

TELEVISION

TV castigated for link with violence in children

Study by National Institute for Mental Health claims 10-year research shows aggressive behavior follows TV viewing; NBC, ABC, CBS disagree; other effects include distortion of reality

Ten years after the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Television and Behavior issued a report indicating, if with considerable qualification, that television violence leads to violent behavior in the children who watched it, another government report has been issued suggesting there no longer is any doubt about the link. "According to many researchers," the report says, the evidence "seems overwhelming that televised violence and aggression are positively correlated in children."

The report—"Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties"—was prepared by the National Institute of Mental Health on the basis of research done on the subject in the past decade. It is not limited to the effects of television violence on children, as the 1972 surgeon general's report was. Rather, it addresses a range of areas in which television plays a part in the life of the viewer—its socializing effects, for instance, and its influence on physical and mental health.

But the chapter on violence and aggression—one dealing with a subject that has commanded the attention of critics, including many in Congress, and parents for 30 years—is sure to command the most attention.

The language, unlike that in the 10-year-old report, seems unequivocal. "After 10 more years of research, the consensus among most of the research community is that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teen-agers who watch the programs."

The report notes that "not all children become aggressive, of course." But it says "the correlations between violence and aggression are positive." Indeed, it says, the correlation is as strong as "any other variable behavior that has been measured." The conclusions are based on laboratory experiments and field studies.

Among the field studies was one funded by CBS. It reported that teen-age boys in London, according to their own accounts, were more likely to engage in "serious violence" after watching violence on television.

Two independent studies of three- and four-year-old children over a year's time both showed "consistent associations between heavy television viewing of violent programs and unwarranted aggressive

behavior in their free play."

And in a five-year study of 732 children, several kinds of aggression—conflict with parents, fighting and delinquency—were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing, not simply viewing of violent programs.

The report said that, despite concerns expressed by critics, "the amount of violence" on television has not decreased. It does seem cyclical, though. The report says it is up one year, down the next, with the percentage of programs containing violence remaining essentially the same over the past decade. And during that time, the report says, children's weekend programming was more violent than that

supervision of David Pearl, chief of the Behavioral Sciences Research Branch of NIMH. The first volume is a summary of reviews of the literature on television and its effects on viewers, done by 24 researchers that NIMH commissioned for the task. The reviews themselves will be published in the second volume.

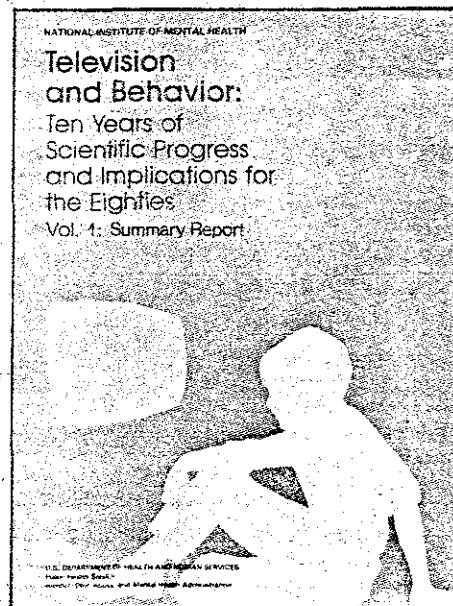
And that bifurcated approach was cited by CBS and NBC spokesmen in commenting, critically, on the report.

The summary "cannot be properly and fully evaluated until the material in the second volume ... is released and studied," said the NBC spokesman. "In what is available so far, however," he said, "NBC researchers find a number of inaccurate statements and believe that many of the conclusions in the report will be challenged by social scientists conducting independent reviews." He said the NBC study, which does not support the report's conclusions, will be published by Academic Press this fall.

The CBS spokesman said that the "assessment" of the literature the report's introduction said would be made "is not apparent," at least as far as the section on violence is concerned. He said the report "seems to represent an almost wholly uncritical selection and acceptance of certain studies." He also claimed "there are conflicting approaches and results within the report itself" and said it has been "put together by individuals who came to it with publicly identified positions on the role of television in society." Among those listed as "advisors"—not authors of the project, George Gerbner, of the University of Pennsylvania, who has done a number of critical studies of television and its effects on children, and Dr. Eli A. Rubinstein, of the University of North Carolina, who directed the 1972 study.

ABC said it remains convinced "the existing body of research literature does not warrant the conclusions reached" in the report. Among other reasons, it says the summary report does not provide "conclusive substantiation" for the conclusions reached, "making it difficult" to evaluate the claims in detail.

Citizen groups saw the report differently. Sam Simon, executive director of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting and a member of the board of the National Coalition on Television Violence, said the report "is not surprising," that it validates the results of the monitoring NCTV has done and "highlights the need to do something" about television violence. He talked of a need to educate viewers as to their "rights" in broadcasting and parents as to the role they should play as TV monitors. He also said net-



seen in prime time.

The studies on which the report was based were not unanimous in showing a link between television and real-life violence. One study funded by NBC found no evidence for a long-term enduring relation between viewing violent television programs and aggressive behavior. The NIMH study suggests that "others doing television research will no doubt examine the new study to try to learn why it does not agree with many other findings."

The report is not entirely negative in its conclusions. For instance, a section on imagination and pro-social behavior says that "evidence is persuasive that children can learn to be altruistic, friendly and self-controlled by looking at television programs depicting such behavior patterns. It appears that they also learn to be less aggressive."

The report constitutes Volume One of a two-volume project conducted under the

works and syndicators must be informed "a public health problem exists" with which they must deal.

Peggy Charren, president of Action for Children's Television, also said the findings "make sense." But she expressed the hope the report would not be "a stimulus to censorship." Rather, she said, it should send the administration a message that alternatives to existing children's television programing "cannot be left to the marketplace." She said a reasonable response would be "adequate funding for public broadcasting."

Beyond television violence, the report contained a number of other findings:

- There is good evidence that television contributes to viewers' conceptions of social reality, especially when they are related to violence and feelings of mistrust. "People who look at a great deal of television tend to believe that there is more violence in the real world than do those who do not look at much television."

- Television seems to be doing a rather poor job of helping its audience to attain "better health or better understanding of health." The report acknowledges that that is not a goal of commercial television. But it notes that incidental watching may influence life styles—it may encourage the use of alcohol and food that is not nutritious.

- Some observers believe television "reinforces the status quo and contributes to a homogenization of society and a promotion of middle-class values. Television's ubiquity in bringing events—especially violent and spectacular events—throughout the world to millions of people may mean television itself is a significant factor in determining events."

- Among adults, television viewing and education are inversely related—the less schooling, the more television viewing. Children with low IQ scores watch television more than others, but there is no indication as to whether heavy viewing lower scores or whether those with low IQ simply choose to watch more TV.

The report does not contain any recommendations. But the director of the NIMH, Dr. Herbert Pardes, expects the report to have an effect. In a foreword, he says, "We would anticipate . . . that persons bearing responsibility for policy and for television industry practices would be interested in the findings for use in decisionmaking."

But the report does not contain all of the answers. Pardes notes that a tremendous surge of interest in the subject of television's impact on society followed the release of the surgeon general's advisory committee report in 1972. Some 2,500 titles—about 90% of all research publications on the subject—appeared in the last 10 years. And the report itself notes that the research papers are continuing to pile up. "Compared with the 1970's," it says, "the decade of the 1980's should witness an even greater intensity of necessary research effort on television and behavior." □

Cable making greater inroads with Yankees

Ball club admits talks under way; 15-year deal believed in works

The New York Yankees baseball club is reported in the final stages of negotiations for granting rights to cable telecasts of its games for a period of 15 years and for more than \$100 million.

A spokesman for the Yankees would only say last week that discussions have been held with various cable companies in the past months but declined to identify them or discuss any financial or programing details. Front-runners in the bidding appear to be SportsChannel and Warner Communications. Officials of SportsChannel declined to comment and a Warner spokesman said the company has held several meetings with the ball club but could not go beyond that statement.

The club currently has a five-year contract (through 1984) with WPX(TV) New York, calling for payments in excess of \$25 million over that period. The station telecast more than 100 games. Speculation is that while the WPX agreement is still in force, the Yankees will carry 40 to 50 games a year on cable and the remainder on WPX. Starting in 1985, the Yankee plan is said to call for about 100 games on cable television and the remainder on free TV.

For several years, until this season, the Yankees had an agreement with SportsVision for 30-40 games a year but did not renew the arrangement for this season. This action fueled reports that the Yankees wanted to open up their cable rights to a number of bidders for a long-term cable commitment.

Pay-per-view the goal of ABC-Cox deal

Addressability is key to new joint ventures offering programing, information, data

ABC Video, which had startled the electronic communications world the week before with news of its Home View Network (HVN), using its ABC-TV network to construct a middle-of-the-night pay TV system (BROADCASTING, May 3), announced still another pay project at the NCTA convention last week. This time the news was less surprising, perhaps because of the frequency with which that once-pay-and-cable-reluctant company has been announcing new ventures into those fields. Perhaps, too, because hard outlines of the newest project were elusive.

The deal is a joint venture with Cox Cable Communications ("In Brief," May 3) "to develop advanced programing and addressable communications technology." The avowed purpose: pay-per-view.

Ratings Roundup

Score a double victory for ABC-TV.

Not only did the network win prime time for the week ended May 2, it also topped the usual network news leader, CBS, in the early evening.

In prime time, ABC scored a 15.4 rating and 26 share to CBS-TV's 14.7/25 and NBC-TV's 13.8/24. In news, ABC earned a 12.1/24 to CBS's 11.8/24 and NBC's 11.2/22.

During this post-season week, ABC won Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday; CBS took Thursday, Friday and Sunday and NBC won Monday. Big numbers weren't needed to win a night. On Saturday, ABC won with a 13.4/26 average and on Monday, NBC's 16.4/26 was enough for victory.

If overnight ratings in the three top markets are indicative of a nationwide audience, the networks also faced stiff competition from the latest Operation Prime Time project: *A Woman Called Golda*.

Airing on various days across the country, the first two hours of the four-hour special earned a 23.6/32 Nielsen rating and 21.0/29 Arbitron rating on WPX(TV) New York. On KCOP-TV Los Angeles, it scored a 17.9/28 and 18.2/29 respectively and on WGN-TV an 18.8/30 and 19.1/30. Those all were winning scores.

The First 20

1.	<i>60 Minutes</i>	CBS	21.6/44
2.	<i>Dynasty</i>	ABC	21.4/35
3.	"Mae West" (movie)	ABC	19.6/31
4.	<i>M*A*S*H</i>	CBS	19.5/29
5.	<i>Fall Guy</i>	ABC	19.1/30
6.	<i>Too Close For Comfort</i>	ABC	19.1/30
7.	<i>Hart to Hart</i>	ABC	19.0/32
8.	<i>Magnum, P.I.</i>	CBS	18.9/31
9.	<i>Three's Company</i>	ABC	18.9/30
10.	<i>Jefferies</i>	CBS	18.9/29
11.	"Side By Side" (movie)	NBC	18.6/29
12.	<i>Simon & Simon</i>	CBS	18.3/29
13.	<i>Facts of Life</i>	NBC	18.0/29
14.	"Kenny Rogers As The Gambler" (movie)	NBC	18.0/29
15.	"The Babysitter" (movie)	ABC	17.2/27
16.	<i>Alice</i>	CBS	17.1/27
17.	<i>Country Music Awards</i> (special)	NBC	17.0/29
18.	<i>Greatest American Hero</i>	ABC	16.9/29
19.	<i>Real People</i>	NBC	16.8/29
20.	<i>Dukes of Hazzard</i>	CBS	16.7/32

The Final Five

63.	<i>No Soap, Radio</i>	ABC	9.1/16
64.	<i>Q.E.D.</i>	CBS	8.2/14
65.	<i>Crime In America</i>	ABC	7.8/16
66.	<i>Father Murphy</i> (R)	NBC	7.8/16
67.	<i>Jokebook</i>	NBC	6.7/13

Herbert A. Granath, president of ABC Video Enterprises, spoke of a "ramping process" that would begin with one-way addressable operations, would proceed to two-way and then add data capability. Robert C. Wright, president of Cox Cable, put the joint venture's "philosophy" in virtually the same terms: to look toward the long-term objective of interactive two-way systems with data capability. But