of social power and cultivates assumptions and fears conducive to the acceptance of that structure (Gerbner 1972b).

In sum, the mass production of popular imagery changed the nature of the social process. No more can we speak of "sheer" ignorance or apathy. In the midst of a symbol-rich environment ignorance and apathy are manufactured products. No cultural definition of any aspect of the human condition survives unless its continued manufacturing serves some market and some purpose. What may be seen as irrationality, superstition, "neglect" of public institutions of education and welfare, the persistence of ghettos of the "underprivileged" and the "underdeveloped," and periodic wars upon those who try to break out of them—all these and other "crises" of the physical, social, and symbolic environment are sustained by the greatest mobilization of information, wealth, and power in human history.

Drug addiction is one of these "problems." Its cultural definitions and those of the ways to combat it serve markets and purposes other than just therapeutic; they may even function to perpetuate the very "abuses" they are out to conquer.

Not so long ago, narcotics in the U.S. were a luxury for the idle rich to enjoy in relative obscurity. It was only after World War II that the ghettos of America reached the level of becoming lucrative markets for a commodity that helps to enslave its customers.

When a certain type of practice crosses class lines it may become vulgar or illegal or otherwise usable for stigmatization and control. Obscenity is Saxon peasant idiom intruding into the speech of Norman nobles. Crime is the ruled trying to act like rulers.

Congress made the sentencing of federal narcotics offenders mandatory in 1951. The number of arrests doubled within ten years. The largest outbreaks continued to occur in low-income neighborhoods, even if suburbs and campuses were to get the most publicity. Stiffer penalties speeded the process. By the mid-sixties it took only four years to double the rate of arrests. Most of them were—and still are—made in the areas where most of all arrests are made: the "underprivileged" neighborhoods. In July 1972 it was reported that President Nixon ordered arrests doubled in one year:

During a meeting in his Oval Office, Mr. Nixon pointed to a chart showing 16,144 arrests in fiscal 1972—compared with the 1969 figure of 8,465—and said, "I'd like to see this number doubled next year."

"We very likely may do that," responded Myles Ambrose, special consultant to the President and director of the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement [*Philadelphia Inquirer* 1972].

The same week, long-suppressed government reports revealed that narcotics investigators saw "no prospect" of halting smuggling into the U.S. Despite daily reports of "record" seizures less than one percent of the heroin flow was intercepted. "It's nonsense to me to keep reading these stories about how we're going to stop it from growing," said Mr. Ambrose. "The fact of the matter is that we're not thinking so much about the addicts as the 10 million other people they might infect," he added (*New York Times* 1972).

The estimate of ten million may turn out to be modest. The history of drug traffic intermingles with that of global and wherever it took hold of domestic imperialism. Tough little wars were fought to open China to Western fortunes through control of the opium trade. Making the trade illegal did not stop it. On the contrary, it gave the police vast powers to use at their discretion.

Our own culture has also defined the problem in a way that helps sustain a multi-billion dollar international industry largely on money siphoned off from the poorest sector of society. We may be the first country to use advanced marketing techniques to make genuine opiates the "opium of the people." Huge profits from improved exploitive efficiency reward high-risk capital and its official protectors at home and abroad. Enough terror has been generated to enable private and public "security" agencies to greatly strengthen the total surveillance and repression machinery available to cope with any opposition. The underlying cultural scenario is no more likely to achieve its purported aims than was prohibition or the Cold War. But, as those symbolic crusades, it may be a powerful if costly instrument of social control.

The evidence available to me suggests a cultural pincer-movement. Act I of the scenario comes from that section of our mass culture in which the rituals of society are spelled out in unmistakable forms, the comics. It is a Faustian play, displaying a world of winners and losers and a *rite de passage* into the winners' circle. Delicious power, sweet immortality, astounding insight, and the ability to right all wrongs—yours but for one bold deal of defiance and daring.

Act II starts in agony and ends in hell. You fell for the oldest trick in the cultural repertory and are now trapped by the forces you set out to conquer. Captivity provides another opportunity for basic training in the socio-sexual-political lesson that underlies the entire scenario. Its form is that of "drug abuse" literature, and our case in point will be a widely distributed booklet appropriately entitled "Teen-Age Booby Trap."

### THE SCENARIO: ACT I

Of all the symbolic quests that test human frailty few are as persistent as the lure of potent potions of pleasure, power, and profit. Over the last hundred years or so, this venerable motif has been finessed by the peddlers of drugs and nostrums who have subsidized so much of our emergent mass culture, and then by virtually the entire myth-making apparatus of the new populist commercialism. The cult of

instant private gratification made into an article of democratic faith suggests and supports drug use (or "abuse") as the ideal style of life for the dutiful consumer literally addicted to his purchasing habits.

The nearest to outright promises of magic transformation from scrawny youngsters to dashing musclemen and Amazons are the elixir and health-gadget ads in comic books and similar materials. The more subtle attractions of sophisticated advertising are not too different. The clearest expressions of the basic appeal come from those ideal types of mass-produced culture heroes described in Jules Feiffer's book, *The Great Comic Book Heroes*:

That strange bubbly world of test tubes and gobbledy-gook which had, in the past, done such great work in bringing the dead back to life in the form of monsters—why couldn't it also make men super. Thus Joe Higgins went into his laboratory and came out as the Shield; and John Sterling went into his laboratory and came out as Steel Sterling; and Steve Rogers went in the laboratory of kindly Professor Reinstein and came out as Captain America; and kindly Professor Horton went into his laboratory and came out with a synthetic man, named, illogically, the Human Torch [Feiffer 1965].

The creation of Captain America is prophetic. In the first issue of the comic, the scientist examines a youthful "98 pound weakling." "Observe this young man closely," he says. "Today he volunteered for army service and was refused because of his unfit condition! His chance to serve his country seemed gone!!"

The next frame is a close-up of the scientist lifting up a giant hypodermic needle, and the caption: "Don't be afraid son . . . you are about to become one of America's saviors!" Then the narration: "Calmly the young man allows himself to be inoculated with the strange seething liquid. Little does he realize that the serum coursing through his blood is rapidly building his body and brain tissues, until his stature and intelligence increase to an amazing degree!" (Feiffer 1965).

Frederick Leaman, a member of my graduate communications research seminar, conducted an informal study of the hidden message of comic books. He visited three large drugstores in different sections of Philadelphia and asked for their best-selling comics. From a list of 204 titles, he selected all stories that depicted different casts of characters in order to diversify the sample and avoid having the same heroes in most books. From this group of 26 stories and 87 characters, he constructed a composite image of the world of popular (mostly action-adventure type) comics.

The world he found is a world of conflict and contest. Its stories endlessly reiterate brutal lessons of transgression and sin. Of all the main themes contained in every 10 stories, 8 depict the foul deeds of criminals, 7 show the magic of science, 6 demonstrate how the forces of righteousness smash criminals or evil scientists, 5 percent miraculous transformations through drugs, and 4 relate some hair-raising lesson about "power-hungry" politicians.

The fictional population is male 4 to 1 (the usual representation of the sexes in the mass media), and predominantly young, white, middle-majority. Of every ten characters, 7 commit some crime, the same number fall victim of violence, and 6 inflict violence. Killers represent 13 percent of the population and their fatal victims 7 percent.

Virtually all stories present problems of life and death.

But the real name of the social-symbolic game is power. It takes super-power and super-consciousness to wrest the world about. In more than half (54%) of the stories, the key to super-status is the consumption of some chemical substance that can affect a drastic transformation.

On the whole, one out of every 5 characters uses drugs to seek super-power, ultra-intelligence, or eternal life. Scientists, as a group, are heavy users; some of them become (or try to become) super-heroes. Scientists administer the drugs even more frequently. While 28 percent of all scientists take drugs, 36 percent administer drugs. By comparison, 21 percent of all super-heroes use but only 4 percent give drugs. Here we begin to see a role differentiation between those who can bestow and those who may use the gift of superhuman insight and power. Of all *users*, 33% are super-heroes, 28% are scientists, and the rest is divided among other characters. Of all those who *administer* drugs, 56% are scientists and 33% are super-heroes.

Positive, active, violent characters use drugs most. The heroes of the comic book world comprise 67% of all drug-takers. Only 17% of their antagonists, the villains of the comic book world, use drugs.

When it comes to administering drugs, heroes are less important (but still in the majority), while villains double their representation. In other words, 67% of all drug users but only 56% of drug givers are heroes, while only 17% of all drug users but 33% of drug givers are villains.

The role of the drug user is thus relatively untainted by villainy. Heroes use drugs in a good cause. The drug giver is more likely to be evil, and also more likely to be a scientist.

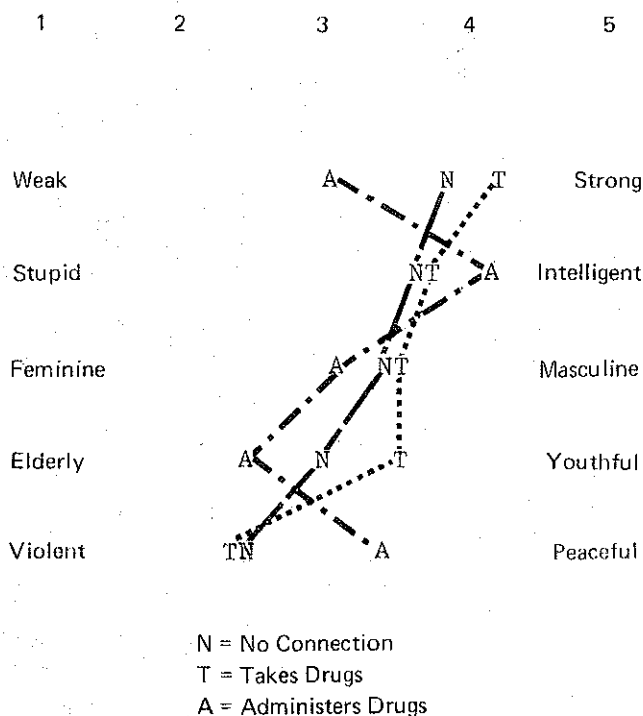


Figure 1  
Personality Profiles of All Comic Book Characters

Personality ratings provide a further clue to the dynamics of comic book power. Figure 1 shows the mean ratings of all 87 comic book characters on a series of personality traits. The broken line (marked "A" for "Administers drugs") shows the aggregate personality profile of all characters who dispense or inject the drugs in comparison with those who ingest them (dotted line) and those who neither give nor take them (solid line). The givers are relatively intelligent, but also relatively weak, effeminate, elderly, and peaceful. The takers as a group are (or become) more youthful and strong, and demonstrate through violence the power that flows from the potent potion, powder, or serum. The independent intellect and in the gears of any consciousness industry is neutralized by showing scientists or teachers as generally benign but impotent except to serve others. When they move outside the reach of responsible corporate service and control, and grab the powers they should bestow on others, they usually turn vicious or go mad. For example, in one comic book story of our sample the left-leaning professor of biochemistry, Derek Willden, neglects his attractive wife Sylvia to spend all his time in the laboratory working on a serum of eternal life. Scholarly but athletic professor Ross Cochran is named head of the department, but Derek doesn't care. "They're FOOLS!" ... he snorts, as he tells Sylvia his secret. "Oh really!" she retorts. "If you know the secret of the Universe, Derek, then why did Ross get promoted?" "This bourgeois materialistic thinking doesn't become you dear," he replies. "Soon... I shall be VINDICATED! Then... just you and me, Sylvia! Together FOREVER!" But the elixir lacks one ingredient, a human gland, which Derek obtains by killing Ross who had by now become Sylvia's lover. The potion is now ready and he gulps it down - only to be arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment forever!

Act I of the scenario is for everyone. Although comics spell it out most clearly, it is implicit in much of general news, advertisement, fiction, and drama. It is a ritual of power and of its promise through some individual act or intervention. The siren song warns against political solutions or the application of rationality as doomed to failure; power flows from the barrel of a gun or the hypodermic syringe.

## ACT II: "TEEN-AGE BOOBY TRAP"

Act II is for those - the most disaffected, uprooted, powerless - who yield to the siren song that enthralls so many. "Try It, You'll Like It" and now you're hooked. Our case in point is the widely used anti-drug booklet entitled "Teen-Age Booby Trap." It was produced in comic book style by Commercial Comics, Inc., of Washington, D.C., whose President, Malcolm W. Ater describes the effort in these words:

To be sure we produced the right kind of brochure - one which would be well received by the intended audience of children of junior and high school age - we sought the support and helpful guidance of experts in this field. I do not mean "self-styled" experts, but authorities whose counseling I could depend on for the best kind of evaluation. Major contributors in an editorial way were the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Senate Judiciary Sub-committee on Juvenile Delinquency and the U.S. Department of Defense (Education) and we also had editorial approval of the American Pharmaceutical Association and the

National Coordinating Council on Drug Abuse and Education. All the above named approved the copy before the magazines were first printed. The Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs ordered a substantial quantity twice and the Department of Defense purchased 625,000 copies only after they had made an evaluation study of the cross-section of 18-25 year olds representative of their troops. The study was made by an independent organization outside the government and showed overwhelming acceptance of both the technique and the contents. I repeat, it was only because of this very high approval of the brochure that DOD made its purchase.

We have sold millions of copies and have filled orders for as low as 250 copies for school systems. The praise has not stopped coming in for this brochure [After 1972].

Let us examine this widely praised and well-tested work, approved by the highest authorities (except for a few "self-styled" experts). Again we shall probe for the lessons implicit in the world of people and events that the booklet reveals to its readers.

On the 32 pages and 57 frames of the booklet, about 142 persons are portrayed. More than half are males, and 13 percent are nonwhite. Active professional help or service comes mostly from males, nearly all white. Even nurses and hospital attendants are mostly male and all white. In fact, practically all work is performed by males; men are shown as scientists, teachers, doctors, farmers, firemen, and drivers. Women and nonwhites are portrayed only as drug addicts, or as listening to white males give lectures or orders.

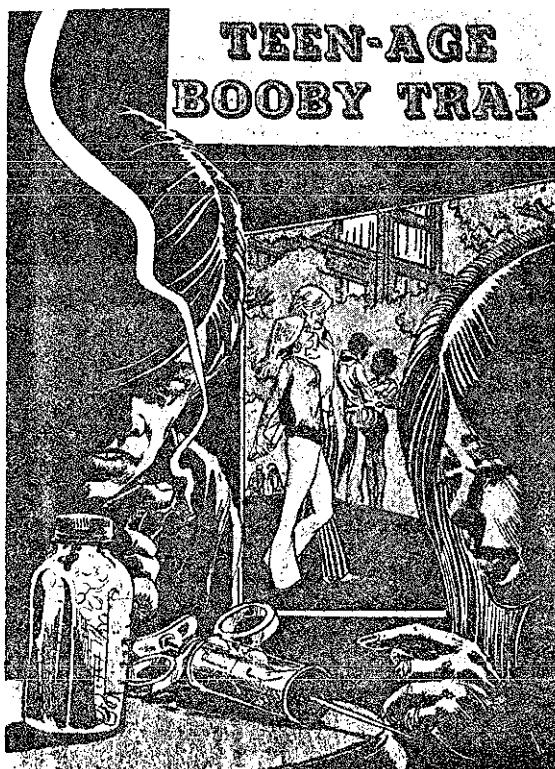


Figure 2



**HALLUCINOGENS** act on the central nervous system to produce weird sensations by distorting time, space, sight and sound. Their impact on the central nervous system is highly unpredictable.



**STIMULANTS**, through their action on the central nervous system, cause wakefulness, increased blood pressure and decreased activity of the gastro-intestinal system. Their misuse can cause headache, dizziness, confusion, apprehension and delirium.

Figure 3

Although in the booklet male and female drug addicts number the same, they differ in their respective proportions of their own sex. Half of all women, but only 35 percent of the men are shown as victims of drugs, despite the fact that real-life drug addiction is much more prevalent among males. The male addicts are somber, tragic figures engaged in serious business. The women--mostly blond and scantily clad--are just hysterical. Blacks and whites are also different in ways we shall see as we examine some of the illustrations.

The cover (Figure 2) reveals the shadowy world of drug abuse. A bushy-haired young man smirks contentedly as he is about to puff on a joint. A demure blond reaches for a syringe about the size of a short bicycle pump. An equally oversized bottle of pills rests on the table between them. Through the window we can see the sunlit campus scene, supporting popular assumptions about the prevalence of drug use on campus. In fact, however, the survey of *Drugs and American Youth* by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (1972) found less drug abuse on campus than off. The highest rate of conversion to drugs occurred after leaving high school and among the groups most likely to enter military service rather than college.

A few pages later our eyes fall on three faces of Blondie (Figure 3). She goes into wide-eyed, full-lipped hysterics, and then hallucinates with eyes closed, mouth wide open. The male user, on the other hand, is doing a man's work. He is a

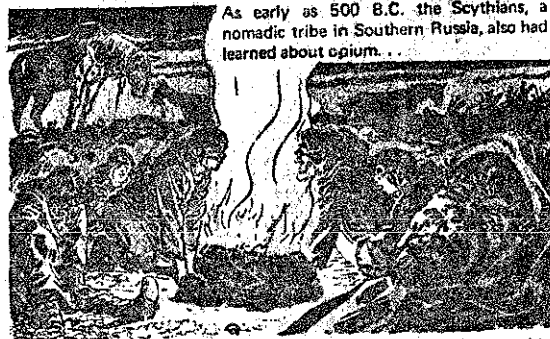
truck driver in work clothes, union buttons on his cap, using stimulants to keep awake at night on the road.

Next comes a lesson in comic-book history (Figure 4). It begins with the Western fantasy of exotic oriental religious ceremonies complete with monster-gods, inscrutable faces, and gyrating belly-dancers. Dipping even farther back into the mists of prehistory, we see a "nomadic tribe in Southern Russia" sniff poppy seed around the campfire. (For the edification of Boy Scouts?)

On the next page we come upon the drug-crazed hordes of Southeast Asia, so hopped-up on the hashish that they rush headlong into their deaths (Figure 5). The story served the British Empire and the Foreign Legion even before American troops (with *their* drug problems) fought and killed Southeast Asians on their own native soil. These ape-like creatures, and the two ceremonial dancing girls on the previous page, are the only nonwhite drug users portrayed in the book. A favored media "solution" to the delicate problem of overtly unfavorable portrayal is to take nonwhites back into "history" where they can be shown as naturally savage fanatics and primitives. Contrast the savagery on top of Figure 5 with the nobility in the bottom frame. Cannons and guns (in white hands) indicate that we are now in civilized times. Here drugs are used not to send ape-men into mindless slaughter but to "relieve suffering." Unfortunately, explains the caption, many of the soldiers thus treated returned to civilian life as addicts. *They* were considered sick men.



The use and misuse of drugs is probably as old as civilization itself. Primitive people knew about opium and sometimes used it to produce a state of intoxication during religious ceremonies.



As early as 500 B.C. the Scythians, a nomadic tribe in Southern Russia, also had learned about opium. . . . By burning dried poppy plants and inhaling the smoke they were able to experience the intoxicating effects of the opium narcotic.

Figure 4

In Southeast Asia, young warriors were sometimes keyed up for battle to the point where they rushed headlong to their deaths due to the psychoactive effects of hashish, a concentrated preparation of marijuana.



By the time of the Civil War, opium was used as a pain killer. Wounded soldiers were treated with morphine, the major constituent of opium, to relieve suffering. . . .



... Unfortunately, many of them returned to civilian life with an addiction not then understood, but commonly referred to as "Soldier's Disease."

Figure 5

But not for long. The next headline (Figure 6) marks the transition from sickness to crime. The picture supplies what illustrated manuals call the "how-to-do-it," showing the well-aimed shot being self-administered into the powerful fisted arm.

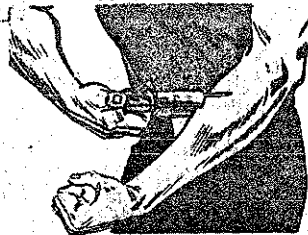
Soon addicts become criminals in the cultural as well as the legal sense. The cultural function of this category is to stigmatize a variety of presumably associated transgressions. The bottom frame of Figure 6 illustrates that function. A glassy-eyed bearded hippie addict wearing a peace symbol is shown panhandling a well-dressed young woman. The tendency to piggyback an overtly political message onto the drug education story recurs a few pages later.

After some frames showing pushers, an anxiety-ridden female addict, policemen grabbing a hopped-up bank robber, a white male teacher lecturing to a mixed audience, marijuana plants, and how to roll a joint, we come to a pot party. This time Blondie wears the peace symbol (Figure 7). As the caption speaks of "impairment of judgment and confusion," she passes the joint to two intellectual types as other sophisticates cavort in the background. The bottom frame gives examples of further hazards of marijuana smoking, some of them misleading.

The next page below introduces a sequence of frames in horror-comic style (Figure 8). A chief social function of horror as a cultural ritual is the scaring of women to (and

### IS DRUG ABUSE A SICKNESS OR A CRIME?

When heroin, a derivative of morphine, was introduced late in the 19th century it was believed that injection of the drug into a vein rather than having it ingested through the stomach would prevent people from becoming "enslaved by the habit."



At first, heroin was even believed to be a cure for addiction to morphine. It turned out that heroin produced an even stronger addiction.



With the nature of addiction poorly understood, public opinion accused the drug rather than the user. Perhaps this attitude stemmed from the fact that so many had unwittingly become dependent upon drugs. As a result, addicts at that time were pitied more than they were condemned.

Figure 6

A marijuana cigarette burns rapidly and is often shared by several persons. It produces varying effects such as hilarity, distortion of sensations and perception, impairment of judgment and confusion.

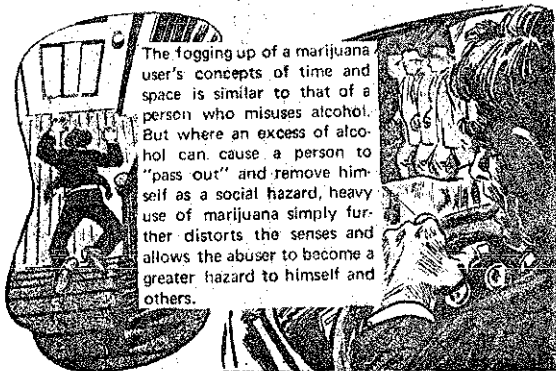


Figure 7

with) death. The ultimate sexual put-down, rape by a beast, is usually part of the fun. Here we see all faces of Blondie shrieking in psychedelic horror as monsters fall upon her. A giant bird descends with claws ready and long sharp beak and tongue poised for action. A death head puts a bony finger on her curly locks.

The sex-role message is further developed through frames (not shown here) depicting one woman raging and two others buying and using amphetamines while a male druggist looks worried and a male scientist is engaged in laboratory research.

Next we see Blondie green with terror (Figure 9). She is caught in an imaginary cobweb, with fantasy insects crawling over her curvaceous body. She is clad in a negligee and is writhing on a sofa, agonizing over how best to scratch the itch. Underneath that scene, the Male Thinker sits in a torn work shirt, silhouetted against a beam of light, contemplating suicide. To be or not to be, that is *his* question.

After frames of another male scientist, two male doctors, two female nurses, and "drug abusers" of both sexes (not shown), we come to Blondie again (Figure 10). She has shed her negligee and moved from the sofa into bed, alluring as ever, still itching and twitching in horror. The insects, skeleton, and long-beaked bird now become a giant snake-dragon with fangs and a forked tongue, literally enveloping and ready to rape the terrified woman victim. "The torture of one horrible withdrawal," state the bottom caption "far outweighs any possible pleasure . . ."

LSD, nicknamed "acid", is a chemical in the family of hallucinogens. Like other hallucinogens, LSD brings to the user an escape from realism.



LSD users imagine all sorts of weird things—like thinking they are birds . . . or vicious animals . . . or even other people. The impact on the mind is great and sometimes of long duration.

LSD "trips" produce not only varying reactions among different users, but different results from time to time with repeat users. No one, even on a planned repeat trip, can foretell what will happen. The reaction might range anywhere from euphoria to terror.



Figure 8

Next are frames (not shown here) depicting a poppy field, another male physician, three firemen, three male underworld characters, and another hysterical woman. Later, as if one snake would not have been enough, we see six slimy tentacles of a hairy monster grab Blondie in the arms, legs, and thigh (Figure 11).

In the lower half of the page, the male figure is doing difficult, dangerous work. The sadistic imagery of the female victim again contrasts with the male self-image in serious (if illicit) business. While furry tentacles wrap around her body, he reaches for pearls and precious stones "to feed his ugly habit."

Soon we come to the first and only picture in which Blondie is not an alluring, if hysterical, sex symbol (Figure 12). The potent potions worked their magic too well. She is sitting on a park bench suggestively near a trash can, looking poor, sloppy, stupid, and pregnant.

Woman's fate is biology; man's is society. She is sentenced for life and more; "she knows," claims the caption, that "the baby may be born an addict." The Male Thinker pays for his mistake in jail and risks "chances for employment and promotion." Culture sets each his or her own "booby trap."

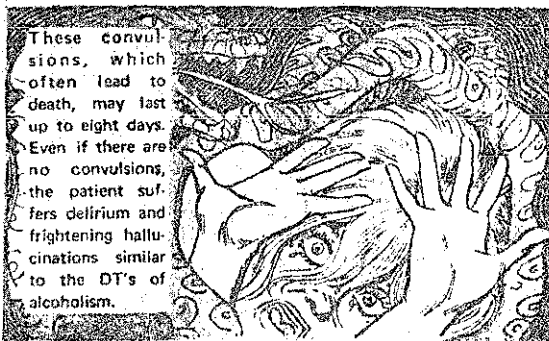
#### THE HIDDEN MESSAGE AND HOW TO COUNTER IT

The hidden message of "drug abuse" is that it all depends on who you are: man or woman, white or black, native American or foreigner, rich or poor, solid citizen or

Detoxification (withdrawal) from barbiturates is even more dangerous than from heroin and should be done gradually, ALWAYS under the supervision of a physician.



As with heroin, there is nervousness, muscle twitching, tremor and a sudden drop in blood pressure. After about 24 hours from the last dose, the abuser becomes desperate for more drugs. After 36 to 72 hours, agonizing convulsions begin.



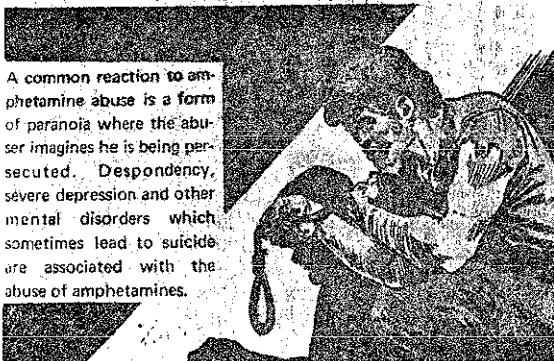
The torture of one horrible withdrawal far outweighs any possible pleasure derived from the abuse.

Figure 10

Amphetamine use, when carried to the point of dependence, offers many hazards. As with barbiturates, there is an increasing demand by the body for larger doses to produce a "high." When drugs are not available, unpleasant reactions usually follow.



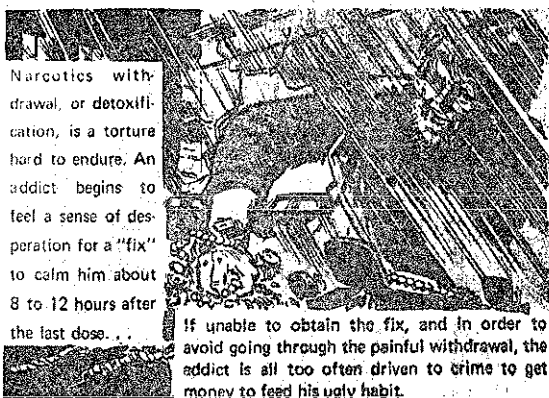
... A feeling that insects are crawling over one's body is often the unhappy reward of users of amphetamines and other stimulants such as METHAMPHETAMINE and COCAINE.



A common reaction to amphetamine abuse is a form of paranoia where the abuser imagines he is being persecuted. Despondency, severe depression and other mental disorders which sometimes lead to suicide are associated with the abuse of amphetamines.

Figure 9

Users of heroin get "hooked" and have a compelling physical dependence on the drug. With repeated use, a person develops a tolerance, meaning that increased dosages are required to meet the demands of dependence. If the heroin supply is cut off, "withdrawal" results.



Narcotics withdrawal, or detoxification, is a torture hard to endure. An addict begins to feel a sense of desperation for a "fix" to calm him about 8 to 12 hours after the last dose.

If unable to obtain the fix, and in order to avoid going through the painful withdrawal, the addict is all too often driven to crime to get money to feed his ugly habit.

Figure 11

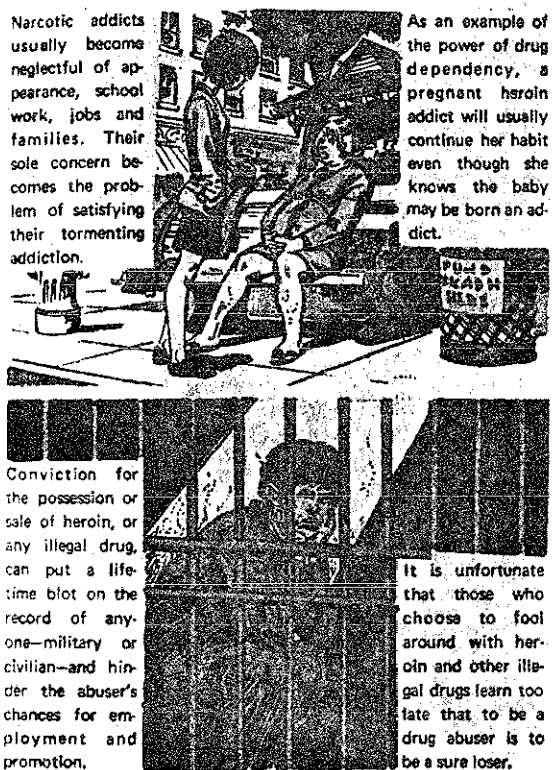


Figure 12

longhaired hippy peacenik. "It is unfortunate," warns the last caption, "that those who choose to fool around . . . learn too late that to be a drug abuser is to be a sure loser." For, you see, there are winners and there are losers; follow no siren song promising easy passage.

The implicit lesson recalls the paradox of commodity culture preaching salvation through the consumption of illusions for a price. The tragic hero of that culture is the dutiful consumer chained to his purchasing habits, including the ultimate delusion of liberation through potent potions for pleasure, power, and profit.

This way of dealing with "drug abuse" can only generate increasing misery and conflict until its cultural sources and social uses are recognized and altered. That will not be easy or painless, because the sources run deep and the uses benefit

powerful groups in our society. Of course, any useful therapy and all alleviation of suffering and destructive dependency are to be supported. But a counter-scenario is needed that would be of sufficient sweep and scope to begin to turn the tide.

First, all advertising, and not only patent medicine and other drug commercials, would have to be scrutinized by their producers to avoid promising spurious values and unrealistic expectations of the achievement of feelings of mastery and power. Similarly, teachers, parents, and critics should oppose the celebration of irrationality and the attribution of magic or superhuman virtues to be derived from any mechanical or chemical intervention. I am not suggesting that such (or any) subjects are not legitimate material for fiction and drama, but rather that our critical sensibilities should be attuned to these symbol systems in the same way as they are to many other themes of sensitive human relevance. And, finally, the implicit social content and covert communication of all types of imagery, especially "drug abuse" literature, must be examined for the unwitting reinforcement of the very pressures that make dangerous drugs so attractive a risk to so many.

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## MESSAGE SYSTEM ANALYSIS

The analysis of message systems rests on the conception of the role of communication in human life. Communication is interaction through messages. Messages are specialized events (or aspects of events) that signify other things in enormously varied and creative ways unique to human culture.<sup>6</sup> Social interaction through such symbols is the "humanizing" process of our species. That process creates the symbolic environment from which behavior derives its distinctively human significance. It also cultivates man's notions of the facts and potentials of existence, his orders of priorities and ranges of values, and the clusters of associations among all these

<sup>6</sup> An earlier development of this definition and its implications may be found in George Gerbner, "On Content Analysis and Critical Research in Mass Communication," 6 *AV Communication Review* (Spring 1958), pp. 85-108, reprinted in Lewis A. Dexter and David M. White, *People, Society and Mass Communications* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 476-501. The present discussion of message system analysis is a further development of ideas presented in George Gerbner, "Toward 'Cultural Indicators': The Analysis of Mass-Mediated Public Message Systems," in George Gerbner, Ole R. Holsti, Klaus Krippendorff, William J. Paisley and Philip J. Stone, *The Analysis of Communication Content* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1969), pp. 122-132.

dimensions of imagery and imagination.

The terms of our analysis stem from and relate to the dimensions of common consciousness that mass-produced message systems cultivate in large and heterogeneous publics. We have identified these dimensions as message-mediated assumptions about *existence*, *priorities*, *values*, and *relationships*. Table 1 summarizes the questions, terms, and measures of analysis relevant to each dimension.

The dimension of assumptions about *existence* deals with the question "What is?" that is, what is available (referred to) in public message systems at all, how frequently, and in what proportions. The availability of shared messages defines the scope of public attention. The measure of *attention*, therefore, indicates the presence, prevalence, rate, complexity, and varying distributions of items, topics, themes, and the like, represented in message systems.

The dimension of priorities raises the question "What is important?" We may use measures of *emphasis* to study the context of relative prominence and the order or degrees of centrality or importance. Measures of attention and emphasis may be combined to indicate, not only the allocation, but also the channeling attention in a message system.

The dimensions of *values* inquires

TABLE 1—DIMENSIONS, QUESTIONS, TERMS, AND MEASURES OF MESSAGE SYSTEM ANALYSIS

| DIMENSIONS                             | EXISTENCE                                                            | PRIORITIES                                                                      | VALUES                                                                        | RELATIONSHIPS                                              |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Assumptions about:</i>              | WHAT IS?                                                             | WHAT IS IMPORTANT?                                                              | WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG, GOOD OR BAD, ETC.?                                    | WHAT IS RELATED TO WHAT, AND HOW?                          |
| <i>Questions:</i>                      | What is available for public attention? How much and how frequently? | In what context or order of importance?                                         | In what light, from what point of view, with what associated judgments?       | In what over-all proximal, logical, or causal structure?   |
| <i>Terms and measures of analysis:</i> | ATTENTION<br>Prevalence, rate, complexity, variations                | EMPHASIS<br>Ordering, ranking, scaling for prominence, centrality, or intensity | TENDENCY<br>Measures of critical and differential tendency; qualities, traits | STRUCTURE<br>Correlations, clustering; structure of action |

into assumptions about right and wrong, good and bad, and other associated qualities. It asks about the point of view from which things are presented, about the characteristics, traits, or connotations attached to different items of reference and emphasis. Measures of *tendency* are used to assess the direction and intensity of value judgments observed in messages.

The dimension of *relationships* focuses on the more complex associations within and among all measures. When we deal with patterns of attention, emphasis, or tendency, instead of only simple distributions, or when we relate the clustering of measures to one another, we illuminate the underlying *structure* of assumptions about existence, priorities, and values represented in message systems.

The four dimensions, then, yield measures of *attention*, *emphasis*, *tendency*, and *structure*. I shall illustrate some of the terms of each measure with findings of research on mass media violence, and suggest how such research might be developed to serve the tasks of indicators of the role of cultural production in image-cultivation and policy-formation.

### Measures of attention

A mass-produced message system is the result of institutional processes selecting some things to be brought to public attention and ignoring or rejecting others. Measures of attention indicate the presence and distribution of subjects, topics, themes, and the like, selected to compose the system. Knowing something about the distribution of attention over time and across cultures is an elementary measure of the most commonly available fund of raw materials out of which each age and place weaves its own patterns of public imagination and imagery.

Focusing on an issue such as violence, we can ask how prevalent its representation is; what rate per natural context-unit, for example, story or play, it occurs; and how its frequency varies by different categories of analysis within systems and across systems.

The evidence, of course, is scattered, fragmentary, and rarely comparable. In one of the first studies, Edgar Dale found that "crime" prevailed in 84 percent of the movies of the early 1930's,

FROM:

## Cultural Indicators: The Case of Violence in Television Drama

The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,  
Philadelphia, Vol. 388 (March, 1970), pp. 69-81  
Printed in U. S. A.

(an average of 3.9 per picture), and violent death in 39 percent.<sup>7</sup> Our own research noted violence in 66 percent of some three thousand Hollywood movies produced between 1950 and 1961.<sup>8</sup>

Studies of television drama in the early 1950's found that "in over three-quarters of the plays, acts of violence, crime, or aggression occurred,"<sup>9</sup> that violent acts "predominated" in 56 percent or 3.7 per play,<sup>10</sup> and that the hourly rate doubled between 1952 and 1954.<sup>11</sup>

Our television violence study analyzed plays, cartoons, and feature films telecast nationally during study periods representative of 1967 and 1968 network programming. The study found violence portrayed in eight out of every ten plays for both years. The rate of violent episodes was 5.0 per play in 1967 and 4.5 in 1968. An average dramatic program hour had seven, and a cartoon hour, twenty-two, violent episodes. Half of all leading characters committed, and six out of ten suffered, some violence. One in ten became a killer. One in twenty was killed.

Variations by other categories begin to form patterns of life manifest in the world of television drama. The following highlights from the findings of our 1967-1968 television violence study come from measures of attention across such variables as personal and demographic aspects, social environment, place, and time.

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Dale, *The Content of Motion Pictures* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), pp. 133-134.

<sup>8</sup> Unpublished research data.

<sup>9</sup> Sidney W. Head, "Television and Social Norms: An Analysis of the Social Content of Television Drama" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1953), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Sidney W. Head, "Content Analysis of Television Programs," *9 Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television*, 1954, pp. 184-185.

<sup>11</sup> H. H. Remmers, *Four Years of New York Television* (Urbana, Ill.: National Association of Educational Broadcasters, 1954), pp. 37-38.

- Violence stuns, maims, and kills without much visible "hurt." Suffering was difficult to detect, making violence appear painless, despite the "body count" of about 400 casualties per week or an average of five per violent play.
- When witnesses appear on a scene of violence, they are passive in seven out of ten such episodes. When they are not passive, they are as likely to assist or encourage as to try to prevent violence.
- The "generation gap" looms with a vengeance. One young adult gets killed for every five young killers. One middle-aged character gets killed for every two middle-aged killers. Old people rarely appear in television plays (6 percent of all characters), and even more seldom kill (2 percent of all killers); but two old men were killed for one who was a killer. To look at only killers and their fate; one young killer out of fourteen is himself the fatal victim of violence; one middle-aged killer out of five gets killed; the old man who kills is killed in return.
- Social class, too, makes a difference. Half of all upper- and middle-class characters, but three-quarters of lower-class characters, commit violence. Six out of ten upper- and middle-class characters, but nine out of ten lower-class characters, fall victim to violence. Almost one-third of upper- and middle-class characters escape both violence and victimization; none of the lower-class characters does. When it comes to fatal violence, upper-class killers number 11 percent, middle-class killers, 12 percent, and lower-class killers, 16 percent

of all characters in their class. Middle-class killers outnumber middle-class killed 3 to 1, but for every upper- and lower-class killer, there is an upper- and lower-class character killed.

- Ethnic and race distinctions are related and equally striking. The violent comprise half of all white American characters, six out of every ten white foreigners, and two-thirds of all nonwhites. The same groups suffer from violence in the same order, with nearly six out of ten whites, but eight out of ten nonwhites falling victim to some violence. Both inflicting and suffering violence themselves were 39 percent of white Americans, 46 percent of white non-Americans, and 60 percent of nonwhites. Escaping both violence and victimization were 35 percent of white Americans, 32 percent of white non-Americans, and only 13 percent of nonwhites. However, the proportion of killers was one out of every five white foreigners, one out of every eight white Americans, and one out of every fifteen nonwhites. There seems to be something like "violent efficiency" at work here, too: one-third of all violent foreign whites and nearly one-fourth of all violent white Americans, but only one-tenth of all violent nonwhites, succeed in killing an opponent. The pattern of fatal victimization also shows that while white American killers outnumbered killed 4 to 1, and white foreigners 3 to 2, for every nonwhite killer there was a nonwhite killed. Time and place also affect the patterns of violence and justice implicit in the way things work out in the world of television.

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Violence was involved in three-fourths of all plays in a contemporary or domestic setting. But it was featured in 98 percent of plays set in the past, every single play set in the future, and 92 percent of all plays depicting foreign lands or people. To look at it another way, the past was nine times as likely to be depicted when there was some violence than when there was none. The future was always violent. The outside world was three times as likely to be violent as nonviolent. And, as we have seen, the violence extracts a higher price—a tooth for a tooth—from its predominantly violent strangers than it does from its violent native whites.

Crude as they are, these patterns begin to lay bare some assumptions cultivated in these message systems. They also begin to give substance to the contention that without a more specific knowledge of these assumptions about the role of violence, research on "effects" may be shallow and misdirected.

#### *Measures of emphasis*

"Emphasis" is that aspect of the composition of message systems which establishes a context of priorities of importance or relevance. The distribution of emphases sets up a field of differential appeal in which certain things stand out. Emphasis orders the agenda of public conceptions and discourse cultivated in message systems. Measures of emphasis may be based on indications of size, intensity, or stress, or on the featuring of certain topics or themes as the major points of stories, and are usually expressed in ranks or ratios.

Measures of emphasis are most useful when it is necessary to examine orders of priority channeling or even command-

ing attention independently of terms of prevalence and rate of messages available for attention. For example, in an international study,<sup>12</sup> we found that the ratios of films in which violence was "essential to the plot" to those in which violence was "secondary" was higher in Polish films (2.5) than in United States films (1.3), despite the fact that the prevalence of violent portrayals was higher in the United States films. Yugoslav films with a very high, and Czechoslovak films with a very low, prevalence of violence both yielded the lowest emphasis ratios of six countries (0.8).

Some evidence of trends in emphasis over time comes from television studies. The 1952 television research found violent acts "predominating" in 56 percent of plays analyzed.<sup>13</sup> Our 1967-1968 study found violence integral to the plot (essential for a brief plot description) in 66 percent of the plays in 1967 and 56 percent in 1968. However, when television drama portrayed violence, it emphasized it as an essential plot element in from seven to eight out of every ten plays in both the early 1950's and the late 1960's.

#### *Measures of tendency*

The position of an institution (or an individual) in time and space, and in the over-all structure of social relations, enters into the approach, point of view, or direction from which that institution or individual presents aspects of existence. The investigation of "tendency" deals with the explicit or contextual value judgments and other qualities that such vantage points impart to message systems.

<sup>12</sup> Based on research data for George Gerbner, "The Film Hero: A Cross-Cultural Study," University of Minnesota Journalism Monographs, no. 13 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> Head, "Television and Social Norms."

The broadest over-all dimension of judgment is a summary evaluation of the goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness, of things. A measure of the favorable-unfavorable associations expressed in message systems may be called "critical tendency." It is based primarily on whether a subject or topic appears in a supportive or critical context. But value judgment is, of course, multidimensional. Measures of "differential tendency" can be used which indicate directionality of judgment in many different dimensions.

In fiction and drama, tendency may be implicit in justifications for action, consequences of action, and the characterization of persons assigned different roles and fates. The international film study cited above found that principal characters in all countries' films resorted to violence for defense, protection, and other sanctioned or legal ends from over two to more than four times as frequently as for illegal or immoral ends. But illegal and immoral reasons for violence were portrayed twice or more as frequently in the West as in Eastern Europe. The ratio of the tendency to commit "socially sanctioned" violence versus antisocial violence was 2.5 in French films, 2.6 in United States films, 3.5 in Italian films, 3.8 in Czechoslovak films, 4.1 in Yugoslav films, and 4.4 in Polish films. (The higher the ratio, the lower the proportion of antisocial violence.)

The 1967-1968 television study traced the tendency to present violence as serious, or as slapstick or "just for fun." Four-fifths of all violent episodes (including comedy) were judged "serious." The proportion of "serious" episodes declined from 87 percent of all violent scenes in 1967 to 74 percent in 1968.

The more complex judgments inherent in the world of dramatic violence can be illuminated by combining dimensions again to weave fuller patterns of life.

#### *Measures of structure*

Systematic measurement of patterns of relationships requires the analysis of correlations or clusters among measures. Such methods depend on the development of sophisticated and flexible computer programs that can reveal complex interrelations of different types of data. I am limited to the few relatively simple examples available to illustrate some possibilities. These examples, from the 1967-1968 television violence study, involve certain aspects of purpose, characterization, role, and fate.

- Most violence is interpersonal and at close range, but relatively impersonal. Strangers assault each other for reasons of private gain, power, or duty. In a world of specialized relationships, violence is one more specialty that rarely involves intimates and seldom stems from great emotion or from fighting for a noble cause.
- Happy are the good guys and unhappy the bad (at least in the end). Good guys *initiate* as much violence as bad guys, but hurt less and kill less. Good guys *suffer* more from violence, but heroes never die. Bad guys get hurt less than good guys, but, of course, they lose out in the end.
- Half of all killers are good guys who reach a happy end in the stories.

If virtue suffers more than evil, the ultimately happy hero must be more decisive and efficient to triumph in the end. "Personality-differential" scales used to measure the intensity of selected character traits support that inference, and add more dimensions to the structure of judgments.

Figure 1 charts the mean scores of all violent characters, all killers, and all

those who commit no violence, on scales found to be reliably used by analysts on the television violence study. Aside from the sex difference which results, in part, from the larger proportion of women among nonviolents, the traits that distinguish nonviolents from violent and killers are "usualness," efficiency, attractiveness, emotionality, and logic. Nonviolents are more usual, less efficient, more emotional, and less logical than violent. Killers are the most efficient and the least emotional. (We shall come to "attractiveness" later.)

Now let us see how a happy fate—practically identical with virtue—affects the portrayals. Figure 2 compares violent and nonviolent by fate. The greatest difference, aside from violence itself, is that the "happies" are attractive whether violent or not. The "unhappies" are repulsive when violent.

Violence does not mar, nor nonviolence improve, the attraction of the happy hero. But violence does appear to have logic on its side. And the key to violent happiness is efficiency. Let us take a closer look.

Attractive characters reach a happy end, (or vice versa) whether violent or not. Attractive, happy, and violent characters are also the most logical, but the repulsive, unhappy, violent characters are nearly equally logical. Thus, all violent are more logical than all nonviolents. Nonviolents—whether happy or unhappy—are more emotional and intuitive than violent. Unhappy nonviolents are also more irrational. Cool logic is all on the side of violence.

Violence with a happy ending, furthermore, is a matter of efficiency. Superior efficiency separates happy violent from all others. Efficient, cool logic is the unbeatable combination that makes for the happy violent hero. Characters can remain happy and lack efficiency only if nonviolent. Violent

heroes must be efficient to win, while nonviolent heroes may, and all villains (a little older than the rest), *must* bungle the job.

Further confirmation comes from a comparison of happy and unhappy killers, and their, naturally, unhappy victims. (See Figure 3.) Unhappy killers and killed present similar profiles because their numbers overlap; half of the unhappy killers are themselves killed.

The happy killers stand out in manliness and attractiveness; they are heroes. The happy killers are "first among equals" in rational and unemotional logic, for they, too, are killers. But the happy killers are the most distinguished

in the quality they must possess to win, even more than all violent heroes: efficiency.

Unhappy killers and all victims present, by comparison, an image of repulsive bunglers. The victims of fatal violence, half of them killers but some of them innocents themselves, are also the oldest and least masculine. Otherwise they are almost as repulsive and bungling as are those of their killers who come to an unhappy end.

Cool efficiency, and, to a lesser extent, manliness and youth, appear to be the chief correlates of success and virtue in a fairly impersonal, self-seeking, and specialized structure of violent action.

FIGURE 1—PERSONALITY PROFILES OF CHARACTERS BY VIOLENCE-RELATED ROLES IN TELEVISION DRAMA

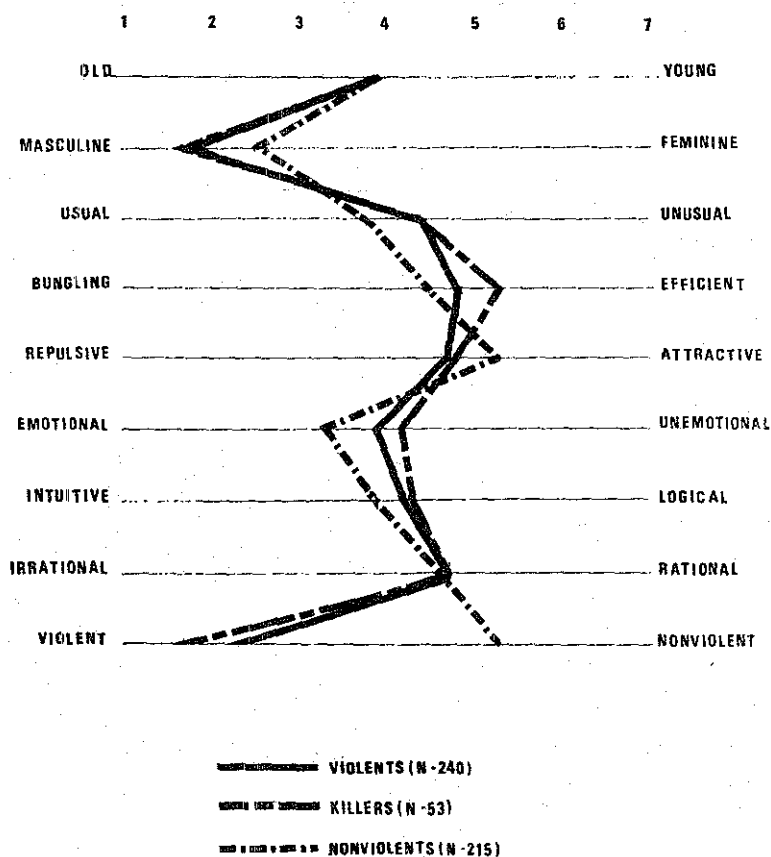


FIGURE 2—PERSONALITY PROFILES OF CHARACTERS BY FINAL OUTCOME

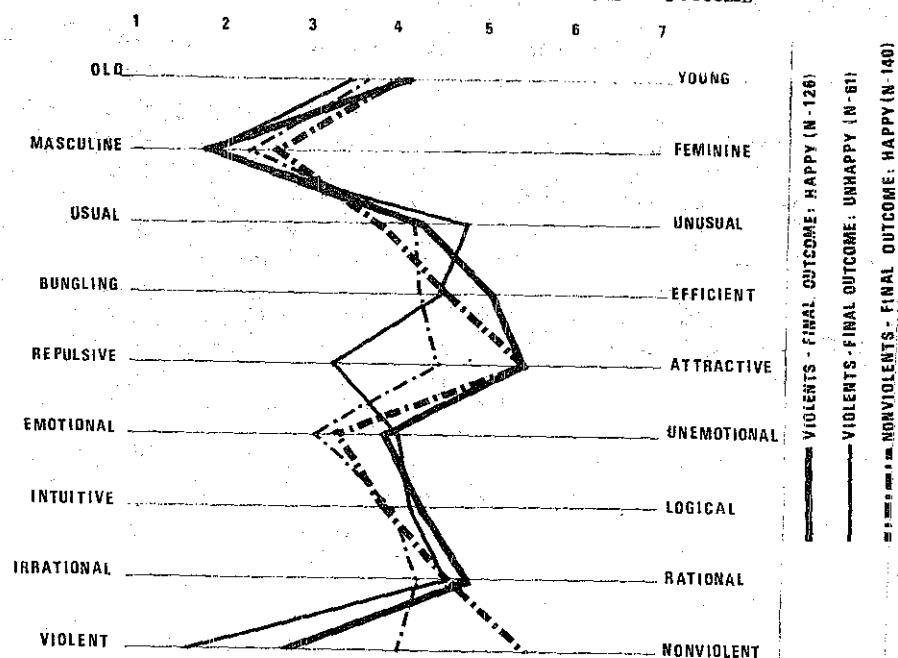
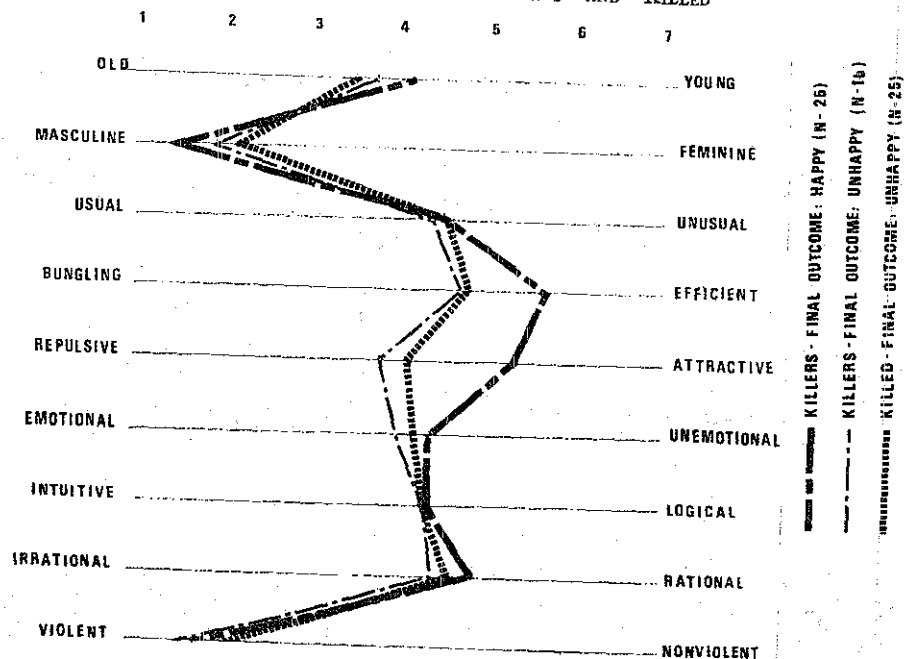


FIGURE 3—PERSONALITY PROFILES OF "KILLERS" AND "KILLED"



One method for probing the implicit structure of factual or narrative discourse, or comparing such structures in different message systems, consists of the following steps. (1) Derive all simple assertions contained in messages produced by each source. (2) Sort all different propositions into categories that describe different aspects of or indicate different tendencies toward general areas of attention. (3) Arrange the propositions in each category into passages and find a descriptive phrase that characterizes the aspect or tendency represented in them. (4) Measure the proportion of representation of each passage in the message system. (5) Use the proportions of representations contained in each system out of all propositions advanced in each passage as the basis for computing correlations between systems.

Such a "proposition analysis" included in the education study attempted to discover different political and ideological perspectives in the reporting of an act of criminal violence and of the trial that followed. The French press was used in the analysis because it represents a relatively wide range of partisan orientations. The essential facts of the case: An overwrought teacher fires his gun into the night to scare pranksters harrassing him and his sick wife. A boy falls to the ground, fatally wounded. The teacher rushes him to the hospital, then calls the police.

The top part of Figure 5 illustrates the shifting structure of associations in organs of the political Left, the commercial press, and the political Right. The lower part of Figure 5 is a diagram showing the two highest correlations for each newspaper with the other papers.

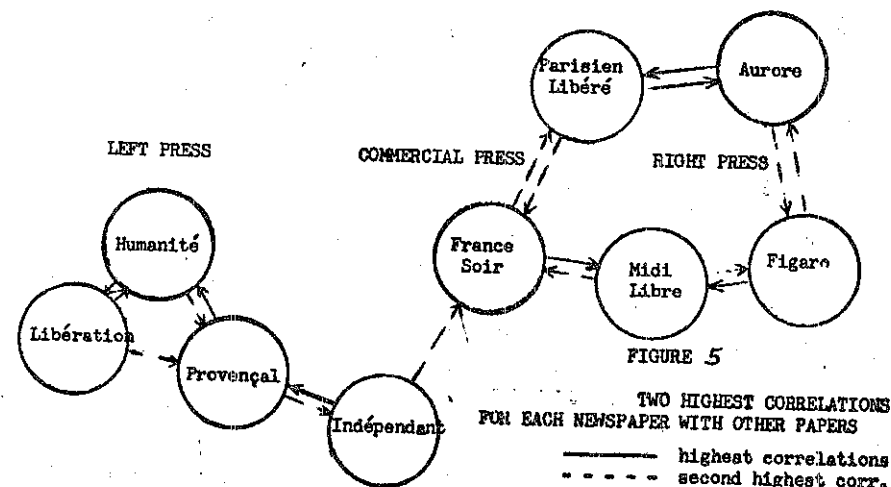
Each phrase on the upper left characterizes passages composed of propositions describing a different aspect of or tendency toward the event. The corresponding chart shows the percentages of representation in each of the three press systems.

| Passages in order of percentage of representation in . . . . . | Left press       | Commercial press | Right press    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Politics has much to do...                                     | HHHHHHH LLLLL PP | SS P I           | A F M          |
| A heart-rending affair                                         | HHHHHH LLLLL P   | SS P II          | A F M          |
| Unjust conditions                                              | HHHH LLLLL PPP   | SS PP II         | AA F M         |
| Modest means, heavy burdens                                    | HHHHH LLLL PP    | SSS PP I         | A F M          |
| "Knight with sad face"                                         | HHHH LLL PPP     | SSS P II         | AA F M         |
| Good man, terrible accident                                    | HHH LLL PP       | SSS PP I         | AA PF M        |
| A defective personality                                        | H LL P           | SSSS PP II       | AAAA F M       |
| A contemptible wretch                                          | HH LL            | SSS PPP I        | AAAAA FF M     |
| Happy childhood, easy life                                     | H L              | SSS PPP I        | AAAA FFFF MM   |
| Not a political case                                           | H L              | SSSS P II        | AAA FFFFF MM   |
| National disgrace                                              | H                | SSS PP I         | AAAAA FFFFF MM |

KEY:

| Left press   | Commercial press  | Right press  |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| H L P        | S P I             | A F M        |
| H-Humanité   | S-France Soir     | A-Aurore     |
| L-Libération | P-Parisien Libéré | F-Figaro     |
| P-Provençal  | I-Indépendant     | M-Midi Libre |

Each letter represents approximately 5% of all propositions



The Left press led with claiming that "politics has much to do" with the case; that it is "a heart-rending affair" reflecting the "unjust conditions" under which the teachers of France work; that a man of "modest means," carrying "heavy burdens" was provoked; that it

was a tragic accident. With each of these groups of propositions the proportion of representations shifts toward the center. The Commercial press leads in the proportion of propositions stressing the "defective personality" of the teacher. The pendulum swings swiftly to the Right with the claim that the man was a monster, a "contemptible wretch," committing his crime of violence despite a "happy childhood and easy life"; that this is "not a political case" but it is above politics, an invitation to anarchy, a "national disgrace."

The analysis suggests a structure of associations between ideological perspectives, political tendencies and socio-political vs. moral-military approaches to violent crime. The bottom diagram of Figure 5 shows the two highest positive correlations between pairs of papers, with the distances representing approximate magnitudes of the correlations. It can be seen that the Commercial press interlocks with the press of the Right, while the Left press forms a fairly tight group of its own with Provencal, and (the also provincial) L'Independant forming the links between them.

Another method of structure analysis in nonfiction such as news (if that still qualifies for nonfiction!) is to correlate the contexts (topic groups) in a message system, indicating what subject areas tend to occur most frequently in association with what other subject areas in the same stories. Such an analysis was conducted in the education study, and violence was one of the topic groups correlated with the others.

Figures 6, 7, and 8 compare the topic groups structures of press coverage of schools and education in the U.S., Great Britain, and West Germany. The size of the circles indicates the relative amounts of attention given to each topic group in each press system. The arrows again denote the two highest positive correlations, but this time between

topic groups in the same stories.

Violence in the U.S. education-related news sample (Figure 6) was presented primarily in the context of school-community (mostly race) relations and of related political news. The British press (Figure 7) devoted more attention to teachers and teaching than to administrative and political matters; news of school-related violence appeared mostly in the context of health (injury) and of the teachers who were affected. The West German press coverage (Figure 8), was dominated by attention devoted to the aims and values of education (in a period of school reform); violence was noted mostly in a private context of student life and personal or family affairs.

I have used the issue of violence to illustrate central aspects of the case, and of a scheme, for cultural indicators. But I have also noted that the cultural representations of any aspect of life can best be seen in the context of others, across conventional distinctions of media or modes of representation, and against the background of changes in time and place. They should survey the history, geography, and demography of the symbolic worlds produced for common vicarious experience and learning. Interpersonal and group relationships portrayed in these message systems should be studied. Themes of nature, science, politics, law, crime, business, education, art, illness and health, peace and war, and sex, love, and friendship, as well as conflict and violence should be analyzed. Roles, traits, goals, values, and fates of characters engaged in dramatic action should be related to the symbolic worlds and issues in which they act.

The analysis of message systems can then provide a framework in which comprehensive, coherent, cumulative, and comparative information can be systematically assembled and periodically reported. Indicators relevant to specific problems or policies can then be seen in the context of the entire structure of assumptions cultivated at a particular time and place.

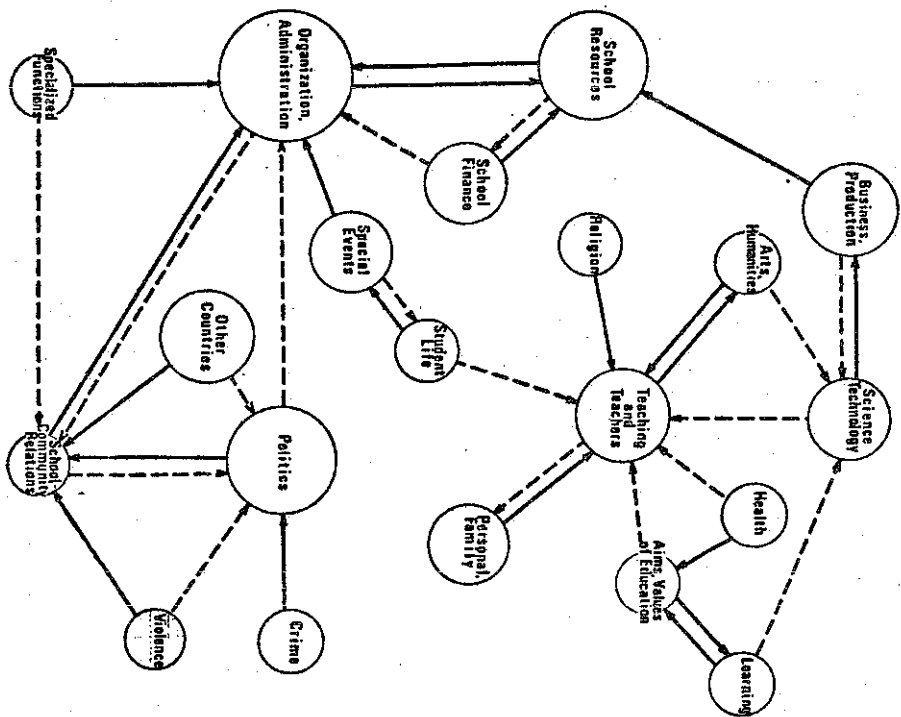


FIGURE 5 THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE IN U.S. NEWSPAPERS

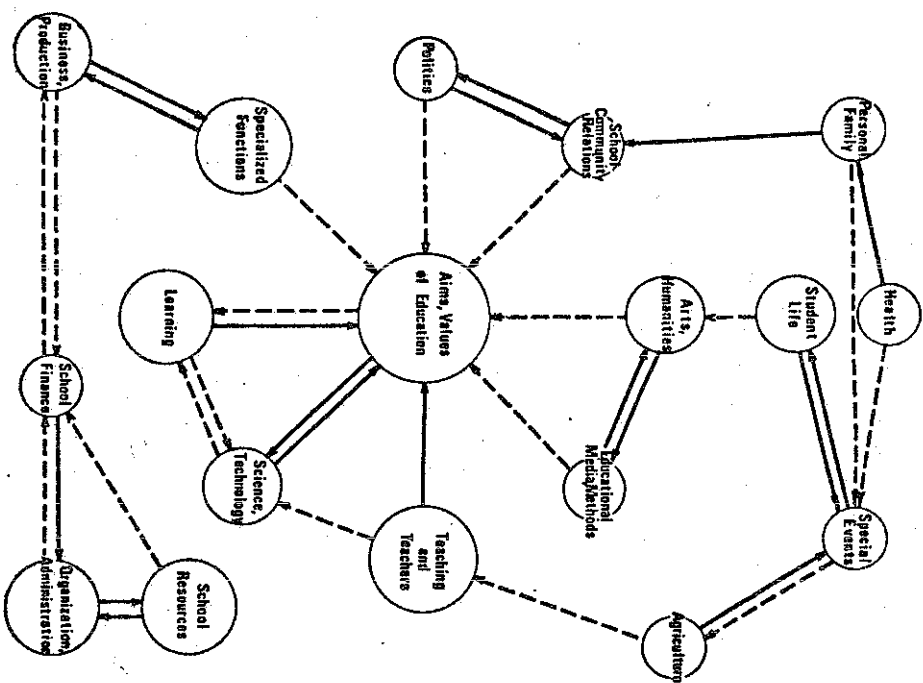
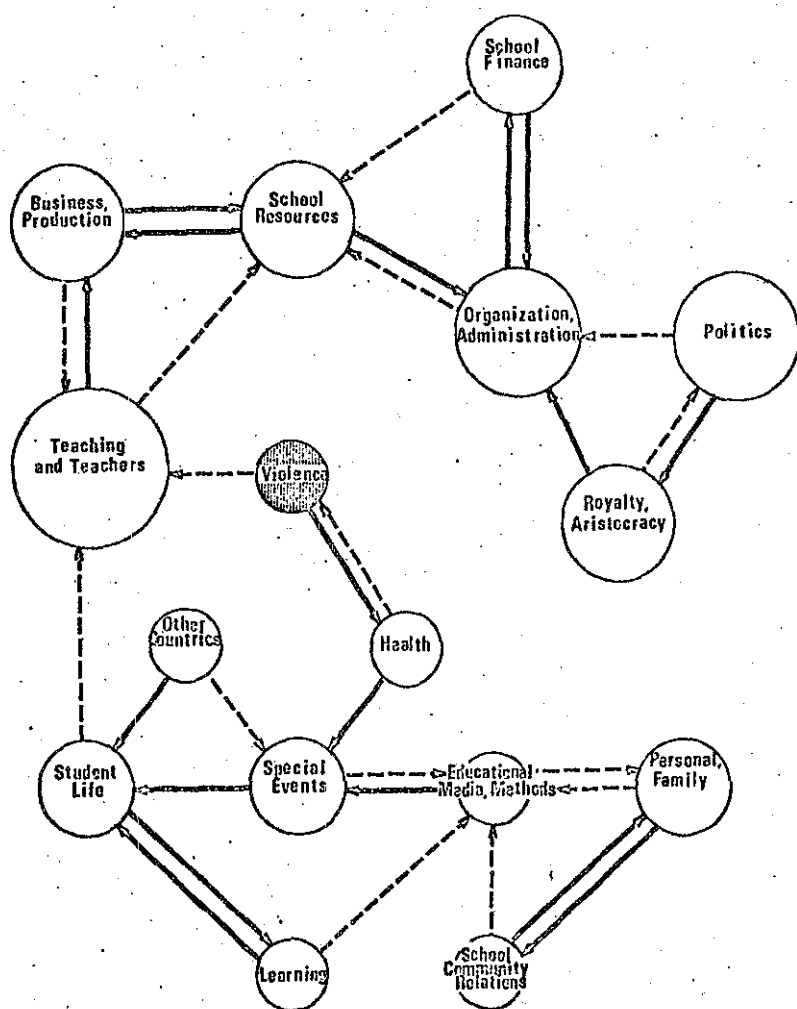
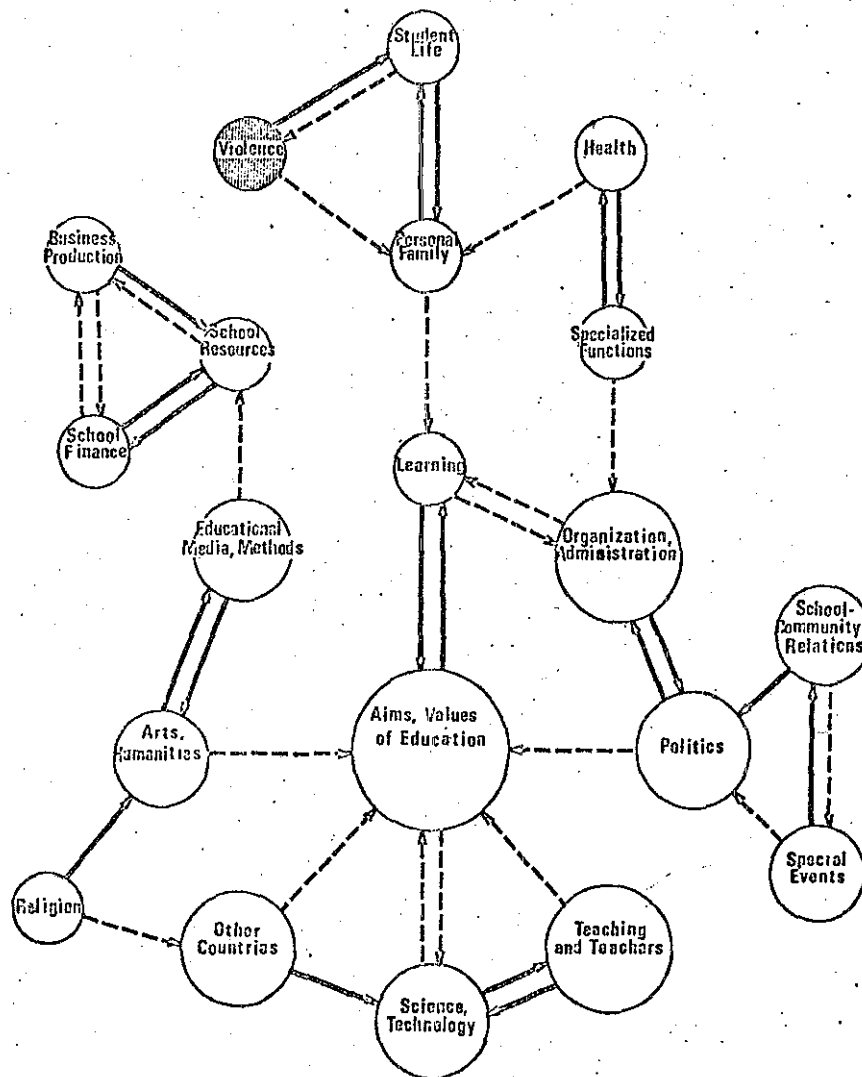


FIGURE 6 THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE IN IZVESTIA



————— HIGHEST CORRELATION  
 - - - - - SECOND HIGHEST CORRELATION

FIGURE 7: VIOLENCE IN THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE IN BRITISH NEWSPAPERS



————— HIGHEST CORRELATION  
 - - - - - SECOND HIGHEST CORRELATION

FIGURE 8: VIOLENCE IN THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE IN WEST GERMAN NEWSPAPERS

## IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

On a dull winter night six boys saunter up to a large prefabricated structure near Buttes-Chaumont Park in northeastern Paris. It is their school, not unlike many others built around France in response to agitation for school improvement and reform. The boys are petit-bourgeoisie "middle-French". As a columnist later put it, they are not "other people's children -- they are our own." One of them, identified as "p" by the police (he is only 14) is small, skinny, bright, the son of a house painter, "very polite" and "kept in hand" by his parents (says the concierge); "a menace," and "sly and boastful" at school (say some of his classmates); full of resentment and thoughts of revenge "for being bullied" (says he, later). "p" climbs the fence. While his friends look on, he opens a window, pours a bottle of cleaning fluid into a nearby wastebasket, and tosses a lighted match.

None of them knows that for the first time ever music classes are held at the school that night. The prefab -- only two years old -- burns in minutes and collapses on 16 trapped children and 4 teachers who will be identified by their dental records. So much for the "facts."

In the context of French media and politics, the facts of the case took on a symbolic significance that, as Nan Robertson reported from Paris (*New York Times*, February 13, 1973) "gripped all of France and made her examine her conscience . . . far beyond the central event that set it off . . ."

Virtually every element of French society has seized upon the case. With only three weeks to go before parliamentary elections, the Gaullist government and the centrist and leftist opposition are using the tragedy.

Depending on their political coloration and background, the politicians blame parental permissiveness, radical agi-

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tation among students since the 1968 disorders, disrespect for authority, the glorification of violence in films and on television or the "scandalous neglect" of a Government that ignores safety hazards in its schools.

Christian Fouchet, a former Gaullist Minister of Education and now an independent member in parliament, said "In all my life, I have never experienced such an overwhelming feeling of sadness and shame. This is what the absence of a moral upbringing, the abdication of adults and the flood of violence and pornography has brought us to."

Take, as another example, the affair of Gabrielle Russier.

A 31 year-old teacher in a Marseillaise lycée falls in love -- in fact lives -- with one of her pupils, aged 16. Charged with "leading a minor astray," imprisoned without a trial, depressed and ill, given a suspended sentence, but finally disqualified from teaching on orders of the Minister, Gabrielle Russier turns on the gas, lies down on her bed, and dies. Now imagine that instead of an episode in a soap opera or perhaps an obituary in the local paper, as Mavis Gallant (1971) has written,

. . . this case could have such a hold on the public mind that all over America hardly anything else will be talked about; that anyone with access to a typewriter or a microphone -- journalists, welfare officers, churchmen, political activists of all persuasion, government officials, magistrates, lawyers, psychiatrists, sociologists, leaders of parents' associations and of student movements concerning the law, morality, hypocrisy, preventive detention, discrimination against women, the rights of minors, the need for prison reform, the absurdities of the criminal code, and the abuses of power.

The boy's parents are Communists. The boy is a Maoist. Imagine that major and minor doctrinaire differences on the left could become a subject of excited discussion in the American press, and that readers will know what it is all about and be deeply interested. There will be virtually no news of the case on television, which is government-owned and censored from Washington. However, the New York Times and the Washington Post will publish letters and even editorials expressing surprise that Communists could behave repressively, and reproaching the parents, both gently and violently, for having cooperated with the bourgeois police.

The teacher's death is an event of national importance. It is brought up at a televised Presidential press conference. The President (a Ph.D. in literature from Yale) will quote, from memory, a poem about a girl martyred by society because she loved the wrong person. The poem is the work of a celebrated American writer, patriot, and member of the Communist Party.

Of course, it sounds hopelessly wrong; this is not an American tragedy.

Of course it isn't. The symbolic functions of the French schools as fountainheads of national culture and central authority contrast with the ambivalent images of schools and teachers in American mass culture. American media cults are largely centralized and homogenized, notwithstanding the appearance of local control. No sharp ideological differentiations are legitimized within the systems, as none has ever had a chance to develop (as in France after the revolution). Therefore, social and moral issues tend to be quickly defined and "operationalized" as technicalities and procedural problems.

# "L'affair Amiel"

Our case study of differential attention inquired into the coverage of a criminal event in the French press (for a full technical report, see Gerbner 1961). The French press is in the process of transformation from a "party press" to a commercially-sponsored press system. Both types of newspapers exist side-by-side. They differ mainly in their criteria of selection and editing. The party press selects news and views according to standards relevant to its political clients' ideological perspectives. In a multi-party system, it creates and cultivates publics of different -- and at times radically opposed -- political tendencies. The commercial press selects material according to standards relevant to its clients', the advertisers', need for broad mass appeal. Its "independence" is only of public organization, not private. The commercial press creates and cultivates a public perspective which cut across political party lines.

The event was the probably unintended (but not entirely accidental) fatal shooting of a student by a teacher. The underlying political dimension of the reporting of any event, and especially an event involving education in France, found expression in the news coverage.

## The events and the times

Perpignan is a provincial town in the foothills of the Pyrenees, at the southwestern edge of the wine-growing region along France's Mediterranean coast.

Jean Amiel, 37, teaches English at the Arago lycée of his home town of Perpignan. His wife is also an English teacher at a local girl's school. They have a four year old daughter and lead a busy but quiet private life in their new house in the suburbs.

Alain Rolland, 16, is a good student at the Arago lycée. He has never had Amiel for a teacher. He divides his time between the Boy Scouts, his studies, and his family. The Rollands are recent arrivals in Perpignan. Alain's father is director of a local branch of a bank, the Algerian Credit Society.

It is the night of St. Joan, June 23. Bonfires and dancing on the streets celebrate the longest day of the year in the tradition of Catalan youth. A group of boys, including Alain, heads toward the suburbs to engage in a familiar prank: lighting firecrackers in the mailboxes of the quiet and dignified residential district.

This is the third night the same prank (although not the same pranksters) plague the Amiel house. Mme. Amiel does not feel well. The children cannot sleep. Jean Amiel has obtained a police permit for a gun to "scare off the vandals." Now he grabs the old revolver and fires three shots into the darkness from the second story window.

Alain falls to the ground. "He's hurt, he's bleeding," a friend cries out. Amiel drives the wounded boy to the police station, then to the hospital. The intern pronounces him dead on arrival. "Le coup du lapin," he says; a fatal blow to the spine, suffered in the fall.

Amiel drives the dead boy to his parents. He says he is responsible. But, despite their sorrow, the Rollands insist that only fate is responsible; a bad fall, "le coup du lapin." Amiel says nothing about the shots.

He arrives home pale, drawn, and still silent. His wife does not question him. Soon it's morning. Amiel calls his high school principal, says he will not meet his classes that day. He waits for the police. They arrive. The coroner has repudiated the intern's diagnosis. There is a small bullet hole in the back of Alain's neck.

Public emotion runs high in Perpignan. A crowd of 3,000 gathers around the Amiel house. The police delay the usual reconstruction of events at the scene of the crime to avoid a riot. Nearly a year goes by before the case comes to trial. There is no denial of guilt. The defense pleads merely an accident, "un cruel hazard." The jury's verdict: two years in prison, two and a half million (old) francs damages.

The events took place at a time of national crisis marking the end of the Fourth Republic. It was a time of war and revolt in Algeria, the establishment of rebellious Committees of Public Safety, rumors of impending paratroop landings in Paris. There were fears of rightwing dictatorship and civil war. A "legal coup d'etat" brought De Gaulle to power in May. Labor unions, Left parties, many other organizations demonstrated in protest. Teachers called a one-day strike throughout France on May 30. They continued to demonstrate (and suffer government sanctions) throughout the period of the trial.

A new constitution reduced the power of the elected Deputies and changed the basis of representation to the detriment of the Left. The strife over Algeria erupted in shocking terrorism and deepened the national trauma. Headlines of Alain's murder competed for attention with those of "L'affaire Jaccoud" in which a famous Geneva lawyer killed the lover of his mistress; of the kidnapping of actress Michele Morgan's son by her ex-husband; and of the Tour de France bicycle race. During Amiel's trial, there was continuing coverage of the much longer Guillaume-Lacaze and the "Ballets Roses" affairs, implicating former Ministers or other important personalities in corruption, extortion, and prostitution.

It was in this general context that the crime and trial of Jean Amiel stirred a sensation in the French press.

Our analysis included nine newspapers in three general groups: the Left press, the Right press, and the commercial press. Two Paris dailies and one provincial daily comprised each group.

A procedure we call proposition analysis was developed to provide a measure of the differential selections and tendencies in the presentation of the same events by the three press groups. The stories are screened sentence by sentence to develop a list of all basic propositions advanced by each source. Identical propositions contained in differently worded statements are considered the same. A master list of propositions includes all essentially different propositions advanced in all statements of each source. These propositions are sorted into "balanced" and "differential" categories, and further grouped into "balanced" and "differential" passages. The passages in which each source (in this case, press group) has about the same share of propositions are the "balanced" versions. Those in which some sources are represented more than others are the "differential" versions; they indicate the composition of differential selections and tendencies.

A total of 642 separate propositions were listed as having been advanced in the statements of one or more of the newspapers studied. More than two-thirds of these propositions were "balanced" (advanced by papers of all three groups in about equal proportion), or were not strictly relevant to the events themselves, or both. (For example, there was much discussion about the general characteristics of modern youth in France and elsewhere.) About one-third of all propositions represented the differential aspects and versions.

These propositions were grouped into 11 passages. Each passage dealt with a certain aspect or version of the events. The grouping of the propositions was done without reference to the stories themselves. The passages represent sets of proposition abstracted from the total coverage. The focus and complexion of the account changes from passage to passage as the balance of representation shifts from one side of the political spectrum to the other.

#### Implicit dialogue of perspectives

We shall paraphrase each passage, and indicate each press group's share of representation in the propositions of each passage. We shall first attempt to reconstruct "dialogue" of ideological perspectives implicit in the press coverage of events in a pluralistic press system. Later we shall discuss the passages in the order of the shifting ideological perspectives.

Good man, terrible accident. The first passage is a relatively balanced version, recounting the story of a terrible accident that kills an innocent boy and ruins the life of a good man. The Left press leads in the number of propositions, but the differences are not very great and the individual papers rank in almost random order.

Happy childhood, easy life. The second passage delves into Jean Amiel's past. Its propositions paint a picture of happy childhood and easy life. The Right press is followed by the Commercial press in advancing these propositions. They provide a psychological rather than social context for the crime; the Left press takes scant notice of these propositions.

Modest means, heavy burdens. The Left press leads in suggesting a very different context for the crime. This passage points to the modest means and heavy financial burdens of the Amiel family. It notes the insufficiency of even two teachers' incomes to pay for the cost of a suburban house. The significance of the house for Jean Amiel, and his generosity and good humor amidst difficult circumstances receive emphasis in this version.

A defective personality. The fourth passage depicts Jean Amiel as a defective personality: pedantic, irascible, vindictive, provoking the wrath and revenge of students. The commercial France Soir and the rightist Aurore take the lead in presenting or citing these statements.

A "knight with a sad face". The next passage paints yet another portrait: a pitiful, harrassed teacher in a state of near collapse from worry and overwork, yet inspiring respect (though not a deserved promotion); a kind of "chevalier a la triste figure" - knight with a sad face. The Left press leads with nearly a half of all statements advancing such propositions.

A contemptible wretch. The propositions brought together in this passage counter the "knight" image with a start extension of the theme of defective personality: Amiel is a contemptible mental and physical wretch, a liar and a coward. He is indifferent to his (possibly intentional) crime, and is perhaps more concerned about bloodstains in his car than about the life of his innocent victim. The right wing Aurore is in the lead in citing these propositions, again followed by France Soir.

A heart-rending affair. Counterpointing that hostile version is a heart-rending story of despair, pathos, and family devotion, advanced mainly in the Left press. The propositions of this passage relate that Amiel sobs when his parents enter the court and that he displays tender affection for his wife. They depict Mme. Amiel as a beautiful woman who resembles tragic Antigone, pathetic in her attempt to defend her husband.

A national disgrace. A totally different version presents Mme Amiel a shrew, the family in discord, the trial unfair, Amiel's promotion while in prison a scandal. The whole affair is regarded a national disgrace. The Right press reported nearly two-thirds of all such statements.

Unjust conditions. The next version, favored by the Left, is very different. It dwells on conditions that frustrate the efforts and try the patience of teachers and other "intellectuals." No one, it is claimed, can judge or punish such a crime more than the teacher's own remorse. It is not the verdict that is seen as "disgraceful"; it is the catastrophic situation in secondary education."

Not a political case. All papers reported that the Amiels (as most teachers in France) had leftist political leanings. But only the press of the Right carried allegations that they really had no political convictions and did not take part, or at least not willingly, in the teachers' strike of May 30, 1958. These propositions claim that neither politics nor conditions help explain the crime; the right, as usual, attempts to depoliticize the case and to present it as a simple but heinous crime, best dealt with outside of or "above" politics.

Politics has much to do with it. In contrast with "non-political" explanations, the socio-political background is most explicitly invoked in the left press. The propositions of this passage specifically expose the bitter conflict which beset France during this period and suggest its relevance to the tragic accident on the eve of St. Jean.

Figure 1 illustrates the order and magnitude of shift-perspectives from Left to Right. The chart indicates the

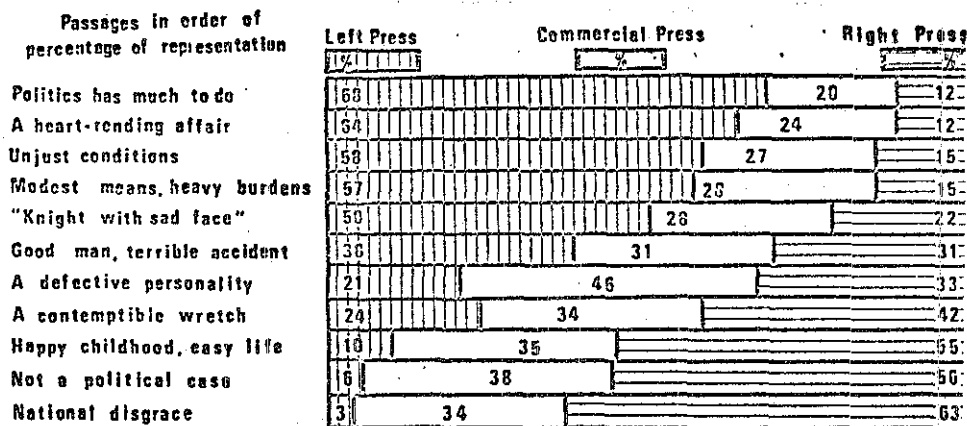


FIGURE 1

percentages advanced by each out of the total number of propositions advanced by all papers in each passage.

The Left press, as a whole, advances the most overtly "political" version of the case. It seizes the opportunity to make common cause with the left-leaning teachers of France in this "heart-rending affair." It views the crime and personality of Jean Amiel against the background of "unjust conditions." Education itself is seen as the victim of the greater crimes of reactionary subversion, harassment, neglect. Amiel himself is a victim; a modest man bearing heavy burdens, a "knight with a sad face," a symbol of the intellectual in a society ruled by wealth and privilege. Although the crime and the trial are fully reported, the differential accounts of the Left stress social injustice as the root of personal tragedy.

With the theme of "defective personality," the balance of perspectives shifts to the Right. Hints of "abnormalities" and unknown "true causes" counter suggestions of mitigating circumstance. The accounts merely observe Amiel's "contemptible" character and his dastardly deeds. After a "happy childhood" and "easy life," the crime must be outside the scope of social causation, or even reason. The right-wing perspective limits the scope of public discussion to a carefully circumscribed area. The crime is a personal rather than social aberration. Politics has nothing to do with it. The threat is not to liberty, learning, or justice, but to law and order. It is a national disgrace.

The strength of the French Left lies in the arena of grass-roots political struggle. The Right tries to limit that arena and to rely more on "law and order," the army, the police, and on moral (and financial) power outside or "above" politics. The commercially dependent press occupied a position between the two groups of politically dependent newspapers, but, as we shall see, not quite in the middle.

The only passage in which the commercial press itself had the highest share of representation was the theme of the "defective personality." The order of representations of the commercial press, all following the lead of

the Right, were in passages disclaiming political relevance, describing the Amiels' "easy life" and observing their "contemptible" conduct.

The commercial press shares more of the differential accounts of Left and Right than the two share of each others'. But the commercial press also shares more of the passages favored by the Right than it does of the versions advanced primarily on the Left. Furthermore, the greater the Left leadership in advancing the propositions of a passage, the closer the commercial press is to the Right press.

While the commercial press paves the way for certain types of propositions favored by the Right, and follows the lead of the Right in others, its most striking characteristic is a strong reaction against the perspective of the Left. Across all passages the commercial press is an average of 26 percentage points distant from the Left, and 12 percentage points distant from the Right.

The percent of different propositions each newspaper advanced out of all propositions contained in each passage was used to compute correlations between pairs of newspapers across all passages and thus to determine the relative position of each paper on the continuum of perspectives.

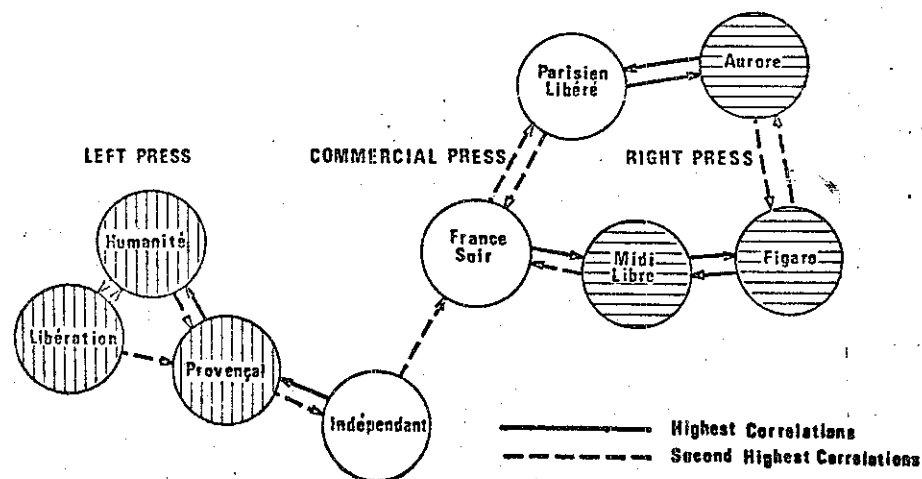


FIGURE 2

Figure 2 is a graphic representation based on correlations for each paper. The two highest positive correlations between each paper and two others are shown by lines leading from the former to the latter. The length of the lines represents the relative magnitudes of these correlations. It can be seen, for example, that the provincial L'Indépendant was the only commercial newspaper whose two highest correlations included one with an organ of the left, the Provencal. It can also be noted that the commercial press interlocks with the press of the Right, while the Left press forms a fairly tight group of its own.

I find no support for the assumption that the commercial (or any) press system is free of ideological controls and political tendencies. The basic ideological choices are inherent not in party-partisanship but in the total operation of "news values" and of standards of reporting. These choices are evident in press systems where ideological plurality is maintained through more than one type of client-patron relationship and source of press support.

There is little doubt that any press reacts most sharply against perspectives which threaten its principal client-patron relationships. When that challenge is not represented by competing mass publications in the same system, the dominant press may be free to ignore that perspective altogether, or to present it not only as a hostile but also as an "outside" and alien view.

Our next case study compares two such contrasting systems.

This is a comparative examination of major headline content and news emphasis between The New York Times and the Hungarian Socialist Workers (Communist) party central daily, Népszabadság, dealing with the United Nations 15th General Assembly session in the fall of 1960.

The distinctive roles of national media are products of their social system's conditions for industrial investment and popular support. Patterns of institutional decision-making develop in response to needs of stockholders, advertisers, parties, governments or other sources of support for large-scale mass production in the communications field. Theories and standards emerge--each with its own conception of "freedom," "objectivity," "news values," etc.--to codify, rationalize and perpetuate these patterns of decision-making. When measured by categories of analysis based on a nation's own theories of the press and conventions of journalism, that nation's media usually come out on top in any comparison. But self-justifying standards, reflecting internal needs and pressures, are hardly adequate yardsticks of relative communication roles outside their own systems.

This is a case study in the application of two contrasting approaches as major categories of analysis. Each has its own conception of standards and definition of realities, priorities and perspectives. The two dimensions are relevant to crucial differences in press performance and sensitive to differential bases of communication around the world.

The first approach is along the dimension of the cold-war power-contest. From this point of view, strategy and counter-strategy, threats and counter-threats, yardage gained or lost, and keeping the scoreboard up to date become the most significant aspects of newsworthy events. What the game is about is assumed to be known. The important items on the agenda concern matters of technique and of procedure: how gains already made can be defended, on what or whom losses can be blamed, how rules can be kept to maximize gains and minimize losses, how new points might be scored. We call this dimension procedural and conflict-oriented.

The other dimension cuts the pie differently. The substance and promise of specific issues occupy the center of the stage. The "power game" with its rules, scores, gains and losses has a secondary place on the agenda, except as it affects the possibility of agreement on the substantive ends to be achieved. These ends are issues with direct significance in everyday reality. Coexistence, disarmament, colonial liquidation, nuclear test ban, etc., are seen not mainly as aspects of big-power strategy but as bread and butter for tomorrow's table, a school for the children, appliances in the store, a freer and more secure life for everyone. From this perspective, conflict is seen as delaying, agreement as hastening, the realization of all that really matters. We call this dimension substantive and agreement-oriented.

These questions were explored in two ways.

The first part of the study compares emphases through the analysis of major headlines in the two papers. The second part examines broader aspects of the general context of selection and emphasis.

The line was the unit of analysis. Each line of every major relevant headline was classified in two ways. First, we asked whether the line was "procedural" or "substantive." Secondly, we had to decide whether the tendency of the line was "agreement," "neutral" or "conflict."

Substantive was the term assigned to lines which focused upon the substance of issues pending before the Assembly. Such lines as EISENHOWER CALLS FOR PEACE or SOLVE GENERAL DISARMAMENT were considered "substantive" in emphasis. Procedural was the term given to emphases pointing to U.N. organization, Assembly procedure, agenda strategy, parliamentary moves, contacts among the powers and circumstances surrounding the meetings.

Agreement direction was defined as emphasis on matters (either "substantive" or "procedural") generally accepted or desired (at least in principle) by most of those who would agree with the basic purposes of the United Nations. Peace, freedom, disarmament, summit meeting independence of colo-

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nial countries fall into the "agreement" category.

Neutral denotes the direction of statements which are non-controversial or do not raise any cold-war issues. Simple statements of who met whom, "U.N. ASSEMBLY BEGINS," and the like, were classified "neutral."

Conflict was defined as either "substantive" or "procedural" emphasis on the power struggle, on disapproval or support for either side, on outstanding divisive issues in the cold war or on threats or warnings of conflict.

The following are examples of the five actual headline classifications used (the sixth, substantive-neutral, never occurred):

TITO URGES IMMEDIATE STEPS TO CUT ARMS (substantive-agreement from the Times).

LEADERS EXPOSE COLONIALISM (substantive-conflict from Népszabadság).

NEUTRALS ASK U.S.-SOVIET TALK (procedural-agreement from the Times).

BALTIKA ARRIVES IN NEW YORK (procedural-neutral from Népszabadság).

U.N. REBUFFS KHRUSHCHEV 54 to 13 (Procedural-conflict from the Times).

#### The near mirror-image of the two papers' perspectives

is reflected in the comparison between categories of opposite value

in terms of the analytical dimensions employed.

The largest single concentration of lines in the Times -- 45 percent of the total -- was in both "procedural" and "conflict" categories. Only 5 percent of all the lines in Népszabadság fell into both of these categories. Conversely, almost one-third (30 percent) of all lines in Népszabadság classified both "substantive" and "agreement," while the Times devoted as many lines to "substantive - agreement" as Népszabadság did to "procedural - conflict" -- 5 percent.

TABLE 3

Percentage of New York Times and Népszabadság Headlines in Each Category

| Classification          | <u>Times</u><br>N= 60<br>% | <u>Népszabadság</u><br>N= 56<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Substantive - agreement | 5                          | 30                                |
| Substantive - neutral   | -                          | -                                 |
| Substantive - conflict  | 7                          | 2                                 |
| Procedural - agreement  | 7                          | 9                                 |
| Procedural - neutral    | 36                         | 54                                |
| Procedural - conflict   | 45                         | 5                                 |
| Total                   | 100%                       | 100%                              |
| All substantive         | 12                         | 32                                |
| All procedural          | 88                         | 68                                |
| Total                   | 100%                       | 100%                              |
| All agreement           | 12                         | 39                                |
| All neutral             | 36                         | 54                                |
| All conflict            | 52                         | 7                                 |
| Total                   | 100%                       | 100%                              |

Comparing emphasis alone, Népszabadság featured nearly three times as many "substantive" lines as did The Times. Conversely, The Times headlines were "procedural" compared to 68% of Népszabadság's. Comparing tendency alone, Népszabadság had three times as many "agreement" lines as did The Times. The Times had over seven times as many "conflict" lines as did Népszabadság. Over half of the lines in Népszabadság and over one-third of the lines in The Times were "neutral."

The headwriting styles reflected in these findings play a part in directing as well as in expressing emphases. These styles -- as other tools and conventions of the journalists's craft -- serve not only to communicate his perspectives but also to guide his attention to those aspects of events which fit them best. Our penchant for stark, terse, active, and pungent headlines tends to direct attention to procedure -- who does what to whom -- rather than to the substance. With a verb in nearly every line, The Times -- noted for its relatively subdued headlines -- pinpointed strategy with "admits," "meets," "joins," "confers," etc. It emphasized tension between antagonists with such verbs as "quit," "wins," "snub," "insists," "rebuffs," "defies," "charges," "bars" (used twice), and "warns" (used three times). Dynamic terms such as "buffer bloc," "arms impasse," "war peril," and "rocket power," were used to add punch to the lines. Modifiers "coldly," "noisy," and "angry" (always applied to an opponent) supplied color to the drama of highly personalized encounter and clash. There were 36 names in the 60 lines.

With only one verb in every three lines, Népszabadság heads were short on what we would consider "hard facts" content and long on declarations of intent. Two out of the four tension verbs used -- "expose," and "hate," --

pointed at imperialism and war; only two -- "reject," and "demand" -- dealt with people. "Greet," "solve," and "live" (used three times) denoted mutuality; "peace," "freedom," "independence," and "disarmament" (used seven times) denoted the aims. Only one line in eight named individuals.

Differences in perspective go deeper than style.

Let us now follow the course of the Assembly

as highlighted in the two papers.

Russian dignitaries were still on the high seas aboard the Baltika when the Security Council received a strong Soviet protest over the role of the Secretary General as Commander-in-Chief of the U.N. army in the Congo. (This was the time when pro-Soviet Congo leader Lumumba was deposed while U.N. troops held Leopoldville airport, and eventually assassinated). But The Times kept the spotlight on Hammarskjöld. Its first headline for the period was "U.N. CHIEF WARNS / HE MAY QUIT POST / OVER CONGO ROLE. This was followed by the reassuring top line the next day that ASIAN-AFRICAN BLOC AIDS U.N. CHIEF. Companion front-page headlines asked for "restraint" in Khrushchev's TV coverage related the hope of the State Department that the Assembly will not become Khrushchev's "propaganda platform" and reported that "2,000 DENOUNCE PREMIER before his arrival.

The generally procedural and combative aspects spotlighted in The Times cast only a partial shadow on the back pages of Népszabadság. On page five of the September 18 issue, Népszabadság headlined its U.N. story "ILLEGAL ATTEMPT BY U.S. / TO HAVE EXTRAORDINARY U.N. SESSION / SANCTION AGGRESSION AGAINST CONGO. A companion piece claimed that COLONIALIST'S

AGENTS / GRAB POWER IN LEOPOLDVILLE / WITH U.N. ASSISTANCE.

Front-page emphasis, however, was on peace, hope, and good wishes. MAY SUCCESS FOLLOW YOUR WORK the two-column headline cited one of reportedly "hundreds of telegrams" pouring in from "workers, peasants, intelligentsia" to the passengers of the Baltika on their way to New York. The major three-column spread was headlined REPRESENTING PEACE. It was a long editorial sounding the keynote of the coverage for days to come. "Representing peace" were the socialist delegations soon to arrive at the world forum to battle for the overriding concern of all humanity, declared the editorial, and to engage in (what The Times warned about on its front page) propaganda for disarmament. The key portions of the lengthy piece are paraphrased below because they are useful for an understanding of the communist press perspective:

The West has defeated 40 disarmament proposals advanced by the socialist camp in the last 15 years. It has opposed, then scuttled the Summit. But the diplomacy of imperialism has suffered a setback: disarmament is on the Assembly agenda again and even a Summit is being realized. The world must listen now not only to our proposals but also to concrete unilateral steps that have been taken. In five years the Soviet Union reduced its armed forces from 5,763,000 to 2,423,000, and the Warsaw pact countries followed suit...

And what does all this mean to mankind? Consider a few facts...Every single day a hundred million people spend almost a billion hours not to build houses, not to produce clothes and food and drugs and school implements but means of destruction! . . . Every year the world spends

dence creates a new world in Africa. In a reference to the Congo, he asserted that provocations against world opinion, peace, and orderly development can now be observed in Africa. At the same time he was deeply silent about the efforts of Belgian colonialists to rob this new nation of its independence." The key paragraph of the speech story stated:

The American President spoke in vague generalities about the desirability of disarmament in some distant, unspecified future. But again he placed the emphasis not upon disarmament but upon armaments inspection . . . With this he returned to the same old proposals which are designed -- as has often been proven -- not to secure the peace but to legalize espionage.

The next day it was Népszabadság's turn to run its largest type across the front page: FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE / TO ALL COLONIAL PEOPLES' / SOLVE GENERAL DISARMAMENT! "Significant Speech of Comrade Khrushchev on Burning Problems of Our Age," the deck declared. The six and a half page account of the speech was dotted with such ecstatic subheads as "All the Beauty of the World Could Flower," and "The Exalted Tasks of the U.N."

Khrushchev's proposal for reforming the Secretariat came to an end of the long speech in which he argued that if the world was to disarm, the international force should not be under the command of any one man attached to any one power bloc.

In contrast to this jubilant mood and emphasis on disarmament hopes, the Times banner headline was KHRUSHCHEV ASK HAMMARSKJOLD OUSTER; / WOULD SUBSTITUTE A 3-BLOC DIRECTORATE/ HERTER SEES 'DECLARATION OF WAR' ON U.N. The decks, on two sides of the speech photo, drew a neat balance of intransigence: PREMIER IS HARSH and AMERICAN IS ANGRY.

The next day the Soviet Premier said that in the light of U.S. Secretary of State Herter's remarks he wished to clarify his U.N. reform proposal. In an impromptu press conference in the driveway of the Soviet's Glen Cove mansion, Khrushchev repeated the reasons given for his plan, and said (obviously tongue-in-cheek) that while Marshal Malinovsky is a great leader, the Soviets would not insist on his heading a world police force if they really wanted general disarmament. The Times headlined its top news story of the informal press conference KHRUSHCHEV INSISTS U.N. REVISION / MUST PRECEDE DISARMAMENT PLAN. Népszabadság noted the remarks in a roundup story on page four, and again interpreted them as moves to strengthen a more representative U.N. for the tasks of the future.

While in the Times' major headline Khrushchev put U.N. procedure before disarmament, Népszabadság's banner headline of the same day insisted that DISARMAMENT IS THE / CENTRAL ISSUE OF OUR AGE / FOUNDATION OF SECURE PEACE. The Hungarian paper's first three and one-half pages were devoted to the Soviet disarmament proposal submitted along with the Khrushchev speech the day before. The account included such large front-page subheads as "One Year's Military Costs Could Pay for Africa's Complete Technical and Economic Reconstruction;" "Life Itself Demands Discussion of Disarmament" and "Another Year Lost Because of Behavior of the West." The Times did not carry the disarmament proposal.

On Monday and Tuesday, September 26-27, the Times was still dwelling upon the dangers of the U.N. reform plan, partly on the basis of further "clarifications" from Glen Cove over the weekend. Népszabadság headlined its Tass roundup of the weekend press conferences 'MUST LIVE TOGETHER.'

CAN LIVE TOGETHER. It also gave the front-page banner headline SOVIET PLAN ON COLONIAL FREEDOM and two inside pages to a colonial declaration submitted along with the disarmament proposal. The Times gave news of the colonial declaration in five inside paragraphs noting that it was "tough" and dealing mostly with reactions to it.

The following exchange from an interview was included in Népszabadság but not in The Times.

QUESTION: Our papers carried your speech in full, but your papers gave only 600 words of the Eisenhower speech. Where is freedom of information?

KHRUSHCHEV: You talk but do not know the facts. Only The New York Times carried the full text of my speech, and even that without the attachments, without the colonial and disarmament proposals. Our Izvestia, which has many times the circulation of The New York Times, carried the full text of the Eisenhower speech. Now judge for yourself.

The U.N. story on the front page of Népszabadság on September 28 was SOCIALIST AND EX-COLONIAL / LEADERS EXPOSE IMPERIALISM / BEFORE U.N. ASSEMBLY FORUM. It was followed by a full-page account of Khrushchev's speech at Cyrus Eaton's dinner, headed LET US COMPETE IN RAISING PEOPLE'S STANDARD OF LIVING! The Times headlined an Eisenhower-Macmillan joint statement on disarmament procedure (reported but not headlined in Népszabadság) and Nasser's call for a summit, reported in Népszabadság but headlined NASSER: CONGO IS VICTIM OF IMPERIALIST MANEUVER.

On September 30, British Prime Minister Macmillan met Khrushchev and spoke in the Assembly. He was "Heckled by Russian During Speech" said a Times caption. The Assembly story was headlined MACMILLAN IN U.N. APPEAL /

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KHRUSHCHEV SHOUTS PROTEST. The "heckling" incidents were reported in Népszabadság's account of the speech without headlines or emphasis. "Just don't send us any U-2's," said Khrushchev, according to Népszabadság, when Macmillan expressed hope that a summit meeting might be held; "Give us disarmament and we'll accept any kind of controls," remarked Khrushchev when Macmillan discussed the difficulties of finding an acceptable form of arms control inspection.

Khrushchev spoke again in the Assembly on October 2. He got top billing in The Times. KHRUSHCHEV WARNS / U.N. OF WAR PERIL / OVER CHINA ISSUE, was the head. The lower deck cited Wadsworth, the American delegate, as "A Bit Shocked" at Outburst, Says it Dims Prospect of Peace Talk." (According to a companion headline, CAPITAL SEES NO POSSIBILITY / OF U.S. - SOVIET TALKS NOW, and a front-page story ten days before to the effect that Secretary Herter "saw no prospect of any private meeting between President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev at the United Nations," those prospects had been dim from the outset.) The next day's top Times headline announced Eisenhower's rejection of the "peace talk."

Népszabadság played up the prospect of U.S.-Soviet "peace talk" and played down Khrushchev's "warning," interpreting the latter as a move for disarmament rather than a threat of "war peril over China issue." The Khrushchev speech story, below the fold, carried the headline: CANNOT CONDUCT / SUCCESSFUL DISARMAMENT TALKS WITHOUT CHINA / SAYS COMRADE KHRUSHCHEV.

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The last paragraph of that story referred to Wadsworth's "groundless distortion of the meaning of that speech as implying that there could be no serious peace talks at the U.N."

In its next issue Népszabadság devoted the first three pages to the speech of Hungarian First Secretary Janos Kadar under the banner headline OUR PEOPLE HATE WAR, IMPERIALISM / WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ALL. The Times' story of the Kadar speech on page 22 paraphrased his remarks and devoted ten paragraphs to the contents of a booklet on Hungary just released by an anti-communist organization called "Assembly of Captive European Nations."

On the same day, a Khrushchev-Hammarskjold exchange dominated The Times' coverage of the U.N. The Russian Premier had made another speech, again "clarifying" the Soviet stand on U.N. organizational reform. As reported in both papers, he claimed that only a reconstituted executive representing the three major blocs can guarantee the impartial use of U.N. armed forces necessary for colonial liberation and for disarmament. Hammarskjold, in reply, reaffirmed his determination to remain in his post "in the interests of all those other nations, as long as they wish me to do so."

The Times gave its major front-page headline to Hammarskjold's "defiance" of Soviet demand to Nehru's support of the U.N.'s record. Népszabadság carried Khrushchev's speech on pages four and five, under the five-column headline U.N.'S ENTIRE WORK / MUST BE BASED ON SECURING UNIVERSAL PEACE. This was followed by an account of Nehru's speech headlined NEED IS URGENT TO LIBERATE / COUNTRIES STILL UNDER COLONIAL RULE. Hammarskjold's reply to Khrushchev was noted in one paragraph of the U.N. roundup story on page six citing the Secretary General only as arguing that "if he resigned, the U.N. would fall apart."

With defeat of the Soviet U.N. reform proposal never in doubt,

three key issues remained to be settled

They were (1) the five-power neutral move for a summit, (2) the disarmament proposal and (3) the colonial resolution.

Neutral move for a summit. It was on October 6 that five neutral powers finally gave up their attempt to bring the Big Two face-to-face. NEUTRALS IN U.N. ABANDON / MOVE FOR BIG TWO TALKS / AS KEY POINT IS REJECTED, said the top Times headline. The debacle came after a simple majority voted to include Eisenhower and Khrushchev by name in the "peace talk" resolution, but Irish Assembly President Boland invoked the two-thirds rule. The rule was upheld, according to the New York Times' lead story, "after a procedural wrangle of an hour and a half"; whereupon the sponsors withdrew the resolution as pointless.

Népszabadság carried news of the defeat below the fold on page one. The story focused upon what the Times termed a "procedural wrangle." The headline said WESTERN VOTING MANEUVERS/BLOCK EFFECTIVE WORK BY U.N. A two-column subhead quoted the Ukrainian delegate as saying "It is Time to Prevent Use of U.N. as Tool of Western Bloc." The story asserted that the neutralist resolution was accepted and supported by the Soviet delegation as "a sincere effort... to end the cold war and to relax tensions." However, the story went on, the Western powers resorted to "desperate and unprecedented procedural tactics" to avoid having to discuss peace and disarmament.

Disarmament. Defeat of the disarmament proposal was recorded, along with the score and a threat, in the Times' top headline of October 11: U.N. REBUFFS KHRUSHCHEV 54 TO 13; / BARB ASSEMBLY ARMS DEBATE NOW; / PRE-

MIER WARNS OF ROCKET POWER. On the same day, Népszabadság's major headline insisted that THE QUESTION OF DISARMAMENT / BELONGS TO PLENARY SESSION / OF U.N. ASSEMBLY. The deck cited Khrushchev declaring that "If Present Session is Unable to Discuss Disarmament / Call Special Session in Spring with Heads of State." The vote itself was noted at the end of the long story. The rocket "threat" was part of the verbatim account on page two, under the three-column head WE INSIST ON PRIORITY FOR DISARMAMENT and the subhead "You Cannot Scare the Soviet People."

The major theme of unceasing effort on behalf of disarmament in the face of obstruction and provocation returned to Népszabadság's front page on October 13. WE SHALL NOT SLACKEN OUR EFFORTS / IN THE STRUGGLE FOR DISARMAMENT declared the top headline based on a Khrushchev press conference. A long frontpage editorial shared the spotlight with the lead story. It began in a sarcastic vein:

We can safely say that in the recent history of imperialism there has rarely been a more dubious 'victory' than that won by the Western bloc on disarmament . . . Consider what has been achieved! American history books will now be able to say: 'Thanks to the firm stand of our government, we were able to keep the major question of disarmament off the Assembly floor and thus gain time for the arms race, hated by all peoples!'

The New York Times' major headline that day was NOISY U.N. SESSION / CUT SHORT TO END / HECKLING BY REDS. The colonial resolution had reached the Assembly floor.

The colonial resolution. While Népszabadság kept the spotlight on "the struggle for disarmament," the New York Times featured a memorable scene. The resolution on "speedy and unconditional" colonial liberation

was on the agenda. That was the day when the shaky decorum of Assembly procedure was shattered by table-pounding, shoe-banging communist delegates. Népszabadság carried the story of the meeting on page five, under a three-column headline: SERIES OF WESTERN PROVOCATIONS / MARK WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION. The "provocations" reported consisted mostly of the Assembly President's interruptions of various speakers urging passage of the colonial resolution. As the vote was about to be taken, related the story, the American delegate rose to inject irrelevant and slanderous remarks directed against the people of Eastern Europe. The Rumanian delegate objected to this delaying tactic but could not complete his remarks; in a "provocative maneuver" the Assembly President unexpectedly adjourned the meeting. (According to the Times, he also broke his gavel in the process.)

The next day the colonial resolution passed by acclamation. The United States, according to the Times' account, withdrew its opposition with a brief statement that the debate yesterday had shown "the intensity of feeling among nations around the world on the question of national independence and human freedom everywhere."

Népszabadság headlined the action, gave it most of page one, and termed it "Defeat of Colonialists." The Times, which had given precedence to the U.N. over the presidential election campaign throughout the Assembly session, now switched positions. The U.N. story headline was KHRUSHCHEV GOES HOME / AFTER A THREAT IN U.N. / TO BOYCOTT ARMS TALKS. "Premier Khrushchev," stated the lead, "bade an angry farewell to the General Assembly today after threatening to walk out on any future disarmament negotiations unless they were conducted on Soviet terms." In a front-page story the next day, Népszabadság gave its account of Khrushchev's last day in New York, citing him as follows: "We leave in a good mood as we believe there are signs of hope for a solution

of major international problems . . . We are especially satisfied over the decision on liquidating the colonial system . . . The Soviet Union will do everything in its power to achieve general and complete disarmament. . ."

Every newspaper presents a fragmented and synthetic image of the world. It highlights its own set of significant realities from its own social and cultural vantage point. The New York Times tended to highlight procedural moves, gains, threats and conflicts. It emphasized method rather than substance, and the tension-arousing rather than mutually acceptable or even neutral aspects of events. The standards we hold are most applicable to reporting a contest - business, political, athletic, personal - from a more or less detached vantage point, but with primary emphasis on the clash, the color and the score. The detachment is especially noticeable in skirting the substance of what is at stake. This perspective sells publics and serves interests vested in the rules of the game. Those whom the rules favor have nothing to gain from stressing the issues.

The communist press serves clients with a stake in the ends and not the rules of the game. The ends are defined clearly, emphasized daily, and espoused enthusiastically. They sweep aside the "game theory" of "objectivity" in preference to the claim that aspects of reality to be most emphatically "objective" about are the bread-and-butter promise and substance of the great issues of our time and the "objective requirements" of a radical transformation of life.

## *Living With Television: The Violence Profile*

by George Gerbner and Larry Gross

*Does TV entertainment incite or pacify (or both)?  
New approach to research uses Cultural Indicators  
as a framework for a progress report on a long-range  
study of trends in television content and effects.*

The environment that sustains the most distinctive aspects of human existence is the environment of symbols. We learn, share, and act upon meanings derived from that environment. The first and longest lasting organization of the symbolic world was what we now call religion. Within its sacred scope, in earlier times, were the most essential processes of culture: art, science, technology, statecraft, and public story-telling.

Common rituals and mythologies are agencies of symbolic socialization and control. They demonstrate how society works by dramatizing its norms and values. They are essential parts of the general system of messages that cultivates prevailing outlooks (which is why we call it culture) and regulates social relationships. This system of messages, with its story-telling functions, makes people perceive as real and normal and right that which fits the established social order.

The institutional processes producing these message systems have become increasingly professionalized, industrialized, centralized, and specialized. Their principal locus shifted from handicraft to mass production and from traditional religion and formal education to the mass media of communications—particularly television. New technologies on the horizon may enrich the choices of the choosy but cannot replace the simultaneous public experience of a common symbolic environment that now binds diverse communities, including large

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groups of young and old and isolated people who have never before joined any mass public. Television is likely to remain for a long time the chief source of repetitive and ritualized symbol systems cultivating the common consciousness of the most far-flung and heterogeneous mass publics in history.

*Our long-range study of this new symbolic environment  
developed from, and still includes, the annual Violence  
Index and Profile of TV content and its correlates in  
viewers' conceptions of relevant aspects of social reality.*

The research began with the investigation of violence in network television drama in 1967-68 for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (4) and continued through 1972 under the sponsorship of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior (5). The study was broadly conceived from the beginning and both reports showed the role and symbolic functions, as well as the extent, of violence in the world of television drama. A conference of research consultants to the National Institute of Mental Health in the spring of 1972 recommended that the Violence Index developed for the report to the Surgeon General be further broadened to take into account social relationships and viewer conceptions. Implementing that recommendation, we issued the Violence Profile (fifth in our series of reports), including violence-victim ratios and eventually viewer responses. The then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Caspar W. Weinberger reported to Senator John O. Pastore in the fall of 1973 that our research was "broadened to encompass a number of additional dimensions and linked with viewers' perceptions of violence and its effects, as recommended by NIMH consultants and as incorporated by Dr. Gerbner in his renewal research" (16).

The "renewal research" to which Secretary Weinberger referred is our present project, Cultural Indicators. Conducted under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, it consists of periodic study of television programming and of the conceptions of social reality that viewing cultivates in child and adult audiences. Although the study of violence is a continuing aspect of the research,<sup>1</sup> the project is also developing indicators of other themes, roles, and relationships significant for social science and policy.

The pattern of findings that is beginning to emerge confirms our belief that television is essentially different from other media and that research on television requires a new approach. In this article we shall sketch the outlines of a critique of modes of research derived from experience with other media and advance an approach we find more appropriate to the special characteristics, features, and functions of television. We shall illustrate the design and some

<sup>1</sup>Several additional events influenced the further fate and development of the Violence Profile. Senator Pastore and Chairman Torbert Macdonald of the House Communications Subcommittee continued to take an active interest in it. The research director of the studies for the Surgeon General, Eli A. Rubinstein, continued to press for follow-up research (14). Douglass Cater and Stephen Strickland wrote a book on the report and argued for "ongoing research capable of undergirding large public policy investigations" (1, p. 133). And, finally, a committee of the Social Science Research Council especially formed and funded by NIMH to study the Violence Profile recommended continued use and further development.

contributions of the approach taken in the Cultural Indicators project by presenting the latest Violence Profile (No. 7 in the series), including indicators of some conceptions television cultivates in its viewers.<sup>2</sup>

*The confusing state of television research is largely due to inappropriate conceptions of the problem.*

The automobile that burst upon the dusty highways of the turn of the century was seen by most people as just a horseless carriage rather than as a prime mover of a new way of life. Similarly, those who grew up before television tended to think of it as just another in the long series of technological innovations in mass communications. Consequently, modes of thinking and research rooted in experience with other media have been applied to television. These earlier modes of study were based on selectively used media and focused on attitude or behavior change. Both assumptions are largely inadequate to the task of conceptualizing and investigating the effects of television.

We begin with the assertion that television is the central cultural arm of American society. It is an agency of the established order and as such serves primarily to extend and maintain rather than to alter, threaten, or weaken conventional conceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. Its chief cultural function is to spread and stabilize social patterns, to cultivate not change but resistance to change. Television is a medium of the socialization of most people into standardized roles and behaviors. Its function is, in a word, enculturation.

The substance of the consciousness cultivated by TV is not so much specific attitudes and opinions as more basic assumptions about the "facts" of life and standards of judgment on which conclusions are based. The purpose of the Cultural Indicators project is to identify and track these premises and the conclusions they might cultivate across TV's diverse publics.

We shall make a case for studying television as a force for enculturation rather than as a selectively used medium of separate "entertainment" and "information" functions. First, we shall suggest that the essential differences between television and other media are more crucial than the similarities. Second, we will show why traditional research designs are inadequate for the study of television effects and suggest more appropriate methods. Third, we will sketch the pattern of evidence emerging from our studies indicating that "living" in the world of television cultivates conceptions of its own conventionalized "reality."

*The reach, scope, ritualization, organic connectedness, and non-selective use of mainstream television makes it different from other media of mass communications.*

TV penetrates every home in the land. Its seasonal, cyclical, and perpetual patterns of organically related fact and fiction (all woven into an entertainment fabric producing publics of consumers for sale to advertisers) again encompass

essential elements of art, science, technology, statecraft, and public (as well as most family) story-telling. The information-poor (children and less educated adults) are again the entertainment-rich held in thrall by the myths and legends of a new electronic priesthood.

If you were born before, say, 1950, television came into your life after the formative years as just another medium. Even if you are now an "addict," it will be difficult for you to comprehend the transformations it has wrought. Could you, as a twelve-year old, have contemplated spending an average of six hours *a day* at the local movie house? Not only would most parents not have permitted such behavior but most children would not have imagined the possibility. Yet, in our sample of children, nearly half the twelve-year-olds watch at least six hours of television every day.

Unlike print, television does not require literacy. Unlike the movies, television is "free" (supported by a privately imposed tax on all goods), and it is always running. Unlike radio, television can show as well as tell. Unlike the theater, concerts, movies, and even churches, television does not require mobility. It comes into the home and reaches individuals directly. With its virtually unlimited access from cradle to grave, television both precedes reading and, increasingly, preempts it.

Television is the first centralized cultural influence to permeate both the initial and the final years of life—as well as the years between. Most infants are exposed to television long before reading. By the time a child reaches school, television will have occupied more time than would be spent in a college classroom. At the other end of the lifelong curriculum, television is there to keep the elderly company when all else fails.

All societies have evolved ways of explaining the world to themselves and to their children. Socially constructed "reality" gives a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right. The constant cultivation of such "realities" is the task of mainstream rituals and mythologies. They legitimize action along socially functional and conventionally acceptable lines.

The social, political, and economic integration of modern industrial society has created a system in which few communities, if any, can maintain an independent integrity. We are parts of a Leviathan and its nervous system is telecommunications. Publicly shared knowledge of the "wide world" is what this nervous system transmits to us.

Television is the chief common ground among the different groups that make up a large and heterogeneous national community. No national achievement, celebration, or mourning seems real until it is confirmed and shared on television.

Never before have all classes and groups (as well as ages) shared so much of the same culture and the same perspectives while having so little to do with their creation. Representation in the world of television gives an idea, a cause, a group its sense of public identity, importance, and relevance. No movement can get going without some visibility in that world or long withstand television's power to discredit, insulate, or undercut. Other media, used selectively and by

<sup>2</sup>A summary of the cultivation studies also appears in our article in the April 1976 *Psychology Today* (10).

special interests or cultural elites, cultivate partial and parochial outlooks. Television spreads the same images and messages to all from penthouse to tenement. TV is the new (and only) culture of those who expose themselves to information only when it comes as "entertainment." Entertainment is the most broadly effective educational fare in any culture.

All major networks serving the same social system depend on the same markets and programming formulas. That may be one reason why, unlike other media, television is used non-selectively: it just doesn't matter that much. With the exception of national events and some "specials," the total viewing audience is fairly stable regardless of what is on. Individual tastes and program preferences are less important in determining viewing patterns than is the time a program is on. The nearly universal, non-selective, and habitual use of television fits the ritualistic pattern of its programming. You watch television as you might attend a church service, except that most people watch television more religiously.

Constitutional guarantees shield the prerogatives of ownership. Technological imperatives of electronics have changed modern governance more than Constitutional amendments and court decisions. Television, the flagship of industrial mass culture, now rivals ancient religions as a purveyor of organic patterns of symbols—news and other entertainment—that animate national and even global communities' senses of reality and value.

*These considerations led us to question  
many of the more common arguments raised  
in discussions of television's effects.*

An important example is the concern over the consequences of violence on television. The invention and development of technologies which permit the production and dissemination of mass mediated fictional images across class lines seems invariably to raise in the minds of the established classes the specter of subversion, corruption and unrest being encouraged among the various lower orders—poor people, ethnic and racial minorities, children and women. The specter arises when it seems that the lower orders may presume to imitate—if not to replace—their betters. Whether the suspect and controversial media are newspapers, novels, and theater, as in the nineteenth century, or movies, radio, comic books, and television as in the twentieth, concern tends to focus on the possibilities of disruption that threaten the established norms of belief, behavior, and morality.

In our view, however, that concern has become anachronistic. Once the industrial order has legitimized its rule, the primary function of its cultural arm becomes the reiteration of that legitimacy and the maintenance of established power and authority. The rules of the games and the morality of its goals can best be demonstrated by dramatic stories of their symbolic violations. The intended lessons are generally effective and the social order is only rarely and peripherally threatened. The *system* is the message and, as our politicians like to say, the system works. Our question is, in fact, whether it may not work too well

in cultivating uniform assumptions, exploitable fears, acquiescence to power, and resistance to meaningful change.

Therefore, in contrast to the more usual statement of the problem, we do not believe that the only critical correlate of television violence is to be found in the stimulation of occasional individual aggression. The consequences of living in a symbolic world ruled largely by violence may be much more far-reaching. Preparation for large-scale organized violence requires the cultivation of fear and acquiescence to power. TV violence is a dramatic demonstration of power which communicates much about social norms and relationships, about goals and means, about winners and losers, about the risks of life and the price for transgressions of society's rules. Violence laden drama shows who gets away with what, when, why, how and against whom. "Real world" victims as well as violents may have to learn their roles. Fear—that historic instrument of social control—may be an even more critical residue of a show of violence than aggression. Expectation of violence or passivity in the face of injustice may be consequences of even greater social concern. We shall return to this theme with data from our studies.

*The realism of TV fiction hides its synthetic  
and functionally selective nature.*

The dominant stylistic convention of Western narrative art—novels, plays, films, TV dramas—is that of representational realism. However contrived television plots are, viewers assume that they take place against a backdrop of the real world. Nothing impeaches the basic "reality" of the world of television drama. It is also highly informative. That is, it offers to the unsuspecting viewer a continuous stream of "facts" and impressions about the way of the world, about the constancies and vagaries of human nature, and about the consequences of actions. The premise of realism is a Trojan horse which carries within it a highly selective, synthetic, and purposeful image of the facts of life.

A normal adult viewer is not unaware of the fictiveness of television drama. No one calls the police or an ambulance when a character in a television program is shot. "War of the Worlds"-type scares are rare, if they occur at all. Granting this basic awareness on the part of the viewers, one may still wonder how often and to what degree all viewers suspend their disbelief in the reality of the symbolic world.

Surely we all know that Robert Young is not a doctor and that Marcus Welby is an M.D. by only poetic license. Yet according to the Philadelphia Bulletin (July 10, 1974) in the first five years of the program "Dr. Welby" received over a quarter of a million letters from viewers, most containing requests for medical advice.

Doctor shows are not the only targets of such claims. A former New York City police official has complained that jury members have formed images and expectations of trial procedures and outcomes from television which often prejudice them in actual trials. In a courtroom incident related to us by a lawyer, the counsel for the defense leapt to his feet, objecting, "Your Honor, the

Prosecutor is badgering the witness!" The judge replied that he, too, had seen that objection raised on the Perry Mason show but, unfortunately, it was not included in the California code.

*Anecdotes and examples should not trivialize the real point, which is that even the most sophisticated can find many important components of their knowledge of the real world derived wholly or in part from fictional representation.*

How often do we make a sharp distinction between the action which we know is not "real" and the accumulation of background information (which is, after all, "realistic")? Are we keenly aware that in the total population of the television world men outnumber women four to one? Or that, with all the violence, the leading causes of real life injury and death—industrial and traffic accidents—are hardly ever depicted?

How many of us have ever been in an operating room, a criminal courtroom, a police station or jail, a corporate board room, or a movie studio? How much of what we know about such diverse spheres of activity, about how various kinds of people work and what they do—how much of our real world has been learned from fictional worlds? To the extent that viewers see television drama—the foreground of plot or the background of the television world—as naturalistic, they may derive a wealth of incidental "knowledge." This incidental learning may be effected by bald "facts" and by the subtle interplay of occurrence, co-occurrence, and non-occurrence of actors and actions.

In addition to the subtle patterns against whose influence we may all be somewhat defenseless, television provides another seductively persuasive sort of imagery. In real life much is hidden from our eyes. Often, motives are obscure, outcomes ambiguous, personalities complex, people unpredictable. The truth is never pure and rarely simple. The world of television, in contrast, offers us cogency, clarity, and resolution. Unlike life, television is an open book. Problems are never left hanging, rewards and punishments are present and accounted for. The rules of the game are known and rarely change. Not only does television "show" us the normally hidden workings of many important and fascinating institutions—medicine, law enforcement and justice, big business, the glamorous world of entertainment, etc.—but we "see" the people who fill important and exciting roles. We see who they are in terms of sex, age, race, and class and we also see them as personalities—dedicated and selfless, ruthless and ambitious, good-hearted but ineffectual, lazy and shiftless, corrupt and corrupting. Television provides the broadest common background of assumptions not only about what things are but also about how they work, or should work, and why.

The world of television drama is a mixture of truth and falsehood, of accuracy and distortion. It is not the true world but an extension of the standardized images which we have been taught since childhood. The audience for which the message of television is primarily intended (recall that an au-

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dience of about 20 million viewers is necessary for a program's survival) is the great majority of middle-class citizens for whom America is a democracy (our leaders act in accordance with the desires of the people), for whom our economy is free, and for whom God is alive, white, and male.

*The implications for research are far-reaching and call into question essential aspects of the research paradigm stemming from historic pressures for behavior manipulation and marketing efficacy.*

They suggest a model based on the concept of broad enculturation rather than of narrow changes in opinion or behavior. Instead of asking what communication "variables" might propagate what kinds of individual behavior changes, we want to know what types of common consciousness whole systems of messages might cultivate. This is less like asking about preconceived fears and hopes and more like asking about the "effects" of Christianity on one's view of the world or—as the Chinese *had* asked—of Confucianism on public morality. To answer such questions, we must review and revise some conventional articles of faith about research strategy.

First, we cannot presume consequences without the prior investigation of content, as the conventional research paradigm tends to do. Nor can the content be limited to isolated elements (e.g., news, commercials, specific programs), taken out of the total context, or to individual viewer selections. The "world" of television is an organic system of stories and images. Only system-wide analysis of messages can reveal the symbolic world which structures common assumptions and definitions for the generations born into it and provides bases for interaction (though not necessarily of agreement) among large and heterogeneous communities. The system *as a whole* plays a major role in setting the agenda of issues to agree or disagree about; it shapes the most pervasive norms and cultivates the dominant perspectives of society.

Another conventional research assumption is that the experiment is the most powerful method, and that change (in attitudes, opinions, likes-dislikes, etc., toward or conveyed by "variable X") is the most significant outcome to measure. In the ideal experiment, you expose a group to X and assess salient aspects of the state of the receivers before and after exposure, comparing the change, if any, to data obtained from a control group (identical in all relevant ways to the experimental group) who have not received X. No change or no difference means no effect.

When X is television, however, we must turn this paradigm around: stability may be *the* significant outcome of the sum total of the play of many variables. If nearly everyone "lives" to some extent in the world of television, clearly we cannot find unexposed groups who would be identical in all important respects to the viewers. We cannot isolate television from the mainstream of modern culture because it *is* the mainstream. We cannot look for change as the most significant accomplishment of the chief arm of established culture if its main social function is to maintain, reinforce, and exploit rather than to undermine or

alter conventional conceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. On the contrary, the relative ineffectiveness of isolated campaigns may itself be testimony to the power of mainstream communications.

Neither can we assume that TV cultivates conceptions easily distinguishable from those of other major entertainment media. (But we cannot emphasize too strongly the historically novel role of television in standardizing and sharing with all as the common norm what had before been more parochial, local, and selective cultural patterns.) We assume, therefore, that TV's standardizing and legitimizing influence comes largely from its ability to streamline, amplify, ritualize, and spread into hitherto isolated or protected subcultures, homes, nooks, and crannies of the land the conventional capsules of mass produced information and entertainment.

*Another popular research technique which is inappropriate  
is the experimental or quasi-experimental test of the consequences  
of exposure to one particular type of television programming.*

Much of the research on media violence, for example, has focused on the observation and measurement of behavior which occurs after a viewer has seen a particular program or even isolated scenes from programs. All such studies, no matter how clean the design and clear the results, are of limited value because they ignore a fundamental fact: the world of TV drama consists of a complex and integrated system of characters, events, actions, and relationships whose effects cannot be measured with regard to any single element or program seen in isolation.

*How should, then, the effects of television  
be conceptualized and studied?*

We believe that the key to the answer rests in a search for those assumptions about the "facts" of life and society that television cultivates in its more faithful viewers. That search requires two different methods of research. The relationship between the two is one of the special characteristics of the Cultural Indicators approach.<sup>3</sup>

The first method of research is the periodic analysis of large and representative aggregates of television output (rather than individual segments) as the system of messages to which total communities are exposed. The purpose of message system analysis is to establish to composition and structure of the symbolic world. We have begun that analysis with the most ubiquitous, translucent, and instructive part of television (or any cultural) fare, the dramatic programs (series, cartoons, movies on television) that populate and animate for most viewers the heartland of the symbolic world. Instead of guessing or assuming the contours and dynamics of that world, message system analysis maps its geography, demography, thematic and action structure, time and space

<sup>3</sup>For a more detailed description of the conceptual framework for this research see "Cultural Indicators: The Third Voice" (8).

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dimensions, personality profiles, occupations, and fates. Message system analysis yields the gross but clear terms of location, action, and characterization discharged into the mainstream of community consciousness. Aggregate viewer interpretation and response starts with these common terms of basic exposure.

The second step of the research is to determine what, if anything, viewers absorb from living in the world of television. Cultivation analysis, as we call that method, inquires into the assumptions television cultivates about the facts, norms, and values of society. Here we turn the findings of message system analysis about the fantasy land of television into questions about social reality. To each of these questions there is a "television answer," which is like the way things appear in the world of television, and another and different answer which is biased in the opposite direction, closer to the way things are in the observable world. We ask these questions of samples of adults and children. All responses are related to television exposure, other media habits, and demographic characteristics. We then compare the response of light and heavy viewers controlling for sex, age, education, and other characteristics. The margin of heavy viewers over light viewers giving the "television answers" within and across groups is the "cultivation differential" indicating conceptions about social reality that viewing tends to cultivate.

Our analysis looks at the contribution of TV drama to viewer conceptions in conjunction with such other sources of knowledge as education and news. The analysis is intended to illuminate the complementary as well as the divergent roles of these sources of facts, images, beliefs, and values in the cultivation of assumptions about reality.

*We shall now sketch some general features of the  
world of network television drama, and then report  
the latest findings about violence in that world.*

As any mythical world, television presents a selective and functional system of messages. Its time, space, and motion—even its "accidents"—follow laws of dramatic convention and social utility. Its people are not born but are created to depict social types, causes, powers, and fates. The economics of the assembly line and the requirement of wide acceptability assure general adherence to common notions of justice and fair play, clear-cut characterizations, tested plot lines, and proven formulas for resolving all issues.

Representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation. Being buffeted by events and victimized by people denotes social impotence; ability to wrest events about, to act freely, boldly, and effectively is a mark of dramatic importance and social power. Values and forces come into play through characterizations; good is a certain type of attractiveness, evil is a personality defect, and right is the might that wins. Plots weave a thread of causality into the fabric of dramatic ritual, as stock characters act out familiar parts and confirm preferred notions of what's what, who's who, and who counts for what. The issue is rarely in doubt: the action is typically a game of social typing, group identification, skill, and power.

Many times a day, seven days a week, the dramatic pattern defines situations and cultivates premises about society, people, and issues. Casting the symbolic world thus has a meaning of its own: the lion's share of representation goes to the types that dominate the social order. About three-quarters of all leading characters are male, American, middle- and upper-class, and in the prime of life. Symbolic independence requires freedom relatively uninhabited by real-life constraints. Less fully represented are those lower in the domestic and global power hierarchy and characters involved in familiar social contexts, human dependencies, and other situations that impose the real-life burdens of human relationships and obligations upon freewheeling activity.

Women typically represent romantic or family interest, close human contact, love. Males can act in nearly any role, but rare is the female part that does not involve at least the suggestion of sex. While only one in three male leads is shown as intending to or ever having been married, two of every three females are married or expect to marry in the story. Female "specialties" limit the proportion of TV's women to about one-fourth of the total population.

Nearly half of all females are concentrated in the most sexually eligible young adult population, to which only one-fifth of males are assigned; women are also disproportionately represented among the very young and old. Children, adolescents, and old people together account for less than 15 percent of the total fictional population.

Approximately five in ten characters can be unambiguously identified as gainfully employed. Of these, three are proprietors, managers, and professionals. The fourth comes from the ranks of labor—including all those employed in factories, farms, offices, shops, stores, mining, transportation, service stations, restaurants, and households, and working in unskilled, skilled, clerical, sales, and domestic service capacities. The fifth serves to enforce the law or preserve the peace on behalf of public or private clients.

Types of activity—paid and unpaid—also reflect dramatic and social purposes. Six in ten characters are engaged in discernible occupational activity and can be roughly divided into three groups of two each. The first group represents the world of legitimate private business, industry, agriculture, finance, etc. The second group is engaged in activity related to art, science, religion, health, education, and welfare, as professionals, amateurs, patients, students, or clients. The third makes up the forces of official or semiofficial authority and the army of criminals, outlaws, spies, and other enemies arrayed against them. One in every four leading characters acts out a drama of some sort of transgression and its suppression at home and abroad.

Violence plays a key role in such a world. It is the simplest and cheapest dramatic means available to demonstrate the rules of the game of power. In real life much violence is subtle, slow, circumstantial, invisible, even impersonal. Encounters with physical violence in real life are rare, more sickening than thrilling. But in the symbolic world, overt physical motion makes dramatically visible that which in the real world is usually hidden. Symbolic violence, as any show of force, typically does the job of real violence more cheaply and, of course, entertainingly.

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Geared for independent action in loosely-knit and often remote social contexts, half of all characters are free to engage in violence. One-fifth "specialize" in violence as law breakers or law enforcers. Violence on television, unlike in real-life, rarely stems from close personal relationships. Most of it is between strangers, set up to drive home lessons of social typing. Violence is often just a specialty—a skill, a craft, an efficient means to test the norms of and settle any challenge to the existing structure of power.

*The Violence Profile is a set of indicators tracing aspects of the television world and of conceptions of social reality they tend to cultivate in the minds of viewers.*

Four specific types of indicators have been developed. Three come from message system analysis: (1) the context of programming trends against which any aspect of the world of television can be seen; (2) several specific measures of violence given separately and also combined in the Violence Index; and (3) structural characteristics of the dramatic world indicating social relationships depicted in it, (in the present report, "risk ratios"). The fourth type of indicator comes from cultivation analysis and will be shown in this report as the "cultivation differential." Although the Violence Profile is the most developed, the Cultural Indicators project is constructing similar profiles of other aspects and relationships of the media world.

Before we present the indicators, let us briefly note the definitions, terms, and some procedures employed in generating the TV violence measures.<sup>4</sup>

Message system analysis has been performed on annual sample-weeks of prime time and weekend daytime network dramatic programming since 1967 by trained analysts who observe and code many aspects of TV content. The definition of violence employed in this analysis is "the overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing." The research focuses on a clear-cut and commonly understood definition of violence, and yields indicators of trends in the programming context in which violence occurs; in the prevalence, rate, and characterizations involved in violence; and in the power relationships expressed by the differential risks found in the world of television drama.

All observations are recorded in three types of units: the program (play) as a whole, each specific violent action (if any) in the program, and each dramatic character appearing in the program.

"Program" means a single fictional story presented in dramatic form. This may be a play produced for television, a feature film telecast during the period

<sup>4</sup>For a more detailed methodological description and all tabulations not included here, see "Violence Profile: A Technical Report" (3), available for \$12.00 (checks to be made out to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania) from The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19174.

of the study, or a cartoon story (of which there may be one or more in a single program).

*Violent action* means a scene of some violence confined to the same parties. If a scene is interrupted (by flashback or shift to another scene) but continues in "real time," it is still the same act. However, if a new agent of violence enters the scene, that begins another act. These units are also called violent episodes.

*Characters* analyzed in all programs (whether violent or not) are of two types. Major characters are the principal roles essential to the story. Minor characters (subjected to a less detailed analysis) are all other speaking roles. (The findings summarized in this report include the analysis of major characters only.)

*Samples of programming.* Network dramatic programs transmitted in evening prime time (8 p.m. to 11 p.m. each day), and network children's dramatic programs transmitted weekend mornings (Saturday and Sunday between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.) comprise the analytical source material.<sup>5</sup> With respect to four basic sample dimensions (network, program format, type and tone), the solid week sample is at least as generalizable to a year's programming as larger randomly drawn samples (2).

*Coder training and reliability.* For the analysis of each program sample, a staff of 12 to 18 coders is recruited. After about three weeks of training and testing, coders analyze the season's videotaped program sample.

During both the training and data-collection phases, coders work in independent pairs and monitor their assigned videotaped programs as often as necessary. All programs in the sample are coded by two separate coder-pairs to provide double-coded data for reliability comparisons. Final measures, computed on the study's entire corpus of double-coded data, determine the acceptability of information for analysis and provide guidelines to its interpretation (11, 12).

Three sets of violence measures have been computed from the direct observational data of the message system analysis. They show the percent of programs with any violence at all, the frequency and rate of violent episodes, and the number of roles calling for characterizations as violent, victims, or both. These measures are called *prevalence*, *rate*, and *role*, respectively. Each is given separately in all the tabulations that follow.

For ease of illustration and comparison, the three types of measures are also combined to form the Violence Index. The Index itself is not a statistical finding but serves as a convenient illustrator of trends and facilitates gross comparisons. The Index is obtained by adding measures of prevalence, rates (doubled to raise their relatively low numerical value) and roles. The formula can be seen on Tables 1 through 4.

<sup>5</sup>In 1967 and 1968, the hours included were 7:30 to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 7 to 10 p.m. Sunday, and children's programs 8 a.m. to noon Saturday. Beginning in 1969, these hours were expanded until 11 p.m. each evening and from 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. As of 1971 however, network evening programming has been reduced by the FCC's prime-time access rule. The effective evening parameters since 1971 are therefore 8 to 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. Sunday.

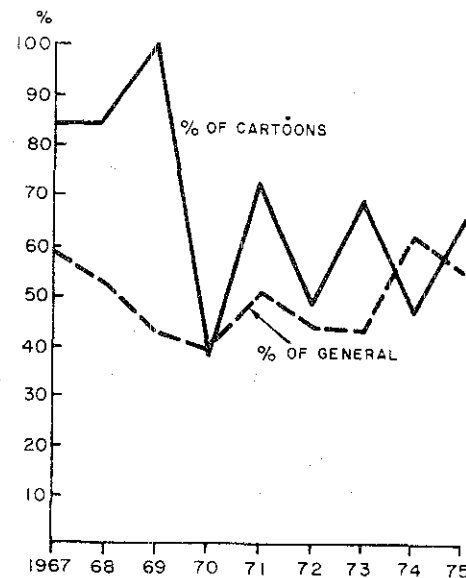


Figure 1: "Action" (crime, western, adventure) programs as percent of cartoon and of other (general) programs analyzed

Before presenting the trends indicated by the measures just discussed, let us glance at the first indicator, that of program mix. "Action" programs contribute most violence to the world of television drama. Figure 1 shows that such programs comprise more than half of all prime-time and weekend daytime programming, and their proportion of the total has not changed much in recent years. In fact, while general (non-cartoon) crime and adventure plays dropped from their 1974 high of 62 percent to 54 percent in 1975, cartoon crime and adventure rose in the same period from 47 percent to 66 percent of all cartoons.

These programming trends foreshadow the violence findings that follow. We can summarize them by noting that there has been *no significant reduction in the overall Violence Index despite some fluctuations in the specific measures and a definite drop in "family hour" violence, especially on CBS, in the current season.* The "family hour" decline has been matched by a sharp increase in violence during children's (weekend daytime) programming in the current season and by an even larger two-year rise in violence after 9 p.m. EST.

Figure 2 shows these trends in greater detail. Figure 3 provides similar information for each network separately, showing that late evening violence shot up on all three networks in the past two or three years (with minor dips on CBS and ABC in 1975), and that children's (weekend daytime) programs became more violent on ABC and NBC in the past season. Figure 4 is a direct comparison of the Violence Index for each network, showing remarkable long-term stability and similarity among them. Figure 5 is a direct comparison of the "family hour" Violence Index for each network, showing little change over a two-year period for ABC and NBC, substantial reduction for the second year in a row for CBS.

Tables 1 through 4 (found at the end of the article) present all measures for the different hours of programming. They show how the specific measures of prevalence, rate, and role fluctuate and combine each year to make up the composite Violence Index. More complete tabulations, including network and format breakdowns, can be found in the Technical Report (3).

The indicators reflected in the Violence Index are clear manifestations of what network programmers actually do as compared to what they say or intend to do. Network executives and their censorship ("Standards and Practices") offices maintain close control over the assembly line production process that results in the particular program mix of a season (6). While our data permit many specific qualifications to any generalization that might be made, it is safe to say that network policy seems to have responded in narrow terms, when at all, to very specific pressure, and only while the heat was on. After nine years of investigations, hearings, and commissions (or since we have been tracking violence on television), eight out of every ten programs (nine out of every ten weekend children's hour programs) still contain some violence. The overall rate of violent episodes, 8 per hour, is, if anything, higher than at any time since 1969. (The violence saturation of weekend children's programs declined from the 1969 high but increased from its 1974 low to 16 per hour, double that of overall programming, as can be seen on Table 4.) Between six and seven out of every ten leading characters (eight and nine for children) are still involved in some violence. Between one and two out of every ten are still involved in killing.

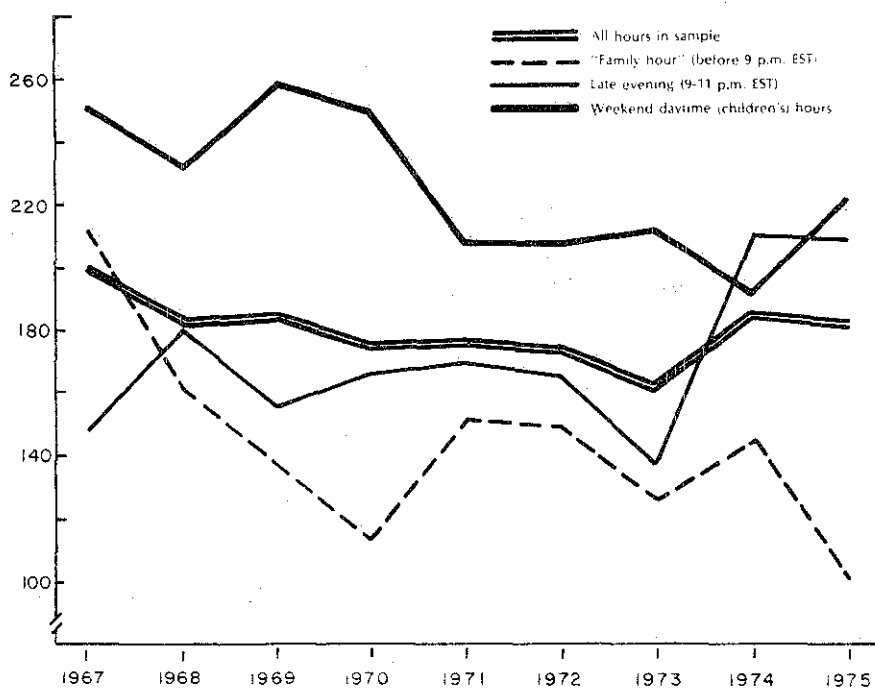


Figure 2: Violence Index for different hours of dramatic programming

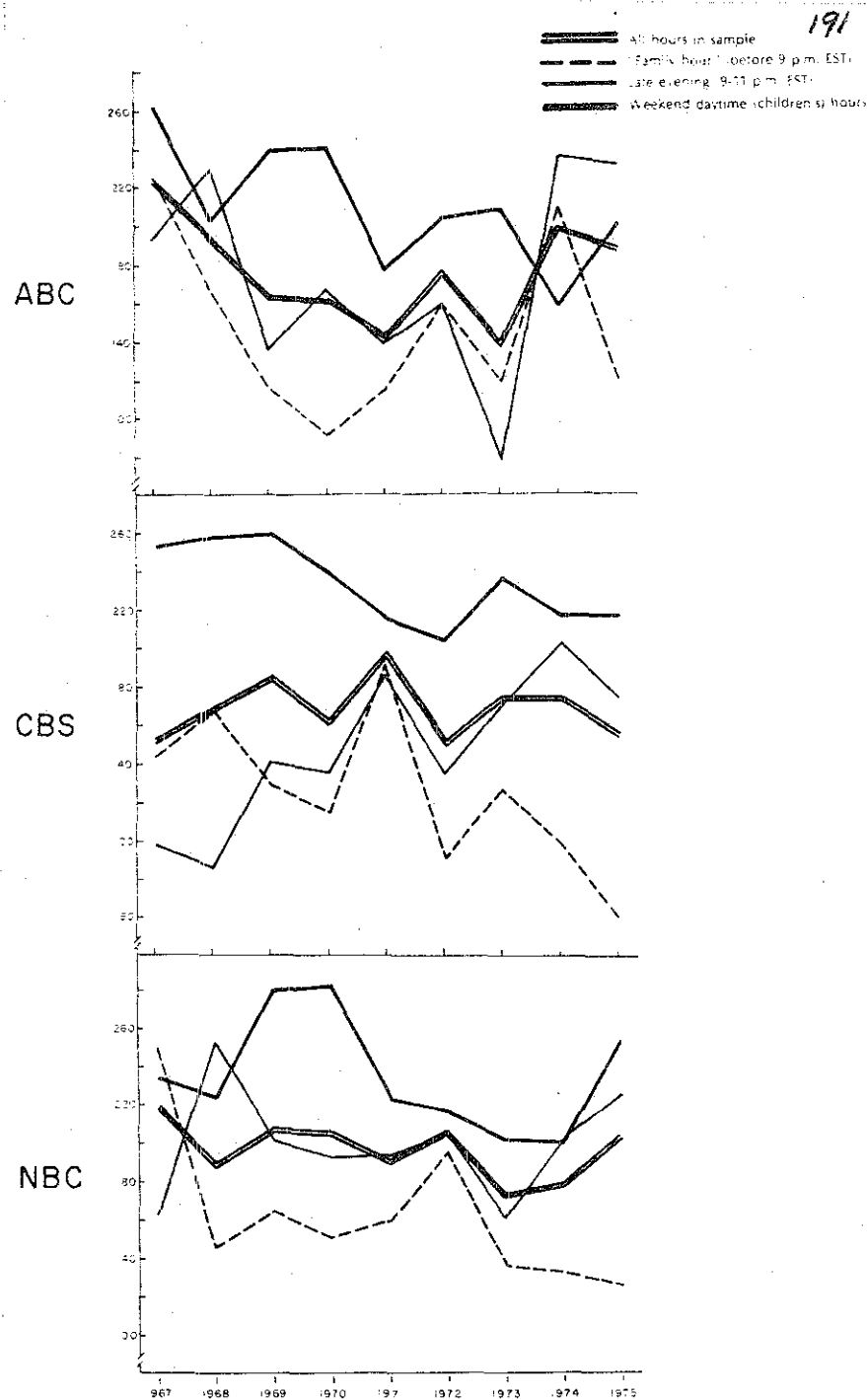


Figure 3: Violence Index for different hours by network

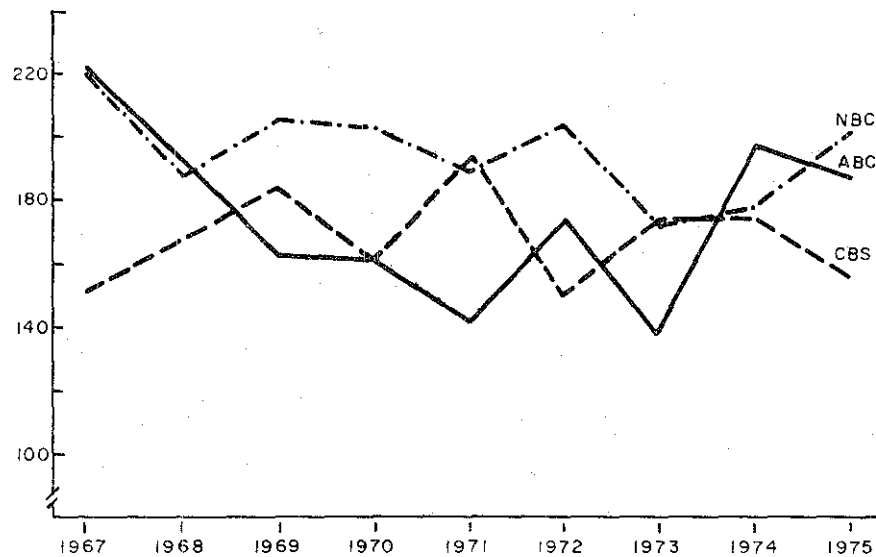


Figure 4: Violence Index for each network, all programs in sample

Reductions have been achieved in the portrayal of on-screen killers (especially during weekend children's hours) and in "family hour" violence (especially by CBS), but, as we have noted, a sharp rise in late evening and general children's violence has canceled out any overall gains from the latter.

It is clear, at least to us, that deeply rooted sociocultural forces, rather than just obstinacy or profit-seeking, are at work. We have suggested earlier in this article, and have also developed elsewhere (9, 10), that symbolic violence is a demonstration of power and an instrument of social control serving, on the whole, to reinforce and preserve the existing social order, even if at an ever increasing price in terms of pervasive fear and mistrust and of selective aggressiveness. That maintenance mechanism seems to work through cultivating a sense of danger, a differential calculus of the risks of life in different groups in the population. The Violence Profile is beginning to yield indicators of such a mechanism, and thereby also of basic structural and cultivation characteristics of television programming.

The structural characteristics of television drama are not easily controlled. They reflect basic cultural assumptions that make a show "entertaining"—i.e., smoothly and pleasingly fitting dominant notions (and prejudices) about social relations and thus demonstrating conventional notions of morality and power.

The most elementary—and telling—relationship involved in violent action is that of violent and victim. The pattern of those who inflict and those who suffer violence (or both) provides a differential calculus of hazards and opportunities for different groups of people in the "world" of television drama. Table 5<sup>6</sup> presents a summary of the scores of involvement and what we call risk ratios. The character score is the roles component (CS) of the Violence Index; it is the percent of all characters involved in any violence plus the percent involved in

<sup>6</sup> All tables appear at the end of the article.

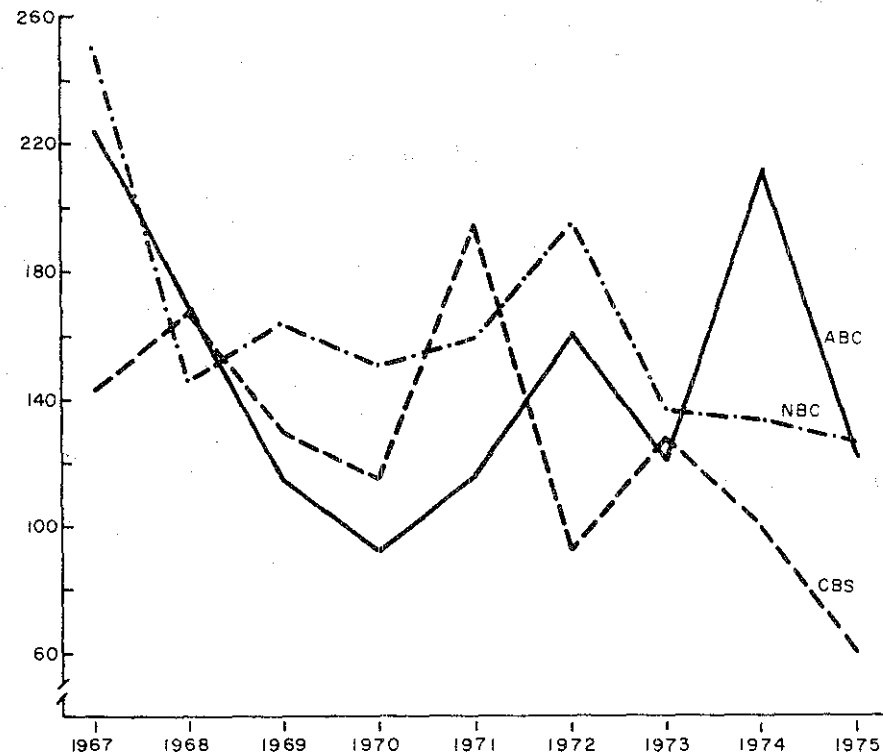


Figure 5: Violence Index for each network, family hour only

any killing. The violent-victim and killer-killed (risk) ratio are obtained by dividing violents and victims, or killers and killed within each group. The plus sign means more violents or killers in the group; the minus sign means more victims (hurt) or killed.

We see that the 1967-75 totals show 1.19 male and 1.32 female victims for every violent male and female. Even more striking are the differential risks or fatal victimization. There were nearly two male killers for every male killed; however, for every female killer one woman was killed.

Table 5 also shows the differential risks of involvement and victimization attributed to other groups, projecting assumptions about social and power relations. Old men, married men, lower class, foreign, and nonwhite males were most likely to get killed rather than to inflict lethal injury. "Good guys" were of course most likely to be the killers.

Among females, more vulnerable than men in most categories, both young and old women as well as unmarried, lower class, foreign, and nonwhite women bore especially heavy burdens of relative victimization. Old, poor, and black women were shown *only* as killed and never as killers. Interestingly, "good" women, unlike "good" men, had no lethal power, but "bad" women were even more lethal than "bad" men. The victimization of the "good" woman is often the curtain-raiser that provokes the hero to righteous "action."

The pattern of relative victimization is remarkably stable from year to year. It demonstrates an invidious (but socially functional) sense of risk and power. We do not yet know whether it also cultivates a corresponding hierarchy of fear and aggression. But we do have evidence to suggest that television viewing cultivates a general sense of danger and mistrust. That evidence comes from the fourth and final element of the Violence Profile, the component we call the cultivation differential.

*The cultivation differential comes, of course, from the cultivation analysis part of the Cultural Indicators research approach.*

It highlights differences in conception of relevant aspects of social reality that television viewing tends to cultivate in heavy viewers compared to light viewers. The strategy is obviously most appropriate to those propositions in which television might cultivate conceptions that measurably deviate from those coming from other sources. Furthermore, the independent contributions of television are likely to be most powerful in cultivating assumptions about which there is little opportunity to learn first-hand, and which are not strongly anchored in other established beliefs and ideologies.

The obvious objection arises that light and heavy viewers are different prior to—and aside from—television. Factors other than television may account for the difference.

The point is well taken. We have found, as have others, that heavy viewing is part and parcel of a complex syndrome which also includes lower education, lower mobility, lower aspirations, higher anxieties, and other class, age, and sex related characteristics. We assume, indeed, that viewing helps to hold together and cultivate elements of that syndrome. But it does more than that. Television viewing also makes a separate and independent contribution to the "biasing" of conceptions of social reality within most age, sex, educational, and other groupings, including those presumably most "immune" to its effects.

Our study of TV's contribution to notions of social reality proceeds by various methods, each comparing responses of heavy and light viewers, with other characteristics held constant. Of the different methods used in cultivation analysis, only adult survey results are included in this report; the others are still in the process of development and summarization. These surveys were executed by commercial survey research organizations. For details of sampling, etc., the reader is referred to the Technical Report (3).

To probe in the direction of the pattern suggested by our message analysis, we obtained responses to questions about facts of life that relate to law enforcement, trust, and a sense of danger. Figure 6 presents the results of the first question asking what proportion of people are employed in law enforcement. The "television answer" (slanted in the direction of the world of television) was five percent. The alternative answer (more in the direction of reality) was one percent.

As Figure 6 shows, the heavy viewers (those viewing an average of four hours a day or more) were always more likely to give the television answer than

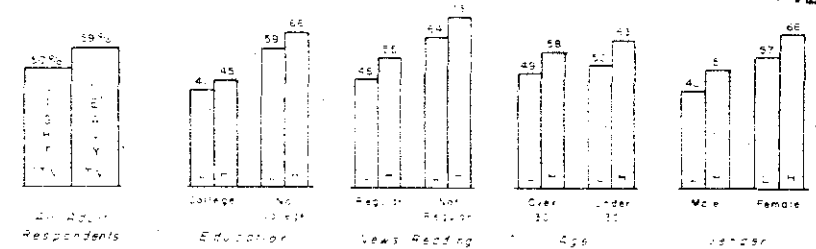


Figure 6: Percent giving the "television answer" to a question about the proportion of people employed in law enforcement

the light viewers (those viewing an average of two hours a day or less). Figure 7 shows similar results for the question "Can most people be trusted?" and Figure 8 for the question "During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some type of violence?" One in ten (the "television answer") or one in a hundred?"

Let us take education as probably the best index of a complex of social circumstances that provide alternative informational and cultural opportunities. Those of our respondents who have had some college education are less likely to choose the "television answer" than those who have had none. But *within* each group, television viewing "biases" conceptions in the direction of the "facts" it presents. When we compared light and heavy viewers within the "college" and the "no college" groups, we got a typical step-wise pattern of the percentage of "television answers." Regular reading of newspapers makes a similar difference.

Both college education and regular newspaper reading seem to reduce the percentage of "television answers," but heavy viewing boosts it within both groups. This appears to be the general pattern of TV's ability to cultivate its own "reality."

An exaggerated impression of the actual number of law enforcement workers seems to be a consequence of viewing television. Of greater concern, however, would be the cultivation of a concomitantly exaggerated demand for their services. The world of television drama is, above all, a violent one in which more than half of all characters are involved in some violence, at least one-tenth

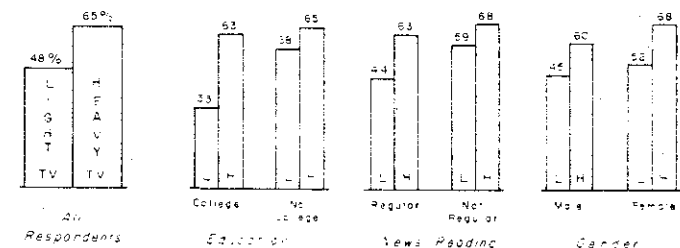


Figure 7: Percent responding "Can't be too careful" to the question "Can most people be trusted?"

in some killing, and in which over three-fourths of prime-time hours contain some violence. As we have suggested, the cultivation of fear and a sense of danger may well be a prime residue of the show of violence.

Questions about feelings of trust and safety may be used to test that suggestion. The National Opinion Research Corporation's 1975 General Social Survey asked "Can most people be trusted?" Living in the world of television seems to strengthen the conclusion that they cannot. Heavy viewers chose the answer "Can't be too careful" in significantly greater proportions than did light viewers in the same groups, as shown in Figure 7. Those who do not read newspapers regularly have a high level of mistrust regardless of TV viewing. But, not surprisingly, women are the most likely to absorb the message of distrust.

Focusing directly on violence, we asked a national sample of adults about people's chances of being involved in violence in any given week. Figure 8 shows the patterns of overestimations in line with television's view of the world. It may explain why in recent surveys, such as the Detroit study conducted by the Institute of Social Research (13), respondents' estimates of danger in their neighborhoods had little to do with crime statistics or even with their own personal experience. The pattern of our findings suggests that television and other media exposure may be as important as demographic and other experiential factors in explaining why people view the world as they do.

Television certainly appears to condition the view of the generation that knew no world without it. All the figures show that the "under 30" respondents exhibit consistently higher levels of "television responses," despite the fact that they tend to be better educated than the "over 30" respondents. We may all live in a dangerous world, but young people (including children tested but not reported on here), the less educated, women, and heavy viewers within all these groups sense greater danger than light viewers in the same groups. College education (and its social correlates) may counter the television view, but heavy exposure to TV will counteract that too.

Fear is a universal emotion and easy to exploit. Symbolic violence may be the cheapest way to cultivate it effectively. Raw violence is, in comparison, risky and costly, resorted to when symbolic means fail. Ritualized displays of any violence (such as in crime and disaster news, as well as in mass-produced drama

may cultivate exaggerated assumptions about the extent of threat and danger in the world and lead to demands for protection.

What is the net result? A heightened sense of risk and insecurity (different for groups of varying power) is more likely to increase acquiescence to and dependence upon established authority, and to legitimize its use of force, than it is to threaten the social order through occasional non-legitimized imitations. Risky for their perpetrators and costly for their victims, media-incited criminal violence may be a price industrial cultures extract from some citizens for the general pacification of most others.

As with violence, so with other aspects of social reality we are investigating. TV appears to cultivate assumptions that fit its socially functional myths. Our chief instrument of enculturation and social control, television may function as the established religion of the industrial order, relating to governance as the church did to the state in earlier times.

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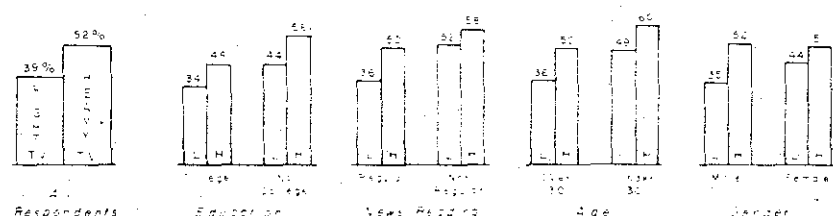


Figure 8: Percent giving the "television answer" (exaggerating) their own chances of being involved in violence

Table 1: Violence measures for all programs in sample

|                                            | 1967  | 1968  | 1969  | 1970  | 1971  | 1972  | 1973  | 1974  | 1975  | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SAMPLES (100%)                             | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Programs (plays) analyzed                  | 96    | 87    | 121   | 111   | 103   | 100   | 99    | 96    | 111   | 924   |
| Program Hours Analyzed                     | 62.0  | 58.5  | 71.8  | 67.2  | 70.3  | 72.0  | 75.2  | 76.0  | 77.3  | 630.2 |
| Leading characters analyzed                | 240   | 215   | 377   | 196   | 252   | 300   | 359   | 346   | 364   | 2649  |
| PREVALENCE                                 | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| (%P) Programs containing violence          | 81.3  | 81.6  | 83.5  | 77.5  | 80.6  | 79.0  | 72.7  | 83.3  | 78.4  | 79.8  |
| Program hours containing violence          | 83.2  | 87.0  | 83.2  | 78.3  | 87.2  | 84.2  | 79.7  | 86.8  | 83.0  | 83.6  |
| RATE                                       | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Number of violent episodes                 | 478   | 394   | 630   | 498   | 483   | 539   | 524   | 522   | 626   | 4694  |
| (R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)        | 5.0   | 4.5   | 5.2   | 4.5   | 4.7   | 5.4   | 5.3   | 5.4   | 5.6   | 5.1   |
| (R/H) Rate per all hours                   | 7.7   | 6.7   | 8.6   | 7.4   | 6.9   | 7.5   | 7.0   | 6.9   | 8.1   | 7.4   |
| Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)         | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | 3.2   | 3.8   | 3.6   | 10.6  |
| ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)            | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| Violents (committing violence)             | 55.8  | 49.3  | 46.5  | 52.0  | 46.0  | 39.3  | 34.5  | 40.8  | 43.1  | 44.6  |
| Victims (subjected to violence)            | 64.6  | 55.8  | 58.9  | 56.6  | 50.8  | 45.7  | 48.2  | 51.2  | 53.8  | 54.0  |
| (%V) Any involvement in violence           | 73.3  | 65.1  | 66.3  | 62.8  | 61.5  | 58.3  | 55.7  | 60.7  | 64.8  | 62.9  |
| Killers (committing fatal violence)        | 12.5  | 10.7  | 3.7   | 6.6   | 8.7   | 7.7   | 5.8   | 9.8   | 6.3   | 7.7   |
| Killed (victims of lethal violence)        | 7.1   | 3.7   | 2.1   | 4.6   | 3.2   | 4.7   | 3.3   | 5.6   | 3.8   | 4.2   |
| (%K) Any involvement in killing            | 18.7  | 11.6  | 5.6   | 8.7   | 9.9   | 9.7   | 7.5   | 13.6  | 9.1   | 10.2  |
| INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Program Score: PS = (%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H) | 106.6 | 104.1 | 111.4 | 101.3 | 103.7 | 104.8 | 97.3  | 107.9 | 105.6 | 104.8 |
| Character V-Score: CS = (%V) + (%K)        | 92.1  | 76.7  | 71.9  | 71.4  | 71.4  | 68.0  | 63.2  | 74.3  | 73.9  | 73.0  |
| Violence Index: VI = PS + CS               | 198.7 | 180.9 | 183.3 | 172.7 | 175.1 | 172.8 | 160.5 | 182.2 | 179.7 | 177.8 |

Table 2: Violence measures for family hour only

|                                            | 1967  | 1968  | 1969  | 1970  | 1971  | 1972  | 1973  | 1974  | 1975  | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SAMPLES (100%)                             | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Programs (plays) analyzed                  | 38    | 36    | 38    | 35    | 28    | 27    | 32    | 29    | 31    | 294   |
| Program Hours Analyzed                     | 30.0  | 27.0  | 27.3  | 26.0  | 25.0  | 23.5  | 29.0  | 27.0  | 21.5  | 236.3 |
| Leading characters analyzed                | 103   | 102   | 130   | 76    | 78    | 98    | 110   | 109   | 105   | 911   |
| PREVALENCE                                 | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| (%P) Programs containing violence          | 78.9  | 75.0  | 63.2  | 57.1  | 75.0  | 74.1  | 56.3  | 69.0  | 51.6  | 66.7  |
| Program hours containing violence          | 86.7  | 83.3  | 74.3  | 67.3  | 86.0  | 85.1  | 70.7  | 77.8  | 60.5  | 77.1  |
| RATE                                       | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Number of violent episodes                 | 240   | 123   | 122   | 86    | 110   | 122   | 147   | 108   | 77    | 1135  |
| (R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)        | 6.3   | 3.4   | 3.2   | 2.5   | 3.9   | 4.5   | 4.6   | 3.7   | 2.5   | 3.9   |
| (R/H) Rate per all hours                   | 8.0   | 4.6   | 4.5   | 3.3   | 4.4   | 5.2   | 5.1   | 4.0   | 3.6   | 4.8   |
| Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)         | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | 0.9   | 1.0   | 0.5   | 2.4   |
| ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)            | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| Violents (committing violence)             | 58.3  | 39.2  | 36.2  | 32.9  | 37.2  | 37.8  | 29.1  | 24.4  | 16.2  | 35.0  |
| Victims (subjected to violence)            | 68.9  | 46.1  | 40.8  | 39.5  | 38.5  | 40.8  | 33.6  | 36.7  | 27.6  | 41.4  |
| (%V) Any involvement in violence           | 75.7  | 56.9  | 49.2  | 40.8  | 50.0  | 50.0  | 40.9  | 45.0  | 36.2  | 49.5  |
| Killers (committing fatal violence)        | 22.3  | 10.8  | 6.2   | 3.9   | 9.0   | 4.1   | 6.4   | 12.8  | 1.0   | 8.6   |
| Killed (victims of lethal violence)        | 7.8   | 4.9   | 3.1   | 1.3   | 2.6   | 3.1   | 4.5   | 7.3   | 0.0   | 4.0   |
| (%K) Any involvement in killing            | 28.2  | 12.7  | 9.2   | 3.9   | 10.3  | 5.1   | 10.0  | 16.5  | 1.0   | 11.0  |
| INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Program Score: PS = (%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H) | 107.6 | 90.9  | 78.5  | 68.7  | 91.7  | 93.5  | 75.6  | 84.4  | 63.7  | 84.0  |
| Character V-Score: CS = (%V) + (%K)        | 103.9 | 69.6  | 58.5  | 44.7  | 60.3  | 55.1  | 50.9  | 61.5  | 37.1  | 60.5  |
| Violence Index: VI = PS + CS               | 211.5 | 160.6 | 137.0 | 113.4 | 151.9 | 148.6 | 126.5 | 145.9 | 100.9 | 144.5 |

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**Table 3: Violence measures for late evening (9-11 p.m. EST)**

|                                               | 1967  | 1968  | 1969  | 1970  | 1971  | 1972  | 1973  | 1974  | 1975  | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>SAMPLES (100%)</b>                         | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Programs (plays) analyzed                     | 26    | 21    | 26    | 26    | 34    | 33    | 30    | 29    | 35    | 260   |
| Program Hours Analyzed                        | 25.0  | 24.0  | 30.5  | 28.0  | 30.3  | 33.0  | 27.5  | 33.0  | 39.5  | 270.7 |
| Leading characters analyzed                   | 75    | 60    | 88    | 56    | 91    | 119   | 104   | 115   | 133   | 841   |
| <b>PREVALENCE</b>                             | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| (%P) Programs containing violence             | 69.2  | 76.2  | 80.8  | 69.2  | 76.5  | 69.7  | 63.3  | 86.2  | 85.7  | 75.4  |
| Program hours containing violence             | 76.0  | 89.6  | 84.4  | 80.4  | 87.6  | 79.8  | 79.1  | 92.4  | 92.4  | 85.1  |
| <b>RATE</b>                                   | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Number of violent episodes                    | 87    | 99    | 110   | 116   | 129   | 172   | 130   | 220   | 284   | 1347  |
| (R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)           | 3.3   | 4.7   | 4.2   | 4.5   | 3.8   | 5.2   | 4.3   | 7.6   | 8.1   | 5.2   |
| (R/H) Rate per all hours                      | 3.5   | 4.1   | 3.6   | 4.1   | 4.3   | 5.2   | 4.7   | 6.7   | 7.2   | 5.0   |
| Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)            | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | 1.3   | 1.8   | 1.9   | 5.0   |
| <b>ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)</b>        | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| Violents (committing violence)                | 38.7  | 55.0  | 34.1  | 46.4  | 44.0  | 37.8  | 32.7  | 56.5  | 51.1  | 44.0  |
| Victims (subjected to violence)               | 42.7  | 55.0  | 44.3  | 50.0  | 48.4  | 45.4  | 36.5  | 61.7  | 59.4  | 49.7  |
| (%V) Any involvement in violence              | 56.0  | 68.3  | 52.3  | 57.1  | 59.3  | 55.5  | 41.3  | 71.3  | 68.4  | 59.1  |
| Killers (committing fatal violence)           | 5.3   | 16.7  | 5.7   | 14.3  | 15.4  | 16.0  | 12.5  | 16.5  | 16.5  | 13.6  |
| Killed (victims of lethal violence)           | 4.0   | 5.0   | 2.3   | 12.5  | 5.5   | 8.4   | 6.7   | 10.4  | 9.8   | 7.4   |
| (%K) Any involvement in killing               | 9.3   | 16.7  | 6.8   | 21.4  | 17.6  | 19.3  | 14.4  | 24.3  | 23.3  | 17.6  |
| <b>INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE</b>                 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Program Score: $PS = (\%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H)$ | 82.9  | 93.9  | 96.4  | 86.4  | 92.6  | 90.5  | 81.5  | 114.7 | 116.3 | 95.7  |
| Character V-Score: $CS = (\%V) + (\%K)$       | 65.3  | 85.0  | 59.1  | 78.6  | 76.9  | 74.8  | 55.8  | 95.7  | 91.7  | 76.7  |
| Violence Index: $VI = PS + CS$                | 148.2 | 178.9 | 155.5 | 165.0 | 169.5 | 165.3 | 137.2 | 210.4 | 208.1 | 172.4 |

**Table 4: Violence measures for weekend daytime (children's) hours**

|                                               | 1967  | 1968  | 1969  | 1970  | 1971  | 1972  | 1973  | 1974  | 1975  | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>SAMPLES (100%)</b>                         | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Programs (plays) analyzed                     | 32    | 30    | 57    | 50    | 41    | 40    | 37    | 38    | 45    | 370   |
| Program Hours Analyzed                        | 7.0   | 7.5   | 14.0  | 13.2  | 15.0  | 15.5  | 18.7  | 16.0  | 16.3  | 123.2 |
| Leading characters analyzed                   | 62    | 53    | 159   | 64    | 83    | 83    | 145   | 122   | 126   | 697   |
| <b>PREVALENCE</b>                             | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| (%P) Programs containing violence             | 93.8  | 93.3  | 98.2  | 96.0  | 87.8  | 90.0  | 94.6  | 92.1  | 91.1  | 93.2  |
| Program hours containing violence             | 94.0  | 92.2  | 97.0  | 95.6  | 88.5  | 92.3  | 94.6  | 90.6  | 89.8  | 92.7  |
| <b>RATE</b>                                   | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     | N     |
| Number of violent episodes                    | 151   | 172   | 398   | 296   | 244   | 245   | 247   | 194   | 265   | 2212  |
| (R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)           | 4.7   | 5.7   | 7.0   | 5.9   | 6.0   | 6.1   | 6.7   | 5.1   | 5.9   | 6.0   |
| (R/H) Rate per all hours                      | 21.6  | 22.9  | 28.4  | 22.5  | 16.2  | 15.8  | 13.2  | 12.1  | 16.2  | 18.0  |
| Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)            | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | --    | 1.0   | 0.9   | 1.2   | 3.2   |
| <b>ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)</b>        | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| Violents (committing violence)                | 72.6  | 62.3  | 66.7  | 79.7  | 56.6  | 43.4  | 40.0  | 36.1  | 57.1  | 54.8  |
| Victims (subjected to violence)               | 83.9  | 75.5  | 81.8  | 82.8  | 65.1  | 66.3  | 67.6  | 54.1  | 69.8  | 70.9  |
| (%V) Any involvement in violence              | 90.3  | 77.4  | 88.1  | 93.8  | 74.7  | 72.3  | 77.2  | 64.8  | 84.9  | 79.9  |
| Killers (committing fatal violence)           | 4.8   | 3.8   | 0.6   | 3.1   | 1.2   | 0.0   | 0.7   | 0.8   | 0.0   | 1.2   |
| Killed (victims of lethal violence)           | 9.7   | 0.0   | 1.3   | 1.6   | 1.2   | 1.2   | 0.0   | 0.0   | 0.8   | 1.3   |
| (%K) Any involvement in killing               | 14.5  | 3.8   | 1.9   | 3.1   | 1.2   | 1.2   | 0.7   | 0.8   | 0.8   | 2.3   |
| <b>INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE</b>                 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Program Score: $PS = (\%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H)$ | 146.3 | 150.7 | 169.1 | 152.8 | 132.2 | 133.9 | 134.4 | 126.6 | 135.3 | 141.1 |
| Character V-Score: $CS = (\%V) + (\%K)$       | 104.8 | 81.1  | 89.9  | 96.9  | 75.9  | 73.5  | 77.9  | 65.6  | 85.7  | 82.3  |
| Violence Index: $VI = PS + CS$                | 251.2 | 231.8 | 259.0 | 249.7 | 208.1 | 207.4 | 212.3 | 192.1 | 221.1 | 223.4 |

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Table 5: Risk ratios for all programs studied 1967-75

| Groups                  | Male Characters |                 |                      |                     | Female Characters |                 |                      |                     |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|
|                         | N               | Character score | Violent-victim ratio | Killer-killed ratio | N                 | Character score | Violent-victim ratio | Killer-killed ratio |
| All characters          | 2010            | 80.0            | -1.19                | +1.97               | 605               | 48.9            | -1.32                | 1.00                |
| <i>Social age</i>       |                 |                 |                      |                     |                   |                 |                      |                     |
| Children-adolescents    | 188             | 64.9            | -1.83                | +0.00               | 77                | 46.8            | -1.39                | 0.00*               |
| Young adults            | 431             | 81.2            | -1.21                | +3.07               | 209               | 59.8            | -1.67                | +1.29               |
| Settled adults          | 1068            | 80.8            | -1.15                | +1.98               | 267               | 37.8            | 1.00                 | 1.00                |
| Old                     | 81              | 58.0            | +1.03                | -2.00               | 22                | 50.0            | -2.25                | -0.00*              |
| <i>Marital status</i>   |                 |                 |                      |                     |                   |                 |                      |                     |
| Not married             | 1133            | 83.6            | -1.16                | +2.24               | 306               | 57.2            | -1.51                | -1.43               |
| Married                 | 462             | 66.9            | -1.33                | +1.57               | 252               | 39.3            | -1.11                | +1.40               |
| <i>Class</i>            |                 |                 |                      |                     |                   |                 |                      |                     |
| Clearly upper           | 196             | 87.2            | -1.28                | +1.15               | 70                | 52.9            | -1.64                | +1.33               |
| Mixed; indeterminate    | 1744            | 78.7            | -1.19                | +2.36               | 517               | 48.2            | -1.26                | 1.00                |
| Clearly lower           | 70              | 91.4            | 1.11                 | -1.33               | 18                | 55.6            | 2.67                 | -0.00*              |
| <i>Nationality</i>      |                 |                 |                      |                     |                   |                 |                      |                     |
| U.S.                    | 1505            | 75.0            | 1.19                 | +2.39               | 503               | 46.1            | 1.39                 | -1.08               |
| Other                   | 276             | 96.7            | -1.22                | +1.13               | 66                | 60.6            | 1.55                 | +3.00               |
| <i>Race</i>             |                 |                 |                      |                     |                   |                 |                      |                     |
| White                   | 1533            | 77.6            | -1.20                | +2.12               | 541               | 49.9            | -1.29                | +1.07               |
| Other                   | 264             | 83.3            | -1.27                | +1.33               | 50                | 38.0            | -2.43                | -0.00*              |
| <i>Character type**</i> |                 |                 |                      |                     |                   |                 |                      |                     |
| "Good" (heroes)         | 928             | 69.3            | -1.26                | +3.47               | 314               | 43.3            | -1.56                | -6.00               |
| Mixed type              | 432             | 71.1            | -1.31                | +1.09               | 156               | 43.6            | -1.37                | 1.00                |
| "Bad" (villains)        | 291             | 114.1           | -1.03                | +1.80               | 41                | 82.9            | +1.14                | +2.00               |

\* Group has neither violent(s) nor victims. If 0.00 is preceded by a sign, group has either no violent(s) or no victims; +0.00 means only violent(s) but no victims(s); -0.00 means only victim(s) but no violent(s).

\*\* This classification was introduced in 1969.

Note: Character score is the percent of characters involved in any violence plus the percent involved in any killing. V-v ratio is of violent(s) (+) and victims (-). K-k ratio is of killers (+) and killed (-).

Sex, Violence, and the Rules of the Game

## TV Violence Profile No. 8: The Highlights

by George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eleey, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorielli

*Summary of annual report shows sharp upturn and confirms associations with viewer conceptions of a "mean world."*

Television violence increased sharply in all dramatic categories including "family viewing" and children's programs on all three networks. The increase resulted in the highest Violence Index on record. The only score that comes close to the current record of 204 was the score of 199 in 1967, the year of turmoil that led to the establishment of the Eisenhower Violence Commission and our TV Violence Index.

Other components of the TV Violence Profile confirmed previous findings of the unequal structure of power and risk in the world of television drama, and showed children's particular vulnerability to the effects of television. Heavy viewers revealed a significantly higher sense of personal risk, of law-enforcement, and of mistrust and suspicion than did light viewers in the same demographic groups, exposed to the same real risks of life. The results also showed that TV's independent contributions to the cultivation of these conceptions of a "mean world" and other aspects of social reality are not significantly altered by sex, age, education, income, newspaper reading, and church attendance.

The authors are members of the communications research team at the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, in charge of the Cultural Indicators project studying trends in network television dramatic content and viewer conceptions of social reality. A special analysis of television and race was conducted by Josephine Holz, a doctoral candidate at the same institution. The study is conducted under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. A previous article describing the theoretical and methodological bases of that study, and reporting the findings of Violence Profile No. 7, appeared in the Spring 1976 issue of the *Journal* (1). This article presents the findings of monitoring and viewer studies conducted in the fall and winter of 1976-77 and brings the Violence Profile up to date. It is based on a larger report including methodological details and 71 tables (2). Copies are available for \$12.50 each (checks to be made payable to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania).

Table 2: Data sources for questions included in index reflecting "television answers" relating to violence, by each network.

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The Violence Profile is a cluster of indices sensitive to different aspects of the nature and effects as well as the amount of violence on television. The Violence Index, one component of the Profile, is a composite of measures of the prevalence, rate, and characterizations involved in violent action.

The latest Violence Index was based on the analysis of a fall 1976 sample of prime time, late evening, and weekend daytime network television dramatic programming. The analysis focused on clear-cut and unambiguous physical expressions of overt violence in any context. (Available evidence suggests that violence in a humorous or fantasy context may be at least as effective a demonstration of some of its lessons as "realistic" or "serious" violence. The social consequences of these "lessons" are not given or implicit in the Index but may be inferred from other components of the Profile.)

Figure 1 shows that the percentage of characters involved in violence and killing (CS) rose to the second highest, and the indicator of violent action in programs (PS) to the highest point on record. Three-fourths (74.9 percent) of all characters were involved in some violence compared to 65 percent in 1975. Nine out of every ten programs sampled (89.1 percent) contained some violence, compared to 78.4 percent in 1975. The saturation of programs with violence, indicated by the rate of violent episodes, rose to record heights of 6.2 per play and 9.5 per hour, compared to 5.6 and 8.1, respectively in 1975. Only killing

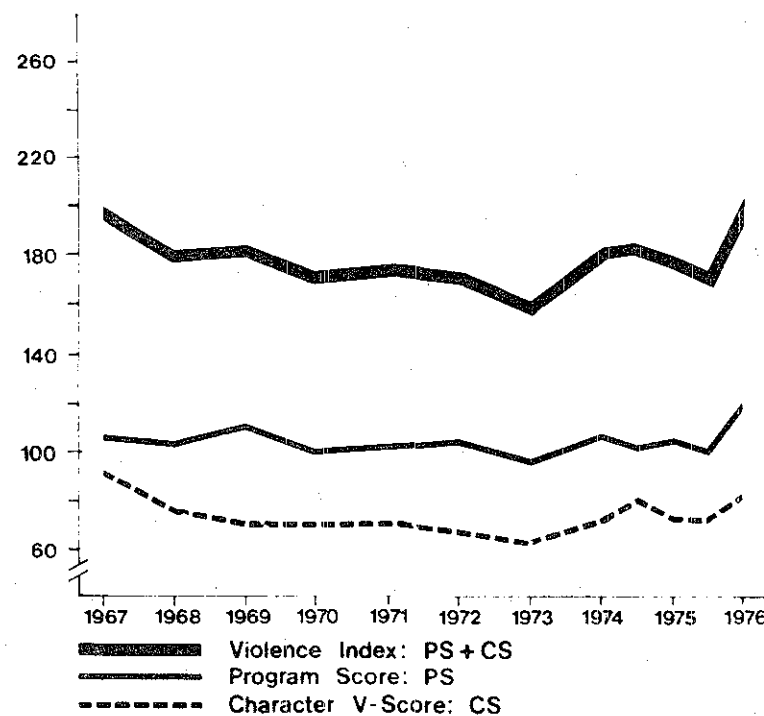


Figure 1: Violence Index 1967-1976

Table 1: Violence Index by networks and different hours of programming for 1975 and 1976

|                                                       | ABC  |      | CBS  |      | NBC  |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                                                       | 1975 | 1976 | 1975 | 1976 | 1975 | 1976 |
| Overall index                                         | 187  | 207  | 155  | 181  | 201  | 224  |
| "Family viewing" time<br>(8-9 p.m. EST)               | 121  | 197  | 60   | 101  | 126  | 139  |
| Late evening (9-11 p.m. EST)                          | 232  | 196  | 176  | 175  | 224  | 282  |
| Weekend (children's) hours<br>(Sat. and Sun. daytime) | 201  | 237  | 218  | 239  | 252  | 264  |

declined slightly. The cumulative effect of the increases resulted in the unprecedented jump in the composite Violence Index.

The increase in violence cuts across program categories and times. The context of dramatic programming did not change significantly, eliminating the possibility that the upsurge of violence was due to a sudden jump in the number of action programs, or late evening, cartoon, new, or "serious" programs in the sample.

All three networks increased in their overall mix of violence but stayed in the same violence rank order as in 1975 with NBC the highest, ABC second, and

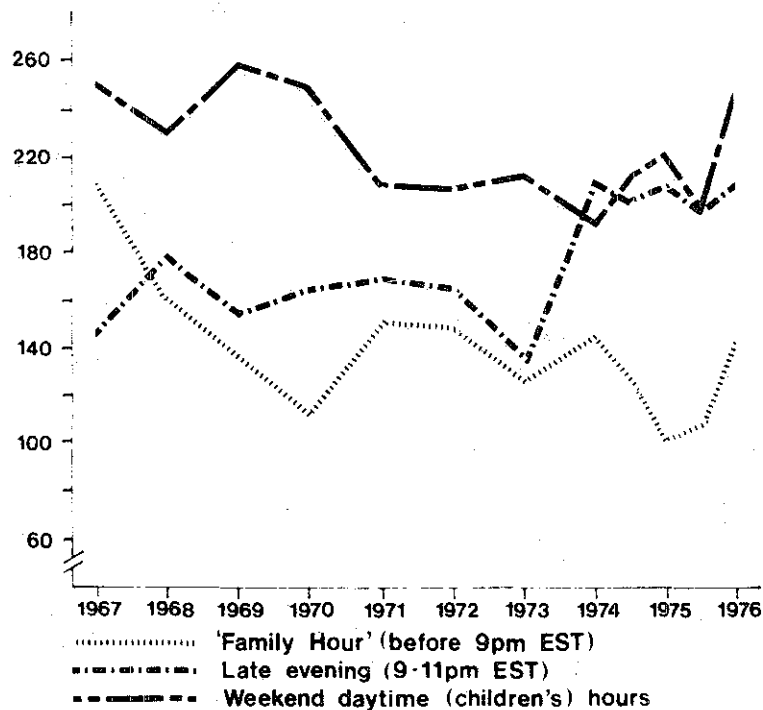


Figure 2: Violence Index for different hours of dramatic programming

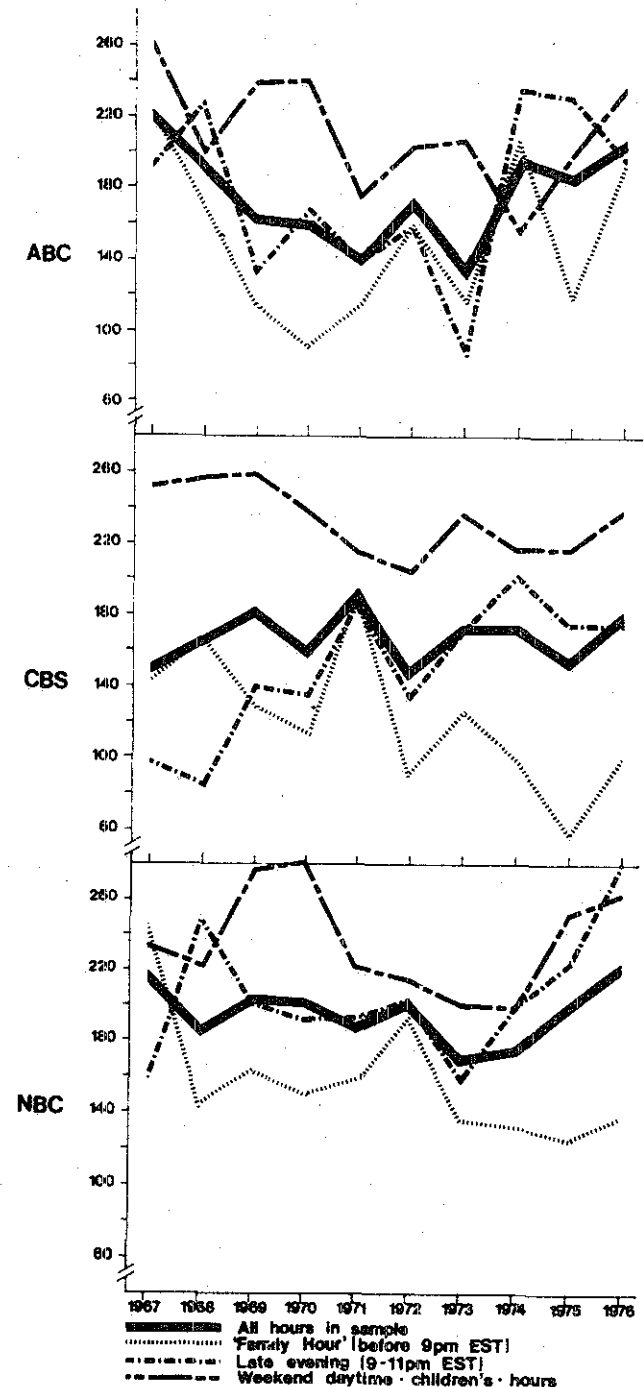


Figure 3: Violence Index for different hours of programming by networks

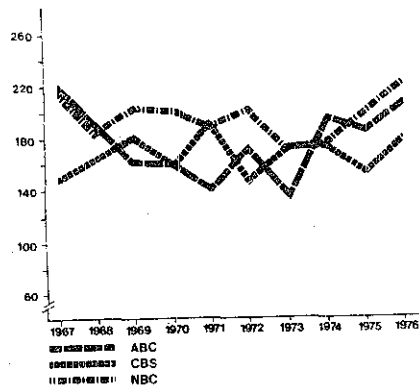


Figure 4: Violence Index for each network, all programs in sample

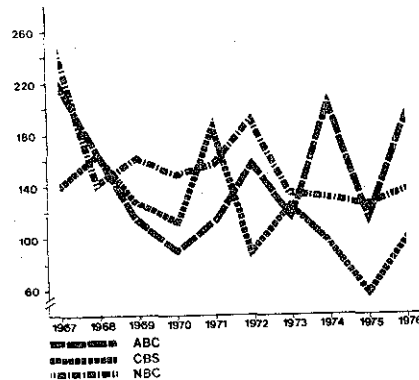


Figure 5: Violence Index for each network, "Family Hour" only

CBS third. A network-by-network comparison showing the rounded Violence Index scores for 1975 and 1976 appears in Table 1.

The 10-year trends are shown in Figures 2 through 7. Figure 2 gives the Violence Index for different hours of programming for all networks. Figure 3 presents the Violence Index for different hours of programming by each network. Figures 4 through 7 provide direct network comparisons separately for the overall Index, "family viewing time," late evening, and weekend (children's) programs.

As in 1975, NBC is the "leader" in overall violence and in both children's hours and late evening violence. ABC is in the middle in overall violence, due to a decline in late evening violence (in which it had been the highest before), and despite increases in "family viewing" and children's hours. CBS, leader in the "family viewing" concept, lifted its two-season lid on "family viewing time" violence, but still held the lowest "family viewing time," late evening, and overall violence scores. The Violence Index ranks CBS least and NBC most

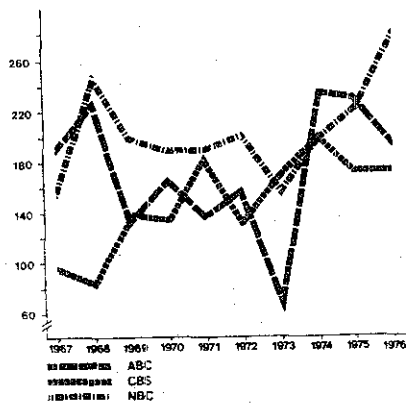


Figure 6: Violence Index for each network, late evening only

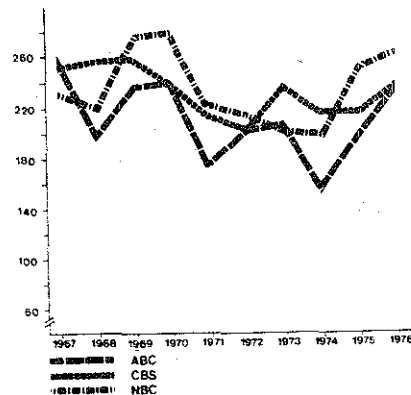


Figure 7: Violence Index for each network, weekend daytime (children's) programs only

violent overall, CBS least and ABC most violent in "family viewing time," CBS least and NBC most violent in late evening, and ABC least and NBC most violent in weekend (children's) program time.

Other components of the Violence Profile deal with the structure of power demonstrated in TV violence and with conceptions of social reality that television viewing cultivates in the minds of viewers. The most elementary—and telling—social structure involved in a violence scenario is that of violent and victims. The ratios of those who inflict and those who suffer violence provide a calculus of life's chances for different groups of people in the world of television drama. These Risk Ratios are obtained by dividing the more numerous of these two roles by the less numerous within each group. A plus sign indicates that there are more violent or killers than victims or killed and a minus sign indicates that there are more victims or killed than violent or killers.

The overall Violence-Victim Ratio since 1969 (when this measure was developed) is  $-1.21$ , meaning that for every violent there were 1.21 victims. However, while the overall victimization ratio for men is  $-1.20$ , for women it is higher:  $-1.32$ . Even more striking are the differential risks of fatal victimiza-

Table 2: Data sources for questions included in index reflecting "television answers" relating to violence and law enforcement

| Question<br>("TV Answer" Underlined)                                                                                                                     | Data Source                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                          | "Real world"                                                                                                                                               | "World of television"                                                                                  |
| 1. During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some kind of violence? <u>About one in ten?</u> <u>About 1 in 100?</u>              | .41 violent crimes per 100 people (1973 Police data)                                                                                                       | 64.4% of characters are involved in violence (Cultural Indicators data, 1976-76)                       |
| 2. What percent of all males who have jobs work in law enforcement and crime detection? <u>One percent?</u> <u>Five percent?</u>                         | 1% (1970 U.S. Census)                                                                                                                                      | 12% of all TV male characters (Cultural Indicators data, 1969-76)                                      |
| 3. What percent of all crimes are violent crimes like murders, rape, robbery and aggravated assault? <u>Fifteen percent?</u> <u>Twenty-five percent?</u> | 10% (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1974)                                                                                                               | 77% of all TV major characters (as criminals) also commit violence (Cultural Indicators data, 1969-76) |
| 4. Does most fatal violence occur between strangers or between relatives or acquaintances?                                                               | 15% of homicides occur between strangers, 64% occur between family members or friends (National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, 1969) | 58% of homicides are committed by strangers (Cultural Indicators data, 1967-76)                        |

tion: There were nearly two male killers for every male killed (Killer-Killed Ratio of +1.96). However, for every female killer, one woman was killed (K-K Ratio of 1.00).

Particularly high risks of victimization (relative to the ability to inflict violence) are borne by children (-1.73), old women (-3.00), unmarried women (-1.50), lower class women (-2.25), nonwhites (-1.40) and particularly non-white women (-2.50). "Good" characters were more likely to be victimized (-1.28) than "bad" characters (-1.02), although the latter were more often fatal victims. "Good" women were even more likely victims (-1.47) than "good" men (-1.24). But "bad" women had the most favorable (and only positive) Violent-Victim Ratio of all groups (+1.16). Committing violence seems more likely to mark a female than a male character "bad" in the world of television.

Exceptionally high relative risks of *fatal* victimization are borne by the old and the poor, particularly among women. (Detailed findings can be found in Tables 44 through 64, with a summary in Table 65 of the full report (2).)

Although the pattern of relative victimization has been fairly stable from year to year, the overall Violent-Victim Ratio declined from -1.25 in 1975 to -1.06 in 1976, suggesting a possible decrease in relative overall victimization.

**Table 3: Partial correlations between amount of television viewing and scores on index reflecting "television answers" to questions about violence and law enforcement**

|                              | ADULT SAMPLES                            |        |                                           |        |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------------|--------|
|                              | Quota sample<br>(N = 573)                |        | National Probability sample<br>(N = 1627) |        |
| Control                      | Partial correlation<br>coefficient and p |        | Partial correlation<br>coefficient and p  |        |
| Zero order<br>(no controls): | .16                                      | (.001) | .07                                       | (.003) |
| Sex:                         | .17                                      | (.001) | .07                                       | (.003) |
| Age:                         | .17                                      | (.001) | .08                                       | (.001) |
| Years of education:          | .12                                      | (.003) | .05                                       | (.015) |
| Newspaper reading:           | .18                                      | (.001) | .09                                       | (.001) |
| TV news programs:            | .13                                      | (.001) |                                           |        |
| All controls:                | .08                                      | (.036) | .06                                       | (.001) |
|                              | CHILDREN'S SAMPLES                       |        |                                           |        |
|                              | New Jersey (N = 466)                     |        | New York (N = 133)                        |        |
| Control                      | Partial correlation<br>coefficient and p |        | Partial correlation<br>coefficient and p  |        |
| Zero order<br>(no controls): | .16                                      | (.001) | .21                                       | (.021) |
| Sex:                         | .15                                      | (.001) | .23                                       | (.029) |
| Grade/Age:                   | .16                                      | (.001) | .20                                       | (.047) |
| Newspapers:                  | .16                                      | (.001) | .18                                       | (.070) |
| Father's education:          | .15                                      | (.001) |                                           |        |
| SES:                         |                                          |        | .17                                       | (.076) |
| IQ:                          | .13                                      | (.001) |                                           |        |
| All controls:                | .12                                      | (.004) | .18                                       | (.079) |

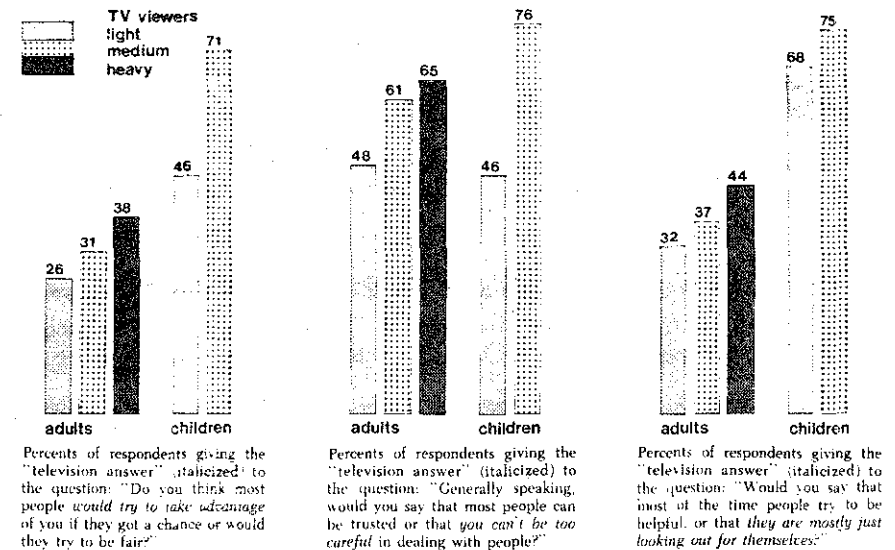


**Figure 8: Percents of adults and children giving "television answers" to three "mean world" questions**

However, the relative power positions of different sex, age, and social groups did not change.

Indicators of conceptions of social reality that television cultivates in the minds of viewers comprise the final components of the Violence Profile. They highlight the effects of heavy television viewing for different groups and in relation to various socioeconomic, educational, cultural, and media consumption characteristics and activities. Nine data bases have yielded the results reported here. Five are adult and four are children's samples.

To summarize larger patterns of responses, we have combined the answers to sets of related questions. Table 2 lists one group of questions combined into a Cultivation Index relating to some assumptions about the facts of violence and law enforcement. The table shows the relationship between each component question, its source in the message analysis data, and the corresponding "real world" figure.

Such an Index can be used to compute relationships between the answers given by our respondents and their levels of television viewing, controlling for a variety of important demographic and individual characteristics. In Table 3 we show the zero-order and partial correlations of the violence and law enforcement Index with amount of television viewing for two adult and two children's samples.

The analysis shows a significant tendency for heavy viewers to overestimate the prevalence of violence, compared to that exhibited by light viewers. The analysis also demonstrates that television effects cannot be accounted for in

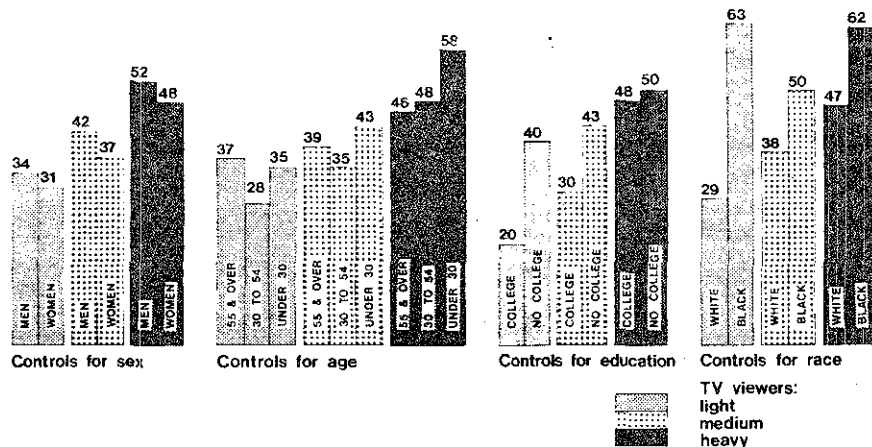


Figure 9: "Mean world" index (percents of respondents scoring high on three "mean world" questions) controlled for sex, age, education and race

terms of the major demographic variables of age, sex, education or even, in the case of our New Jersey children's sample, I.Q. Controlling for these variables, we still find a positive and significant relationship between our Index and amounts of television viewing. In each sample, television viewing is significantly associated with giving "television answers" to our questions, and the partial correlations show that the relationships remain positive and, in 19 out of 22 cases, significant when controls are added, singly or together. The effects are consistent and robust across a range of undoubtedly powerful control comparisons.

We have also analyzed responses to three questions used on the NORC 1975 General Social Survey and added to one of our children's surveys. The heavy viewers, both child and adult, were consistently more likely to choose an answer which reflected a sense of mistrust and suspicion. Figure 8 shows the pattern of answers to this set of what we have called "mean world" questions. The percentages of "television answers" given by the light, medium, and heavy viewers (in the case of children, viewing levels did not permit us to identify heavy viewers in our usual terms) clearly indicate the patterns of association between viewing and conceptions of social reality.

We have combined these questions into a "mean world" index shown in Figure 9. We see that the greater likelihood of giving television answers among heavy viewers retains (or increases) its strength with controls for sex, age, and education. (Controls for income, newspaper reading, and church attendance show the same results. All data and statistical tests of association strength can be found in the full report (2).)

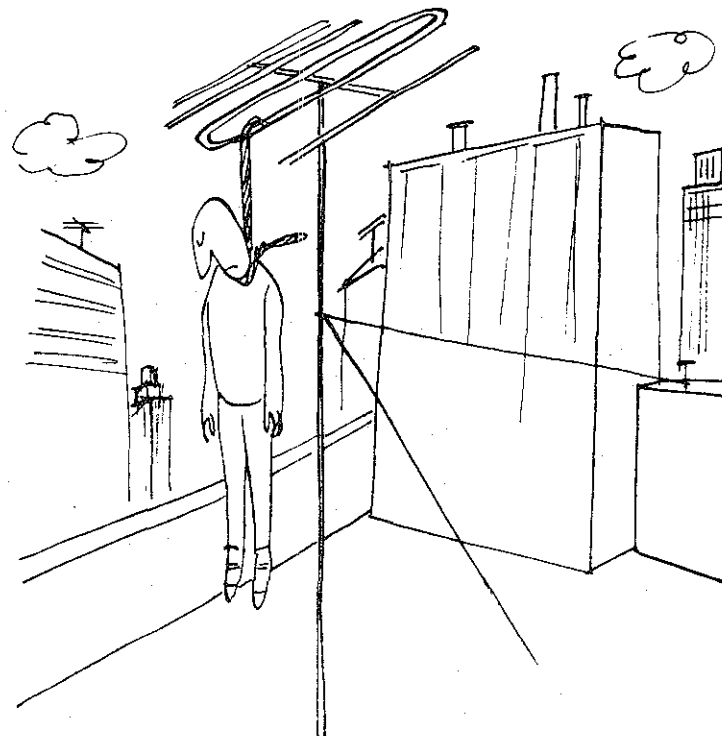
Blacks, as a whole, do not show this association, although those blacks in the sample who are college educated or whose income is over \$8,000 do show the cultivation pattern found among white respondents. In general, the level of mistrust evidenced by black heavy and light viewers is higher than that for

whites, although the relatively small number of blacks in a representative, proportional national sample precludes a definitive analysis at this stage.

In the children's sample, the patterns of significant association are maintained with sex, age, parent's socioeconomic status, and newspaper reading controlled (not shown on Figure 9).

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## TELEVISION:

GEORGE GERBNER\* *The New State Religion?*

**B**OTH CLASSICAL electoral and classical Marxist theories of government are based on assumptions rooted in cultural developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These developments also gave rise to mass communications and eventually to research on mass communications. In the past few decades, however, rapidly accumulating changes brought about a profound transformation of the cultural conditions on which modern theories of government and of mass communications rest. That change presents an historic challenge to these theories and to scientific workers concerned with these theories. I would like to sketch the nature of that challenge and to make a few tentative suggestions about the tasks ahead.

Human consciousness seems to differ from that of other animals chiefly in that humans experience reality in a symbolic context. Human consciousness is a fabric of images and messages drawn from those towering symbolic structures of a culture that express and regulate the relationships of a social system. When those relationships change, sooner or later the cultural patterns also change to express and maintain the new social order.

For most of humankind's existence, these systems of society and culture changed very slowly and usually under the impact of a collapse or invasion. The long-enduring, face-to-face, pre-industrial, pre-literate cultural patterns, relatively isolated from each other, encompassed most of the story-telling, and the rituals, art, science, statecraft, and celebrations of the tribe or larger community. They explained over and over again the nature of the universe and the meaning of life. Their repetitive patterns, memorized incantations, popular

sayings, and stories demonstrated the values, roles, productive tasks, and power relationships of society. Children were born into them, old men and women died to their ministrations, and both rulers and the ruled acted out their respective roles according to their tenets. These organically integrated symbolic patterns permeated the life space of every member of the community. Non-selective participation of all in the same symbolic world generated mistrust of strangers, the quest for security through protection by the powerful, and a sense of apprehension of and resistance to change. Conflicts of interest were submerged and dissent suppressed in the interests of what to most people seemed to be the only possible design for life.

All of this changed when the industrial revolution altered the contours of power and the structure of society. The extension of mass production into symbol-making correspondingly altered the symbolic context of consciousness and created cultural conditions necessary for the rise of modern theories of government.

One of the first industrial products was the printed book. Printing made it possible to relieve memory of its formula-bound burdens and opened the way to the endless accumulation of information and innovation. "Packaged knowledge" (the Book) could be given directly to individuals, bypassing its previously all-powerful dispensers, and could cross the old boundaries of status and community. Images and messages could now be used *selectively*. They could be chosen to express and advance individual and group interests. Printed stories—broad-sides, crime and news, mercantile intelligence, romantic novels—could now speak selectively to different groups in the population and explain the newly differentiated social relationships which emerged from the industrial revolution. Print made it possible for the newly differentiated consciousness to spread beyond the limiting confines of face-to-face communication. Selectivity of symbolic participation was the prerequisite to the differentiation of consciousness among class and other interest groups within large and heterogeneous societies.

Publics are created and maintained through *publication*. Electoral theories of government are predicated upon the assumption of cultural conditions in which each public can produce and select information suited to the advancement of its own interests. Representatives of those interests are then supposed to formulate laws and administer policies that orchestrate different group interests on behalf of society as a whole.

Marxist-Leninist theories of government similarly (albeit more implicitly) assume cultural conditions that permit selectivity of symbolic production and participation, and thus differentiation of consciousness along class lines. Lenin's characterization of the press as collective organizer and mobilizer assumes (not unlike advertisers do in

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capitalist countries) that the major mass media are the cultural organs of the groups that own and operate (or sponsor) them. Only in that way could working class organizations (or business corporations) produce ideologically coherent and autonomous symbol systems for their publics.

Before these theories of government came to full fruition, the cultural conditions upon which they were explicitly or implicitly based began to change. Private corporate organizations grew to the size and power of many governments. The increasingly massive mass media became their cultural arms and the First Amendment their shield. Commercial pressures made the service of many small, poor, or dissenting publics impractical. Public relations replaced the autonomous aggregation of many publics. Public opinion became the published opinions of cross-sections of atomized individuals rather than a differentiated mosaic reflecting the composite of organized publics, each conscious of its own interest.

In the young socialist countries and People's Democracies, mass media became centralized organs of revolutionary establishments. Their governing responsibilities made it difficult to cultivate a distinctly working class consciousness and to institutionalize the critical functions of the press.

These problems and difficulties arose under essentially print-based cultural conditions. But in the past few decades even those conditions began to change.

The harbinger of that change is television. The special characteristics of television set it apart from other mass media to such an extent that it is misleading to think of it in the same terms or to research it in the same terms. Furthermore, these special characteristics are only the forerunners of the prospect of an all-electronic organically composed and orchestrated total symbolic environment.

What are these special characteristics of television? My observations are based primarily on our research and experience in the United States. We do not yet know to what extent they are applicable to other countries. (That, I think, should be an early task for communications research to discover.)

1. Television consumes more time and attention of more people than all other media and leisure time activities combined. The television set is on for six hours and fifteen minutes a day in the average American home, and its sounds and images now fill the living space and symbolic world of most Americans.
2. Unlike the other media, you do not have to wait for, plan for, go out to, or seek out television. It comes to you directly at home and is there all the time. It has become a member of the family, telling its

stories patiently, compellingly, untiringly. Few parents, teachers, or priests can compete with its vivid demonstrations of what people of all kinds are like and how society works.

3. Just as television requires no mobility, it requires no literacy. In fact, it shows and tells about the world to the less educated and the non-reader—those who have never before shared the culture of the literate—with special authority and force. Television now informs most people in the United States—many of its viewers simply do not read—and much of its information comes from what is called entertainment. As in ancient times of great rituals, festivals, and circuses, the information-poor are again royally entertained by the organic symbolic patterns informing those who do not seek information.
4. These organic patterns have to be seen—and analyzed—as total systems. The content differentiations of the print era, where there were sharp distinctions between information (news) and entertainment (drama, etc.) or fiction and documentary or other genres, no longer apply. Besides, viewers typically select not programs but hours of the day and watch whatever is on during those hours. Unlike books, newspapers, magazines, or movies, television's content and effects do not depend on individually crafted and selected works, stories, etc. Assembly-line production fills total programming formulas whose structure encompasses all groups but serves one overall perspective. Story-telling (drama and legendary) is at the heart of this—as of any other—symbol system. "Real-life" demonstrations of the same value structure, as in television news, provide verisimilitude and "documentary" confirmation to the mythological world of television. All types of programming within the program structure complement and reinforce one another. It makes no sense to study the content or impact of one type of program in isolation from the others. The same viewers watch them all; the total system as a whole is absorbed into the mainstream of common consciousness.
5. For the first time since the pre-industrial age, or perhaps in all of history, there is little age-grading or separation of the symbolic materials that socialize members into the community. Television is truly a cradle-to-grave experience. Infants are born into a television home and learn from its sounds and images before they can speak, let alone read. By the time they reach school age they will have spent more hours with television than they would spend in a college classroom. At the far end of the life cycle, old people, and most institutionalized populations, are almost totally dependent on television for regular "human" contact and engagement in the larger world. Only a minority of children and older age groups watch the

few programs (none in "prime time") especially designed for them. Unlike other media, television tells its stories to children, parents, and grandparents, all at the same time.

6. Television is essentially in the business of assembling heterogeneous audiences and selling their time to advertisers or other institutional sponsors. The audiences include all age, sex, ethnic, racial, and other interest groups. They are all exposed to the same repetitive messages conveying the largest common denominator of values and conduct in society. Minority groups see their own image shaped by the dominant interests of the larger culture. This means the dissolution of the concept of autonomous publics and of any authentic group or class consciousness. Television provides an organically related synthetic symbolic structure which once again presents a total world of meanings for all. It is related to the State as only the church was in ancient times.

All this adds up to a non-selectively used cultural pattern which can no longer serve the tasks of cultivating selective and differentiated group, class, or other public consciousness. The pattern is formula-bound, ritualistic, repetitive. It thrives on novelty but is resistant to change, and it cultivates resistance to change. In that, too, television's social symbolic functions resemble pre-industrial religions more than they do the media that preceded it. The process has tremendous popular mobilizing power which holds the least informed and least educated most in its spell. Results of our research (reported under the title "Living With Television: The Violence Profile" in the Spring 1976 issue of the *Journal of Communication*) indicate that television viewing tends to cultivate its own particular outlook on social reality even among the well educated and traditionally "elite" groups.

Heavy viewers of television are more apprehensive, anxious, and mistrustful of others than light viewers in the same age, sex, and educational groups. The fear that viewing American television seems to generate, the consequent quest for security and protection by the authorities, the effective dissolution of autonomous publics, and the ease with which credible threats and scares can be used (or provoked) to justify almost any policy create a fundamentally new cultural situation. The new conditions of synthetic consciousness-making pose new problems, difficulties, and challenges for those who wish to realistically analyze or guide public understanding of society.

Researchers and scholars of communication and culture should now devote major attention to long-range cross-cultural comparative media studies that investigate the policies, processes, and consequences of the mass-production of major symbol systems in light of the respective structures and aims of different social systems. Do media really do

what they are designed to do according to the theories governing (or used to explain) the societies in which they exist? What are the differences and similarities among them? What are the cultural and human consequences of the international exchange of media materials? What are the effects of changing cultural, technological, and institutional conditions upon the social functions of media, particularly television? What are the new organizational, professional, artistic, and educational requirements for the effective fulfillment of societal goals in different cultural and social systems? And, finally, how can liberation from the age-old bonds of humankind lead to cultural conditions that enrich rather than limit visions of further options and possibilities?

These are broad and difficult tasks but we can at least begin to tackle them. Much depends on the success of the effort.