

ART SEIDENBAUM

Urban Fear— No Way to Live

I've been taking sporadic notes on the lengths to which urban people go these days in order to protect themselves in public.

One woman, once mugged, will no longer leave the bus at her stop if there are young men standing at the corner. She will instead ride a few blocks out of her way and wait for a clear sidewalk.

A man will not enter an elevator if he suspects another passenger of potential menace. The man will remain in the lobby until a seemingly safe car opens its doors.

Many people have decided to avoid underground parking lots unless they have companions. They would rather drive and walk farther and park in a street-level space.

A former police executive always varies his route home and to the office. His knowledge of kidnap-robber techniques convinces him that candidates for ransom are studied in advance and one good way of avoiding trouble is finding new ways to come and go, changing times as well as courses.

Flashlight Signals

A husband and wife have devised a flashlight code between them, in which she signals him, from street to home, to indicate whether the neighborhood coast is clear.

I've even met a couple of people who case their own banks before entering; if they don't like the looks of all the patrons inside, they wait until the suspects have completed their business and left.

So we have cityfolk who make elaborate detours if there are people present whom they mistrust. And we have other cityfolk who won't go anywhere unless there are other people around to suggest protection in numbers.

The architecture of security is a strange practice. Some of its obvious design solutions are alarm systems and locks and dogs and uniformed guards and nonuniformed patrols and television monitors and old-fashioned fences. One of the newer techniques is a two-way lock that confutes a criminal's exit even if the criminal has gained illegal entry: The lock that failed to keep the burglar out is different from the lock that may hold him in at the same door.

A Strange Practice

A man who sells security devices called recently to suggest that many of the systems are worthless—or dangerous in their own right. Robbery is one way to steal, he said. Cheating people by selling them a false sense of security, is another. He would have the police or a public agency evaluate security systems to protect the public from buying poor protection.

The forces of mental health are studying victimology or victimization. Just the other day a report came out of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania tying together fear and television watching. "Heavy TV viewers," the AP quoted Dr. George

MIGHT BE TRUE

URBAN FEAR

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Gerbner, "are more likely to be afraid. They ask for more protection from authorities."

Dr. Gerbner's quote is slightly ambiguous, suggesting the authorities may be the menace. But I think we all understand the idea: TV may stimulate fright. Heavy viewers in the Gerbner survey tended to estimate their chances of becoming victims in much shorter odds than people who shy away from the tube. A majority of television addicts summarized their attitudes toward human trust as "can't be too careful" while less than half the sometime watchers shared that dour perspective.

This is yet another argument that TV violence breeds fear among TV viewers. But there's also irony at the end of the tube: The people who may stay home most and take their world through a channel are most worried about what the real outside is like. The people who watch less—and presumably do more—are less fearful.

Security is indeed as much a state of mind as a coat of armor or a fortress design.

Fear is, finally, inconvenient. In the most literal sense, fear takes time and energy and the creation of cumbersome habits.

The former police official says the cautions are worth it; once new adjustments have been made and new practices adopted, then a sense of security replaces any fear and life can be enjoyed again.

Perhaps. Perhaps many of the people who move to the far corners of exurbia are using distance as a security system. They find it easier to believe they've removed themselves from the urban problem instead of installing bars and alarms to barricade themselves against the urban problem. They accept the inconvenience of miles for the reassurance of remoteness.

Important people go out of their way because they consider themselves chosen targets. Unimportant people go out of their way because they consider themselves de-

fenseless and candidates for random victimization.

The trouble with the architecture of security is that it overbuilds. It piles protection upon protection, gradually separating and walling people away from each other. The tragedy of Howard Hughes was not the way he died—at last mortal and visible—but the way he lived, alone and impregnable.

The terrible inconvenience of fear is that it does not so much prolong life as diminish it.

The Rise and Fall of TV Violence

By John Carmody

CBS has released a study indicating that violence on prime-time TV this past season dropped 24 per cent on all three networks—and 36 per cent on CBS itself.

The study, based on a survey of 13 different weeks during the 1975-76 season, also suggests that the average number of violent incidents on network "family-hour" shows (before 9 p.m.) dropped to 11 per cent of the overall prime-time total.

The CBS study results contrast with those in a report by Dr. George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania issued earlier this month.

Gerbner's annual one-week study of network TV this year showed a decline in family-hour violence but noted a sharp increase in violence in children's weekend programming and on

broadcasts after 9 p.m. He concluded that the overall level of TV violence has remained constant.

On April 1, CBS attacked

Broadcast Notes

the "so-called Gerbner Index" as "fallacious," despite the fact that the communications expert had credited the network with a drop in violence. This week's report is regarded in the industry as a rebuttal of Gerbner's study.

Since 1973, CBS has issued an annual study of two weeks of prime time. This year the survey was increased to 13 weeks, in part because the network believes its smaller sample, in omitting heavy special weeks, gave an unbalanced picture of regular prime-time programming.

Gerbner said Friday he

doesn't "quarrel with the integrity of the CBS survey," but suggested the network's definition of violence is so different from his that "only after a few years can anybody judge what the trends are in CBS' own survey terms."

Gerbner pointed out that the CBS study doesn't include "cartoon violence" and tended to count as a "single violent incident" what he calls "continuing" scenes that under his rules would add up to more incidents.

Norman Lear is researching a series called "Portrait of America" which could result in six to 10 shows for public TV, perhaps by 1977.

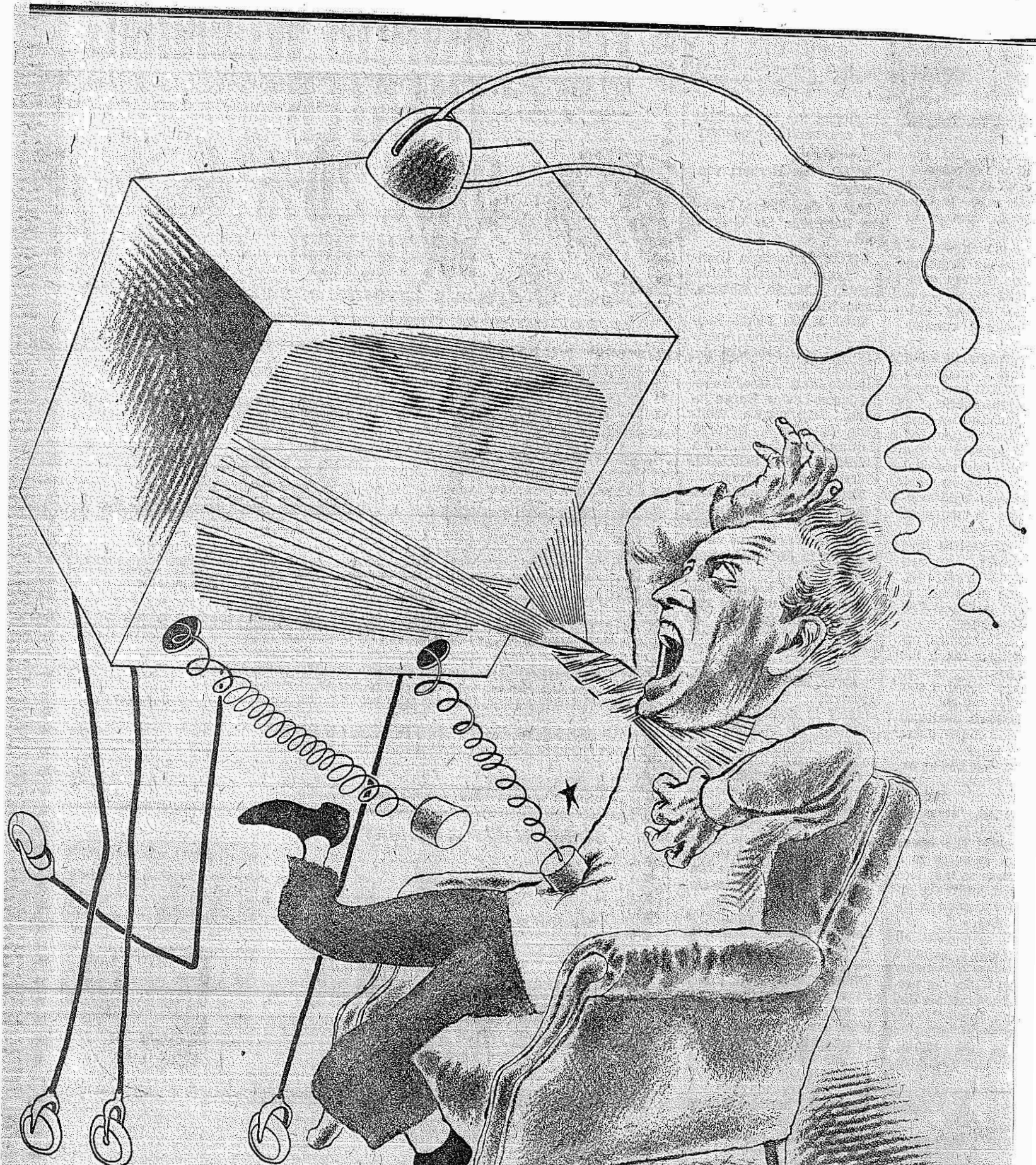
The top commercial TV producer is working under a development contract with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. "Portrait" will rely on "many literary

sources" to produce a picture of "the land, the history, the people," according to a CFB announcement.

CBS has announced some of its summer replacement shows and the accent is on musical variety and comedy, featuring "young guest performers" (read unknowns), all hoping to be network replacements later next season.

Among the big name stars who will have shows featuring "young guest performers" are Dinah Shore, The Jackson Five, Diahann Carroll, Frankie Avalon and Johnny Cash.

Late in August the network will try out a situation comedy, called "Ivan the Terrible" featuring Lou Jacobi as the head of a family of nine in Moscow—and they don't mean Idaho.



Are We Victims Of Our Own Violence?

By Tom Shales

This is not exactly *another* story about violence on television. It is not about the traditional hazards of TV violence—that people who see violent acts on TV will duplicate them in real life, or that children exposed to too much violent television will become more surly and aggressive than is normal and healthy. These are still real and present dangers to many people, but now some new dangers have been discovered that make the others look nearly puny.

A new school of thought about television violence has emerged, and it tells us we may not have been worrying as much as we should have.

It says that people who watch television heavily are not so much potentially aggressive viewers as they are unwitting victims—they see themselves portrayed as victims on the screen, and they become the victims of television's distorted, abrasive picture of violence in contemporary life. Their perceptions about the world are being shaped in such a way as to make them conceivably more compliant, more malleable, more hopeless and more fearful.

"Violence has long been used as a popular issue generating very little light and very much heat," says Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and perhaps the nation's leading authority on television violence. "Television has grown up almost imperceptibly around us until we find ourselves in a different society, culturally and symbolically.

"A few years ago we became aware of our physical environment—pollution and ecology. When we become aware of such problems we can tackle them. Now we need a new kind of attention to the manufacturing of a symbolic environment, the television environment. If we remain unaware of it, the consequences could be surprising and potentially catastrophic."

Gerbner's concerns evolve from the Violence Profile he and Dr. Larry Gross have worked on for the past nine years at the Annenberg School. The latest profile, released early last month, showed that the level of violence on television has not decreased but in fact "remained constant" even with the institution of the so-called Family Hour in prime time. CBS promptly attacked the results as invalid—even though the study had called it the least violent of the networks—and last week came out with its own study, which not surprisingly claimed that "incidents of dramatic violence declined by 24 per

cent this season, on all three networks combined, and by 36 per cent on the CBS Television Network."

Gerbner says in response to that industry self-study that the difference in findings results from a difference in definitions. "Their definition of violence differs in important respects from ours. They qualify 'violence' by 'intentional' and 'serious' types and limit their study to prime time. Their definition of a 'violent incident' differs from ours as well. They chose last season as their basis for comparison, but that season was unusually high in violence, so naturally one sees a decline for this season.

"These are matters of judgment, but their definition was obviously calculated to come up with a lower count."

Counting fallen bodies is not Gerbner's chief interest now, however. The most fascinating parts of his latest Violence Profile are those dealing with the psychological effects of television on the "heavy viewer." The heavy viewer may be the typical one; Gerbner defines heavy viewer as anyone who watches four hours or more of television a day (light viewers, 2 hours or less), but according to the latest figures (for 1975) from the A.C. Nielsen ratings service, the average American television set is on for six hours and eight minutes each day.

Statistics from the same source show that there are 69.6 million American households with "at least one" television set (30 million of those have two or more sets) and that television has achieved an incredible 97 per cent saturation of American homes.

No medium in the history of civilization can equal television's pervasiveness.

In the study, heavy viewers were found to "significantly overestimate violence and danger in the world." Fifty-nine per cent of them overestimated the possibility of personal violence being done to them (based on comparisons with the actual crime rate), while only 39 per cent of the light viewers made the same pessimistic miscalculation. Heavy viewers have a "heightened sense of fear and mistrust" as reflected in their answers to questions about "their own personal safety, about crime and law enforcement, and about trust in other people."

The effects were especially striking in what Gerbner calls "The Television Generation," those people under 30 who have been exposed to television during their entire lifetimes—who have never known life without it. Even though this group tends to be better ed-

ucated than previous generations and older viewers, Gerbner says, the tremendous predominance of television in their lives tends to offset other cultural factors and most dramatically affects their view of the world around them.

In an article for the April issue of *Psychology Today*, Gerbner and Gross take some of their statistics further in order to sketch a rather dismaying portrait of American television viewers and what they see.

More than half of the characters a viewer sees on prime time network TV are "involved in some violence, about one tenth in killing," they write. "To control this mayhem, the forces of law and order dominate prime time. Among those TV males with identifiable occupations, about 20 per cent are engaged in law enforcement. In the real world, the proportion runs less than 1 per cent."

It may not be the criminals who are the danger on television so much as it is the crimefighters and the profusion of them.

What television is surreptitiously teaching viewers, through its endless cavalcade of cop and detective shows and in some other program forms as well, is to accept and play the role of victim. Gerbner and Gross write, "Instead of worrying only about whether television violence causes individual displays of aggression in the real world, we should also be concerned about the way such symbolic violence influences our assumptions about social reality. Acceptance of violence and passivity in the face of injustice may be consequences of far greater social concern than occasional displays of individual aggression."

The authors conclude with a reference to Big Brotherism through television: "The exaggerated sense of risk and insecurity may lead to increasing demands for protection, and to increasing pressure for the use of force by the established authority. Instead of threatening the social order, television may have become our chief instrument for social control."

"Social control"? By whom? Gerbner was asked this week if he'd ever seen the movie version of Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451." He said he was familiar with the story. In this conjecture about the future, each home is equipped with a wall-size television screen that serves as a conditioning and socializing device. It helps make sure that everyone is obedient and everyone is the same. Its purpose is control through the encouragement of conformity, complacency and contentment.

Does that sound pretty far-out to Gerbner? "No," he says, "It's not far-out at all."

Does he believe government control of the media is possible? "There are differing definitions of 'government,'" he replies. "There are large corporations with a scope and budget larger than some state governments. There are differing ways to be governed."

What television is doing is not new, Gerbner says. The effectiveness with which it does it, though, is unheard of.

"Story-telling has always been a means of social control. Fairy tales that parents told children were scary, and scary for that very purpose—to establish the accepted codes of behavior and control them. Pre-industrial religions were all fear-provoking, designed to show where the authority in life is and what will happen if one is disobedient. Fear is a powerful means of social control. TV inherited this historical cultural process of setting the norms of behavior for society through story-telling. What is unprecedented is the scope with which it does it. Television

has become a part of the environment to which everyone is exposed. Its stories have become the most common models for society. It's like an old-time pre-industrial religion coming up in technological form -preaching, teaching, and telling stories, from the cradle to the grave.

"This is a totally new cultural phenomenon."

Most people watch television "non-selectively," says Gerbner. Television is just "on." It is just "there." Relatively few viewers do conscientious program-planning. In this, as in impact, television differs radically from literature and the movies.

Victimization is one of the "lessons that television teaches," and here certain patterns emerge in the Annenberg study. It shows that there were two male killers for every male killed in network prime time but only one female killer for every female killed. Women are more commonly

"The Annenberg study shows that there were two male killers for every male killed in network prime time but only one female killer for every female killed."

the victim and viewers see more women than men in the victim role. The most likely males to be victims were old, married, lower class, foreign, and/or non-white characters. Old, poor, and black women were depicted only as the killed and never as the killers, the study found.

This kind of pattern, the report concludes, "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 that television viewing cultivates a general sense of danger and mistrust."

The study takes into account only what it identifies as acts of violence in prime-time network television. The working definition of a violent act is "the overt expression of physical force against other or self, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing." That definition does not encompass the raucous insults on "Welcome Back, Kotter," the furious and frequent shouting matches between Archie and Meathead on "All in the Family" and between Maude and Walter on "Maude." It does not include the screams and convulsions of gameshow winners nor the harsh directives of hardsell commercials.

Nor does the report attempt to consider the effect of television violence, and its frequency, on other media. Movies have become far more violent since television became dominant. They are compelling to try to "out-do" television. Several recklessly violent film genres have appeared within the last decade alone, including the dismemberment film ("Texas Chainsaw Massacre," "Snuff"), the devil-cult thriller ("Beyond the Door," "Abby"), the kids-on-the-run killing spree ("Aloha Bobby and Rose," "Bobby Jo and the Outlaw") the kung fu bash ("Bloody Fists," "The Killing Machine") and the urban-oriented black action film ("Slaughter," "Black Gestapo"). In popular culture more

recently, there has been wide discussion and exploitation of sado-masochism as a sexual alternative. It would, of course, be unjustified to attribute such things solely to the effects of television, but it would be naive not to consider the possibility of some correlation.

The networks say they are cutting down on violence. But not by much. In fact, the number of crime shows on the air when the new season begins in the fall will be down only four (16 as opposed to 20) from the season that just ended. Among the programs announced for fall are "Most Wanted," a cop show starring Robert Stack on ABC, "Delvecchio," a cop show starring Judd Hirsch on CBS, and "Serpico," a cop show starring David Birney on NBC. ABC is moving its ultra-violent "Starsky and Hutch" from a 10 p.m. Wednesday slot to 9 p.m. Saturdays. There it will be accessible to many more children than it is now.

The format for cop shows is rigorously strict—violent crimes are committed and, more often than not, the perpetrators meet violent ends. It has been so since the earliest days of television. The symbols of authority are almost unerringly successful and largely unblemished. The cop is the dominant authority figure on television and he (sometimes, though rarely, she) is always victorious. The only new wrinkle in this ritual is probably a result of the Watergate scandals; now "the feds" are sometimes referred to in pejorative terms and occasionally depicted as bunglers or clods. The cop authority stands unchallenged; violence is neat and slickly packaged.

Such are the programs affecting the perceptions of viewers. Not all TV shows are violent, and not all reinforce this attitude, but on primetime network television, violence is fairly inescapable. It will not be much more escapable next season.

Concern over the immediate and more easily identifiable effects of television violence has hardly died. But at the moment, no congressional hearings are scheduled on the subject, in spite of Gerbner's profile and such other recent studies as one by Lieberman Research, Inc.—financed by ABC — which found that "under certain conditions and depending on the types of violence portrayed, exposure to televised violence is capable of producing increased inclination towards aggression in children."

Most previous studies in this area said violence could only encourage aggression in children who already have aggressive tendencies.

Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin (D-Calif.), newly elected chairman of the House Communications Subcommittee, said this week he would like to hold hearings on violence but that time is short. He will try to schedule such hearings, which would also cover the Family Hour, during the summer, perhaps between conventions, he said, with an eye toward "possible legislation."

But Gerbner says he hopes to visit with Van Deerlin and advocate a deeper look at the effects of violence, deeper than the kind that has by now become virtually an annual tradition. Gerbner wants to work with the networks, he insists, and not against them, in better defining the psychological effects of heavy television viewing and repeated exposure to televised violence. "I would like the hearings to go in a more positive direction than previously," he says.

Maybe his findings and the speculations that grow out of them sound a little like science fiction. But Gerbner and his associates have been studying violence for nearly a decade. The subject of victimization has come up before in other studies he has done. These, along with many

other studies, are listed in the landmark Rand Corporation collection, "Television and Human Behavior: The Key Studies," edited by George Comstock and published one year ago.

Some 450 separate studies are summarized in the book, and together they help paint a composite of the television viewer. The idea that violent television antagonizes aggressive tendencies is strongly confirmed in more than one of the reports.

There are other provocative findings—among them those in studies of American viewing habits by J.P. Robinson in 1969 and 1971. Robinson found that "American adults spend about 28 per cent of all leisure time watching television as a primary activity"—television thus getting the largest single chunk. The study also found that "more than half of the adult population did not watch a single national television news program in a two-week period." Thus television viewers get the lion's share of their ideas about the world around them from entertainment, prime-time television; Nielsen estimates that 40 per cent of all television viewing by those over age 5 is done in prime time.

There are those who believe that the era of monolithic network domination of television is near an end and that a greater number of program choices will alter the effects of television viewing in

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years ahead. It is also believed by some that the proportion of leisure time spent viewing television will not increase as the amount of leisure time grows, that a peak has been reached.

There are others who think differently. And when you start combining the discomfoting implications of Gerbner's Violence Profile—its portrait of the viewer-as-victim, as passive, fearful, law-and-order recluse—with such forecasts of technological evolution as those made recently by media expert and Columbia University professor Eric Barnouw, the creepiest fantasies of sci-fi writers start sounding all the more plausible, and 1984 starts looking all the nearer.

In a copyrighted interview with U.S. News and World Report, Barnouw looked ahead with dismay:

“The viewer...is becoming more and more isolated. Tomorrow, he won't have to go to the polling place any more. He'll be able to vote by pushing buttons. He doesn't have to attend class; he can take the course from home. In doing this, he can be tested and graded by computer. The result is that people are getting out of touch with humanity. Everything is pretended participation.

“Lord Acton said, ‘Power tends to corrupt: absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ Somebody has adapted that to say, ‘Powerlessness corrupts, and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely.’

“I think it's quite likely that our communities of the future, under the influence of television and the wired city, will have a lot of psychological problems—a malaise that will prove dangerous in the long run.”

“Malaise” may be putting it mildly.



The Problem May Lie in the Facts,

By Sander Vanocur

Bill D. Moyers decided this week that now is the time to come to the aid of network documentaries. His decision to sign with CBS News to anchor "CBS Reports," after turning down attractive offers from ABC and NBC, suggests that both he and his new employer think there is still some life in the television documentary.

The evidence, if you look at the ratings, is against them: the fact of the matter is television documentaries, with few exceptions, do poorly.

Perhaps Moyers and "CBS Reports" can change that ratings situation. But

to do so, they are going to have to break out of the standard documentary mold, which, to be blunt, is pretty boring.

Television

Television documentaries tend to deal in facts and issues. There's ample evidence around these days to support the contention that viewers are not very turned-on by facts (which most of them don't believe), or by issues (which most either cannot or will not try to understand).

By their insistence on even-handedness in the treatment of subject matter, most documentaries tend to take the drama out of life, which, as most of us know, is not even-handed.

CBS finished the regular season as a ratings leader because of the huge audiences drawn to "Helter Skelter," the dramatic re-enactment of the Manson Family murders. The two-part dramatization was far more gripping than any documentary that might have dealt with the same subject and perhaps more factual because it dealt with motive.

Like the evening news or, for that

and Nothing but the Facts

matter, news papers and news magazines, documentaries shy away from dealing with motive or meaning. That is left to the novelists, the playwrights, the screenwriters. And that is why novels, plays, movies—especially when adapted for television—have this capacity to move us in a way documentaries seldom do.

Documentaries are put before us with the same intent as Sgt. Friday, saying, "Just give me the facts, man." But what are the facts? They are an individual's way of ordering what he or she perceives to be the reality of a given situation.

Most people who present us with a documentary honestly believe they are presenting an ordered view of reality. But the scriptures of fairness and objectivity usually incline them toward giving us nothing more than a disordered view of disorder.

That may be one reason why viewers are favoring dramatic interpretations of events over documentaries. Given how little any of us journalists really knows about the events we are reporting, who is to stay which version—the dramatical or the so-called factual—is the more truthful?

Moyers and his colleagues at "CBS

Reports" have a great opportunity to rescue the television documentary from its present doldrums. That will involve admitting that fact is often fiction, and fiction can often be fact. And to do so will take a certain amount of courage, a willingness to depart from "if, on the other hand" journalism. They will be criticized by those who will charge them with departing from the conventional journalistic norm of not taking a position. But there are precedents—person and program—from which they can take heart. The person's name was Edward R. Murrow, the program was "See It Now."

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Pornography, Violence, Greed:

American Society Seen Mired in Swamps of Filth

(This is the third of an eight-part series on America's morals, this one focusing on the media.)

By **CHARLOTTE SAIKOWSKI**
 The Christian Science Monitor
 News Service Copyright 1976
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At the University of Pennsylvania recently some 200 communications students piled into an auditorium to watch

a show on the desensitization of America.

The presentation, put on by the J. Walter Thompson advertising firm with the help of slides, film clips, and a running commentary, was a shocking and mind-numbing capsule of media history.

The communications media have gradually escalated the level of sex titillation, bizarre violence, and greedy commercialism until they now reek of hucksterism and human degradation. Americans, it seems, live in a world of erotic soap operas, disaster films, pornographic magazines, sexually explicit novels, mind-pounding rock music, midnight shows, and dirty humor.

Even the national maga-

zines and newspapers today permit barracks language not allowed 20 years ago.

The J. Walter Thompson Company, the largest advertising firm in the world, put together its presentation in order to convince prospective clients as well as media students and industry executives that the time has come to reach for a social goal higher than mere profit.

"Sensation has been piled

**AFTER
 PERMISSIVENESS
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on sensation to capture a jaded public," Arnold Grisman, executive vice-president of the firm, told the students.

"Today's violence is tomorrow's ho-hum. In area after area we are losing our capacity for feeling and we are badly in need of a reappraisal. It is time to cool it, to resensitize ourselves."

The extent of the impact of books, films, and other communications media on the

nation's morals is a matter of controversy — "the parents leave a vacuum and then blame TV," says one expert. But whether the media influence or simply reinforce people's moral attitudes and behavior, they are coming under increased attack.

"One could watch television all week and never learn that the strongest associations in our country are religious," says Dr. Neuhaus.

Can't Fight It

"Communities cannot effectively fight pornography because the Supreme Court has decided that artistic expression is free speech, and all the porno writers need do is write in a little social issue." laments ethicist Paul Ramsey of Princeton

University.

"Given today's libel laws and obscenity statutes, how can a community set standards? And the ratings on movies are an invitation to come!"

While communication takes place through a variety of media, including books, press, and films, television invites the most comment because it has had by far the largest impact. It is the medium which, given only a few networks, affords the smallest choice and is the most engrossing.

Arthur Berger points out in his book "The TV-Guided American" that by the time an average child reaches 18 years of age he has seen

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Pornography, Violence, Greed:

America Seen Mired In Swamps of Filth

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about 22,000 hours of TV programming and 600,000 commercials totaling some three years of his life.

Commenting on the power of the electronic media, Neil Postman, a professor of communications at New York University and author of "The Soft Revolution," notes that they have tended to undermine the nation's "hierarchical structures" because the people at the bottom now have equal access to information and therefore can challenge their institutions — schools, churches, business, government.

Took Over Classrooms

Because of the diffusion and "democratization" of information, he points out, college students in the 1960s took over classrooms, parish priests began instructing the Pope in the ways of God and man, the last two presidents of the United States were forced to step down, and the authority of the CIA, FBI, and other groups has been questioned.

"Television has destroyed the responsibility of institutions," he says.

"It goes into competition with the school for the attention and respect of the students. It also helps erode the integrity of the family because it presents different options for children" — portraying, for example, youngsters who use guns or take drugs.

"Even not wanting to excel has to do with the electronic media," he adds. "In the past a person became well-known or admired because of his quality as an individual. Today it is by fact of his being in the media, on the 'Mike Douglas Show.'

Undermines Work Ethic

“That undermines the work ethic — for it says in effect that it does not make any difference what you do. It is also an implicit rejection of language and does little to promote respect for intellectual work.”

This is not to indict the whole of commercial television. No one denies that the three major networks provide some wholesome fare, from sheer entertainment to news and public-affairs programs.

Television as a whole is seen to have produced considerable social benefit — giving whites in the South a better image of blacks, for instance, and Christians a better image of Jews.

But the worst programs — the soap operas, game shows, sex-and-adventure stories — fall precisely in those hours when they can reach the largest audiences. And many critics now ask: is that a “public service”?

Industry Defensive

To the charge that it is a purveyor of immorality, the commercial-television industry is defensive. Princely

sums are spent proving that TV viewing has not led to increased drug taking and that delinquency and violence are born in the home and not on the tube.

"Television only reinforces young people's ideas," says Paul Klein, who recently returned to NBC as vice-president for network marketing and programming.

"The media are followers not leaders, and the sex and violence will get even worse because the population is getting more immoral."

Klein, who NBC hopes will be able to pull the network out of its current doldrums, does not deny that the commercial networks have a responsibility but he makes two points.

One, the networks are in business to make a profit and, two, through the Nielsen ratings they are able to gauge what audiences want and they are giving them what they want — brutal police adventures, screaming game shows, and inane soap operas, the latest of which, "Mary Hartmann," has lured some audiences away from the news.

Getting Touchy

There is evidence, however, that corporate business and advertising agencies are getting touchy about their image. Some clients, such as Kraft Foods, are moving away from sponsoring sex-filled programs.

Significantly, however, the students of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications who watched the J. Walter Thompson presentation were skeptical.

Immediately afterward they challenged the motives of the advertising firm in putting on such a display when in fact it was in the very business of huckstering and had helped America to begin with.

Nicholas Johnson, a former member of the Federal Communications Commission and now director of the public-interest group National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB), says that the trouble with commercial television is its "commercial quality."

~~The game show,~~ for instance, he sees as the "ultimate example of the psychological craving for money."

Commercial TV, he adds, refuses to discuss social issues in a way that might challenge the corporate existence or the capitalist system. It in essence preaches the value of conspicuous consumption instead of the values of education, self-improvement, development of the mind, religion, caring for others, or, say the values of parks and museums.

"This theology teaches that worth is found not inside the mind of the individual but in things — his car, clothes, homes, beer, and what hair spray he uses — and that success is measured by income," Johnson stresses.

Challenge Argument

Many professionals, in and outside the industry, vehemently challenge the argument that American audiences do not want more wholesome programs and that commercial networks would go out of business if they exercised more social responsibility.

Larry Grossman, president of Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), points to cases where quality and standards do pay off, reaching huge audiences and earning substantial profits. "The Incredible Machine," for instance, a program produced by the National Geographic Society, was turned down by CBS but got an immense audience on PBS.

"Sesame Street," rejected by commercial networks, has become the most popular children's program on PBS. CBS's "60 Minutes," shown in prime time, gets higher ratings than the other two network programs.

PBS, which is funded by the public, foundations, and the federal government, gradually is reaching a wider audience. It now captures only about 3 percent of the viewers in areas where it has an outlet, but the attainable goal, industry people believe, is about 10 percent.

Labeled Disappointment

PBS has its detractors. Robert Shayon, who teaches communications at the Annenberg School and comes out of the broadcasting industry, calls it "a disappointment."

"It has become a cultural alternative for the middle class instead of an educational vehicle," he comments. "Real problems ought to be aired so we can have an informed, not just an educated public."

To this, Grossman responds that the public network has a broader responsibility to

portray knowledge and arts in a democracy, and he defends the network's programming. But he concedes that private corporations, which will underwrite such socially unprovocative programs as "Masterpiece Theater" and "Great Performances," do not tend to fund controversial programs which could make enemies for them.

The need for more programs that explain to Americans what is happening in their own society and in the world is self-evident. As Leonard Sussman, executive director of Freedom House, urgently puts it.

Society In Danger

"Television leaders must realize that free society is in danger. The times call for something more than profit and loss."

Sussman suggests that the commercial networks agree to devote a certain percentage of their time to public-affairs programs as a service, even if this costs them money. The networks are "very profitable," he observes.

Industry leaders view such an approach as unrealistic, however, as long as profit dominates private enterprise. Recognizing this, Johnson is now devoting his energies along two reform fronts.

One is to stimulate greater diversity through alternative institutions, such as public broadcasting, cable TV, community - supported stations, and community video centers, which in effect decentralize the TV industry and give viewers more choice.

It is no surprise that the commercial networks are resisting this.

Secondly, Johnson would move through legislative and legal channels to place more public controls on the commercial networks. One project of the NCCB would be to require every TV station to devote no less than one hour a week of prime time to locally organized public-affairs programming.

To File Proposal

The NCCB also will soon file a proposal with the FCC for a rule requiring stations to run several minutes of public-service ads a day — and ads drawn not only from public - advertising councils that are made up of advertisers on commercial programs but also from community organizations.

Another means of control is for local organizations to challenge station license renewals. As a pilot project, the NCCB is preparing a study of Ohio and Michigan television stations, whose licenses will be coming up for renewal, as an aid to local groups that may want data to improve broadcasting or to fight the renewals by the FCC.

"The trend is with us," says Johnson. "Years ago a hundred organizations would never have joined our project. Women's organizations and churches, too, are into media reform.

"There is an escalating level of consciousness that the media are important influences in our lives — such as on the kind of politics we get. When the media become more open and responsive, there will be more hope for those concerned about women's rights, religion, and everything else."

Some social scientists have a visionary view of television and its possibilities. The Center for Policy Research, for example, has explored the use of television, radio, and telephone communication for engaging huge numbers of people in "electronic" town hall meetings. Test projects have proved successful.

The center has also experimented with the use of cable TV for a program on marriage "learning experiences" designed to enlist married couples' participation — in analyzing how they make budget and household decisions, for instance.

Taking the long, historical view, Dr. Postman suggests that any innovation in communication — information systems produces upheavals in the social order, just as the printing press did centuries ago, and that a little perspective might be in order, too.

"Any new medium has Faustian results, both good and bad," he comments. "The electronic media are being misused, but there is no conspiracy here. The uses of television today will seem trivial and idiotic 50 years from now."

Meanwhile, say social scientists, television by itself cannot reinforce moral standards and values if these are not first implanted in the home. The onus is on the family.

—
NEXT: Ethics in the schools.

Handwritten Advertiser

Friday - May 7, 76

Socrates on television

By MELVIN MADDOCKS
Christian Science Monitor Service

Socrates had a metaphor for life. Imagine, he said, prisoners chained within a cave from childhood, seeing nothing but the shadows thrown on the wall of the cave by the light of a fire as people walk by outside.

Wouldn't these viewers of shadows consider what they saw "reality"? And if you freed them and showed them "reality," wouldn't they consider that the shadows?

THIS SOCRATIC QUESTION must fascinate us almost 2,500 years later when we consider the flickering shadows on the wall of our cave: television.

What resemblance do the images that appear on the picture tube bear to reality? And — since we are not quite chained — what effect do these images have on the way we perceive reality when we emerge, now and then, from the cave?

So far these questions have been raised only at a rudimentary level — after-the-crisis, so to speak. When a teen-ager holds up a liquor store, we ask: Did he get the idea from watching "Kojak," or "Joe Forrester," or "S.W.A.T.?" Does seeing violence result in doing violence?

This simple, old-fashioned question of cause-and-effect has produced from psychologists, sociologists, and congressional investigators alike a record crop of yes-and-no answers.

Nobody, it seems, can say for sure, and once the statistics have been shuffled here and there and a chairperson has muttered, "Well, all this bang-bang-you're-dead can't do a 5-year-old any good," that tends to be that for the theory of life-copies-art.

BUT NOW SOCRATES' QUESTION is beginning to be applied more subtly. In *Psychology Today* a team from the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania suggests that the watchers of TV shadows do indeed tend to accept them as reality.

And for George Gerbner and Larry Gross the question becomes not, if you see violence, do you do violence? But, if you see violence, do you find that violence credible? Does one's fiction become one's sense of fact?

As usual in these researches, the Gerbner-Gross evidence does not seem very hard. Discovering that nearly half the 12-year-olds in their survey watch at least six hours of television a day and about one-third of their adults watch at least four hours, they compare the responses of "heavy" and "light" viewers to questions like: "Can most people be trusted?"

They conclude that the "heavy" viewers — by as much as 25 per cent — are more suspicious, more fearful. Why? Well, more than one-half the characters portrayed by television dramas are involved in violence, and presumably it follows that the "heavy" viewers are more ready to see in life the head-bashers they see so often on the screen.

THIS MAY BE ABOUT as far as statistical analysts with their viewer-percentages-and-index-of-violence approach can go. But even if the television moguls were able to say, "We are not violent" (more or less as a President can say, "I am not a crook"), shouldn't we be asking for more?

What would Socrates say if he saw us confronted with our television sets and heard us plead, in effect, "Don't make our children criminals, and don't make us afraid they will be — that's enough?" One imagines his quiet sarcasm:

"You are a people who worry inordinately about the food you put in your stomach. What are its ingredients? How goes its vitamin count? What fertilizers are used to grow it?"

"Yet when you come to the images — the food you put in your minds — all you ask is that they not be poisonous. Aren't you going to ask that your imagination and your feelings be fed by more than their own kind of junk-food diets . . . ?"

BUT NOBODY SHOULD presume to speak for Socrates. He was one of the pre-TV generation, with no shadows of giveaway shows and car chases permanently fixed on the walls of the cave called his head. And that, we are beginning to realize, is certainly one of the factors that made Socrates, Socrates, and us, us.

part II

Sunday, May 23, 1976



No more making like 'Superman'

Children like Christopher Lane, 5, may not be jumping off chairs anymore in imitation of 'Superman,' because a group of mothers is turning off that and other programs such as 'Batman' and 'Popeye,' which they consider violent.

Page 3.

Holography and art

"It's in its infancy," says Peter Nicholson of holography, a laser technique for making 3-D, in-depth pictures. The director of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design's program at Brookhaven says, "Holography can be for our time what perspective was for the Renaissance," but he also says that it's in danger of disappearing.

Page 17.

The Quiet Stone

Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones is an accomplished doodler. He proved it during an interview with Newsday's Wayne Robins. But he didn't seem too interested in answering any serious questions, Robins says. And the Stones' new album, Robins adds, is also a little disappointing.

Page 19.

Travel

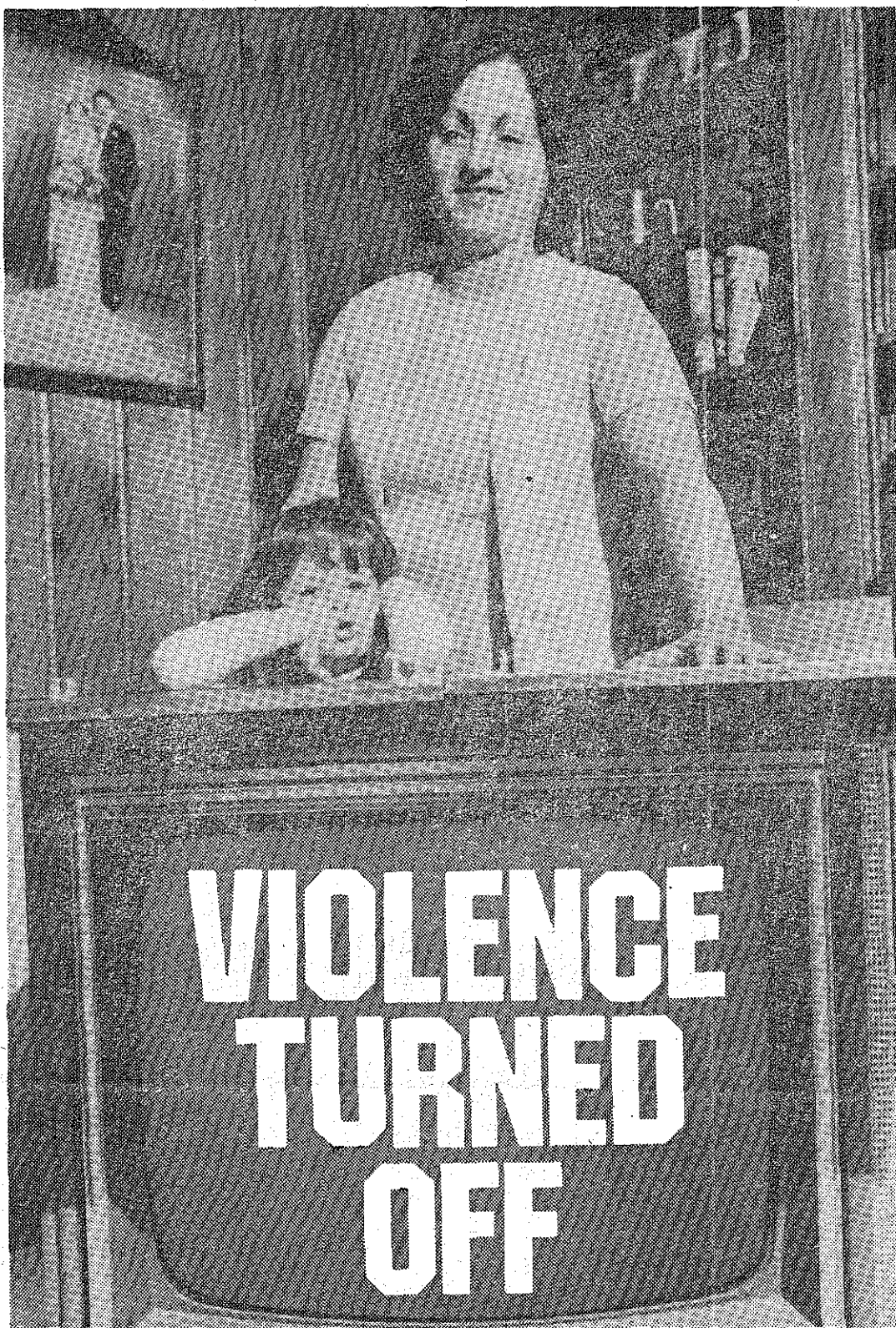
Feature, Penny-Wise Traveler, Travel Line, Pages 33-52.

Previews

TV Switches, Radio, Movies, Pages 6 and 13.

Hobbies and Advice

Chess, Bridge, Photo, Coins, Stamps, Pages 25-27. Landers, Dixon, Lamb, Page 29.



Newsday Photo by Jim Pepler

By Susan Soper

Brian Spinner has been known to pin a towel to his shoulders and tear through the house jumping off beds and tables. Like other 4-year-olds at play, he sometimes becomes lost in fantasy. With the "cape" whipping behind him as he flings his small body from available perches, he is not Brian Spinner. He is Batman.

Imitation is a form of child's play. For preschool children, at a most impressionable age, it seems only natural that they copy what they see on television. It is estimated that children watch 20 to 25 hours of television a week. One expert reported that by the time a child graduates from high school, he will have spent 15,000 hours in front of the set, compared with 11,000 hours spent in classrooms. Exhaustive studies have shown—but not changed—the almost obvious fact that what is seen sinks in. And what sinks in sometimes comes out as behavior.

Jaye Spinner would rather not have Batman in Brian's repertoire of behavior. But instead of scolding her son, she has turned "Batman" off the TV set. "I definitely found a more aggressive attitude in my son from watching 'Batman' that hadn't been there before," Mrs. Spinner said. "That and certain [other] programs made him more violent, fighting and punching . . . I found he was being more physical with children in nursery school."

It is just that kind of monkey-see, monkey-do behavior that has led Mrs. Spinner and eight other mothers from the Hicksville Cooperative Nursery School into an admittedly unscientific experiment, limiting how much and what their children watch on television. In regularly scheduled

sessions between the mothers and Adrea Seligsohn, the school's director, they discuss how or if the restrictions affect the children's behavior.

Television violence is not a new topic of concern. It has been studied by congressional committees, the U.S. surgeon general's staff, psychology and communications departments at leading universities, the medical profession, consumer groups, lobby groups and even the broadcasting industry. The consensus has been that TV violence *does* have an adverse effect, resulting in varying levels of antisocial behavior.

But progress toward peace on the screen is slow, stymied by the industry's and advertisers' economics of supply and demand based on the high Nielsen ratings that crime shows almost invariably draw. And the erudite reports appearing in behavior journals or government publications often escape the attention of those who would—or should—be most concerned: parents.

"As adults, when you sit and watch this," Mrs. Spinner said at a recent group discussion at the school, "you don't realize how many acts could be considered violent. I wasn't aware of it until we started these discussions and I was really shocked. Then if you also keep in mind that kids don't know the difference between what's real and what's not real . . . What they do to poor Olive Oyl [in "Popeye" cartoons], tying her legs up in knots! You're just not aware of how much violence there really is and some of the cartoons are the worst."

During the school year, Mrs. Seligsohn conducts discussion groups on a variety of topics with all the mothers. When this particular session started in March, she casually asked one mother

to limit TV violence at home, hoping to improve the child's aggressive behavior at school. "The child's attitude toward other children was to attack rather than communicate verbally or any other way," Mrs. Seligsohn said. "Apparently, this child was spending so much time watching violent programs, he didn't know any other way . . . Then the whole group [of mothers] got into the question of TV limitations—what kind of limits the parents put on viewing and what, in fact, their children were absorbing from particular programs."

At that point, most of the mothers estimated that their children watched television about an hour a day. And since much of the content was animated cartoons, considered then to be harmless, they assumed that too much violence was not really an issue. The women came up with a working definition of violence: any behavior that is threatening, mentally or physically.

As the mothers listed the times and programs that their children watched, they tuned in, too, and old assumptions began to fade away. After two weeks of documenting viewing patterns, they were surprised to discover overexposure on both counts: Children were watching two to three hours a day; programs that the parents had previously thought were innocuous, like "Batman" and even "Popeye," were riddled with what they had come to see as violent acts.

With new insights gleaned from group discussion and what for some was concentrated exposure to children's programming, they saw an overkill of punching, kicking, fighting, raised clenched fists, hair pulling and superhuman stunts that

—Continued on Page 23



VIOLENCE TURNED OFF

—Continued from Page 3

could be dangerous if accepted as reality and attempted in imitation.

The mothers compared their findings and went home determined, as one said, to stick to their guns on restricting violent programs, including a total ban on Ch. 11, which they called "violence prone."

At a recent follow-up meeting, the mothers agreed that they had encountered surprisingly little resistance to their restrictions—in part, they said, because spring weather offers children constructive diversions and activities away from television. And while the children had not exactly become little angels, behavior seemed to be better.

Jane Lane, mother of 5-year-old Christopher, said: "I really didn't have any problem. Instead of saying 'You're *not* watching 'Batman,'" I said, 'Please don't watch it. I don't like those shows. They're too rough and you get too wound up.' No questions asked. He was outside a lot and it's working. I was amazed. It's really terrific . . . He came in one day and said 'Hey, Mom, some kids are fighting out there and I don't think they should be.' In the past he might have stayed out

11—"Batman," "Popeye," "Magilla Gorilla" and "Superman"—indefinitely. Even the Cookie Monster on the much acclaimed, prizewinning "Sesame Street" (Ch. 13) got mixed reviews. They said it encouraged rather than corrected bad eating habits by making grabbing and gobbling food look like so much fun. But that show, along with "Mister Rogers" (Ch. 13) and "Captain Kangaroo" (Ch. 2), met with general approval.

Jean Moran, speaking for Ch. 11, said: "Well, have they seen 'The Magic Garden' or 'Jovous Fun School'? We also have 'I Dream of Jeannie' for the children and 'Family Affair,' 'Big Blue Marble,' 'Call It Macaroni' . . . How do you define violence? You can't stop children from reading the newspapers. You can't tear up their books and there's plenty of violence in the classics."

A leading academic expert on American television, George Gerbner, says there's a tremendous difference between television and the other media. "The problem with television is that most people use it unselectively," says Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. "Most people turn it on when they have something to watch and then they leave it there. All other media—newspapers, books, films—are based on the idea of selection. You have to exercise choice and judgment."

To those who would say that television is no more violent than real life, Gerbner says: "Violence on television is not a replication of real-life violence at all . . . What it reflects is how a conflict can be resolved in a quick and dramatic way and in a way that maintains a social hierarchy." That is why, he adds, it is necessary to be as selective with television as with other media. "With television it's just on. The important educational principle is that there is a choice and thought and judgment that goes into that selection."

In a recent article in *Psychology Today*, Gerbner and Larry Gross, an associate professor at the Annenberg School, wrote that violence on

"There is no substitute for what people in a community can do," Gerbner said regarding the mothers in Hicksville. "When a group of neighbors and community people do it, there's a reinforcing effect . . . The only problem in a general sense is that this is strictly middle- and upper-middle-class. The parents control it. In lower-class families, the children are in control of the dials. The friction is just too great. You can't be constantly quarreling with your children, so allowing them to watch is, in a sense, the price of peace . . . And in cities, it's harder because you can't always go out in the streets. A lot of lower-class people feel it [TV] is the best of very few alternatives."

On a national level, there are committees and groups dedicated to pushing for better alternatives on television. In Los Angeles, the National Association for Better Broadcasting, joined by citizens' groups, succeeded in persuading station KTTV to drop "Batman," "Superman," "Aquaman" and 39 "excessively violent" animated cartoon series from its programming for at least three years.

One citizens group, Action for Children's Television, or ACT, based in Boston, is working for better quality programming, less commercialism (tallied now at 10 minutes of advertising per hour during children's viewing hours) and educating parents on the effects of television on young minds.

"Every parent knows most about his or her own child," ACT president, Peggy Charren, said. "The limiting of a program is most appropriate regardless of whether the program is good or bad for the general population . . . I think the fact that parents are becoming aware is what's important here . . . It is up to the parents to watch and limit the programs appropriate for their particular child. If you decide that one of them is just too much for the child, you handle it intelligently, the way you teach a child not to cross the

there, and, while I'm not saying he would cheer them on, he would at least root for his friend."

Christopher's friends at nursery school who are part of the experiment have also exhibited less aggression. Arlene Artale, whose 3-year-old son, Joseph, once insisted on pouring ketchup on an Evel Knievel toy to show "the blood and guts," has, she said, "been a lot better as far as hitting other children." And Marv Ann Forgie said Danny, 5, "doesn't jump around as much off the chairs. That kind of thing isn't going on as much."

The mothers plan to continue the ban of Ch.

television has "much more far-reaching" effects than stimulating viewers to aggressive acts. "We have found," they wrote, "that people who watch a lot of TV see the real world as more dangerous and frightening than those who watch very little. Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens and more fearful of the real world."

Parents should begin television selection, Gerbner said last week, when their children are "in the crib. The children today absorb a tremendous amount of television before they can even speak . . . It's not that they should be forbidden, but their fare should be considered . . .

street."

Brian Spinner has learned that he is not to watch certain programs and he has given up trying to sneak in "Batman." Mrs. Seligsohn said, "In school, his play has been much more constructive."

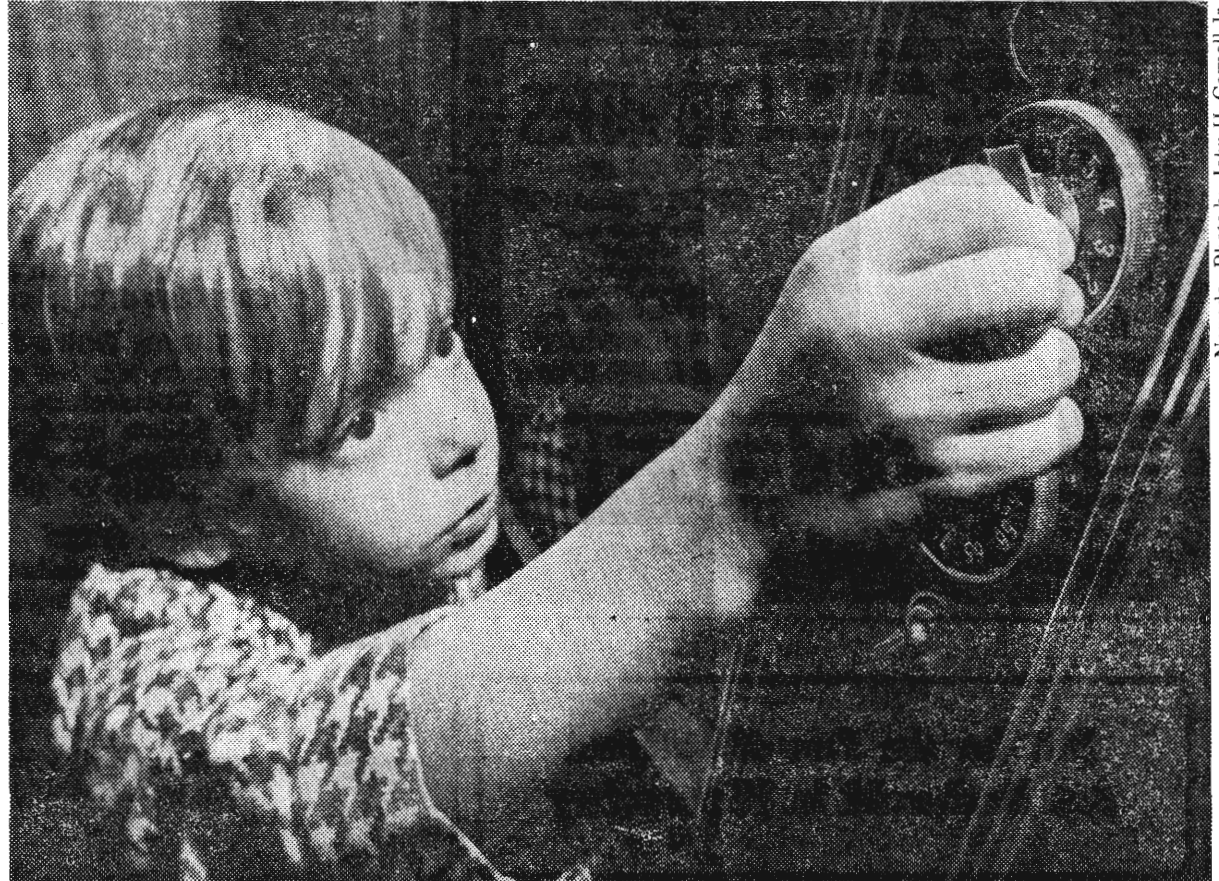
At home, his mother said, he still plays "Batman"—pow, pow—but on the cat and dog instead of on his peers. "At least he plays it alone," Mrs. Spinner said, "and his behavior and attitude have improved . . . Still, though, one of his favorite lines is, 'I've got you, Joker.'" ■

Brian Spinner watches 'Sesame Street,' which got the mothers' general approval.



Newsday Photo by Jim Pepler

Christopher Lane, 5, whose mother found 'no problem' in denying him 'Batman': 'I said, "Please don't watch it. I don't like those shows."'



Newsday Photo by John H. Cornell Jr.

Newsday

THE LONG ISLAND NEWSPAPER

550 Stewart Avenue, Garden City, Long Island, New York 11530

Dr. Gerbner --

Obviously this is a serious development which probably
and rightfully deserves more than newspaper stories.

It was extremely interesting talking to you several weeks
ago and I appreciate your help very much.

Susan Lopez

Heavy television viewing distorts fear of violence

TORONTO (CP) — Heavy television viewers tend to have a grossly distorted fear for their physical safety, the Ontario royal commission on violence in the communications industry was told yesterday.

Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg school of communication at the University of Pennsylvania, told the commission that people

who watch four or more hours of violent television drama daily begin to think that the drama is an accurate depiction of their environment.

Dr. Gerbner, who monitors and evaluates the effects of television violence, said the result of such fear is that the viewers demand greater security and increased police protection.

Viewers become convinced

that their local police need the type of equipment shown on television to control a crime rate which exists only on television, he said.

Dr. Gerbner said the heavy television viewer believes he faces a 50-50 risk of being attacked when he leaves his home. A more realistic person assesses the risk as one in 100 while the real odds are about one in 10,000.

Toronto Globe & Mail 5/26/76
Page 1

Violence-laden drama often seen as real life, inquiry told

Heavy TV viewers found to have distorted fear for safety

By ARTHUR JOHNSON

People who watch four hours or more of violence-laden television drama daily tend to have a grossly distorted concern and fear for their physical safety, the Ontario Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry was told yesterday.

Dr. George Gerbner, who heads a U.S. group that monitors and evaluates the effects of television violence, said people who watch a lot of TV begin to take the violent fantasies that flicker before them as an accurate depiction of their environment.

About a third of the U.S. population would qualify as heavy viewers of TV—that is, they watch four or more hours a day.

Under questioning from commission chairman Judy LaMarsh, Dr. Gerbner said this fear and anxiety is manifested in demands for greater security. Many people keep their doors locked and look to the police for increased protection when in fact, the crime rate has not changed in their community.

Miss LaMarsh observed that the lesson to be learned from Dr. Gerbner's research is that "it would be cheaper to take off the blasted programming

than to pressure governments for more protection."

In an interview, Dr. Gerbner said police departments in many small U.S. communities have responded to pressure from anxious TV viewers by buying sophisticated and expensive equipment that is unnecessary and mostly unused.

Viewers become convinced that their local police need the type of equipment shown in big-city crime dramas in order to control a crime wave that exists only on the airwaves, he said.

The other side of the coin, he told

the commission, is that the apprehensions could become self-fulfilling prophecies, with violent people taking advantage of an atmosphere of anxiety and fear.

One of the questions asked by Dr. Gerbner and his researchers is what do people think the odds are of being physically attacked when they venture out of their homes.

The heavy TV viewer, he said, replies that he faces a 50-50 risk of being attacked. More realistic people assess their chances as one in 100, when in fact the real odds are about one in 10,000.

An interesting illustration of the dif-

ference in the nature of news in newspapers and news on television, Dr. Gerbner said, is that people who read rather than watch their news tend to be less fearful for their safety, even if they also watch a lot of TV.

Dr. Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, said TV producers rely heavily on violent programming because it is inexpensive to produce in comparison with other programs, being formulaic and predictable.

Ironie position
Page 5

Children called slaves to TV - America's



METRO WEATHER

Sunny, warmer tomorrow,
high 23 Celsius. Low tonight
10C. Details, page A2.

ESTABLISHED 1892

April paid circulation Mon.-Fri. 496,652; Sat. 783,873

The Toronto Star

Wednesday, May 26, 1976—110 pages

By PAUL DALBY

Star staff writer

Television is North America's new religion and children are its slavish converts, a U. S. specialist on communications said in Toronto yesterday.

George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, said no one can advise parents what to watch on TV any more because their children control the TV sets.

He told Ontario's Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry that today's children are watching up to eight hours of television every day.

NO ARGUMENT

Gerbner and three university colleagues have been surveying the three major U. S. networks for the past nine years and their reports have ruffled quite a few feathers.

Gerbner told the royal commission, headed by Judy LaMarsh, that the networks' old argument, "If you don't like it, switch off," just doesn't hold water any more.

"That's like telling someone who doesn't like pollution to hold his nose. Television is the only medium that dominates us from the cradle to the grave," he said.

Miss LaMarsh told Gerbner that this was why the Ontario government had called the royal commission.

"Most of the Ontario population gets its culture from the States," she said. "Ontario doesn't know what's going on in Ontario hospitals, schools, courts and governments. Only what's happening in San Francisco and New York."

MISLEADING IDEA

Gerbner went on to say that the "family hour" viewing idea now being used by U. S. networks is misleading. "The violent programs have just been redistributed into other viewing times. There's as much violence on TV as ever."

He said that people who watch four hours or more of violence-riddled television shows per day tend to acquire a grossly distorted fear for their own safety.

These viewers begin to take the violence on TV as an accurate depiction of

See CHILDREN, page A3

Children slaves to TV screens commission told

Continued from page 1

their environment. They keep their doors locked and demand greater protection from the police, despite the fact that the crime rate hasn't changed in their community, he said.

In an interview yesterday; Gerbner told The Star: "Violent programs are very cheap to produce for the U.S. networks' assembly line production.

"Better programming costs more money and the networks are interested in only one thing, to deliver the biggest audience to their advertisers."

Gerbner said Canadians should consider themselves lucky to have a network like the CBC, which does offer selective viewing.

And he urged both the CBC brass and the Canadian government not to fall into the trap of fighting CTV and the U.S. networks for big audiences.

"So what if the CBC does

not always pull in big audiences? At least they offer variety in programming, which is a lot more than we get in the States," Gerbner said.

Things aren't likely to improve in the foreseeable future for either U.S. or Canadian audiences watching the three American networks, he said.

"The networks have only responded with changes like the family hour when the heat was in," Gerbner reported.

Government inquiries such as the LaMarsh commission and the U.S. House of Representatives communications subcommittee help to put some heat on the TV industry, he said.

"But I doubt if they can force wholesale changes on their own."

Gerbner thinks the answer may lie in the U.S. government's giving funds to the TV networks specifically for quality programs such as current affairs, drama, the arts and documentaries.

"The money could be raised by a \$5-a-year-levy from every U.S. taxpayer and awarded to the networks like a defence contract.

"It would remove the networks' old argument against better programs — that they're too costly and advertisers won't support them."

Gerbner also argues that violence is most prevalent in television. "People can be selective about buying newspapers so there's no comparison between them and the mass audiences of TV."

OSINOUS EVIDENCE

Dr. Kingsley Ferguson, psychologist in chief of the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, said there is "an unassessed degree of danger" in the amount and type of television programs most children watch. He said that although there is a lack of formal studies on the effect of television in Canada, "what evidence we have on violence (on television) is ominous."

He said American studies show that violence on the screen aggravates or encourages violent or aggressive behavior in the viewers and, since Canadian children tend to watch American shows, "we can assume it's true here, too."

Dave Nostbakken, 31-year-old lecturer at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, said there is "ample evidence" that television is addictive.

He cited a European

TELEVISION SITCOM has the Lowe children, of Lynbrook Dr., enthralled. But Vicki (left) 11, Mere-

study in which people were paid not to watch TV — some lasted a week, none lasted a month.

"They experienced withdrawal symptoms similar to drug withdrawal," Nostbakken said. "They suffered from nervousness, tension and sleeplessness."

He said some children could suffer from a loss of "self-identity" through excessive TV viewing.

"They lose their ability to stand back from a situation," he said. "Their awareness of themselves and others diminishes and they become frustrated. It could lead to violent behavior."

North York board of education recently conducted a survey among 630 students and found 15 per cent of them watched eight

hours of television a day and 50 per cent of them were unrestricted by the parents in their choice of programs.

Board chairman Mel Shipman told The Star yesterday constant viewing was psychologically unhealthy for children because it kept them from being actively involved with others.

"But we're encouraging teachers and parents to teach children to be discriminating in what they watch and to evaluate content," he said.

Walter London is a concerned parent — he's also associated dean of the faculty of education at the University of Toronto. Yesterday he said more scientific studies on the effects of TV are needed to map out a safe, sensible future for young viewers.

dith, 3, and Caron, 3, usually prefer to be outdoors. Vicki likes police stories but doesn't see many of them.

"An unmitigated diet of violence doesn't lead anywhere and all parents should be concerned about it," London said. "Excessive viewing is a danger and parents should know exactly what their children are watching and how much of it."

PREFER OUTDOORS

Gail Lowe, of Lynbrook Dr., mother of three girls, said her children "don't watch a lot of television anyway — they'd rather be outside playing. My 11-year-old likes the police adventure programs but she goes to bed at 9 p.m. so she does not see many."

Caron, 3, told The Star "being outside is better" than watching TV. She

doesn't even like Sesame Street any more.

But Margaret Draper, of Jane St., said her three children, aged 13 to 6, "watch TV all the time. If it's raining or in the winter I can't get them away from the television set. I don't mind as long as they're quiet — it's when they're fighting I get mad."

Reality Knocked Out of Focus by TV Violence

By STEVE CASEY -
Copley News Service

HOLLYWOOD — What a tefrific country. We are blessed with such vast resources that we can employ entire battalions of highly educated, highly trained people to sniff and snort and sample and fidget and write voluminous, learned treatises, all chock-full of big and bureaucratic words, all masterful statements of the obvious.

Poverty, prisons and discrimination having been claimed by social scientists of the past, researchers in quest of grant money have now found

a fertile field in television — in particular, televised violence.

A case in point is a recent finding by a psychiatrist — even more dangerous than a social scientist — that violence on television brings out aggressive tendencies in both stable and unstable personalities.

Unstable folks, we are told, are the more likely to respond to television violence by going totally crackers.

Big deal. Every parent who gets concerned about TV violence knows instinctively that a kid who overdoses on "The Rookies" is more likely to turn into a cretin than a kid who

watches only Oral Roberts or the latest Peanuts special.

Still, such studies serve a useful purpose if only to document, and thus make us feel better about, what we knew in the first place.

If you say you won't let your kid — or husband or wife, for that matter — watch televisidd mayhem, you sound like a flaming reactionary and a meanie to boot. But if you say all that trash is "scientifically proved to have deleterious effects on your emotional health," you sound positively liberal.

Comes now a report in the

current number of Psychology Today, a magazine remarkable for being written in real English so that real people can understand it. (It has great-looking graphs for those in the trade who have to look at pictures.)

This article is called "The Scary World of TV's Heavy Viewer" and it says, in part, that not only does televised violence beget violence for real, but TV warps the perspective of the world of those who sit and sop up all the patent nonsense poured their way by the networks.

Television, say authors George Berbner and Larry

Gross, makes people apprehensive about their world and presents a phony, simplistic picture of that world some souls accept as the real McCoy.

Of course.

Killing, as the ultimate in "action," is so commonplace on the tube it's probably becoming ingrained in our collective head as an acceptable means of solving problems. Respect for life and for the right of each individual to be free of batterings upon his person are cheapened by the ceaseless poundings and slaughterings inflicted upon television characters.

Remember the old "Peter

Gunn" series? Every week, Pete would take more of a beating than a normal man could withstand in a lifetime.

Some punk teen-age hood sees that, wraps some poor guy upside the head with a lead pipe and gets all kinds of surprises when the victim dies.

But it's more than violence, really, that television warps, as Berbner and Gross point out. It tells us lies about how our society works.

John Ryor, president of the National Education Association, said the other day that the average high school kid sees 15,000 hours of TV and is in class but 12,000 hours.