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Preventing School Violence: No Easy Answers

Psychiatrists and other mental health professionals know how to identify and treat young people at risk for violent behavior, and they have a good handle on primary prevention of violence, too, presentations at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in Toronto, Ontario, in June and interviews afterward suggest. Implementing this knowledge is the tough part: that takes money, a network of support services, and physicians and others committed to voluntary service in their communities.

Last year, the National Institutes of Health budgeted only \$10 million for research in childhood violence, said Harold Eist, MD, a psychiatrist practicing in Washington, DC, and immediate past president of the APA. "This is a minuscule amount of money for this issue," Eist said in an interview. "It's as if Congress doesn't want to admit the seriousness of the problem."

"Violence is the leading public health problem in America," Eist asserted, "and we're doing virtually nothing about it."

Whence the Escalation?

The bruises, black eyes, and bloody noses of playground clashes a generation or so ago now prompt nostalgia. In the 1997-1998 school year, children as young as 11 years old have gunned down classmates and teachers in mass shootings at schools in Pearl, Miss, West Paducah, Ky, Jonesboro, Ark, Edinburgh, Pa, and Springfield, Ore (*JAMA*. 1998;279:1853), leaving 13 dead and 45 wounded, according to Ronald Stephens, EdD, executive director of the National School Safety Center, a nonprofit organization based in Westlake Village, Calif.

Such youngsters undeniably represent the far end of the violence spectrum, said Richard Harding, MD, APA vice president and clinical professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Columbia. In hindsight, signs of their disturbance may have been apparent, he said, but it takes a system sensitized to such signals to pick them up and to respond appropriately.

"Other children often distance themselves from peers who are irritable, angry, and talk of 'blasting someone away' or other scary or extreme acts. Most children don't want to think about the things these children are thinking about," Harding said. "Yet they rarely report the danger to adults," he noted. "There's peer pressure not to tell."

The troubled youngster becomes increasingly isolated, Harding said,

leaving him—the typical offender is male—with no counterbalance for his violent thoughts. He wants to make people pay attention to him. If he has seen enough examples of violence and bizarre behavior on television and in movies, video games, and comic books, Harding said, similar feats may seem a good way to impress others. Being kicked out of class may trigger an impulsive act of aggression.

"This is why locking up guns saves lives," Harding said. "If a person doesn't have ready access to a gun, the passage of time may permit him to reorganize and calm down."

"The recent school shootings are headline-grabbing events because of their rarity," Joan Kinlan, MD, a child and adolescent psychiatrist practicing in Washington, DC, said at an APA workshop on school violence. But the possibility of such violence in schools, she said, is appallingly common. In a national survey of nearly 22,000 students in public and private schools, nearly 13% of schoolchildren reported knowing another student who brought a gun to school in the 1995-1996 academic year (*Students' Reports of School Crime*. Washington, DC: US Dept of Education; 1998, publication NCES 98-241; available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/>). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 7.6% of a representative sample of nearly 11,000 students in grades 9 through 12 reported carrying a gun during the 30 days preceding the survey (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1995. *MMWR*. 1996;45(SS-4):1-86).

Some of those who carry guns belong to gangs. Others are those whom teachers would not suspect of violence. They often feel insecure, Kinlan said, and see the world as a dangerous place. They avoid fights. They are the ones who are bullied. "But because the gun is there," she said, "they may use it."

Stephens of the National School Safety Center said that from July 1, 1992, when the organization began keeping records, to July 1, 1998, there have been 226 school-associated violent deaths. Of these, 175 were shootings, 33 were stabbings or slashings, and the remainder were attributed to beatings, hangings, or asphyxiations. In the past school year alone, there were 40 violent deaths in the nation's schools.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 10% of US public schools experienced at least 1 serious violent crime in the 1996-1997 school year. These incidents included murder, rape or other type of sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon, or robbery. There were nearly 190,000 physical attacks or fights without a weapon, as well as high numbers of thefts or larceny and vandalism (*Violence and Discipline Problems in US Public Schools 1996-97*. Washington, DC: US Dept of Education; 1998, publication NCES 98-030; available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/>). [Figure]

These statistics do not include other pervasive and disturbing events that create an atmosphere conducive to violence that occurs in schools on a daily basis, Kinlan said, citing "verbal harassment, graffiti in bathrooms that identifies kids by name, and sexual harassment of both boys and girls, such as butt holding and breast touching." A visitor to almost any public high school who spends just 5 minutes in the hall, she said, will see numerous examples of such violence.

Moreover, incidents of violence in schools probably are underreported, according to Lois Flaherty, MD, clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, and chair of the APA workshop on school violence. School administrators want to downplay violence, she said, and may not report such events as assaults on teachers and fights in lunchrooms. [Figure]

Violence occurs most often in unstructured time, she said, when classes are changing, at lunchtime, recess, and dismissal, for example. Having clear rules for students about what is and is not acceptable behavior and having teachers who are viewed as fair and consistent, Flaherty said, help reduce violence.

Children Need Rules, Protection

Children who have witnessed violence or been victims of violence feel let down by the adult protective system, said Carl Bell, MD, chief executive officer of the Community Mental Health Council and professor of psychiatry and public health at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, both in Chicago. These children often have generalized anxiety and depression, he said at the APA workshop. They are afraid of being victimized again and may carry knives or guns to school for self-protection. "The solution is to reestablish the adult protective shield," he said in an interview. "The school must be clear about security. Children need to feel safe at school."

Some schools have eliminated lockers and even book bags, he said, providing 1 set of books to be used in class and another to be left at home. Others require that students use see-through book bags. Although some schools have used metal detectors at doors like those in airports, there are easy ways to stymie this system, he said: children may bring tin cans to set off the alarm, especially on test days, causing long delays. Handheld detectors may be more practical, he said, because they can be used for spot checks on, say, every second child or on different days of the week. Some schools employ uniformed security guards. Hallway cameras may serve as a deterrent. Signs can make the rules explicit, Bell said: "No guns; no alcohol; no fighting. Violators will be prosecuted. Do your part to make our school a safe place."

The school principal must make safety a prime mission, he said, by involving students and teachers in a collaborative partnership to work toward their shared goal. In a mission-driven system, he said, students are asked to take personal responsibility for how they resolve conflicts with one another. Students who buy into the mission of keeping their school safe learn that it sometimes is necessary to snitch on someone whose behavior is subverting that goal.

Schools need gun safety drills, Bell said. "Every school has procedures for a fire drill," he noted, "but few have plans for what to do if a student walks into school with a gun." Most, he said, have an "It won't happen here" mentality. Schools, he said, should adopt public address codes for emergencies like those hospitals use: "Mr Strong, report to the auditorium." Teachers should lock doors to their classrooms and stay with students until an all-clear signal sounds, not send students fleeing from the building. This tactic, he said, keeps them from becoming

targets.

Students who are caught carrying weapons or are otherwise disruptive, Bell said, need counseling. They may need to go to an alternative school. They should not just be expelled and put on the street. "Behind all anger, usually, is some form of hurt," he said. "A child who tries to commit suicide," he noted, "gets a lot of attention. Disruptive children need intensive services, too. Schools need support from the social service system and the psychiatric system. Violent children may have treatable psychiatric illnesses."

Some Need In-School Help

A contemporary approach to reducing youth violence is to reverse the traditional model of referring troubled youngsters out to treatment and bring both treatment and prevention services into the school. The mental health program affiliated with the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore, started in 1989 under Flaherty's direction, is an example.

According to its present director, Mark Weist, PhD, a clinical psychologist and associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry, the in-school program sees proportionally more youngsters with internalizing disorders such as depression and posttraumatic stress, while community mental health centers see proportionally more youngsters who had to act out to get treatment and have been diagnosed with disorders involving oppositional defiance, antisocial behavior, and conduct.

In some inner-city communities, the majority of children could benefit from some mental health services, Weist said in an interview. Studies show that fewer than one third of those who have such needs nationally receive appropriate services (Dryfoos JG. *Full-Service Schools*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass; 1994; *Adolescent Health*. Washington, DC: Office of Technology Assessment; 1991). In-school programs, Weist said, not only minimize the stigma of seeking care, but also avoid financial, transportation, and other barriers, as well as long waiting lists and long intake procedures.

Kindergarten teachers, he said, can identify highly aggressive children, the ones at risk for later dropping out and engaging in violence and criminal behavior. "But schools often don't know what to do with these youngsters," he noted. Frequently the only way to get mental health services is to refer the child to special education, a cumbersome process that often leads to unwarranted labeling.

About one third of Baltimore's 183 schools now have expanded mental health services, provided by 5 separate programs. The one Weist directs serves 19 schools, offering brief focused intervention throughout the school years from providers with whom children feel comfortable. "After I'm finished wearing my clinician hat," said Weist, who spends part of his time working directly with high school students, "I can put on my mentoring hat." Students drop by his office for help with filling out college applications or studying for tests. In this context, he said, he continues to provide therapeutic services.

The program offers all students classroom training in ways to manage

anger, develop cognitive skills, improve self-control, and reduce aggressive behaviors. Such programs also give youngsters the opportunity to talk about violence they've experienced. Having a classmate killed, for instance, understandably upsets the others. In this situation, Weist said, the mental health group forms a team, makes an announcement about what happened, asks for a moment of silence, and holds a series of meetings to let students know adults are concerned about them and are there to help them cope.

Without outside concern, Weist said, children may develop a sense that life is cheap, and whole communities may be numbed and feel beaten down by violence. Children who undergo traumatic experiences that are not processed, he noted, are more likely to become violent themselves.

Weist said the mental health program seeks parental consent for most of those who participate because the school wants the parents to become involved. In Maryland, youths over 16 years of age may independently receive mental health services. When substance abuse is involved, services may be provided to youths younger than 16 years without parental consent.

Involve the Parents

Paul Fink, MD, professor of psychiatry at Temple University School of Medicine, Philadelphia, Pa, speaking at the APA workshop on school violence, described a kind of psychological autopsy he conducts as the voluntary head of the Philadelphia health department's youth homicide committee. Annual reviews of the killings of all persons in the city under the age of 22 years, he said, showed that the earliest marker for killing or being killed was truancy.

This finding, he said, prompted lowering the threshold at which parents are brought into truancy court from 50 days to 25 days and increasing the court's sessions from twice a month to 4 days a week. Some 30,000 of the 215,000 students in the Philadelphia school system are absent on any given day, he said, and often parents are unaware that their children are skipping school. This year the court will handle 10,000 cases of youngsters absent from school 25 days or more, up from 2000 when the cutoff was 50 days. The court also has been decentralized and moved into the community, holding sessions in schools. This raises the embarrassment for parents on the local level, Fink said, and also brings them into the school.

The committee found that ninth grade is a critical time: the majority of youngsters who murdered or were murdered had truancy problems or dropped out in that academic year. The transition to high school may be more perilous than previously suspected, Fink said, suggesting that a longer and more in-depth orientation period may prove a useful violence prevention strategy.

Fink also directs a child-centered community collaboration that aims, he said, "to identify at-risk children before they kill someone or are killed themselves." Once a month, he meets at an inner-city middle school serving grades 5 through 8 with the school principal, nurse, counselors, and other faculty members, along with representatives from the department of human services, local community mental health

center, and other service agencies or organizations—about 20 to 25 participants on average. A school counselor presents cases of disturbed or distressed children, including those engaging in violent behavior.

Typically, Fink said, a school system has 3 ways of dealing with disruptive children: transfer them, suspend them, or expel them. All, he said, "are punitive and useless." But now, he said, everyone works together to try to improve the situation. One child was getting an "A" in math, but flunking all other subjects. The math teacher became his mentor. Other children were facing difficult family situations that home visitors from the mental health center helped resolve. Treatment of a parent with a substance abuse or other problem may be the key to improving a child's behavior.

Fink, a past president of the APA, volunteers his services. The project, he said, takes only a modest amount of his time: 90 minutes for the monthly meeting, travel time, and occasional other visits to the school. He would like to see more physicians assume a similar role. "With 650,000 physicians in this country," he said, "there must be a few others who understand the need to bring more and more people into the room. The community has to acknowledge that schools can't do their job all alone."

—by Lynne Lamberg, JAMA contributor

Is Media Violence to Blame?

The statistics are familiar but still chilling: By 18 years old, the APA reports, the typical American child will have seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence while watching 28 hours of television a week. The perpetrators of violence went unsanctioned in 73% of these violent scenes, according to the National Television Violence Study in 1996. The most effective way to quell imitation, the study said, is to show punishment for such acts. Failure to show consequences desensitizes viewers and promotes identification with aggressors. The APA's fact sheet on the psychiatric effects of media violence may be found at the APA Web site: <http://www.psych.org/>.—L. L.

School Mental Health Conference Next Month

The Center for School Mental Health Assistance in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore, provides leadership and technical assistance nationwide to develop school-based mental health programs. Its services include training, education, and resource materials. The center will sponsor a national conference on advancing school mental health September 24 to 26, 1998, in Virginia Beach, Va. Details are available on the Center's web site, <http://csmha.ab.umd.edu/> or by calling (888) 706-0980.—L.

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Statement of Mark L. Rosenberg, M.D., M.P.P.
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Hearing On School Violence
Thursday, March 11, 1999

Good morning. I am Dr. Mark Rosenberg of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where I direct the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. The CDC's mission is to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability. I am honored to be here today to explore what schools can do to help prevent violence among our youth. I would like to talk with you about (1) the framework we use in public health to address the problem of violence; (2) what we know about violence among our youth and in schools; (3) the characteristics of successful strategies and programs that work in preventing violence; and (4) future directions for moving forward together to address the problem of school violence.

The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention

In public health, we approach the problem of youth violence by asking four questions:

1. ***What is the problem? (Surveillance)***. We collect data on the problem that we can use to better understand the problem and to do something about it. We ask "who, what, where, when, and how did it happen?"
2. ***What are the causes? (Risk Factor Research)***. We seek to discover what puts people at risk or protects them.
3. ***What works to help prevent the problem? (Intervention Evaluation)***. We use the knowledge we have of the pattern of the problem to develop and test interventions that might work to prevent it.
4. ***How do you do it? (Program Implementation)***. We look at how we can accelerate the dissemination of research findings more quickly and effectively. We also explore how we apply the proven effective interventions broadly in the community.

Violence among our youth and in our schools is an urgent problem. Sometimes, the urgency of a problem forces us to take action before we have time to complete all the steps, and we must learn as we go how to refine our efforts and to provide the science base for our programs and programs that others are implementing. Therefore, our progress along this model is not always linear, i.e., following in an orderly fashion from numbers one through four. Congress; schools throughout the Nation; those of us in State, Federal, and local agencies who deal with violence; our partners in the private sector; parents; and others have had to respond at the same time that we are learning what works best. CDC's public health efforts focus on prevention, are science based, and integrate the approaches and findings of many different fields and disciplines. We have learned a number of things in public health that can help.

What Do We Know About the Problem of Youth Violence and Violence in our Schools

Surveillance

It is important for us to begin by taking a closer look at this problem based on what we have learned from surveillance and research. Prior to the tragedies at the schools in Jonesboro, Paducah, Pearl and Springfield, CDC collaborated with the Departments of Education and Justice and the National School Safety Center in a study of violence-related deaths in schools. This is important because it gives us a baseline for comparing and analyzing what has gone on more recently. We looked at any homicide, suicide, or firearm-related death in the United States, from January 1992 through June 1994 that occurred: 1) on the property of a functioning public or private elementary or secondary school, 2) on the way to or from regular sessions at such a school, or 3) while attending or on the way to or from an official school-sponsored event. We found that 105 deaths occurred during the two-year period. More than half of the victims

(65 percent) were students, 11 percent were teachers or other staff, and the remaining victims

(23 percent) were community members killed on school property. The majority of victims

(83 percent) were males. The deaths included in this study occurred in 25 different States across the country. They affected primary and secondary schools and communities of all sizes. Fewer than one third (28 percent) of the fatal injuries happened inside the school building, approximately one third (36 percent) occurred on school property but out-of-doors, and about one third (35 percent) occurred off campus.

We are extending the study on violent deaths in schools to examine the time period from July 1994 through June 1998 to determine what differences there may be in violence in schools since the beginning of the study. We have analyzed the data relating to the events in Jonesboro, Paducah, Pearl and Springfield, and are examining how this compares to statistics from all other incidents of lethal violence in schools where multiple deaths occurred since 1992. Our analysis shows that whereas there were only two recorded multiple-death shooting events in schools between 1992 and 1994 (each involving two deaths), preliminary data show that between July 1994 and June 1998, there have been 18 multiple-victim events in schools. In addition to the cases of Jonesboro, Paducah, Pearl and Springfield, there were more than six other schools that experienced violence involving two or three deaths. Many also have been shocked at the profile of those involved: in the Jonesboro, Paducah, Pearl and Springfield shootings, all of the perpetrators were white males with an average age of 13.5 and all of the fatalities were white females with an average age of 14.5. Moreover, all of the perpetrators and victims knew each other. We are extending our analysis in order to determine whether these multiple-death incidents in schools represent an increasing trend, and whether there is an increasing trend in overall school deaths or other aspects of school violence.

During 1992-1994, when the 105 school-related deaths were reported from the initial phase of the CDC study, more than 8,000 children and adolescents were victims of homicide in this country. The unconscionable violence in school settings is an extension of the violence that occurs among children and adolescents in communities throughout our Nation. No school is an island -- violence prevention programs in the schools must include and encompass violence prevention in the community. The effects of school and community violence fall disproportionately among the poor and minorities and take a great toll on their education. Homicide remains the second leading cause of death for young Americans between the ages of 15 and 24 and the leading cause of death for African Americans in this age group. For children ages 10-14 years, homicide is the third leading cause of death. What has changed most dramatically over the past 20 years has been the emergence of fatal youth violence -- children killing children. Although there has been a slight decrease in national youth homicide rates since 1993, the number of young people who die violently remains unacceptably high, and the recent multiple shootings in schools underscores the importance of addressing youth violence.

In addition to the school studies, CDC continually monitors behaviors among youth that have an impact on their health through a surveillance system, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted in collaboration with the States. This survey is administered to high school students in grades 9-12. Part of this survey covers risk behaviors for violence-related injuries and deaths, including weapon-carrying and physical fighting. In 1997 (the latest year for which these data are available), the YRBS showed that during the month preceding the survey: 8.5 percent of students in grades 9-12 carried weapons on school property; 14.8 percent of students had been in a physical fight on school property; more than 36 percent had been in a fight in the community, with 3.5 percent sustaining injuries that required medical treatment; and 4.0 percent of students had missed a day of school because they felt unsafe at school or traveling to and from school.

Risk Factor Research Findings

From analysis of data on youth violence, we know that:

- Violence involving youth is more lethal, i.e., a greater proportion of violent interactions among youth result in death. The use of firearms in violent interactions was associated with a dramatic increase in youth homicide between 1985 and 1993. More than 90 percent of the increase in youth homicide rates between 1985 and 1993 was due to homicides committed with firearms.
- Reacting violently to circumstances is a learned behavior that can be unlearned.
- Children who witness or experience violence in the home are more likely to become perpetrators or victims of violence later on. This means that children who live in homes where their mother's partner beats or sexually assaults her are at higher risk of being victims of the same violence themselves or of committing violence later on. It is important that our violence prevention efforts at school and in the community recognize and intervene in this cycle.
- 25 percent of 8th and 9th grade male and female students in a recent study, conducted by the University of North Carolina as part of a CDC-sponsored Safe Dates project, indicated they had been victims of physical and psychological dating violence and 8 percent had been victims of rape or other sexual dating violence.

In reviewing research on youth violence, we have identified the following risk factors:

- Individual factors

- History of early aggression

- Beliefs supportive of violence

- Attributing hostility to others

- Social cognitive deficits

- Family factors

- Problem parental behavior

- Low emotional attachments to parent/care givers

- Poor monitoring and supervision of children

- Exposure to violence

- Poor family functioning

- Peer/school factors

- Negative peer influences

- Low commitment to school

- Academic failure

- Certain school environments/practices, such as undisciplined classrooms, lax enforcement of school rules and policies, and crowded physical space

- Environment/neighborhood factors

- High concentrations of poor residents

- High levels of transience

- High levels of family disruption

- Low community involvement/participation

- Diminished economic opportunity

- Access to firearms

Successful Strategies and Programs

Intervention Evaluation

In their book, Violence in American Schools, Dr. Del Elliott (a prominent youth violence researcher who leads the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) at the University of Colorado at Boulder), and his colleagues say, "Most of the violence prevention program currently being employed in the schools, e.g. conflict resolution curricula, peer mediation, individual counseling, metal detectors, and locker searches and sweeps, have either not been thoroughly evaluated or have been evaluated and found to be ineffective." At CDC, our primary efforts have been directed toward evaluating these types of programs to build a body of knowledge about programs that are effective.

In fiscal year 1993, Congress provided funds to CDC for research to determine what interventions work to prevent violence among youth, both in schools and in communities, and how best to implement those interventions. The initial thirteen projects, funded for three years with an investment of over \$6.9 million, were located in 11 cities and one county and targeted elementary schools, middle schools, and older youth. These projects have targeted predominately urban, high-risk youth and may be applicable to other areas of the country; however, these projects have not been evaluated in rural settings. Results indicate:

- Effective strategies include school-based curricula that emphasize the development of problem-solving, social and communication skills, and anger management. In addition, parenting programs that promote strong bonding between parents and children and that teach parents skills in managing conflict in the family are also very promising.
- Even theoretically sound strategies do not succeed in schools with chaotic environments or where the administration does not actively support the project. Examples are schools where administrative policies are unclear, communication among school staff or between the school and parents is confused or where teachers are unable to manage their classrooms. Established partnerships between intervention agents (schools, community-based organizations and health departments) work better than newly established efforts.
- Outcomes varied across age groups whether examining elementary vs. middle vs. high school or even between grades in the same elementary school. It is important to design interventions that are appropriate for the developmental level of the students who will receive them. In addition, outcomes varied by gender for students in the same intervention showing the importance of tailoring the interventions as specifically as possible for girls and for boys.
- Timing and duration of interventions make a significant difference in the effect of a program. There is wide disparity in the amount of time some children are exposed to interventions. In some cases there is only one class period in the whole year compared to those which occur several hours a week for more than a semester. The emphasis should be on more interventions that have intensive and longer exposure rather than on interventions of shorter, less intense duration.

CDC recently funded a three-year follow-up effort, which will conclude in the Fall of 1999, with some of the most promising projects to see if these results are appropriate for replication and long term application. Below are brief summaries of some of our current projects (including the follow-up

projects):

- Peace Builders in Tucson, Arizona, work in elementary schools to reduce physical and verbal aggression by creating a "culture of peace" within the school. Throughout the school year, counselors or other specially trained instructors, using various methods such as modeling, role play, and self-monitoring, teach students to interact socially in a positive way. The main messages are to praise others, avoid insults, seek the advice of wise people and speak up about hurt feelings. The intervention has achieved significant behavioral improvement. Teachers reported an overall decline in individual problem behaviors such as fighting and destruction of property belonging to others. The follow-up study will also assess whether these results will continue to hold up over time as the students progress through middle school.
- The University of Michigan is evaluating a three-level intervention to prevent violence. Participants are high-risk, urban youth, ages 7-13, residing in high-violence areas of Chicago and Aurora, Illinois. The first level consists of classroom-based training to increase awareness and knowledge about factors that influence peer and other social relationships. The next level includes activities in the first level plus training conducted through small groups and peer relationships for high-risk children. The third level adds a family intervention for the high-risk children and their families. The results show that a combination of classroom, small group, and family interventions significantly reduced aggressive behavior among study participants who had demonstrated higher levels of aggression.
- In Richmond, Virginia, the Youth Violence Prevention Program is a school-based project to reduce aggressive behaviors among 6th graders. The 16-session curriculum teaches students how to deal with violence and anger. For example, the students participate in role-playing and practice the conflict resolution skills such as using humor or leaving the scene of a dispute. Some other programs simply discuss, but don't rehearse, these skills. The program also has a peer mediation program that uses a problem-solving approach to reinforce the skills students learn in the curriculum. The results show a significant, 50 percent reduction in fight-related injuries requiring medical attention, 56 percent fewer fights at school, 74 percent fewer incidents of carrying weapons to school, 59 percent fewer suspensions, a lower frequency of threats to hurt a teacher, and significant improvements in self-esteem. Students in the program had fewer incidents of disruptive behavior and defiance of school authority.
- In Portland, Oregon, Self Enhancement, Inc., provided students from low-income, high-crime neighborhoods in grades 7-9 in the Portland Public Schools with adult mentors and programs that included training in conflict resolution and social skills, peer education in violence prevention, recreational opportunities, and academic tutoring. Students spent at least 1 hour per month interacting with their mentor. Services were provided about 13 hours per week during the school year and 25 hours per week during the summer months. The training drew extensively upon unique cultural foundations and experiences that were relevant to the target population of students. Approximately 120 students from four schools (three middle and one high school) were enrolled in the program. Approximately 200 students from the same school and with similar school performance, behavioral problems, and peer relationships served as the comparison group. After two years, rates of weapon carrying decreased by 65 percent and fights at school decreased by 66 percent; no significant decreases in these behaviors were noted in the control group.

- In Seattle, Washington, Second Step - A Violence Prevention Curriculum has been implemented for elementary school students. Evaluation of the Second Step program showed a positive impact in reducing aggressive physical acts and increasing pro-social behavior. The effect was modest, but combined with a growing body of evidence from other evaluated interventions, indicates that, just as violence is a learned behavior, it can be *unlearned*.

Program Implementation

We have put in place some programs that work, and we know some strategies for reducing youth violence. However, we need a more complete response to this problem. Parents, teachers, school administrators and others need to have ready access to the best, most current, science-based information. The demand for solutions in youth violence prevention is a direct consequence of the increasing realization that youth violence can be prevented. More and more communities and schools are designing and implementing violence prevention programs. To benefit from new information, they will need to know: (1) how to access understandable and practical information on developing violence prevention programs that have demonstrated success elsewhere; (2) how to localize intervention strategies for specific community needs; and (3) how to determine if the violence prevention program is working. Based on our experience in implementing the first 13 projects, CDC published, "Youth Violence Prevention - - Descriptions and Baseline Data from 13 Evaluation Projects," a supplement to the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, and, "Measuring Violence-Related Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors Among Youths: A Compendium of Assessment Tools." We also have produced a manual to help communities develop prevention activities, "Prevention of Youth Violence: A Framework for Community Action," and are in the process of developing recommendations for "best practices" that characterize promising violence prevention strategies. We are providing a copy of these documents to the Subcommittee.

CDC is conducting the Best Practices Project to capture and disseminate new knowledge gained from the CDC/outside experts and other evaluation projects, to the specific community, practitioners and lay people interested in violence prevention. Over the past two years we have consulted with over 70 experts in the field of youth violence prevention and reviewed the results of research to make recommendations on state-of-the-art prevention strategies. Four strategies have been identified that form an effective, manageable approach for communities to implement in their efforts to prevent youth violence: (1) social-cognitive skills training; (2) parent/family interventions; (3) nurse-home visitation; and (4) mentoring. Technical assistance materials on preventing youth violence will be developed for different audiences, including schools, and made available based on this compilation of current knowledge of the state of the art. We anticipate that the first products from this effort will be ready by the end of 1999.

In another effort to disseminate information about what works based on rigorous scientific standards and to provide technical assistance to schools and communities, CDC is supporting the work of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), headed by Dr. Del Elliot, through an interagency agreement with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the Department of Justice. The CSPV operates the Blueprints program to determine effective youth violence prevention activities. The CSPV has identified four scientific criteria which they use to determine effectiveness. The intervention must (1) be theoretically sound; (2) have demonstrated a reduction in violent behavior; (3) have demonstrated a long-term effect; and (4) have been replicated in at least one other site. Blueprints programs use strategies such as mentoring, intensive counseling or therapy for troubled youth, and bullying prevention. The CSPV works with communities and schools to assist them in choosing the most appropriate intervention and provides technical assistance in implementation.

The criteria mentioned above are also consistent with the principles of effectiveness outlined by the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program. To strengthen collaboration between CDC and the Department of Education, CDC has placed a staff person within the Department of Education to work with the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program.

Because of the nature of youth and school violence, much of our work in this area is collaborative. For example, within CDC, there are three Centers that work together on various parts of the public health approach to school violence. In addition to the work of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, which I have primarily addressed, CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion supports the YRBS and a number of other school health-related activities, and the National Center for Health Statistics works with us on the surveillance of violence against women, including teenagers. Within the Department of Health and Human Services, we are jointly funding evaluation of an early childhood intervention to prevent youth violence with the National Institute of Mental Health at the NIH, working with the Health Resources and Services Administration on school safety guidelines, and will be working with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration on the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative. In addition to our collaboration with the Department of Education, CDC collaborates with a number of offices in the Department of Justice. We also have initiated a Safe USA partnership that currently involves over 25 key organizations in the public and private sector who have joined together to address injury prevention and control, including violence.

Future Directions for Moving Forward Together

In, Violence in American Schools, Dr. Del Elliott, et al. make the point, "When their costs are high or there are alternatives that are *known* to be effective, the absence of any evidence of effectiveness is a sufficient basis for challenging the use of these programs or policies. If there are no alternatives known to be effective and the costs are modest, a case may be made for using untested prevention programs for a time, pending a careful evaluation." We believe that the public health approach can help focus investments in school-based violence prevention programs on programs that work -- and, in cases where proven programs are not adaptable or available, this approach can help determine if other programs are making a difference. Throughout my testimony, I have used the public health framework to address the problem of youth and school violence. I would like to return to this framework to set out some future directions that we can take together to address this problem.

Surveillance

- ***An ongoing system for describing school-associated violent deaths and injuries.*** We need to monitor school-associated nonfatal injuries as well as violent deaths on an ongoing basis to identify emerging trends. Previous studies have been periodic and require significant effort to update. One possible approach would be to make the school-associated violent death study an ongoing effort. In addition, we are exploring the use of sentinel schools to report non-fatal injuries from violence on a routine basis, similar to CDC's national notifiable disease reporting system for infectious diseases. We could provide information to communities and schools throughout the country to help them in identifying emerging problems and in planning and monitoring the success of their responses.

Risk Factor Research

- ***Further examination of school-associated violent deaths.*** We need to examine in further detail the circumstances and background of the school-related, violent deaths described in

the school-violence study and compare the information with information from a control group which did not experience this level of violence. Based on this comparison, we can learn what puts kids at risk for violence. If we can gain a greater understanding of these circumstances, we will be able to help schools identify kids at risk and get them help before another tragedy occurs. For example, if we find that homicide offenders are from families in which abusive violence is present, family-based intervention strategies should be explored.

Intervention Evaluation and Implementation

- ***Evaluation of school-based violence prevention programs and assistance to schools in selecting and implementing successful program.*** We need to provide more support to schools in identifying and implementing violence prevention interventions of proven efficacy, and we need schools that can serve as demonstration sites for violence prevention programs. In order to do this we need to promote evaluation research to identify effective programs for widespread dissemination and to develop and test new interventions. There needs to be a way to communicate information about good programs systematically. The Best Practices manual that we are developing can help. Many schools have programs that are not based on the best scientific knowledge and are not being implemented as designed. In partnership with the Departments of Education and Justice, we are providing schools with guidance in selecting violence prevention programs. But we are just beginning to fill the needs of the schools.
- ***Quality School-based Health Education.*** Young people must acquire the skills needed to prevent future injuries and violence. To assist State and local educational agencies and schools in promoting safety and teaching students the skills needed to prevent future injuries and violence, CDC, in collaboration with other Federal and national non-governmental organizations, has recently begun developing evidence-based injury and violence prevention guidelines. As a model, the guidelines development process has been successfully employed for the topics of tobacco use prevention, HIV infection prevention, nutrition, and physical activity. It includes an extensive review and synthesis of the literature on effective program components and the creation of an expert panel to guide the process.
- ***Parenting Skills.*** Parenting programs are important because the behavior of adults in the home can have an enormous influence on children. Parenting skills training can make a difference in preventing violence and anti-social behavior in children. Many parents need assistance to develop structured environments, and they need to learn how to talk with their kids about the risks of weapons and fighting.
- ***Better Communication Between Parents and Schools.*** Schools can link parents to programs in the community to help children with behavior problems. We have seen that parent training programs can help, but there is a gap in getting knowledge to the parents. Schools can help make the link.
- ***Reach out to high-risk youth.*** Many youth are not accessible in traditional settings such as schools. We need to support the implementation of efforts to identify and recruit high-risk youth into programs intended to reduce the risk of violence.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to have this opportunity to bring you the public health perspective on addressing the problem of violence among our youth and to share with you some of the things we have learned. I look forward to working together with our partners in the Departments of Education and

Justice and with you and others to address this serious problem. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

CRS Report for Congress

Television Violence: An Overview of the Issue and Actions Taken by Congress, the Clinton Administration, and the Television Industry

January 28, 1999

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Television Violence: An Overview of the Issue and Actions Taken by Congress, the Clinton Administration, and the Television Industry

Summary

With the ongoing national concern about the role and influence of violence in society, the pervasiveness and effects of television violence continue to be an issue of congressional interest. For the last three decades, legislation to monitor and/or regulate TV violence has been introduced. Only two bills have been enacted that had some significant influence on industry actions regarding TV violence. The first, the Television Program Improvement Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-650), allowed television industry representatives to meet, consider, and jointly agree upon implementing voluntary standards that would lead to a reduction in the depiction of violence in television programs. The second, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-104), included a provision that required certain new television sets to contain a V-chip device that would allow parents and other viewers to block out offensive programming.

In 1993 during the 103rd Congress, many Members of Congress proposed enacting legislation that would mandate immediate television industry action to reduce violence depicted in programs. These congressional actions prompted voluntary self-policing efforts by the television industry. A "Parental Advisory" (PA) warning label was implemented alerting viewers of violence in the upcoming program, and later two independent TV violence monitoring reports were released to keep the industry and public abreast of the amount of violence in programs. Cable television executives agreed to develop a ratings system and supported placing the V-chip into new television sets. A congressional mandate, however, was required to implement the V-chip since network broadcasters initially opposed a ratings system.

In the 104th Congress, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was passed requiring the V-chip and consequently a television ratings system. In the 105th Congress, the TV violence issue was focused on a debate about what would be the most appropriate television ratings system — age-based or content-based. Since 1993, the Clinton Administration has shown interest in the TV violence issue. The Administration influenced broadcasters to accept the V-chip mandate, air three hours per week of educational children's programs, and devise a content-based ratings system.

The two independent monitoring studies drew significantly different conclusions about program violence. One reported a decline in violence, except in reality specials, while the other determined that gratuitous violence remained relatively constant, was glamorized, and posed a high risk to children. The contradictory findings might be the result of different definitions used for TV violence. In the 106th Congress, policymakers might decide to conduct oversight hearings to clarify the issue, and decide whether any new legislative proposals appear warranted.

Since certain forms of TV violence appear to persist, questions remain about the respective roles parents, policymakers, and television industry executives could play in addressing and finding solutions to this issue.

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Television Violence: An Overview of the Issue and Actions Taken by Congress, the Clinton Administration, and the Television Industry

The Issue

In 1952, Congress first expressed concern about whether viewing violent television programs could cause children and youth to behave aggressively. Rising public interest about the airing of television programs portraying crime, brutality, gratuitous violence,¹ and sexual innuendo led to congressional investigations examining how television might have an influence on juvenile delinquency and affect real-life actions of youth.² As a result of the hearings, the television industry tried to police itself.³

Since 1955, approximately 1,000 research studies, reports, and commentaries about the impact of viewing violent television programs have been published.⁴ Most of these materials concluded that a constant diet of violent behavior depicted on television has an adverse effect on human character and attitudes, encourages violent behavior, and influences moral and social values about violence in daily life. The Mass Media Task Force, working for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence in 1968-69, which studied violence in entertainment programs and its impact on society, particularly children, perceived that television was not the principal cause of violence in society, but was considered a possible contributing factor (still a current view).⁵ Researchers examining the problem for the television

¹Gratuitous refers to violence that is unwarranted and does not contribute to the plot of a program's story line.

²Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency*, Interim Report Pursuant to S.Res. 274, 88th Cong., 2nd sess., 1965, 2.

³For a more detailed discussion about the history of congressional actions regarding this issue and the outcomes, see: Congressional Research Service, *Television Violence: A Survey of Selected Social Science Research Linking Violent Program Viewing With Aggression in Children and Society*, by Edith Fairman Cooper, CRS Report 95-593, 17 May 1995, 14-17.

⁴Aletha C. Huston et al., *Big World, Small Screen: A Role of Television in American Society* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 53.

⁵For more detailed information about the work of the Media Task Force, as well as a discussion about the social science research efforts examining TV violence, see Congressional Research Service, *Television Violence: A Survey of Selected Social Science Research*, 2-3, and the entire report, respectively.

industry, however, did not find evidence of such a connection. As a result, the major television networks (ABC, CBS, NBC)⁶ maintained that no such relationship existed.

In 1993, however, the position of the major television networks changed probably because of continued pressure from Congress and anti-violence lobbying groups.⁷ For the first time since the issue had been under discussion, executives of the television networks, and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), acknowledged that viewing gratuitous violence could cause adverse effects on viewers. Also, some industry leaders reportedly have conceded that research might be correct and "television could be a factor in the dramatic increase in murders, assaults and illegal weapons sales in this country."⁸ Therefore, although the policy debate continues, it no longer appears to be focused only on the question of whether viewing TV violence can cause subsequent aggressive behavior in viewers. The controversy now includes what can and should the television industry do to decrease the amount of violence in programs and assist parents in keeping such programs away from children?

Violence Portrayed in Television Programs

A Cultural Indicators research project to study trends in television content and how viewers were influenced, was initiated in the 1967-68 broadcast television season by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.⁹ The project, published in the form of "Violence Profiles," was funded through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)¹⁰ and conducted by George Gerbner, then Dean (now Dean Emeritus) of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Gerbner and his colleagues defined violence as "overt physical action that hurts or kills, or threatens to do so." A violent scene was determined to be "continuous violent action among the same characters."¹¹

⁶Until recent years there were three major television networks — ABC, CBS, and NBC. In recent years, the Fox network has increased the number to four.

⁷Megan Rosenfeld, "Warning: TV Violence Is Harmful, Networks Concede," *Washington Post*, 1 July 1993, A1.

⁸Ibid.

⁹The National Commission on Violence was created in 1968 by President Lyndon Johnson who was disturbed by the prevalence of violence in the nation following the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. He directed the Commission to investigate the causes of violence in society and find ways for its prevention.

¹⁰Over the years, the project has been sponsored by the President's Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, NIMH, the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, the American Medical Association, the U.S. Administration on Aging, the National Science Foundation, the W. Alton Jones Foundation, the Screen Actors' Guild, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, the National Cable Television Association, the Turner Broadcasting System, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention of the U.S. Public Health Service.

¹¹"Television Violence Act Has Made An Impact: Penn Study Finds Violence Has Declined (continued...)"

From analyzing the violence content of television programs for 20 years (1973 to 1993),¹² those research scientists found that over the years, the level of violence in prime-time programming remained at about five acts per hour. For the same period, however, Saturday morning cartoon violence levels waxed and waned from a low of 13.2 acts per hour in the 1973-74 broadcast season, to a high of 30.9 violent acts in 1981-82, to a lower percentage of 17.9 acts per hour in 1992-93. They found an average of 23 acts per hour overall for that entire 20-year period.¹³

The Annenberg researchers estimated that the average preschooler and school-aged child watched television two to four hours per day. Depending on how much television is viewed, they determined that by the time an average child finished elementary school, he/she would have seen 8,000 murders, and over 100,000 additional acts of violence on television. Furthermore, by the time a child became a teenager, depending on the amount of television watched, more than 200,000 violent acts could have been viewed.¹⁴

An August 1994 report by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA) reported that in one 18-hour day in 1992 (during the 1991-92 television season), observing 10 channels of all major kinds of programs, 1,846 different scenes of violence were noted which translated to more than 10 violent scenes per hour, per channel, all day. A comparison with an 18-hour day in 1994 (during the 1993-94), indicated a 41% increase in violent scenes to 2,605 translating to nearly 15 scenes per hour of violence.¹⁵ These findings indicated much more violence because CMPA researchers used a mixed methodology. Not only did they monitor prime-time programs and children's cartoons, but also included news and "reality" programs, music videos, toy commercials, and promotions for upcoming movies and television series.

A September 1996 update of the study analyzing an 18-hour day in 1995 (during the 1995-96) television season, found that violence was concentrated in cable television movies and cartoons rather than the broadcast television network programs.¹⁶ This study excluded violence in commercials, news, and all non-fiction

¹¹(...continued)

on Major Network Dramatic Shows," *Penn News*, 28 July 1993, 2.

¹²Researchers viewed and analyzed week-long videotaped samples of each television season's dramatic programs.

¹³George Gerbner, Michael Morgan, and Nancy Signorielli, *Television Violence Profile No. 16: The Turning Point; From Research to Action*, January 1994. Table 1 — Violence in Television Networks Prime-Time Dramatic Programs, 1973-1993, and Table 2 — Violence in Television Networks Saturday Morning Dramatic Programs, 1973-1993. Provided by Dr. George Gerbner on April 5, 1996.

¹⁴Aletha C. Huston et al., *Big World, Small Screen*, p. 54.

¹⁵Center for Media and Public Affairs, *A Day of TV Violence: 1992 vs 1994*. Prepared by S. Robert Lichter, and Daniel Amundson, 8 August 1994, p. 2.

¹⁶The networks channels studied were Washington, D.C. affiliates of ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, (continued...)

programming which were included in the previous days observed. Nevertheless, an increase by 74% in the number of violent scenes was recorded, for an average of almost 10 violent incidents per channel.¹⁷ Gun play violence nearly tripled increasing 334% over the three seasons observed, rising from 159 in the 18-hour period in 1992, to 218 in 1994, to 531 in 1995. Furthermore, violence levels were found to be highest on cable channels with 546 scenes on HBO, 322 on the USA channel, and 303 on WDCA. Contrastingly, a total of 60 violent scenes were observed on “the big three” networks — eight on NBC, 21 on ABC, and 31 on CBS. Violence was found mainly in promos for movies and future series episodes. Cartoon violence also was prominent with a total of 147 violent scenes.¹⁸

The CMPA results cannot be generalized across the entire television seasons monitored because the studies covered only one day of a particular season. The organization’s co-director observed from the findings that, “We’re looking for violence in all the wrong places. It’s not on the network prime time series; it’s in commercials and on cable movies and cartoon shows. And it seems to be growing.”¹⁹

Findings for the 1994-95 through the 1996-97 television seasons are discussed below as two independent television monitoring studies are reviewed -- the UCLA Television Violence Report, and the cable television funded National Television Violence Study. For the 1994-95 season, the reports indicated that although network executives appeared to be responding to pressure to reduce TV violence, there was room for significant improvement. The UCLA survey found that violence portrayals declined in the 1995-96 season, and gave good reports for the 1996-97 season, although two programs raised “frequent concerns” (a decrease by three programs from the previous season), and six programs raised “occasional concerns” about violence.²⁰ The National Television Violence Study researchers found that the level of violence depicted on broadcast and cable television remained steady over the three-year period observed which appeared to contradict most of the UCLA findings.²¹

The Impact of Televised Violence on Viewers

Although there is no conclusive answer to the question about how the viewing of televised violence affects everyone in society, in the aggregate, the majority of a large body of social and behavioral science research studies found that: (1) constant

¹⁶(...continued)

and PBS. The cable channels were HBO, MTV, WTBS, USA, and the independent station, WDCA.

¹⁷Center for Media and Public Affairs, *Study Finds Rise in TV Guns and Violence: Cable Movies and Cartoons Are Culprits, Not the Networks*, Press Release, September 11, 1996.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰UCLA Center for Communication Policy, “The UCLA Television Violence Report, 1997,” [<http://ccp.ucla.edu/network.htm>], 15 January 1998.

²¹*National Television Violence Study*, “New Study Reveals Glamorized Violence Continues To Pervade American Television,” News Release, [<http://research.ucsb.edu/cori/press.htm>], April 16, 1998.

viewing of televised violence had negative effects on human character and attitudes, (2) violent forms of behavior were encouraged, (3) moral and social values about violence were influenced in daily life, (4) children who watched four or more hours of TV violence a day during preschool years, probably would subsequently exhibit aggressive behavior, and (5) TV violence influenced viewers of all ages, intellect, socioeconomic levels, and both genders, among others.²²

Dr. Gerbner summed-up the Annenberg School's conclusions about the long-term impact of viewing violent television programs. Children and adults²³ appeared to experience threefold consequences from such exposure:

- (1) For a few (whose acts provoke frightful publicity), violence seems an effective quick-fix to any problem;
- (2) Many more become desensitized to violence and lose the ability to protest or to resist; and
- (3) [I]n nearly all of us, but especially in heavy TV viewers, lifelong exposure to images of violence generates a sense of insecurity and a demand for repression (more jails, more executions, more global policing) as long as it can be justified as enhancing our security. Heavy viewers live in a meaner world than their next-door neighbors who watch less television, and they act accordingly.²⁴

Findings of other prominent studies drew similar conclusions — the 1972 Surgeon General's report, *Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence*, found a causal effect of viewing violent television programs and later aggressive behavior in children; the 1982 NIMH report corroborated the 1972 Surgeon General's study; and the 1984 U.S. Attorney General's Task Force study on Family Violence revealed that viewing TV violence contributed to acting-out violence in the home.²⁵

In 1992, the American Psychological Association (APA) concluded through its Task Force on Television and Society that,

The accumulated research clearly demonstrates a correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior — that is, heavy viewers behave more aggressively than light viewers. Children and adults who watch a large number of aggressive programs also tend to hold attitudes and values that favor the use of

²²Congressional Research Service, *Television Violence: A Survey of Selected Social Science Research*, 2.

²³Annenberg researchers estimated the impact on viewers by surveying samples of adults and children. Participants responded to questions based on what was seen on television and how they interpreted what was viewed with the facts, norms, and values of "real" life.

²⁴George Gerbner, "About Violence: Road Runner Begets Rambo," *New York Newsday*, 26 February 1993, 54-56.

²⁵For a more detailed discussion about these studies see Congressional Research Service, *Television Violence: A Survey of Selected Social Science Research*.

aggression to resolve conflicts. These correlations are solid. They remain even when many other potential influences on viewing and aggression are controlled, including education level, social class, aggressive attitudes, parental behavior, and sex-role identity.²⁶

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported that between 1994 and 1996, the violent crime²⁷ arrest rate declined for youth both under and over 15 years of age (15% for youth under 15, and 12% for youth 15 and older). The 1996 violent crime arrest rate, however, was still 60% higher than the 1980 rate for youth younger than 15, and 41% higher for youth 15 years and older.²⁸ The APA correlation between viewing TV violence and subsequent aggressive behavior might warrant consideration because of its possible relevance to the OJJDP findings.

Federal Government Actions Responding to the Issue

Cyclical interest about the impact of violence in television programs on the overt behavior of children and youth has occurred in Congress for over 40 years. A recurring concern of Congress has been how to encourage leaders in the television industry to be more responsible about programming accessible to young viewers. Also, Members of Congress have explored ways to assist parents in protecting vulnerable and impressionable children and youth from undesirable programming.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton expressed the desire for a cooperative effort between government and industry to address the TV violence issue rather than enacting legislative solutions.²⁹ Both of these avenues, however — government/industry cooperation, and legislative intervention — have been used to address the TV violence issue.

This section briefly discusses congressional actions from 1952, the 82nd Congress, through the 105th Congress, and activities by the Clinton Administration.

Congressional Action From the 82nd Congress Through the 103rd Congress

Since 1952, when the first hearing was held, Congress has expressed concern about TV violence and how it might influence later aggressive behavior in children and youth. Hearings were held in 16 different congressional sessions,³⁰ and over 50 legislative measures were introduced calling for monitoring, reducing, and/or ways

²⁶Aletha C. Huston, et al., *Big World, Small Screen*, 54.

²⁷Violent crimes include murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

²⁸Charles M. Puzzanchera, "The Youngest Offenders, 1996," *OJJDP Fact Sheet*, #87 November 1998.

²⁹Kim McAvoy, "Clinton To Weigh in on TV Violence," *Broadcasting & Cable*, 6 (December, 1993): 18.

³⁰Hearings were held in the 82nd, 83rd, 87th, 88th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 103rd, and the 104th congressional sessions.

of controlling violent content in television programs. Until the 101st Congress, no legislation that directly addressed the issue had ever become law. On December 1, 1990, the Television Program Improvement Act was signed into law as Title V of the Judicial Improvements Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-650). The Act allowed television industry representatives, without violating antitrust laws,³¹ to meet, consider, and jointly agree upon implementing voluntary standards that would lead to reducing violence depicted in television programs. In December 1992, discussions among ABC, CBS, and NBC network executives resulted in the release of joint standards regarding the broadcasting of television violence (See appendix B).

Much activity concerning the TV violence issue took place in the 103rd Congress as ten bills and two resolutions were introduced to monitor and regulate the problem. In addition, eight hearings were held at various times from May to October 1993 focusing on the need for broadcasters to curb gratuitous violence portrayed in television programs. Although none of the legislation became law, concern that it might be enacted led to several "voluntary" television industry actions (see p. 10-15).

The 104th Congress

In the 104th Congress, 12 bills were introduced and one hearing held on July 12, 1995 by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation regarding the TV violence issue. One bill, S. 652, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-104), was signed into law on February 8, 1996. It mandated that certain new television sets contain a V-chip blocking device allowing viewers the option of blocking out offensive programs.³²

Additionally, two other legislative proposals received some action. The first, S. 772, the Television Violence Report Card Act of 1995, introduced by Senator Dorgan, et al., on May 9, 1995, and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, provided for a regular assessment of violence on television by a private, non-profit group funded through grant awards. Results would be made available to the public at least once every 90 days. Through this process, no regulations or penalties would be imposed on the television industry, but it would provide consumers with information to help them monitor television viewing in their homes. The bill was reported to the Senate from the Committee on February 9, 1996 (S. Rept. 104-234). No further action occurred.

The other provision, S. 470, the Children's Protection From Violent Programming Act of 1995, was introduced by Senator Hollings, et al. on February 23, 1995, and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The Act amended the Communications Act of 1934 to prohibit the public distribution

³¹An antitrust exemption was in effect for a three-year period, due to expire at the end of 1993. In November 1993, however, the Department of Justice decided to extend the antitrust exemptions, allowing network executives to continue discussing ways to reduce television violence.

³²For information about the V-chip and television ratings, see Congressional Research Service, *V-Chip and TV Ratings: Helping Parents Supervise Their Children's Television Viewing*, by Marcia S. Smith, CRS Report 97-43, Updated 14 April 1998.

of violent video programming during hours when children were most likely to comprise a substantial portion of the audience. This legislation, unlike most of the other measures introduced in the 104th Congress, did not directly provide assistance to viewers by suggesting ways to control the televised violence that was viewed in their homes. Instead, it encouraged the television industry to control the violence that was broadcast into homes by not showing such programs at certain hours of the day. S. 470 was reported to the Senate from the Committee on November 9, 1995 (S. Rept. 104-171). No additional action occurred.

The 105th Congress

During the 105th Congress, the TV violence issue was focused on the television ratings debate.³³ The Telecommunications Act (P. L. 104-104) required that a ratings system be devised. Parents could use the ratings system to determine which programs would be inappropriate for their children to watch and then block those programs through the V-chip technology. An age-based ratings system was created and implemented in December 1996. This consisted of six ratings levels — TV-Y and TV-Y7 for children's programs, and TV-G, TV-PF, TV-14, and TV-MA for general audiences. Parents and other critics, however, felt that specific descriptors (such as "V" for violence and "S" for sex, "L" for language, and "D" for suggestive dialog) should be added to provide more information for viewers about a program's content. Some Members of Congress who were critical of the age-based ratings system assured industry representatives that they would not move forward on legislation on ratings, programming content, or scheduling for several years in return for a revised ratings system.³⁴ Other Members indicated that since NBC, unlike the other networks, refused to modify its age-based ratings, the door was opened for Congress to ignore the moratorium in favor of legislation.³⁵

Five bills were introduced regarding the TV violence issue in the 105th Congress. One bill received action. S. 363, the Children's Protection From Violent Programming Act, also called the "safe harbor" bill, was multifaceted and contained provisions relating to broadcasting violent programs, television ratings, and the electronic blocking of such programs. Introduced by Senator Ernest Hollings, et al., on February 26, 1997, and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, the measure would have amended the Communications Act of 1934 to require that violent television programs be limited to broadcast after the hours when most children are reasonably unlikely to comprise a substantial portion of the audience, unless the programs are specifically rated as violent and can be blocked by electronic means specifically on the basis of that content. The bill was reported to the

³³Ibid.

³⁴Letter of Assurance From Representatives Edward J. Markey, Dan Burton, James P. Moran, and John M. Spratt, Jr., To Mr. Decker Anstrom, Eddie Fritts, and Jack Valenti, c/o The National Cable Television Association, 7 July 1997, [<http://www.house.gov/markey/agreeltr.htm>]; U.S. Senate, Dear Colleague Letter, From Senators John McCain, Conrad Burns, Patrick Leahy, Carol Moseley-Braun, Tom Daschle, Dan Coats, Orrin Hatch, Barbara Boxer, and Trent Lott, 8 July 1997.

³⁵Paige Albiniak, "Hollings Wants New Ratings on the Books, *Broadcasting and Cable*, 127 (15 September 1997), 24.

Senate with amendments from the Committee on September 25, 1997 (S. Rept. 105-89). No further action occurred.

Clinton Administration

Since 1993, President Clinton and various members of his Administration have stated their concern about how children and youth are affected by watching violence on television. (At an October 1993 hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Subcommittee on Communications, Attorney General Janet Reno testified that the entertainment industry (including movies, television networks, cable television and independent stations) should voluntarily curb the broadcast of violent programs. If this action was not taken, she indicated, legislative action would be imperative.³⁶ Later that year, President Clinton stated that he desired cooperation between government and industry rather than a legislative solution to the issue.³⁷

On January 24, 1995, during his State of the Union Address, President Clinton reminded the entertainment industry about its responsibility to evaluate the influence its work has on society and the damage it might cause from the incessant broadcast of "mindless" violence that appeared to permeate the media.³⁸ Subsequently, at a July conference on "The Family and the Media" in Nashville, Tennessee, the President publicly endorsed the V-chip by suggesting that it be included in the telecommunications bill that was before Congress.³⁹

During the State of the Union Address on January 23, 1996, the President mentioned his concern about the need to reduce TV violence. He particularly stressed his support for the V-chip, creation of a ratings system by the television industry, and an increase of and improvement in the overall quality of children's television programming.⁴⁰ To improve this type of programming, he urged the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to require broadcasters to provide at least three hours per week of quality children's programming.⁴¹

A few weeks later, as previously discussed, the President signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and subsequently held two open forums — a

³⁶Ellen Edwards, "Reno: Curb TV Violence: Regulation Not Unconstitutional, Panel Told," *Washington Post*, 21 October 1993, A1.

³⁷Kim McAvoy, "Clinton To Weigh In On TV Violence," *Broadcasting and Cable*, 123 (6 December 1993): 18.

³⁸Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, 24 January 1995, In *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, January 30, 1995, vol. 31, no. 4, 106.

³⁹Christopher Stern, "Clinton Puts V-Chip on Fast Track," *Broadcasting and Cable*, 125 (17 July 1995): 6.

⁴⁰President William Jefferson Clinton. State of the Union Address, U.S. Capitol, January 23, 1996, [<http://www.2.whitehouse.gov>].

⁴¹"America's Challenge: Background on President Clinton's State of the Union Address to Congress," January 23, 1996, [<http://www.2.whitehouse.gov>].

February 29 meeting with media executives, and a March 1 meeting with a select group of parents, children, and youth who expressed their reactions to the V-chip. The President repeatedly emphasized that the V-chip was not the single solution to the TV violence issue, and efforts to improve children's programming were crucial.

The Clinton Administration continued its interest in not only the TV violence issue, but the general quality of children's programming. On July 29, 1996, a White House Conference was held with leaders of the entertainment industry to discuss improving the quality of children's television. As a result, broadcasters agreed to air three hours per week of educational children's television and the FCC adopted the proposal as a requirement for license renewal, effective September 1997.⁴²

On October 15, 1996, the focus returned to TV violence when the President held a joint press conference with the Director of the UCLA Center for Communication Policy in Albuquerque, New Mexico to release the second UCLA annual report on television violence (see p. 12). Nearly one year later, on September 30, 1997, Vice President Al Gore launched the new television ratings system, designed to assist parents, to be used with the V-chip to protect children from programs that contained violence and other inappropriate depictions. Through the Administration's leadership, the television industry agreed to devise a content-based television ratings system that went into effect on October 1, 1997.⁴³

Voluntary Television Industry Actions

In 1993 during the 103rd Congress, several concerned Members of Congress pressed for legislation that would mandate immediate action by the television industry to reduce violent programming. Because of these numerous congressional activities, and an August conference in Los Angeles on television violence featuring Senator Paul Simon as the keynote speaker, voluntary self-policing efforts by broadcasters to address the issue accelerated. These actions included — (1) creating a "Parental Advisory" warning label;⁴⁴ (2) appointing independent monitors to keep the industry and public abreast of the amount of violence in programs; and (3) cable television executives agreeing to create a ratings system and support V-chip technology in certain new television sets.⁴⁵

At that time, the leaders of network broadcast television stressed their opposition to establishing a ratings system contending that it could lead to censorship. Also, some broadcasters feared that advertisers would not support violence-labeled

⁴²The White House, Office of the Vice President, "Vice President Launches New Television Ratings System: V-Chip, Ratings, Educational Programs Give More Control, Choices to Parents, Children," News Release, 30 September 1997, 1.

⁴³See Congressional Research Service, *V-Chip and TV Ratings*, for more information about the V-Chip and television ratings system. NBC declined to use the descriptors.

⁴⁴Kim McAvoy, "Networks Adopt Violence Warning," *Broadcasting and Cable* 123 (5 July 1993): 7.

⁴⁵Elizabeth Jensen and Mark Robichaux, "Accord Reached on Monitoring TV Violence," *Wall Street Journal*, 1 February 1994, B12.

programs. The cable television industry endorsed the ratings system. One stipulation cable executives made regarding the ratings system was that before they would implement it, leaders of network broadcast television and independent stations also should agree to create such a system. This requirement cast doubt on the eventual institution of a ratings system because of the networks' stated opposition.⁴⁶

In spite of this development, in July 1994, the Engineering Subcommittee of the Electronic Industries Association (EIA), representing the nation's television manufacturers, gave its approval to create a voluntary industry standard facilitating V-chip manufacturing and placement into new television sets.⁴⁷ In December 1994, the EIA's consumer electronics group voted to incorporate V-chip blocking into its extended data services and closed-captioning standard.⁴⁸ Congressional action became necessary in order for the network broadcasters to acquiesce to a ratings system and thus, the V-chip.

Program Warning Label

A program warning label was instituted in the 1993-94 broadcast season by the four major television networks alerting parents to the violent nature of certain programs. Before and during the broadcasting of some regular television series, theatrical films, made-for-television movies, mini-series and specials that might contain excessive violence, the following announcement was made: "Due to some violent content, parental discretion is advised."⁴⁹ In addition to the warning label, a "PA" symbol was to be placed next to such programs in newspaper and magazine television listings. This symbol, apparently, was never adopted.

Independent Television Violence Monitoring Studies

In January 1994, both broadcast and cable television network executives announced an agreement to have TV violence independently monitored. Three annual reports would be issued by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Communication Policy Center that analyzed, assessed and reported on violence that was portrayed in broadcast network television programs.⁵⁰ Also, Mediascope, a non-profit California-based group, would monitor cable television programming for violent content. In June 1996, the responsibility of monitoring cable shows was assumed by the Center for Communication and Social Policy at the University of California, Santa

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷This information was stated in a September 14, 1994 letter from two Members of Congress to the chairman of the EIA's R-4 Video Systems Committee responsible for reviewing the V-chip issue and voting its approval or disapproval.

⁴⁸"In Brief: V-Chip Technology Moved a Step Closer to Reality Last Week," *Broadcasting and Cable* 124 (19 December 1994): 72.

⁴⁹Kim McAvoy, "Networks Adopt Violence Warning," *Broadcasting and Cable* 123 (5 July 1993): 7.

⁵⁰"The Four Broadcast Networks Select UCLA Communication Policy Center To Assess and Report on Television Violence," News Release From U.S. Senator Paul Simon, Washington, 29 June 1994, 1.

Barbara. The monitoring results became known as the National Television Violence Study. Three television seasons were analyzed — 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97. The findings of the reports are discussed below.

The UCLA Television Violence Monitoring Report. In September 1995, the first UCLA Television Violence Monitoring Report was released. In January 1998, the third and last report was published. In undertaking the task, UCLA researchers considered the nature of the violence depicted in programs and the context in which it occurred. Instead of emphasizing the number of violent acts that were depicted in programs, which had been a main focus in many past research studies, the UCLA analysts used a broad definition for violence and determined whether or not the violence raised issues of concern.

Television violence was broadly defined to include sports violence, cartoon violence, slapstick violence — i.e., anything that involved physical harm of any sort, intentional or unintentional, self-inflicted or inflicted by someone or something else. Also, verbal threats of physical violence were included although they were of secondary importance.⁵¹ Using this definition, program fare was found to have improved from the first to the third season of monitoring. Over the three-year monitoring period, researchers noted that violence depictions steadily declined in the television series area in which only two of 107 regularly scheduled programs raised “frequent concerns” about the way violence was portrayed (compared with nine series in 1994-95 and five in the 1995-96 seasons); in the number of programs causing “occasional concerns” from seven in the first study (1994-95) and eight in the second report (1995-96) to six in the third study.⁵²

On the other hand, the analysts concluded that television specials broadcasting reality shows contained more violence by the end of the three years, and raised new concerns about TV violence. These programs showed real or re-created violence such as animals attacking and sometimes killing people. Also, theatrical films remained a problematic area, although some significant improvement had occurred. On-air promotions of those films demonstrated the largest improvement over the three-year period, although promos for the live-action reality specials caused concern.

Children’s television remained consistent from the second to the third year with a few positive signs emerging. The number of Saturday morning programs featuring sinister combat violence (violence for the sake of violence) declined from seven in 1994-95 to four in 1995-96, and remained at four in 1996-97. Although those four programs still raised concerns, three were older programs, and only one new program depicted sinister combat violence. Analysts conjectured that since three of the programs were older, their popularity soon would decline and eventually they might

⁵¹UCLA Center for Communication Policy, *The UCLA Television Violence Monitoring Report*, Jeffrey Cole, Principal Investigator, (UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, Los Angeles, CA), September 1995, 22.

⁵²UCLA Center for Communication Policy, *The UCLA Television Violence Report*, 1997. [<http://ccp.ucla.edu/conclusi.htm>], 11 February 1998.

be discontinued. Overall, researchers found that most Saturday morning programs contained, at most, very minor violence.⁵³

Basically, these findings contradicted the results of the National Television Violence Study (discussed below) which monitored both broadcast and cable network programs. There, researchers reported that TV violence remained consistently rampant over the three-year monitoring period.⁵⁴

National Television Violence Study (NTVS). In February 1996, the second independent monitoring report was released. Reported as the largest scientific study of TV violence ever attempted, it was funded by the National Cable Television Association (NCTA). Cable and prime-time broadcast television network programming was monitored by researchers at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the University of Texas, Austin (UTA), and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Analysts assessed violence in televised entertainment programs including comedy series, movies, children's programs, and music videos; examined the effectiveness of anti-violence public service announcements (PSAs); monitored reality-based programs such as tabloid news, talk shows, police shows, and documentaries; observed violence ratings and advisories used on television; and studied their impact on viewing decisions of parents and children.

Since 1994 when the study began, researchers analyzed over 6,000 hours of programming and concluded, in the third and final report released on April 16, 1998, that TV violence continued to pose a serious risk of harm to children. Furthermore, they found that since 1994, violence had increased among prime-time broadcast and basic cable programs. Also, they postulated that the way TV violence was depicted encouraged children to learn aggressive behavior, among other such risks. In addition, they agreed with most broadcast and cable network executives that content labels should be added to age-based television ratings,⁵⁵ that is, "V" for violence, "D" for suggestive dialog, etc.⁵⁶

Violence was broadly defined as "any overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings." Also it included "certain depictions of physically harmful consequences against an animate being or group that occur as a result of unseen violent means." Therefore, the researchers' findings embraced three forms of violence including "credible threats, behavioral acts, and harmful consequences of unseen

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Paul Farhi, "TV's Violent Streak Continues, Study Says: Cable-Funded Report Contradicts Others," *Washington Post*, 16 April 1998, B1, B7.

⁵⁵*National Television Violence Study*, "New Study Reveals Glamorized Violence Continues To Pervade American Television."

⁵⁶For detailed information about the TV ratings system, see Congressional Research Service, *V-Chip and TV Ratings*.

violence.”⁵⁷ Using this definition across the three-year period of monitoring, analysts found overall, that the percentage of television programs that contained some violence was virtually unchanged at 61% for both the 1995-96 and 1996-97 seasons, compared with 58% in the 1994-95 season. In addition, programs containing violence in prime time increased by 14% on broadcast networks rising from 53% to 67% since 1994, and by 10% on basic cable from 54% to 64%. Therefore, although since 1994 violence depictions in prime time increased more on broadcast networks than on cable, premium cable⁵⁸ networks, however, had consistently aired programs with the highest percentage (averaging 92%) of violence.⁵⁹

Most violence, researchers found, had become glamorized and sanitized. Almost 40% of violent incidents in programs were initiated by the “good” characters who were more likely to be perceived as attractive role models. Also, when averaged over the three-year period, only 15% of programs portrayed long-term negative consequences for violent acts. The “bad” characters went unpunished in 40% of the programs. Furthermore, programs with strong anti-violence themes were rare with only an average of 4% of shows including such themes.⁶⁰

Additional findings concerned public service announcements and violence in reality programs. Analysts concluded that PSAs which conveyed negative results related to violent behavior had more influence on the belief of youth regarding handgun violence than PSAs that did not depict negative consequences. Across the three-year assessment, the overall level of violence in reality programs remained constant, displaying at least one instance of violence (39% in 1996-97, 37% in 1995-96, and 39% in 1994-95).⁶¹ Furthermore, analysts found that cartoon programming contained high rates of violence which they believed would probably promote young children’s learning of aggressive behaviors.

Possible Reasons for the Different Conclusions of the UCLA and the NTVS Reports

Findings of the UCLA and the NTVS reports were strikingly different. The UCLA report indicated overall improvements in TV violence portrayals in network television. Contrastingly, the NTVS found that not only had violence programming basically remained relatively unchanged over the three-year period in both network and cable television programs, but researchers consistently found that when violence

⁵⁷Center for Communication and Social Policy, University of California, Santa Barbara, *National Television Violence Study*, Volume 3, Executive Summary, Joel Federman, ed. [<http://www.ccsb.ucsb.edu/execsum.pdf>], April 1998.

⁵⁸Premium cable channels are those stations that require a subscription and individuals have to pay a monthly fee, e.g., Cinemax, Home Box Office HBO, and Showtime.

⁵⁹*National Television Violence Study*, “New Study Reveals Glamorized Violence Continues To Pervade American Television.”

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

did occur, it was depicted most often in ways that would increase the likelihood of negative influences on viewers. Why were the findings so markedly different?

A possible reason for the differences in the conclusions was the methodologies used to determine what constituted TV violence, that is, how the term was defined and the context in which violence was portrayed. The UCLA analysts did not consider all violence to be "created equal." Their focus was not on counting the number of violent acts, but on the contextual analysis of each act. The mere presence of violence was not the issue, they believed, but the nature of the violence and the context in which it occurred. Sometimes, they indicated, violence was necessary in a program as a significant part of the program's storyline. Whether the violence was appropriately or inappropriately depicted, however, was an issue. From this viewpoint, researchers determined whether a scene of violence raised concerns within the context of a program or did not cause such concerns. Over the three-year period they concluded, "enormous strides have been made in dealing with the content issues."⁶²

The NTVS researchers analyzed over the three years both the amount and nature of violent acts on television, emphasized the context of the violence that posed risks for viewers; monitored "Talk About Violence" in reality programs, i.e., discussions about violence and its consequences that were not visually depicted; examined ways in which television could be used to reduce violence among youth by assessing the effectiveness of anti-violence programs; examined public service announcements; and television ratings and advisories. Using these techniques, NTVS analysts found that violence continued to permeate television programming and pose risks to viewers.⁶³

In spite of which conclusion an observer would be more inclined to believe, it appears clear that TV violence in some form continues to be portrayed, and to cause concern for many individuals. Although the UCLA study found overall favorable results in what its researchers determined to be a decline in violent fare, it still noted problems with violence depicted in reality specials which grew worse by the end of the three years of monitoring, as well as promotions for such specials which raised new concerns about TV violence.

Remaining Policy Issues

Television violence remains an issue of concern to many observers. After more than 40 years of social science research about the influences of television violence on society, especially children and youth, most researchers in the scientific community have reached the consensus that a constant diet of viewing televised violence could lead to violence in society. With the encouragement of Congress through the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the television industry, by developing and implementing a television program ratings system, has taken steps to assist parents in determining which programs are or are not appropriate viewing for their children.

⁶²UCLA Center for Communication Policy, *The UCLA Television Violence Report, 1997*. [<http://ccp.ucla.edu/conclusi.htm>]

⁶³*National Television Violence Study*, Vol. 3, Executive Summary, 26, 29.

Also, in March 1998, the FCC approved technical standards for the "V-chip" blocking device to be used in conjunction with the ratings system so parents can keep offensive programming out of their homes. In spite of these important actions, other policy questions remain concerning the ratings system, the V-chip technology and their possible contribution to solving the TV violence issue.

One such question: Will the qualifier descriptors of the television ratings system ("V" for violence, etc.) have unintended outcomes? Specifically, will children and teens be more inclined to seek-out inappropriate programs because of the content rating? The first National Television Violence Study examined how different rating and advisory systems affected the interest of children in watching certain television programs and movies. Researchers found that for younger children, the phrase, "parental discretion advised" increased the viewing interest of boys, but decreased the interest in girls. On the other hand, the phrase, "contains some violent content" did not affect the children's interest. Their interest was heightened, however, with the MPAA movie ratings. Older children tended to have an increased interest in the more restrictive "PG-13" and "R" ratings, and a decreased interest in "G" rated movies. Among younger children, the more restrictive ratings did not appear to have an overall affect except among those who were more aggressive, and among those who liked watching television more than most of the others. In particular, these children were attracted to "R" rated movies, and showed less interest in "G" rated movies.⁶⁴ The concern was that some children and youth might respond similarly to television ratings, such as "TV-M" (for mature audiences) as well as programs labeled with the "V" descriptor.

How parents respond to the ratings also has been questioned. An April 1998 Associated Press poll discovered that seven out of 10 adults pay little or no attention to the television ratings system.⁶⁵ Contrastingly, a report released in May 1998 by the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit group that frequently examines the effect of the media on public health, indicated that over half of parents surveyed use the television ratings system to guide their children's viewing. Almost 70% of the parents, however, did not plan to purchase a new V-chip equipped television set or buy a set-top box that would provide program blocking abilities when the technology was available. However, 65% of those parents indicated that they would use the V-chip to block programs if they owned such a television set. In addition, 78% of children surveyed indicated that they approved of the blocking device and of their parents using it to control their viewing habits. On the other hand, however, over 35% of children stated that they would try to circumvent the V-chip device to watch forbidden programs.⁶⁶ It should be noted, however, that the TV ratings system had been in effect just over one year when these surveys were taken.

⁶⁴Center for Communication and Social Policy, University of California, Santa Barbara, *National Television Violence Study 2* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 269.

⁶⁵Laurie J. Flynn, "V-Chip and Ratings Are Close To Giving Parents New Power," *New York Times*, 2 April 1998, E6.

⁶⁶Paige Albiniak, "Parents Taking to Ratings," *Broadcasting & Cable* 123 (1 June 1998): 16.

Another issue concerns the reliability of program ratings. Can parents assume that programs are always correctly rated and clearly indicate the content of television programs? A Kaiser Family Foundation study released in September 1998 found that television programmers rarely used the ratings symbols designed to warn viewers about the content of programs.⁶⁷ For example, after examining 1,332 shows broadcast during the 1997-98 television season, researchers found that although nearly all programs carried the aged-based ratings (i.e., TV-G, for general audiences, TV-14 for those over 14, etc.), 92% did not display the content descriptor, "S" for sexual content when the show contained such material. The "V" for violence was not displayed in 79% of programs containing violence, 91% of programs containing crude language did not display the "L" warning label, and 83% of shows containing suggestive dialog did not display the "D" designator. Similarly, in children's programs the "FV" for fantasy violence was not displayed in shows that contained such depictions.⁶⁸ Therefore, according to Vicky Rideout, Director of the Kaiser Family Foundation's Program on the Entertainment Media and Public Health, these findings suggested that parents who would want to use the V-chip, "cannot rely on the content descriptors, as currently employed, to identify most shows containing sex, violence, or adult language."⁶⁹ Consequently, the usefulness of the V-chip would be limited.⁷⁰

Several television network executives stated that the ratings system was relatively new and might contain some flaws, while some network representatives took issue with the Kaiser study's methodology. An ABC spokesperson claimed that the study defined sex and violence too broadly and counted some scenes, such as a couple passionately kissing as "sexual behavior." Another network executive stated that since networks have not received complaints about the ratings from viewers in the recent past, they appeared to be generally satisfied with the ratings or have largely ignored them.⁷¹

Since it is unlikely that all gratuitous televised violence will be eliminated from programs by the television industry, parents, industry executives, and policymakers all appear to have important roles to play in addressing the ongoing TV violence issue. Because of the contradictory conclusions drawn by the UCLA and National Television Violence Study researchers about the state of gratuitous violence portrayed on television, in the 106th Congress policymakers might decide to conduct congressional oversight hearings to clarify the issue, and decide whether any new

⁶⁷Dale Kunkel, et al., *Rating the TV Ratings: One Year Out*, A Report to the Kaiser Family Foundation, University of California, Santa Barbara, An Assessment of the Television Industry's Use of V-Chip Ratings, Executive Summary, September 1998. [http://www.kff.org/archive/media/entertainment/ratings/ratings_rp.pdf]

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹*Major New Study of the V-Chip TV Rating System*, Press Release, Kaiser Family Foundation, September 24, 1998. [http://www.kff.org/80/kff/library....ocument_key=2124&data_type_key=405]

⁷⁰Paul Farhi, "Most New TV Ratings Missing, Study Finds," *Washington Post*, 25 September 1998, B7.

⁷¹Ibid.

legislative proposals appear warranted. Consequently, parents could consider possible steps to take to increase their control over the viewing habits of their children. Also, the television industry could assess any additional actions it could employ to curtail unwarranted violence portrayed in television programs.

Appendix A. Chronology of Events

1952

- The House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Subcommittee on the Federal Communications Commission held 12 days of hearings over a seven-month period to investigate offensive radio and television programs and how they might negatively influence real-life actions of youth. As a result of these hearings, the television industry attempted to police itself.
- The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) created the Television Code. This was the principal self-regulatory document that listed specific standards for network broadcasters to apply to programming and advertising. Among other things, the Television Code set and enforced standards that would substantially reduce the level of violence and other types of anti-social behavior shown in programs.
- A few social scientists began research efforts to explore how the portrayal of crime and violence on television might influence youth.

1954

- The Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency held three hearings examining the link between television programs and juvenile delinquency.
- The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency discovered numerous violations of the Television Code concerning crime and brutality. The need for scientific evidence to determine the long-range effects of television on youth was expressed.

1955

- Two hearings were held by the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, continuing its investigation on television programs and juvenile delinquency.

1956

- The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency issued a report (S.Rept. 1466, 84th Congress, 2nd Session). The Subcommittee strongly recommended the creation of a Presidential commission to study how all mass media might affect children and youth; periodically report to the President and Congress regarding practices and materials that might adversely affect children and youth; and encourage and stimulate basic scientific research on the impact of mass media on children and youth.

1961

- Eight hearings were held by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency examining the impact on youth of viewing crime and violence in television programs and how this might effect the juvenile delinquency problem in the nation.

1962

- Three hearings were held by the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency to explore the effects on young people of violence and crime portrayed on television.

1964

- Allegations that the Television Code was not being effectively enforced, as well as new research findings supporting the premise that televised crime and violence had adverse effects on the attitudes and behavior of many young viewers, and other factors led to another congressional hearing.
- The Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency held hearings to discuss the influence on young people of viewing violence and crime on television programs.
- The Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency issued an interim report on television program violence that had been conducted over a three-year period beginning in mid-1961. The Subcommittee concluded, on the basis of expert testimony and "impressive" research evidence, that "a relationship has been conclusively established between televised crime and violence and antisocial attitudes and behavior among juvenile viewers." Remedial measures were recommended to the television industry.⁷²

1968

- President Lyndon B. Johnson established the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence to search for the causes of violence in society and propose ways it could be prevented.
- The National Commission's Mass Media Task Force studied violence in entertainment programs, particularly television. It contacted Dr. George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, to analyze the amount of violence depicted in television programs.

⁷²For a list of these suggestions, see: Congressional Research Service, *Television Violence: A Survey of Selected Social Science Research Linking Violent Program Viewing With Aggression in Children and Society*, by Edith Fairman Cooper, Report 95-593, 17 May 1995, p. 15.

- The ongoing Cultural Indicators project was initiated by Dr. Gerbner and colleagues to assess the extent, nature, and presentation of violence on television. Initially, dramatic programs were analyzed for 1967 and 1968.

1969

- Senator John O. Pastore requested that the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) have the U.S. Surgeon General appoint a scientific advisory committee to investigate a possible connection between the viewing of violence on television and antisocial behavior of children and youth.
- Two-part hearings were held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications to review Federal Communications Commission policy matters and to inquire about crime and violence on television and the proposed study by the U.S. Surgeon General.
- The Secretary of HEW announced the appointment of the U.S. Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee composed of experts in the behavioral sciences, mental health disciplines, and communications to study the effects of television violence on children and youth.
- On September 23, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, chairman of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, issued a Commission statement that a constant diet of violence on television has a negative influence on human character and attitudes.

1971

- In September, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications held hearings to discuss the progress of the report being prepared by the Scientific Advisory Committee.
- In December, the Scientific Advisory Committee presented its report, *Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence*, to the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Jesse Steinfield. This document became known as the Surgeon General's report.

1972

- Five volumes of social science research reports were published to accompany the Scientific Advisory Committee's study. These studies assessed the impact on viewers of watching television violence. Results were made available to the Scientific Advisory Committee to evaluate and draw its own conclusions in preparing its report. Over 50 scientists participated in the research and produced more than 40 scientific reports.
- The U.S. Surgeon General made a statement about the Scientific Advisory Committee and its findings citing evidence that there is a causal effect between viewing televised violence and subsequent aggressive behavior in children.

- In March, hearings were held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications to discuss the Scientific Advisory Committee's findings about the impact of televised violence on children and youth.

1974

- In April, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications held hearings to discuss the harmful effects of televised violence on children and youth.
- In November, the Chairman of the FCC, Richard E. Wiley, held the first of a series of meetings with the executives of the three major networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, to discuss specific proposals for them to consider in addressing concerns about violence on television. These proposals included reducing the level and intensity of violence and sexually-oriented material in programs; scheduling shows considered inappropriate for children to be shown after 9:00 p.m. local time; including audio and video warnings before a broadcast, and placing a white dot in the corner of the screen during the broadcast of inappropriate programs to warn viewers with young children; providing advanced warnings in the local TV Guide and in newspaper television listings and promotional materials of such programs; and possibly adopting a ratings system similar to that provided by the motion picture industry.
- Because of research results indicating a connection between viewing television violence and real-life violent behavior in youth, a "Family Viewing Hour" (FVH) was incorporated into the NAB Television Codes that dealt with programming. (The Codes had two sections — one addressing television program standards, the other television advertising standards.)

1975

- The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) adopted a resolution demanding that television networks and local stations reduce the amount of violence in programs and commercials throughout the entire day, especially between 2:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., and on weekend morning hours when impressionable children and youth most likely are watching.
- In February, FCC Chairman Wiley, met with the three major network executives and representatives of the NAB. All network leaders made a commitment to have a "Family Viewing Hour" included in the Fall 1975 television program schedule; give "viewer advisory" warnings; and provide advance notices of inappropriate programs to publishers of television listings. The NAB Television Code Review Board agreed to a proposed amendment to the Television Code to extend the "Family Viewing" period to include the hour immediately before the first hour of prime time network programming, pending approval by the NAB Television Board.
- In October, the Writers Guild of America, the Directors Guild of America, the Screen Actors' Guild, some independent production companies, and several

individual producers and writers filed a lawsuit in the federal District Court of Los Angeles against the FCC, the three major networks, and the National Association of Broadcasters protesting that the FVH infringed upon their constitutional right of free speech.

- In November, Norman Lear, creator of the "All in the Family" television program filed a \$10 million lawsuit in the Los Angeles U.S. federal District Court in the name of his Tandem Productions against the three television networks, the FCC, and the NAB. He charged that the FVH violated First Amendment rights, the Administrative Procedures Act, and the Sherman Antitrust Act.

1976

- In July and August, the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications held hearings in Denver, Colorado and Los Angeles, California to discuss the concept of the FVH.
- The American Medical Association's House of Delegates approved a resolution which states that television violence "is a risk factor threatening the health and welfare of you[ng] Americans, indeed, our future society."
- In November, U.S. federal District Court Judge Warren G. Ferguson ruled that the FCC violated the First Amendment by pressuring the three television networks into organizing the FVH programming concept and not allowing them independent judgment regarding the desirability of the concept. Therefore, the FVH, as an industry-wide standard, was officially discontinued by order of the federal court, although many networks continued the practice for several years after the ruling.

1977

- In March, a hearing was held by the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications to discuss violence on television and obscenity.
- Ronald Zamora, 15, of Miami, Florida was accused of fatally murdering an 83-year-old neighbor in a robbery attempt. Zamora, claimed that viewing a similar violent criminal act on a television program, "Kojak," a year earlier, drove him to commit the crime. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to life-imprisonment with possible parole in 25 years.
- In September, the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications, released a Committee Print (95-28) report entitled, *Violence on Television*. Suggestions were given to researchers, public/private groups and parents, and the FCC concerning rulemaking as it related to the issue. No recommendations were given to the television industry.

1978

- A Superior Court Judge dismissed a \$13 million lawsuit against NBC that was filed by parents on behalf of their daughter. In 1974, at the age of nine years old, she was sexually attacked by teenagers who claimed to have been influenced by a similar brutal act portrayed in a television movie entitled, "Born Innocent," that had been broadcast in September 1974. The judge held that the plaintiff's lawyer would have had to prove that NBC intentionally advocated rapes by showing the program during the FVH and thereby "inciting" the act. This charge, he felt, could not be proven.

1979

- The parents of Ronald Zamora filed an unsuccessful lawsuit against the three major television networks for negligence. His parents claimed that the television industry failed to prevent their son from being incited to commit a violent crime he had witnessed on television. They lost the case.

1981

- The House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection, and Finance, held hearings to discuss the social and behavioral effects of violence on television.

1982

- Ten years after the Surgeon General's report was released, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) published an update and follow-up study entitled, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*. The report concluded that after 10 years of research, there was a consensus among most of the scientific community that violence on television leads to aggressive behavior in children and teenagers.
- On March 10, the NAB canceled the Television Code after 30 years of existence.

1983

- The House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime held a hearing on crime and violence in the media.
- Dr. C. Everett Koop, U.S. Surgeon General, stated, in a keynote address at a special conference held in Washington, D.C. entitled, "Violence on Television: A National Health Issue," that instead of trying to find a link between television and violence, researchers should examine why people experience fear in American society, why they are insecure, and why they withdraw from the real world.

1984

- The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement cautioning pediatricians and parents that television viewing has the potential to promote violent or aggressive behavior and obesity in children and youth.
- In September, the U.S. Attorney General Task Force on Family Violence released a study concluding that viewing violence on television and in movies might contribute to both normal adults and children acting out violence in the home.
- In October, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice held a hearing after a three-year hiatus to examine the possible connection between viewing violence in the media (this time including movies) and aggression in children and youth.

1985

- Senator Paul Simon expressed his concern in the Senate about the amount of violence being broadcast on television and how it might affect young people. He revealed plans to meet with representatives of the three major networks to see if any voluntary actions could be taken to improve the situation. Also, he stated his plans to introduce legislation to require a 10-minute warning at the beginning of shows or commercials that contained excessive violence.
- After reviewing the literature on the issue, the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted the position that television violence has a causal effect on aggressive behavior, especially in children.

1986

- Senator Paul Simon introduced two pieces of legislation concerning television violence. One directed the FCC to study the impact of viewing such programs on the mental and physical health of children and adults, the other called for exempting the antitrust laws to allow persons in the television broadcast industry to meet and discuss how to alleviate the negative impact of watching violence on television. Hearings were held on the latter proposal by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, and it was favorably reported (S.Rept. 99-535). The measure passed the Senate amended, and was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary. No further action occurred.
- The ongoing Violence Profile studies analyzing the content of television programs, conducted by Dr. George Gerbner and associates of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, reported that the most recent assessment (for the 1984-85 and 1985-86 television seasons) indicted that programs broadcast during the former family viewing hour (between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m.) were more violent than prime time programs shown during hours considered to be adult viewing time.

1987

- Senator Paul Simon reintroduced legislation (the Television Violence Antitrust Exemption Act) to exempt antitrust laws and allow television broadcast industry leaders to meet and discuss how violence on television can be reduced. Hearings were held by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Antitrust, Monopolies and Business Rights. The measure was favorably reported (S.Rept. 100-365) and passed by the Senate. No further action occurred.

1988

- The Television Violence Act of 1988 was introduced by Representative Dan Glickman, that was similar to Senator Simon's legislation. Hearings were held, but no further action occurred.

1989

- Senator Simon reintroduced the Television Violence Antitrust Exemption Act, as did Representative Glickman, the Television Violence Act. Hearings were held on both measures and Both were reported out of the appropriate committee (H.Rept. 101-123; the Senate bill had no written report). The Senate passed its measure amended in May 1989. In August, the House passed its bill but laid it on the table and passed the Senate bill, amended, in lieu.

1990

- The American Academy of Pediatrics reaffirmed its concerns about the negative impact television viewing could have on children and adolescents. Recommendations were made about what pediatricians could do to encourage parents to monitor what, and how much television children are allowed to watch.
- In October, the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990, which required, by 1993, every new television set over 13 inches to contain the electronics to provide closed captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing, was passed and signed into law. This legislation had nothing to do with television violence, but is considered to be the platform from which the subsequent "V-chip" was built.⁷³
- The Television Violence Antitrust Exemption Act was attached to a federal judgeships bill, and on December 1, signed into P.L. 101-650 as Title V, Television Program Improvement.

⁷³Markey, Edward J. How the V-Chip Came to Pass: A Paradoxical History. The Communications Policy Briefing. Roll Call, Mar, 11, 1996. P. 15.

1992

- The American Psychological Association's task force report was published in a book entitled, *Big World, Small Screen*. Results of this five-year effort to review literature on the broad topic of television and society concluded, in regard to the impact of television violence, that "there is clear evidence that television violence can cause aggressive behavior and can cultivate values favoring the use of aggression to resolve conflicts."
- In December, ABC, CBS, and NBC released joint standards regarding the broadcasting of excessive television violence (see Appendix B).
- In December, the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice held violence on television hearings to examine the issue as an underlying cause of violence in society.

1993

- Between May 12 and August 3, various Members of Congress introduced eight pieces of legislation that, among other things, proposed protecting children and youth from harm as a result of viewing violence on television, and requiring the FCC to create standards to curb the amount of programs containing violence.
- A total of eight hearings were held at various times from May to October among the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution, and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, Subcommittee on Communications. The hearings focused on and emphasized the need for broadcasters to curb gratuitous violence depicted in television programs.
- On May 12, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance held a hearing chaired by Representative Edward Markey. He suggested three things the television industry could consider in helping parents choose suitable programs for children — (1) adopt a ratings system for television similar to the movies ratings system; (2) require that new television sets contain technology to block programs deemed too violent for children; and (3) have the networks cease showing promotions for violent shows during the times when children's programs are broadcast. A representative of the Electronic Industries Association (EIA), which represents television manufacturers, testified that a voluntary standard is available for blocking certain programs.
- On June 30, leaders of the four major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox) revealed their intentions to alert parents of the violent nature of certain programs through an "advance parental advisory plan" or warning label, before and during the programs. Also, they agreed to place a warning label symbol, "PA" (parental advisory) next to certain shows printed in the television listings in newspapers and magazines.

- On June 30, television network executives acknowledged for the first time, that viewing gratuitous violence could cause adverse effects on viewers. They conceded that television could be a factor in the dramatic increase in murders, assaults, and illegal weapons sold in the nation.
- On July 28, 15 cable channel executives announced that they would follow the broadcast television networks' lead and also provide warning labels for certain programs.
- In August, a special conference on television violence, sponsored by the National Council for Families and Television, was convened in Los Angeles. Senator Paul Simon, the keynote speaker, suggested that network executives consider having independent monitoring to track progress in their efforts to reduce gratuitous violence in television programs.
- On August 5, Representative Edward Markey introduced a bill requiring that new television sets have built-in circuitry, referred to as a "V-chip", to allow viewers to block the display of programs rated as violent. This was the first "V-chip" legislation proposed. Also on this date, Senator Ernest Hollings introduced a bill that would prohibit the broadcast of violent programs during hours when children likely would comprise a substantial portion of the audience.
- At a October hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Subcommittee on Communications, Attorney General Janet Reno urged the entertainment industry (including movies, television networks, cable television, and independent stations) to "voluntarily" curb the broadcasting of violent fare, or legislative action would be "imperative."
- In November, Attorney General Janet Reno extended the antitrust exemption, that was scheduled to expire on December 1, allowing the television industry to discuss ways to reduce violent programming.
- In December, President Bill Clinton indicated that he desired cooperation between government and industry rather than a legislative solution to the television violence issue. Also, he delivered a speech in Los Angeles in which he encouraged the entertainment industry to "clean up its act" and reduce the level of indiscriminate violence in programs.

1994

- In January, both broadcast network and cable television executives announced an agreement to have television violence independently monitored. Assessments would be made of the 1994-95 and 1995-96 broadcast seasons.
- Along with independent monitoring, cable television executives assented to develop a ratings system for its entertainment networks, and a "V" block to allow viewers to keep out programs receiving a violent rating.

- Ongoing research analyzing television content, released by Dr. Gerbner and associates of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, indicated that over a 20-year period (1973-1993) the level of violence in prime time programming remained at about five acts per hour. Saturday morning cartoon shows, however, averaged 23 violent acts per hour.
- On January 31, Senator Byron Dorgan introduced legislation, similar to Representative Markey's bill, to require new television sets to contain built-in circuitry to allow viewers to block violent rated programs.
- In March, a TV Guide interview with President Clinton was published in which the President discussed violence and the power of the television industry to curb it. This interview marked the release of 30-to-60 second public-service ads, featuring the President, encouraging Americans to work together against violence.
- In May, cable television executives stated that Mediascope, a non-profit California-based group, would monitor programming for violent content and provide a report for the public.
- In June, the four broadcast networks affirmed that the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Communication Policy Center was selected to analyze, assess and report on television violence.
- In July, an Electronic Industries Association subcommittee voted to create a voluntary industry standard facilitating V-chip manufacturing and placement into new television sets.
- In August, the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA) reported that from observing all major programs on 10 channels, within an 18-hour day, there were 10 violent scenes per hour, per channel, all day. CMPA researchers not only monitored prime time programs and cartoons, but also observed news and "reality" shows, music videos, toy commercials, and promotions for upcoming movies and television series.
- The EIA's consumer electronics group approved incorporating V-chip blocking into its extended data services and closed-captioning standard.

1995

- In his State of the Union Address on January 24, President Clinton reminded the entertainment industry about its responsibility to assess the influence its work has on society and the damage that might occur from the incessant broadcast of "mindless" violence that permeates the media.
- Between January and May, six pieces of legislation regarding television violence were introduced by various Members of Congress. These included a bill, introduced in February by Senator Ernest Hollings, that would prohibit the broadcast of violent programming during the hours that children likely would comprise a large portion of the viewing audience.

- In February, Senator Kent Conrad introduced a bill that directed the FCC to prescribe rules for rating violence in television programs, and require certain television sets to contain blocking circuitry enabling viewers to block shows with a common rating.
- On March 30, Senator Larry Pressler introduced the Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act of 1995 which provided for all telecommunications markets to be opened for competition, and other purposes.
- On May 3, Representative Thomas Bliley, Jr. introduced a bill similar to Senator Pressler's, the Communications Act of 1995 to promote competition and deregulation in the telecommunications industry.
- On May 31, Senator Robert Dole gave a speech in Los Angeles in which he warned that popular music, movies, and television were "bombarding our children with destructive messages of casual violence and even more casual sex."
- In June, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued recommendations to pediatricians encouraging them to urge the entertainment industry to be sensitive to the issue of media violence in a timely and substantial fashion, and made other suggestions regarding the issue and its impact on children.
- On June 8, Representative James Moran introduced legislation that would direct the FCC to prescribe rules for rating sexual, violent, and indecent television programs, and require certain television sets to be equipped with blocking circuitry to allow viewers to block programs with a common rating.
- On June 13, during the Senate debate over the Telecommunications Act, Senators Conrad and Joseph Lieberman, proposed two "V-chip" amendments based on the bill that was introduced by Senator Conrad in February. All new television sets would be required to contain a V-chip, and the broadcast and cable television industries would have one year to create a ratings system.
- On June 15, the Telecommunications bill passed the Senate amended.
- On July 7, Representative Markey introduced the Parental Choice in Television Act of 1995, a measure similar to Senators Conrad and Lieberman's amendments, that would provide V-chip technology to help parents control their children's viewing of inappropriate programming.
- On July 10, at a conference in Nashville, Tennessee on "The Family and the Media," President Clinton publicly endorsed the V-chip by suggesting that it be included in the Telecommunications bill. This provision, he indicated, would empower parents to be responsible with media in regards to their children and what they are allowed to watch.

- On July 12, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing on television violence. Although the impact of viewing violence on children and youth was discussed, the main concern focused on the V-chip.
- On August 4, the House considered and passed the Communications Act of 1995 amended. This included an amendment by Representative Markey to encode the V-chip into certain new television sets to block inappropriate television programs.
- In September, the UCLA Television Violence Monitoring Report was released. The first of two independent monitoring studies "voluntarily" sought by the television industry in response to Senator Simon's 1993 suggestions, found that television network executives appeared to be responding to concerns about television violence, but cautioned that there remains room for substantial improvement.
- On October 12, the House considered and passed the Senate's Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act of 1995, amended in lieu of the House version of the bill, the Communications Act of 1995.
- On November 9, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation reported the Children's Protection From Violent Programming Act of 1995 (introduced by Senator Hollings) to the Senate (S.Rept. 104-171). No further action occurred.
- In November, House and Senate staff members met to reconcile differences between the House and Senate versions of the Telecommunications Act. They agreed to accept Representative Markey's proposal for the V-chip, and for the voluntary creation of a ratings system by the television industry.
- On December 6, House and Senate conferees agreed to require television set manufacturers to include a V-chip in certain television sets to block objectionable programs. Broadcasters would be given one year to create a ratings system. If not completed within that time, the FCC would develop the system.

1996

- On January 23, President Clinton, in his State of the Union Address, mentioned his concern about the need to reduce television violence. He stressed his support for the V-chip and the creation of a television ratings system by the industry, plus the overall improvement in the quality of children's television programming.
- On January 31, the House filed a Conference report (H.Rept. 104-458) on the Telecommunications Act of 1996.
- In early February, the independent monitoring report funded by the National Cable Television Association was released by Mediascope, Inc. Researchers

from four universities found that “psychologically harmful” violence permeates both broadcast and cable television programs.

- On February 1, the Senate filed and agreed to the Conference report (S.Rept. 104-230) on the Telecommunications Act. Also, the House agreed to the Conference report it previously filed.
- On February 2, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was sent to the President.
- On February 8, the President signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 into P.L. 104-104.
- On February 9, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation reported the Television Violence Report Card Act of 1995 to the Senate (S.Rept. 104-234). At the time of this writing, no further action has occurred.
- On February 29, top television industry executives, and others in the entertainment industry including Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, met with President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore at the White House. Industry leaders revealed plans to create a ratings system for television programs.
- On March 1, President and Mrs. Clinton, along with Vice President and Mrs. Gore met with a select group of parents, youth, and children to discuss their reactions to the V-chip and ratings system.
- Jack Valenti was selected to lead a television industry coalition to establish a ratings system.
- On July 29, a White House Conference was held with leaders of the entertainment industry to discuss improving the quality of children’s television. As a result, broadcasters agreed to air three hours per week of educational children’s television and the FCC adopted the proposal.
- On September 11, the Center for Media and Public Affairs released a report which found an increase in television gunplay and violence.
- On October 15, President Clinton held a joint press conference with the Director of the UCLA Center for Communication Policy in Albuquerque, New Mexico to release the second UCLA annual report on television violence. The study found that the level of violence in network programming appeared slightly to decline.
- On December 19, details were released about a television ratings system that was developed by a group of television industry executives led by Jack Valenti. Six age-based ratings were presented with explanations regarding what each rating represented in terms of program content.

1997

- On January 17, the Motion Picture Association of America, the National Association of Broadcasters, and the National Cable Television Association submitted a proposal to the FCC for a television ratings system.
- In January, the television rating for individual programs began appearing for 15 seconds in the upper left-hand corner of the television screen at the beginning of a show.
- On February 27, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing to debate the television ratings system issue. Some individuals believed the system was a good first step in addressing the television violence and sexual content issue, while many parents and teacher groups believed the ratings were inadequate and needed revision.
- On March 26, the second National Television Violence Study was released. Sponsored by the National Cable Television Association and administered and coordinated by the Center for Communication and Social Policy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the study found that the amount of television violence on both broadcast and cable networks had not declined between the first and second television seasons monitored and frequently continued to be glamorized.
- On May 19, the House Committee on Commerce's Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protection held a field hearing in Peoria, Illinois to discuss the television ratings system and determine how the citizens, representing middle-class America, assessed the system.
- On July 10, as a result of criticisms that the television ratings system did not provide enough information about the content of television programs, all television networks except NBC agreed to revise the system by including designators to indicate whether a program received a certain rating because of violence (V), sex (S), language (L), or suggestive dialog (D).
- On August 1, the television industry submitted the revised ratings system to the FCC.
- In September, the new FCC rules requiring television broadcasters to air three hours of educational and instructional programming per week as a requirement for license renewal went into effect.
- On September 30, Vice President Al Gore launched the new television ratings system which will assist parents in identifying offensive programs they will be able to block from their homes through the upcoming V-Chip technology.
- On October 1, the revised ratings system became effective.
- In October, a study surveying public attitudes toward television programming was conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide and sponsored by the

Broadcasting & Cable magazine and the International Radio & Television Society. It was discovered among other things that 57% of the respondents strongly favored the V-chip technology, and 51% believed it would produce positive results, while 30% did not. Also, 82% favored the decision to broadcast three hours of children's educational television, while only 21% believed it would "do a lot of good."

1998

- On January 13, the third UCLA study monitoring television violence was released. A steady decline in violent fare on broadcast networks was reported, except in reality specials.
- In February, a spokesperson for the NAB, which represents 1,600 commercial television stations, reported that no complaints or basically any viewer response had been received regarding the revised television ratings system.
- On March 12, the FCC approved the revised ratings system and adopted technical standards for the V-chip blocking device. Television manufacturers will have to have all new television sets with screens 13 inches or larger equipped with the V-chip by January 1, 2000.
- On April 16, the third and final National Television Violence Study was released. Researchers found, after examining both broadcast network and cable television, that "glamorized" violence considered harmful to viewers remained steady over the three years of monitoring.
- In May, the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization that frequently study the effects of the media on public health, released results of a survey that questioned whether parents were using the revised ratings system. Results indicated that over half used the ratings system, but nearly 70% did not plan to purchase a new V-chip equipped television set within a year or two after the sets were available.
- On September 24, the Kaiser Family Foundation released a major report indicating that the content descriptors ("V" for violence, etc.) were being used only in 23% of television programs that contained such depictions. Ninety-seven percent of programs containing violence had not received the "V" designator, and 79% of shows with sexual situations had not carried the "S" warning descriptor.

Appendix B. Standards For the Depiction of Violence in Television Programs

Issued By ABC, CBS, and NBC -- December 1992

Preface

The following standards for the Depiction of Violence in Television Programs are issued jointly by ABC, CBS, and NBC Television Networks under the Antitrust Exemption granted by the Television Violence Act of 1990.

Each network has long been committed to presenting television viewers with a broad spectrum of entertainment and information programming. Each Network maintains its own extensive published broadcast standards governing acceptability of both program (including on-air promotion) and commercial materials.

These new joint standards are consistent with each of the Network's long-standing preexisting policies on violence. At the same time they set forth in a more detailed and explanatory manner to reflect the experience gained under the preexisting policies. While adopting and subscribing to these joint Standards, each Network will continue the tradition of individual review of material, which will necessitate independent judgments on a program-by-program basis.

The standards are not intended to inhibit the work of producers, directors, writers, or to impede the creative process. They are intended to proscribe gratuitous or excessive portrayals of violence.

In principle, each of the ABC, CBS and NBC Television Networks is committed to presenting programs which portray the human condition, which may include the depiction of violence as a component. The following Standards for the Depiction of Violence in Television Programs will provide the framework within which the acceptability of content will be determined by each Network in the exercise of its own judgment.

Standards For Depiction of Violence in Television Programs

These written standards cannot cover every situation and must, therefore, be worded broadly. Moreover, the Standards must be considered against the creative context, character and tone of each individual program. Each scene should be evaluated on its own merits with due consideration for its creative integrity.

- (1) Conflict and strife are the essence of drama and conflict often results in physical or psychological violence. However, all depictions of violence should be relevant and necessary to the development of character, or to the advancement of theme or plot.
- (2) Gratuitous or excessive depictions of violence, (or redundant violence shown solely for its own sake), are not acceptable.

- (3) Programs should not depict violence as glamorous, nor as an acceptable solution to human conflict.
- (4) Depictions of violence may not be used to shock or stimulate the audience.
- (5) Scenes showing excessive gore, pain, or physical suffering are not acceptable.
- (6) The intensity and frequency of the use of force and other factors relating to the manner of its portrayal should be measured under a standard of reasonableness so that the program, on the whole, is appropriate for a home viewing medium.
- (7) Scenes which may be instructive in nature, e.g., which depict in an imitable manner, the use of harmful devices or weapons, describe readily usable techniques for the commission of crimes, or show replicable methods for the evasion of detection or apprehension, should be avoided. Similarly, ingenious, unique, or otherwise unfamiliar methods of inflicting pain or injury are unacceptable if easily capable of imitation.
- (8) Realistic depictions of violence should also portray, in human terms, the consequences of that violence to its victims and its perpetrators. Callousness or indifference to suffering experienced by victims of violence should be avoided.
- (9) Exceptional care must be taken in stories or scenes where children are victims of, or are threatened by acts of violence (physical, psychological or verbal).
- (10) The portrayal of dangerous behavior which would invite imitation by children, including portrayals of the use of weapons or implements readily accessible to this impressionable group, should be avoided.
- (11) Realistic portrayals of violence as well as scenes, images or events which are unduly frightening or distressing to children should not be included in any program specifically designed for that audience.
- (12) The use of real animals shall conform to accepted standards of humane treatment. Fictionalized portrayals of abusive treatment should be strictly limited to the legitimate requirements of plot development.
- (13) Extreme caution must be exercised in any themes, plots, or scenes which mix sex and violence. Rape and other sexual assaults are violent, not erotic, behavior.

- (14) The scheduling of any program, commercial or promotional material, including those containing violent depictions, should take into consideration the nature of the program, its content and the likely composition of the intended audience.
- (15) Certain exceptions to the foregoing may be acceptable, as in the presentation of material whose overall theme is clearly and unambiguously anti-violent.

4506-8.1: Typological Approach To Doing Social Area Analysis

[No. 1. 1981. iii+72 p. ADM 81-262. HE20.8110/2:BN1. ASI/MF/(see below)]

By Harold F. Goldsmith et al. Reprint of report explaining use of MHDPS, with illustrative data for Maryland. For description and ASI microfiche availability, see ASI 2nd Annual Supplement, 4226-3.10. Report reprint is available from the agency or GPO.

4506-8.2: Interorganizational Relations: A Sourcebook of Measures for Mental Health Programs

[No. 2. 1982. vii+119 p. ADM 82-1187. HE20.8110/2:BN2. S/N 017-024-01133-9. GPO \$6.00. ASI/MF/4]

By Joseph P. Morrissey et al. Presents an overview of methods used in assessing interactions among organizations delivering mental health and related services. Includes excerpts from survey questionnaire forms used in various assessment studies.

4506-8.3: Small Area Social Indicators

[No. 3. 1982. v+30 p. ADM 82-1189. HE20.8110/2:BN3. ASI/MF/3]

By Harold F. Goldsmith et al. Discusses uses and limitations of MHDPS for targeting special mental health needs of individual communities and describes planned MHDPS revisions based on data from the 1980 Census of Population and Housing. Includes 11 figures, with illustrative data for selected areas in New York State and Maryland.

4508 (ADAMHA) NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Special and Irregular Publications

4508-4 TELEVISION AND BEHAVIOR: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties

Item 507-B-5.
GPO; for individual bibliographic data, see below.
*HE20.8102:T23/2/v.1-2.
MC 82-23597. LC 82-600539.

Report reviewing research on the influence of TV programs on viewers' behavior, conducted during the 1970s. Discusses TV effects on cognitive and emotional functioning, social role concepts, the family, and physical and mental health.

Report is issued in 2 volumes, described below.

4508-4.1: Vol. 1: Summary Report

[1982. viii+94 p. ADM 82-1195. HE20.8102:T23/2/v.1. S/N 017-024-01129-1. \$5.00. ASI/MF/4]

Narrative overview of research conducted primarily 1972-82, with some historical comparisons. Includes bibliography following each chapter.

4508-4.2: Vol. 2: Technical Reviews

[1982. x+362 p. ADM 82-1196. HE20.8102:T23/2/v.2. S/N 017-024-01141-0. \$9.00. ASI/MF/6]

Compilation of 24 papers presenting technical reviews of research conducted primarily 1972-82, with some historical comparisons.

Papers often contain text statistics or tables showing various indicators relating behavior and beliefs to amount of TV viewing and sociodemographic characteristics; and tabulations of program content and characterization.

Sections are listed below; statistical material is noted. Each section also includes introductory comments.

SECTIONS:

- Cognitive and affective aspects of television: indicators of educational achievement and occupational and educational aspirations of child viewers; and vocabulary knowledge of adult viewers. 7 papers. (p. 1-101)
- Television and violence and aggression: incidence of program violence, by network and time of day; and indicators of viewer aggressive action. 4 papers. (p. 103-173)
- Television and social beliefs and behavior: distribution of TV characters by sex and occupation or major activity; and indicators of viewer perceptions of social reality. 6 papers. (p. 175-257)
- Television and social relations. 2 papers. (p. 259-286)
- Television and health: indicators of viewer health attitudes and behavior; and behavior of emotionally disturbed, institutionalized child viewers. 3 papers. (p. 287-330)
- Television in American society: distribution of programming hours by supplier. 2 papers. (p. 331-362)

4604

OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES Annuals and Biennials

4604-1 STATUS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN HEAD START PROGRAMS

Annual. 1982.
v+35+App 12 p.
Item 454-C-5. † ASI/MF/3
*HE23.1012:981.

Eighth annual report by HHS to Congress on handicapped children enrolled in Head Start programs. Provides estimates of the number of children served, and information on their handicapping conditions and services being provided. Data are based on a Mar. 1980 survey of 1,780 full-year Head Start programs, and a July-Aug. 1979 survey of summer programs.

Report includes 2 charts and 9 tables showing number and percent distribution of handicapped children enrolled in programs, by type of handicap; and reasons why handicapped children could not be enrolled. Also includes the following appendix tables:

A. Number of responding programs and total and handicapped children enrolled, by State, including D.C. and outlying areas; with separate totals for Indian and migrant worker programs. (5 p.)

B-D. Programs providing special educational and related services to handicapped children, receiving special services from other agencies, and providing special services to parents, by service provided and type of handicap. (7 p.)

Previous report, for 1979, was described in ASI 1980 Annual under this number.

4604-2 RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION, AND EVALUATION STUDIES

Annual, discontinued.

Annual report containing descriptions of Administration for Children, Youth, and Families funded research and demonstration projects, discontinued with report for FY80 (see ASI 1981 Annual under this number).

The Research and Evaluation Division, which was responsible for publishing the report, has been abolished.

4604-4 FACTS ABOUT OLDER AMERICANS, 1980-81

Annual. [1982.] 13 p. †
ASI/MF/3

Annual report containing text statistics, 7 charts, and 1 table on persons 65 and older. Covers population trends and sex ratio, population by State, life expectancy, marital status and living arrangements, income and poverty status, employment, and health. Most data are for 1980.

Previous report, for 1979, was described in ASI 1980 Annual under this number.

APA Public Communications

Violence on Television

What do Children Learn? What Can Parents Do?

Violent programs on television lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch those programs.

That's the word from a 1982 report by the National Institute of Mental Health, a report that confirmed and extended an earlier study done by the Surgeon General. As a result of these and other research findings, the American Psychological Association passed a resolution in February 1985 informing broadcasters and the public of the potential dangers that viewing violence on television can have for children.

What Does the Research Show?

Psychological research has shown three major effects of seeing violence on television:

- Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others
- Children may be more fearful of the world around them
- Children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

Children who watch a lot of TV are less aroused by violent scenes than are those who only watch a little; in other words, they're less bothered by violence in general, and less likely to do anything wrong with it. One example: in several studies, those who watched a violent program instead of a nonviolent one were slower to intervene or to call for help when, a little later, they saw younger children fighting or playing destructively.

Studies by George Gerbner, Ph.D., at the University of Pennsylvania, have shown that children's TV shows contain about 20 violent acts each hour and also that children who watch a lot of television are more likely to think that the world is a mean and dangerous place.

Children often behave differently after they've been watching violent programs on TV. In one study done at Pennsylvania State University, about 100 preschool children were observed both before and after watching television; some watched cartoons that had a lot of aggressive and violent acts in them, and others watched shows that didn't have any kind of violence. The researchers noticed real differences between the kids who watched the violent shows and those who watched nonviolent ones.

'Children who watch the violent shows, even 'just funny' cartoons, were more likely to hit out at their playmates, argue, disobey class rules, leave tasks unfinished, and were less willing to wait for things than those who watched the nonviolent programs,' says Aletha Huston, Ph.D., now at the University of Kansas.

Real-Life Studies

Findings from the laboratory are further supported by field studies which have shown the long-range effects of televised violence. Leonard Eron, Ph.D., and his associates at the University of Illinois, found that children who watched many hours of TV violence when they were in elementary school tended to also show a higher level of aggressive behavior when they became teenagers. By observing these youngsters until they were 30 years old, Dr. Eron found that the ones who'd watched a lot of TV when they were eight years old were more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for criminal acts as adults.

A Continuing Debate

In spite of this accumulated evidence, broadcasters and scientists continue to debate the link between the viewing TV violence and children's aggressive behavior. Some broadcasters believe that there is not enough evidence to prove that TV violence is harmful. But scientists who have studied this issue say that there is a link between TV violence and aggression, and in 1992, the American Psychological Association's Task Force on Television and Society published a report that confirms this view. The report, entitled *Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society*, shows that the harmful effects of TV violence do exist.

What Parents Can Do

While most scientists are convinced that children can learn aggressive behavior from television, they also point out that parents have tremendous power to moderate that influence.

Because there is a great deal of violence in both adult and children's programming, just limiting the number of hours children watch television will probably reduce the amount of aggression they see.

In addition:

Parents should watch at least one episode of the programs their children watch. That way they'll know what their children are watching and be able to talk about it with them.

When they see a violent incident, parents can discuss with their child what caused the character to act in a violent way. They should also point out that this kind of behavior is not characteristic, not the way adults usually solve their problems. They can ask their children to talk about other ways the character could have reacted, or other nonviolent solutions to the character's problem.

Parents can outright ban any programs that they find too offensive. They can also restrict their children's viewing to shows that they feel are more beneficial, such as documentaries, educational shows and so on.

Parents can limit the amount of time children spend watching television, and encourage children to spend their time on sports, hobbies, or with friends; parents and kids can even draw up a list of other enjoyable activities to do instead of watching TV.

Parents can encourage their children to watch programs that demonstrate helping, caring and cooperation. Studies show that these types of programs can influence children to become more kind and considerate.

For More Information

If You're Interested in reading more about the research and public issues discussed in this brochure, you may find the following books and articles helpful:

Comstock, G. (1991). *Television in America*. Newbury Park, CA; Sage Publications.

Huston, A.C., Donnerstein, E., Fairchild, H., Feshbach, N.D., Katz, P.A., Murray, J.P. Rubinstein, E.A., Wilcox, B. & Zuckerman, D. (1992). *Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Liebert, R.M. & Sprefkin. (1988). *The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth*. New York: Pergamon.

Murray, J.P. & Salamon, G. (1984). *The Future of Children's Television: Results of the Markle Foundation/Boys Town Conference*. Boys Town, NE. The Boys Town Center.

National Institute of Mental Health (1982). *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties, Volume 1*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Palmer, E.L. (1988). *Television and America's Children: A Crisis of Neglect*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Singer, D.G., Singer, J.L. & Zuckerman, D.M. (1983). *Teaching Television: How to Use TV to Your Child's Advantage*. New York: Dial Press.

Singer, D.G., Singer, J.L. & Zuckerman, D.M. (1983). *Getting the Most Out of Television: Lesson Plans for Teachers and Children*. Northbrook, IL. Scott-Foresman.

The American Psychological Association (APA) located in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 132,000 practitioners, researchers, educators, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 49 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 58 state and territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

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**Statement On Television Violence
Before The U.S. House
Subcommittee On Telecommunications And Finance
by Joycelyn Elders
Former U.S. Surgeon General**

September 15, 1993

Mr. Chairman, Representative Fields (ranking minority leader), and members of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, it is a great honor to appear before you today as the United States Surgeon General. I commend you on your insight in addressing how television violence affects our communities and especially our children. I appreciate the opportunity to add my professional observations to this forum.

I attended medical school on the G.I. Bill and am now a board certified pediatric endocrinologist. For over twenty years, I have been on the faculty in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Arkansas School of Medicine. For the past five and a half years, I served as the Director of the Arkansas Department of Health. As a result of my background, education, training, and experience, I have become a strong advocate for programs that will strengthen families, reduce risky behaviors, improve health and enable children to become healthy, educated, motivated and to have hope for the future.

You have asked me to talk about the effects of violence in the media on our communities and children. I am here today to tell you that violence in America is a critical public health issue, deeply embedded in our

society that requires the sustained effort of not just the public health community, but also criminal justice, education, housing, community and religious institutions -- in short, all of us committed to giving our children a safe and hopeful future.

Mr. Chairman, as your Surgeon General, I am deeply concerned about this epidemic of violence -- and deeply committed to preventing it. Violence breeds in every community, large and small -- and especially in pockets of poverty where residents believe there is little hope for the future.

To understand the effect of media violence on our children we must look at how it fits into that larger picture of violence in our society. Violence is a very complex problem for which there are no simple solutions. The prominence of violence in the movies, on TV, and in the news should make us all realize how central a place violence has come to occupy in our society. The media mirrors our culture, and we need to take a hard look into that mirror.

Our culture tends to glorify violence. Courageous alternatives, such as talking things out and peacefully resolving conflicts, are considered cowardly. We need to look carefully at our culture to see the many places where these misguided values are set and conveyed, and we need to think hard about the many ways we can go about changing these norms and values. There is no one cause for violence; therefore, there will be no easy or simple solution.

Every year, over 23,000 U.S. citizens die by violent acts, an average of 65 people a day. Another 6,000 people each day suffer injuries related to violence. In 1987, America spent an estimated \$19.9 billion on long-term medical and mental health treatment, emergency response, productivity losses, and administration of health insurance and disability payments for injuries from violent assaults. Successful prevention means that many of these 23,000 people would be alive and contributing to society. Prevention means saving people and society the human suffering and financial cost of caring for the injured and the resulting disabled.

One of the factors that makes these numbers so devastating is the youth of the victims and the perpetrators. A group of young people reported in a recent PHS survey that violence was so prevalent in their lives they believed they would not live to age 16. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for those ages 15 through 24. Violence has a disproportionately greater impact on racial and ethnic minorities. In fact, it is the leading cause of death for African American males and females ages 15 through 24. Women are frequent victims of both physical and sexual assault -- many of which are fatal. In 1990, 5,316 women were murdered--six out of every ten by someone they knew.

To protect our children, there are many things we must change. Addressing TV violence alone is not enough. We must address these "root causes."

What can public health offer in the nation's effort to

stop the epidemic of violence? First, public health can provide a scientific basis for defining the problem and finding solutions. The topic of violence in our nation is a very emotional one. It has all the elements of human drama--the death of children, the glamour of the media, the right to bear arms. These issues have placed the debate in an emotional and political framework. We need good, factual information to make good decisions about public policy and individual and societal choices. And the public health community can do that by gathering the data and appropriate information on all aspects of the problem, including who is affected and what puts people at risk. Public health also has experience with designing interventions that address the multiple facets of the problem, and we are helping communities put these interventions in place and evaluate their effectiveness.

Let me take a moment to summarize the data we have on media violence. Television has become an integral part of American society with at least one television set in 99 percent of American households (two in 66 percent). The average American child at the time of graduation from high school has spent more time watching TV -- 15,000 hours -- than in school -- 11,000 hours. By age 18, the average American child has witnessed approximately 250,000 acts of violence on TV and/or in films.

American youths identify with media characters and superheros, especially if a same-sex role model is absent in their own life. These young people consequently model their own behavior after these fictional

personalities. Research has shown that boys and men who are poor, urban and who have witnessed or been victimized by violence in their families are more at risk for this kind of behavior modeling.

Given the universality of television and the extent of time involved in watching, there has been considerable concern about the effects, bad and good, of television. For more than two decades, research on the effects of television violence has been a subject for careful review and assessment by panels of behavioral scientists:

In 1972, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior found a preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behavior; an indication that any such causal relation operates only on some children (who are predisposed to be aggressive); and an indication that it operates only in some environmental contexts.

The committee also observed that "(t)he sheer amount of television violence may be unimportant compared with such subtle matters as what the medium says about it: is it approved or disapproved, committed by sympathetic or unsympathetic characters, shown to be effective or not, punished or unpunished."

In 1982, the National Institute of Mental Health conducted a review of the decade of extensive research (some 2500 titles) that followed the Surgeon General's report. The most relevant section of the NIMH report is as follows:

After 10 more years of research, the consensus ... is that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs. This conclusion is based on laboratory experiments and on field studies. Not all children become aggressive, of course, but the correlations between violence and aggression are positive. In magnitude, television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behavior as any other behavioral variation that has been measured. The research question has moved from asking whether or not there is an effect to seeking explanations for the effect.

The NIMH report also noted the potential of and evidence for television to affect health practices, cognitive and emotional functioning, imagination, creativity, prosocial behavior, and socialization. Television, thus, can be a notable influence for good as well as bad.

In 1992, the American Psychological Association published "Big World, Small Screen," a report of a committee of psychologists that substantive update of the literature on television effects. With benefit of ever increasing research on the effects of violence, the APA report observes:

The accumulated research clearly demonstrates a correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior -- that is, heavy viewers behave more aggressively than light viewers. Children and adults who watch a large number of aggressive programs also

tend to hold attitudes and values that favor the use of aggression to resolve conflict --- these correlations are solid. They remain even when many other potential influences on viewing and aggression are controlled, including education level, social class, aggressive attitudes, parental behavior, and sex- role identity.

To sum up, the weight of the scientific evidence is that there is reason for concern about the effects of media violence.

Now let me return to the role of public health in stopping violence. In public health, we focus on primary prevention -- programs and policies that are designed to prevent violent behaviors, injuries, and deaths from occurring in the first place. Until recently, most of our nation's response to violence has been to apprehend, arrest, adjudicate, and incarcerate violent offenders through the criminal justice system. Too many today believe this response is too little, too late. It is an expensive solution. By itself, it will not prevent the spread of violence in America.

Although we have a great deal to learn about how to prevent violence, we do know that violent behaviors, and the injuries and deaths that result, can be prevented. Even those in the criminal justice system -- the police, the judges, the probation officers and others -- are saying the same thing. We cannot continue to wait until violence occurs to rehabilitate the offender. We must stop the violent behavior before it starts. For example, we know that when nurse home visitors meet with expectant parents, they can counsel them and discuss

parenting skills with the end result of decreasing the incidence of child abuse and preventing some of the violence that might otherwise be perpetrated by youth abused as children.

This means public health, justice and other social systems working together. The Department is seeking ways to collaborate with other Cabinet agencies -particularly the Departments of Justice, Education, and Housing and Urban Development -- to find more meaningful and effective ways of confronting this problem on a larger scale.

Public health can mobilize a broad array of existing resources in medicine, mental health, social services, education, and substance abuse prevention to attack injuries and death from youth violence. But, most importantly, the best resource in preventing violence is the community itself. Public health works in partnership with communities to design programs that fit their unique problems and culture. The success of any program is likely to reflect the community environment and the ownership of the program by the community.

I am now pleased to tell you about the programs we already have in place in the Public Health Service for addressing this problem, as well as our plans for future activities in this area.

The PHS has worked and will continue to work closely with State and local health departments, as well as non-governmental organizations from the community to the national level. For example, we have supported the

campaign of the American Medical Association to help physicians across the country identify, treat, and refer patients involved in family violence. The President-elect of the AMA, Dr. Robert McAfee, has testified before your subcommittee already; we share his concerns in this area and plan to work closely with him. PHS is also coordinating its efforts with other parts of the Department, including the Administration on Children and Families.

Regarding PHS-specific efforts, since the early 1980s, our Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has led PHS violence prevention activities. In addition to this leadership role, CDC sponsors and funds violence prevention programs. CDC conducts and funds epidemiological studies of violence, collects trend data, researches the risk factors associated with violence, supports community demonstrations of interventions (such as conflict resolution, school based educational curricula, mentoring), and funds evaluations of interventions and training.

Other PHS agencies also make important contributions to the Department's violence prevention goals. Programs of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) work to prevent and treat two significant cofactors of violence, substance abuse and mental illness. The Office of Minority Health (OMH) funds grants for coalition building and other community-based activities, including violence prevention, targeted at minority males. The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

supports demonstrations to evaluate methods of reducing violence among children and youth, child abuse, and dating violence.

The President's FY 94 budget includes proposals for new violence prevention projects in two PHS agencies:

A \$10 million increase for CDC for an initiative to prevent violence against women.

A \$5 million increase for the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, part of SAMHSA, to target substance abuse prevention to youth at high risk for violent or anti-social behavior.

I hope that this brief overview of the problem of violence in our country helps you place the issue of violence in the media in perspective with all the other issues related to violence prevention. In your deliberations on the impact of media violence on violent behavior, I hope you will not forget the critically important role of media in preventing violence. Recent successes with public health information and education campaigns for smoking reduction, cardiovascular disease reduction, and AIDS prevention suggest that similar efforts can be important parts of the public health approach to violence prevention. With violence prevention, it is clear: children learn from watching television, and what they learn depends on what they watch. The programs they see on television change their behavior. If they look at violent or aggressive programs, they tend to become more aggressive and disobedient. But if they look at prosocial programs, they will more

likely become more generous, friendly, and self-controlled.

Violence prevention messages can be included in public service announcements and information programs, in entertainment programs, and in news features. To achieve the same success as has been achieved with anti-smoking efforts for example, public health information campaigns for violence prevention need to formulate precise objectives, identify target audiences, carefully develop culturally competent messages, and then measure the impact of these marketing efforts.

We hope to work with the media to do the following:

First, help to shift the violence prevention paradigm from a focus now limited to only helping victims of violence and changing perpetrators of violence, to one that includes preventing violence before it ever occurs.

Second, make people aware of the magnitude and characteristics of the problem of violence today by describing the many forms violence takes across the span of life: child abuse, child sexual abuse, youth violence, gang violence, hate crimes, domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse.

Third, let people know that violence is a preventable problem and that, as parents and citizens, we all share in the responsibility to change it.

Fourth, give hope to individuals and communities, informing them that there are things that work to

prevent violence, there are things that people and communities can do to prevent it.

Fifth, mobilize individuals, organizations,, and communities to act.

Sixth, provide information about what works and how to conduct effective prevention programs.

We also need to look at how news media portrays violence, and how they could better promote understanding of the impact, causes, and solutions. Media could promote better understanding among diverse groups, family members, and racial/ethnic minorities. And TV can publicize those community resources that are available (e.g. boys and girls clubs).

Parents and teachers must help children put violence in the media in perspective. Today, the average child ages 2-11 watches 28 hours of TV each week! We must realize the extent to which we have abandoned our children to TV. We need to reclaim them, we need to spend time with them, do things with them and teach them the values we think they need to have. In those communities where traditional family and community structures have broken down, we need to rebuild them.

It will take the strengths and positive values of our communities to turn this problem around. We must make our homes, our communities, and our nation safer. As a public health official, I have learned that, before you can increase resources to treat a problem, you must convince the masses that a problem exists. In this case,

the best treatment is prevention. Prevention must start early, with our children.

I welcome the opportunity to work with you to increase awareness that violence is a public health problem. Together, I hope we will be successful in making our streets and our homes safe again.



Gifts
Of
Speech