

# Violence in the media: Judy leaps before looking

By **BORDEN SPEARS**  
Star senior editor

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

The words are those of Judy LaMarsh, in her capacity as chairman of the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, and they are clearly defamatory of the population of Ontario. Evidence of truth is a defence against a charge of libel, but if the LaMarsh proclamation is supported by evidence she did not indicate it.

There is in fact no evidence thus far that the commission has carried out any independent basic research in the province, other than the hearings at which interested parties were invited to express opinions. It has collated a good deal of research done in other countries, notably the U.S. It should therefore know what's happening in San Francisco and New York.

The commissioners began their work with a set of conclusions already formed, as they have made clear in comments at the public sessions and in speeches and interviews. They believe, for example, that violence is stimulated not only by violence but by the reporting and depiction of it; that there is too much violence in all the media, and that in the interest of public safety it must somehow be curtailed. The disease has been diagnosed; it remains only to prescribe a cure.

They have had some difficulty, however, in establishing a clear cause-and-effect relationship between media violence and violence in the society. Not that they haven't tried. At a hearing in Mississauga, where the subject of violence in school texts came up, Miss LaMarsh observed: "Children with reading or learning disabilities may be the most susceptible to the violence in these books."

"May be," in truth; but no evidence is suggested. The possibility of malign influence, however, may win acceptance as fact if it is often enough repeated. In the commission's in-



☆ *Borden Spears, Your Man at The Star, represents the readers' interests in The Star's newsroom. This is one of the articles in which he periodically appraises the problems and performances of the press.*

terim report, which set the tone for most of what has followed, such phrases as "may be," "possibly," "it could be that," occur no fewer than 172 times.

Some of the evidence leads in curious directions, not always followed up by the commission. A star witness this week was Dr. George Gerbner, who studies the effects of televised violence in the U.S. He said that when people watch a great deal of TV violence (and one third of the U.S. population, according to him, see four hours of it every day) they become excessively fearful about their personal safety. They come to believe that violence is pandemic; they lock their doors and fear to go outside without protection.

This led Miss LaMarsh to observe that "it would be cheaper to take the blasted programming off the air than to pressure governments for more protection." But perhaps, if the object is to reduce real violence, the opposite lesson should be drawn. Let TV violence go unchecked, keep the population cowering indoors, and violence will disappear.

The research, however, is not concluded and it is too early to anticipate the commission's report. The Ontario hearings now being over, the commissioners will go abroad to see how violence is treated in foreign media. Miss LaMarsh will visit Poland and Hungary. That should be instructive.



James Taylor, Ontario's minister of community and social services, is also concerned to protect the public from the pernicious media — or, for that matter, from anyone else who asks questions. In a three-page memo this

week he instructed all employees of the ministry that if they receive a query from the press, they must inform him or his deputy at once.

The memo said that reports, correspondence, conceptual ideas, proposals, programs, projects, procedures and "any other source or basis for communication that is subject to the authority of the minister" are confidential until approved by him. No communication with anyone outside the ministry, "whether verbal or by letter or memoranda" is to be made without express approval.

But relax; the prohibition is not as wholesale as it might appear. It's all right, Taylor says, to give out information; what must be withheld is intelligence. Information means numbers, names and dates; intelligence means "factual or conceptual material of a qualitative nature."

Right, Mr. Taylor. Now, what if a reporter asks for intelligent information?

## The Toronto Star

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## Health Policy 1976: Violence, Television, and American Youth

IN 1973, 18 032 young Americans, aged 15 to 24, died in motor vehicle accidents, 5182 were murdered, and 4098 committed suicide (1). The three main causes of death in this age group were all violent. During the same year, 425 children, aged 5 to 14, and 342, aged 1 to 4, were reported murdered. The actual figures for child murders are assumed to be very much higher.

The death rate, for ages 15 to 24, from all causes, was 19% higher in 1973 and 74 than it had been in 1960 and 61 (2). The rise was entirely due to deaths by violence. Even for the population as a whole, which showed a significant improvement in mortality rates in 1974 for the first time in over a decade, death rates from homicide and suicide continued to climb. Murder is now the fastest growing cause of death in the U.S. The annual rate rose more than 100% from 1960 to 1974 (2, 3). By contrast, the rate for all malignant neoplasms rose just over 1% and the rate for major cardiovascular diseases fell about 7%.

According to the United Nations, our homicide rate for the early Seventies, 9.2 per 100 000, was the highest of all reporting countries and a major cause of our poor showing in international comparisons of life expectancy (4). The next highest were Finland with 3.2 per 100 000 and West Germany and Australia with 1.8 each. All others were less than 1.

Dr. Arnold Barnett, a mathematician at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that, short of a significant change in public policy, the murder rate will continue to rise.

Even at current levels, approximately 2 percent of the babies now born in large American cities will be murdered. The actual figure might reach as high as 5 percent. . . . An American boy born in 1974 is more likely to die by murder than an American soldier in World War II was to die in combat (5).

The age group most involved in the recent upturn in homicide, with both the greatest number of victims and persons arrested, is 20 to 24. In 1972, 17.0% of all homicide victims and an estimated 23.7% of all arrests were in this age group (6). Teenagers, 15 to 19, accounted for 9% of all victims and nearly 19% of the arrests.

For every murder victim, about 25 are reported victims of aggravated assault and rape; many more unreported (7). For every youth killed in a car accident, nearly 40 are injured (8). According to a 1975 estimate, more than a million American children suffer physical abuse or neglect each year and at least 1 in 5 die from maltreatment. (9).

For a significant proportion of American children and

youth, violence is a major health problem. For an alarming number it is a way of life. For the nation as a whole it has become a major political issue, with profound implications for our lives and our liberties.

### Violence and TV

The rise in overt violence has been accompanied by a new experience for most American children: exposure to a massive daily diet of crime and violence on television "entertainment" shows. Any adult, not addicted to the tube, would find it difficult to believe the amount.

According to the annual "Violence Profile," maintained at the Annenberg Institute of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, approximately three-fourths of all network dramatic programs during evening prime time (8 PM to 11 PM) and children's dramatic programs on Saturday and Sunday mornings, 1967 through 1973, contained violence as standard content (10). The proportion declined slightly from 80% in 1967 to 73% in 1973. However, the rate of violent episodes remained virtually unchanged: about 8 per hour. One authority has estimated that "between the ages of five and fifteen, the average American child will view the killing of more than 13 000 persons on television" (11).

Television is not the only entertainment medium to emphasize violence today. The film industry is far worse in proportion to total output and some of the worst violence in television today originates in movies.

Television differs, however, from other media, including the movies, in its pervasive impact on children. A recent Nielsen survey reports that preschoolers watch an average of 54 hours of week (12). This means 7 to 8 hours a day! More than 20 million 2-to-17-year-olds are still at the set at 9 PM, 13 million at 10 PM, and 5.3 million at 11 PM (13). For many children, watching TV will take up as many hours from the ages of 2 to 6 as classroom hours will consume for the next 10 years (11).

Low-income children spend more time in front of TV than others. One study of 15-to-17 year-olds, in the late Sixties, found that middle-class youngsters averaged 4 hours on Sundays; low-income youngsters upwards of 5 to 6 hours (14).

It is this almost total immersion, in the home setting, combined with the audio-visual impact, that sets TV apart from other entertainment media and necessitates special consideration as a risk-factor influencing the health of American youth. More than a decade ago, Dr. Frederick Wertham (15), a psychiatrist, said bluntly in his book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, that "television was becoming

a school for violence."

A recent effort to reduce the amount of TV violence and sex to which children are exposed has produced a major controversy. Under long-time pressure from parents, Congress, and the Federal Communications Commission, the industry finally came up with the concept of a "Family Viewing Hour" between 7 and 9 PM (6 to 8 PM in the Central time zone) during which time no program deemed "inappropriate for viewing by a general family audience" would be shown. The new rule went into effect in September 1975 amid plaudits from the FCC and 80% of adult Americans (13), scepticism from many industry critics who suspected a meaningless public relations gesture, and intense opposition from the producers and writers of the shows that were affected. Within less than 2 months, three industry unions brought suit against the FCC, the National Association of Broadcasters and the three networks, claiming censorship and violation of the First Amendment. The case—significant not only for the future of TV entertainment but our ability to set safety and cultural standards for the nation—is expected to reach the Supreme Court.

The stakes in the "game" of TV violence are enormous, not only for the networks but for all who have contributed to, and profited from, the creation of a mass audience for violence entertainment. On July 1975, Paramount Pictures announced that it had leased to the TV networks the rights to 42 recent movies, including "The Godfather" and "The Godfather Part II," for about \$76 million (16). The NBC-TV network, which paid about \$7 million for a single showing of "The Godfather" in 1974, has reportedly paid \$15 million for a single run of the two films in TV format.

Napoleon is reported to have said, "Let me write the songs of the people. I care not who writes their laws." No society can be indifferent to the ways its citizens, especially its children, publicly entertain themselves. Bear-baiting and cockfighting were prohibited by law, not so much out of compassion for the animals, but mostly because such spectacles debased and brutalized the audiences.

#### What Can Be Done?

What, if anything, can the medical profession and individual physicians do in this situation? First, and most important, recognize violence for the major threat it has become to the life and health of American children and youth and be prepared to play a leadership role in the search for causes and cures. This role will, obviously, vary from physician to physician, depending on particular interest, competence, and organizational affiliations.

Those working directly with children and youth—pediatricians, general and family practitioners, school health doctors, and others, psychiatrists working with disturbed individuals, surgeons and others specializing in trauma and emergency care: all have the opportunity to deal at firsthand with the victims of the "culture of violence."

As citizens, with more-than-average community status, physicians, both individually and through their organizations, can make their voices heard on issues where the

threat to life and death is already clear, for example, holding down and enforcing reasonable speed limits, heavier penalties on drunk driving, registration of handguns and meaningful penalties for illegal possession, and reform of the system of juvenile justice.

Others, whose primary interest is research, can contribute to the development of a desperately needed "epidemiology of violence," an epidemiology that should be pursued with the same degree of moral and intellectual commitment that we are currently devoting to the war on cancer and once did to the war on tuberculosis.

With respect to television, there is much that can be done, as physicians, as citizens, and as parents. The essential first step is to recognize the relation between symbolic and overt violence in the behavior of children. Fortunately the profession is beginning to make this connection (17).

The approach to the television industry the FCC, and federal and state representatives should be twofold: a reduction of violence in general entertainment programming and support for the concept of the Family Viewing Hour. The argument for the latter is not that it will save our children from exposure to adult violence; it won't. But the very existence of such a family hour commits the industry to values other than commercialism and may force them, and the rest of us, to come up with some positive guidelines for realizing TV's enormous cultural and educational potential.

The remarkable success of the Public TV program, "The Incredible Machine," an imaginative and well-produced show about the human body, first aired 28 October 1975, and the new technological developments in cable TV, videodisks, and videorecorders, all suggest the exciting frontiers that lie ahead for television. But, first, we must bring ourselves as a nation to a clear policy decision that some things—especially the lives, the health, and the ethical values of our children—are more important than the profits that can be made out of the glorification of violence. (ANNE R. SOMERS, *Department of Community Medicine, Rutgers Medical School, College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Piscataway, New Jersey*)

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# Advertisers React to TV Violence

An organization called H.A.R.T. (Help America Reduce Televiolence) has been in contact with major TV sponsors to get their reactions to the increase in TV violence.

The high amount of violence on TV is a matter of growing concern among some of the major advertisers. In November of last year, Mr. Archa O. Knowlton, media services director for General Foods, spoke to the issue at a conference of advertising executives in New York. In a copy of the speech which he sent to H.A.R.T. he said, "It's time to stop the dialog about whether broadcast violence has a negative impact on society. Let's be on the safe side and speculate that it can't do anybody any good." His speech was the subject of a front page article in the Nov. 24 issue of *Advertising Age*. He concluded with a call to action, "We at General Foods have, to the greatest extent possible, avoided participation in what we believe to be violent programs. We don't deceive ourselves into believing that a single advertiser, no matter how large, can sway the economics of the television business, but if enough of us were to buy around violent programming, it would not make business sense for the networks to put as many of such programs on their schedules."

H.A.R.T. has written to 100 TV sponsors asking their policy regarding advertising on violent programs. Some of the concerned sponsors replied as follows:

**SEARS**—"We have notified the networks and our advertising agencies of our strong objections to violence. We try to avoid it whenever possible."

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# MEDIA WATCH

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL  
CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR  
BROADCASTING  
VOLUME 1, NO. 4, JUNE 1976

## NCCB Official Testifies in Suit Against Family Hour

Although NCCB and Action for Children's Television have filed their own separate brief in the lawsuit opposing the Family Viewing Hour [*MEDIA WATCH* No. 3], NCCB Chairperson Nicholas Johnson was invited to testify by the Writers Guild in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles. As an expert witness, based on his service as an FCC Commissioner, Johnson was asked to clarify the ability of the FCC and its chairman to bring force to bear on the industry through speeches and special meetings.

An important part of the case is the assertion that the FCC forced broadcasters to act by "jawboning" and "regulation by lifted eyebrow" so that the FCC could reduce sex and violence on TV without formal regulatory proceedings. The plaintiffs claim that because there were no formal proceedings, the Family Hour was adopted by the TV networks without allowing the public, TV producers, writers and other interested parties to comment or suggest alternatives.

Johnson pointed out many examples of such indirect pressure that amounted to significant "orchestrated" pressure, particularly by FCC Chairman Wiley, that forced the networks to respond. He particularly emphasized Wiley's action in calling the network presidents to his Washington office—an act so unusual that the network officials would have been "frightened and concerned. They would take it very seriously. Calling them into the Chairman's office in Washington, with all of the Washington nuances where you meet with whom, would obviously

have serious implications."

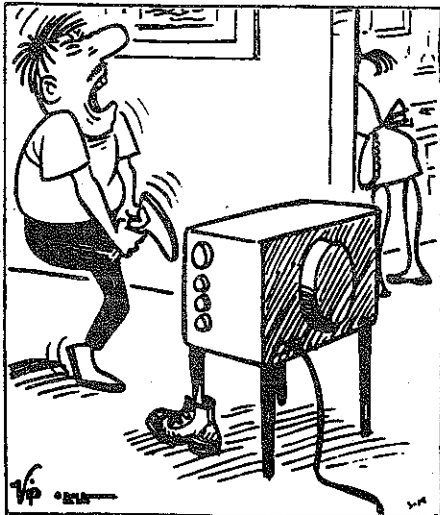
Johnson pointed to his own actions while an FCC Commissioner to open the meeting to the public. His testimony also emphasized that the result of such indirect regulation is a Family Hour that has not substantially reduced the overall amount of violence on television, and discourages the discussion of serious social issues during a period of prime time when most people are watching television.

## Prime Time Public Affairs Check Up

Gary Deeb, the *Chicago Tribune's* acid-penned TV critic has a suggestion for a local TV programming survey. Armed only with old copies of *TV Guide*, Deeb discovered which Chicago stations preempted the most (and least) network prime time "pulp" for local public affairs programming. In the last year, Chicago's WLS-TV (ABC) bumped network shows only once, WMAQ-TV (NBC) only three times, and WBBM-TV (CBS) 12 times. Deeb was puzzled, along with others, why a station in the country's second largest city couldn't come up more than once with anything more interesting than network programs.

Such poor local performance is one reason why NCCB has called for a proposal for one hour of prime time public affairs programming by all local stations—a proposal now endorsed by over 100 major organizations and 21 members of Congress.

**BIG GEORGE**



"The TV set just kicked me back!"

copyright Field Enterprises, Inc. 1976

# Advertisers React to TV Violence

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**RALSTON PURINA**—"We have written the networks, instructing them not to place our "spot" advertisements before, during, or immediately after obviously violent shows."

**REVLON**—"We usually select television programs we believe will enhance the Revlon name and image. Generally speaking, this policy rules out shows that lean on violence."

**OSCAR MAYER**—"We sponsor only family type shows."

**GILLETTE**—"We have declined to sponsor S.W.A.T. because of its undue emphasis on violence."

**PILLSBURY**—"Known violence shows are not purchased."

**BRISTOL-MYERS**—"It is our policy to avoid programs which exploit sex and violence."

**STATE FARM**—"Our position is to avoid buying (violent) programming to the greatest extent possible."

**HALLMARK**—"We abhor violence on television. We think the best way . . . is to offer our viewers a better alternative—something equally as meaningful and

entertaining but without resorting to violence or any other gimmickry."

**KODAK**—"We avoid programs that are excessively and unnecessarily violent."

**GOODYEAR**—"We hope that our efforts, together with those of other responsible advertisers, will bring an end to the unnecessary glorification of violence."

**CARNATION**—"We instruct the networks not to insert our commercials in programming which involves extreme violence."

**GENERAL MILLS**—Sent H.A.R.T. a copy of an article by GM media director critical of TV violence.

H.A.R.T. received replies from many other advertisers who state that they have no responsibility for the content of the programs they sponsor.

H.A.R.T. has a newsletter called **HART BEAT**, and its address is: Box 1701, South Bend, Ind. 46624

## Pat Scott Joins NCCB Staff

NCCB's new Director of Special Projects is Patricia Scott, who previously worked as a Regional Director for the Cable Television Information Center, a Markle and Ford Foundation project under the sponsorship of the Urban Institute. Prior to CTIC, Pat worked as Director of Public Access for Sterling-Manhattan Cable in New York City. She brings with her a broad perspective of access and alternate media issues. As Director of Special Projects, Pat will oversee our action programs and activities, and coordinate the recruitment and involvement of our student interns.

## Carson Show Uses NCCB Material

The Ten Symptoms of TV Guilt which were reported in the last issue of **MEDIA WATCH** were used as the basis for a comedy routine on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson" in April. Citing NCCB and **MEDIA WATCH** as the source, Carson read the 10 symptoms and then added some of his own, such as, "If you saw your family on the street, would you recognize them?"

# A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

What have you gentlemen done with my child? . . . You have sent him out in the streets in rags of ragtime, tatters of jive and boogie woogie, to collect money from all and sundry for hubba hubba and audio jitterbug. You have made of him a laughing stock to intelligence, surely a stench in the nostrils of the gods of the ionosphere, you have cut time into

tiny segments called spots (more rightly stains) wherewith the occasional fine program is periodically smeared with impudent insistence to buy and try.

From an address by Lee de Forest, inventor of the TV picture tube, to an annual meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters.

## Study Shows TV Violence Still High

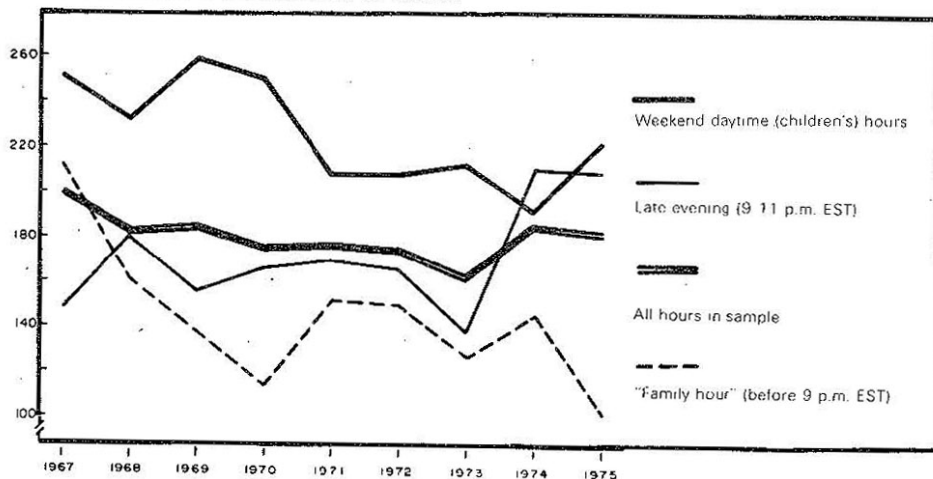
*Family Hour Reduction Offset by Other Increases*

Dr. George Gerbner, who pioneered the study of TV violence with the Surgeon General's Report in 1972, has released his seventh annual violence profile. Dr. Gerbner and his associate Dr. Larry Gross, working through the Annenberg School of Communications, report that there has been a significant decrease in violence during the "Family Hour," but that dramatic increases in violence during children's viewing hours have offset that reduction so that the overall violence level has hardly changed. In fact, the study states that "the overall rate of violent episodes, 5.6 per play, is, if anything, highest on record."

The study also shows that NBC has had the greatest increase in violence with ABC and CBS showing a reduction. Although CBS showed the biggest reduction in the study, it was the first network to sharply criticize the Gerbner report, pointing out that its own studies were for 13 weeks instead of Gerbner's random two weeks and that it showed an overall

reduction of 24% by all networks. Gerbner replied that the difference was in the definition of violence, with the CBS study refusing to include violence in a humorous situation such as cartoons. The consensus of independent researchers on TV violence is that cartoon or humor-

ous violence has as much impact on the viewer, particularly children, and must be included. By ignoring this, Gerbner points out, the CBS study omits nearly half of the total violence normally counted by independent experts.



# What Hath TV Wrought? Ad Execs Wonder

By Bailey Morris

Washington Star Staff Writer

The room was dark and the screen was big and the images were those of the 1950s — jitterbugging bobbysoxers on Dick Clarke's Bandstand, porterhouse steak for \$1 a pound, Howdy Doody and Milton Berle and pie-throwing contests on the TV screen.

It was an attempt to reassess the beginnings of the Revolution or what one participant called "The New Religion."

Suddenly, the images changed and the pace picked up to a fevered pitch of bloodied victims, of drug-charged, bare-breasted women, of massive rallies of

young people in revolt, of "sickies" entertaining huge crowds, of magazines portraying nudes in every possible position and condition — including dismemberment.

## SEX AND VIOLENCE. VIOLENCE AND SEX. SEX AND VIOLENCE.

That was the message of a controversial and privately-produced film entitled "The Desensitization of America," shown to a group of the country's leading advertising executives yesterday.

It showed us as a people who have moved from a state of innocence and folk-siness in the early TV years to a society

that nothing shocks yet many things terrify.

Ours is a world of "strong women and weak men," one in which the data shows that impotence is on the rise among young college men, according to Arnold Grisman, executive vice president of J. Walter Thompson Co., one of the world's largest advertising agencies.

Based on its research for the film — including some 2300 studies, books and other items — J. Walter Thompson was able to pinpoint "a fear of violence in the streets" as one of the dominant trends in America today, Grisman said.

In many cases, it is a paranoid fear

based on second-hand and even third-hand knowledge of what is actually happening in the streets, Grisman said. In almost all cases, it is accompanied by strong "law and order" tendencies.

SO ALARMED is J. Walter Thompson by the trends it is seeing that it plans to urge its clients to perform a kind of economic censorship (although it doesn't like to use that term) on TV programs that are deemed too violent.

It is TV, the giant ad agency thinks, which is the most potent of all the communications media and the one most re-

See PANEL, D-4

# PANEL

Continued From D-1

sponsible for the turned-off, cynical society of today. Grisman paints a picture of a society too scared to do anything other than take care of its immediate and more materialistic needs.

The data shows that young people, for example, may be super bright but that they are "also afraid of emotional commitment," of becoming involved with anyone, the ad executive says.

So totally immersed have we become in the whole sex-violence syndrome that we, as a people, have lost our ability to feel.

GRISMAN'S presentation before the American Advertising Federation raised the spectre of zombie-like creatures capable of walking by a person dying in the street and likely to be roused only when something threatened his or her immediate turf.

Reacting to the J. Walter Thompson presentation was a panel including Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania; Tom Swafford, vice president for programming of CBS-TV; Don Johnston, president of J. Walter Thompson; Arthur Kretchmer, editorial director of Playboy Magazine; former Nixon press officer Herbert Klein, vice president of Metromedia Inc.

AND THE PANEL'S reactions were strong ones, with Kretchmer, for example, expressing the view that he felt he had been "conned" by the film.

"I grew up with Bob Dylan and Richard Pryor . . . I felt they were sensitizing experiences for me," Kretchmer said in referring to some of the film's subjects.

The Playboy editor said he had gotten the feeling from the film that J. Walter Thompson was bemoaning the loss of a "better time" and that it was taking it upon itself to "lead the common man to a better place and a better level of taste."

"That frightens me to death . . . you can't go back to what was," Kretchmer said.

Later in the discussion, Kretchmer said that he, for one, grew up with the "real American mythology of John Wayne movies . . . in which justice prevails even if it has to be imposed by violence."

Rather than imposing a set of solutions on society, Kretchmer said, he thought it was better to let the society work it out for itself.

"If you put your money into shows which are short on violence . . . into the more tepid shows . . . what's going to make you stop with violence?"

REACTING somewhat defensively to the discussion was CBS's Swafford who said that TV is always getting "a lot of flack" and now "is being accused of contributing to the desensitization."

"Are we condemning society or the media that reflects that society," Swafford asked.

There seemed to be little argument among the participants that we live in a more desensitized world in which nudity, violence, and buckets of blood come to us in increasingly bigger packages — whether it be in movies like "Jaws" or after-9 p.m. TV programs or lurid front-page stories.

But there was disagreement over the prescription for this societal disease.

Most everyone seemed to argue for a slowing-down of today's media pace and for time to think about where we, as a people, are going.

SOME OF the most interesting and most reflective comments came from Dr. Gerbner, who characterized TV "as the coming of a new religion" in terms of its impact on us all. Its impact is long-term, Gerbner said, and as yet not completely understood.

Based on the research that has been done — on the effects of the 6 to 8 hours of TV-watching a day that now prevails — Gerbner said the findings are:

● This amount of TV-watching leads people to be more fearful and more mistrusting than those people who do not watch it.

● It makes them more desirous of security and protection.

● It makes them more concerned about possible victimization.

The solution, in Gerbner's view, is to rethink the traditional liberal arts education and education in general to include TV and in order to train people to be more thoughtful and selective consumers of it.

IN ADVOCATING its brand of economic action against violence on TV, J. Walter Thompson President Johnston said he was motivated for social reasons and also for commercial reasons.

Based on a research survey it did of 200 adult TV viewers, the agency found people are becoming so turned off by violence that "10 percent considered not buying a product because it had been advertised on what they thought to be an excessively violent program."

A firm 8 percent of those survey said they had actually taken such positive action — had not bought the product — because they thought the show on which it was advertised was too violent, Johnston said.

That finding was a key reason for J. Walter Thompson's action in declaring war against violence on TV, he indicated.

The Washington Star

# Portfolio

● Amusements

SECTION D ★ WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 1976

## JWT's Johnston says violent TV should get sponsors' axe

Agency's survey of negative reaction among viewers explained at AAF session in Washington; Gerbner contends family viewing shifts violence to other times

J. Walter Thompson, the nation's largest advertising agency, is advising its clients to think twice before placing advertisements in television shows perceived to be violent. Such spots, the agency believes, may not have the selling power that gross rating points seem to indicate.

Don Johnston, JWT president and chief executive officer, justified that conclusion during a panel session at the American Advertising Federation convention last week in Washington (also see page 34). Mr. Johnston, in a prepared statement, gave the results of a JWT survey of 200 adult viewers ("very preliminary, a small sample") which the agency plans to expand.

According to Mr. Johnston: "Of the people surveyed 10% told us that they had

"Of the people surveyed 10% told us that they had considered not buying a product because it had been advertised on a program they considered excessively violent. Eight percent reported that they had actually taken such action . . . I cannot imagine any advertiser who would risk negative sales of those proportions." *JWT's Johnston*

considered not buying a product because it had been advertised on a program they considered excessively violent. Eight percent reported that they had actually taken such action . . .

"Here is a programming environment which can actually turn off sales. . . . Even . . . if it were 4%, I cannot imagine any advertiser who would risk negative sales of those proportions."

As for viewing, he explained that more than two out of five adults said they avoided those programs they considered too violent. In addition, he said, one-fifth of

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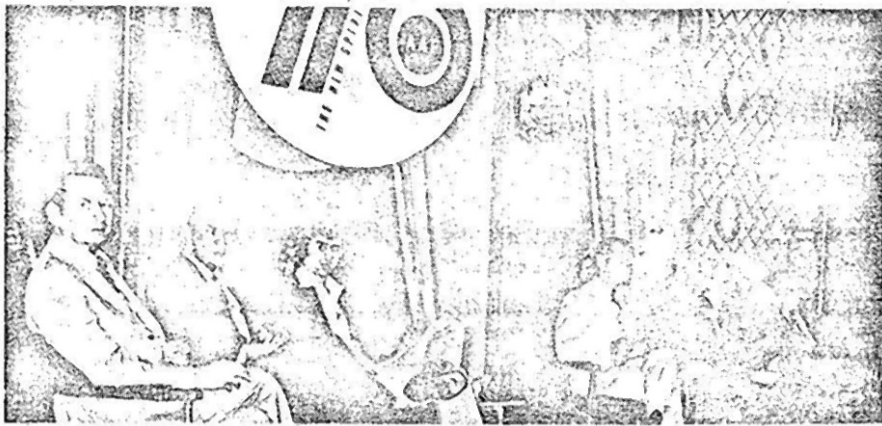
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**Are the media overloading our senses?** That question was debated last week following a presentation of J. Walter Thompson's "The Desensitization of America." Panelists at the AAF session were (l-r) Dr. George Gerbner, University of Pennsylvania; Thomas Swafford, CBS; Arnold Kretchmer, *Playboy*; moderator Herbert Klein, Metromedia; Don Johnston, JWT, and Arnold Grisman, JWT, who narrated the presentation.

the men and one-third of the women reported preventing children from watching shows considered too violent. He said that public hostility to TV violence is growing and "I am convinced it will make itself felt more and more, in letters of protest, and in product boycotts."

Mr. Johnston's remarks followed the screening of "The Desensitization of America"—a 40-minute presentation of slides, film, and audio track assembled by JWT and narrated by the agency's executive president, Arnold S. Grisman. (At an earlier presentation last month for a select audience, it was noted that two JWT clients, Kraft and Eastman Kodak, already have taken steps not to advertise in violent programs.)

The presentation demonstrates the increased emphasis on sex and violence over the past two decades. It claims that a "constant escalation" of media sensations is causing us to lose "our capacity for feeling... We seem to be heading for a period of sensory overload." The "obvious victims of social stress," it holds, are young people who have grown up with such media bombardment.

On the AAF panel with Mr. Johnston were Dr. George Gerbner, dean, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania; Arthur Kretchmer, editorial director, *Playboy* magazine, and Thomas Swafford, vice president, program practices, CBS-TV. The moderator was Herbert Klein, vice president, Metromedia.

In reference to the presentation itself, Mr. Johnston said that television as a whole was not being questioned but only the elements exploiting violence. In preparing for the presentation, he said JWT grew to believe that, given violent models, young people's "behavior will probably turn violent;" that unstable adults have modeled their actions on TV crimes; that "excessive doses of violence tend to desensitize even stable adults," and that heavy viewing of TV violence creates paranoia—"the streets of many of our

cities are bad enough, but they're not that bad."

Mr. Kretchmer, however, argued that "we've been a little conned this morning," claiming that much of contemporary media has provided sensitizing experiences, such as the music of Bob Dylan or the comedy of Lenny Bruce. All told, he said, he prefers today to the "neurotic" 50's and said that whoever would control the flow of media would be a dictator.

Mr. Swafford questioned whether the presentation was condemning society or "condemning the media that reflect that society." He also exchanged words with Dr. Gerbner concerning the academician's claim that there may have been a reduction in violence during family viewing time but there was an increase after that period and during children's programming during Saturday mornings. Dr. Gerbner also used the AAF convention to release an addendum to a violence profile he issued last month. Mr. Swafford said his figures showed the elimination of violence during family viewing. Dr. Gerbner disagreed but applauded CBS as a leader in reducing TV violence.

**Gerbner 'addendum' to violence study doesn't change earlier conclusion: violence hasn't decreased much**

The over-all amount of violence on network dramatic programs has remained "substantially unchanged, fall or spring, since 1974." So concludes Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, and the country's foremost student of TV violence.

Dr. Gerbner released last week an addendum to his "Violence Profile Number Seven," (*BROADCASTING*, April 5) and circulated it at the AAF convention. The full report now includes the 1976 spring season.

According to the report, samples of the fall and spring seasons 1974-1976 show a "slight upturn in the 'family hour' Violence Index (except on CBS) and a

corresponding decline during late evening and weekend daytime hours."

It holds that violence during the 8-9 p.m. EST period decreased only on CBS with the advent of family viewing. CBS was also named as the lowest in late evening violence. The study noted that violence during the current family hour period has risen at NBC since 1975 and has increased at ABC during the spring season.

During "children's hours," ABC had the lowest amount of violence although CBS and NBC figures are going down, the report said.



Bulletin illustration by Rudy DiFelice

Some advertisers are beginning to show concern about violence on television.

## What Price Televised Violence?

By HERB DRILL  
Of The Bulletin Staff

"Our clients are very concerned about the rising violence on TV and are asking us all the time about TV's violent programming."

The remark came from George Eversman, executive vice president and general manager of the Dearborn (Mich.) office of J. Walter Thompson Co. JWT is the nation's second largest ad agency, with 1975 billings of \$888.3 million, according to the trade publication "Agency Red Book."

Eversman said in an interview that JWT's clients are concerned about TV's effect on children and the effect of a violent environment on commercials. "Can you talk about a sporty Mustang II after a violent TV segment?" he asked.

### 'Non-Violent Route'

He noted that one of JWT's clients, Kraft Foods division of Kraftco Corp., "has gone the non-violent route" and other clients are expressing their views to the major television networks on the subject.

A letter to all Kraftco advertising agencies from the "Kraftco advertising advisory committee" dated March 24, 1976, said:

"Kraftco commercials are not to be scheduled in movies or other programs where the carrying network and/or station feels it necessary to insert a pre-

liminary 'mature audiences, parental discretion' advisory. This policy also applies to programs whose story line is known to involve sex, violence, shock, etc., but which perhaps may not carry this preliminary warning.

"... By taking this step we are continuing to adhere to the Kraftco programming policy of associating our commercial messages only with those programs which qualify as family entertainment."

Two days before that, Arthur W. Woelfle, Kraftco president, sent a letter inviting corporate personnel to a May 10 meeting in Skokie, Ill., dealing with Kraftco's ads. (In 1975, Kraftco spent \$93.3 million on advertising, according to the letter.)

Woelfle's letter said: "We have always been concerned with mass media programming, and today we share the same concern as the public regarding violence and sex — especially in television programming."

The letter asked the recipient to come prepared to discuss the issue of advertisers' responsibilities.

### Cites 'Reappraising'

Eversman said some of his clients are "reappraising their TV expenditures, but it's hard to avoid TV" for advertising. So far, he said, there hasn't been a "switch of major dollars."

The networks are also looking into the question of

violent fare. In April, CBS-TV's Office of Social Research completed a study, based on prime-time TV in the September '75 to February '76 period, which found that "incidents of dramatic violence declined 24 percent," compared with the '74-'75 season on all three networks combined, and by 36 percent on CBS.

"The study also shows that the introduction of family viewing period in the current season has been accompanied by a marked decrease from last year in the number of violent incidents that occur in the pre-9 P.M. period, as well as a decline in the post-9 P.M. period."

Attempts to contact NBC-TV and ABC-TV for their comments were unsuccessful.

University of Pennsylvania researchers have been looking into TV and violent programming, and their findings do not jibe with those of CBS-TV.

On March 31, Penn released the 1975 Violence Profile compiled by researchers at its Annenberg School of Communications. The profile said that although violence declined during the "family hour" on all three networks, it increased sharply on weekend programs for children.

It also said violence increased sharply on broadcasts after 9 P.M. throughout last fall and that, "family hour" notwithstanding, the overall level of TV violence remained constant.

# It Was a Disaster

My honeymoon was a disaster. Our travel agent booked us into an awful hotel in Nassau. The airconditioning in the main lobby wasn't working properly. Our room wasn't nice, but worst of all, there was a water shortage. Not getting any positive response about our various gripes, we started to pack. We made calls and visits to other hotels but decided to leave the island. We called our travel agent in Philadelphia but he was very uncooperative. I feel that my wife and I are entitled to a full refund of that disastrous trip. We've already been refunded the cost of the hotel but we want our airfare back also. We think the agent misrepresented the entire trip.

Your travel agent has taken offense at being called uncooperative. First of all, he claims you had your room changed at the hotel but the new room didn't suit either. You then moved to another hotel but that place left you cold, so you decided to leave the island. The agent offered to transfer your funds to a Miami Beach hotel since your flight connected there from Nassau. This alternative was rejected by you also. There was a water shortage on the island, typical for the summer months. Tourists were asked not to use the water between the hours of midnight and 7 a.m. The agent refunded you \$574 in full upon your return to Philadelphia. That was the entire hotel portion of your bill. The request for airfare recompense, he has refused, as the airline did transport you to the island and back. We think, under the circumstances that your agent has been most patient with you and is correct in his evaluation.

## Has New Motto

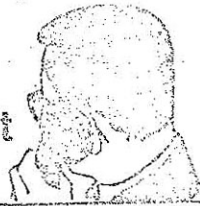
A bird plate in hand is worth two in Connecticut. That's been my motto since I sent this New England-based mail-order outfit a \$17 check for their Game Bird Plates. Trying to convince them of this is proving difficult.

The plates were meant to be Christmas gifts. That idea was shot down when I received a card saying that, due to a delay in pottery production, the plates wouldn't arrive in time for the holidays.

But, for my patience in waiting, I was to get a special gift in addition to my order.

-That special gift mentioned must have been aggravation. I still have

Mr. Fixit



nothing positive to show for my canceled check.



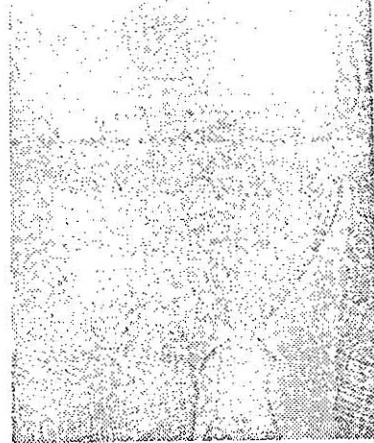
## At a Snail's Pace

Having been caught up in today's mania for quick results, I couldn't resist a local nursery's ad offering "fast growing" trees, for \$5.99. I immediately rushed them a check for the proper amount and they quickly cashed it.

Then things slowed to a snail's pace. The trees never arrived and the outfit won't answer my letters. Help.

Stop being a manic-depressive. You've received a refund. Try another nursery. The outfit you dealt with has signed a consent order with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Consumer Protection that it will not solicit orders unless capable of filling them.

Got a problem? Call Mr. Fixit at CO 3-6767, 5 P.M. to 9 P.M. Mondays through Fridays, or better, write him at The Evening and Sunday Bulletin, 30th and Market sts., Phila., Pa. 19101. The volume of calls and letters is so large that it is impossible to answer or even acknowledge every query. However, all problems are considered and many more are solved than can be published. Be sure to include all pertinent information, including your phone number, but don't send original documents you want returned.



George Eversman  
... clients concerned

# A Look At TV Violence

Continued From Page 19

The profile also showed that the "steady level of TV violence could have a little-noted effect: it may teach some members of the audience to anticipate their own victimization."

Have you ever tried to teach your children to defend themselves against bullies in school and have something like this working against you, perhaps on a subconscious level?

Eversman said that JWT has been working with the Annenberg School on the subject of "violence and the concern for the decline of literacy in this country."

"TV Guide" magazine reported in its June 5 issue that nearly three-fourths of American adults think there is too much violence on TV. By a 2-to-1 margin, they find violence more objectionable than sex.

The nationwide poll on Family Viewing Time was sponsored by the magazine and conducted by Opinion Research Corp., Princeton, N.J.

## 'All Methods'

In New York, Robert E. (Buck) Buchanan, JWT's senior vice president in charge of media, said JWT isn't concerned just with TV. "We are studying music (records in particular), magazines, newspapers, books, standup comics, all methods of communication.

"We have become a visual society and we (at JWT) are concerned that 10 to 15 years from now the ability and desire of younger people will not allow them to read properly," he added.

A blow on the subject has also been struck by someone who has been eminently successful with TV programming.

# She Wants Policy At Reasonable Cost

QUESTION: I'm over 65, but my husband is only 59. I was carried on his health insurance policy where he works until I was 65, and then dropped from it. I don't have enough Social



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## Washingtoni levél

Írja: VANDOR PETER.



„Fiuk, nézzétek a főnököt, nem szivott be?” — kiálltott fel Nixon egyik fiatal asszisztense, 1968 novemberének egyik szép estéjén, Los Angelesben, a Century Plaza Hotelban.

Haldeman most folytatásokban közölt visszaemlékezései azonban ellentmondanak mind az ilyen kijelentéseknek, mind az amerikai lapokban nemrég

dehát vert pletykának, hogy

Haldeman szerint sohasem volt ittas és semmi jele nem volt annak, hogy bármikor is bármilyen problémát okozott volna az ital elnöki funkcióinak ellátásában.

Haldeman cikkének azért van jelentősége, mert miután Nixonnal a hatalommal való visszaélése napvilágra került, miután „szennyest kitergettek”, egy sor szenzációhajásztól író ujjak és ujjak részlete-

sor állítással, többek között tagadja, hogy az elnök elszigetelt lett volna (amiért őt magát, Haldeman is vádolták sokan, mert ő volt az iroda „kapuőre”, aki számos kapcsolatot elvágott az elnök és a külvilág között).

Haldeman szerint Nixon éppen hogy a legkevésbé elszigetelt elnök volt, más elnökökkel összehasonlítva.

Ivott-e Nixon vagy sem, és ha igen, sokat vagy keveset, az most sem derült ki teljes bizonyossággal.

## Brutális nevelési módszer a tengerészképző iskolában

SAN DIEGO, Kalifornia — Hisztérikusan kiáltozott a 20 éves ujonc, Lynn McClure az ütések alatt. „Nem akarok harcolni, nem tudom, hogyan kell...” Azután elesett, orrán száján folyt a vére.

Ezt vallották egy nemrég lezajlott tárgyaláson, ahol Sgt. Harold Bronson tengerész kiképzőt azzal vádolták, hogy brutális kiképzési módszerével McClure halálát okozta. Az eset decemberben történt a Marine Corps Recruit Depoton.

McClure, aki gyengeelméjű volt, addig ütötték, amíg az nekizuhant egy kerítésnek. Sirva

## Minél többet nézi a tévét annál kevesebbet tud a világról?

PHILADELPHIA — Akik sok időt töltenek a televízió előtt — és minden harmadik amerikai ebbe a kategóriába sorolható —, azok esetleg zavarban vannak a valóságos események közepette.

Minden harmadik tévé-néző több mint négy órát tölt naponta a televízió előtt. Dr. George Gerbner, az Annenberg School of Communication dékánja és Larry P. Gross professzor kutatásai azt mutatják, hogy azok, akik tulságosan sok időt töltenek a televízió előtt „félénkek” és „gyámoltalanok” lesznek amikor a valóságban kellene szembenézniük mindazzal, aminek hamis képét már ismerik a tévéből.

A két kutató szerint a televízió tulságosan leegyszerűsíti a valóságos társadalmat, a legtöbben a tévéen a tévéen vagy teljesen rosszak, vagy teljesen jók. Ez természetesen, nem felel meg a valóságnak, hiszen az emberek tulságosan összetettek és a legtöbb társadalmi jelenség vagy cselekedet nem pusztán „a tiszta jó és a tiszta rossz, a fehér és fekete harca”.

A valóságban ritkán oldják meg olyan könnyen a bűncse-

lekményeket, mint a tévéen, sőt olykor meg sem oldják azokat. Egy család problémái gyakran fél óra alatt megoldódnak a televízió — s legtöbbször egy életen át sem oldódnak meg a valóságban.



Dr. George Gerbner

Ezen túlmenően dr. Gerbner hangsúlyozza, hogy az amerikai televízió jelenlegi programja sok szempontból tulságosan nagy befolyással van a gyerekekre.

A két kutató azt tanácsolja, hogy mindaddig, amíg az amerikai televízió vezetői jobban felismerik társadalmi felelősségüket a kommercializmuson túlmenően, a tv-néző jobban teszi, ha tv nézés helyett néha olvas.

# Art Talk by Paul D. Gilbert

EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT, HUMOR, AND GENERAL COMMENT FROM THE ARTIST'S PEN

## Why Johnny Can't Read—Or Write!

Many have dubbed television "the boob tube" in the past. These critics were probably right—more so than most realized at the time.

Studies and research by some of the nation's top psychologists indicate that television is indeed a source of countless social problems, including illiteracy, growing in our midst.

Ironically, the villain, TV, can itself be the most practical and influential means available to remedy and reverse the very social diseases it has created. Critics have for years bewailed the violence that fills TV programs, but the powers that control the flood of fictional plots, spackled with various degrees of violence, romantic unrealism, incredible giveaways, etc., which pour into homes across America, are adamant.

In the years prior to 1950, people relied upon books, novels, magazines, newspapers, radio, public and civic events, and the theater for recreation, entertainment, education, and cultural social development. Because the products of these latter institutions do require some degree of education to comprehend, and because the lesser amounts in which dramatic incidents of violence is consumed, the amount of psychological harm is relatively minor if it exists at all. However, with television, literacy is unnecessary, and the huge dosage—overdosage, in fact—is simple and convenient.

Even the most illiterate, in earlier years, had to learn reading to some degree in order to understand and enjoy the barrage of comic books and pulp magazines which were eagerly grasped by

shaped by the shallow psychology of TV characters."

Further research by these and other psychologists show that Americans who watch prime time television for more than four hours a day usually become suspicious and paranoid; they think that the world is dangerous and untrustworthy. Too often these TV addicts become confused about the make-believe world of fantasy and fiction, of stereotyped characters, and life in the real world as it exists. They cannot cope with life and its real problems. Often they begin to adopt to the world of fantasy and have difficulty understanding why real life problems cannot be resolved with the directness and simplicity of stereotyped fictional plots where rewards and punishments follow quickly and logically, and authority always triumphs. They demand unrealistic measures and, when these cannot be met to their expectations, become generally apathetic and unresponsive.

To quote Gerbner and Gross, "Although critics complain about the stereotyped characters and plots of TV dramas, many viewers look upon them as representative of the real world. Anyone who questions that assertion should read the 250,000 letters, most containing requests for medical advice, sent by viewers of 'Marcus Welby, M.D.' during the first five years of his practice on TV.

"If adults can be so accepting of the reality of television, imagine its effect upon children... At the age of ten the average youngster spends more hours a week in front of a TV screen than in the classroom...

"In order to complete a story entertainment in only an hour or even a half

a psychological, or even a psychologically-related physical disturbance, from which he and others can find no possible related cause or reason.

It was recently discovered that some unscrupulous advertisers were taking advantage of this little-known psychological factor. Like the hidden "flash symbols" seen only by the subconscious mind, it was found that certain advertisers were injecting into their ads invisible symbols of sex, fear, security, love, and death with a secret technique called "embedding." This could be simply a word that is blurred or so small you couldn't read or see it, or the utilization of specific shapes in the composition not obvious to the conscious eye, such as sex symbols, but which the subconscious can and does grasp clearly and quickly.

The conscious mind doesn't see or pick up these subliminals, but your subconscious does. The hidden messages shoot into your brain without your knowledge and they can remain there for a lifetime. In the same sense, the subconscious absorbs an overload of subliminal images from the huge array of televised violence, and these, embedded into the brain, may be the cause of apparently unrelated problems at a later time in life.

But, when we discover that Johnny can't read—or write, let's not blame his teachers or educators, or even ourselves—wondering where we've failed. Instead, let's take a good hard look at the Cyclops sitting nonchalantly in our living room!

**The Handyman's Helper!**

Continued on page 10

so many of the weaker, indolent mentalities.

In the pre-television times, kids in their formative years considered themselves lucky if they were allowed to see as many as three movies a week. Yet surveys by psychologists and sociologists uncover the fact that modern 12-year-olds are, on the average, addicted to watching six or more hours of television shows per day! If this doesn't sound incredible enough, consider sitting for six hours every day in a movie house. Worse, the habit, once started, continues into adulthood. Surveys show that at least one third of all adult Americans watch four hours or more of television per day!

George Gerbner, Psychologist and Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, and Psychologist Larry Gross, Associate Professor at Annenberg, University of Pennsylvania, stated in a recent article in *Psychology Today*:

"Never before have such large and varied publics—from the nursery to the nursing home, from ghetto tenement to penthouse—shared so much of the same cultural system of messages and images, and the assumptions embedded in them. Television offers a universal curriculum that everyone can learn.

"Imagine a hermit who lives in a cave linked to the outside world by a television set that functioned only during prime time. His knowledge of the world would be built exclusively out of the images and facts he could glean from the fictional events, persons, objects, and places that appear on TV. His expectations and judgments about the ways of the world would follow the conventions of TV programs, with their predictable plots and outcomes. His view of human nature would be

hour, conflicts on TV are usually personal and solved by action. Since violence is dramatic, and relatively simple to produce, much of the action tends to be violent. As a result, the stars of prime-time network TV have for years been cowboys, detectives, and others whose lives permit unrestrained action. Except in comic roles, one rarely sees a leading man burdened by real-life constraints...

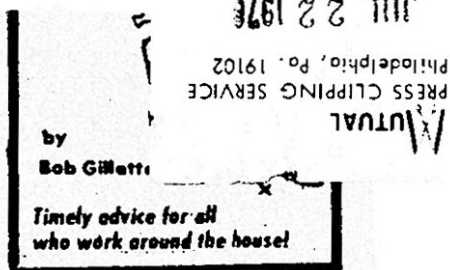
"Anyone who watches evening network TV receives a heavy diet of violence. More than half of all characters on prime-time TV are involved in some violence, about one tenth in killing. To control this mayhem, the forces of law and order dominate prime time...

"Victims, like criminals, must learn their proper roles, and televised violence may perform the teaching function all too well... Acceptance of violence or passivity in the face of injustice may be consequences of far greater social concern than occasional displays of individual aggression...

"We have found that violence on prime-time network TV cultivates exaggerated assumptions about the threat of danger in the real world. Fear is a universal emotion, and easy to exploit. The exaggerated sense of risk and insecurity may lead to increasing demands for protection, and to increasing pressure for the use of force by established authority..."

It is easy for those unaware of the real dangers to claim no visible harm ensues from overdoses of violence, fantasy, fiction and symbolism. However it is a known scientific factor that even an overdose of food or water can be lethal.

What is generally overlooked is the fact that much is absorbed subconsciously. Even the viewer is himself unaware of this. A person can suffer



### Wood Stain

Wood finishing is a term and a process that seems to cause a lot of confusion. The term "wood finishing" is actually one which covers several different steps. It is a series of operations which starts after the sanding is complete and continues until the finished results are obtained. Many people confuse staining, or the coloring of the wood, with the actual applying of a finish which protects.

The first step in "finishing" wood is that of coloring the wood to do one of three things: enhance the grain figure; make wood resemble more expensive wood; or to cause the wood color to match some other existing wood. Never does it offer protection to the wood.

There are many types of stain and three of these are available for the handyman. The most common is oil stain. This type is wiped or brushed on, rubbed out to uniform and allowed to dry. The longer between applying and rubbing, the darker the finish.

The second type is vinyl based stain. This type is preferred for hard-to-stain woods such as maple and birch. Water base stains are similar in application, but have a tendency to make the wood fuzzy. All are fade-proof. Any of these three are suitable for home use. Stains are very easy to use and will give professional results.

There are many protective finishes which may be applied over stains. Among them are: wax, oil, shellac, varnish, lacquer and polyurethanes.

JUL 30 1976

WALL STREET  
JOURNAL  
New York, N. Y.

AM-487,715

*TV-Violence Study  
Is Released in Effort  
To Promote Reform*

• • •

**Group Plans Series of Reports  
To Bring Public Pressure  
On Sponsors, Producers**

*By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter*

NEW YORK—The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a media reform group, yesterday released the first in a series of detailed studies designed to bring public pressure on the sponsors and producers of violent television entertainment programming.

The study, which was based on a monitoring of prime-time TV programming during the six weeks ended last Friday, found that Tegrin shampoo was the product most associated with violent programs. RCA Corp.'s National Broadcasting Co. network broadcast the largest amount of violent programming, while American Broadcasting Cos.' "SWAT" series was the single most violent show on TV, according to the study.

Nicholas Johnson, chairman of the citizens group and a former member of the Federal Communications Commission, said the current plans call for another six-week

study of programming this fall. The purpose of these "violence profiles," he said, is to "make it possible for advertisers, ad agencies, networks, producers, shareholders, viewers and consumers to take whatever action they think most appropriate."

Mr. Johnson said the study was based on monitoring conducted by BI Associates, a Washington, D.C., commercial monitoring firm. The definition of violence used in the study was that developed by George Gerbner, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications and a critic of violent TV programming.

According to Mr. Johnson, the sponsors most associated with violent programming, in order of violence, were: Tegrin shampoo, a product of Reedco Inc.; Burger King Corp.; Clorox Co.; Colgate-Palmolive Co.; Gillette Co. hair products; Breck products, made by John H. Breck Inc.; Ford Motor Co.; Johnson & Johnson; American Motors Corp., and Lysol Products, made by Sterling Drugs Inc.

The 10 most violent TV series, according to the study, were: "SWAT," "The Rookies," "Sara," "Sunday Night at the Movies," "Friday Night at the Movies," "Rockford Files," "Starsky & Hutch," the "McMillan and Wife" and "Columbo" segments of the NBC Sunday Mystery movie, "Saturday Night at the Movies" and "Joe Forrester." Of those programs, two are carried on CBS Inc.'s network, and four each on the ABC and NBC networks.

berry.

## TV-Violence Study Is Released in Effort To Promote Reform

Group Plans Series of Reports  
To Bring Public Pressure  
On Sponsors, Producers

7-30-76

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

NEW YORK—The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a media reform group, yesterday released the first in a series of detailed studies designed to bring public pressure on the sponsors and producers of violent television entertainment programming.

The study, which was based on a monitoring of prime-time TV programming during the six weeks ended last Friday, found that Tegrin shampoo was the product most associated with violent programs. RCA Corp.'s National Broadcasting Co. network broadcast the largest amount of violent programming, while American Broadcasting Cos.' "SWAT" series was the single most violent show on TV, according to the study.

Nicholas Johnson, chairman of the citizens group and a former member of the Federal Communications Commission, said the current plans call for another six-week study of programming this fall. The purpose of these "violence profiles," he said, is to "make it possible for advertisers, ad agencies, networks, producers, shareholders, viewers and consumers to take whatever action they think most appropriate."

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# Right Now

## AUGUST 1976

Last year, in response to a growing wave of complaints about sex and violence on television, the networks created the family viewing period, a promise that the first two hours of prime time (seven to nine P.M. on the East and West Coasts, six to eight P.M. in the Central and Mountain time zones) would contain only programs suitable for all members of the family, including young children. September marks the first anniversary of what has been called family hour.

Have the networks kept their promise? In the most limited sense, they have. According to a recent study by Dr. George Gerbner of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, the amount of violence on television declined significantly during the family hour compared with the same time period last year. His results have been confirmed by a McCALL's survey of 25 television critics across the nation. Though the incidence of sex was not measured in the Gerbner report, most critics say that it too has declined during family hour.

Let's look at what is shown over national television during family hour—compared to what was offered the full year before. (Except on Sundays, network family shows only run from eight to nine P.M. Eastern Standard Time. The first hour of the family period contains news or local programming, which we were unable to study.)

In the 1974-75 season, in addition to 15 situation comedies, seven dramas, five va-

riety shows and two fantasies, there were seven police series, two Westerns and five weekly movies. Among the police shows were "Kojak"—rated television's fourth most violent show by another McCALL's poll of TV critics (March, 1975)—and "The Rookies," rated eighth.

Queen." The one show left with a significant violence rating (14th) was "The Six Million Dollar Man."

Doesn't this mean that the family hour has been a success? Not if you consider the complaints of too much sex and violence on television that led to the establishment

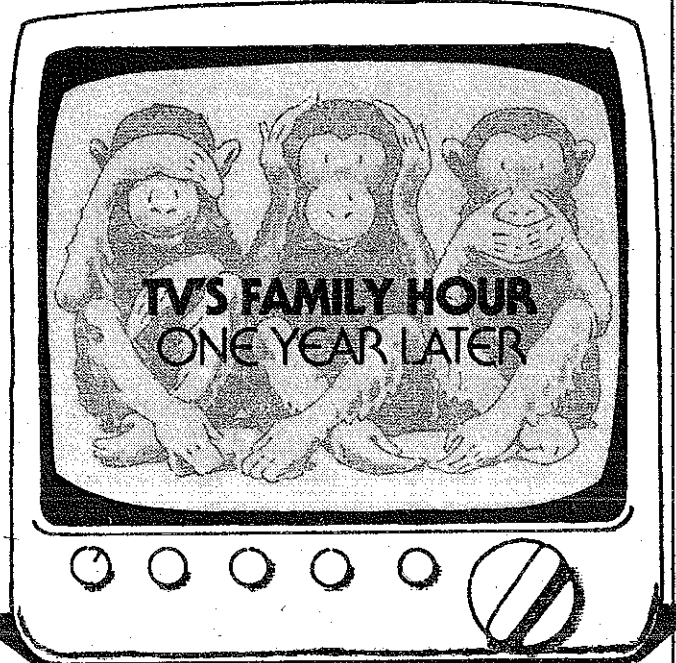
two-hour time period was never the most violent part of a child's program day. Children most often watch after school—when the most outdated, sadistic shows and cartoons are aired."

Ted Carpenter, Executive Director of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a nonprofit public-interest group, agrees: "The increase in violence on afternoons and weekends offsets the decrease on the family hour."

And, he says, family hour not only doesn't solve the problem, it has created another one: "Besides sex and violence, the networks have taken out of family hour anything that's the least controversial. Whoever said that children should get a Pollyanna view of the world? We want more measured responsibility and diversity."

However, some network people argue with the findings of the Gerbner report. Robert Hummerstone, a vice-president for CBS, says, "Of course, Gerbner counts Bugs Bunny getting hit over the head as violence." Squire D. Rushnell, vice-president in charge of children's programs at ABC adds, "I believe that the Gerbner report is erroneous and that any reasonable adult who sits down and watches network television with his or her children will conclude that there is no violence in the proportions that Dr. Gerbner suggests. Speaking of ABC, you will find no violence."

But while Mr. Hummerstone—and others—downgrade the effect of cartoon violence, Dr. David Pearl, Chief of the Behavioral Research Division, National



With the coming of family hour, movies disappeared, situation comedies and dramas increased, fantasies doubled, and a news program, "60 Minutes," was added. "Gunsmoke" (15th in the violence poll) and "Kung Fu" (tenth) vanished, replaced by a comedy-Western, "Barbary Coast," and a drama-Western, "Sara." (Both have been canceled.) The only police show to survive was "Barney Miller," a comedy, which was joined briefly by "The Cop and the Kid," another comedy, and the whodunit, "Ellery

of family hour in the first place. Have the complaints been satisfied? Apparently not, because no one we spoke to seemed content that violence and sex had simply diminished during family hour.

For, while the Gerbner report shows that violence has decreased during family hour, it also indicates that violence has increased on weekend programming. And Peggy Charren, president of Action for Children's Television in Newtonville, Massachusetts, says: "Family hour has had just about no effect on television violence. That

Institute of Mental Health, says that "research suggests that cartoon violence can also affect children adversely. Television doesn't just shape behavior—it develops attitudes and shapes expectations. What children watch can lead them to accept a certain level of violence as normal."

So what should we do with family hour? Abandon it, say many—including 17 of the 25 critics we polled. Some of the latter would like to replace family hour with a stronger system of self-regulation, with warnings before shows considered "adult" (a process most stations follow these days). Wade Mosby of the *Milwaukee Journal* would like to see an inter-network committee, directly responsible to the public, to which complaints could be forwarded for study on a case-by-case basis. And nine of the critics would like to return to the pre-family-hour situation.

So would various groups of writers, directors, producers and actors. Last October, supported by the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting and Action for Children's Television, they took the Federal Communications Commission, the three major networks and the National Association of Broadcasters to court. They claim that because family hour was planned after FCC chairman Richard Wiley had met with the network presidents, it constitutes an example of illegal government influence on television programming. At this writing, the case is still being tried.

Meanwhile, what do the viewers think about family hour? According to a poll published by *TV Guide* last December, most of them are grateful for any respite from violence on television that they and their children get: Eight out of ten favored the concept of family viewing. But seven out of ten said they thought there was too much violence on television. Whatever one thinks of family hour, it still hasn't solved the real problem. —JULIA KAGAN

When an elderly person begins to show signs of senility—such as emotional outbursts, paranoid behavior, confusion, and so forth—adult relatives, particularly if they are the sons or daughters, often have trouble accepting the change in roles that takes place. The strong, supportive aunt, uncle, father or mother now seems irritatingly infantile. And the response by their relatives may be resentment, anger and guilt.

To help people in her community deal with such feelings and cope with related problems, Florence Safford, Director of Social Service at the Isabella Geriatric Center in New York City, recently ran an innovative workshop for relatives of the mentally impaired aged. (Another is scheduled this fall.) Thirty-eight persons enrolled for the six two-hour sessions.

Participants were urged to get their elderly relatives a thorough medical examination to make sure that their mental disorders were not reversible. Often apparently senile people are suffering from malnutrition or an undiagnosed medical



## UNDERSTANDING AN AGING PARENT

problem that can be treated. However, if it is established that the aged person has a chronic brain disease—such as hardening of the arteries—the relative must recognize that the deterioration—and the erratic behavior—will continue.

To deal with irrationality in the aged, Ms. Safford explained that relatives must accept that no amount of reasoning will make a change. She cautions against contradicting old people and urges reassuring them instead. For instance,

if relatives are accused of never coming to visit, when actually they frequently visit, the thing to say is, "Oh, yes, we were here such and such day," and get on to another subject. And she suggests that sons and daughters must assume the responsibility of decision-making for the parent.

Just by getting these problems out into the open, the participants learned to recognize their anger and the source of their guilt. By talking with each other, they realized that they weren't alone in feeling resentful and angry toward their elderly relatives and that their reactions were legitimate. As Ms. Safford pointed out, it often is very difficult to reconcile familial respect with the behavior of the senile. "The concept of 'honoring thy father or mother,' if taken literally, can cause anguish and guilt for the relative, since it is hard to honor someone who is mentally impaired," she told them. "But you can behave in an honorable way by being a loving, responsible and concerned son or daughter."

—SUSAN WEISS

## INSURANCE BREAK FOR NONSMOKERS



Many insurance companies are offering discounts on various kinds of insurance for nonsmokers who have either kicked the habit or never took it up in the first place.

After the Surgeon General declared cigarette smoking hazardous to health, State Mutual of America decided that nonsmokers were better-than-average risks, and gave them discounts of about 3 percent on life-insurance premiums. Since then, more than 30 other companies have adopted similar plans, many with even more substantial nonsmoker discounts. They are available in every state for both life and disability-income insurance. To qualify, policyholders must satisfy standard health requirements and sign an affidavit stating they have not smoked for a specified length of time—usually one or two years.

But many people who stop smoking start *eating* more. To insure that nonsmokers don't substitute one vice for another, some companies require weight standards for nonsmoker discounts. Guardian Life, for example, offers a 10-percent reduction on disability-income insurance if nonsmoking policyholders meet height and weight standards.

When surveys showed that drivers who smoked were involved in more accidents, Farmers Insurance Group responded with a 15-percent discount on auto insurance for nonsmokers. Distraction, smoke in the driver's eyes and dropped cigarettes were some of the hazards linked to smoking. To qualify for the discount, the principal operator of a car must not have smoked for the past two years.

An entire household of nonsmokers is eligible for Hanover Insurance Company's 5-percent discount on homeowners' insurance. Hanover feels that nonsmokers are more prudent and self-disciplined than smokers. And statistics show that about one out of six fires in the home is caused by cigarettes or matches.

Ask your local insurance agent for details. Or, for a listing of the companies offering these discounts, write to INFORMATION SERVICES, INSTITUTE OF LIFE INSURANCE, 277 PARK AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017. (Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.) —MAUREEN SMITH

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# Thanks For the Violence

THE NATIONAL Citizens Committee for Broadcasting has issued a survey of violence on TV. The committee, headed by Nicholas Johnson, the former FCC commissioner, monitored television for six weeks and came to the conclusion the most violent shows they saw were S.W.A.T., The Rookies, Sara, The ABC Sunday Movie, The CBS Friday Movie, The Rockford Files, Starsky and Hutch, McMillian-Columbo, NBC Saturday Night Movie and Joe Forrester. How they missed Kojak, Hawaii Five-O and The Streets of San Francisco I'll never know.

But they came up with another interesting bit of research. Using the definition of TV violence modeled on a system devised by Dr. George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania they discovered the most frequent sponsors of this type of show were Colgate-Palmolive products, Gillette hair products, Breck shampoo, Ford Motor Co., Johnson and Johnson, American Motors and Lysol.

It seems to me that those of us who enjoy violence on television should thank the people who make it all possible.

SINCE I KNOW you're all busy people I have typed up some form letters that you can clip out and send to a few of the companies who make all these violence-prone shows possible.

"President, Colgate-Palmolive:

"Dear Sir,

"I just wanted to tell you how much our entire family enjoyed the program you sponsored the other night where the man was buried in sand and the villain poured honey on his head so the ants would eat him. We also enjoyed the film the other night which showed this psychopathic killer who got his jollies from blowing up people's cars. My son Fred duplicated the bomb the killer made with stuff he found in our kitchen. Not only are the shows you sponsor exciting but they are also educational, and we assure you as long as you stick with violence we'll stick with Colgate toothpaste."

"Chairman of the Board, Gillette hair products:

"Dear Sir,

"You probably don't hear from too many satisfied viewers, but I want you to know that every time we see a Gillette commercial interspersed in a program where someone is kidnaped, mugged or killed, we make a mental note to buy your product. I realize you don't make these shows yourselves, but the fact that you have the good taste to advertise on them is enough for us. Keep up the good work."

"PRESIDENT, BRECK shampoo:

"Dear Sir,

"I saw a movie Sunday night on ABC where 14 cowboys were killed in four minutes. There was blood all over the place and it was a real turn-on. I asked my wife how ABC could afford to pay for that kind of entertainment and she said, 'Don't thank ABC, thank Breck. They paid for it.' So that's what we're doing. Stay with violence. If you change to comedy we'll stop using your shampoo."

These are only a few samples, but I'm certain the heads of companies who buy time on violent TV shows are anxious to hear from you. It makes them feel all the money and time they have invested has really paid off.

# Thanks for the Blood and Guts, We Needed That

By Art Buchwald

The National Citizens' Committee for Broadcasting has issued a survey of violence on TV. The committee, headed by Nicholas Johnson, the former FCC commissioner, monitored television for six weeks and came to the conclusion the most violent shows they saw were "S.W.A.T.," "The Rookies," "Sara," "The ABC Sunday Movie," "The CBS Friday Movie," "The Rockford Files," "Starsky and Hutch," "McMillan-Columbo," "NBC Saturday Night Movie" and "Joe Forrester." How they missed "Kojak," "Hawaii Five-O" and "The Streets of San Francisco" I'll never know.

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It seems to me that those of us who enjoy violence on television should thank the people who make it all possible.

Too often we sit back in our chairs after seeing a girl raped or a policeman shot down in cold blood on TV and fail to say, "I think I'll write them how much it pleased me." After all, sponsors are people, too, and when they bring us blood and gore they want to know how much the audience appreciates it.

Since I know you're all busy people, I have typed up some form letters that you can clip out and sent to a few of the companies who make all these violence-prone shows possible.

"President, Colgate-Palmolive:

"Dear Sir,

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"President—Breck Shampoo:

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## Capitol Punishment

turn-on. I asked my wife how ABC could afford to pay for that kind of entertainment and she said, 'Don't thank ABC, thank Breck. They paid for it.' So that's what we're doing. Stay with violence. If you change to comedy we'll stop using your shampoo."

"Henry Ford—Detroit:

"Dear Mr. Ford,

"I see your name in the papers a lot, but I never thought I'd be writing to you. I just saw the scariest show on television. A madman was holding 13 people hostage and he kept killing them one at a time with a knife. You probably weren't even aware of it, but Ford was one of the sponsors. I want you to know how proud I am that you would have your product associated with this kind of program. It shows you're not intimidated by the small segment of the population who think violence on TV is bad for our children. I say stick to your guns. Kids don't buy cars, anyway."

(You can write the above letter to American motors as well.) "President—Johnson and Johnson:

"Dear Sir,

"I liked the show the other night you sponsored where a crooked cop crashed his car into a camper and killed the entire family. Then he made it look like a petty thief was the hit-and-run driver. It was a corker full of action and must have sold a warehouse of Johnson and Johnson baby powder. Looking forward to what you're sponsoring next week. I hope it has a guy slugging a woman around. I guess I enjoy that kind of violence more than anything."

These are only a few samples, but I'm certain the heads of companies who buy time on violent TV shows are anxious to hear from you. It makes them feel all the money and time they have invested has really paid off.

# TV violence breeds aggression

By RICHARD SALTUS  
AP Science Writer

*EDITOR'S NOTE — The cultivation of fear among adults has serious social and political consequences, some experts believe. And adults who constantly watch violence on TV might acquire such fear.*

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Shootings, bombings, the thud of fist against jaw ... Researchers are finding that these television staples may

push not only children but adults toward aggressive behavior.

The case for adults is just forming. It is far less established than the generally accepted conclusion that children can be turned toward antisocial behavior by screen violence.

But the results that have come out of a University of California at Los Angeles study of adults "are especially important," says the researcher, Dr. Roderick Gorney, "because adults, after all, are the ones who are making decisions, declaring war, voting for president, putting additives in our food ..."

Dr. Gorney and a few other researchers are finding that excessive viewing of cop and crime shows (they constitute 30 per cent of prime time television) apparently can stimulate aggressive behavior in adults and also can develop in them a distorted view of how

dangerous the world really is.

"Think of the potential effect on senior citizens, for whom television is a major source of received knowledge about the world," said Dr. David Pearl of the National Institute of Mental Health's behavioral science division.

In the years before and since the U.S. Surgeon General's controversial study three years ago, in which a panel of experts tentatively concluded that children could be adversely affected by television violence, hundreds of research projects on youngsters have been conducted.

Many researchers say they feel the cause-and-effect relationship in children has been well established. But this may make people forget, as psychiatrist Dr. Fredric Wertham points out, that "children grow up to be adults, incorporating into their psyches the thousands of hours of television they saw in their youth."

Wertham, a psychoanalyst who 25 years ago sounded the alarm against violence in comic books and movies aimed at children, says his clinical research in recent years has shown that constant viewing of violence is damaging to adults, too.

"It is a social impact which is not without consequences for the whole society," says Wertham, author of "A Sign for Cain," "The Show of Violence" and the best-selling "Seduction of the Innocent," about comic books and children. "The very fact that extremely violent programs both in television and movies are so popular does not show that they are all right and harmless, but that a whole society is affected."

While Wertham relies mainly on clinical patient relationships for his research, UCLA's Gorney and his

research partner, David Loye, represent a contrasting method — controlled experiments on groups.

In the UCLA study, still being analyzed, more than 200 couples were divided into sections and fed varying TV diets for two weeks.

One group spent each night watching programs filled with violence. Another viewed programs such as "Sesame Street" that encourage beneficence and humanitarianism. A control group watched no television.

The preliminary findings, reported at an American Psychiatric Association conference, were "startling for a field study," according to Loye, in that they showed substantial effects and not just slight trends.

The violence-viewers, he said, rated themselves as increasingly more hostile and aggressive in mood as time passed. They also were observed to be acting more aggressively — groucher with their families, less tolerant of the child leaving his bike in the driveway, generally in "hurtful" behavior.

In contrast, those exposed to the "Sesame Street" type program generally became more charitable in mood.

Of course, it's impossible to make generalizations based on one study, no matter how persuasive, Loye said, but it does suggest that there is a need for further studies of TV violence and adults.

Dr. Michael Rothenberg, a Seattle child psychiatrist who recently called for a "public outcry" from the medical profession against violent children's programs, has surveyed the research being done in the United States on television violence. He said he found only one other study now in

progress dealing with violence and adults. That study, Rothenberg said, apparently is producing results similar to those of Loye and Gorney. He declined to identify those conducting the study.

Loye and Gorney said that adults in their study were rated as normal in pre-experiment personality tests. The tests were administered to counter the argument that only persons emotionally susceptible to anti-social influences are vulnerable to depictions of violence.

Dick Kirschner, CBS vice president for program practices and standards, says there's concern for adults at all three networks, but there's special concern for children. The "family viewing hour," two hours of nonviolent programming during evening prime time, is an example of this concern, he notes.

As for TV violence and adults, Kirschner said, "Adults should know better than to use violent solutions to problems because most of them have seen the effects of violence in their own lives."

The effects of television violence are emphasized by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. Gerbner is best known for his yearly analyses, since 1967, of the amount and kinds of violence portrayed each season on television.

# Television Violence

# A Threat To American Youngsters?

By LEE MARGULIES

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Television's early evening viewing hours will continue to be governed by the industry's nonviolent "family viewing" policy this fall, and there will be fewer police and private detective shows on the air.

But the controversy over TV

violence rages on.

The American Medical Association called attention to the issue in June by declaring: "TV violence is a risk factor threatening the health and welfare of young Americans, indeed our future society."

The AMA's declaration, adopted as a resolution at its annual meeting, stopped short

of saying there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship between televised murder and mayhem and the climbing death rate of young Americans due to violence.

A majority of the doctors and scientists who have studied the relationship of television and violence state flatly that TV violence unquestionably produces increased aggressiveness at least in some young viewers.

"There is a positive relationship between the amount of violence a child watches and the amount of aggression seen in his daily attitudes and behavior," says Dr. Robert Liebert, professor of psychology and psychiatry at the State University of New York.

He was a principal investigator for the U.S. Surgeon General's report, which found in 1972 that there was a "tentative" link between watching TV violence and aggressive behavior.

Executives at the three major television networks are keenly aware of the scientific evidence regarding TV violence and children.

"We acknowledge that television violence can contribute to aggressive behavior in some cases in some children," says Jerome H. Stanley, vice president of broadcast standards on the West Coast for NBC-TV.

"But I don't know that such depiction of violence has an overwhelming effect on all children ... I don't believe any great percentage of the children in our country are going to go out and kill somebody after having seen an act of that nature on television," Stanley adds.

He has a good point, says George Comstock, a researcher at the Rand Corp. think tank in Santa Monica, Calif. He eval-

uated 3,200 projects dealing with the relationship between television and human behavior.

The increase in aggressive behavior that many scientists noted in children who had viewed violent TV programs usually took the form of unruliness, hostility or fighting, often in play situations, Comstock said in a recent interview. Whether it would prompt them to go out and commit a crime has not

been clearly established, he said.

That is why Comstock concluded that "violent television entertainment increases the probability of subsequent aggressive behavior on the part of children and youth," but the impact on society "may be negligible or large."

There have been occasions when an antisocial act depicted on a television program — such as a hijacking or murder — is re-enacted in real life by someone who saw the show. Network executives argue that these incidents are few in number and tend to be committed by persons who were pathologically predisposed to crime anyway.

Alfred R. Schneider, vice president of ABC Inc., reported in May that two studies commissioned by ABC found "that though television viewing was not a causal factor in the development of violent behavioral tendencies among youthful offenders, television sometimes provided a model for the imitation of antisocial techniques in the commission of crimes in persons predisposed to crime."

Dr. George Gerbner, a communications professor who has been compiling a TV violence profile every year since 1967 for the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, says people who watch four hours or more of television a day have an exaggerated view of their chances for becoming the victim of a crime.

"Heavy TV viewers are more likely to be afraid," Gerbner says. "In asking, 'What are your chances of encountering violence,' in the course of a given week we found that heavy television viewers overestimated their chances."

Even if TV violence does nothing else, many persons ar-

gue, it contributes to a general desensitization of the public to real-life acts of horror.

"It breeds indifference, an acceptance of violence," says Dr. Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist who wrote the best-selling "Seduction of the Innocent," the first major study of the harmful effects of comic books on children. Wertham says movies and pulp magazines, as well as TV, are responsible for dulling the sensibilities of many persons.

Many network executives argue that conflict, whether physical or emotional, is a key ingredient for any good drama.

"You can't dramatize a murder mystery without a murder," says NBC's Stanley. "Then what you have to do is consider the elements used to illustrate that murder. That's where you get into what is gratuitous. You do not have to see a decapitated body to know the head is missing; you can talk about it."

Executives at the three networks say they diligently try to make certain that whatever violence a program contains is necessary for the story plot. CBS says its study of 13 weeks of prime time television on all three networks this past season showed that "incidents of dramatic violence" declined 24 percent from the previous season. The network said one major reason for the decline was the introduction of the family viewing period: two hours of early evening television that must be limited to programs deemed suitable for young children.

But the responsibility is not the networks' alone, they say. Offensive programs can be shut off or made off-limits to children.

"There is no substitute for discriminatory parental supervision," says ABC's Schneider.

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# The case of the frightened viewer

## STACY MARKING reveals some new research on television violence

*Starsky and Hutch: 75 shots in one episode.*

SUDDENLY, though rarely, a new idea may send a tired topic like television violence spinning around, putting on it a completely new perspective. Professor George Gerbner and Dr Larry Gross of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania have recently published the results of four years' research into the effects of television viewing in the United States, and have spun around the conventional approach to television violence in such a dramatic way.

It was previously held that something (if only common sense) told us that it must be harmful for society to saturate the population in a cultural flood of murder and violence. Research revealed that violence on television could stimulate real-life violence, either by suggesting ways to commit crimes, or by arousing aggression in those already prone to violence.

The new research by Gerbner and Gross, however, examines the viewer's

identification not with the aggressors on television, but with their victims.

The violence on American television is far more unrelenting than it is here, but used because it is dramatic, relatively cheap to produce, and easy to resolve in neat half hour or hourly episodes without complicated characterisations or morality. Although, with some self-imposed virtue the American networks have been observing a "family hour" between 8 pm and 9 pm (and, incidentally, are being sued for infringement of the First Amendment, the right to freedom of speech), the violence spills out with renewed vigour on all channels as the clock strikes nine.

Twenty of the prime-time shows are crime/cop series. ABC's ultra-violent Starsky and Hutch is available to British viewers on Saturday nights on BBC-1. In one episode I counted 75 shots — 60 coming from the police and 15 from the villains.

In both countries television now reaches 97 per cent of homes. The average television set is on for five hours each day in this country, and for six hours eight minutes

in America. It has an influence, especially on the young: half of American 12-year-olds watch six hours or more a day, and Gerbner and Gross found that regardless of newspaper reading, education or even viewing habits, people under 30 years old were consistently more influenced by television than their generally less-educated elders.

With the usual controls for differences of education, sex, class, etc, Gerbner and Gross questioned "heavy" viewers (four hours or more each day) and "light viewers" (two hours or less) on their picture of society. Significantly, they could not find enough non-viewers to form a group. They found that with this violent diet of television heavy viewers "significantly over-estimate violence and danger in the world," and have "a heightened sense of fear and mistrust" about society and other people.

For example, when asked whether most people can be trusted, 65 per cent of "heavy" viewers answered that: "You can't be too careful." Well over half the "heavy" viewers over-

estimated the risk of being involved in some violent incident in any given week — many estimating the chances as "fifty-fifty." These fearful beings are trapped in their own vicious circle of fear. Afraid to go out, they watch more of the television that feeds that fear.

Gerbner and Gross found that, on American screens, threequarters of the main characters are male, white, single, and middle-to-upper class. In prime time more than half the characters are involved in violence, 10 per cent of them in killing. But two thirds of the killers are men, while victims tend to be female or — if male — old, lower class, married and foreign/non-white.

From all this Gerbner and Gross go on to consider a more alarming consequence of television induced paranoia. "To control this mayhem, the forces of law and order dominate prime time," they say. "Among those television 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." The increasingly passive and fear-

ful viewer tends to accept unquestioningly the often dubious authority of the hero and the speedy logic of the rewards and punishments he gives.

Indeed, law enforcement seems a misleading description these days. Crime and Cop shows have moved a long way from the wordy courtroom dramas of the sixties, such as Perry Mason. From Barlow to Kojak, the law is seen to be freely broken in the interests of order. In fact, there is very little law and a lot of enforcement, which leads Gerbner and Gross to warn: "The acceptance of violence, and passivity in the face of injustice, may be consequences of far greater social concern than occasional displays of individual aggression."

They conclude: "Fear is a universal emotion, and easy to exploit. The exaggerated sense of risk and insecurity may lead to increasing demands for protection, and increasing pressure for the use of force by established authority. Instead of threatening the social order, television may have become our chief instrument of social control."



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Prof George Gerbner  
Larry Gross  
The Annenberg School of Communications  
University of Pennsylvania

Sept 1 1976

Peter Edward Court  
9 Thorney Rd  
Streethy  
Sutton Coldfield  
Birmingham  
ENGLAND

Dear Sir,

I herby enclose the article from the  
'Guardian' that prompted me to write  
to you. Many thanks for your copy  
of 'Living with Television: The Violence Profile'  
I found it a very illuminating piece of  
work, one which has left me with a keen  
interest in your present work on television  
conceptions of social reality. I would be  
most interested with <sup>in</sup> your findings.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Court.

# The medium may be the message, but the message is frightening

Starsky and Hutch's red muscle car takes the corner in a rubber-shedding skid, bounces off a parked car and spins to a stop as bullets ricochet off the sidewalk.

Starsky leaps out, grips his trusty .357 magnum in both hands, and squeezes off a shot.

(First of a six-part series)

Thousands of Calgary youngsters watch excitedly as the bad guy staggers and falls the 30 feet to the cement below. Boy, is it fun!

On television, nothing is as certain as violence. Viewers — adults and children — lap up more blood than a gaggle of starving vampires.

There are bodies with knife wounds, bodies tossed from car hoods and bodies thrown from windows. Bodies are set on fire, drowned in rivers, crushed in machinery, shot by shotguns, machine guns, sporting guns, .22's, .38's, .45's, and for those special occasions, the beloved .357's.

All bodies — not people. Shapes ordered to measure from Central Casting.

### Trail of carnage

Police authorities, social scientists and parents, especially parents, watch the children watch this unending trail of carnage and wonder what affect it has on them.

A few parents tell their children to turn off the violent shows. Others work to get producers to play down violence, or have programmers put it on late at night when, supposedly, the youngsters are in bed.

Most parents, it seems, are simply confused. They know their children enjoy violent programs, just as they themselves sat in theatres and cheered as cavalry bullets scythed through tribes of attacking Indians.

They don't know if violence on tv does hurt the kids and they aren't sure



Bill Musselwhite

...on television

what they could do even if they knew.

This series is about violence on television, which has turned from a vague rumble to one of the most talked-of issues in society today. It doesn't pretend to give any firm answers, because at the moment there aren't any to the questions posed by televised violence.

### Fantasy vs reality

Does violence on television have a harmful affect on children, on everyone for that matter?

One person who says yes to that question is Brian Sawyer, Calgary's chief of police.

Chief Sawyer is one of many Calgarians trying to regulate his children's viewing habits, both directly and by trying to interest them in music, sports and reading. To keep an eye on things he has — with some reluctance, I gather — moved his tv set upstairs from its usual place in the family room so he and his wife can keep a closer watch on it.

Why does he worry? Well, he says, advertisers spend millions of dollars on commercials aimed at influencing viewers.

If viewers are affected by what they see during the commercials, which take up 10 minutes of a program, can anyone claim they are not influenced by what they see during the other 50 minutes?

Chief Sawyer's point is well taken, since few tv executives would say their ads do not have an affect on viewers.

Those who believe television violence is harmless often compare it with vio-

lence in fairy tales and Saturday matinees, both of which generations of children have survived.

The difference, according to those who do believe tv violence is harmful, is the measure of reality involved.

Fairy tales are filled

with giants, ogres, witches and happen in far off and strange lands. Even the western, that staple of so many matinees, is set in another time and another place.

Today's action dramas, as Chief Sawyer notes, happen on familiar ground. The crimes happen on city streets much like our own streets. The cars are like Dad's car. The planes hijacked are like those we see overhead.

Especially for the very young, then, the dividing line between reality and the fantasy of television may be paper thin.



"Okay kiddies, bedtime"

That the dividing line may be thin has been shown by studies conducted, not on children, but on adults.

In a test done by two University of Pennsylvania professors, George Gebner and Larry Gross, viewers were divided by the amount of television watched and were given a questionnaire on crime and violence in the U.S.

#### Warped view of reality

The questions asked were along the lines of: "What percentage of Americans will be victims of crimes this year?"

The professors found that 69 per cent of the heavy viewers overestimated the risks faced in society, and that the percentage dropped sharply as the amount of tv watched dropped. They also found that 75 per cent of female heavy viewers overestimated the seriousness of crime in the U.S. and that among all viewers, the younger the viewer the higher the percentage.

All such studies are suspect and this one may mean nothing at all. Even if the results are relevant, as one Herald reader wrote to point out, this just

means that the heavy viewer will take more precautions.

If this just meant that the heavy viewer stopped walking down dark alleys, it might be a good thing. But it also could mean that the heavy viewer might be more likely to go out and buy a handgun — a weapon he doesn't need, probably doesn't know how to use, and which could fall into the hands of a burglar or the man's own children.

Most of all, though, it means that violence on television has had an affect.

#### Does violence become acceptable

The Canadian Broadcast League, a viewers' group aimed at improving television, had this to say in a brief to the Ontario royal commission investigating violence on television. The brief was drawn up with the assistance of Dr. Fred Rainsberry, one of this country's leading authorities on children's television.

"As a result of reliance upon proven program formats, many of which capitalize on violence and aggression to add to their dramatic appeal, a higher acceptability factor for all forms of violence, physical, emotional, real or implied, appears to have been created.

"The child who sees his parents actively enjoying or expressing implicit approval of violent activity on television has his perceptions of violence as an acceptable response reinforced."

The above statements are just that — statements. A theory. I found a curious echo, however, while talking to Inspector Al Menzies, of the city police youth division.

I asked the inspector if there hadn't been a rather dramatic increase in crime and violence among juveniles and was surprised when he said no.

The percentage of juveniles getting into trouble hasn't increased by very

much, he believes. Juvenile crime has increased simply because the number of juveniles has increased.

What could be happening, as we watch hour after hour of violence, is what psychologists call desensitization, according to Michael B. Rothenberg, MD, of the University of Washington School of Medicine and the Children's Orthopedic Hospital and Medical Centre, in Seattle.

Writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dr. Rothenberg states: "There is a decreased emotional sensitivity to media violence as a result of repetition of violence in the mass media. Classical desensitization takes place, as practised in modern behavior therapy.

This desensitization is a common enough occurrence. Remember the first ad you saw for a starving African waif with flies crawling across his eyes, a bloated belly sticking out from below his toothpick ribs? What, honestly now, was your reaction after seeing the ad for the 200th time? Or did you even notice it?

Social scientists and other authorities have been worried about tv violence and desensitization for some time. Now it seems they have a new ally, from an unexpected corner.

The new ally is the J. Walter Thompson Company, one of the largest ad agencies in the U.S. The company's mixed-media presentation on the dangers of violence in the media is being shown on college campuses throughout the U.S.

In describing why the company is doing this, Arnold E. Grisman, an executive vice president of the agency, said: "What shocked us yesterday does not shock us today. What interested us yesterday does not interest us today.

"This is the process we have described as the desensitization of America. It is a threat and a challenge to us all."

MUTUAL

AUG 14 1976

Courier-Post  
Camden, N. J.

PM-126,000

**THE WAY IT  
LOOKS  
FROM**



## *Violent argument*

Television's early evening viewing hours will continue to be governed by the industry's nonviolent "family viewing" policy this fall, and there will be fewer police and private detective shows on the air.

But the controversy over TV violences rages on.

The American Medical Association called attention to the issue in June by declaring: "TV violence is a risk factor threatening the health and welfare of young Americans, indeed our future society."

The AMA's declaration, adopted as a resolution at its annual meeting, stopped short of saying there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship between televised murder and mayhem and the climbing death rate of young Americans due to violence.

**A MAJORITY OF** the doctors and scientists who have studied the relationship of television and violence state flatly that TV violence unquestionably produces increased aggressiveness at least in some young viewers.

"There is a positive relationship between the amount of violence a child watches and the amount of aggression seen in his daily attitudes and behavior," says Dr. Robert Liebert, professor of psychology and psychiatry at the State University of New York.

He was a principal investigator for the U.S. Surgeon General's report, which found in 1972 that there was a "tentative" link between watching TV violence and aggressive behavior.

Executives at the three major television networks are keenly aware of the scientific evidence regarding TV violence and children.

"We acknowledge that television violence can contribute to aggressive behavior in some cases in some children," says Jerome H. Stanley, vice president of broadcast standards on the West Coast for NBC-TV.

**"BUT I DON'T KNOW** that such depiction of violence has an overwhelming effect on all children . . . I don't believe any great percentage of the children in our country are going to go out and kill somebody after having seen an act of that nature on television," Stanley adds.

He has a good point, says George Comstock, a researcher at the Rand Corp. think tank in Santa Monica, Calif. He evaluated 3,200 projects dealing with the relationship between television and human behavior.

The increase in aggressive behavior that many scientists noted in children who had viewed violent TV programs usually took the form of unruliness, hostility or fighting, often in play situations, Comstock said in a recent interview. Whether it would prompt them to go out and commit a crime has not been clearly established, he said.

That is why Comstock concluded that "violent television entertainment increases the probability of subsequent aggressive behavior on the part of children and youth," but the impact on society "may be negligible or large."

**THERE HAVE BEEN** occasions when an antisocial act depicted on a television program — such as a hijacking or murder — is re-enacted in real life by someone who saw the show. Network executives argue that these incidents are few in number and tend to be committed by persons who were pathologically predisposed to crime anyway.

Alfred R. Schneider, vice president of ABC Inc., reported in May that two studies commissioned by ABC found "that though television viewing was not a causal factor in the development of violent behavioral tendencies among youthful offenders, television sometimes provided a model for the imitation of antisocial techniques in the commission of crimes in persons predisposed to crime."

Dr. George Gerbner, a communications professor who has been compiling a TV violence profile every year since 1967 for the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, says people who watch four hours or more of television a day have an exaggerated view of their chances for becoming the victim of a crime.

"Heavy TV viewers are more likely to be afraid," Gerbner says. "... In asking, 'What are your chances of encountering violence, in the course of a given week we found that heavy television viewers overestimated their chances.'"

**EVEN IF TV VIOLENCE** does nothing else, many persons argue, it contributes to a general desensitization of the public to real-life acts of horror.

"It breeds indifference, an acceptance of violence," says Dr. Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist who wrote the best-selling "Seduction of the Innocent," the first major study of the harmful effects of comic books on children. Wertham says movies and pulp magazines, as well as TV, are responsible for dulling the sensibilities of many persons.

Many network executives argue that conflict, whether physical or emotional, is a key ingredient for any good drama.

"You can't dramatize a murder mystery without a murder," says NBC's Stanley. "Then what you have to do is consider the elements used to illustrate that murder. That's where you get into what is gratuitous. You do not have to see a decapitated body to know the head is missing; you can talk about it."

Executives at the three networks say they diligently try to make certain that whatever violence a program contains is necessary for the story plot. CBS says its study of 13 weeks of prime time television on all three network this past season showed that "incidents of dramatic violence" declined 24 per cent from the previous season.

**THE NETWORK SAID** one major reason for the decline was the introduction of the family viewing period: two hours of early evening television that must be limited to programs deemed suitable for young children.

But the responsibility is not the networks' alone, they say. Offensive programs can

## Execs Say Parents Role Important

# AMA Takes TV Violence Stand

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — As the studies pile up, even a television executive acknowledges "that television can contribute to aggressive behavior in some cases in some children."

By **LEE MARGULIES**  
Associated Press  
Writer

**LOS ANGELES AP** —  
Television's early evening

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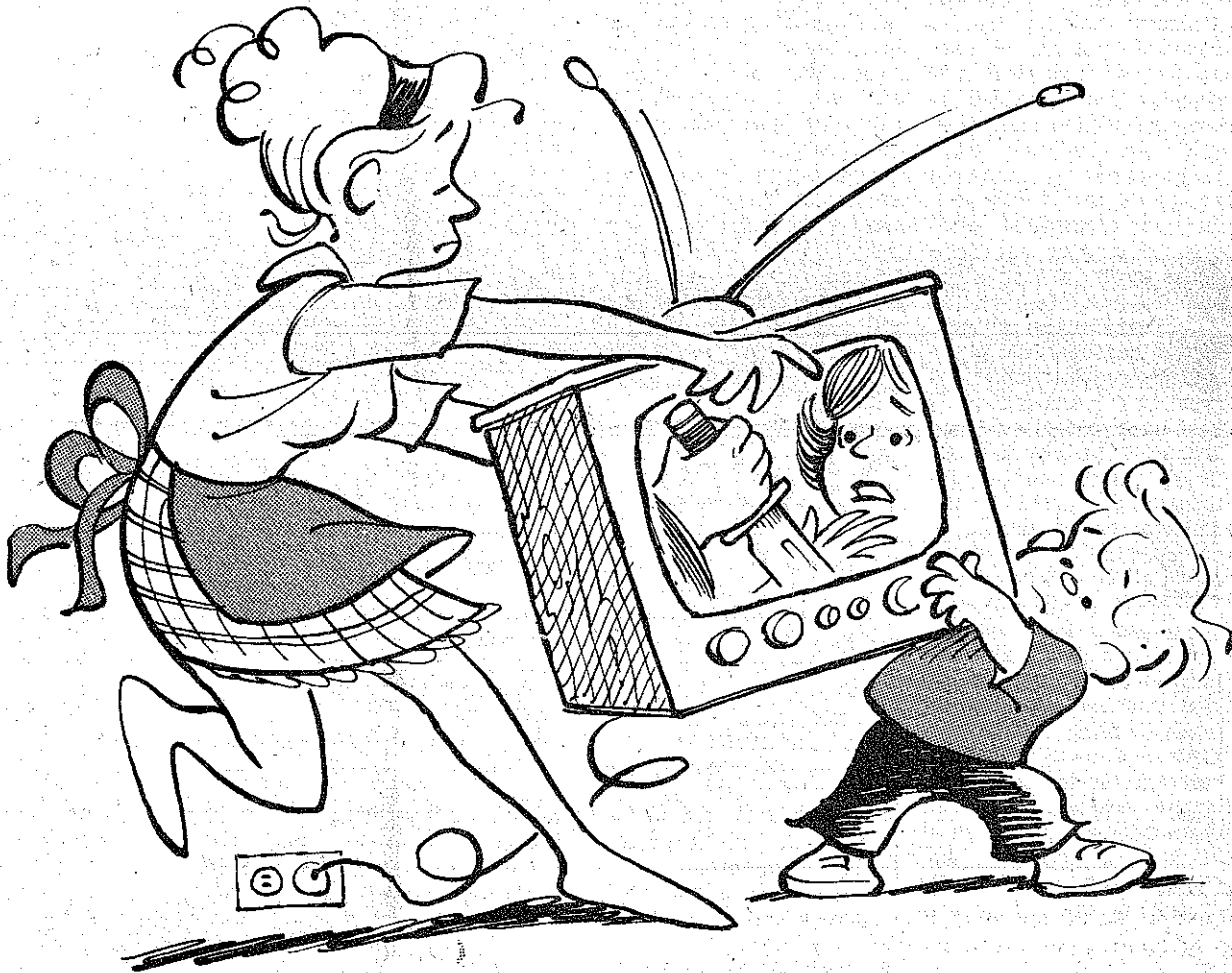
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