Medicine and Mass Communication: An Agenda for Physicians

PETER M. SANDMAN, Ph.D.; Ann Arbor, Michigan

Because the medical content of the mass media significantly affects public attitudes and behavior, physicians should participate more fully as critics and sources of that content. Attempts to sway audiences with medical information alone are often unsuccessful. Communication is more likely to be effective when it offers people something they want, such as satisfaction of a need or legitimation of an existing value. Except for advertising, the media seldom engineer their impact intentionally. Instead, the producers of news and entertainment rely heavily on sources, critics, and pressure groups outside the communications industry. By mastering the patterns of media impact and the rudiments of public relations, physicians can make the media a useful tool of medicine.

LIKE OTHER PROFESSIONAL and technical people, most physicians want nothing to do with the mass media. Some have seen their own research garbled by journalists; many have watched a colleague lose professional stature (and much-needed sleep) by becoming embroiled in a public controversy; nearly all have noted with scorn the errors, omissions, and misrepresentations in medical news and medical entertainment. A doctor seemingly has much to lose and little to gain by dabbling in the mass communication business.

Besides, reasons the typical physician, mass communication is as much a specialized field as medicine. It's too bad that journalists and entertainers sometimes try to practice medicine, but that's no reason for doctors to return the favor. The quality of medical content in the mass media, deplorable though it may sometimes be, is a matter for media professionals to deal with. Medical professionals wouldn't know how and are better off not trying*.

I want to dispute the foregoing chain of reasoning. I shall argue that it is both feasible and desirable for physicians—individually and collectively—to try to influence the medical content of the media.

Few people today deny that the mass media have an important influence on the attitudes and actions of their audience. The typical American visits a doctor several times a year. The same American reads a medical article in a newspaper or magazine several times a month; he or she watches a TV show featuring a medical problem several times a week; and may well encounter medical advertising several times a day. The impact of this constant exposure is profound. What medication do your patients use when they have a cold? How worried are they about cholesterol, and how has the worry affected their diet? Do they know the early signs of cancer? What are their views on megavitamins, on national health insurance, on partial mastectomy, on paramedical personnel, on malpractice suits, on "pulling the plug"? Inevitably the answers to these questions depend more on the content of the media than on the conduct of your practice.

Yet they affect your practice. The question we must answer is not whether the mass media significantly influence the medical attitudes and behavior of their audience, and thus the health of your patients and the future of medicine. We know they do. The question is what can doctors do about it. To answer this question, we must first look at the nature of media impact.

Media Impact†

People have thought about the effects of communication on attitudes and behavior at least since the time of Aristotle. And the special power of mass communication to change the way we think, feel, and behave has been a source of concern since the invention of the printing press. But the modern science of communication research emerged only in the 1930s. Its most important finding so far is a negative one: the mass media are very seldom able to convert their audience from one strongly held position to another.

Why? For one thing, the profit-oriented media rarely try. But there is a more fundamental explanation. The audience is an active participant in the communication

* Of course some medical professionals do try. Public health communication is an established subdiscipline, responsible for extensive media campaigns on such topics as smoking, population control, alcoholism, and cancer detection. The substantial research literature in public health communication will not be discussed in this article, for several reasons. First, most health communication campaigns rely on public-service advertising, while I will be concentrating here on news and entertainment. Second, physicians in private practice seldom have an opportunity to participate in these nationally coordinated campaigns; I want to look at what the local practitioner can do. Third, and most important, the health communication literature is almost uniformly discouraging. Most campaigns have attempted to urge changes in deep-seated audience behaviors on the basis of semitechnical information alone; for reasons that will be outlined in this paper, their impact has seldom been cost-effective. There are important lessons to be learned from these campaigns—positive as well as negative ones—but they are not fundamental to the thrust of this discussion.

► From the School of Natural Resources, University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, Michigan.

† Most of the nonmedical content in this section is drawn from Sandman PM, Rubin DM, Sachsman DB: *Media: An Introductory Analysis of American Mass Communications*, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1976, pp. 12-21.

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process. We are not sponges who soak up everything the media throw at us; we choose our media diet, and we do so on the basis of our own goals, needs, and motivations. People use the media for fun, for passing the time, for information, for reassurance, sometimes even for guidance—but not, as a rule, for getting converted. When media content threatens our established viewpoints, we are free to avoid it, ignore it, misunderstand it, or forget it. We can even dispute it, seeking out competing media content or interpersonal support from our friends and colleagues.

These defenses are usually sufficient to insulate the audience from intentional media advocacy: from newspaper editorials or political advertising, for example. Of course advocacy in the media has a variety of effects on supporters and the uncommitted; we will turn to these effects shortly. But it is seldom powerful enough to convert one's opponents. Patty Hearst did not become a revolutionary by reading S.L.A. pamphlets.

If this is true of intentional advocacy, it is all the more true of media news and entertainment, neither of which is even trying to convert the audience. It is especially important to acknowledge the inability of news to effect conversions, because so many campaigns of health-related persuasion rely on the principal component of news: raw information. Probably the most pernicious myth among amateur advocates is the stubborn, rationalistic conviction that new information leads to attitude change, which in turn leads to behavior change. Again and again, empirical studies have found very low intercorrelations among these three variables. Even when the audience is initially neutral, the causal links between information and attitude and between attitude and behavior are weak and unreliable. When the audience is predisposed against your position, these links are virtually nonexistent.

Confronted with a piece of information that conflicts with pre-existing attitudes, the audience usually ignores or distorts it, thus avoiding the conflict. And if this is impossible, the audience will usually manage to tolerate the inconsistency rather than change the established attitude. The new information is simply stored separately from the old attitude; behavior remains determined by the latter and unaffected by the former. In this sense we are all accomplished "still-thinkers," capable of responding to discrepant information with the complacently anti-intellectual rejoinder, "I still think . . . ."

Similarly, most people are quite capable of embracing attitudes that are inconsistent with their behavior without changing the behavior (consider attitudes and behavior with respect to smoking, for example). If forced to choose between the two—a difficult communication job in itself—we will abandon the attitude before the behavior; people are more committed to what they do than to what they think. For a new attitude to be easily translated into behavior, then, there must be no established behavior pattern to overcome. And the new attitude must have developed in a context that is real and immediate. But the abstraction of newsprint and the miniaturization of television are the antithesis of immediacy. The media "mediate" messages, creating a secondhand reality to which we respond as observers, not participants*.

Anyone who wishes to influence people by means of mass communication, then, must first abandon the notion of rational conversion through information in the media. If the media affect people—and they do—it must be through meeting their needs and fulfilling their goals, through reinforcement, not through conversion. This is the fundamental law of communication: *you reach people by offering them something they want.* Consider the following examples of change through reinforcement.

1. NEED MANIPULATION

When a communication promises that a particular behavior will help satisfy a particular need, those in the audience who feel that need most strongly are likely to give the prescribed behavior a try. Much of modern advertising is predicated on this simple phenomenon. Does Ultra Brite really give you sex appeal? Most people don't think so, but in a society preoccupied with sexual success there will always be plenty of us willing to ignore our own skepticism and try a tube or two.

Of course a message has greater credibility if the connection it postulates between need and behavior is genuine or at least conceivable. But the success of Ultra Brite establishes that this is not essential. It is the strength of the need, not its relevance to the recommended behavior, that determines its motivational power. Thus many successful drug advertisements go beyond the promise of "prompt relief" (which is relevant if not always true) to suggest more fanciful ties between the product and audience needs. Celebrity endorsements, for example, imply a tie to fame and success; scenes of tender nursing by one's spouse imply a tie to love and nurturance.

Need manipulation raises serious ethical issues, of course, especially when there is no logical relation between the need and the behavior being urged. Nonetheless, it is a successful strategy that deserves the consideration of would-be advocates†. And when the behavior you are trying to promote can genuinely fulfill a strong audience need, such as the need for good health, it would be foolish not to stress the relationship.

2. SALIENCE MANIPULATION

The mass media are very proficient at applying existing audience attitudes to new circumstances, suggesting a new

* The nature of media news presentations helps lessen the likelihood that the audience will act on media-acquired information. The very format of the news is aimed at rewarding the reader, listener, or viewer for the mere act of reading, listening, or viewing. Reporters are taught to "round out" their stories, to work at creating the impression that all relevant questions have been asked and answered—that the job (reporter's and audience's) is done. In their effort to be objective, reporters seldom tell us what we should do with the information in the news, or even what we could do with it. The emphasis in news on the opinions and actions of "important" people encourages us to believe that citizen action is impossible and perhaps even inappropriate. Our job, we conclude, is to know what the issues are; dealing with them is someone else's job.

† An important byproduct of need-motivated behavior is the sense of psychological discomfort ("cognitive dissonance") that most people feel when they are doing things for which they have an inadequate attitude base. This discomfort, in turn, prompts people to seek out information that can rationalize and justify the new behavior by building attitudes to support it. If no such information is available, the behavior remains unstable and must be constantly triggered by repetition of the need-association. This suggests a two-tiered approach to persuasion: First motivate the tentative behavior by tying it to audience needs, then cement it with relevant information.

behavior or a new evaluation of some event or issue without any change in attitude. This is a major function of news. News of the Watergate scandals, for example, didn't make people any more opposed to political corruption than they already were, but it did focus that opposition on the behavior of Richard Nixon. Manipulating the salience of an existing attitude is a great deal easier than creating a new attitude.

In the fluoridation debate, for example, opponents of fluoridation have gained substantial ground in recent years by redefining the issue as "fluoride pollution." Public disapproval of chemical pollutants in the water supply thus becomes a salient attitude in evaluating the fluoridation controversy. Similarly, medical information about the relation between diet and coronary disease probably doesn't make many people more concerned about their hearts. But for those who are already concerned, it helps to focus their concern on dietary decisions.

3. AMMUNITION

In any hotly debated or strongly felt controversy, people look to the media for fresh arguments supporting their side. That's why Republicans listen carefully to the words of Republican candidates, and why recent Pinto purchasers pay close attention to Pinto ads. Suppose most of the news about a local school bond issue happens to favor the supporters. Even if no opponents are converted by the news imbalance, the supporters will be much more likely to speak up in conversations with their friends and to vote on election day. Lacking this reinforcement, opponents of the bond issue are more likely to keep quiet and forget to vote.

Like most political disputes, the battle over national health insurance has been fought chiefly through rival efforts to provide ammunition to supporters. Few adults have changed their minds about "socialized medicine" in the past few decades, but many have been influenced by competing persuasion campaigns to become more (or less) active on behalf of their positions. If there is a trend toward more comprehensive health insurance programs in the country today, it is probably not because more people want them, but because people want them more.

Besides supplying ammunition to one's supporters in public controversies, the media can also provide a sort of intrapsychic ammunition for more personal commitments. Suppose a patient has at last decided to follow his or her physician's advice to lose weight, quit smoking, or exercise more regularly. The likelihood of that patient's remaining on the prescribed regimen will depend very largely on the availability of reinforcement. Repeated messages that the new behavior is indeed healthful and that many people have adopted it successfully are invaluable in keeping the patient going. Such messages can be viewed as offering the patient ammunition favoring one side of an internal dialogue. The media are a very efficient vehicle for providing this ammunition.

4. LEGITIMATION, AGENDA-SETTING, AND MODELING

Most people are uncomfortable doing and believing things for which they have no "good reason." We therefore use the media to legitimate our actions and attitudes: to provide information that makes sense of our personal commitments and examples of high-status or sympathetic people who share those commitments. By legitimating our actions and attitudes, of course, the media in effect strengthen them. Many opponents of the war in Vietnam, for example, were exceedingly tentative about their opposition until media criticism of the war made it seem more acceptable.

Although the media can seldom tell us what to think, they constantly tell us what to think about. Any event given major play in the media becomes by definition a major event: something to think about, talk about, and reach an opinion about. Conversely, if the news media ignore an event, then it cannot be news in the minds of the audience. This agenda-setting function is not confined to news. When movies and TV shows began dealing with women's liberation, for example, moviegoers and TV viewers had to begin dealing with it too.

Besides legitimating our commitments and suggesting new issues to think about, the media often provide us with sympathetic examples of people and behaviors we can feel good about copying. We imitate the posture and vocabulary of our media heroes, as well as their styles of dealing with people and situations. And not all of our media models are socially acceptable. In the early 1970s, scores of airplane hijackers learned from the media a new way to act out their hostility or their alienation. The media didn't make them hostile or alienated, but through modeling the media did make them hijackers.

Legitimation, agenda-setting, and modeling are three distinct avenues of mass-media influence, but quite often they act in concert. Consider the issue of abortion. Media attention to abortion in recent years has put the topic on people's agendas to think about; it is virtually a cultural imperative today to have some opinion about abortion. What had previously been a forbidden option became legitimate to consider and even to advocate. And on countless soap operas and prime-time entertainment programs, familiar and attractive characters—worthy of modeling—chose abortion right in the viewer's livingroom. Even this triple blow failed to convert many proponents of the "right to life." But it gave enormous support to those who were tentatively considering liberalized abortion laws as a policy preference or abortion itself as a personal choice.

5. CULTURAL NORMS

On topics about which people have no strongly developed attitudes in any direction, media content often determines and disseminates the cultural norms that will influence our behavior. How argumentative, how flirtatious, and how drunk can you be at a party and still remain within the bounds of good taste? When is an adolescent old enough to stay out all night? What is the proper attitude to hold toward Communist China, extramarital sex, and cheating on one's income tax? How often should you wax your car? Principally in entertainment content, but also in news and advertising, the media suggest answers to these sorts of questions, helping to create and transmit national norms and a national culture.

"Doctor shows" have been a staple of television entertainment almost since its beginnings. One generation of patients and doctors grew up with Ben Casey and Dr. Kildare. Another generation is growing up with Marcus Welby and Joe Gannon. What sorts of norms about medicine are disseminated by these television physicians and their patients? No one has studied the question rigorously, but the following list probably isn't too far off.

- Doctors are and should be heroic, glamorous figures who regularly—indeed, constantly—sacrifice their personal lives and personal relationships to the welfare of their patients*.
- The best way—the only conclusive way—to deal with most serious illnesses is surgery.
- Doctors treat one patient at a time. They have the time, the inclination, and the right to become intimately involved in each patient's private life and to mastermind every conceivable aspect of each patient's medical problem.
- Doctors never argue with their patients or among each other about money; they don't especially care if they get paid or not.
- Hospitals are places of high drama and constant personal interaction. Patients are not bored or fed unappetizing food; doctors and nurses are not harried, overworked, exhausted, or abrupt.
- Diagnosis is usually easy; treatment is usually experimental.
- Patients typically hide critical information from their doctors, revealing the key facts only after a highly emotional confrontation with the doctor, which immediately makes them feel much better.
- Seriously ill people usually look and behave just like healthy people, except occasionally when they gasp, keel over, and need immediate emergency treatment.
- Apart from high-risk (often experimental) surgery, the key to most medical treatment is sudden insight into one's neurotic relation with one's family and other intimates.
- Most medical decisions are fast, correct, and heroic; a few medical decisions are fast, incorrect, and virtually criminal; no medical decisions are slow, uncertain, or tentative.

A Proposed Agenda

We have discussed five areas of mass-media impact: need manipulation; salience manipulation; ammunition; legitimation, agenda-setting, and modeling; and cultural norms. We could easily discuss five more. But the important point here is that none of these areas of impact works by converting the audience from one viewpoint to another. They all work through some variety of reinforcement, through offering the audience something it wants.

* Like many of the norms on the list, this one is double-edged. It's nice to be admired, but the expectation is unrealistic, harmful if the patient swallows it and probably more harmful if the doctor swallows it.

Except for advertising, all of these media effects are accidental as far as the media are concerned. Reporters are kept busy just grinding out the news; entertainment producers are kept busy just grinding out the programs. Both work under strong professional norms against intentional manipulation of the audience. Conspiracy theorists notwithstanding, no one in the mass media is orchestrating their impact or trying to engineer this or that effect.

Who, then, is responsible for the content of the media? The media are. Journalists and scriptwriters are predominantly white, male, middle-class, urban, liberal people. Without especially trying to—often conscientiously trying not to—these people inevitably saturate the rest of the country with their particular sense of reality. Of course media professionals are constrained by a variety of external forces: government, advertisers, publishers and station managers, and so forth. But for the most part these constraints are embodied in the very structure of the communications industries. Working within that structure, media professionals seldom come up against a government regulation, an irate advertiser, or even a domineering owner. On a day-to-day level, the people who write medical news and medical TV shows write pretty much what they want.

But they have to get it from somewhere. The mass media, remember, are not trying to change reality; they are merely trying to depict it in a way that will attract and hold the interest of their audience. True, they must filter that reality through the values of the writer and the traditions, goals, and constraints of the medium. But what emerges from the "media filter" bears a distinct resemblance to what was fed into it in the first place. The media, in other words, write about the things they find out about.

It follows that if you want the media to write about something, you must make sure they find out about it. To get a particular fact, viewpoint, event, or issue into the media, you need only raise it in such a way that it becomes a part of the writer's "reality." In recent months the news has been filled with articles and features on the merits of keeping incurable patients alive indefinitely. Before the year is out we will undoubtedly see several TV entertainment shows on the same theme. "Pulling the plug" is by no means a new issue to physicians. Did reporters and scriptwriters suddenly resolve to explore its moral and medical implications? No. Karen Quinlan's parents and the state of New Jersey made it a part of their "reality."

The Quinlans and the New Jersey government had other goals than publicity in mind. But interest groups quite frequently raise issues in the mass media with no other purpose than to have the issues raised in the mass media. Reporters and scriptwriters seldom resent this as an intrusion on their independence. On the contrary, they are voracious for new and interesting content and are grateful to anyone who can provide usable grist for their mills.

This is especially true for news, which is more dependent than entertainment on a constant supply of new material. Journalists are in the business of reporting what happened.

It would be absurd for them to resent a source for making something happen. The easiest way to gain access to the news, then, is to do or say something newsworthy. The media cover things because they are important, unusual, timely, local, interesting, amusing, violent, traditional, and so forth. To get them to cover your thing, simply endow it with several of these characteristics.

The craft of doing this effectively is, of course, public relations. Its most common tools are simple to master: the press release (content submitted by a source in the form of a usable news article) and the pseudoevent (an event that takes place principally so that the media will report that it took place, such as a press conference or a demonstration). There are more complicated weapons, but these two are fundamental. There are also simpler weapons. Few reporters will take offense when a physician—or any citizen—calls them with a good idea for an article.

In trying to influence entertainment content, the direct approach is usually the best. There are devious strategies that have sometimes worked well: cash prizes, for example, for the best TV show on this or that topic. But a number of health-related organizations have been just as successful simply by approaching various producers, suggesting new themes and story lines, and volunteering to review scripts in their areas of expertise. A few years ago the American Red Cross offered free blood-donor posters to the set designers of medical programs; you can still see one occasionally behind Dr. Welby as he confers with a patient in the hospital corridor.

I am not a physician. I do not know what sorts of medical content should be funneled into the mass media or what sorts should be squeezed out. The people who run the media don't know either. For the most part they are too busy to care. If the mass media are to improve significantly as a vehicle for health education, individual physicians and organizations of physicians must play a more active role.

The following suggestions are necessarily general, but they describe the range of communication activities that physicians might productively undertake.

1. Learn something about public relations. Many newspapers offer brief seminars from time to time on how to write a usable press release; most colleges offer courses on journalism, PR, and persuasion; the references at the end of this paper include a few good books on these subjects. Better yet, arrange for a workshop on medical public relations at a forthcoming regional convention.

2. Volunteer your services to local publishers and station managers as an expert on the acceptability of medical advertising. Every mass medium tries to screen ads before it accepts them, but, except for the networks and the big metropolitan newspapers, they are sorely lacking in expert guidance. While you're at it, let the local media know which public-service advertising campaigns on health-related topics you consider most valuable and urge them to use more than they do. And if the public-service campaign you'd most like to see run isn't available, get some help from a local journalism department or from the media themselves and write it.

3. Find out who the medical reporters are at local newspapers (broadcast stations won't have a specialist) and get to know them. Try to establish the sort of relationship that enables you to offer advice on possible stories, approaches, and the like and enables them to seek your advice when they need it. Work toward a similar interchange between local editors and local medical groups.

4. When reporters approach you for a story, try to be a good source. That means being accessible, accurate, and frank; it also means being willing to simplify your explanations to make them understandable and interesting to laypeople. Arrange for a local medical organization to supply the media with the names of experts in various fields who are willing to be called on a story.

5. In dealing with the media, give serious consideration to the nature of media impact. Instead of expecting to change people's behavior with technical information, try to offer the media content that reinforces the needs, attitudes, or behaviors of the audience in a way that seems likely to yield the desired effect. At the same time, however, bear in mind that the media themselves are not thinking in terms of impact.

6. If you have medical information you badly want covered, try to embed it in a "newsworthy" format: a public speech by a noted celebrity, for example. Encourage local medical groups to play a more active role in public relations: engineering pseudoevents, mailing out press releases, taking stands on health-related issues of public policy, and volunteering information and expertise relevant to the stands others are taking.

7. Remember that the media are very responsive to feedback from audiences, sources, and interest groups. When you encounter medical content in the media that you consider inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise undesirable, let the writer or producer, reporter or editor know. Try to make your criticisms constructive rather than carping, though, and bear in mind that newspapers and TV shows are not technical journals. When you find something in the media that you consider exemplary, be free with your praise.

8. Consider undertaking a formal "content analysis" of medical entertainment programming. A quantitative study of information, themes, and stereotypes in television's doctor shows would be a useful project for any medical organization. The findings would provide a sound basis for proposing various changes to the writers and producers. Systematic monitoring of local medical news would be similarly valuable.

9. When you watch television, try to think of ways in which important medical issues and information could be worked into the plots of local and national programs. If possible, establish regular contact between medical organizations and the producers of these programs, as a vehicle for appropriate suggestions. Even as an individual, make a habit of sending the producers news of suitable medical developments and proposals for possible story lines.

10. Apart from news and entertainment, begin making use of radio talk shows, local television panel discussions, newspaper letters to the editor, and other sorts of media

content that can help carry your message. Consider untraditional media as well: posters, pamphlets, and leaflets; matchbook covers and cereal boxes; comic books and restaurant placemats.

In sum, make it your business to know how the mass media influence the public on medical topics, and how physicians can influence the influence. And then, if you care, do something about it.

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► Requests for reprints should be addressed to Peter M. Sandman, Ph.D.; Wells College; Aurora, NY 13026.

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PUBLICATIONS OF NOTABLE INTEREST

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Compiled by Jacqueline Marx Atkins. Includes more than 200 annotations of audio-visual items (films, filmstrips, slides, tapes, etc.). Also contains helpful "how to" articles on audio-visual resources, equipment, and materials as well as distributors' addresses. $2 per copy. International Association of Schools of Social Work, 345 East 46th St., New York, NY 10017. 1975.

Films Too Good for Words

By Salvatore J. Parlato, Jr. (author of "Films on Noise Pollution and Deafness" in *EMC ONE-76*). Gives brief descriptions and sources for 1,000 films that communicate to their viewers without narration, dialog, or interviews, though most do have sound tracks with music, natural sounds, or special sound effects to enhance the visuals. Includes some silent classics, but most selections are contemporary non-narrated educational films. R. R. Bowker, P.O. Box 1807, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. $13 plus shipping. Hardbound.

Catalog of Religious Education Media and Multimedia Material

Available from John and Mary Harrell, Box 9006, Berkeley, CA 94709. Latest production, *To Tell of Gideon,* is a book with accompanying 13-minute LP phonograph record. $8. Available only from the address above.

Basic Media in Education

A book on nontechnical, hand-made media (posters, tack boards, charts, maps, lettering, etc.) for the classroom. By John Harrell. St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN 55987. $3.50. 1974.

Teaching Is Communicating

By John Harrell. Overview of audio-visual education based on the theoretical work of Dr. George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication, U. of Pennsylvania. Seabury Press, New York. $3.95. 1963.

TV viewers perceive violent world

BY STEVE TARTER

When was the last time you passed a running gun battle in the street? Ever been roughed up in an alley? How about entering your home and getting pistol whipped?

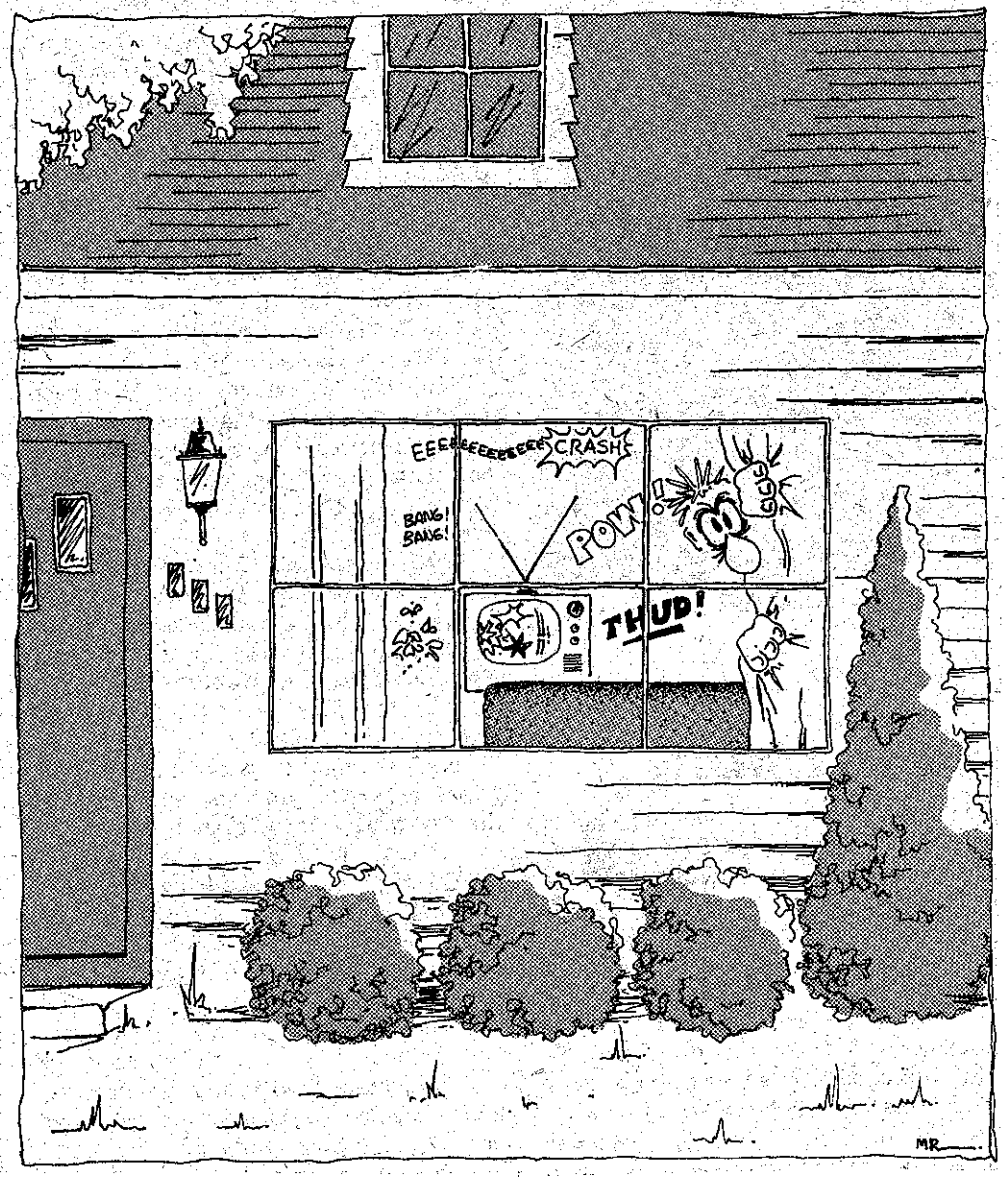
If you're lukcy enough to have avoided all that, those events probably don't alarm you. You're used to it. Television doles out enough violence in a single evening to span a hundred lifetimes.

Shy? Because it works. TV devours hundreds of ideas a minute, day in and day out. At over $1000 a second, the battle for viewers is intense. Frantic producers face the task of trying to fill this bottomless maw.

Quick, hard, larger-than-life violence fills the bill. It sells. Try the Starsky-Hutch formula: scream down the road, smash up a few cars, brawl with crooks, maybe do a little shooting, and add mandatory chase scenes, of course, both on foot and at high speed in traffic. Keep the whole thing spiced with plenty of low-life deeds by the doomed-to-failure deviate brigade, also known as "heavies."

"The world of television drama is, above all, a violent one in which more than half of all characters are involved in violence, at least one-tenth in some killing and in which three fourths of prime time hours contain some violence."

So says George Gerner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and Larry Gross, a fellow professor at Penn. The pair authored a study in the April *Psychology Today* entitled "The Scary World of TV's Heavy Viewer."



Dispensing a nightly ration of "action," that which we are denied in our own daily routines. There's no one in the streets to fight; everybody's watching TV.

Six Hour a Day

The problem has only begun. "Imagine spending six hours a day at the local movie house when you were 12-years-old. No parent would have permitted it. Yet in our sample of children, nearly half the 12-year-olds watch an average of six or more hours of television per day. For many of them the habit continues into adulthood," the report states.

"On the basis of our surveys, we estimate that about one-third of all American adults watch an average of four or more hours of TV per day," say Gerbner and Gross. "At the age of 10 the average youngster spends more hours a week in front of the TV screen than in the classroom."

Soaking up all those stock characters, rigid formulas and shallow stereotypes. It's not driving people to violence—just the opposite. It's setting up a zombie culture, afraid and ignorant, unable to handle contemporary thoughts because they aren't exposed to them.

"Throughout history," says the TV report, "once a ruling class has established its rule, the primary function of its cultural media has been the legitimization and maintenance of its authority. Instead of threatening the social order, television may have become our chief instrument of social control."

They state Americans are watching so much TV, the tube shapes their view of the world.

"Americans who watch prime time TV more than four hours a day," they write, "think the world is more dangerous than those who watch two hours or less (a day)."

Mind Control

TV has this country in a trance. Warping the public around the clock with commercially distorted picture that, pure and simple, effects mind control in an effort to push merchandise.

"Television is not just another medium," says the Gerbner-Gross report. "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."

"Unlike the real world, where personalities are complex, motives unclear, television is a world of clarity and simplicity. To insure the widest acceptability, (or greatest potential profitability) the plot lines follow the most commonly accepted notions of morality and justice, whether or not those notions bear resemblance to reality."

"Television dmatically demonstrates the power of authority in our society, and the risks involved in breaking society's rules. Violence-filled programs show who gets away with what, and against whom," the pair continue.

The cop show brings the urban jungle into the home allowing every viewer to understand what goes through an officer's mind as he comes face to face with a deranged killer. These kind of vicarious thrills provide a good backdrop for commercial images of snacks and munchies keeping traffic heavy in the kitchen all night.

The world of TV big business dictates the public be entertained, the networks have sponsors, and the sponsors get results. Everybody's happy only:

"Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens, and more fearful of the real world," say the TV researchers.

People turn off the set at night and bolt the door. It's a jungle out there. Remember those junkies you saw on *Streets of San Francisco*? They'll do anything for a fix. The Gerbner-Gross article (and they present statistical evidence) says TV escalates public paranoia. Indeed, in some cases, it's generating fears. Folks don't want to fool with a big, bad world when there's fighting in the streets.

We have a good part of this country arranged at present in neat, comfortable communities where on any given evening, if you could pass over the roof tops, you'd find at least one set ablaze in every home.

AN ELECTRIC REVIEW

TV Guide

There are remedies, America. First, you can turn the damn thing off. Try turning the sound off and playing some of your favorite records. The Olympics was great for this. War films go down a lot better when accompanied by Bob Dylan or James Taylor.

Let the radio talk for awhile. TV hypnotizes by demanding all your senses. Reduce one and you're able to "see" the tube more objectively.

Commercials are far more entertaining when you just watch them. They're so quick. The momentary expression of a "typical" consumer may be all that's needed to reach a certain segment of the viewing audience in a sympathetic manner.

It takes a conscious effort but remember one thing about commercial TV: though it's viewed as entertainment, it's also a business, the biggest business because the product is us.

Better Broadcasts, Better World

Better Broadcasts NEWS

Tel. (608) 257-7712 Mornings
120 E. Wilson St.
Madison, Wis. 53703

RADIO-TV, EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY
Published by the
American Council for Better Broadcasts

Number 116
October 1, 1976

AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR BETTER BROADCASTS IS A NATIONAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION COORDINATING THE EFFORTS of individuals and local, state, and national groups to improve by educational means the quality of radio and television

LOOK-LISTEN OPINION POLL

WHAT is it? A chance for people to say their say about TV and radio programs.
WHO may monitor in it? Anyone.
WHEN is monitoring to be done? NOW — SEPTEMBER 15 to THANKSGIVING.

HOW GET Report Cards?

For groups: The chairman orders them from **American Council for Better Broadcasts,** 120 E. Wilson St., Madison, WI 53703, stating number of expected monitors. Give name or organization; name and address of Look-Listen Chairman. Material is free **except** the 8 cards each monitor needs (3¢ **per person**).

Individual monitors order their own cards, enclosing 5¢ and business-size stamped, self-addressed envelope.

WHAT IS TO BE MONITORED? 8 NETWORK television or radio programs **of evening or late afternoon or anytime Saturday or Sunday,** in these categories:
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS
DRAMA, including detectives, cowboys
MUSIC
NEWS; INFORMATION

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER monitors return cards to chairmen?

Chairman makes report (number of Good's, Fair's, etc. for each program); **sends report** and cards to AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR BETTER BROADCASTS; reports also to the monitors.

The Council compiles national report (emphasizing opinions rather than grades); sends it to networks, FCC, sponsors, concerned Congressional committees, and monitoring groups.

A SPONSOR reply: "The (commercial) surveys can count noses, but can't evaluate attitudes."

A NETWORK reply: "I know the work of your organization; have long admired it."

A FORMER FCC COMMISSIONER: "Private organizations such as the American Council for Better Broadcasts perform an invaluable service by providing an effective means of mobilizing public opinion"

THE GROUP CHAIRMAN is very important—in rousing enthusiasm for participating, being very clear as to returning cards to him/her, and when. (Two weeks or less will be most successful.) The chairman makes the group report and sends it and the cards to the AMERICAN COUNCIL for BETTER BROADCASTS, 120 E. Wilson, Madison, WI 53703 **before Thanksgiving.**

PROJECT POSTCARD directions will be given in the Nov. 15 issue. It may be done at any time; but **January** or **February** are recommended.

QUESTIONS, Five Years Old

In the **"TV: Turn On or Turn Off?"** edition of **LOOK** (Sept. 7, 1971) its senior editor, Jack Hamilton, asks several pertinent questions—among them (quoting):

Why can't TV see as much lawless drama in, say, the "No-Knock" law and the Mafia as in Gunsmoke reruns?

Did TV lose interest in ecology when it ceased being a "safe" issue?

Why does public TV with no profits, frequently outshine the commercial networks in overall quality?

Why does every new season seem the same as the last?

Why, in short, does TV underuse its own potential?

Surely the medium that claims to reach the largest audience has the largest responsibility.

Listen, old buddy, aren't you too big to be so small?

Now, five years later, what are the answers to these questions?

YOUR OPINIONS

Your opinions are important in getting the quality of broadcast programs you want. When you deliver them in person or by writing or telephoning, they mean more than just counting noses, as in the ordinary poll, because you tell **What** about a program you like or dislike, something definite for a broadcaster to consider.

To combine definiteness with the impact of many people's opinions, ACBB offers two opportunities: the Look-Listen Poll (which has **just begun** and is different from other polls); **Project Postcard** (in which the writer sends postcards to local stations and perhaps to some sponsors. It is recommended for January or February).

Violence! Violence! Violence!

The television programs for fall seem to point to two conclusions: (1) that the Family Viewing time is continuing (in spite of some viewers' criticisms) and (2) that those programs following Family Time, as well as children's weekend programs are to be more violent than in the past. This becomes even more true when one adds some of the movies which will be coming to the television screen.

It might be said here, parenthetically, that some well-informed, long-time viewers (teachers and parents) feel dissatisfied with some of the choices—perhaps with the way such choices were made. For example, many feel that a program like **The Rookies**, though somewhat violent, had a lot to offer the youth by teaching loyalty, devotion to duty, and human understanding. Yet it was eliminated. Is there any chance for evaluation here?

The CBS Office of Social Research issued a report in April, 1976, based on thirteen weeks of monitoring prime-time television last season, which shows a twenty-four per cent decline in incidents of dramatic violence on all three networks, but claims a thirty-six per cent decline on CBS. According to the News Bureau, University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg School of Communication, the over-all level of violence remained constant. A news release from that bureau in the spring says that "CBS emerges as the least violent network, carrying the lowest amount of violence in both its family hour and total program schedule."

The previews of fall programs are really alarming! Are these "in the public interest?"

For years those of us concerned over the influence of violence in television programs have followed the research projects with great interest and have been frustrated by the numbers of times the results have carried no proofs. We have been reminded that television is just one of the influences brought to bear on the thoughts and actions of youth, that we have not had long enough time to follow up the individuals or groups in the research projects.

Today a rather different kind of survey is available. **Living with Television: the Violence Profile**, published by George Gerbner and Larry Gross, in the "Journal of Communications", Annenberg School of

Continued on Page 4

See INSIDE

PROMISING PROGRAMS

Barbara Larson

This list is made from press releases. The networks sometimes change their schedules; so check with your newspaper.

This list also gives you a chance to see whether your station has substituted an inferior program for an excellent one from its network, or vice versa. If so, why not ask your station manager about it? He may have a good explanation. EASTERN TIME.

Fri. Oct. 1, 7:30-8, **"Campaign '76,"** special report each Friday until elections. CBS

Sat. Oct. 2, 1-2 p.m., **"Fire Fighters," "Children's Film Festival,"** CBS

Sunday, Oct. 3, 11:30-noon, **"Eternal Light,"** conversations with Rabbi Finkelstein, NBC

Sun. Oct. 3, 5-6, **"Faces of Hope,"** (Yugoslavia, its history, culture, people) NBC

Sun. Oct. 3, 7-8, **"One Little Indian," "Special Treat"** for children, NBC

Saturdays, 6-6:30, Oct. 9 23; Sun. Oct 17, **"Campaign and Candidates,"** NBC

Tues. Oct. 5, 4-5, **"Luke Was There," "Special Treat,"** NBC

Wed. Oct. 6, 4:30-5:30, **"Francesca, Baby," "Afterschool Special,"** ABC

Fri. Oct. 8, 9-11, **"The Great Houdini's."** Inner turmoil of Harry Houdini—two dominant forces in his life, his wife and his mother. ABC

Sat. Oct. 9, 11:30-1 a.m., **"Olympics of the Dance," "Weekend."** PBS

Sat. Oct. 9, 1-2 p.m., **"Nina and the Street Kids," "Children's Film Festival,"** CBS

Sun. Oct. 10, 8 p.m., **"Madame Bovary,"** PBS

Sun, Oct. 10, 5-6, **"Fanfares and Fugues," N. Y. Philharmonic, Festival of the Lively Arts for Young People,** CBS

Sun. Oct. 10 & 17, 7-8, **"The Biscuit Eater," "Disney,"** NBC

Mon. Oct. 11, 9-11, **"Jesus Christ, Superstar,"** NBC

Mon. Oct. 11, 8-11, **"Nikki, the Wild Dog of the North," "The Great Locomotive Chase,"** (All Disney Night) NBC

Thurs. Oct. 21, 9 p.m., **"Madame Butterfly,"** PBS

Sat. Oct. 23, 1-2, **"Master of the World," Jules Verne** story, animated, CBS

Sat. Oct. 23, 8-8:30, **"It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown,"** CBS

Mon. Oct. 25, 8-11, **"Amelia Earhart," (Susan Clark, John Forsythe, Susan Oliver)** NBC

Fri. Oct. 29, 8:30, **"America in Song,"** PBS

Sun. Oct. 31, 8-11, **"Life Goes to the Movies,"** with stars, films, legends of motion pictures. NBC

Sun.-Mon. Nov. 7 & 8, **"Gone with the Wind," "Big Event"** with **Celeste Holm** and **Elizabeth Cheshire**. NBC

Tues. Nov. 9, 4-5, **"Big Henry and the Polka Dot Kid," "Special Treat"** NBC

Wed. Nov. 10, 4:30-5:30, **"J. P. and the President's Son," "Afterschool Special"** NBCSun. Nov. 21, 7-11:30, **"The First Fifty Years," "The Big Event,"** celebration of NBC's years of broadcasting. NBC

Wed. Nov. 17, 8-10, **"Sister Aimee,"** disappearance of Aimee Sempel McPherson, NBC

Mon. Nov. 22, 8:30-9, **"Carnival of Animals,"** CBS

Mon. Nov. 22, 9-11, **"Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye,"** movie, NBC

Thurs. Nov. 25, 10-11, **"Beverly Sills and Carol Burnett at the Met,"** CBS

Sun. Nov. 28, 11:30 a.m., **Jacques Cousteau series** starts, PBS

Wed. Dec. 1, 10-11, a musical variety with **George Burns** and others, CBS

Tues. Dec. 14, **"Little Women,"** (**ballet** version) **Special Treat.** NBC

PROGRAM NOTES

"Communication, the Invisible Environment" is a course being given (began Sept. 20) by New York University over the CBS network Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Credit is given for it. One difficulty: your CBS station may not carry it, or carry it at 6 a.m. The course will point out how, on an unprecedented scale, our lives are being changed by new media and technology; which increasingly govern our ways of seeing, knowing, and valuing. This course is part of **"Sunrise Semester."**

"Faces of Hope" is a one-hour documentary on Jugoslavia, focusing on present religious life in this socialist state. It is presented October 3 by Radio-Television Division of the Southern Baptist Convention.

October 3, 11:30 a.m., in observance of Yom Kippur, **Rabbi Louis Finkelstein** will be interviewed by **Sol M. Linowitz**, Board chairman of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and former U. S. ambassador to the Organization of American States. They will discuss the meaning of Yom Kippur and the history of religious freedom in this country.

The ballet version of **"Little Women"** on Dec. 14, 4 p.m., will be narrated by Joanne Woodward. **Edward Villella** is the chief male dancer and choreographer.

"Luke Was There," Oct. 5, 4 p.m., is the story of a young boy who was left in a children's shelter. Eleanor Clymer's book on which the film is based received the Children's Book Award of the Child Study Association.

Nov. 22 will be the 13th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination. In **"Johnnie, We Hardly Knew Ye"** Paul Rudd stars as JFK.

For Young People

"The Big Blue Marble", a much lauded program, is now being shown on some PBS stations (in this area Sundays at 8:30 a.m.)

It is available from an independent source and so may also be seen on commercial stations.

PBS has several new programs for young people. **"Once upon a Classic"** will show **Mark Twain's "The Prince and the Pauper," Dickens' "David Copperfield" and others. "Bebop,"** designed for 9-to-13-year-olds, illustrates acceptance of ethnic differences. **Studio See,** produced for preteens and early teens, will show scenes at a rodeo, pirate ships, adventure.

On commercial networks the old favorites, **"Children's Film Festival"** and **"Captain Kangaroo"** will continue. **"Animals, Animals, Animals"** is new this season. The animals are treated with some respect for their wishes.

All this shows that young people are being treated with more respect than heretofore by broadcasters. One speaker at the ACBB Conference who spoke about young people said over and over again that fine programs for adults were **equally important**.

TELEVISION NEWS and THOUGHTFULNESS

Jacques Cousteau*, scientist of the sea, believes that thinkers are barred from mass media. He has said, "If Ivan Schmovik, candidate to the presidency of Transbosnya sneezes, or declares that Albania interferes with the internal affairs of Transbosnya, every television network will invite him and give him prime time. But if Linus Pauling expresses his fears about the future of mankind, that is only matter for a brief note. The most formidible thinkers of our time . . . have no access to electronic mass media."

Others find television news is not stimulating to thought. Daniel Bell, professor of sociology at Harvard, believes that we get too much information—"that most of the news is being organized essentially by television which, by its very nature, is short, melodramatic, and highlighting. But it is incapable of presenting complexity and historical background."

* Watch for Cousteau's six programs, **"Oasis,"** on PBS.

In Depth?

Several monitors in the Look-Listen Poll last fall said that they wanted news in depth. This year the daily **MacNeil/Lehrer Report** on PBS will examine one subject in as much depth as thirty minutes will allow five nights a week from 7 to 7:30. You listen to the commercial networks to learn **what** has happened, and then turn to PBS to find out **why** it happened.

ELECTION-YEAR PERSUASION

Will October's political broadcasts be filled, in the main, with appeals to unreasoning fear, personal greed, ethnic and local prejudices, and imputed shoddy motives of opposing leaders?

If television presents such a spectacle, will the American people stand for it? be swayed by it? Or are most Americans intelligent enough to distinguish between main issues and minor incidents? do they admire truth enough to try to be impartial, reasoning judges of political leadership? The delighted howls of political gatherings at unwarranted digs at opponents do not augur well. But perhaps that is because of surprise and the jibes won't seem funny on later reflection.

In Schools

In some schools young people are taught to use their reasoning power in judging speeches, and teachers have used election speeches as an exercise in thoughtful assessment of oratory. The results, as they showed in the Look-Listen Polls, have been encouraging.

SUGGESTED READING

Books

Berger, Arthur A., "The TV-Guided American," 1976, Walker & Co., $3.95

Gelfman, Judith S., "Women in Television News," 186 pp., 1976, Columbia University Press, $7.95

Wakefield, Dan, "All Her Children," 182 pp., 1976, Doubleday, $6.95, (about daytime serials)

Other Publications

Anderson, J. B. and **Latta, D. L., "Television Congress in Action?"** (interviews) U. S. News, June 14, 1976

Baker, R., "Spongeability," N. Y. Times Mag., June 27, 1976

Forbes, May 15, 1976, **"Destination America: British Programs**

Gerbner, G. and **Gross, L., "The Scary World of TV's Heavy Viewer,"** Psychology Today, April, 1976

Intellect, May, 1976, **"Children and TV's Commercials,** a Symposium conducted at the **American Psychological Ass'n.** Convention

Langway, L. and others, "The Crowded Screen," Newsweek, June 14, 1976

Lessner, G. S., "Applications of Psychology to Television Programming: Formulation of Program Objectives," American Psychologist, Feb., 1976

Marshall, E., "News at PBS; the Question of News and Documentary Coverage," New Republic, June 19, 1976

Milarsky, J. R. and others, "TV Drug Advertising and Proprietary and Illicit Drug Use Among Teenage Boys," Public Opinion Quarterly, Winter, 1975-76

Sevareid, E., "Relationship between the Print and Elective Media," an address, June 3, Vital Speeches, July 1, 1976

Waters, Harry F. and **Carter, B., "Affiliates Lib: Fighting Network Plans to Expand Nightly News,"** Newsweek, June 7, 1976

New FCC Commissioners

With the appointment of Joseph Fogarty, a Democrat, and Margareta Eklund White, a Republican, to the Federal Communications Commission, and their ratification by the Senate, the FCC is again at full strength—seven.

Because the commission is small, and its decisions affect the quality of the powerful broadcast industry, these people are Very Important People. What they do, or fail to do, influences what kind of nation we are.

Mr. Fogarty will fill a full term, seven years. He is an attorney and has been counsel to Senator Pastore, Chairman of the Senate Communications Sub-committee, so he is familiar with communication problems. Mrs. White will serve for two years because she is filling an unexpired term. She has been director of the Office of Communications at the White House.

New Director of OTP

Thomas J. Hauser has been sworn in as Director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy. He served on the Federal Communications (FCC) in 1971. For the last five years he has practiced law in Chicago. He sees the OTP as an agency for looking ahead and planning, while the FCC's function is to regulate use of the airways; and so expects to have harmonious relations with the FCC.

LICENSE TO BROADCAST

Every three years broadcast stations must apply for renewal of their license to broadcast. Last year broadcasters worked hard to persuade Congress that a five-year license would be better, and they almost succeeded.

Action by Congress is sought again this year. Over seventy bills have been introduced. Does the length of the license period make any difference to the kind of programs presented and their quality? The longer period would mean less work for the broadcasters and for the Federal Communications Commission. However, ACBB has noticed that broadcasters are more eager to furnish programs of high quality during the last year of their license period than during the first two years, so the shorter license period would bring this benefit to the public more often.

Among the bills already introduced. the one favored by many citizen groups is H. R. 15168 (the Ottinger bill). It retains the three-year license period. It also specifies that the FCC shall consider whether the station's programming has met quantitative standards of **substandard service** in popular time periods, the standards to be set by the FCC. This provision could be decisive, if others apply for the same frequency. This decision is vital to the public interest.

YOU KNOW THESE MAGAZINES?

THE JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION is a quarterly, which usually carries in some detail the report of a research project, as well as articles of general interest in printed news and on television. It is published by the Annenberg School of Journalism, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

SCHOOL REVIEW, a quarterly published by the University of Chicago, deals in the main with education, but always has an article by Florence H. Levinsohn involving television. In the May, 1976, issue she discusses television's reporting of school busing. Though school busing for desegregation has been peaceful in many places, she says of television news reports: "Missing from these reports are films of integrated classrooms, school corridors and lunchrooms, comments by school people, parents, or kids to match the bus-burnings, rock throwing, angry pickets, screaming parents."

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW deals with handling of the news in print and on the air. It is published by Columbia School of Journalism, New York City. It has a number of distinguished contributors.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW, 488 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022, published biweekly, has as television critic, Karl E. Meyer, who reviews notable programs. Comparing one's own ideas with his makes the performance more memorable.

HOW ABOUT READING AND TELEVISION?

There has been a lot written about "Why Johnny Can't Read." It seems about time to ask "Why Can't Mary Read?" Why is it always Johnny? Does Mary have less of a problem? There are no records to prove that.

This is not an opinion on why either Johnny or Mary can't read, nor on which reads better, nor does it claim to be able to offer the perfect method for teaching reading. In fact, there is much to be said for the teacher who was asked what her method was. "My method," she said, "is whatever works best with the children involved."

The aim of this article is to suggest some thoughts on relations between television and reading for both Johnny and Mary.

It is easy for critics to say young people watch so much television that reading suffers. That may be so at times, and in some homes, but it does not have to be so. We read about the television programs on Saturday mornings in our libraries following which there are lines of people to take out those books. We know that "if you want a youngster to read, you don't give him boring books made up by academics. Give him something that interests him. What fascinates kids today? TV, of course, TV is a living text." (Dr. McAndrew in **TV Guide** for September 4-10, 1976). Peggy Charron, President of ACT is also quoted in this same article as saying, "Ask any librarian; if any show is in anyway based on a book, kids will storm the library for it." A recent example is **Little House on the Prairie.**

To use television to stimulate reading requires a little help from the adults at home or at school, a knowledge of what is being shown on the screen and an ability to draw out discussion of the follow-up books. The school librarian can be of a great help.

Of course, we know a lot about the actual efforts to teach reading by the medium itself. **Sesame Street** and **The Electric Company** have had great success. There are some criticisms: that so much is going on that the child's interest is diverted; or that they are sometimes too much like school. A survey of teacher opinion could help here.

We come back always to the teachers and the parents. How well informed or how well trained are they to make the greatest use of the medium? How well do they read themselves? Teaching reading to adult nonreaders is showing up as a real problem.

An interesting new use of television might be mentioned here. One university (University of Wisconsin, Madison) is beginning (September 1976) a new statewide Extension Series called **"Strategies in Reading, Grades 5-12,"** which will use television to disseminate its program in teaching teachers to teach reading skills, and which will be available in every county. At least 1000 teachers are expected to enroll.

Instead of asking why can't Johnny and Mary read, or worrying over this method or that, or blaming television for their lack of success here, let's use this new fascinating method to help others to read and to enjoy what they read.

Jessie Hill McCanse

Violence! Violence!

Continued from Page 1

Communications, University of Pennsylvania, has a new approach. A few sentence quotes may indicate some differences:

"TV penetrates every home in the land."

"Unlike print it does not require literacy."

"Television is the first centralized cultural influence to permeate both the initial and the final years of life—as well as the years between."

"Never before have all classes and groups (as well as ages) shared so much of the same culture."

With those statements in mind, it is easy to see that the research would be different, in fact the difference includes two methods: (1) to analyze "large and representative aggregates of television output" and (2) to "determine what, if anything, the viewers absorb." To accomplish these two ends the report first deals with general features of television drama (including cartoons and movies) and then with the violence in that world of drama. There are many statistics and diagrams.

One new element (at least new to many of us) emerges in the report on violence. We should not only be concerned about those indidivuals who become more aggressive in their life-patterns but about those who are learning to be the victim! "Fear—that historic instrument of social control—may be an even more critical residue of a show of violence than aggression." So we add another dimension, not only violence but victimization!

Jessie Hill McCanse

POLITICIANS AND TELEVISION

Because there are many politicians, access to television becomes a problem, not only for politicians but for broadcasters. Can they work out a system of television appearances that is fair to all?

Herbert S. Slosser, President of the NBC network, says it is time now to develop an organized, pre-planned system for the sale of political time for 1980 campaigns.

He sets forth a plan:

"I propose that in advance of the 1980 Presidential campaign, the three networks set aside a reserve of five-minute and half-hour periods in prime time. . . .

"The three-network reserve pool might consist of a total of 45 5-minute segments and 12 half-hours, each network furnishing one-third of these totals over the four-month primary period." This is not an exact formula. "Lists of these time periods could be supplied to the National Committees of the major parties. They would act as clearinghouses for the candidates and a number of fringe party candidates." Time would be allotted equally. Each network would handle 30 or 60-second slots of advertising individually.

ACBB OFFICERS

These officers were elected April 8, 1976:

President	Mr. Gene W. Carter Dayton, Ohio
Vice President	Susan Dreyfuss Fosdick Washington, D. C. Area
Secretary	Mrs. Isabel Bartels Dayton, Ohio
Treasurer	Mr. Wayne Helmerick Sun Prairie, Wis.

HOW TEST A DRAMA?

"The script is the most important single ingredient," says S. Brooke White.

The script must have **honest** characters; that is, real people, true to life. "You must be able to say about the characters—the leading character in particular—that you **care** for him. You must identify with him. Either root for him or for his downfall. Even if he is a villain, you must care what happens to him." Mr. Smith illustrates his point by using **"Mr. Roberts."** "From the moment the play starts, you care what happens to Mr. Roberts because he is written honestly and believably. He has a will of his own. He has both good and bad qualities. He is not one-sided. He can hate another man, as he does the captain. He can also be completely devoted to many men, as he is to his crew."

Dramatic conflict is essential. First of all, says Mr. Smith, "the script must **dramatize** the story and the characters. The audience must **see** what's going on before their own eyes.

" . . . Drama has been defined as the record of a pressure and a response—in other words, a conflict. . . . Conflict can take many and varied forms. Man can be in conflict with himself, with environment, with society, with another person or persons. In "Mr. Roberts" Mr. Roberts is in conflict with the captain, who also personifies Navy red tape. . . . Joe Boneparte in "Golden Boy" is in conflict with society. He wants to be a musician, but society doesn't pay musicians as much as they pay prizefighters."

Unity of mood, he says, helps an author to keep a sharp focus on the story.

There is also the **quality** of the writing. Mr. White asks, "Can the author not only give the script real, honest, believable characters and story—but also add a feeling of quality, of worthwhileness, or beauty to them?"

(Mr. White wrote for **Sponsor**.)

ATTENTION: Local Group Chairmen:

Please remind your members that, because your group belongs to ACBB, we will mail BETTER BROADCASTS NEWS to their homes upon receipt of their names and addresses, and $1.00 each. Thank you.

The Supplement to this issue shares with you highlights of the spring conference. We wish you could have been there.

Groups will enjoy discussing the supplement.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I believe the American Council for Better Broadcasts has reached the place in its development where it should place more emphasis on individual memberships. One of the several unique and significant characteristics of the American Council has been the group memberships of many national and state organizations. Through these groups the educational efforts of the ACBB have been spread to many people who are concerned about the cultural impact of broadcasting on our culture and on individuals.

However, I believe the number of persons who are concerned, and who want to do something positive about that concern, is increasing in our nation. But many of these people may not be members of the organizations now holding membership in the ACBB. Therefore, I think the time has come for us to make a more serious effort to expand our individual membership and thus to expand the benefits of our services.

If you have been a personal member in the past, please check to be sure your membership is paid up to date. If you are uncertain about this, send a card or letter to our Madison, Wisconsin, office.

If you are not now a member, please consider joining us. There is a membership form on the last page of this issue of **Better Broadcast News** that you can use. (If you don't want to cut a corner out of your newsletter, just send your name and address on another sheet of paper and indicate the type of membership you desire.)

But, most important of all, tell others about the work of the American Council and encourage them to join you as personal members. If broadcasting is to be improved in our time, concerned persons must join hands in an intelligent and positive effort to seek that improvement through education and appropriate action.

Finally, I would like to hear from you about your own thoughts and concerns relative to the influence of radio and television on our lives today. Such comments will be helpful to me and to the Board of Directors as they seek to guide the organization forward on your behalf.

Gene W. Carter

Dues Groups	**National Groups**	**$25.00**
	State Groups	**$25.00**
	Local Groups	**$ 7.00**
	with subscription to BB NEWS from group members at $1.00 (mailed to their homes.)	
Persons	**Life**	**$100.00**
	Patron	**$ 50.00**
	Sustaining	**$ 25.00**
	Contributing	**$ 10.00**
	General	**$ 5.00**
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Violence index begins with alternate definitions

See table, Page 94.

WASHINGTON—The movies "Magnum Force" on CBS and "Big Jake" on NBC topped the "most violent" list for the first two weeks of the new tv season, according to monitoring reports recorded by BI Associates, Kensington, Md.

The data is to be included, along with subsequent weeks' reports, in a "violence index" due for public release coincident with the publication of rating books later this fall and winter.

The detailed computer printouts which BI Associates offers to clients report all network programs in terms of violent incidents, specifies the form of violence, identifies the sponsors and shows the timing of the violence in relation to the commercials.

BI Associates and the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, which financed the initial work (AA, Aug. 9), see it as a "planning tool" which will be used by advertisers and agencies who are sensitive to current public concern about violence on tv.

■ The monitoring reports for the first two weeks of programing this fall have been tabulated in accordance with either of two definitions of violence.

One uses the so-called Gerbner definition of violence, widely used by social scientists studying tv violence, and the basis of the pilot index which BI Associates and NCCB published last summer.

A second set uses a narrower definition of violence developed in response to industry critics who say the Gerbner definition is so broad that even humor gets classified as violence. Under the new approach, the monitors count only aggressive violence against individuals—physical violence, use of weapons, capital crimes. It screens out comedic humor and even the violence associated with car chases and natural disaster scenes. No

(Continued on Page 94)

Most violent tv programs (Sept. 25-Oct .1)

Gerbner definition	No. of Incidents	Minutes	Aggressive personal violence definition	No. of Incidents	Minutes
"Big Jake," NBC	38	15.4	"Big Jake," NBC	41	14.5
"Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid," ABC	13	16.8	"Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid," ABC	14	15.6
"The Quest," NBC	36	7.4	"The Quest," NBC	28	5.1
"Hawaii Five-O," CBS	28	4.1	"Sundance Woman," ABC	21	4.3
"Sundance Woman," ABC	21	4.3	"Delvecchio," CBS	10	6.0
"Police Woman," NBC	25	2.6	"Police Woman," NBC	19	2.1
"Earthquake," NBC	19	4.6	"Baa Baa Black Sheep," NBC	18	1.9
"Spencer's Pilots," CBS	10	7.1	"Starsky & Hutch," ABC	10	3.9
"Baa Baa Black Sheep," NBC	23	2.7	"Baretta," ABC	15	2.2
"Six Million Dollar Man," ABC	5	8.5	"Charlie's Angels," ABC	10	3.6
Week total: 426 incidents 140.5 minutes			**Week total: 295 incidents :90.0 minutes**		

Violence index offers two definitions

(Continued from Page 16)

sports programs are rated—under either definition.

The double approach was adopted, according to Roger Wagner, president of BI Associates, following a day-long seminar in New York late last month attended by representatives of networks, ad agencies and foundations. "Our goal," according to Ted Carpenter of NCCB, "is to encourage use of the index. Rather than confuse the whole picture with a debate over Gerbner's methods, we prefer to settle for an index covering areas of widespread agreement."

A mass mailing promoting the index to agencies and others was to go out this week, under the headline, "Tv violence is a pain in the pocketbook." It offers a variety of data packages, at subscription rates ranging as high as $2,000.

The project is still under clouds of financial uncertainty. BI Associates has been collecting the data along with other monitoring which it does for commercial clients, but Mr. Wagner stresses this is a temporary arrangement. NCCB reports that it has applied for foundation support so it can continue underwriting public release of the data, and Mr. Wagner says he is hoping that the mailing will produce sufficient subscriptions to solve the money problem.

While all the networks, and at least half a dozen big ad agencies are listed on the roster of those who took part in the New York meeting, Mr. Wagner concedes he has no firm orders yet. "A lot of agencies and advertisers say, 'We like what you are doing. Keep up the good work'," he said. "But so far they haven't signed up."

The computer printout provides all the information which is needed to identify advertisers with programs, but there is no special tabulation in the new report continuing the initial index which ranked sponsors identified with "least violent" and "most violent" programs. In part, according to Mr. Wagner, this is because there are technical problems in classifying the way many companies buy, and there are too many unresolved questions to justify an index.

The use of the more restricted definition results in some changes among programs on the "most violent" list, "but less than you might imagine," Mr. Wagner says. "Programs which are violence-oriented simply are not relying on comedic episodes, and factors of that kind."

Eight of the 10 "most violent" in terms of the more restricted definition were also among the 10 most violent under the Gerbner definition during the first week of the season. Results for the second week showed six of the top 10 were on both lists. #

P.1

'Black Sheep' violence

WASHINGTON—Using the "Gerbner definition," there were 23 violent incidents on NBC's "Baa Baa Black Sheep" Sept. 28, according to monitoring reports by BI Associates, Kensington, Md. *(see story Page 16)*. A more limited BI definition (only aggressive acts of personal violence) lists 18 incidents. The program was ninth most violent for the week on the basis of Gerbner standards and seventh most violent by the narrower test.

The BI tabulation of aggressive personal violence on "Baa Baa Black Sheep": 04:40 gunfire; 04:55 gunfire; 06:40 gunshots; 06:55 gunfire; 12:35 capture; 1.:25 fight; 16:00 gun threat; 34:35 gun threat; 34:55 fight; 35:05 hit; 37:10 fight; 37:30 gunfire; 37:50 manhandled; 38:00 gun threat; 46:25 manhandled; 47:30 gunshots; 49:00 gunfire; 49:25 gunfire.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram
FORT WORTH, TEXAS
D. 8,[illegible] SUN. 721,725

OCT 30 1976

Group aims at sponsors of violent TV programs

Chicago Tribune

When Nicholas Johnson's term as commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission expired, many broadcasters, programmers, and advertisers breathed easier.

Johnson was known as the tiger of the FCC, a man outspoken about low-quality programming, insidious advertising, shortcomings in licensing and in the FCC itself.

But the FCC tiger didn't change his stripes when he left the commission. He became head of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a public interest organization based in Washington, D. C.

One of the projects NCCB has undertaken is a study of exactly how much violence there is on television, which programs are the most and least violent, and who sponsors the violent and nonviolent shows.

Using a yardstick for violence developed at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, monitors hired by the NCCB came up with a computer printout ranking 63 shows and 127 advertisers in order of violence. The printout shows the name of the show, the number of incidents of violence and their nature and duration, the exact time of the incidents, who the advertisers were, and the time of the ad in relation to the violent episodes.

Armed with these results, Johnson attended the national PTA workshop on violence on television. The information, along with addresses of the advertisers behind the most and the least violent programs, is given in the NCCB newsletter, Media Watch.

In an interview, Johnson discussed what his group is doing and what viewers can do about violence on television.

"There are some companies that want violent programming, don't give a damn about its impact on the people, continue to use it as a vehicle for selling because they think it's effective," he said.

"But the vast majority of advertisers are simply unconscious of the issue. They've never thought about it; no one's talked to them about it. Once it's pointed out that they have sponsored violent shows, some of them are outraged; others are not really moved.

"We're not telling advertisers not to advertise on television but rather, in the course of their selling effort, wouldn't it be wiser if they identified themselves with programming that doesn't have a disastrous byproduct effect on society."

Don't advertisers claim that violent shows draw the largest audiences and thus sell their product best?

"The five least violent shows we found are the 'Bob Newhart Show,' 'Mary Tyler Moore Show,' 'Welcome Back, Kotter;' 'Chico and the Man,' and, 'Rhoda' — all top-rated shows. That in some ways is the most significant thing in our study. It totally puts the lie to the argument that you've got to have violence to sell.

"Now we are in a position to go to advertisers and ad agencies and tell them, 'Look, if you're still using violence after we've done this study, you have no excuse. You are doing it because you have made it deliberate corporate policy to say 'the public be damned' in terms of the consequences of crime on television being copied in the street, in terms of increased aggressive and violent behavior in children, in terms of the raised sense of unwarranted fear on the part of adults.

"You're not doing it to sell; you're not doing it to get the ratings, you're not doing it out of ignorance of the consequences. You are deliberately choosing to have this disastrous impact upon America."

Do you get any indication that the nonviolent message is getting across?

"More than one agency spokesman at a recent seminar we held said, 'I want you to know we've lost a multi-million-dollar account. We're here because we care about it.' Another said, 'Our client is losing sales and they want us to take some action.'"

Isn't some violence merely a reflection of reality?

"It is not our goal to drive all violence off television. Sporting events are naturally violent in their own way; news reports may necessarily include some violence. We use the analogy of an X-rated movie. The X-rating doesn't mean the movie can't be distributed or that people can't go see it. It does mean that you let people know what's there.

"That's what we're doing. We're saying that these shows are very high in violence. If the advertisers want to go with these shows, that's their option. But at least the public will know that, and if they want to respond they can."

All That TV Violence:
WHY DO WE LOVE/HATE IT?

First of Two Parts
By Max Gunther

Early in the 1950s, Estes Kefauver stood up in the U.S. Senate and asked one of the longest-lived questions in the history of Congressional debates. He wondered whether there was too much violence on television.

Now, nearly a quarter-century later, we are still asking the same question. And as solid answers continue to elude us, we go right on watching killings, fights, beatings, auto accidents and other varieties of mayhem on our screens. Except for the colossal growth in TV's national importance during these decades—and, hence, in the presumed importance of the question—hardly anything seems to have changed.

Have we really learned nothing about the subject in this quarter-century? Has it all been a waste: the endless Congressional hearings, the huge sums of government research money, the earnest efforts of social scientists, the uncountable public and private debates? Could it be that the question has no answers—or, if it has some, that we don't really want to know them? Will people still be asking the same question in the year 2000?

TV GUIDE set out to find whether there is any light at the end of this long tunnel. This week we will examine what appears to be a central paradox: that people have always found violent

The Networks:

'We only give you what you want. If you didn't watch violent shows, obviously the ratings would be low and we'd have abandoned them long ago.'

TV material appealing, and watched it—as the ratings show—even while piously decrying it. Next week we will ask if any progress at all has been made, or if there is any hope of progress, in elucidating just how video violence affects adults and kids.

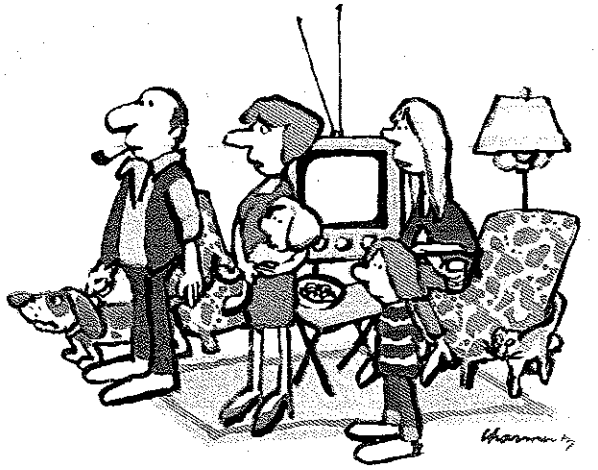
The debate about violence has almost always degenerated into a circular quarrel between the networks and the public. Networks: "We only give you what you want. If you didn't watch violent shows, obviously the ratings would be low and we'd have abandoned them long ago." Public: "Nonsense. We only watch violent shows because you don't give us enough alternatives." It has often seemed that the only way out of the circle has been down into pessimism and self-chastisement. As a distinguished professor put it during a gloomy moment at Senate hearings in the 1960s, "Maybe we are just a violence-addicted people. Maybe we should just face it, stop being hypocritical about it, relax and enjoy it."

Are we violence-addicted and hypocritical? One optimistic view, espoused largely by TV-industry people, is that we are deluded about the amount and degree of violence we really watch. "It is in the nature of Americans to be too harsh in criticizing ourselves," says Gene Mater, vice president and assistant to the president of CBS. Among his other duties, the amiable and scholarly Mater has adopted the role of chief violence debater for the network. "We think we are worse than we are. Amid all the name-calling and breast-beating, what many people haven't noticed is that the level of violence on TV has been dropping steadily for years."

If this is true, the charge of hypocrisy won't stick. If true, it would mean that the quarter-century of agonizing has produced some meaningful results after all. But if you try to judge objectively whether it *is* true, you end neck-deep in a philosophical morass.

The problem is, violence cannot be measured like potatoes. Anybody who tries to measure it, whether in terms of quantity or intensity, guarantees himself a fight. There are several "violence indexes" around, but their developers disagree sharply—and often, it must be said, violently.

One of the longest-running indexes, and probably the best-known, was →



The Public:

'Nonsense. We only watch violent shows because you don't give us enough alternatives.'

continued

developed years ago, with much tinkering since, by Prof. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania. His approach is to pick one week in the spring and one week in the fall as samples of a given year's TV fare. During that week, 12 to 18 trained "coders" sit down before the television screen and carefully count bits of violent material according to a complicated formula. Dr. Gerbner and his colleagues then analyze the findings to produce a many-faceted "Violence Profile," issued once a year.

The latest profile shows "no significant reduction" in the overall level of video violence since the profile's first year, 1967. There has been a fairly impressive drop in violence during the so-called "family viewing hour" in the early evening, especially on CBS. However, this has been offset by a stunning rise during the hours after 9 P.M. The profile also shows a jump since 1974 in violence on weekend daytime shows, generally thought of as children's territory.

These findings are received without enthusiasm in midtown Manhattan. "There is no such thing as a 'typical TV week'," CBS's Gene Mater complains. "On the Friday movie we may have a blood-and-thunder Western this week, a comedy next week. Even the regular crime shows vary tremendously in violent content from week to week. You can't pick a single week and say it represents the whole year."

Other complaints deal with the tricky and perhaps insoluble problem of defining just what "violence" means. "You have to look at the quality as well as the quantity of episodes," insists Alfred Schneider, vice president and chief violence debater at ABC. "To me, a killing is more violent than a punch in the nose, and that in turn is more violent than a verbal threat."

Humorous cartoon violence is a particular sore point among the indexers. Is it "violent" when the hapless Coyote tries to dynamite the Road-Runner and gets himself buried under a million tons of rock? Dr. Gerbner would say yes, even though the poor old Coyote never sustains any permanent injury except to his pride. "The fact that something is funny doesn't mean it is trivial," he says. And so his coders are instructed to make no distinction between humorous and serious violence.

The CBS Office of Social Research has been producing its own index since 1972, and it does make that distinction. It also disagrees with Dr. Gerbner on many other points.

In the case of a long, continuous episode—a chase or gunfight, for instance, with shifts of scene and pauses for reloading, regrouping of characters and so on—the CBS index would count one incident, while the Gerbner index might count many. And, of course, the CBS index, in line with Mater's philosophy, covers more than one week per year. It began with two and is now expanded to 13.

According to the CBS index, our TV fare is steadily getting less violent. One part of the index counts "incidents of dramatic violence" in prime time on all three networks. The latest count shows that the average number of incidents per network per hour has dropped by about 17 per cent in the past four years—from 2.3 in the 1972-73 season to 1.9 in 1975-76.

Still another index was started this year by the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a nonprofit citizen-action group having no great fondness for the TV industry or its works. The NCCB index will appear quarterly. The first report, covering the six weeks ended July 23, gave rankings to shows (most violent program: ABC's *S.W.A.T.*) and advertisers (sponsor supporting most violence in prime time: Tegrin Shampoo). It also ranked the networks from most to least violent: NBC, ABC, CBS. (Dr. Gerbner's latest profile ranks

them in the same order, but the CBS index calls ABC "most.")

"Our idea is to make TV people and advertisers compete for the title of least violent," says NCCB's executive director, Ted Carpenter. "In time, as our back file of reports builds up, we will be able to see whether the general level of violence is dropping or rising." Carpenter says his subjective impression is that there has been very little change over the decades. "If we're having a violence competition," he says, "I'd match *S.W.A.T.* against *The Untouchables* any day."

The Untouchables is an ancient weekly crime drama often mentioned by those wishing to prove that things are less violent today. In that sometimes gory product of the late 1950s, gangsters and law enforcers mowed each other down so assiduously that violent death became routine. Nobody has yet applied today's indexing techniques to the show. But there are some who, unlike Carpenter, feel it may have been somewhat more violent than what we normally see today. Among them is a team of social scientists at Lieberman Research, Inc., which has been studying violence for five years under sponsorship from ABC.

The Lieberman people have a gadget called an "electronic pounding platform." Kids are invited to whack it before and after watching various TV shows, and it measures how hard they hit. The purpose of the measurement is to show how much "inclination toward aggression" the given TV material has stirred up. Lieberman reports that no modern action-adventure program so far tested has made the kids pound harder than *The Untouchables*.

So it may be that the quarter-century debate has produced at least some reduction in video violence. But if the reduction is so slight that intelligent people can argue over whether it has happened at all, one is tempted to conclude that it must be slight indeed. And the fact remains that crime shows like *Kojak* and those dramas about bionic superpeople get excellent ratings. Thus we are back to the hard question: do we like violent shows more than we are willing to admit?

And we are back to the circular debate. Dr. Gerbner is a leading proponent of the view that we would prefer other kinds of shows if the TV industry would only produce them. He points out that the very highest Nielsen ratings seldom go to gun-and-knuckle shows but much more often (at least in recent times) to shows like *All in the Family* and *Laverne & Shirley*. His conclusion: "That is what people really want."

Then why doesn't the industry serve it up? "Because," he says, "violence is among the cheapest and easiest to use of all dramatic devices. Almost any story must show people changing in some way: winning or losing, learning, getting rewarded or punished. If you want to show all this in terms of complex human psychology, you need a highly talented playwright and talented actors. That costs money. It is much easier and cheaper to resolve the story just by having the good guy shoot the bad guy. Violence is the quick way of showing who wins, who has power."

TV people argue in their own defense that violence has been used as a dramatic device by many of the world's greatest writers. "Homer's *Iliad* would make all those indexes jump to record levels," grumbles a California writer who has contributed to *The FBI* and *Hawaii Five-0*. "And have you seen any of Shakespeare's tragedies lately? The stage gets bathed in blood."

He adds morosely, "I'm not saying I'm Shakespeare. I'm only saying Shakespeare used violence for the same reasons we do today on TV: to illustrate conflict, heighten tension, show the consequences of thoughts and actions. You ask why there's violence on TV? Because people like it →

continued

and get messages from it."

Not everyone disputes that contention. One who doesn't is Dr. Alan Pearce, staff economist of the House Subcommittee on Communications, which has been conducting hearings on video violence this year. "There *is* a human preoccupation with watching violence," he agrees. "We are drawn to it irresistibly. Ask any policeman about the crowds that gather when there's an auto accident or a fire. Yes, it's hypocritical to condemn violence in public and then go home, shut the front door and switch on a crime drama. But that's what we do all the time."

Part of the problem seems to be that people who do this—most of us, perhaps—don't see themselves as being hypocritical. "People don't see themselves as selecting a violent program," says Dr. Seymour Feshbach, psychology professor at UCLA. Dr. Feshbach has been studying the subject for years and is famous among social scientists for proposing the idea that violent dramas may be cathartic and therefore good for us. "We pick a given program because we feel it will be exciting, will help us kill time, and so on. We never tell ourselves, 'I choose this show for its brutality and murder.' Those are always other people's motives. *They* pick the same show because *they* like witnessing brutality and murder."

Nor is this the whole problem. "Even if I go so far as to admit I'm enjoying a scene for its violence, I'm sure it's not affecting *me* in any adverse way," says Dr. David Pearl. He is chief of the Behavioral Sciences Research Branch, National Institute of Mental Health, which has funded some of the most important studies of video violence. "It's always someone else whose emotional health is endangered by a diet of violence. It's the kids, or the guy next door, or the people in some social environment other than one's own. We are always sure violent material is bad for everybody else, but *we're* adult enough to handle it."

And so, to some pessimists, we seem doomed to go around in this circle forever. The industry will keep producing gun-and-knuckle shows because violence is a compelling, useful and (some would say) cheap dramatic device. We will keep watching those shows because we secretly enjoy them and are perfectly sure they aren't harming us personally.

Even the optimists concede that changes in this circular pattern have happened and will continue to happen very, very slowly. One of the most prominent optimists around is Sen. John Pastore, the crusading Rhode Islander who launched a famous violence inquiry by the Surgeon General's office several years ago. When TV GUIDE asked him how the crusade had been going, he gloomily admitted that "we have not yet reached the millennium." He conceded: "Violence, like love, is an undeniable element of human life and social character, and as such it is an important element of TV drama." He said he neither wishes nor expects that violent dramas will ever disappear from television.

Then he grew cheerier and started talking about "hopeful signs." He believes he has detected a slow but steady drop in what he calls "gratuitous" violence—meaning violence that isn't essential to the story being told. He is also pleased by the Family Viewing Time concept, as by other signs that the industry is anxious to soothe public worries over the subject. To him, the very fact that people *are* worried is a large, constructive change from the 1950s.

But the millennium still seems to be a long way off. There is one prediction that can be made with almost perfect certainty. It will be at least another quarter-century before the worries are resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Next week: Does violence hurt us?

Second of Two Parts

All That TV Violence:

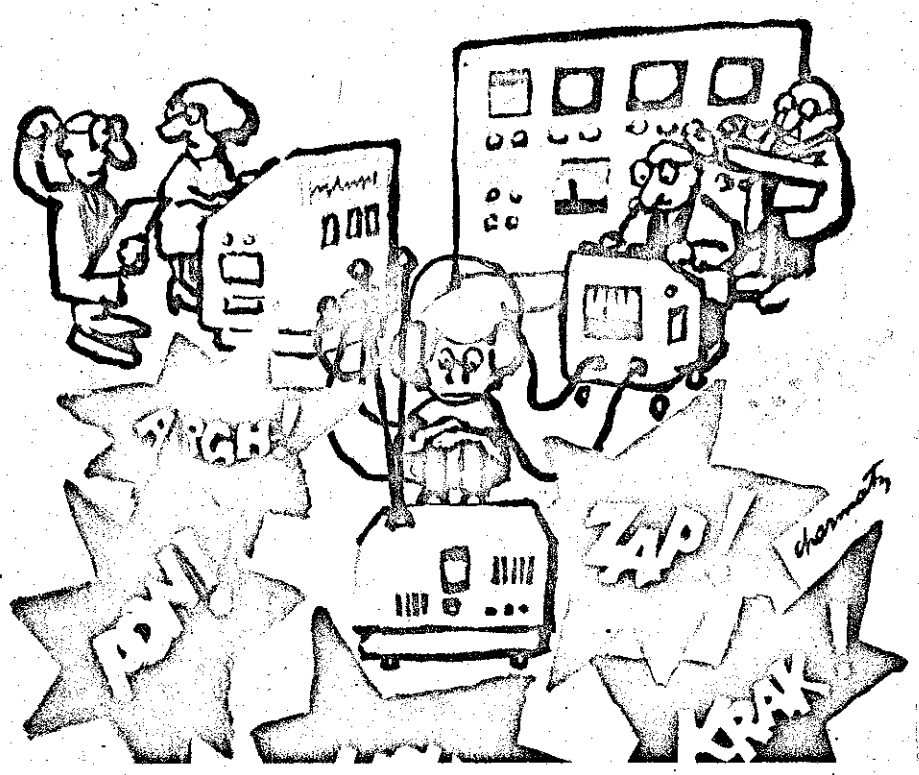
IS IT REALLY SO HARMFUL?

By Max Gunther

"I was quite eagerly hoping to find a connection," said Dr. Stanley Milgram sadly. "I didn't."

Dr. Milgram is a professor of psychology at the City University of New York. He and hundreds of other social scientists have been trying to demonstrate that connection for about 25 years: the supposed link between the violence on TV and the violence in our hearts. Thus far, the link has eluded them.

This is a major frustration, for the link—if it exists at all—must be elucidated before we can answer the larger question: "Is there too much violence on TV?" As we saw last week, this question has profoundly worried the



American public since the early 1950s. Lacking any clear answers, however, we have gone right on watching violent dramas on our screens—and the TV industry, encouraged by the high ratings those dramas so often earn, has gone right on satisfying our appetite for them. We also saw last week that this pattern seems unlikely to change much. Unless some believable answers to the old question turn up, we will still be worrying about video violence in the year 2000.

If it is ever shown unequivocally that televised violence is bad for us, then we will have a rational basis for taking action to control it. On the other hand, if someone shows unequivocally that it *isn't* bad for us, then we can stop worrying about it. Let's now see how close we are to either of these outcomes.

Dr. Milgram, for one, thinks we are stuck dead in the middle between them. "I personally find the prevalence of violence on TV repugnant," he says. "I would be very happy if I could say for sure that it stimulates violence in the community, for then I could urge with conviction that something be done about it. Unfortunately, I don't feel the evidence so far has been compelling."

Dr. Milgram's own hunt for the long-sought connection is worth looking at, for even in failure it illustrates some of the frustrations that have plagued the hunt since Senator Kefauver's time, and seem likely to go on plaguing it.

One major frustration is that it is extremely hard to set up a laboratory situation where you can watch people being led into violent behavior by a TV show. Obviously you cannot create an experiment in which people are encouraged to shoot each other or bash each other over the head. Because of this, most experimenters have had to use symbolizations of violence —which is one reason why their results have seldom been compelling. For example, in one study, kids were shown various kinds of dramatized material, were then subjected to the frustration of being given toys and having them taken away and, finally, were invited to smack a "Bobo the Clown" doll. It turned out that those who had watched violence appeared to assault the doll most aggressively—but, as many have pointed out, this didn't mean they had an urge to assault other kids. "Bobo dolls were meant to be hit," said one critical scientist. "Maybe what it proved was that we should outlaw Bobo dolls. I can't see that it proved anything else."

Dr. Milgram and his colleague, psychologist R. Lance Shotland, pondered this problem in the early 1970s. They wanted to conduct a study in which people could commit a real-life, violent, antisocial act—but an act without grievous consequences. They finally came up with the idea of looting a charity collection box.

With money and support from CBS, they constructed an elaborate experiment. The main part of the study depended on three specially made versions of the then-popular CBS show, *Medical Center*. In the first version, a man named Tom, jobless and in debt, smashes some collection boxes and escapes to Mexico with the money. Second version: Tom smashes the boxes but lands in jail. Third version: he thinks about smashing a box but decides not to. The experiment also used a fourth, "neutral" program: a regular *Medical Center* show that dealt with romantic love.

Through newspaper ads and other means, large groups of men were invited to see one of these four shows in various city theaters. Each man was told he was there to give his opinion of the show and was promised a free transistor radio for his trouble: However, when he went to collect his radio later at a dummy "gift center," he encountered what seemed to be an →

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administrative foul-up. He got his radio in the end—but there were several minutes when he wasn't sure what was going on. The experiment was so artfully arranged that, during the moments of irritation, he was alone in a room that contained a glass-fronted, money-filled charity box, plus some handy objects that could be used as bludgeons.

"My hope," says Dr. Milgram, "was, obviously, that the experiment would demonstrate what my common sense told me to believe"—that the men most likely to break the charity box would be those who had seen Tom get away with the theft. The least likely should have been those who had agonized with him as he decided to be a good citizen. Watchers of the neutral program probably should have been somewhere in the middle.

None of this happened. Though Dr. Milgram repeated the experiment many times, the four TV shows produced no significant effects at all. In every group, some stole the money and some didn't. The proportions who did and didn't showed no clear-cut bias. It made no difference which show they had seen.

Campaigns against violence on TV have always been based on what seems to be good, old-fashioned common sense: that violence on your screen makes you an overaggressive person. But studies like Dr. Milgram's seem to warn that our common sense sometimes plays us false.

TV's critics often talk about cases in which somebody saw a crime depicted on the screen and then went out and imitated it. The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB) goes so far as to call TV a "college of criminal instruction," citing several recent cases of apparent translation from screen to real life: a bludgeoning, a rape, an attempt to slip poisoned candy to a teacher, and so on. Such episodes, though rare, do seem to suggest a direct cause-and-effect relationship. But not all scientists have felt that the relationship is proven, even in cases of obvious imitation.

Among the skeptics have been psychiatrist Melvin Heller and psychologist Samuel Polsky (now deceased), who studied video violence for years with funds from ABC. In one study, they probed the lives and thoughts of 100 young men who were in prison for violent crimes. These 100 lives were filled with violence to a shocking degree. As juveniles, 30 per cent of them had tried to hurt someone with a blunt instrument; 28 per cent had stabbed someone; 23 per cent had shot someone; 44 per cent had themselves been stabbed; and 15 per cent had been shot. In short, they were a storehouse of facts for anyone studying real-life violence.

All 100 had had TV sets in their homes as youngsters. But Drs. Heller and Polsky, dig as they might, could not unearth a single case in which TV was a "causal" or "motivational" factor in a young man's violent behavior. They did find cases in which a TV show evidently affected the "style or technique" of a crime—cases of imitation like those cited by NCCB. But in all such cases, the young man was working himself up to a violent act without any help from television. The television show merely affected the form of an act that would have happened anyway.

Dr. Seymour Feshbach, psychology professor at UCLA, is another highly respected social scientist who warns against jumping to common-sense conclusions. He feels that there is too much violence on TV—"but not on the grounds normally proffered. With me, it's an esthetic issue, a matter of taste. I don't feel the evidence supports the idea that televised violence begets imitation to any important degree. Depiction of a violent event on TV is not necessarily an instruction on how to do it, nor a message saying you *should* do it. . . . People suspend disbelief while reading or watching fiction, but they know the difference between →

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fantasy and real life."

Years ago, Dr. Feshbach performed some experiments that made him think violent dramas may produce "catharsis." This theory was first proposed by Aristotle in reference to the ancient Greek tragedies. In essence, the idea is that you release internal steam by watching an act of brutal retribution on stage or screen, and thus have less need to act aggressively yourself. However, Dr. Feshbach's subsequent studies made him revise his theory of catharsis, and most others who were following that research trail have since abandoned it. In this one sense, at least, there now seems to be almost unanimous agreement in the social-science community and the general public. Nearly everybody thinks too much of certain kinds of violence can be bad for us.

But how bad, and bad in what ways —and what is "too much?" On these questions there is no agreement whatever, while only a few years ago agreement on most major questions seemed to be just a few steps away.

There had never been any agreement in the 1950s or 1960s. Then, in 1969, Sen. John Pastore took the first step toward bringing everybody together. Passionately concerned about video violence and frustrated by the lack of hard facts, he requested that the U.S. Surgeon General organize a major inquiry into the subject. He envisioned a study like the one that ultimately led to the banning of cigarette ads from television.

The resulting inquiry was indeed monumental—a tribute to the U.S. Government's ability to get something done when people finally decide it needs doing. Estimates of the cost depend on whose account books you read, but the amount was close to $2 million. Research grants went to more than 20 eminent social scientists at universities from Coast to Coast, and dozens of others contributed papers, ideas and "overviews." The result was published in 1972: five thick volumes of research papers and a summary that ran nearly 300 pages. Most of the report was written in the tortured language of psychologese, but the general drift seemed clear to those who had the patience to slog through it. One man who did was Surgeon General Jesse Steinfeld. He then went before Pastore's Senate committee and said flatly: "There comes a time when the data are sufficient to justify action. That time has come."

Translated into English, the huge document said that violent TV material *does*, at least sometimes, make violent impulses grow in adults and (especially) kids. Finally, it seemed, a hard nugget of fact had been mined. And most scientists, even some who disagreed sharply with parts of the report, clutched the nugget to their hearts. "At last," said one, "we don't just think, we *know*."

This cozy atmosphere of agreement lasted for perhaps a year. Then came new studies by scientists like Drs. Milgram, Heller, Polsky and Feshbach. Instead of supporting the Surgeon General's report, the new studies seemed to contradict it. That comforting pronouncement "We *know*" is seldom heard any more.

There are still many behavioral scientists who feel the great report's central conclusion was right, but they add important qualifications. For instance, there is Dr. Robert M. Liebert, psychiatry professor at the State University of New York. He was among those who contributed to the report. His most famous experiments employed an artful ruse in which a child, seated in a room with an instructor, was made to believe he had power to hurt another child in another room. Dr. Liebert demonstrated that children were most inclined to "hurt" others after they had seen a violent sequence from *The Untouchables*. When there was criti- →

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cism of the report's conclusions, Dr. Liebert became one of its stoutest defenders.

Today he feels more research needs to be done on the home environment in which kids watch TV. A child watching in a laboratory setting may not react the same as at home—and lab findings, to that extent, may omit some important factors. "Frankly," he says, "I don't think we have much reliable information on this. We can speculate that the influence of TV should be relatively weak when the influence of the family is strong. . . . The effects of TV may be muted by some kinds of home life, amplified by other kinds. We need to understand more about the home-viewing experience and how it works."

Still other researchers think that the 25-year-old question—"Does TV violence beget real violence?"—may be entirely the wrong one to ask, or may at least be of only minor importance. Prof. George Gerbner, developer of the yearly Violence Profile, believes that an overdose of TV violence makes most people not overaggressive but passive and scared. Comparing "light" viewers (two hours a day or less) with "heavy" viewers (four hours or more) reveals stark differences that worry him. The heavy viewers are much more likely to exaggerate the amount of violence in the real world around them, to distrust others and to fear that they will be personally assaulted.

People who view the world this way, says Dr. Gerbner, "may accept established authority too meekly and uncritically because they want it to protect them against the 'bad' elements in society. They may condone the use of excessive force against those 'bad' elements, which they see lurking everywhere . . ."

The J. Walter Thompson Company, one of the world's biggest ad agencies and long an earnest observer of trends on TV, also thinks that it's time to ask new questions. JWT's thought is that a steady diet of violence in all media has "desensitized" most of us—made us not more aggressive but more passive, and less easily shocked by violence that doesn't involve us personally. Arnold Grisman, executive vice president and chief architect of JWT's studies, cites the notorious case of Kitty Genovese, who was murdered on a New York street corner while three dozen or more people looked on. "They watched it as though it was on television," he says.

Grisman is so concerned that he has produced a multimedia presentation called "The Desensitization of America." It has stirred up a lot of interest in this country and also in Britain, Australia, Japan and elsewhere—indicating that other nations have similar worries of their own.

"My major fear is that things will continue getting worse," Grisman says. "The media, competing for audiences, keep pushing each other to think up sexier sex and ghastlier violence. . . . This process of steady escalation leaves the audience jaded. What shocked us a few years ago doesn't shock us any more."

Grisman also thinks that an overload of fictional violence could make some of us exaggeratedly fearful for our own skins. "But it also makes us more tolerant of violence perpetrated against other people. If we hear of a real-life shooting today, we only shrug. We've all seen thousands of shootings on TV."

At present, Grisman points out, TV lags far behind movies and books in terms of gaudy violence. But his soundings of the TV industry's mood suggest to him that, in some quarters, there is a strongly felt need to catch up—or at least not to slip farther behind. Thus it seems unlikely that violence will diminish on TV unless it also diminishes elsewhere. Will that happen? Not fast, if at all. (END)

Meanwhile, Back on the Small Screen, They're Tearing Out Tongues on 'Starsky and Hutch'....

Most professional or amateur guardians of the public welfare—video-violence division—seem to agree that *Starsky and Hutch* is the most violent program on the air these days. (Aaron Spelling, executive producer, is an exception—he thinks *Baretta* and *Police Story* are worse.) What gives this Saturday-night festival of rampant fists, bullets, and late-model automobiles its dubious distinction is not so much the violence shown on the screen as the implied horrors off-camera and during the commercial breaks. A recent episode featured two hoods about to torture a B-girl who had squealed to the police: "We'll make sure she never talks again," one growled as ABC cut to an ad for nasal spray. Viewers were then left for 120 seconds to contemplate medieval methods of rendering a victim mute, only to find on their return to the show that she had been slipped an LSD cocktail instead.

It's much easier to come up with figures on TV violence as opposed to movie violence: So many researchers are studying mayhem on the tube that they probably drive the Nielsen ratings up. Since 1972 when Surgeon General Jesse L. Steinfeld took several volumes and much tax money to conclude "that the causal relationship between televised violence and antisocial behavior is sufficient to warrant appropriate and remedial action," hundreds of groups across the country have been counting incidents of violence on television—everything from a beating on *Kojak* to an exploded cat on a children's cartoon. One set of concerned citizens in Palo Alto, California, puts out a monthly newsletter called *Viewer's Disgust*, which gives bloody box scores to prime-time series and network movies. A homicide "apparently accomplished" (according to their rating scale) earns 50 points; one "merely attempted" gets 30 points; "results shown" wins 25 points more. Moderate injuries mentioned are worth nothing; they rate 18 points if attempted onscreen, 30 points if apparently accomplished. Destruction of a city gets 50 points if apparently accomplished, 5 if just mentioned. Using this scale, a recent episode of *Baretta* earned itself 1,119 points —one killing, one implied killing, seven attempted killings, and so on down the list to 29 references to killing. A *Streets of San Francisco* episode the same week was good for 1,061 violence points; *Police Story*, 690. *Viewer's Disgust*'s champion so far this year in the hour-series category is an episode of *S.W.A.T.* last April which scored a whopping 1,308 points.

At the Annenberg School of Communications in Philadelphia, Dr. George Gerbner and his associates have a violence index of their own, using similar research techniques if less spectacular scores. From this index, Dr. Gerbner reports that the much maligned "family hour" seems to have had some effect: During the 8 P.M. to 9 P.M. (EST) time slot, the violence index dipped from 146 in the fall of 1974 to 101 in the fall of 1975. (It went up to 108 this past spring; nobody knows why.)

That's the *good* news from Gerbner. The bad news is that the dip during the family hour seems to have become a veritable bulge after 9 P.M.: Seven out of every ten characters in later shows were involved in some kind of violent act, as opposed to three out of ten before 10 P.M.

There are other recent studies, including ones produced for the networks, that measure acts of violence in terms

Points of viewing: *Violence in a recent* Baretta *episode, measured by one of several current rating systems, earned a whopping 1,119 points, rivaling this year's champion to date, a* S.W.A.T. *episode of last April which scored 1,308 points.*

of a particular program's context. But what these studies all certify is that there sure is a *lot* of violence on TV—something that anyone trapped in a strange motel for a week with only a nineteen-inch companion could just as easily confirm. What this explosion of violence does to us, and what to do about curbing or redirecting it, are the kinds of questions that *TV Guide,* New York *Times* TV critic John O'Connor, and other sentinels of electronic sanity wrestle with regularly.

Some social scientists think that watching all this violence is training us to become not killers but victims; they cite recent studies which seem to show that people's fear of crime has little to do with the actual crime rate in their particular area. Watch *Baretta* and you'll be more afraid to walk your dog, even if you live in a protected suburb. Spend a Sunday night with *Kojak* and *Delvecchio* and you'll call in sick for work on Monday. "Violence in video," says Dr. Gerbner, "demonstrates how power works in society: Who can—and who cannot—get away with what." Seeing *Starsky and Hutch* skirt the rules of evidence could bring on another John Dean.

Actual links between televised violence and real crimes are rare and much discussed by researchers in the field. (*Viewer's Disgust* came up with a fifteen-year-old girl in Winchester, England, who said she tried to knock off her parents with a technique picked up from *Starsky and Hutch;* she cut what she thought was the brake line on the family car. Luckily, her knowledge of auto mechanics was as faulty as her moral sense.) But any parent who has driven with a four-year-old past a cemetery and has heard him say, "That's where they put all the shot people" knows that there are more direct indications of psychic dysfunction brought on by even regulated viewing.

The attack on TV violence most in favor at the moment is a "hit 'em in the breadbasket" approach—a constant reminder of the power of the consumer. *Viewer's Disgust* and other groups regularly publish the names of advertisers who appear most often on violent shows, urging readers to write the sponsor and express their outrage. It could be working: Several large advertising agencies have already begun advising their clients to stay away from the more violent series. **—Dick Adler**

See p. 44

BLOODY MOVIES

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

The Bloody Movies

Why Film Violence Sells

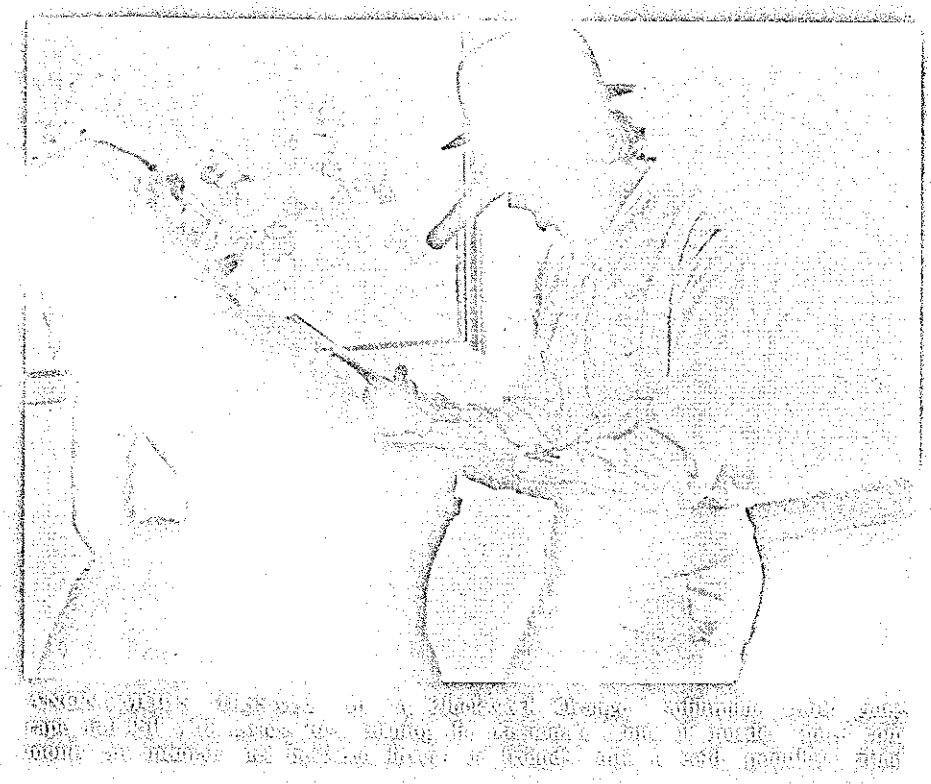
By Stephen Farber

"...American movies are terrified of intimacy. The only sensuality in films, suggests one screenwriter, is in acts of violence..."

Many of the women waiting in line claimed that they had not really wanted to see *Two-Minute Warning*, the bloody new movie about a sniper going on the rampage in a crowded football stadium; they protested that they had been dragged there by their husbands or boyfriends. A European woman shrugged helplessly. "Aren't all movies violent these days?" A young man in his twenties was irritated when I tried to question him about violence in films. "I don't see anything wrong with it," he snapped. "I see all the violent movies." His mother, a woman in her sixties, smiled benignly.

In a trailer for a new movie called *Shoot*—about a band of hunters who start killing people instead of animals—a booming voice announces that the film is "in the great tradition of American violence." The audience howled with laughter, but they probably went back to see the movie. Most of the successful films of the last few years have been violent action pieces or grotesque horror stories, and the depiction of violence is more graphic than at any time in film history. Some recent high points: Robert De Niro shooting off a man's hand in the bloody, phantasmagoric climax of *Taxi Driver*; a sharp piece of plate glass slicing David Warner's head off in *The Omen*; Laurence Olivier torturing Dustin Hoffman in *Marathon Man* by drilling into the nerve of his front tooth; football fans trampling each other to escape from a sniper in *Two-Minute Warning*. In the upcoming *Rolling Thunder*, written by *Taxi Driver*'s Paul Schrader, a Vietnam

Stephen Farber is New West *Magazine's film critic.*



THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

"...Many new filmmakers regard the humanism and social concern of the last generation as hopelessly old-fashioned..."

veteran has his hand ground off in a garbage disposal, and when he recovers, he goes after his attackers wielding his razor-sharp hook as a weapon.

Critics regularly deplore this kind of violence, but the simple fact is that audiences seem to enjoy it. During a recent showing of *Marathon Man* that I attended, a few people did walk out during the scenes of dental torture. One nauseated young man who was recovering in the lobby asked, "Can you believe only four people walked out?" Many other people whom I questioned afterward admitted that they had not known the film would be so violent, but if there is any negative word around, it doesn't seem to have hurt the film too severely at the box office; *Marathon Man* is one of the few hits of the fall.

Dextor York, a young hairdresser who fancies himself a connoisseur of violent movies, must speak for a lot of movie fans when he says, "I get a kick out of seeing violence. I've never fought in a war. I've never even been in a fight. Violence is a fantasy release for me. We need that release. Man has become so sophisticated. Nobody gets to fight anymore. During the sixties I was part of the peace-and-love movement, and I was very frustrated. We have to get those feelings out somehow. The big turning point for me was when I saw *Jaws*. I just ate it up, and I realized that I needed that kind of violence. It may be a cheap thrill, but these days how often do you get anything cheap?"

Before we get too moralistic, it is worth remembering that ours is not the first society to merchandise violence as a form of entertainment. Violence has always been a part of art, from Greek tragedy through Shakespearean drama and up to modern times; when Dickens gave public readings late in his career, he took special pleasure in reading the murder of Nancy from *Oliver Twist* and watching the ladies in the audience faint. Since the earliest two-reel Mack Sennett comedies, violence has been a staple of movies, though it has expressed different attitudes and different social values over the years. In the gangster movies of the thirties, for example, the violence reflected some of the anger, irreverence, and disaffection that many Americans felt during the Depression. In World War II movies the violence was an expression of a belligerent jingoism and xenophobia, with strong racist undercurrents. And the police movies of the early seventies represented a response to the rabid law-and-order ethic of the Nixon era.

The manner in which violence is portrayed has also changed radically, chiefly because of the dissolution of censorship restrictions that once inhibited filmmakers. The Production Code, which regulated movies until the mid-sixties, placed rigid constraints on the content of violent movies. For example, the code specified that crimes against the law "shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation. . . . The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified."

In forbidding a realistic portrayal

STEVE SCHAPIRO/ TRANSWORLD FEATURE SYNDICATE

of crime and its consequences, the code had an insidious effect on our perception of violence. Movies made under the code suggested that murder was bloodless and painless. This dishonest approach to violence is still characteristic of much television fare, and it can be argued that this kind of "tasteful," antiseptic violence is in the long run more dangerous than the graphic brand of violence on movie screens today. In any case, one of the impulses behind the new movies is the filmmakers' desire to record the real impact of violence, without the beautification that falsified scenes of violence in the past. Serious filmmakers claim that they want to portray murder and mayhem in bloody detail in order to take the glamour out of violence. Sam Peckinpah has always insisted that he intends to dramatize the horror of violence, though anyone seeing his movies can tell that he also responds passionately to the "blood ballets" that he choreographs so lovingly.

Lawrence Gordon, the producer of *Hard Times* and *Rolling Thunder*, defends the violence in current films as valid in terms of the characters represented: "Of course there are some filmmakers who include violent scenes purely for shock value. But I think most filmmakers include violence because that is where the character takes you. People like Dirty Harry and *Taxi Driver*'s Travis Bickle exist, and audiences want to get inside those characters. They don't want to be cheated. And I think most people who see these violent films will be so horrified that they wouldn't think of going near a knife or a gun. The people who see *Taxi Driver* are going to be revolted by violence."

Unfortunately, the effect of violence on audiences is never so simple. While the filmmaker may well intend to repel viewers, there are always some people who are excited and aroused by the most ghastly images. Responses to violence are incredibly difficult to gauge and control. A great many people seeing *Taxi Driver* are undoubtedly appalled, sickened, terrified by the violence, which is what director Martin Scorsese intended; other viewers laugh and cheer when Travis goes on his murderous rampage. Scorsese looks back on the film and says, "The movie provoked different reactions from what I anticipated. When I was filming it, I never thought there would be such strong responses to the violence. But then I never thought *Taxi Driver* would be a hit. You can never anticipate those reactions, and you shouldn't try."

Responses to these films seem to become more volatile and unpredictable as the violence becomes more graphic. There were always graphic moments of violence in film—like the famous scene of the razor slitting an eyeball in the Buñuel-Dali classic, *Un Chien Andalou*. Then in 1960 *Psycho*'s shower scene startled audiences accustomed to seeing the camera turn discreetly away from violence. Over the next several years the camera turned away less and less: Violence began to escalate in the James Bond films and in more realistic movies like Roman Polanski's *Repulsion*. But *Bonnie and Clyde*, produced in 1967, was probably the first movie to become a major source of controversy because of its violence. Arthur Penn's explicit close-ups of bloody faces and bodies twitching with bullets were more grisly images than some viewers wanted to see. Perhaps the most unsettling thing about the movie was that Penn asked us to identify with two killers; it was the film's sympathetic portrayal of two attractive criminals that represented the most subversive blow to the orthodox depiction of violence onscreen.

Sam Peckinpah continued this assault on audience complacency in *The Wild Bunch* by asking us to sympathize with killers who were even more hardened and depraved. Peckinpah perfected the use of the realistic blood squib, and the climactic massacre in *The Wild Bunch* remains one of the most shocking bits of orgiastic violence ever committed to celluloid. But Peckin-

"...'Your film has to be more violent than *Starsky and Hutch,*' says a producer. 'Action-picture audiences demand it'..."

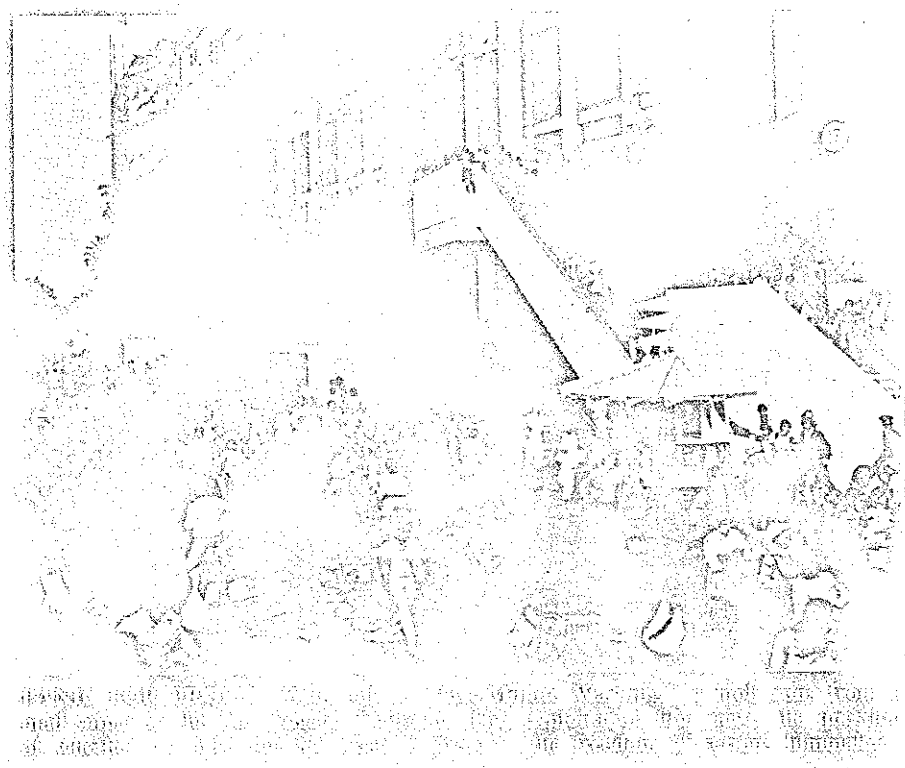
pah's *Straw Dogs* may have had an even stronger impact, because it brought that same level of violence into the contemporary world, and asked us to identify with a meek intellectual who came to recognize a deep sexual satisfaction to be derived from murder.

Peckinpah's violent credo was appropriated by less talented filmmakers, and a good many reactionary action movies—*Dirty Harry, Walking Tall, Death Wish,* and dozens of sleazier imitators—celebrated revenge and vigilante justice in contemporary urban settings. These popular movies encouraged audiences to accept and applaud the most savage forms of violence. The next stage was ushered in by *The Exorcist,* which combined sex and violence in a peculiarly unsavory fashion, assaulting the audience with images more grotesque than any seen on the screen before. Since then, it seems, filmmakers have been competing in a sensationalism sweepstakes, restlessly searching for ever more horrible sights and sounds. *The Towering Inferno* featured close-ups of burning bodies; *Jaws* boasted an amputated leg and a man being gobbled whole by a shark; the climax of *Lipstick* showed a rapist shot in the genitals. David Seltzer, the skillful, unpretentious writer of *The Omen,* admits that in writing it, "I was very conscious of including the most repulsive scenes I could imagine. I wanted to write a commercial movie."

In addition to these expensive major-studio films, there are dozens of low-budget exploitation movies—revenge melodramas, tales of the occult, demolition derbies—that aim to capture the undemanding popcorn crowd with violent chills and spills. Roger Corman, the head of New World Pictures—a company that specializes in car-crash movies like *Death Race 2000, Eat My Dust,* and *Cannonball*—says, "Violence is going to escalate because the public always demands more than what they saw the last time out. Our films are not the most violent produced today. We make action pictures, but we try to stay away from extreme person-to-person violence, like heads being cut off. But even in our car-chase pictures we are conscious of putting more crashes in each movie than in the last one. The public always demands more."

Martin Scorsese reflects, "There seems to be a roller-coaster effect. Violence just keeps increasing. We seem to be heading toward that scene in *Satyricon* where a man's hand was actually cut off as part of a play. Hopefully, in about four or five years things will balance out. Eventually audiences will get tired of excessive violence."

In the meantime today's filmmakers speculate on the reason for this proliferation of violence. Robert Evans, the producer of *Marathon Man,* insists, "Violence is not the only criterion for a successful movie. In fact, I think audiences are turned off by excessive violence. We cut several minutes from *Marathon Man* because preview audiences were repelled by the violence. But you do need scenes that people will remember—like the scene where Roman Polanski cuts Jack Nicholson's nose in *Chinatown.* When we previewed *Rosemary's Baby* in Palo Alto, a woman came up to me afterward and said, 'You should be ashamed of yourselves.' At that moment I knew we had a hit. You have to have a movie people will



talk about; even if they say it's terrible, at least they remember they saw it.

Producer Lawrence Gordon believes that the competition from television is the major factor encouraging violence in films. "Television has become much more violent," he points out. "Therefore your violence must be even more graphic. Audiences for action pictures expect it. Your film has to be more violent than *Starsky and Hutch.*"

There are less obvious reasons for the surge of violence. In a provocative article in the November *Harper's* novelist Stephen Koch discusses a recent violent exploitation picture, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which was praised by many film buffs and even shown at the Museum of Modern Art; as a result of this exposure, the makers of the movie were signed to a five-picture contract by Universal. Koch argues that film buffs have begun to praise sadistic trash, and he contends that "the buffs form a quite coherent and by no means powerless subculture of the general intelligentsia, and they have played a very real role in the formation of modern taste." That may be overstating the point, but the film buffs certainly have a greater influence on the media than they did ten years ago. Today many buffs have critical posts with major publications, and they have a regular forum for their orgasmic reviews. Buffs evaluate movies purely in sensory terms, and they exalt the brutal movies made by the American action directors. This kind of critical acceptance certainly helps violent movies to flourish.

Besides, many former film buffs are now filmmakers active in the industry. And many of these new filmmakers regard the humanism and the social concern of the last generation of filmmakers as hopelessly old-fashioned. They want to reproduce the violent genre pictures that they loved as children. To them violence is part of the magic of movies, and they are unconcerned about the effect these movies may have on audiences.

A veteran director once told me that he has observed that some of the new filmmakers specializing in violence are meek, frail, and sickly in reality. Obviously the savage violence they work into their movies is some kind of fantasy fulfillment. For them, and perhaps for the audiences as well, testing oneself against extremes of violence is a verification of masculinity. Steve Shagan, the author of *Save the Tiger* and *Hustle,* suggests that violence comes from "the failure of American films to be sensual. The only sensuality in our movies is in violence."

Along these lines, consider the studies of sociologist Marvin Wolfgang, who has found that the great majority of murders are committed by the victim's family or close friends. In reality, murder is an intimate act; in movies like *Two-Minute Warning* and *Taxi Driver,* the murders are committed by strangers. American movies are terrified of intimacy—sexual intimacy, or even the intimacy of a crime of passion.

Obviously, there is no single explanation for the craving for violence. Moviemakers commonly justify their preoccupation by arguing that violent films only reflect reality. "The United States is the most violent country in the world," Roger Corman asserts. "We have the most murders and assaults. We have been called the rape capital of the world. I think the function of the artist is to reflect the times."

Violence in America is not limited to crime on the streets. The success ethic that dominates American life is savagely violent. Battles in the boardroom may be relatively bloodless, but they leave some of the ugliest scars. The movie industry is one of the most ruthless of all the businesses in America. The studio chiefs who produce ultraviolent movies may be expressing their own fantasies and experiences in the sadistic melodramas they peddle.

Yet their fantasies undoubtedly have wide appeal. Psychologist Seymour Feshbach contends, "Many people today feel powerless in controlling their

"...Has the saturation point been reached in the new wave of cinematic gore? Some people feel the trend has already peaked..."

lives. That feeling of impotence makes them susceptible to the substitute offered by movies." One of the functions of popular art has always been to give people some notion of experiences denied them in reality—a taste of romance, glamour, adventure, danger. But perhaps as everyday life becomes more smoothly homogenized, people need splashier, more grotesque vicarious thrills. Today, most people have their only contact with danger secondhand—at professional hockey and football games, at high-powered rock concerts, or at the movies. Violence as spectacle is integral to modern life.

Violence begets violence in films. Writers who want to break into the industry know that violent scripts are the easiest to sell, and so there is an unspoken pressure on them to keep the cycle going. Steve Shagan points out, "There are 4,000 members of the Writers Guild, and there were only about 55 films made by the major studios last year. Writers know that if you write a soft, introspective character study, it's a gamble. *Save the Tiger* took me three years to sell. *Hustle* came together in two weeks."

Once writers have acquired some standing in the industry, they may be in a position to say no. Shagan was offered the script of *Two-Minute Warning*, but he turned it down because, he says, "There was no attempt to explore the motivation of the sniper. I think a writer has a responsibility to define the causes and roots of violence. Otherwise you are pandering to the lowest element in the country. I wouldn't want some kid with a gun to climb up above the scoreboard at a high school football game because of a movie I wrote."

This question about the actual influence of brutal movies is one of the trickiest in the debate over violence in films. Key researchers commissioned by the surgeon general feel that they have shown how violent shows inspire violent behavior, but they have literally been in fistfights with each other over interpretation of their data. Psychologist Feshbach admits that most clinical studies have focused on TV violence rather than film violence. Nevertheless, he believes, "A steady diet of heavy, graphic violence in films does tend to make people indifferent to real-life violence. In the long run people will become inured to violence." In doing the federal index on TV violence, psychologist George Gerbner found this year that heavy TV viewers live in greater terror—feeling themselves more likely to be mugged in the streets—than do light viewers. Gerbner believes that brutal fantasies on TV have become an instrument for keeping the population scared and submissive.

One writer who is concerned about the impact of violence is Brian Garfield, who wrote the novel *Death Wish*. He intended the novel as a cautionary tale about the dangers of the vigilante men-

Meanwhile, Back on the Small Screen, They're Tearing Out Tongues on 'Starsky and Hutch'....

Most professional or amateur guardians of the public welfare—video-violence division—seem to agree that *Starsky and Hutch* is the most violent program on the air these days. (Aaron Spelling, executive producer, is an exception—he thinks *Baretta* and *Police Story* are worse.) What gives this Saturday-night festival of rampant fists, bullets, and late-model automobiles its dubious distinction is not so much the violence shown on the screen as the implied horrors off-camera and during the commercial breaks. A recent episode featured two hoods about to torture a B-girl who had squealed to the police: "We'll make sure she never talks again," one growled as ABC cut to an ad for nasal spray. Viewers were then left for 120 seconds to contemplate medieval methods of rendering a victim mute, only to find on their return to the show that she had been slipped an LSD cocktail instead.

It's much easier to come up with figures on TV violence as opposed to movie violence: So many researchers are studying mayhem on the tube that they probably drive the Nielsen ratings up. Since 1972 when Surgeon General Jesse L. Steinfeld took several volumes and much tax money to conclude "that the causal relationship between televised violence and antisocial behavior is sufficient to warrant appropriate and remedial action," hundreds of groups across the country have been counting incidents of violence on television—everything from a beating on *Kojak* to an exploded cat on a children's cartoon. One set of concerned citizens in Palo Alto, California, puts out a monthly newsletter called *Viewer's Disgust*, which gives bloody box scores to prime-time series and network movies. A homicide "apparently accomplished" (according to their rating scale) earns 50 points; one "merely attempted" gets 30 points; "results shown" wins 25 points more. Moderate injuries mentioned are worth nothing; they rate 18 points if attempted onscreen, 30 points if apparently accomplished. Destruction of a city gets 50 points if apparently accomplished, 5 if just mentioned. Using this scale, a recent episode of *Baretta* earned itself 1,119 points—one killing, one implied killing, seven attempted killings, and so on down the list to 29 references to killing. A *Streets of San Francisco* episode the same week was good for 1,061 violence points; *Police Story*, 690. *Viewer's Disgust*'s champion so far this year in the hour-series category is an episode of *S.W.A.T.* last April which scored a whopping 1,308 points.

At the Annenberg School of Communications in Philadelphia, Dr. George Gerbner and his associates have a violence index of their own, using similar research techniques if less spectacular scores. From this index, Dr. Gerbner reports that the much maligned "family hour" seems to have had some effect: During the 8 P.M. to 9 P.M. (EST) time slot, the violence index dipped from 146 in the fall of 1974 to 101 in the fall of 1975. (It went up to 108 this past spring; nobody knows why.)

That's the *good* news from Gerbner. The bad news is that the dip during the family hour seems to have become a veritable bulge after 9 P.M.: Seven out of every ten characters in later shows were involved in some kind of violent act, as opposed to three out of ten before 10 P.M.

There are other recent studies, including ones produced for the networks, that measure acts of violence in terms

tality; the hero began by killing muggers and ended by killing children. Garfield explains, "I wanted to show that when you begin to act as a vigilante, it quickly goes out of control. The movie changed the novel to show vigilantism as a heroic act. And I was alarmed by the effect the movie had. I saw it on Times Square, and the audience reaction was terrifying. People stood up and cheered, 'Kill that mother!'" Garfield points to cases where real-life killers imitated the hero of *Death Wish*, and he says, "I feel a degree of responsibility for the victims of the violence." Recently, Garfield tried to stop CBS from showing *Death Wish* in prime time; he failed.

At the same time, however, Garfield raises another caution: "As a writer I resent censorship in any form. If people get too carried away with this anti-violence crusade, we could find ourselves in a position where violent acts are proscribed, which would mean that certain valid stories simply could not be told. That is censorship, and it is as great a danger as violence."

Edward Anhalt, the Academy Award–winning screenwriter of *Becket*, has had some direct experience with the controversy regarding violence in films. A movie that he worked on back in 1952, *The Sniper*, was caught up in a court case in Canada. A boy in Ottawa saw the movie and went out and shot eleven women. A lawsuit was brought against the filmmakers on behalf of one of the victims, but the Canadian Supreme Court decided that the filmmakers did not bear responsibility for the violence. Anhalt believes, "Most people release their aggressions and hostilities by seeing a violent film. There will always be a few neurotic, disturbed people who may be stimulated by the violence. But whatever the dangers of violence, I think censorship is a far greater danger."

Many of the best American films have always been violent. *Bonnie and Clyde, The Wild Bunch, The Godfather I* and *II, Deliverance, Mean Streets, Taxi Driver*, and the new *Carrie* are among the best movies made in this country during the last decade. Some of the worst American movies made during the same period—low-budget melodramas like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, as well as big-budget productions like *Drum* and *Two-Minute Warning*—are also extremely violent. But I think we will always have to tolerate the trash for the sake of the achievements of artists like Penn, Coppola, Peckinpah, and Scorsese. The escalation of violence in films is troubling, but there are no easy solutions.

Has the saturation point been reached in the new wave of cinematic gore? The fate of violence in films rests with the moviegoing public. Some people feel that the trend toward increasing violence has already peaked. After that recent showing of *Two-Minute Warning* I attended, a lot of people walking out admitted that the film had disappointed or disgusted them. An articulate black couple spoke for quite a few others when they said, "We feel ripped off. We'd like to get our money back. The movie was really sick, and we didn't enjoy it. But it had been advertised so heavily on television that we wanted to see what it was all about. If there were different kinds of movies around, we wouldn't be going to see junk like this." If their dissatisfaction begins to spread, maybe the situation will finally change. The only message that Hollywood understands is the ring of the cash register. ■

Points of viewing: *Violence in a recent* Baretta *episode, measured by one of several current rating systems, earned a whopping 1,119 points, rivaling this year's champion to date, a* S.W.A.T. *episode of last April which scored 1,308 points.*

of a particular program's context. But what these studies all certify is that there sure is a *lot* of violence on TV—something that anyone trapped in a strange motel for a week with only a nineteen-inch companion could just as easily confirm. What this explosion of violence does to us, and what to do about curbing or redirecting it, are the kinds of questions that *TV Guide*, New York *Times* TV critic John O'Connor, and other sentinels of electronic sanity wrestle with regularly.

Some social scientists think that watching all this violence is training us to become not killers but victims; they cite recent studies which seem to show that people's fear of crime has little to do with the actual crime rate in their particular area. Watch *Baretta* and you'll be more afraid to walk your dog, even if you live in a protected suburb. Spend a Sunday night with *Kojak* and *Delvecchio* and you'll call in sick for work on Monday. "Violence in video," says Dr. Gerbner, "demonstrates how power works in society: Who can—and who cannot—get away with what." Seeing *Starsky and Hutch* skirt the rules of evidence could bring on another John Dean.

Actual links between televised violence and real crimes are rare and much discussed by researchers in the field. (*Viewer's Disgust* came up with a fifteen-year-old girl in Winchester, England, who said she tried to knock off her parents with a technique picked up from *Starsky and Hutch;* she cut what she thought was the brake line on the family car. Luckily, her knowledge of auto mechanics was as faulty as her moral sense.) But any parent who has driven with a four-year-old past a cemetery and has heard him say, "That's where they put all the shot people" knows that there are more direct indications of psychic dysfunction brought on by even regulated viewing.

The attack on TV violence most in favor at the moment is a "hit 'em in the breadbasket" approach—a constant reminder of the power of the consumer. *Viewer's Disgust* and other groups regularly publish the names of advertisers who appear most often on violent shows, urging readers to write the sponsor and express their outrage. It could be working: Several large advertising agencies have already begun advising their clients to stay away from the more violent series. **—Dick Adler**

PTA, AMA mount efforts against TV violence

Former will hold hearings; latter will testify at them and publish journal articles

The national Parent-Teacher Association and the American Medical Association have begun separate but occasionally crisscrossing campaigns against violence on television.

The PTA's crusade began last week in Pittsburgh in the first of eight regional hearings on violence to give parents, educators, researchers and industry experts an opportunity to express their views about how TV violence might affect children. Television Information Office Director Roy Danish was among the witnesses at the first all-day forum. When they are finished, the hearings will provide the meat for a report the national PTA will publish.

The AMA, which also plans to publish on the subject, will give testimony at the PTA meetings. The remaining seven will be in Kansas City, Kan., Jan. 11; Atlanta, Jan. 18; Chicago, Jan. 25; Dallas, Feb. 1; Portland, Ore., Feb. 8; Hartford, Conn., Feb. 15 and Los Angeles, Feb. 22.

A PTA spokesman said last week the national association is also monitoring TV programs, visiting and writing TV licensees and legislators and, as a last resort in the year-long effort to arouse public and official concern, would arrange national boycotts of TV products advertised on offending programs.

The AMA, meantime, acting on a resolution passed by the association's house of delegates in June that describes TV violence as an environmental hazard particularly to children, is concentrating on educating parents to act as guardians of what their children see. The association has voted to give $25,000 to Nicholas Johnson's National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting for its TV-violence monitoring activities. A spokesman said last week it may award money to others.

In addition, the AMA will hold a session on TV violence at its annual clinical convention in Philadelphia Dec. 6. Participants will include "recognized authorities," the spokesman said, among them: George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications and leading researcher in the field of TV violence.

Dr. Gerbner will be featured, too, in the Dec. 13 issue of the AMA journal, *American Medical News,* writing about the total impact of television—its role as a societal force.

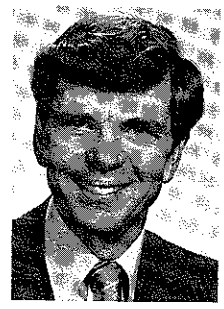
Further, the AMA has in the works a booklet designed to educate parents to the potential impact of violent programs on their children. It will encourage parents to monitor their children's viewing habits and to discuss the programs with the children. The association is shooting for publication of the booklet in February 1977.

Program Briefs

'Double Dare' taken. CBS-TV has canceled *Gambit,* five-year-old daytime game show (11-11:30 a.m., NYT), produced by Heatter-Quigley, and on Dec. 13 will replace it with new Goodson-Todman quiz, *Double Dare. Double Dare* will be taped in Hollywood, with Jay Wolpert as executive producer and Alex Trebek as host.

AP's '76 Roundup. For 12th straight year, Associated Press is producing 60-minute audio program, *The World in Sound 1976,* reviewing highlights of year.

CMA's new captain. Dan McKinnon, owner of KSON-AM-FM San Diego, was elected president of Country Music Association, first broadcaster to be named to that post in association's 16 year history. Mr. McKinnon, who also has interests in KIII(TV) Corpus Christi and KBMT(TV) Beaumont, both Texas, owns music publishing company and talent management firm. He previously served two terms on boards of CMA and National Association of Broadcasters. CMA, 5,000-member group, is host of annual country music awards TV show, elects members to Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville and promotes country music worldwide.



McKinnon

Inquirer 12/9/76

By DOROTHY STORCK

At last, TV bothers AMA

The American Medical Association (AMA) held its national convention in Philadelphia this week, and right there in the program, tucked between "Diseases of the Thyroid" and "Mitral Valve Disorders," was a ringer.

It was a seminar on "The Effect of Televised Violence on Children."

We've all been aware of the ritual flurries about TV violence over the years. Presidential commissions, beginning with Ike, have studied it.

Citizens groups have deplored it. Senate committees have investigated it.

There has even been J. Walter Thompson, the world's largest advertising agency, which has 80 percent of its billings on TV, mounting a road show about it.

I sat through the J. Walter Thompson outing. It was slick and entertaining, and after about an hour I got the message:

Ameriea is good. Violence is bad. We're all going a little nutty in our high-strung, oversexed whoopee, but it's only the real nuts who take TV violence seriousiy and go out and rip up the streets. We should worry about it, of course, but we must remember that commercials have nothing to do wth it.

There were bright kids listening to the J. Walter apologia at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania last year, and they managed to do a scalpel job on that number.

Tiptoeing

But here we are a year later with the AMA—the most powerful status group in America and certainly the most powerful lobby outside of the American Rifle Association—tiptoeing into the TV violence thing.

The TV violence seminar was obviously just one of many small sideshows to the main concern of the convention—fighting national health care and figuring out how to protect against malpractice suits.

But there it was nonetheless, with a psychiatrist to head it and the aura of AMA legitimacy over it.

TV violence has become, for the first time, a certified medical health problem.

The chairman of the panel, Dr. Robert Stubblefield, a white-haired child psychiatrist from New Canaan, Conn., explained his interest in the subject:

Alarming

New research has been coming in, he said, which has alarmed him. There was the result of a 10-year study, for instance, which indicated that aggressiveness in 19-year-old males was significantly related to the amount of TV violence they had watched 10 years earlier.

He was seeing, he said, kids who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic, but who were really not split. They had come from homes where there were maybe five kids and seven TV sets. They had never had an interaction with the family around them. Only with the TV set.

Dr. Stubblefield said he wondered, and you have to wonder if he was considering this for the first time, who were the heroes and heroines now of his grandchildren. Kojak? The Bionic Woman?

The sociologists and the psychologists presented their studies a little hesitantly at first. This was, after all, the holy of holies — an AMA meeting — and they were intruders.

Scary statistics

But after a while you could see they were becoming more sure of themselves, and even a little angry. They knew what they were talking about was as important as the mitral valve.

Kids in their formative years spend 50 percent more time watching television than they do going to school. Before they are teenagers they see, on the average, 13,000 violent destructions of other human beings.

Heavy television watchers, the researchers were saying, tend not to take action to help others in trouble. They become more aggressive themselves, or more frightened. They regard themselves as either victims or perpetrators.

They look at the real world and it is terrifying to them. The TV researchers have a name for it. They call it "The Mean World Syndrome."

I don't know what that seminar did for the doctors who were there. It scared the Gloccamorra out of me.

If kindly Dr. Stubblefield and the other medics are finally taking notice of television, I can only be grateful. Swine flu, it would appear, isn't in the same league when it comes to menace of the public weal.

The Evening Bulletin
Dec. 15, 1976

Rose DeWolf

Family Hour Crime

It was billed as a "special" television show but there was nothing special about it. It was, in fact, TV's usual diet, warmed over.

This was a crime drama on last week called "Feather and Father;" the heroine and hero were a woman and her dear old Dad. Dad used to be a con-man but has now gone straight — or TV's version of going straight, anyway.

Our heroine is representing a young man who we, the TV audience, know is innocent — because we have seen the real murderer commit the crime early in the program. Things look bad for the young man until Dad and his friends — a little band of "reformed" criminals — put all their well-practiced talents at lying, cheating and stealing into action on his behalf. They break into the murderer's home. They (temporarily) steal his car. They disrupt a hospital. And all of this leads to the murderer showing his guilt. Happy ending!

NOW THIS SHOW was on between 8 and 9 P.M. — one of the so-called "family hours" — that time period when parents are told it is okay to have their little darlings watch the tube because they won't see anything on it that is too sexy or too violent.

But they may not see anything that is too . . . well . . ethical either. They will, over and over, see shows like this one which let them know that the end justifies the means, that it is okay to commit crime as long as you mean well, and that breaking and entering, even if illegal, is no big deal as long as the guys doing it are "the good guys."

This isn't to say that the people shown breaking the laws are citizens who hope to prove a specific law is unfair or that they are shown doing so in order to uphold some principle . . . No, they aren't challenging the laws against breaking and entering . . . they just do it.

The predominant pattern on TV crime shows, says Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, is to have most of the violence and most of the illegal acts committed, not by the villains, but by the heros.

THE KIND of stuff a "good guy" can get away with on TV is incredible . . . even murder, even assassination, even torture. The "hero" of a recent TV drama got a "confession" out of somebody by holding his head under water. That, of course, was how the good folks of Salem got people to confess to practicing witchcraft back in colonial times. But this was portrayed as the "right thing to do" because, after all, we knew this bad guy was really bad. It was all part of the script.

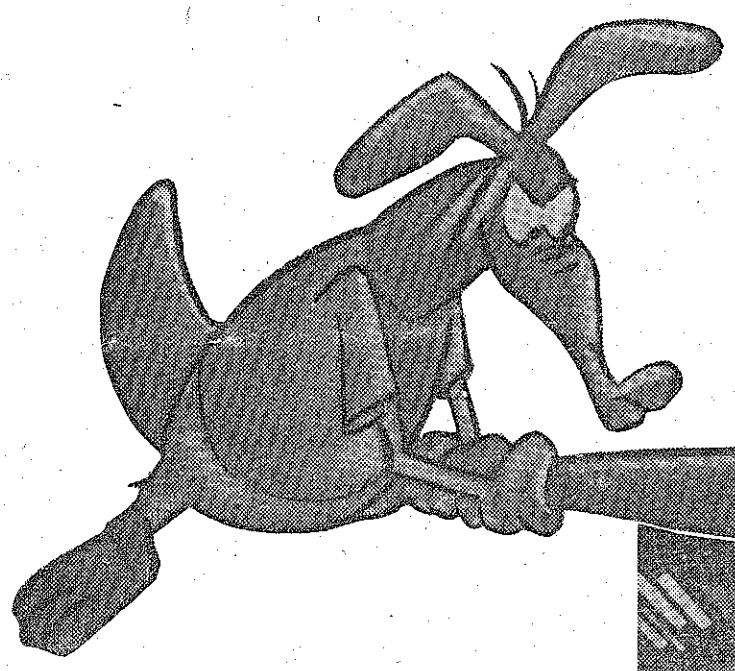
The ever-popular Kojak thinks nothing of punching people and, as happened on one show I caught, if the "punching bag" later turns out to be innocent, Kojak doesn't even bother to apologize. Kojak is not aired during the "family hour," of course, but his attitude — that those who enforce law do not have to bother obeying it — certainly is.

One has to wonder what this is teaching children. Maybe that it is okay to fix an election if "the right candidate" is enabled to win? Or that it is okay to break into a private building (like Watergate) if you think it is okay? Or that people in positions of authority can do anything they want to anyone they want as long as their motives are "pure?"

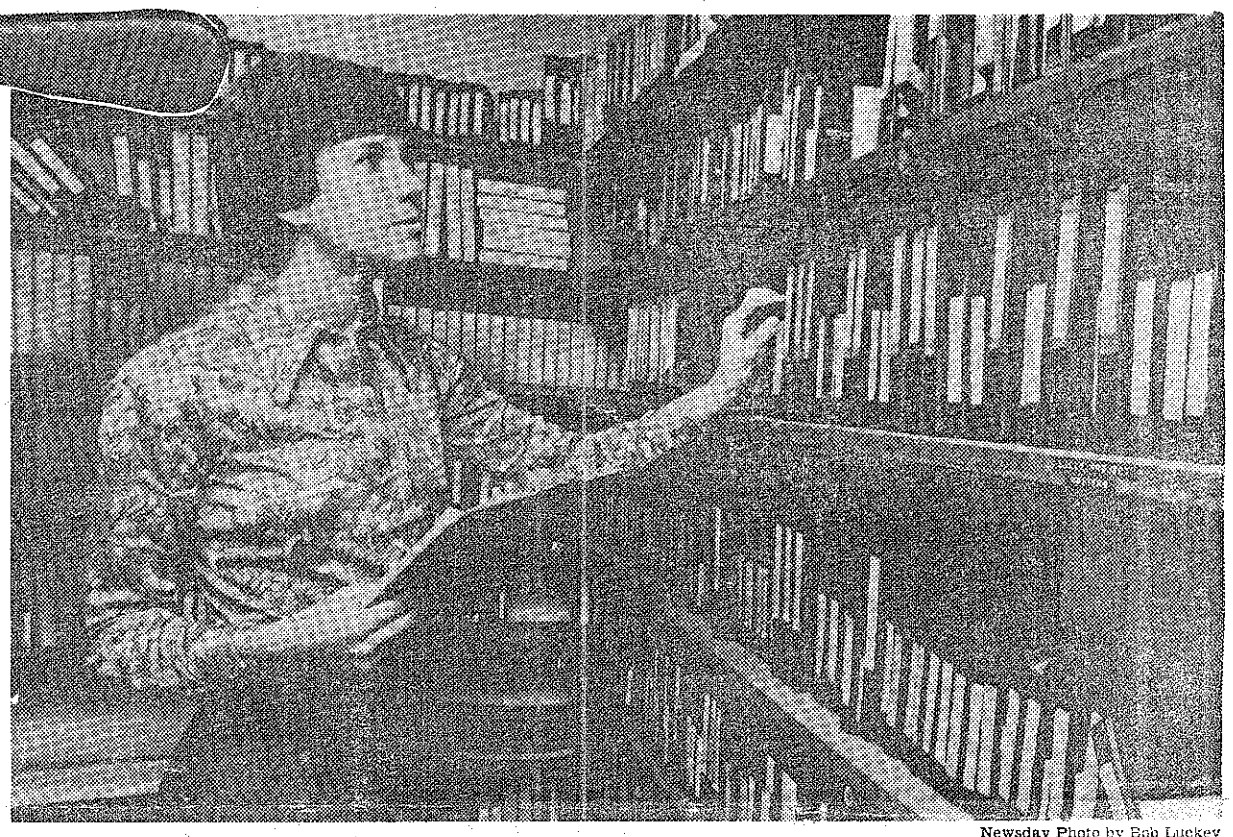
The family hour may have eliminated some attacks on human beings during that time when children are most likely to be watching TV, but it continues to permit attacks on the ideals of Democracy . . . and that problem is worth some consideration, too.

Rose DeWolf's opinion column also appears on Friday and Monday.

Newsday, Dec. 11, 1976



Good, Clean Violence



Newsday Photo by Bob Luckey

Susan Harvey, a Stony Brook graduate student who measured aggressive acts on Saturday morning television.

By Earl Lane

Children's Saturday morning television programs are filled with violence, and the number of aggressive acts appears to be on the rise, according to a researcher at the State University at Stony Brook.

Susan Harvey, a graduate student in psychology who helped direct a survey of children's programs from the 1975-76 TV season, has found that the programs studied averaged one act of violence or aggression every 2 minutes. Some programs, such as "The Pink Panther" and "Bugs Bunny," averaged one act of aggression per minute.

The frequency of aggression had nearly doubled from the previous television season. "There was a statistically significant increase in aggression," Ms. Harvey said recently.

In looking for positive, or "pro-social," behaviors in the programs, the researchers found episodes of altruism and kindness to be relatively rare. They found also that males took about 77 per cent of the human roles in the shows, and 92 per cent of the roles were given to whites.

The research was done at the Brookdale Center for Media Research in East Setauket, which is affiliated with the university. The center is directed by psychologist Robert Liebert, an authority on the impact of television upon children.

Researchers taped the programs on the three commercial networks for a typical Saturday morning during October, 1975. They then analyzed the shows minute-by-minute for acts of aggression, which they define as "acts involving the use of force, threat of force or intent of force against others." They looked also for a variety of altruistic acts, such as sharing, cooperation, expressions of sympathy, resistance to temptation and control of aggressive impulses.

They found an average of 11.6 aggressive acts per half hour of actual program time during the 24 half-hour periods surveyed. The average for altruistic acts was 4.9 per half hour.

NBC programs, on the average, were the most violent, with 13.88 acts of aggression per half hour. For CBS, the average was 10.63 acts per half hour and for ABC it was 10.31.

The levels of aggression were higher than the 1974 programs surveyed, when the averages were: NBC, 8.02 aggressive acts per half hour; CBS, 5.96 acts, and ABC, 4.31. The overall average for the commercial networks was 6.10 acts per half hour. The Public Broadcasting Service programs surveyed had less than one-quarter as much aggression (an average of 1.44 acts per half hour).

The Stony Brook findings are consistent with research by George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania. Gerbner has been anlayzing program content for more than a decade. He found a clear pattern of increasing levels of aggression through the 1950s and mid-1960s.

While the levels of violence stabilized for a time, Gerbner also has been finding some new increases in aggression in program content. "Over the past two years, there has been a general upward movement [in the levels of aggression]," Gerbner said, "although there was a slight decrease last spring." The analysis of this fall's programs has not been completed, Gerbner said.

Among the shows with the most aggressive content in the Stony Brook survey of October, 1975, were:

The Pink Panther (NBC)—33 aggressive acts per half hour.

Bugs Bunny (CBS)— 28.5.

Tom and Jerry (ABC)—22.

Among the least violent shows:

Shazam/Isis Hour (CBS)—1 aggressive act per half hour.

New Adventures of Gilligan (ABC)—1.5.

Emergency Plus 4 (NBC)—6.5.

Ms. Harvey said that it would be risky to characterize shows on the basis of just one episode. But the averages for all programs give a meaningful picture of the probable level of aggression that children are exposed to each Saturday, she said.

"I think it is important for parents to watch the shows their own children are seeing and judge for themselves what values they portray," Ms. Harvey said. "I'm sometimes amazed at what goes on. In one 'Pink Panther' episode, two aardvarks were arguing over who gets to eat an ant . . . Finally, one takes out a box, clearly labeled 'tacks,' and spreads them on the road. The other aardvark runs over them. Now, an act like that is so easy for a child to pick up on."

Whether, in fact, children do imitate aggression they see on TV has been the subject of considerable research and debate. But a variety of studies during the past five years, including several at Stony Brook, have concluded that there is evidence of a causal relationship between television violence and later aggressive behavior in children.

Gerbner said that the link between televised aggression and emotional arousal in children seems quite clear. Whether that arousal necessarily leads to violent actions is another question. But Gerbner said that TV programing can have other effects beyond stimulating viewers to aggressive acts. "Our studies have shown that heavy television viewers are more anxious, more mistrustful of strangers . . . TV violence is a cultivator of fear and the demand for protection. It prepares people to be victimized."

Some of the studies involving children have been criticized for not being "naturalistic" enough, since they often are conducted in laboratory settings. But Ms. Harvey said that there have been similar findings in studies at a nursery school. The children watched TV and then were observed imitating agressive acts from the programs during their playtime.

The researchers at the Brookdale Media Center have a variety of other projects under way, including a survey by Ms. Harvey of violence in prime-time television programing. "We know that many children watch prime-time shows in addition to the children's shows as well," she said. Gerbner said that his research to date on this fall's prime-time programing suggests that the networks have been very uneven in their adherence to the so-called "family hour" concept from 8 to 9 PM. "CBS is the only network to consistently follow the family-hour format. NBC has done it not at all or reluctantly. ABC is somewhere in between," Gerbner said.

The question of TV violence is being debated at a nationwide series of hearings sponsored by the National Parent Teacher Association. At the first, held last week in Pittsburgh, Dr. Keith Reisinger, an assistant professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, said that "television continuously instructs us that we can easily resolve problems by use of force." Other witnesses said that televised aggression has made children less sensitive to the real impact of violence.

Roy Danish, director of the Television Information Service, an arm of the National Association of Broadcasters, said that the networks were moving to remove gratuitous violence from programming. He also challenged the notion that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between violent programs and violent behavior among children. "The case is not closed and more research is needed," Danish said. He added: "We're moving as well as we can toward the removal of gratuitous violence, but it would be wrong to present a picture of the world in which there is no conflict and no aggression." /III

T G & M

Professor to outline television trends in start of last week of hearings

800 briefs later, media violence inquiry winds up Ontario tour

By MICHAEL MOORE

The Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry ends its hearings this week after receiving more than 800 briefs and criss-crossing the province.

It has heard from broadcasters and publishers, from academics and advertisers, and most of all from people who are worried or offended by what they see on television and in films and in their newspapers.

Television has been the most strongly criticized, partly because viewers see a rising tide of violence in the entertainment it provides, and partly because it brings its message into people's living-rooms.

They have complained about the killing on serials about the police, the advertisements for violent movies that are inserted into daytime programs, the Bugs Bunny and Road Runner cartoons and even Sesame Street.

This afternoon Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenburg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, will outline for the commission the trends in television violence as he has measured them over the past half-dozen years.

Last week, J. Walter Thompson, the world's biggest advertising agency, told the commission that television has become so violent it is advising clients to avoid violent shows.

Some advertisers have been doing so for years, the agency said, and others have switched to this position in the past year or two.

But an association of major Canadian advertisers told the commission that advertisers should have no voice in the programs they sponsor.

Thomas Blakely, president of the Association of Canadian Advertisers, said contents of the programs should be left in the hands of "the people running the media."

The 225 companies in his association place $450-million a year in advertising.

"The advertisers' attitude is that it is unwise and not in the best interests of the consumer, the media or anybody if anybody (except the media owners) exercises any control over it," Mr. Blakely said.

"We do not believe the best interests of the public are served when any group can tell any other person what he may or may not read or see or hear."

Tampering with the content eventually would cost the advertiser his audience, Mr. Blakely said. Besides, he said, most advertisers want to get exposure on a range of programs so they can reach a range of customers.

While "it is probably illegal for advertisers to act together to boycott the media for reasons of content," Mr. Blakely said some are doing it individually, even though this reduces the efficiency of their advertising dollars.

"Many companies are doing the same thing," he added.

"Why don't they publicize it?" commission chairman Judy LaMarsh asked.

"They're not very good at it," Mr. Blakely replied.

He said he was sure "responsible editors and broadcasters" would police themselves, but Miss LaMarsh called his position "an abdication of responsibility" and "a cop-out" and "nonsense."

Although people who testify are questioned also by the other two commissioners, family court judge Lucien Beaulieu and Globe and Mail columnist Scott Young, Miss LaMarsh is the queen bee of the hearings.

When Mr. Blakely began, he said some of the things in his brief were "just a little bit at odds" with what J. Walter Thompson had said.

"That's your problem, not ours," Miss LaMarsh said sweetly.

There was nothing sweet about her response to the previous witness, Dr. Joseph Green, dean of fine arts at York University, who brought no brief and spoke in generalities about violence in television and films.

He said the problem is one of economics: the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. and educational television that do not have to pay their own way can afford to be less violent than stations that must live on their advertising revenue. Media violence, he said, is part of "larger social problems" and the answer is not censorship but education.

After the two other commissioners asked equally generalized questions, Miss LaMarsh said she was "rather disappointed by your presentation."

She listed areas in the fine arts that Dr. Green could have mentioned, including music and the dance, referred to a scholarly presentation earlier by a professor from the University of Toronto, and commented: "You've just convinced me, with respect, that you don't know a great deal about your subject."

Earlier, she wondered out loud to Richard Vincent, who teaches communications to nursing students at George Brown College, "whether you've been deferring to us and being simple in your writing for us."

His presentation had been peppered with statements such as "many of our staff are utterly revolted at the violence on television."

Miss LaMarsh called it "kind of fuzzy" and "a real motherhood paper."

Judy Craik told the commission the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, with 19,000 members in Ontario, had called on its members to boycott products of sponsors of violent television shows.

Asked if she could remember the names of any products she had boycotted, Mrs. Craik could not.

Miss LaMarsh told her if the IODE really cares, "you can create bloody hell in the country.

"I am grateful to you for passing the resolutions, but I say go and fire up the boilers. Send two or three of your most bitchy women up to Ottawa and make them listen . . ."

After hearings this week, which will embrace Ontario film censor Donald Sims, Maclean's Magazine, transcendental meditation and several broadcasters, Mr. Young will return to his Globe and Mail column and the other two commissioners will embark on further research. They will report next year.

Judy LaMarsh

Scott Young

Lucien B

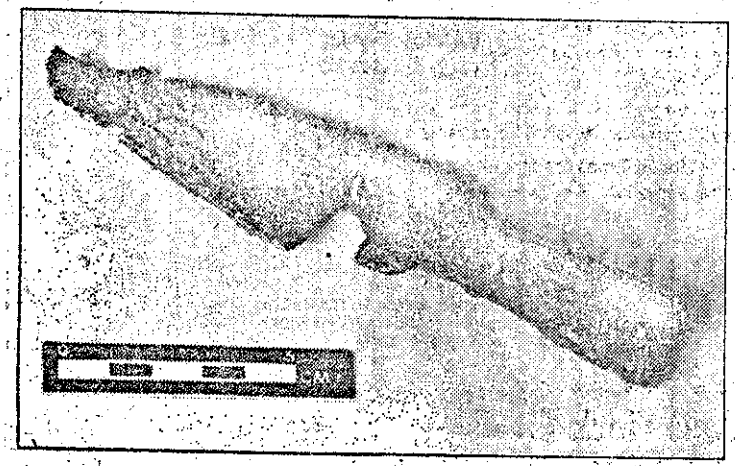
An Earlier Bronze Age

Tests on materials found at an archeological site at Ban Chiang in northeastern Thailand have established the presence there of a Bronze Age culture as early as 3,600 B.C. This date, about 600 years earlier than the oldest known Bronze Age artifacts in the Middle East, tends to upset long-held theories of cultural diffusion from the Middle East toward the rest of the world. In fact, since both the copper and the tin required to make bronze occur together in Thailand, but not in the Middle East, there is speculation the influence may have run the other way.

The Ban Chiang culture also appears to have differed significantly from early Bronze Age Societies elsewhere in the lack of monumental structures and the relative scarcity of weapons at Ban Chiang. Tests on the materials were made at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, and the results were disclosed in a statement by the Thai and American leaders of the expedition.

(More Ideas & Trends, Page 11)

Tom Ferrell
and Donald Johnston



Bronze spearhead found in Thailand.

TV Violence: Is It Creating Greater Violence in Real Life?

New York Times 5/16/76

By CARYL RIVERS

In 1973, a young woman in Boston was doused with gasoline and set afire by teen-agers. The night before, a local television station had featured a movie in which a derelict was murdered in exactly the same way. Coincidence — or inspiration?

In 1966, NBC showed a movie about a man who placed a bomb on an airliner. One bomb threat was made to an airline during the movie, and seven others were made in the course of the following week. When a Senate subcommittee held hearings on juvenile delinquency in 1961, it found kids who had committed acts from burglary to extortion and said they got the idea from television.

The controversy over violence in the media is hardly new; it has had a longer run than "Gunsmoke." Now Chicago's Mayor Daley has proposed to ban children under 18 from movies that are excessively violent.

But how much is really known about the effect of media violence on the viewer? What does it do to people? Evidence has been accumulating for more than two decades. In 1975 the Rand Corporation put together a bibliography of the research on television and human behavior and found 2,300 studies or papers on the topic. A major Government study on television and social behavior (the Surgeon General's Report) was released in 1972 after three years of work and a cost of $1.8 million. As a result of all these studies, there is little doubt that the viewing of media violence, at least in laboratory settings, can lead to aggressive behavior on the part of some children. The question still being argued is whether such exposure in the real world has a significant impact on large numbers of children, and whether it carries over into their everyday life.

Laboratory studies have repeatedly documented short-term aggression. In one such experiment, a film of a knife fight was shown to one group of men, while another group saw a travel film. Both groups were then told to observe a third group who were performing simple tasks. They were told to press buttons to give these men an electric shock if they made any mistakes. The experimenters found that the men who had seen the knife fight shocked the victims far more often and more severely.

But laboratory studies are often criticized because they are done in "unreal" settings. As one scientist puts it, the laboratory setting "involves complex sequences of procedures that simply seem too far removed from the ordinary course of events of human life."

Field studies that involve gathering data and interviewing of subjects in the places where they live and work may offer more convincing evidence of a link between media violence and aggression than laboratory studies do. One such study, for example, collected data once on third-graders in New York State and revisited the same children 10 years later. It found a strong correlation between early television exposure to violence and aggressive behavior in the teen-age years.

In the past, studies focused on finding cause-effect links between violence and aggression. Now, however, researchers are looking at what could be a more pervasive effect of violence. Studies by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, show that heavy TV viewers overestimate the amount of violence and danger in the world. Other studies show that children exposed to TV violence tend to passively accept violence as a solution to problems.

The Surgeon General's Report of 1972, which is still the single most elaborate study, grew out of Senator John O. Pastore's request for more evidence on the question of whether there was a cause-and-effect link between media violence and antisocial behavior. The final report consisted of five volumes of research reports and a 137-page summary that did little to interpret or clarify the data. The report said there was a "preliminary and tentative indication" of a causal relationship, but that it operates only on some children who are prone to be aggressive and only "in some environmental contexts."

Several of the scientists involved in the research objected to the cautious language of the report; some even calling it a "whitewash." But the Surgeon General, Dr. Jesse Steinfeld, endorsed the report and later wrote, "These studies — and scores of similar ones — make it clear to me that the relationship between televised violence and antisocial behavior is sufficiently proved to warrant immediate remedial action."

But other observers, including both industry spokesmen and social scientists, point out that violence existed long before television and that its roots lie in social factors such as poverty, the home environment and the basic fact that people get mad at each other.

Gerald Lesser, director of the Human Development Laboratory at Harvard and chairman of the board of advisers for the Children's Television Workshop, says that enough is known about the effects of violence in the media to know it's not doing anybody any good. He suggests society move on to the problem of devising ways to use television in a more positive and creative manner.

Television may be able, after all, to teach cooperation as well as violence. In one field experiment, nursery-school children were observed over a period of nine weeks. One group that watched the low-key public television program "Misterogers' Neighborhood" displayed more cooperative behavior afterwards. The researchers concluded that television could play an important role in the positive social development of children. The problem of teaching positive values by television is the question of whose values will be taught. But, says Dr. Lesser, it is a problem society ought to grapple with.

Caryl Rivers teaches writing at the School of Public Communication at Boston University.

NATPE SALES RECORDS: "We have fractured every sales record at any convention... We have been drowning in people"—MCA Vp Sales Dir. Donald Menchel on success of last week's NATPE convention (see p. 1) for syndicators. Menchel's assessment was verified almost without exception by his colleagues & competitors in business of selling programs to TV stations. "Terrific... overwhelming... outstanding" were among adjectives used to describe reaction of station program buyers by some 140 sellers in San Francisco.

Much more buying went on than usual at NATPE or NAB conventions, and neither sellers nor buyers agreed on reason. New NATPE Pres. Phil Boyer (see p. 7) said it was because so many gen. mgrs. now attend with their program dirs.; others agreed, but far larger number said it was because of shortage of syndicated product and stations didn't want to be shut out. Other reasons given were fact access time no longer is issue and "the poor seasons the networks are having."

While MCA was silent on dollar volume of sales, Metromedia's Kenneth Joseph said his company did over $1 million in business. Worldvision's Jerry Smith said company sold over $400,000 "before noon Saturday," day suite opened; Worldvision had popular new show in Doris Day, "perfect for family hour," said Smith. Time-Life sold over $750,000, according to Wynn Nathan, who said: "We're tremendously happy... The guys came to buy. We've had 3 screening rooms going constantly."

SFM Media Service's Stanley Moger said reception for new Mickey Mouse Club "has been beyond belief... Stations have been up here fighting over it." Multimedia (ex-Avco) Program Sales Donald Dahlman: "We don't normally close sales here; this time we have." Gold Key, which took pictures of visitors with stuffed gorilla, had over 1,400 in suite. Viacom gave away more than 4,000 prizes to visitors. "This convention has far exceeded the sales [over $500,000] we've made at other conventions," according to Gold Star's Robert Muller. "Everything is just fine, the selling is very brisk," said 4-Star's Robert Newgard. Columbia's William Hart: "Traffic is overwhelming... sales are much better than last year."

ITC had popular new product in The Muppet Show—sold to 75 stations, including CBS-owned stations and 45 of top 50 markets, according to Pierre Weis. MGM's Medical Center went "damned well," according to Al Newman. Small outfits were pleased, too: "It started slow but ended much better than we had hoped," according to Bernice Coe of Coe Film Assoc. Carter-Grant's Sherry Grant: "I'm here to find out what people want... in women's programs... They want something inexpensive and different." And then there's Sandy Frank, who told us: "I didn't come here to sell... I came for good will."

Some station people were confused & upset because programs were offered only if certain number of sales were made up front. Prime example was Yongestreet's proposed New Hollywood Palace, which was withdrawn after network-owned stations didn't buy. Thomas Percer, WHTN-TV Huntsville, Ala., bought 3 shows but complained: "This is the first time I've gone from suite to suite to suite and been told a go or no-go depends on how many orders the syndicator gets... It's very confusing."

Big—and now permanent—loser to NATPE's success is NAB convention, which will attract only handful of syndicators to its convention next month in Chicago. Of those we asked, only 3—Viacom, Multimedia & NTA—will have suites at NAB, although several others will send salesmen. NAB ran afoul of programmers for 1974 Houston convention by putting them in far-out hotel, tried unsuccessfully to woo them back at Las Vegas last year. Those who went to Vegas were very disappointed with traffic there, won't return this year. "We don't feel the NAB is the place to show our product," said MGM's Newman. "This is our convention and we are happy with it"—Gold Key's Muller.

"Specialty station" impasse was resolved by FCC last week, as agency decided to be liberal with waivers for minority-owned stations such as WGPR-TV Detroit (Vol. 16:5 p6). New rules, to be announced soon, will allow cable systems to carry any station classified as "specialty." Such stations must transmit—1/3 of total time & 1/3 of prime time—religious, automated or foreign programs. If no such station is available, systems may carry such programs from any station. All must get certificate of compliance for such carriage, and stations can oppose applications. Only 13 stations now qualify as specialty: KHOF-TV San Bernardino, KXLA-TV Fontana, KBSC-TV Corona, KWHY-TV, L.A. (all Cal.); WCIU-TV Chicago; WGGS-TV Greenville, S.C.; WHMB-TV Indianapolis; KPAZ-TV Phoenix; KXTX-TV Dallas-Ft. Worth; WHAE-TV TV Atlanta; WHCT-TV Hartford; WKID-TV Ft. Lauderdale; WYAH-TV Portsmouth, Va.

TV is legal necessity, can't be seized to satisfy debts, N.Y. State Assembly voted recently. TV joins such other "necessities" as clothes, cooking ware.

Cable can't have it "both ways," FCC Chmn. Wiley told Denver Cable Club—chiding industry for complaining about "over-regulation" while seeking Commission intervention in pole-attachment and rate-regulation disputes. He also listed series of rules relaxations, said few people have paid much attention to Commission's film non-exclusivity rule which, he said, eventually will allow cable access to many 3-10-year-old films. Speaking of 1977 rebuild, he said he thinks it "questionable policy" to "dedicate free channels, beyond perhaps both public need and demand." He pressed for industry support of copyright and forfeiture legislation.

Neb. ETV Network has signaled it won't give up easily in fight to retain its "N" logo—which is practically identical with NBC's new symbol (Vol. 16:2 p6). Neb. Network filed suit in Lincoln, Neb. District Court seeking injunction against NBC use of logo, charging NBC with unfair competition and violation of state & federal trademark laws. NBC said it was "surprised & disappointed" by Neb. ETV action because it thought negotiations were going well.

POST-FV VIOLENCE: Battle between competing measures of violence on prime-time TV seems to be shaping up between CBS & NIMH over amount of violence in post-family viewing (FV) hours. Though Dr. George Gerbner, who prepares annual violence index report to Congress under NIMH research grant, hasn't yet released results of survey for 1975-76 season, CBS has compiled its study—by Vp-Chief Economist David Blank—showing violence levels down for all 3 networks in all time periods.

Gerbner would only say that level of violence before 9 p.m.—during family viewing (FV) period—was down from last year's levels, a finding substantiated by Blank's study. Blank found number of violent incidents "down substantially" compared with 1974-75, and "at their lowest level since we began monitoring activities in the 1972-73 season." Time period apparently open to dispute is after 9 p.m. Blank study claims violence after 9 "is down from last year and about at the level of prior years."

While Gerbner declined to give specific results, he did offer spirited defense of his research methods, challenged accuracy of CBS'. "We have absolute trust in our results and we don't care what anybody else says...When we publish, we set out our methodology completely. We have not been able to see his [Blank's] methodology...Usually, if there's a difference, it's because of differences in the methodology."

Blank said Gerbner's charge that CBS methodology hasn't been published "irritates me...We published full details in Spring 1974," as part of 1974 Senate Communications Subcommittee hearing record (Vol. 14:14 p2).

"It seems ironic to me" that FCC—which has "severely limited cable's ability to compete through a series of arcane rules"—"should be concerned about restraints that might be placed on cable by state & local governments," House Communications Subcommittee Chief Counsel Harry (Chip) Shooshan told Public-Cable membership meeting in apparent response to criticism leveled by FCC Cable Bureau Chief David Kinley (Vol. 16:6 p4). Shooshan added: "We do not have any substantial degree of faith in the federal regulatory body being able to ultimately do a better job than the state or local regulators."

Jury convicted 4 executives of Brunswick Record Corp. in Newark District Court last week for either pocketing or funneling to disk jockeys over $350,000 in cash from illegal sales of Brunswick record albums. Money allegedly was given to disk jockeys as "payola." Executives also were charged with failing to pay copyright royalties on illegally-sold albums. Convicted were Pres. Nat Tarnapol, Vp Peter Carris, Production Mgr. Lee Shep & Secy. Irving Weigan. Acquitted were Promotion Dir. Melvin Moore & Vp Carl Davis.

First profitable year was achieved by Kaiser Bcstg. in 1975. Share of profits going to Kaiser Industries, 77.5% owner, was $1,215,000. Balance is owned by Field Enterprises. Pres. Don Curran said revenues for first 1976 quarter are "substantially ahead" of last year and "we expect our profitability to continue to increase." Kaiser operates 5 UHFs, began in 1965 in Detroit.

OTC DRUG PANELS PLANNED: FCC, in cooperation with FTC, announced it will hold 3 panel discussions May 20-21 to explore TV advertising of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Action is in response to petition by Mass. Atty. Gen. Francis Bellotti & others seeking ban on televised OTC drug ads before 9 p.m. (Vol. 15:29 p2). FCC approved panels 6-0, Comr. Lee not voting; FTC approval was 3-0.

Two panels will concentrate on evaluating existing research findings and future research, while 3rd panel will consider courses of actions. First panel will consider cause-effect relationship between ads & drug use by young children, while 2nd panel will concentrate on elementary & high school children & adults. Members of first 2 panels all will be academic & broadcast industry researchers, while 3rd panel will be group of advocates. FCC & FTC staffs have drawn up list of about 50 possible names, will narrow field to about 30. "We're looking for experts in the field, the best possible people...We just want to get the issues out in the open," according to one official. Lawrence Zacharias, FTC, and Karen Hartenberger, FCC, are staff coordinators.

"I don't watch TV very much, but I think [family viewing] is one of the few things they're doing that's worthwhile," Charles Colson, former adviser to ex-President Nixon, told us. In panel discussion on Decency in Media at National Religious Bcstrs. convention in Washington, he struck out at power of TV news, charging it has changed nation's character, but spent most of his time defending reputations of former Nixon aides. Recording artist Pat Boone said he prays for FCC Chmn. Wiley & network execs. every day to help them resist scheduling violent programs "for profits & ratings." Ellen Richards, WYFI(FM) Norfolk, Va., hit AP Radio for use of "hell" & "damn."

Satellite Working Group members CPB, PBS & Ford Foundation have come to agreement that "there probably should be a single organization responsible" for public broadcasting's satellite distribution system, and that organization should be CPB, according to CPB Pres. Loomis. In joint statement, members said they've agreed that CPB "would assume the basic responsibility and associated risks," continue to assign various tasks to PBS. Agreement settles dispute over control of loan negotiations & system construction (Vol. 16:7 p2). Loan talks continue with Prudential & Equitable, expected to provide financing for project.

CUB petitions to improve quality of UHF broadcasting (Vol. 15:30 p8, et seq.) should receive "prompt Commission consideration," House Communications Subcommittee Chmn. Macdonald (D-Mass.) wrote FCC Chmn. Wiley. Though Macdonald said CUB representatives told him changes would involve "modest costs" and would "produce substantially improved reception," he noted that 7 months have passed since petitions were filed, without FCC analysis or rulemaking, and that issue doesn't appear on FCC calendar for next 3 months.

Optical Systems reports starting or planning pay cable in following Cal. communities: El Cerrito, Castro Valley, Coronado, Martinez, Salinas.