

SUMMARY

OF

VIOLENCE PROFILE NO. 7

Trends in network television drama and
viewer conceptions of social reality
1967-1975

by

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in this research, and the larger Cultural Indicators
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study of trends in television content and effects
conducted under a grant from the National Institute
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April, 1976

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SUMMARY

Americans live much of their lives in the world of television drama. Children and adults alike are exposed to vivid patterns of the facts of life in that world. What are those facts, especially with regard to the context, structure, and functions of violence, and what lessons do children and adults derive from their exposure to those facts?

These are the basic questions addressed in the research that yields the Violence Profile. Trends in network television drama and the conceptions of social reality that viewing tends to cultivate in the minds of viewers are studied in a continuing project called Cultural Indicators. The research is designed to provide annual indicators of television content and effects.

The current season's Violence Profile is the first to report a special comparison of trends during the so-called family hour (for practical purposes 8 to 9 p.m. EST) and other hours of programming including late evening and weekend daytime (children's) program hours. The research is based on the observations of trained analysts coding videotaped samples of each season's programming since 1967, and on surveys of child and adult viewers conducted since 1973.

The Violence Profile consists of measures of (1) the programming context in which dramatic violence occurs, (2) the composite counts of the prevalence, rate, and roles of violence that make up the Violence Index, (3) the structure of power in the world of television drama as indicated by the different risks of violence and victimization for

for different groups in the fictional population, and (4) the extent to which television cultivates its own view of social reality as reflected in the responses of light and heavy viewers to questions related to the message of violence on television but applied to the real world.

(1)

The critical aspect of programming is the proportion of "action programs" which contribute most violence to the world of television drama. Figure 1

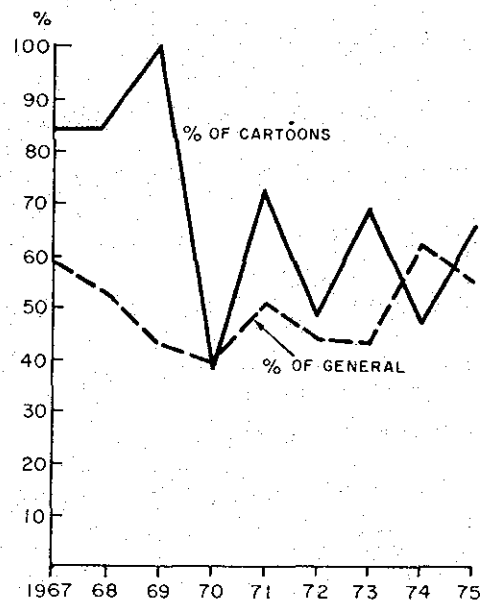


Figure 1: "Action" (crime, western, adventure) programs as percent of cartoon and of other (general) programs analyzed

shows that such programs comprise more than half of all prime-time and week-end daytime cartoon programming, and their proportion of the total has not changed much in recent years. In fact, while general (non-cartoon) crime and adventure plays dropped from their 1974 high of 62 percent to 54 percent in 1975, cartoon crime and adventure rose in the same period from 47 percent to 66 percent of all cartoons.

(2)

These programming trends foreshadow the violence findings that follow. We can summarize them by noting that there has been no significant reduction in the overall Violence Index despite some fluctuations in the specific measures and a definite drop in "family hour" violence, especially on CBS, in the current season. The "family hour" decline has been matched by a sharp increase in violence during children's (weekend daytime) programming in the current season and by an even larger 2-year rise in violence after 9 p.m. EST.

Figure 2 shows these trends in detail.

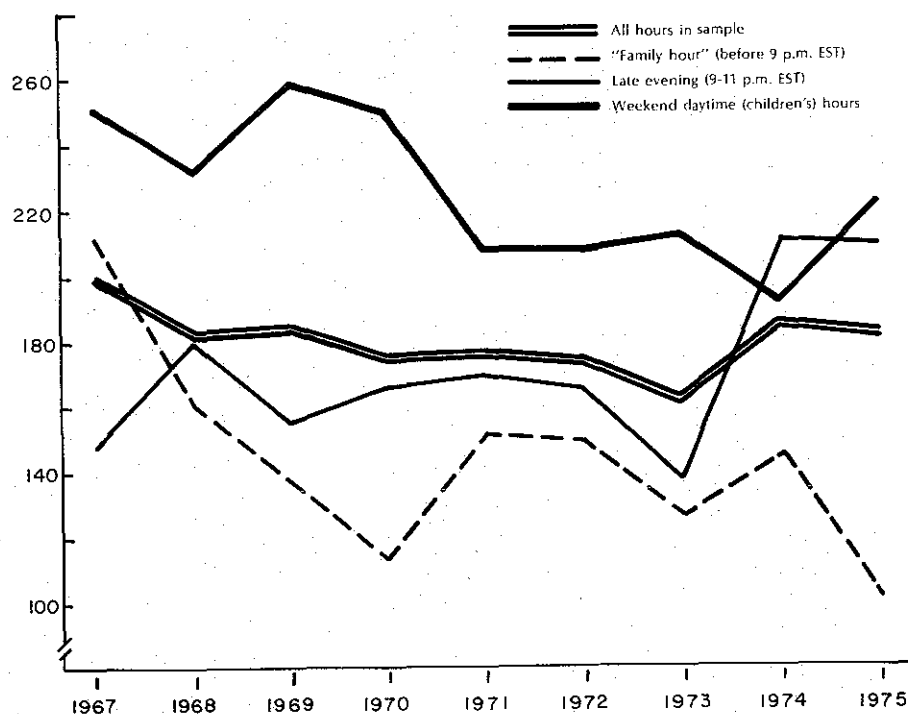


Figure 2: Violence Index for different hours of dramatic programming

Figure 3 provides similar information separately by each network, showing that late evening violence shot up on all three networks in the past two or three years (with minor dips on CBS and ABC in 1975), and that children's (weekend daytime) programs became more violent on ABC and NBC

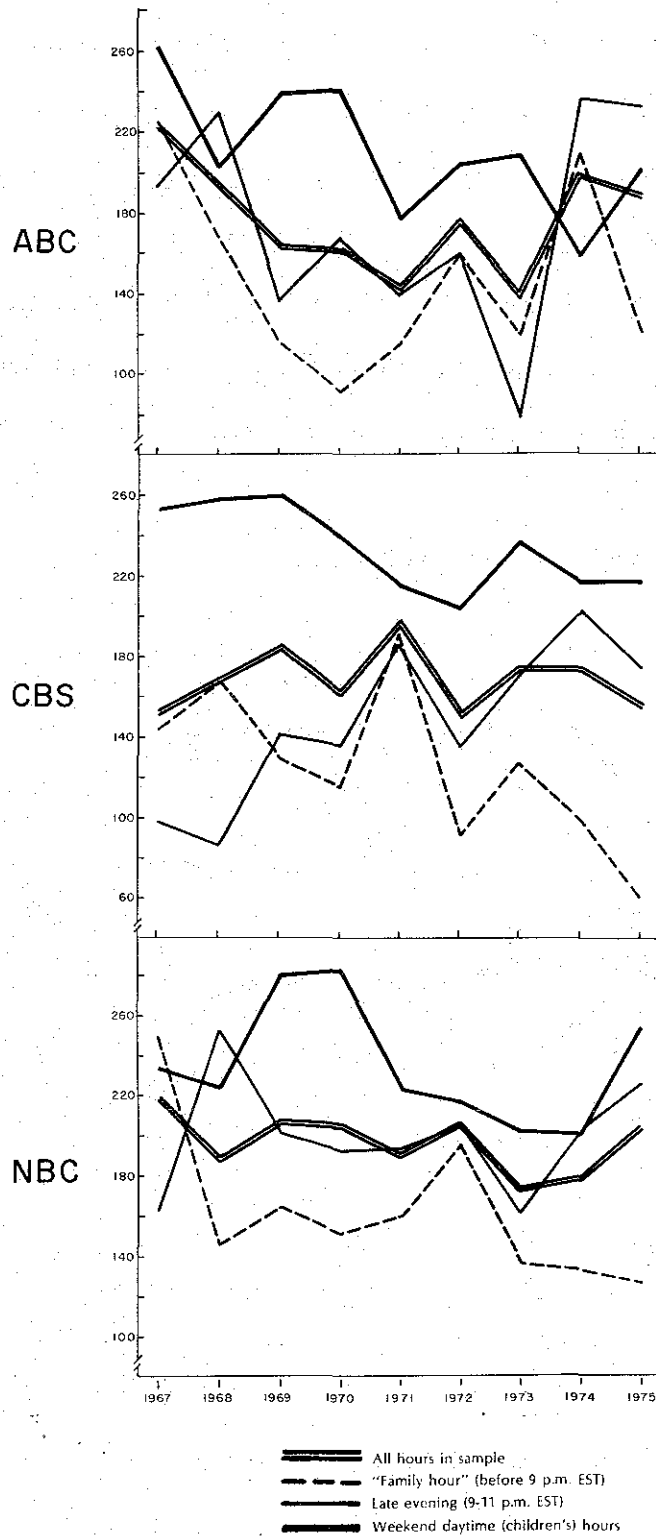


Figure 3: Violence Index for different hours of programming by networks

in the past season. Figure 4 is a direct comparison of the Violence Index for all hours for each network, showing remarkable long-term stability and similarity among them. Figure 5 is a direct comparison of the "family hour" Violence Index for each network, showing little change over a two-year period for ABC and NBC, but a substantial reduction for the second year in a row for CBS.

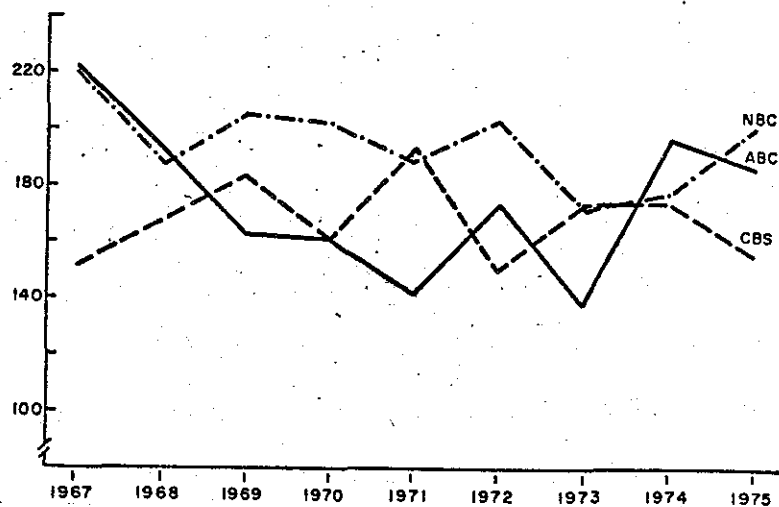


Figure 4: Violence Index for each network, all programs in sample

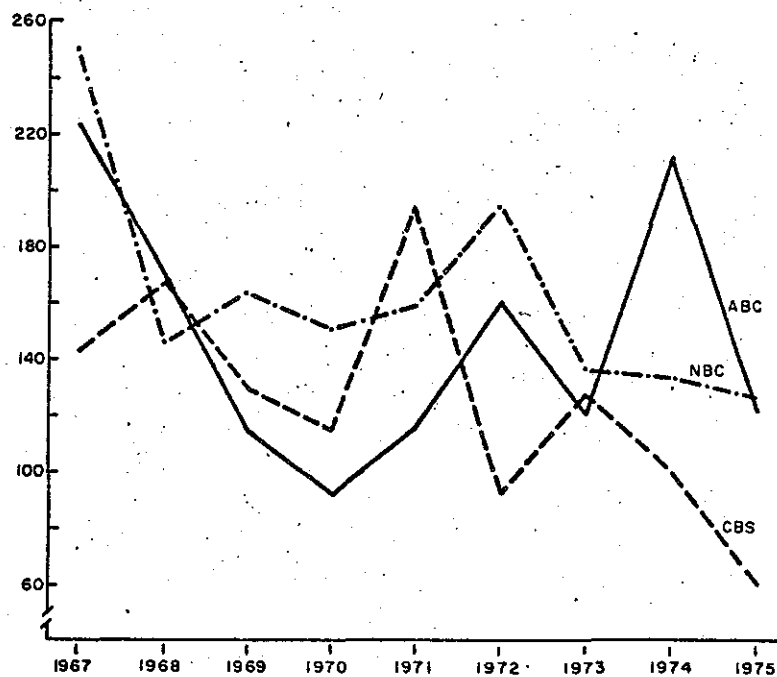


Figure 5: Violence Index for each network, family hour only

The Tables at the end of this report present all measures for the different hours of programming. They show how the specific measures fluctuate and combine each year to make up the composite Violence Index.

The indicators reflected in the Violence Index are clear manifestations of what network programmers actually do as compared to what they say or intend to do. While our data permit many specific qualifications to any generalization that might be made, it is safe to say that network policy seems to have responded in narrow terms, when at all, to very specific pressure, and only while the heat was on. After nine years of investigations, hearings, and Commissions (or since we have been tracking violence on television), eight out of every ten programs (nine out of every ten weekend children's hour programs) still contain some violence. The overall rate of violent episodes, 5.6 per play, is, if anything, highest on record. (The violence saturation of weekend children's programs declined from the 1969 high but increased from its 1974 low to 16 per hour, double that of overall programming, as can be seen on Table 4.) Between six and seven out of every ten leading characters (eight and nine for children) are still involved in some violence. Between one and two out of every ten are still involved in killing. Reductions have been achieved in the portrayal of on-screen killers (especially during weekend children's hours) and in "family hour" violence (especially by CBS), but, as we have noted, a sharp rise in late evening and general children's violence has canceled out any overall gains from the latter.

(3)

The most elementary -- and telling -- relationship involved in violent action is that of violent and victim. The pattern of those who inflict and those who suffer violence (or both) provides a differential calculus of

life chances for different groups of people in the world of television drama.

Table 5 presents a summary of the scores of involvement and what we call risk ratios. The character score is the roles component (CS) of the Violence Index; it is the percent of all characters involved in any violence plus the percent involved in any killing. The violent-victim and killer-killed (risk) ratios are obtained by dividing violents and victims, or killers and killed within each group. The plus sign means more violents or killers in the group; the minus sign means more victims.

We see that the 1967-75 totals show 1.19 male and 1.32 female victims for every violent male and female. Even more striking are the differential risks or fatal victimization. There were nearly two male killers for every male killed; however, for every female killer one woman was killed.

Table 5 also shows the differential risks of involvement and victimization attributed to other groups, projecting assumptions about social and power relations. Old men, married men, lower class, foreign, and nonwhite males were most likely to get killed rather than to inflict lethal injury. "Good guys" were of course most likely to be the killers.

Among females, more vulnerable than men in most categories, both young and old women as well as unmarried, lower class, foreign, and nonwhite women bore especially heavy burdens of relative victimization. Old, poor, and black women were shown only as killed and never as killers. Interestingly, "good" women, unlike "good" men, had no lethal power, but "bad" women were even more lethal than "bad" men. (The victimization of the "good" woman is often the curtain-raiser that provokes the hero to righteous "action.")

The pattern of relative victimization is remarkably stable from year to year. It demonstrates an invidious (but socially functional) sense of

risk and power. We do not yet know whether it also cultivates a corresponding hierarchy of fear and aggression. But we do have evidence to suggest that television viewing cultivates a general sense of danger and mistrust. That evidence comes from the fourth and final element of the Violence Profile, the component we call the Cultivation Differential.

(4)

The Cultivation Differential is the difference in the pattern of responses between light and heavy viewers of television, with age, sex, education, and newspaper reading controlled. Child and adult samples are asked questions about social reality that relate to the "facts" television presents in its own particular way. The difference between light viewers (usually watching 2 hours or less a day) and heavy viewers (usually watching 4 hours or more a day) giving the "television version" of two divergent answers is the Cultivation Differential indicating the "biasing" effects of exposure to television drama.

The Violence Profile's Cultivation Differential shows heavy viewers significantly overestimating (compared to light viewers in the same age, sex, education, and reader categories) the extent of violence and danger in the world. Their heightened sense of fear and mistrust is manifested in their typically more apprehensive responses to questions about their own personal safety, about crime and law enforcement, and about trust in other people.

Children exhibit the same patterns as adults, but the "under 30" or "television generation" is even more imbued with the television view of life than the "over 30" generation -- the last to grow up without television. Education makes a difference, as does regular newspaper reading, but heavy

viewing of television tends to counter these other cultural influences even within the college and news reader groups.

The facts of life in the world of television drama -- a violent world and a mean world -- seem to be reflected in the conceptions of heavy viewers about social reality. This is particularly true of the young and less educated viewers. Figures 6, 7, and 8 show the typical pattern of responses to three of the questions asked in the surveys conducted for the Violence Profile. Future reports will be able to show whether these conceptions can also reflect changes in television programming, if any, that may occur in the years ahead.

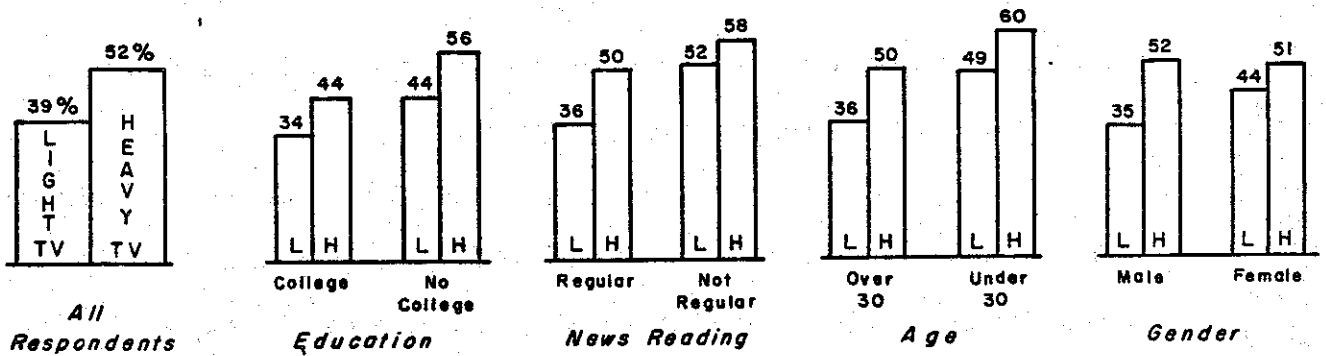


Figure 6: Question: "During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some type of violence -- about a 50-50 chance, about a 1 in 10 chance, or about a 1 in a 100 chance?" Percent of respondents answering "50-50 chance" or "1 in 10 chances"

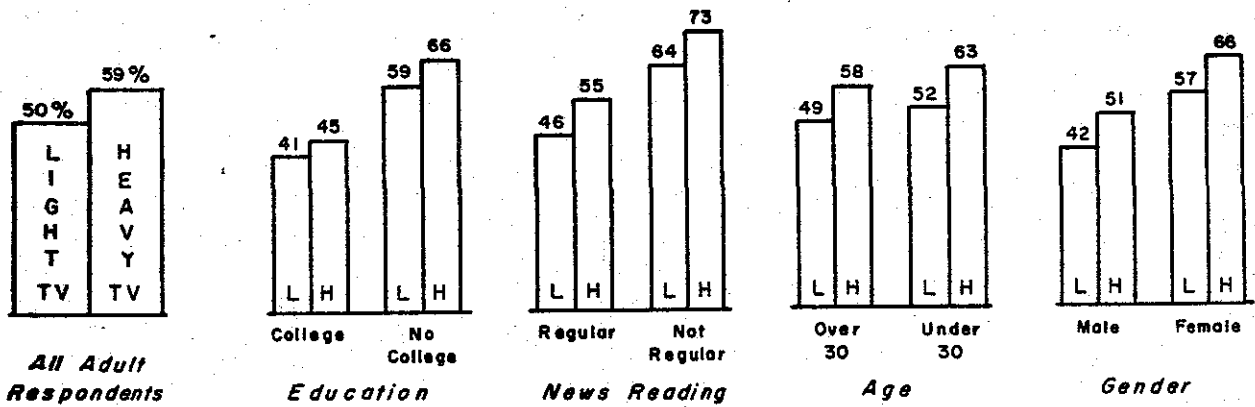


Figure 7: Question: "What percent of all males who have jobs work in law enforcement or crime detection -- 1 percent, 3 percent, or 9 percent?" Percent of respondents answering "3 percent" or "9 percent"

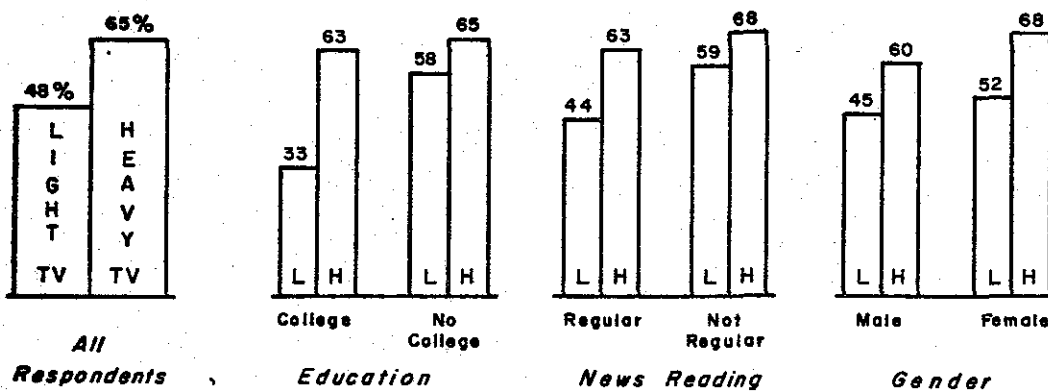


Figure 8: Question: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" Percent of respondents answering "you can't be too careful"

TABLE 1: ALL PROGRAMS, ALL NETWORKS

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	TOTAL
SAMPLES (100%)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Programs (plays) analyzed	96	87	121	111	103	100	99	96	111	924
Program Hours Analyzed	62.0	58.5	71.8	67.2	70.3	72.0	75.2	76.0	77.3	630.2
Leading characters analyzed	240	215	377	196	252	300	359	346	364	2649
PREVALENCE	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
(%P) Programs containing violence	81.3	81.6	83.5	77.5	80.6	79.0	72.7	83.3	78.4	79.8
Program hours containing violence	83.2	87.0	83.2	78.3	87.2	84.2	79.7	86.8	83.0	83.6
RATE	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Number of violent episodes	478	394	630	498	483	539	524	522	626	4694
(R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)	5.0	4.5	5.2	4.5	4.7	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.6	5.1
(R/H) Rate per all hours	7.7	6.7	8.8	7.4	6.9	7.5	7.0	6.9	8.1	7.4
Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.2	3.8	3.6	10.6
ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Violents (committing violence)	55.8	49.3	48.5	52.0	46.0	39.3	34.5	40.8	43.1	44.6
Victims (subjected to violence)	64.6	55.8	58.9	56.6	50.8	49.7	48.2	51.2	53.8	54.0
(%V) Any involvement in violence	73.3	65.1	66.3	62.8	61.5	58.3	55.7	60.7	64.8	62.9
Killers (committing fatal violence)	12.5	10.7	3.7	6.6	8.7	7.7	5.8	9.8	6.3	7.7
Killed (victims of lethal violence)	7.1	3.7	2.1	4.6	3.2	4.7	3.3	5.8	3.8	4.2
(%K) Any involvement in killing	18.7	11.6	5.6	8.7	9.9	9.7	7.5	13.6	9.1	10.2
INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE										
Program Score: $PS = (\%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H)$	106.6	104.1	111.4	101.3	103.7	104.8	97.3	107.9	105.8	104.8
Character V-Score: $CS = (\%V) + (\%K)$	92.1	76.7	71.9	71.4	71.4	68.0	63.2	74.3	73.9	73.0
Violence Index: $VI = PS + CS$	198.7	180.9	183.3	172.7	175.1	172.8	160.5	182.2	179.7	177.8

TABLE 2: ALL FAMILY HOUR PROGRAMS

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	TOTAL
SAMPLES (100%)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Programs (plays) analyzed	38	36	38	35	28	27	32	29	31	294
Program Hours Analyzed	30.0	27.0	27.3	26.0	25.0	23.5	29.0	27.0	21.5	236.3
Leading characters analyzed	103	102	130	76	78	98	110	109	105	911
PREVALENCE	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
(%P) Programs containing violence	78.9	75.0	63.2	57.1	75.0	74.1	56.3	69.0	51.6	66.7
Program hours containing violence	86.7	83.3	74.3	67.3	86.0	85.1	70.7	77.8	60.5	77.1
RATE	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Number of violent episodes	240	123	122	86	110	122	147	108	77	1135
(R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)	6.3	3.4	3.2	2.5	3.9	4.5	4.6	3.7	2.5	3.9
(R/H) Rate per all hours	8.0	4.5	4.5	3.3	4.4	5.2	5.1	4.0	3.6	4.8
Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.9	1.0	0.5	2.4
ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Violents (committing violence)	58.3	39.2	36.2	32.9	37.2	37.8	29.1	29.4	16.2	35.0
Victims (subjected to violence)	68.9	46.1	40.8	39.5	38.5	40.8	33.6	36.7	27.6	41.4
(%V) Any involvement in violence	75.7	56.9	49.2	40.8	50.0	50.0	40.9	45.0	36.2	49.5
Killers (committing fatal violence)	22.3	10.8	6.2	3.9	9.0	4.1	6.4	12.8	1.0	8.6
Killed (victims of lethal violence)	7.8	4.9	3.1	1.3	2.6	3.1	4.5	7.3	0.0	4.0
(%K) Any involvement in killing	28.2	12.7	9.2	3.9	10.3	5.1	10.0	16.5	1.0	11.0
INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE										
Program Score: $PS = (%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H)$	107.6	90.9	78.5	68.7	91.7	93.5	75.6	84.4	63.7	84.0
Character V-Score: $CS = (%V) + (%K)$	103.9	69.6	58.5	44.7	60.3	55.1	50.9	61.5	37.1	60.5
Violence Index: $VI = PS + CS$	211.5	160.6	137.0	113.4	151.9	148.6	126.5	145.9	100.9	144.5

TABLE 3: ALL EVENING PROGRAMS FOLLOWING FAMILY HOUR

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	TOTAL
SAMPLES (100%)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Programs (plays) analyzed	26	21	26	26	34	33	30	29	35	260
Program Hours Analyzed	25.0	24.0	30.5	28.0	30.3	33.0	27.5	33.0	39.5	270.7
Leading characters analyzed	75	60	88	56	91	119	104	115	133	841
PREVALENCE	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
(%P) Programs containing violence	69.2	76.2	80.8	69.2	76.5	69.7	63.3	86.2	85.7	75.4
Program hours containing violence	76.0	89.6	84.4	80.4	87.6	79.8	79.1	92.4	92.4	85.1
RATE	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Number of violent episodes	87	99	110	116	129	172	130	220	284	1347
(R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)	3.2	4.7	4.2	4.5	3.8	5.2	4.3	7.6	8.1	5.2
(R/H) Rate per all hours	3.8	4.1	3.6	4.1	4.3	5.2	4.7	6.7	7.2	5.0
Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.3	1.8	1.9	5.0
ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Violents (committing violence)	38.7	55.0	34.1	46.4	44.0	37.8	32.7	56.5	51.1	44.0
Victims (subjected to violence)	42.7	55.0	44.3	50.0	48.4	45.4	36.5	61.7	59.4	49.7
(%V) Any involvement in violence	56.0	68.3	52.3	57.1	59.3	55.5	41.3	71.3	68.4	59.1
Killers (committing fatal violence)	5.3	16.7	5.7	14.3	15.4	16.0	12.5	16.5	16.5	13.6
Killed (victims of lethal violence)	4.0	5.0	2.3	12.5	5.5	8.4	6.7	10.4	9.8	7.4
(%K) Any involvement in killing	9.3	16.7	6.8	21.4	17.6	19.3	14.4	24.3	23.3	17.6
INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE										
Program Score: $PS = (%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H)$	82.9	93.9	96.4	86.4	92.6	90.5	81.5	114.7	116.3	95.7
Character V-Score: $CS = (%V) + (%K)$	65.3	85.0	59.1	78.6	76.9	74.8	55.8	95.7	91.7	76.7
Violence Index: $VI = PS + CS$	148.2	178.9	155.5	165.0	169.5	165.3	137.2	210.4	208.1	172.4

TABLE 4: ALL DAYTIME PROGRAMS (WEEKEND)

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	TOTAL
SAMPLES (100%)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Programs (plays) analyzed	32	30	57	50	41	40	37	38	45	370
Program Hours Analyzed	7.0	7.5	14.0	13.2	15.0	15.5	18.7	16.0	16.3	123.2
Leading characters analyzed	62	53	159	64	83	83	145	122	126	897
PREVALENCE	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
(%P) Programs containing violence	93.8	93.3	98.2	96.0	87.8	90.0	94.6	92.1	91.1	93.2
Program hours containing violence	94.0	92.2	97.6	95.6	88.5	92.3	94.6	90.6	89.8	92.7
RATE	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Number of violent episodes	151	172	398	296	244	245	247	194	265	2212
(R/P) Rate per all programs (plays)	4.7	5.7	7.0	5.9	6.0	6.1	6.7	5.1	5.9	6.0
(R/H) Rate per all hours	21.6	22.9	28.4	22.5	16.2	15.8	13.2	12.1	16.2	18.0
Duration of Violent Episodes (hrs)	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.0	0.9	1.2	3.2
ROLES (% OF LEADING CHARACTERS)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Violents (committing violence)	72.6	62.3	66.7	79.7	56.6	43.4	40.0	36.1	57.1	54.8
Victims (subjected to violence)	83.9	75.5	81.8	82.8	65.1	66.3	67.6	54.1	69.8	70.9
(%V) Any involvement in violence	90.3	77.4	88.1	93.8	74.7	72.3	77.2	64.8	84.9	79.9
Killers (committing fatal violence)	4.8	3.8	0.6	3.1	1.2	0.0	0.7	0.8	0.0	1.2
Killed (victims of lethal violence)	9.7	0.0	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.3
(%K) Any involvement in killing	14.5	3.8	1.9	3.1	1.2	1.2	0.7	0.8	0.8	2.3
INDICATORS OF VIOLENCE										
Program Score: $PS = (%P) + 2(R/P) + 2(R/H)$	146.3	150.7	169.1	152.8	132.2	133.9	134.4	126.6	135.3	141.1
Character V-Score: $CS = (%V) + (%K)$	104.8	81.1	89.9	96.9	75.9	73.5	77.9	65.6	85.7	82.3
Violence Index: $VI = PS + CS$	251.2	231.8	259.0	249.7	208.1	207.4	212.3	192.1	221.1	223.4

Table 5: Risk ratios for all programs studied 1967-75

Groups	Male Characters				Female Characters			
	N	Character score	Violent-victim ratio	Killer-killed ratio	N	Character score	Violent-victim ratio	Killer-killed ratio
All characters	2010	80.0	-1.19	+1.97	605	48.9	-1.32	1.00
<i>Social age</i>								
Children-adolescents	188	64.9	-1.83	+0.00	77	46.8	-1.39	0.00*
Young adults	431	81.2	-1.21	+3.07	209	59.8	-1.67	+1.29
Settled adults	1068	80.8	-1.15	+1.98	267	37.8	1.00	1.00
Old	81	58.0	+1.03	-2.00	22	50.0	-2.25	-0.00*
<i>Marital status</i>								
Not married	1133	83.6	-1.16	+2.24	306	57.2	-1.51	-1.43
Married	462	66.9	-1.33	+1.57	252	39.3	-1.11	+1.40
<i>Class</i>								
Clearly upper	196	87.2	-1.28	+1.15	70	52.9	-1.64	+1.33
Mixed; indeterminate	1744	78.7	-1.19	+2.36	517	48.2	-1.26	1.00
Clearly lower	70	91.4	-1.11	-1.33	18	55.6	-2.67	-0.00*
<i>Nationality</i>								
U.S.	1505	75.0	-1.19	+2.39	503	46.1	-1.39	-1.08
Other	276	96.7	-1.22	+1.13	66	60.6	-1.55	+3.00
<i>Race</i>								
White	1533	77.6	-1.20	+2.12	541	49.9	-1.29	+1.07
Other	264	83.3	-1.27	+1.33	50	38.0	-2.43	-0.00*
<i>Character type**</i>								
"Good" (heroes)	928	69.3	-1.26	+3.47	314	43.3	-1.56	-6.00
Mixed type	432	71.1	-1.31	+1.09	156	43.6	-1.37	1.00
"Bad" (villains)	291	114.1	-1.03	+1.80	41	82.9	+1.14	+2.00

* Group has neither violent nor victims. If 0.00 is preceded by a sign, group has either no violent or no victims; +0.00 means only violent(s) but no victims(s); -0.00 means only victims but no violent(s).

** This classification was introduced in 1969.

Note: Character score is the percent of characters involved in any violence plus the percent involved in any killing. V-V ratio is of violent (+) and victims (-). K-k ratio is of killers (+) and killed (-).