

Television Violence

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DLC 1993 Annual Conference

Schedule of Events*

Thursday, December 2, 1993

- 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. **DLC Conference Registration**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
Sheraton North Ballroom, Lobby Level (Temporary Site)
- 6:30 p.m. **Shuttle Service to Welcoming Reception Begins**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
24th Street Entrance
- 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. **Welcoming Reception**
Postal Square
2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
- 9:30 p.m. **Shuttle Service from Welcoming Reception Ends**
Postal Square
Corner of Massachusetts Avenue and First Street, NE

Friday, December 3, 1993

- 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. **Conference Registration**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
Virginia Room B/C
Lobby Level
- 7:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. **Breakfast**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
Sheraton Washington Ballroom
Lobby Level
- 9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. **Opening Ceremony & Address**
U.S. Senator John B. Breaux, DLC Chairman
- 9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. **Speeches (TBA)**
- 11:00 a.m. - Noon **The Role of Government in Health Care Reform**
U.S. Representative Jim Cooper, TN

** All speakers, times, etc., tentative as of November 22, 1993. Additional invitations are outstanding.*

Friday, December 3, 1993 (continued)

- 5:00 p.m. **Friday Session Adjourns**
- 6:00 p.m. **Shuttle Service to Union Station Begins**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
24th Street Entrance
- 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. **General Reception**
Union Station
East Hall
Presidential Suite Entrance
- 8:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. **DLC Gala Dinner**
Union Station
Main Hall
Presidential Suite Entrance
- 11:30 p.m. **Shuttle Service to Sheraton Washington Hotel Ends**
Union Station

Saturday, December 4, 1993

- 7:30 a.m. - Noon **Conference Registration**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
Virginia Room B/C
Lobby Level
- 7:45 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. **Breakfast**
Sheraton Washington Hotel
Sheraton Washington Ballroom
Lobby Level
- 9:00 a.m. **Saturday Conference Session Begins**
Sheraton Washington Ballroom, Lobby Level
Sheraton Washington Hotel
- 9:00 a.m. - 10:25 a.m. **Roundtable III**
The Politics of Change: Roots and Resistance
- Confirmed Participants:
Al From, *DLC President, Moderator*
U.S. Representative Tim Penny, *MN*
Jonathan Rauch, *Contributing Editor, National Journal*
Bill Schneider, *Resident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute*

Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch
Sheraton Washington Ballroom
Lobby Level

1:15 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Roundtable I
Assessing Clintonomics: A New Democrat View

Featured Presenter:
Roger Altman, *Deputy Secretary, U.S. Treasury Department*

Moderator:
U.S. Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, *CT*

Confirmed Participants:
U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, *GA*
U.S. Representative Jill Long, *IN*
David Friedman, *PPI Fellow*
Robert J. Shapiro, *PPI Vice President*
Douglas Ross, *Assistant Secretary, Employment and Training*
Administration, U.S. Department of Labor
Paula Stern, *PPI Senior Fellow*

3:15 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Roundtable II
Welfare, Crime and Urban Decline

Featured Presenter:
Donna Shalala, *Secretary, U.S. Department of*
Health and Human Services

Moderator:
Joel Kotkin, *PPI Senior Fellow*

Confirmed Participants:
U.S. Representative Bob Clement, *TN*
U.S. Representative Nathan Deal, *GA*
Mayor-elect Archer, *Detroit*
Lee Bowes, *President, America Works*
Pearl Ceasar, *Lead Organizer, Communities Organized*
for Public Service
Jeanne Marie Kiss, *Senior Vice President, St. Luke's Division,*
St. Luke's/Roosevelt Hospital Center
Will Marshall, *PPI President*
Bronwyn Mayden
State Senator Terese Murray, *MA*
Fred Siegel, *Professor, Cooper Union*
Kathleen Sylvester, *PPI Vice President for Domestic Policy*

Saturday, December 4, 1993 (continued)

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. **Roundtable IV**
 New Democrats Fighting for Change
 Morley Winograd, *Los Angeles DLC Chair*, Moderator

11:30 a.m. - Noon **Closing Ceremonies**

Noon **Conference Session Adjourns**

2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. **Field Workshops**
 Sheraton Washington Hotel

Session I
 Kansas Room
 Lobby Level

Session II
 Wisconsin Room
 Lobby Level

3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. **Field Workshops**
 Sheraton Washington Hotel

Session III
 Kansas Room
 Lobby Level

Session IV
 Wisconsin Room
 Lobby Level

5:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

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THE CQ Researcher

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TV Violence

Will Hollywood tone it down — or face regulation?

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN CHILD WATCHES 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school — thanks to the miracle of television. Suggestions of a link between make-believe TV violence and aggression in real life have been raised since television's formative years in the 1950s — and always dismissed by the TV industry. But recently the three major networks signed a first-ever joint statement outlining practices aimed at reducing violence, and the cable, video and film industries are showing signs of cooperating. Some in Congress are encouraged and maintain hopes that change will come about voluntarily, without the need for federal regulation. But anti-violence activists and scholars of television accuse the industry of merely paying lip service to the problem.



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March 26, 1993 • Volume 3, No. 12 • 165-188

Formerly Editorial Research Reports

**Remarks of Senator Paul Simon
To the National Press Club
* *Violence on Television* *
Washington, D.C.
September 16, 1993**

There is good news, bad news and much uncertainty as we face the problem of glamorized television violence.

The good news is that at the top level of the industry, there are some key leaders who acknowledge the reality that entertainment television violence adds to violence in our society; it is one of the causes of crime, and other anti-social behavior.

Fall broadcast programming will be less violent. That does not apply to reruns, and will apply only marginally to cable, but the fare that most Americans view will be somewhat better, though the docudramas apparently will continue their present unhappy path.

The agreement to have parental advisories is helpful, beyond the obvious assistance to parents. Advertisers generally don't buy programs that have these advisories, so their reluctance to purchase violent programs will be a modest but welcome pocketbook effect.

The good news is also the attention paid to the issue by the print media. I am encouraged when *TV Guide*, for example, publishes an article by Jane Pauley which begins: "So what do you say when a little girl turns from the television set and asks: 'Was he sticking a knife in her, Mommy?' It seemed perfectly clear that he was, so what my daughter really wanted to know was, 'Why?'"

The bad news is that the majority of those who speak out from the television and film industry still do not acknowledge the tie-in between television entertainment

violence and its negative effects on society. Even editorial writers are often unaware of the research. One of the reasons is obvious: Television has not covered the statements of the Surgeon General on television violence with the same thoroughness as it has similar statements on the cigarette threat. The fact that the National Institute of Mental Health twice has warned about this problem is almost unknown. Research on this issue is overwhelming and points in one direction. There have been, at last count, 2,000 studies and reports, many of which are substantial, and in different ways they all deliver the same message, that glorified violence on the TV screen harms our society.

As early as 1969 a national commission headed by Milton Eisenhower warned: "We are deeply troubled by the television's constant portrayal of violence. ... [It is] pandering to a public preoccupation with violence that television itself has helped to generate." In 1969 research was limited, but today research is solid and unquestioned by any serious scholar.

The bad news is that in my August 2nd speech in Los Angeles I challenged at least a few in the industry to occasionally broadcast a simple message: "*Warning: Watching too much television violence may be harmful.*" No major public health problem has been so studiously ignored by the TV industry as this one. I am unaware of any response to this challenge, but I will send a letter to the television stations and cable systems of the nation urging that at least once a day, this public service warning should be voluntarily aired.

I understand why people in the tobacco industry do not want to acknowledge the harm that cigarettes do, and I understand why people in the television and entertainment industry do not want to acknowledge the harm that glamorized violence on television does, but those of us who do not have a financial stake in the industry must speak out forcefully.

Something is wrong when a leading TV creator tells *U.S. News*: "There's more violence on the 5 o'clock news than anything you'll see on the networks during prime time." What he fails to realize is that violence on the news is sometimes excessive but does not glamorize violence. When we see what is happening in Bosnia it is grim; when someone in Washington kills someone else, we see relatives crying. But what George Gerbner calls "happy violence" occurs on entertainment TV. Death is quick and certain and painless and rarely is there a wife or mother on the scene grieving. On the news, violence is a grim, illogical way to solve problems. On entertainment television, violence is a logical means of eliminating problems.

Something is wrong when a widely known children's program is produced in two versions: the violent one for the United States and the non-violent one for distribution in the other nations of the world. When a spokesperson for the show was asked about that by the *Christian Science Monitor*, she replied that there is no objection to the violence in the United States, and by implication that they feel it adds to its salability here, while other nations would not tolerate that. "At home, we don't get many objections to violence in our shows," she said. "American kids are used to it. But abroad, it's a very different story. The BBC in Britain wouldn't buy [it] unless they could edit out some of the violence. It's that version that we sold to the rest of the world. Otherwise [it] wouldn't have done nearly as well."

The good news is that three major polls show that the overwhelming percentage of the public recognizes the tie-in between television entertainment violence and crime. It is of interest that the higher the level of education of the person polled, the greater the recognition of the problem.

The good news is that *Electronic Media* polled 100 television station managers in all regions of the country and all market sizes and 74 percent of them said television is too violent. And when I speak to cable outlet managers, the reaction is the same; they are often ashamed of the product they sell.

Also of interest, and perhaps of significance, is the *Nickelodeon* survey of young people ages eight to 12 years old, which found that 80 percent said there is too much violence on television; 91 percent in this age group said that when they saw violence happening to real people on television it bothered them, causing them to worry what might happen to them or their families; and 87 percent favored warnings at the beginning of a television show that has violence in it.

The bad news is that there is still too much finger-pointing about who is responsible for television violence, and crime, and too little concrete action. Broadcasting blames cable which blames the movies. Executives say they use what producers give them; producers blame the screen writers; and the screen writers say they script what they have been instructed to write. And then they all point the finger at others. Too many people in the TV industry say, "Why don't you do something about poverty?"; or "Why don't you do something about guns?" And of course they are right that we should tackle these things, and we have ducked. But they sound too much like the National Rifle Association leaders who blame everyone else for the cause of crime. That they're all in this grimy business together is illustrated by the TEC-9, the semi-automatic pistol used to kill eight people and wound six in San Francisco. Mike Solo, marketing and sales director at the Intratec gun plant in Miami, which makes the TEC-9, said they weren't selling until they were used in a television series, and then sales shot up.

The bad news is that extreme conduct invites extreme response, and when people in the industry deny the reality of the connection between entertainment television and crime, then some of my colleagues in Congress say that the only answer is legislation, and some of the legislation under consideration goes too far. Lawmakers should be cautious about entering the field of content, but television moguls, who worship the dollar more than responsibility to society, invite legislative solutions.

What is clear is that on broadcast programming this fall, there will be an improvement. My concern is that this improvement may be temporary, that a year from now we will face the same problems. That is why I strongly favor an independent monitoring committee that reports once a year to the public in specific terms about what the individual broadcast and cable networks are doing in presenting glamorized violence, on what is happening in the hours when children are most likely to watch, about what is happening with promos filled with violence. This is not a Hays Commission that pre-censors, but a body that reports the facts, after viewing, to the public. After initially reacting negatively to the idea, some leaders in the industry are now discussing this seriously. I hope they act favorably, and let me add that the committee established has to be of a such stature that its independence is not questioned.

Recently I talked on the telephone with the chief executive officer of one of the major networks. He told me, "Last night, I saw a movie given a four-star review by a major newspaper. There must have been 50 people shot up in the movie. And I'll bet it will be on Home Box Office or Showtime soon."

Or, he might have added, on one of the broadcast networks.

There are many causes for violence in our society, and we are doing an inadequate job in dealing with most of them, including television violence.

If this industry does the right thing, we will continue to inch toward more responsible conduct. I want that trend to continue. If we do, the statistical data on crimes of violence will not suddenly plunge, but in 15 years we will have a society measurably less violent.

**Remarks of Senator Paul Simon
To the Television/Film Meeting on TV Violence
Los Angeles
August 2, 1993
[EMBARGOED Until 12 Noon P.D.T.]**

I am grateful to those who have convened this unprecedented session. You have an opportunity to make a significant contribution to a better nation and world, trite as that sounds.

Many across this country are aware of this meeting, and a considerable portion of them are hoping that a marked reduction in the video violence transported into their homes will follow. They are entitled to some progress.

No one suggests that there should be no violence on television. A film on the Civil War is likely to have violence. But there should be less violence on the screen and, more important, it should not be glamorized. No one suggests that television violence is the sole cause of crime in our society. We have, as a people and government, ducked the problems of handgun proliferation and that of other weapons; we concentrate the poor into our central cities and then ignore their problems. To deal with drug abuse, rather than placing a heavy emphasis on education and treatment, we choose to spend billions on more and more prisons. We now have a higher number incarcerated than any nation and a higher percentage of our population in jails and prisons than any nation -- and the crime rate has escalated, not declined. Other reasons for crime could be mentioned. But one of the causes is violence on the entertainment screen. Television, like political leaders, can appeal to the best in each of us or to our worst impulses and weaknesses.

Ted Turner recently told a House subcommittee: "As a parent with five children, I don't need experts to tell me that the amount of violence on television today, and its increasingly graphic portrayal, can be harmful to children." Of this gathering, he showed pessimism: "Unless you keep the gun pointed at their heads, all you'll get is mumbly, mealy-mouthed BS. They just hope the subject will go away." On this conclusion, I hope you will prove him wrong.

In the magazine Mother Jones, Carl Cannon writes: "Actors and producers seem to be constantly speaking out for noble causes But in the one area over which they have control -- the excessive violence in the entertainment industry -- Hollywood activists remain silent. . . . The liberals in Hollywood don't act like progressive thinkers; they act like the National Rifle Association: Guns don't kill people, people kill people. We don't cause violence in the world, we just reflect it."

Here are a few basic questions, and then I shall make seven recommendations to you.

Is television violence harmful?

When we watch a news program from Bosnia showing the tragedy of violence, we understand the pain, the anguish and the senselessness of violence. When we watch entertainment violence, in the majority of cases, it is sanitized and made attractive. On entertainment television our heroes and heroines, with whom we identify, do not suffer and die. In fact, our heroes and heroines are often portrayed as justified perpetrators of violence. When death occurs, it is usually quick and clean. No relatives with tears are seen at the side of the victim. And just as 30 seconds of attractive portrayal of a bar of soap sells soap, and 30 seconds of the attractive portrayal of a car sells that car, 25 minutes of the attractive portrayal of violence sells violence.

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Jack Valenti is convening meetings of various branches of the movie industry, and I am hopeful for positive results there.

In all these cases, more needs to be done.

In some ways, cable presents greater problems with violence than broadcast, and the agreement by the majors among cable to have the message of caution is welcomed, as is their hiring of George Gerbner to monitor their activities.

Is censorship the answer?

I am, in the words of George Bush, "a card-carrying member of the ACLU." Few nations have as little regulation of their television and movies as we do. I want to maintain that freedom. I want our creative community to flourish. So far, no member of the House or Senate has introduced legislation suggesting formal, general censorship, but many ideas short of that have been floated, including Congressman Ed Markey's chip suggestion to permit parents to prevent violent programs; Congressman Joe Kennedy's idea for a 1-800 number to the FCC that people could call to make a record of complaints on violence, to be considered when a station seeks re-licensing; Senator Byron Dorgan's and Congressman Dick Durbin's suggestion that the FCC calculate incidents of violence and then regularly report to the public on which programs are the most violent, and who the sponsors are; Senator Dave Durenberger's bill would require visual and sound warnings on programs that are violent or which involve unsafe gun practices; Senator Carl Levin and Congressman Charles Schumer each has legislation drafted concerned with television violence, which they may introduce; Senator Kent Conrad has initiated a petition drive on the issue; two Senators suggested to me that sponsors not be permitted to deduct for advertising on programs that the FCC deems violent. Others favor more extreme measures.

All or none of these may pass. I can tell you that none of the sponsors of these initiatives is losing votes back home with these ideas.

Non-lawmakers have made suggestions varying from strict censorship to the proposal that a television station must demonstrate what it is doing in its programming to discourage violence to get its license renewed. Whether or not these proposals become law rests, in large measure, with the decision-makers in this room. When you have Senators from Howard Metzenbaum to Jesse Helms -- and that covers a pretty broad spectrum -- saying that something has to happen to change things, the message should be clear. The July 18th Washington Post carries a lengthy article by staff writer Megan Rosenfeld, with the heading: "And Now, A Word From A Mother," and the subhead: "Forget the First Amendment. When It Comes to TV Violence, All I Care About Is Protecting My Kids."

Aren't the columnists right who suggest that the actions up to this point are simply public relations, that the industry isn't treating this problem seriously?

The answer is no. It is true that we have been through this exercise before. In 1954 Senator Robert Hendrickson held hearings on the subject of television and juvenile delinquency. In 1961 Senator Thomas Dodd held hearings on television violence and received assurance that change would occur. Early in 1974, the Screen Actors Guild adopted a strong resolution calling for change, describing the "degree of violence in television programming [as]. . . excessive." Senator John Pastore followed with hearings on the subject. Some assurance of action followed each set of hearings. And after a short period, violence on the screen escalated.

All of this feeds the appetite of the doubters. When I was a young reporter, the great vice of journalism was whiskey. My first newspaper boss kept a fifth of whiskey in the top drawer of his desk. He opened the drawer frequently. The whiskey of today is cynicism. For every reason they give me for cynicism, I can give them 10 more. The cynics aren't going to build a better society. However,

This is no longer theory. The evidence that television violence does harm is now just as overwhelming as the evidence that cigarettes do harm. Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith of Harvard, commenting on the harmful effects of television violence, noted: "No one is immune. Some are more susceptible than others, children most of all." As recently as July 23, a Harvard publication quoted developmental psychologist Ron Slaby: "Television violence has significantly contributed to the violence in American society."

The National Institute of Mental Health has twice warned us about the harmful effects, as have more than 85 additional substantial studies. The American Medical Association calls television violence an environmental hazard. The most recent study I have seen, from the Department of Psychiatry of Pennsylvania State University, showed, once again, child behavioral problems associated with watching violence on television.

But, you say, the people in the industry are decent people who are good parents and grandparents. They wouldn't do anything to harm society.

Unfortunately, that description also applies to the people who manufacture cigarettes and nuclear bombs and handguns. Sometimes people on the outside, with no financial stake, have to call attention to the harm that can occur.

Isn't the television/film industry simply reflecting reality?

That is partially true, but you also are shaping reality by sometimes glamorizing violence. Television also gives the impression that the person to be feared for violence is the stranger, when the reality is that a family member or an acquaintance is much more likely to commit the violent act. Television portrays the single woman at great risk, but the reality is that the married woman is at greater risk. Urban children and urban teen-agers are too often portrayed negatively, and sometimes they live up to the expectations television creates. The industry should have a higher and more noble calling than simply reflecting reality, even if that argument were completely valid. You should improve reality. The industry should be a beacon for the nation, not simply a mirror.

Isn't the industry responding to the anti-trust exemption that Congressman Dan Glickman and I sponsored and which is now law?

Yes and no.

The broadcast networks have adopted joint standards, which are good but very subjective. What is "gratuitous violence?" Compared to the British standards, for example, they are not strong. But I sense what does give them meaning is a willingness to face the problem and a commitment -- at least by some -- to make these standards meaningful.

The agreement for a warning to parents is helpful and takes on added significance when you understand that generally advertisers are not eager to buy on programs with warnings. That gives this commitment greater meaning than is immediately apparent.

The Association of Independent Television Stations has created a set of guidelines on violent material and is encouraging its members to agree with these standards.

Network affiliates have not been significantly involved up to this point, but their participation is important because they are responsible for programming shown from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. when many children watch television.

Syndication is a total question mark. The "reality-based" shows can do real harm.

there is legitimate reason for questioning whether we are not just going through the same motions again.

Two things have changed:

First, while many had intuitive belief that violence on television caused harm, the research was slim. There were warnings, however. The late Norman Cousins, who lived near where we meet, wrote in the Saturday Review in 1959: "The TV operators make all sorts of claims about the power of their medium to sell all sorts of goods. They boast about the ease with which they dominate the fashions of teenagers just by having TV stars dress in a certain way. Yet they see no cause-and-effect relationship between what they show on the screen and the increasing addiction of young people to cheap violence." About this same time, the nation's most widely-read columnist, Walter Lippmann, wrote: "Can there be any real doubt that there is a close connection between the suddenness of the increase in sadistic crimes and the new vogue of sadism among the mass media of entertainment. A continual exposure of a generation to the commercial exploitation of the enjoyment of violence and cruelty is one way to corrode the foundations of a civilized society. For my part, believing as I do in freedom of speech and thought, I see no objection in principle to censorship of the mass entertainment . . . Until some more refined way is worked out of controlling this evil thing, the risks to our liberties are, I believe, decidedly less than the risks of unmanageable violence."

At the 1961 Congressional hearings, Frank Stanton of CBS could honestly testify: "The research that has been conducted in this field is limited in its scope, is inconclusive in its findings." And Grace Johnson of ABC, in the same hearing, said that an emotionally disturbed child may "drain off . . . elements in his behavior which cause that disturbance" by watching violence on television. At that time, there was limited research showing harm, about like the early research on cigarette smoking. Many people intuitively thought smoking cigarettes did harm, but the evidence had not accumulated. Now it has accumulated, both for violence on television and for cigarette smoking. I know of no serious student of television violence who questions the validity of the massive evidence.

The second difference from the early period is the seriousness with which at least part of the industry is addressing the question. Considerable time is being devoted to the subject, not only at the lower staff levels, but by top officials. Television executives are speaking candidly about the problem. There is almost no denial or semi-denial. Constructive steps are being taken. One network chief executive told me a few weeks ago that he decided to cancel a movie for which he had paid a good price, because he felt it was too violent. There is a changed attitude on the part of at least some key decision-makers.

But what needs to be done?

Let me make seven suggestions.

1. There should be recognition by the creative community that self-restraint is essential for a democracy to function.

Here is an analogy from the political arena. When John F. Kennedy barely defeated Richard Nixon, Nixon could have gone on television proclaiming what harm would come to the nation with Kennedy as President, asking people to turn to the streets with peaceful protest. He did not. While he did not feel like congratulating John F. Kennedy, he did it, and we had a peaceful transition from one administration and political party to another in the world's most powerful nation. When Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey, the same thing happened. Both Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey recognized that for a democracy to function effectively, it is unwise to exercise freedom to its extreme.

In Ken Auletta's recent article in the New Yorker he tells of approaching those who produce

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and asking what violent or shocking stunt wouldn't they put on the screen to make money. He refers to the embarrassed pause he often received when he asked that question.

In response to a Los Angeles Times editorial titled, "Televised Violence Can Have Violent Consequences; Does Anyone Care?", one reader who monitored standards for a network wrote: "I wept on occasion with the inadequacy of my role as we were forced to accept so much violence just to maintain viewers' enthusiasm for the program so they wouldn't switch channels." In his book, Hollywood vs. America, Michael Medved quotes Director Alan J. Pakula: "Movie violence is like eating salt. The more you eat, the more you need to eat to taste it. People are becoming immune to the effects: The death counts have quadrupled, the blast power is increasing by the megaton, and they're becoming deaf to it. They've developed an insatiability for raw sensation." We have spawned an arms race on American television and, like every arms race, no one wins.

I am told that the English word "obscene" comes from two Greek words, "a skene," which means off stage. In the ancient Greek theater, any violent act occurred off stage, and a third party recounted the violence and then interpreted the meaning for the audience, remarkably like the British Code of Standards for television: "People should be permitted to die in private and only in the rarest circumstances should broadcasting dwell on the moment of death itself."

The creative community gathered here needs to exercise its freedom with wisdom, with a sense of public responsibility and with good taste. As FCC Commissioner Ervin Duggan observes: "The public interest is not merely what interests the public." The best way to protect your industry from the dangerous and heavy hand of government is to exercise self-restraint. The gauge of whether we are a civilized society is not to what extremes we can indulge ourselves.

2. The entire industry needs to be involved.

That means broadcasters, cable, independents, syndicators and the movies. What is somewhat disheartening is the finger-pointing that now takes place. Broadcasters say the real culprit is cable, and the other way around. Both blame the movies they get. The producers and directors blame the writers, and the writers say they produce what the networks and cable demand. I am not interested in assigning blame, but getting action. The finger-pointing all has some legitimacy and some illegitimacy, but it should not become an excuse for inaction. Chief executives in all parts of the industry must be exactly what their title implies, chief executives. Just as a publisher or editor of a newspaper has to take the responsibility for what appears in that publication, so chief executives must assert their responsibilities in the television and film industries.

If it becomes obvious that one branch of your industry loves money more than responsibility, that will not go unnoticed in Washington.

3. In some way, we need to be assured of continuity of concern and effort.

The question I cannot answer is: Can you be certain that the present interest in this subject will continue? The current concerns by industry leaders, whatever their motivation, is genuine. Buttressing that is not only the congressional effort, but the Times-Mirror poll that shows 80 percent of the public today believes that television violence is harmful compared to 64 percent ten years ago, and 47 percent describe it as "very harmful" compared to 25 percent ten years ago. The poll showed that the higher the level of education, the greater the concern. The Gannett chain's Sunday supplement, USA Weekend, did a survey of its readers and had similar results. Ninety-six percent said that television violence does not reflect reality but glorifies violence. Seventy percent said they noticed a change in their children's behavior after watching a violent television show or cartoon.

Several chief executives of major American corporations have told me recently that they are asking their public relations people to avoid advertising on programs that glamorize violence.

Some type of ongoing monitoring of the status of television violence is needed, and I would prefer that the federal government not be involved. If those gathered here would form a committee of respected citizens -- perhaps called the Advisory Office on Television Violence -- who would employ a small staff, headed by someone who has an understanding of the field, and that committee would report to the American people annually, in specifics, it would indicate a desire to sustain better programming. Those specifics should let us know whether glamorized violence is increasing or decreasing, on each of the broadcast and cable networks, whether there is an attempt to avoid the time periods when children are more likely to observe. They should tell us what is happening with the independents, affiliates, syndication and with the entire industry. They would play an advisory role to the industry, when requested. The person heading the effort should be someone like Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor or Newton Minow. The Committee could also develop a set of standards by which they will judge both broadcasting and cable, standards that are less subjective than those adopted by the four broadcast networks. These new standards could be guideposts for all elements of the industry, as well as for advertisers and the public. Without some type of monitoring, the lure of profits will entice those less responsible to abuse their privilege. The industry needs encouragement to a higher sense of responsibility and good taste than the financial bottom line.

The interest in dealing effectively with this issue must be sustained. And, let me add, it will be sustained. Either you will initiate the effort for such a monitoring office, or those outside the industry will do it. I started in this effort as a somewhat lonely voice in Congress, but I now find many of my colleagues want to go much further than is healthy for a free society. My request of the television and film industries to accept some responsibility is not an assault on the First Amendment, but if within the industry you do not exercise self-restraint, neither will many of those who are concerned. Extremes in behavior invite extremes in response. The surest solution is governmental intervention, but it is also the most dangerous.

4. Glamorized violence should be avoided, the harsh realities of violence must be portrayed, and non-violent problem-solving should be encouraged.

Howard Stringer of CBS has correctly observed: "If you argue that we have no moral responsibility to sustain values, then perhaps we have an artistic responsibility. Death stings, pain hurts, loss devastates, fear terrifies. If we still insist that television merely mirrors reality, then let us reflect our reality more skillfully and honestly. Murder, even fighting, is not poetic or balletic. It is ugly and clumsy. Violence is vile."

The television/movie industry can play a positive role and should. The harmful effect of choosing the violent alternative to problem-solving should be conveyed and too rarely is.

One intensive study covering 22 years shows first, that the greatest single indicator of violent behavior at age 30 -- more than other indicators, such as economic status, broken home, low IQ, or race -- is the amount of television watched at age eight; second, that television viewers will exaggerate the likelihood that they will become victims and are more likely to isolate themselves, not walking the streets as much and, in the words of criminologist James Q. Wilson, "excessive fear of crime contributes to crime;" third, there is the "bystander effect" to violence, a callousness to it because viewers have been hardened through viewing.

But one more important fourth effect: There is an increased appetite for violence, both as an answer to problems and as entertainment. "Make my day" is a phrase that gets used by children and a President. Its message is clear: Give me the pleasure of a violent response. When small children laugh at violent action in a cartoon, they are being taught the wrong thing by the powerful teacher called television.

The positive message needs to be delivered that violence brings no pleasure. Stories should develop constructive alternatives to violence. In hundreds of schools around the nation there are

'peer mediators,' students assigned to listen to both sides in an encounter between two other students, to work out peaceful resolution of a conflict. It works. Including that reality in a story, as well as other efforts at avoiding violence through peaceful alternatives, needs to be on public display much more. Really creative writers can make it work. And violent alternatives need to be deglamorized.

5. Violent promos should be eliminated or reduced, and certainly avoided when children are most likely to be watching.

Some of the worst moments on television are during the 30-second promotion pieces. The most dramatic part of the movie or feature hopes to captivate an audience. It requires more creativity to get that audience without offending or harming it, and this industry is fully capable of doing that.

Ted Harbert of ABC is quoted in the New Yorker: "[Three-year-old] Emily's entrance into the world totally changed the way I look at television. I have a massive problem . . . now with violence on television If a promo comes on that I would never let her sit there and watch, or if something comes on that is violent . . . and this look of bewilderment comes across her face -- "What is that man doing, Daddy?" -- I don't have a very good answer."

6. The medium must be used to help educate the nation about the harmful effects of television violence.

Cigarette smoking did not experience its dramatic drop because of a Surgeon General's statement. That statement received extensive coverage in television shows and in public service announcements.

When the Surgeon General warns us about the harmful effects of television violence, the industry is audibly silent. That should change. There is no similar heavily documented threat to public health which television has so studiously ignored.

Parents should know more clearly that it is not just their instinct that says entertainment violence is harmful, but solid research. Something more than a brief mention in the evening news or two minutes on a morning show is needed. I would like to see "60 Minutes," "Prime Time" and their counterparts give viewers greater depth of understanding on this issue.

By doing this you can help create the market for less violent entertainment. Then bright executives can also anticipate a growth in that type of market. I would also like to see one of the broadcast networks and one major cable company put together a creative team to explore ways of marketing less violent programming. And which will be the first network or cable company to occasionally bring this simple message: "Watching too much violence on television may be harmful to your children's health?" Who will be the first with an educational film for schools that points out the dangers of glamorized television violence?

Organizations like the PTA, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association can buttress such an effort with public education campaigns that urge viewership of television that plays a positive role.

7. Recognize more clearly the international dimensions of your product.

This is a complex area. Unfortunately, violence is easy to translate into any language. In contrast, comedy is not. Sixty-four percent of New Zealand's entertainment television comes from the United States, but the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation has called for a reduction in the number of U.S. television programs. Their survey concluded that U.S. television shows are three times more violent than those of other countries. One major U.S. children's program has two versions: The

violent one for consumption in the United States and the non-violent one for all other nations. The spokesperson for the program told the Christian Science Monitor: "At home, we don't get many objections to violence on our shows. American kids are used to it. But abroad, it's a different story. The BBC wouldn't buy [it] unless they could edit out some of the violence. It's that version that we sold to the rest of the world. Otherwise [it] wouldn't have done nearly as well."

Ideas -- good and bad -- are hard to retain within national borders. I know of no research to support the assumption by Meg Greenfield of Newsweek that violence on television also causes us to be more receptive to violent answers to international problems. But without any research, my instinct tells me she is correct. And that same message is conveyed to citizens of other nations.

Before he stepped down as Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney told me in a phone conversation that while the United States is reducing the physical harm done to Canada through acid rain, the harm done to that nation's minds through violence on television is a real concern. Canada's Communications Minister has called television violence an international problem that requires an international response. The revulsion in many nations to parts of the American culture is not a reaction to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or to Isaac Stern or to Van Cliburn, nor is it in response to our finer movies or television shows. We should ask ourselves what message we wish to send to other nations.

All of these things are easy to say for an outsider who does not understand all of your problems. But I do understand our culture. I do know the mood of the electorate and of my colleagues in government.

I also know what you have contributed to our culture in many positive ways, including making us one nation as we never were before your medium took its place of dominance, as well as spreading the word about the desirability of democracy to those who do not have it. I know what you contribute to our economy and to our balance of trade.

I also know that you have in your hands a tool that is unprecedented in the history of humanity in its power. You have helped move the nation away from smoking cigarettes, and by being more sensitive on issues of race, you ended the "Amos and Andy" era in film and conversation. You can use television's power for good or ill, and I am here today urging you, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, to use that instrument to "appeal to the better angels of our nature" to aid all of humanity.

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CONTACT: David Carle or Christopher Ryan, 202-224-7115 or 202-224-7023

news from

PAUL SIMON

U.S. SENATOR

EMBARGOED Until 12 Noon P.D.T.
Mon., Aug. 2, 1993

CONTACT: David Carle
Christopher Ryan
202/224-7115 or 202/224-7023
ILLINOIS

Simon Lays 7-Point Guide At Industry's Door To Control TV Violence 'Arms Race' And Avert Dangers of Censorship

Proposes Industry Monitoring Group

LOS ANGELES (Aug. 2) -- In his keynote address to an unprecedented industry-wide conference on TV violence, Sen. Paul Simon Monday defined its harm, credited industry leaders for fledgling steps to control it, and put the responsibility for solving the problem and thwarting calls for censorship on the industry itself in a seven-point message of new proposals, featuring an industry monitoring group to track progress in scaling back glamorized violence.

He pledged continued support for self-regulation as his favored approach but warned that Congress and the public are growing restless for greater progress. "When you have senators from Howard Metzenbaum to Jesse Helms saying that something has to happen to change things, the message should be clear," he cautioned.

Simon, D-Ill., for eight years Congress' leading advocate for reduced violence levels on television, is author of the Television Violence Act of 1990, a three-year antitrust exemption that allows joint industry steps to voluntarily limit on-air violence. The law, which expires Dec. 1st, has been used by the broadcast and cable networks to develop and adopt the voluntary Advance Parental Advisory plan to warn parents about violent programs and to list those programs before they air. ABC, CBS and NBC also have used the law to adopt their first-ever joint standards on violence. The Simon law also enabled industry leaders to organize Monday's unparalleled conference.

Addressing the Industry-Wide Leadership Conference on Violence in Television Programming, Simon said, "We have spawned an arms race on American television and, like every arms race, no one wins." He outlined seven suggestions to promote industry self-regulation on violence issues:

- 1) Self-restraint by television and film makers. "The gauge of whether we are a civilized society is not to what extremes we can indulge ourselves," he said. "The best way to protect your industry from the dangerous and heavy hand of government is to exercise self-restraint."
- 2) Involve the entire industry. He asked the industry's diverse segments to overcome the temptations of finger-pointing and urged chief executives to assert their responsibility to limit screen violence.
- 3) Creation of an industry-wide monitoring group to assure continuity and effort. Simon proposed creation of an *Advisory Office on Television Violence*, commissioned and funded by the industry, headed by a committee of respected citizens with knowledge of the industry and with public credibility, to monitor the industry's handling of television violence issues. He calls for annual tracking reports and assessments of the exposure of children to violent programs and suggests the office also broker development of uniform industry standards on violence.
- 4) De-glamorize violence. He said glamorized violence feeds "an increased appetite for violence," and he promoted instead honest depictions of violence and of alternatives to violence.
- 5) Eliminate or reduce violent promotional ads, which he termed, "some of the worst moments on television."
- 6) Use TV to inform the public about harm done by glamorized violence, as it did about tobacco use. Urging "positive solutions," Simon suggests creative teams to explore marketing less-violent programming, and public education campaigns with child advocacy groups.
- 7) Scale back exports of violent programs. He said merging production for domestic and world markets would reward the industry financially and improve "the message we send to other nations."

"Television, like political leaders, can appeal to the best in each of us or to our worst impulses and weaknesses," he said, also quoting Lincoln to call on the industry to "appeal to the better angels of our nature."

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1302

Background on Television Violence

Joint efforts such as the Advance Parental Advisory Plan and the industrywide conference on television violence in Los Angeles are enabled by the Television Violence Act, which waives antitrust laws for three years to allow self-regulation by the television and film industries in addressing TV violence. The Simon law was enacted in 1990 and expires on Dec. 1.

Contact: David Carle, 202-224-7115

SIMON TELEVISION VIOLENCE LAW ENACTED DECEMBER 1990

TITLE V—TELEVISION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Television
Program
Improvement
Act of 1990.

SEC. 501. TELEVISION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

47 USC 303c.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the “Television Program Improvement Act of 1990”.

(b) **DEFINITIONS.**—For purposes of this section—

(1) the term “antitrust laws” has the meaning given it in subsection (a) of the first section of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. 12(a)), except that such term includes section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 45) to the extent that such section 5 applies to unfair methods of competition;

(2) the term “person in the television industry” means a television network, any entity which produces programming (including theatrical motion pictures) for telecasting or telecasts programming, the National Cable Television Association, the Association of Independent Television Stations, Incorporated, the National Association of Broadcasters, the Motion Picture Association of America, the Community Antenna Television Association, and each of the networks’ affiliate organizations, and shall include any individual acting on behalf of such person; and

(3) the term “telecast” means—

(A) to broadcast by a television broadcast station; or

(B) to transmit by a cable television system or a satellite television distribution service.

(c) **EXEMPTION.**—The antitrust laws shall not apply to any joint discussion, consideration, review, action, or agreement by or among persons in the television industry for the purpose of, and limited to, developing and disseminating voluntary guidelines designed to alleviate the negative impact of violence in telecast material.

(d) **LIMITATIONS.**—(1) The exemption provided in subsection (c) shall not apply to any joint discussion, consideration, review, action, or agreement which results in a boycott of any person.

104 STAT. 5128

PUBLIC LAW 101-650—DEC. 1, 1990

(2) The exemption provided in subsection (c) shall apply only to any joint discussion, consideration, review, action, or agreement engaged in only during the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this section.

Television Violence:

A Recent Chronology

DECEMBER 1, 1990: President George Bush signs Sen. Paul Simon's Television Violence Act, exempting the television industry from federal antitrust limits for three years to allow industry self-regulation to scale back depictions of violence in entertainment programs through development of common standards affecting content. The law covers broadcasters, the cable industry, Hollywood and others.

JUNE 30, 1992: Midway through the three-year Television Violence Act, in an address on the floor of the United States Senate, Simon faults the television industry for its inaction under the law. Simon suggests, "... the industry seems to be in a test-pattern, hoping the law will lapse before the public notices."

DECEMBER 11, 1992: Sen. Paul Simon announces first joint standards for the depiction of violence in television programs on behalf of ABC, CBS and NBC. It is the first substantial use of the Television Violence Act and will affect programming on the networks beginning with the 1993-94 television season.

MAY 12, 1993: Sen. David Durenberger, R-Minn., introduces the Children's Television Violence Protection Act of 1993 in the United States Senate. The bill would require both television broadcast licensees and cable operators to notify viewers through the use of a video and audio warning label that certain programming may contain violence or unsafe gun practices and may adversely affect the mental or physical health of a child. The bill is designed to assist parents and other adults in making responsible and informed decisions about the programming children should watch.

MAY 12, 1993: The House Energy and Commerce telecommunications subcommittee holds a hearing to coincide with the May sweeps period.

MAY 18, 1993: Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Rep. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., introduce legislation to require the Federal Communications Commission to compile quarterly reports on television violence. The reports would list programs containing the most acts of violence and the companies purchasing advertising on such programs.

MAY 21, 1993: Simon convenes Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution for a hearing on television violence which features for the first time executives from the broadcast and cable segments of the television industry who acknowledge that they are 'part of the problem of violence in American society.' They release their fall 1993 programming schedules.

Thomas Murphy, Chairman of the Board of Capital Cities/ABC says "the increased sensitivity of the American people to depictions of violence on television has led us to be more sensitive in ordering shows for our new schedules."

Howard Stringer, president, CBS Broadcast Group, says: "We are guests in the living rooms of America, so our personal values should be the most useful litmus test of taste and the surest guide to decency and sensitivity."

George Vradenburg, executive vice president of Fox, Inc., the newest over-the-air television broadcast services, suggests: "The hypothesis that televising certain kinds of violent behavior may, in turn, affect public behaviors and attitudes is, to be, quite plausible; and repetition of violence on television, one reasonably fears, can desensitize us to violence in society."

JUNE 7, 1993: Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., announces formation of the Citizens Task Force on TV Violence and launches a national petition drive to reduce TV violence. Groups participating in the drive include the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National PTA, American Medical Association, National Foundation to Improve Television, Americans for Responsible Television, National Council for Children's TV and Media, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Council of Churches, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, American Nurses Association -- American Academy of Nursing, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Alliance Against Violence in Entertainment for Children, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Social Workers. Signatures acquired during the petition drive will be presented to television, cable and movie executives at a meeting August 2nd in Los Angeles by Conrad.

JUNE 8, 1993: Simon continues oversight hearings on use of the Television Violence Act. Studio executives testify about Hollywood's contributions to television violence and are asked what their industry intends to do about it.

The president of the leading manufacturer of television programming in Hollywood, Leslie Moonves of Lorimar Television (with 33 pilots in 1992-1993 alone), explains the entertainment industry is an extraordinarily collaborative business involving the studios, the writers, the networks and advertisers. Each represents a vital component of the industry and working together, can improve programming offered to American households.

Stephen Palley, executive vice president and chief operating officer of King World Productions, one of the nation's leading syndicators of first-run original television programming, concludes "The American public has, through its viewing preferences and habits, made clear that gratuitous or excessive violence on television programs is unacceptable. As corporate and individual citizens with families, we share that judgment; and we -- and the television stations which air our shows -- exercise our editorial discretion consistent with that principle."

JUNE 24, 1993: The House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee holds its second hearing. Ted Turner, chairman of Turner Broadcasting Systems Inc., says he is convinced that TV violence is a direct cause of the street violence that he says makes U.S. society "by far the most violent on earth." Turner says his company and broadcasters airing violent programs are guilty of "murder." Turner contends that if the entertainment industry fails to voluntarily cut violent programming, Congress should write its own anti-violence statute and "ram it down their throats." Turner contends "television violence is the single most significant factor contributing to violence in America."

JUNE 30, 1993: Sen Paul Simon convenes news conference with Rep. Edward Markey and executives from NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox, and Jack Valenti to announce the implementation by the networks of the advance parental advisory plan for the next two years. Beginning with their programming this fall, the networks will label violence-prone shows with an eight-word advisory: *"Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised."*

Each network will decide for itself when to issue the advisory. It will run at the beginning of the program and during commercial breaks, and also will be included in advertising and promotional material for the program as well as being offered to newspapers and magazines that print television schedules.

Simon calls the parental warning label "a significant step in the direction of assuring that a powerful medium can be a force for good in our society."

JULY 1, 1993: A House Energy and Commerce telecommunications subcommittee hearing examines the parental warning program. Some lawmakers suggest the warnings need to be accompanied by technology enabling parents to block certain shows they deem unsuitable for children. The latest technological development to accomplish this is the so-called v-chip, a concept envisioned by Rep. Markey, which could be inserted into new tv sets.

MPAA president Jack Valenti says that as configured, the v-chip would encourage parents to block all violent programs without proper consideration. "I'm opposed to indictment without appraisal," he tells the panel. "Parental discretion means it ought to be done individually."

JULY 29, 1993: The National Cable Television Association announces that 15 cable networks will join broadcast networks in implementing the Advance Parental Advisory program for violent programs.

Caging the Beast, Continued

Are the networks serious about curbing violence? An upcoming meeting looms as a key test, as a wary Congress awaits action

By DANIEL CERONE

Ever since Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) turned on a hotel television set in 1985 and saw a movie in which a body being dismembered with a chain saw, he has been on a personal crusade to clean up violence on television. For several years he compiled mountains of research to give weight to his urgent message: that the alarming rise of violence in society can be linked to the rise of violence on television.

In December, 1990, Simon used his information to persuade lawmakers in Washington to pass what amounted to a challenge—signed into law by President Bush—giving the TV industry years to clean up its act, or else have the government step in and do it.

After 2½ years of virtual silence, Hollywood is suddenly responding to what says.

The top brass at CBS, ABC, NBC and Fox to Washington last month and another, beginning this fall, the networks will voluntarily attach parental advisory labels to TV series and movies that contain what the networks deem to be a high level of violence.

In two weeks, an unprecedented meeting of media minds will take place in Los Angeles when key members of the broadcast and cable TV industries sit down together in a daylong conference, organized by the National Council for Families & Television, or NCFT, to explore the effect of violent TV programming on society—especially children.

Coming in the wake of highly charged congressional hearings on TV violence—which cable mogul Ted Turner bested even the harshest congressional critic by referring to himself and other TV programmers as murderers—and with the end deadline set by Simon's bill only months away, the Aug. 2 conference has taken on nearly epic significance. The networks' warning label has served only to greater attention on the meeting, the tag is aimed at identifying violence, not reducing it, as the critics insist is necessary.

But conflicting expectations seem certain to undermine any chance of accord. For Simon and other lawmakers who have been waiting for the industry to act, the law was passed in 1990, the conference represents the end of one phase in a battle against TV violence that has waged in some form almost since the medium's inception. Many express a desire to see some concrete plan of action emerge. For Hollywood, however, the conference is only a beginning step in defining the problem and the industry's role in it.

"I'm concerned that an unfair burden may be placed on this conference by expecting to find the magic pill in one day," said Bill Allen, president of MTM Television and vice chairman of the nonprofit NCFT. "This is the first time the entire TV

industry will sit down in a room, a rather public room, and look for solutions to violence. Easy and facile solutions might not be the best ones."

That attitude riles industry critics. "I've just lost all patience, and I think everybody else has too," said Rep. John Bryant (D-Tex.). "I don't know why everyone wants to spend the day in a group grope discussing a subject that's obvious to everybody already."

If there was ever an industry in need of a quick fix, this is it. Controversy over the effect of TV violence has snowballed

through Capitol Hill with all the speed and momentum of an avalanche.

Although violence in news and sports is also of concern, the main assault has been on gratuitous, glorified mayhem in entertainment programming—TV movies, theatrical movies and reality-based crime series—that portray people using force to deal with crises. In the last eight months, the attacks have become relentless.

In November, President-elect Clinton said in a TV Guide interview that he was "mortified" by some of what is shown on television and that Hollywood should take the lead in "deglamorizing mindless sex

and violence." A Times Mirror survey subsequently found that 80% of Americans believe TV violence is harmful to society, and 72% believe there is too much violence in entertainment programming.

In May, a wave of Democratic politicians convened a dramatic series of congressional hearings on the subject. They were backed by three decades of voluminous research indicating that TV violence leads to more aggressive behavior in viewers, plus new studies citing a rise in violence on television today. During the hearings, acting Federal Communications Commission Chairman James Quello voiced his support for imposing strict on when programs with violence could be shown.

Last month, 19 major organizations, including the National PTA, the American Medical Assn. and the National Council of Churches, formed a letter-writing Citizens Task Force to combat TV violence.

All the while, a growing number of bills have been introduced that—if enacted—seem likely to pit Hollywood against Washington in a monumental battle First Amendment rights.

Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the telecommunications finance subcommittee of the House and Commerce Committee, has proposed a TV-ratings system similar to the one by theatrical movies and a government-mandated device on new TV sets that would let parents lock out violent programming. Other anti-violence bills to toughen the license-renewal process for TV stations, to remove tax breaks for advertisers and to issue a quarterly "violence report card" to shame the programmers and advertisers behind violent

"I'm trying to make it a health and Rep. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), who authored a bill calling for a presidential commission to seek solutions to the problem. "I think we're at the stage cigarettes were 30 years ago—before the surgeon general issued his study but when there were private studies that started to show quite conclusively that smoking bad for you."

What Simon essentially had in mind with his 1990 Television Violence Act—which granted the programmers and producers immunity from federal antitrust prosecution so they could meet voluntarily and devise a plan to self-regulate industry—was a temporary cease-fire between the network, cable and syndication competitors to hammer out an agreement, right down to what kind of violence could be portrayed on the screen.

The networks' first response to Congress came last December, when, in an unusual joint letter to Simon, ABC, CBS and NBC agreed to issue a uniform set of guidelines for the depiction of violence and to convene an industrywide conference about the subject. When the 15-point set of standards was released—including "all depictions of

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JULIETTE BORDA / For The Times

Violence

Continued from Page 3

violence should be relevant and necessary to the development of character, or to the advancement of theme or plot" and "depictions of violence may not be used to shock or stimulate the audience"—critics quickly dismissed them because they contained no notable differences from the standards already in place at each network.

Similarly, last month's press conference announcing an experimental, two-year "advance parent advisory plan" failed to impress the critics. The advisories will run before and during entertainment programs whose "violent content is unexpected, graphic or pervasive" to help parents make informed decisions about what to let their children watch. Politicians and activist groups say the networks are simply using the labels to abandon their responsibility as caretakers of the public airwaves by tossing the problem back to parents, rather than addressing it through programming.

"The networks have made noises in the past about dealing with this violence problem," Rep. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said with a sigh. "If you look at the history of this issue, you will see that Congress would focus and the networks would respond with rhetoric. But I don't think anyone is going to be fooled this time. It's got to be more than some catchy oratory at a press conference."

After the cool reception of the parental-advisory labels, the Aug. 2 conference has become what might be the last chance for Hollywood to show Washington its commitment before Simon's grace period runs out in December.

"I think the networks figure that the attention span of Congress is short, that this issue has been battered around for 30 to 40 years, that if they can fly by this period with fairly minimal or modest steps, then Congress will go away and think about something else," Wyden said. "My own sense is that this is the time. The public is up in arms. Congress has extended the olive branch. Now it's time for the networks and broadcast people to show they're serious."

But the networks maintain that they have already demonstrated their seriousness by arranging this conference to raise awareness, by agreeing to affix labels where necessary and by affirming in general their intention to "eliminate inappropriate depictions of violence." They say they are not planning any more joint actions to address the subject before or even after the meeting—although they have not completely closed the door to the possibility. "We can't say nothing will happen after the conference," said a senior executive at one of the networks. "Someone may have an idea at the conference that's so brilliant . . . but that's not the idea behind the conference."

The NCFT has been putting on annual TV conferences for 15 years, usually small, two-day retreats in Santa Barbara to sensitize the 100 or so producers, writers and network executives in attendance on how to responsibly portray such subjects as health, education and drug abuse.

This year, network executives asked the organization to independently organize a meeting on violence. The program was compressed to one day to accommodate the nearly 500 members of the broadcasting, cable, production and distribution communities who are expected to attend.

"The essential goal of the violence conference is to educate people about ways in which violence on television is being perceived by viewers and the impact that it's having on viewers," said Geoff Cowan, a public-interest lawyer and lecturer on mass media and law at UCLA who also serves as a vice chairman of the NCFT.

The first morning session at the Beverly Hilton Hotel will call on academics and researchers to explain their studies, to be followed by another morning session to focus on the effects of TV violence on children. The afternoon session will be a sort of Socratic dialogue between TV industry leaders and anti-violence activists. For the first time, the press has been invited to cover the conference.

Cowan hopes the meetings will serve a dual purpose by guiding network executives in what kind of projects they order into production, while suggesting ways for the creative community to avoid showing gratuitous violence. Cowan agrees that having a set of standards simply isn't enough.

"That's not the real problem," he said. "Standards and practices (departments) tell you what to keep out of a movie once you've ordered a movie about a murder. They can all agree what to keep out of the Amy Fisher story, but there is still a problem that all three (major) networks ordered the Amy Fisher story."

"A lot of great human themes deal with violence. The problem with movies for television is not that they have some violence in them, but the themes are themes of current perversity, rather than themes of great human importance. I don't think we would have people in Washington, or in their homes throughout America, complaining about violence in 'Roots' or 'Holocaust' or 'Winds of War,' even though they have significant violence."

MTM President Allen says it is unrealistic to expect that solutions can be found to such vexing problems in a day. "People may come up with very interesting ideas at this conference, which will require some thought and refinement," he argues. "Television is created by a creative process of thought and refinement, and that's how I expect this problem to be dealt with—instead of hoping that by 5 p.m. at

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Violence

Continued from Page 74
the close of the conference we can hand out the answer."

David Grant, executive vice president of business operations for Fox, has a lot of questions he would like answered at the meeting: "What happens to kids when they watch violent programs? Is there a difference between action and violence? Is the impact on people the same when a robot blows up as when a person is shot? I want to know those things."

"Violence in dramatic works has been around forever," explained Grant, who says he is making attendance mandatory for many Fox executives. "What we need to do is meld our responsibility with our sense of dramatic creation, and not go nuts one way or another."

The networks have maintained for the most part that they do not show excessive violence—which is why the new parental-advisory warnings are not expected to be seen much in their fall programming. Most of their weekly series are benign comedies, executives point out, and their standards departments edit inappropriate material from drama series and movies.

So the networks seem to be approaching the conference warily. They resoundingly reject the concept of a ratings system or any plan that would dictate what they can or can't put on the screen.

"The decision-making process is subjective, and in a free, democratic society needs to remain so," said Beth Bressan, vice president of the CBS Broadcast Group. "The process is also a creative one. To be too mechanistic in our approach will only inhibit creativity and stop diverse programming."

Christine Hikawa, vice president of standards and practices at ABC, believes the networks have become scapegoats. "Because people are very concerned with violence in society, as we are, we think there's a greater perception of violence on TV," she said.

In addition, Hikawa believes the growth of cable television has added to that perception. "There appears to be more violence on TV because now there are 35 channels to choose from," she explained. "Quite frankly, the networks have less violence than ever before."

According to Sen. Simon, however, many TV executives have privately acknowledged to him over the years that too much violence is coming out of the tube. The dilemma is that violence often means ratings, and if network programmers lose their guts—both on screen and off—then other networks, syndicators or cable services will hold the competitive edge. TV producers, in turn, say they make violent programs because that's what the networks order.

The networks have been much more cautious in recent months as a result of the heightened focus on violence, they're simply not getting credit for the behind-the-scenes decisions they're making

said Rosalyn Weinman, vice president of broadcast standards for NBC.

For instance, NBC recently created two different versions of a promo for the theatrical movie "Mobsters"—a tame version for the early evening and a more graphic one for late at night. And even though a movie about a substitute teacher killing students would deliver huge ratings, Weinman said, NBC not long ago rejected that exact movie pitch, which was picked up later as a feature film.

"We have been much more careful and sensitive to the [violence] issue," she said. "There have been a lot of discussions about how to filter it down to the program level. And we ourselves are trying to do this in a thoughtful way, and not in a knee-jerk reaction."

If nothing else comes out of the NCFT conference, all agree that there clearly needs to be a better definition of violence if Washington and Hollywood are ever going to come together.

A recent study by George Gerbner, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, found that the average 16-year-old in America has watched 200,000 acts of violence on TV, including 33,000 murders. The study said that Saturday morning cartoons are among the worst offenders.

For that reason, Geraldine Laybourne, president of the children's cable channel Nickelodeon, has a problem with studies that attempt to quantify violence. She recalls her network once being cited for excessive violence in "You Can't Do That on Television," a slapstick series for kids.

"They said we had the same number of violent acts as a movie of the week that had decapitations," said Laybourne, who is also a panelist at the conference. "They counted a pie in the face the same as a decapitation. To me, it was so ludicrous." Gerbner's "Violence Index" defines violence as any "clear-cut and overt episodes of physical violence—hurting or killing or the threat of hurting and/or killing—in any context."

Another key function the conference may serve is to pull together the broadcast and cable communities. So far, the cable programmers have remained largely unscathed because cable is an unregulated service that people pay to bring into their homes, whereas broadcasters are licensed by the federal government to use the public airwaves.

"Right now there are not very many cable entities out there using any standards or guidelines," sniped CBS' Bressan. "When there are so many cable outlets out there saying, in effect, 'Come watch us because we do not self-regulate,' how much of the television landscape is really going to change? It's very unfair to say the networks should do more when the networks are the only ones who have done anything to date."

As part of an action plan that includes participating in the Aug. 2 conference, cable networks have agreed to develop their own sets of internal standards by the end of the year. A study commissioned by the National Cable Television Assn. concluded in January that "when all kinds of dramatic programs are taken into account, the level of violence on cable-originated programming is about the same as the violence on broadcast network programming."

To the critics, however, that's too little, too late. So too may be the conference.

"I think the underlying reason for this meeting is to call the dogs off, to get the government off their back, to go through the motions of pleasing Sen. Simon," said Terry Rakolta, founder of Americans for Responsible TV, a grass-roots organization that claims 200,000 members. Rakolta, who advocates banning violent programs between 4 and 9 p.m., will be a panelist at the conference.

She sees the whole NCFT event as a smoke screen: "There is a veiled threat of government intervention if they don't come up with something soon."

And what if the industry can't, or won't, come up with a satisfactory solution for the lawmakers?

"The conference is a useful discussion, but I honestly don't have high hopes that the industry, whose behavior is fueled by the competitive juices to win ratings, will ever be able to resist the more sensational, more violent television programming," said Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.). He is one of several lawmakers who expressed a clear intention to go ahead and press legal solutions if the NCFT conference does not yield a firm plan of action.

"I think it's likely that some legislation will move," he said.

Bob Peck, a legal counselor for the American Civil Liberties Union, said that any federal legislation attempting to govern the airwaves won't wash. "It can't, constitutionally," he said. "As soon as they say what people can say, read or see through their television sets, then they're engaging in censorship, which the First Amendment clearly protects against."

The Federal Communications Commission has a regulation prohibiting radio and TV stations from broadcasting sexually explicit, indecent programming between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., when children are likely to be in the audience, and there has been talk of creating similar legislation for violent programming. But Peck said even the indecency ruling has been tough to enforce in court.

"The fact of the matter remains that the most powerful restraint on television programming remains the viewers," he said. "What they will watch and won't watch has more effect than anything that Washington will pass." □

Daniel Cerone is a Times staff writer.

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AM-TELEVISION-VIOLENCE (SCHEDULED)

TELEVISION 'SUMMIT' WILL SPOTLIGHT VIOLENCE ON SMALL SCREEN

By Michael Miller

LOS ANGELES (Reuter) - Key members of the four major television networks and representatives of the cable industry will meet in an unprecedented media summit to explore the effects of TV violence on society, particularly children.

The conference, to be held Monday in Los Angeles, comes under mounting pressure from Washington for the industry to tone down violence on a voluntary basis, or be forced to do so by a welter of legislation waiting in the wings on Capitol Hill.

In December 1990, then-President Bush signed into law Democratic Sen. Paul Simon's Television Violence Act which, in effect, gave the television industry three years to clean up its act, or have the government do it.

With the December 1993 deadline fast approaching, the four networks, ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox, announced last month a voluntary parental advisory which they would attach to programs containing violent scenes so parents could use their discretion as to whether those programs should be seen by their children.

Monday's conference, which will be attended by academics and public watchdog groups critical of the industry's efforts to clean up its act, as well as by writers, producers and television executives, is expected to focus, at least in part, on the new advisories, which will be introduced in the Fall season.

Simon, one of the television industry's most powerful critics, who will address Monday's conference, said of the survey: "We hope it is a hint of things to come."

The 1990 Television Violence Act which he drafted granted television programmers and producers immunity from Federal antitrust prosecution for three years so they could meet voluntarily and devise a plan to self-regulate their industry.

It was seen as a temporary cease-fire between the network, cable and syndication competitors in order for them to reach an agreement on how the industry should be run, including how much violence could be portrayed on television.

Critics of the advisory system drawn up in June by the networks argue the industry is merely paying lip service to nationwide concerns over gratuitous scenes of sex and violence.

They also argue that "parental empowerment," as the networks describe the advisories, merely transfers the responsibility from the networks to parents, and that the networks have no intention of reducing violent programming.

"I anticipate a lively discussion," said Geoffrey Cowan, a vice president of the National Council for Families and Television, an education body that organized the conference.

Although critics of the conference have said it cannot

succeed in reducing TV violence in just one day, Cowan, a lawyer, Emmy Award-winning movie producer and lecturer in communications at the University of California at Los Angeles, disagreed.

"This conference will have an impact. It will have succeeded if it makes the people in this industry that much more knowledgeable about the ways in which programming has an impact on society and what they can do about it," he said.

The industry received a boost earlier this week with the release of a study by the University of Pennsylvania showing that the frequency of violent scenes on television was now about 50 percent less than before 1990.

Cowan, who won an Emmy last year for Best Prime Time Programming for Children for his made-for-TV movie "Mark Twain and Me," said he believed Monday's conference would not only result in even less violence but it may encourage the industry to be more concerned with themes that tend to reduce violence.

But others remain skeptical. Democratic Rep. John Bryant of Texas, in a recent interview with the Los Angeles Times, said he had lost all patience with the television industry over its inaction on reducing violence.

"I don't know why everyone wants to spend the day (Monday) in a group grope discussing a subject that's obvious to everyone already," he said.

In November last year then President-elect Clinton also put the spotlight on television violence, declaring in an interview with TV Guide that he was "mortified" by what was being shown on TV and calling on Hollywood to take the lead in "deglamorizing mindless sex and violence."

Although the industry established a uniform, 15-point set of guidelines on violence a month after Clinton's interview, critics have been quick to point out they are no different to the in-house guidelines already in place at each network and do not advocate a reduction in violence.

REUTER

Cable to Air Violence

Warnings

15 Networks Agree To Parental Advisory

By Ellen Edwards
Washington Post Staff Writer

The major players in cable television, following the lead of the broadcast networks, yesterday agreed to air a warning to parents on violent programs.

Fifteen networks—including HBO, Showtime, USA, the Disney Channel, MTV, Nickelodeon, A&E, the Discovery Channel and the Turner Entertainment Networks—accepted the advisory, which could be applied to anything shown on cable, including movies. The criteria determining what is violent will be left up to each network.

While the agreement was endorsed by Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), of Capitol Hill's most vocal critics of television violence, he said in a statement that "labeling violence is more of a bandage than a real cure. The best solution still is to reduce the overall levels of violence on television."

The action, announced by the National Cable Television Association, comes just days before an industry-wide conference on television violence to be held in Los Angeles. "You want to come in with something concrete agreed upon," said cable spokesman.

The networks and the producers of television programs are doing all

See CABLE, G6, Col. 1

Cable Adopts Advisory

CABLE, From G1

they can to head off any congressional restrictions. They are particularly afraid that Congress might require a "V-chip," a device within a TV that parents could activate to blank out any programs that the networks coded as violent.

The cable label, identical to what the broadcast networks have adopted, will say: "Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised." Networks are free to go beyond this basic language; HBO, for one, is likely to make its advisories more explicit, perhaps describing the acts of violence.

Like movie ratings, the label is an attempt at self-regulation by an industry that has come under widespread criticism in the last several months, especially after the unusually bloody May ratings sweeps.

In fact, its effect may be very limited. Many of the cable networks already air a variety of disclaimers. HBO and Showtime, for example, show the Motion Picture Association of America ratings for feature movies, as well as advisories for sex, violence and language. HBO has carried disclaimers for 15 years, said spokesman Quentin Schaffer. He said the spy movie "Blue Ice," which will air this fall, would carry a disclaimer, as does the "Tales From the Crypt" anthology.

On Showtime, the film noir series "Fallen Angels," which begins Sunday night, will carry a "mature advisory," said McAdory Lipscomb Jr., senior vice president for corporate affairs.

MTV spokesman Carole Robinson said every video submitted for airing is reviewed by a standards committee, and "gratuitous violence is not something you would see on MTV." The net-

work has occasionally aired warnings in the past, she said.

The USA Network has carried advisories warning of mature subject matter or adult situations for about 10 years but has never had a violence warning, according to spokesman Dan Martinsen. He said no programs have yet been designated to carry the new advisory.

Peggy Binzel, director of government affairs for Turner Broadcasting, said although her network edits movies "heavily" for violence, some might still merit the warning. She cited some Clint Eastwood movies as an example.

"Pretty soon labels will get so ubiquitous that we will pay as little attention to them as we do to the warnings on tobacco advertising," said Peggy Charren, founder of the watchdog group Action for Children's Television, who has criticized labeling as ineffective.

Cable has long been viewed as a worse offender in airing violent programs than broadcast television. A recent study commissioned by the National Cable Television Association showed that to be true for cable-originated dramatic programs, but not for children's shows.

The study excluded any programs or movies that were not made specifically for cable, such as feature-length movies, which are often considerably more violent than other fare and are the staple of some cable networks. The study was done by George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication.

Lipscomb said the cable networks were not invited to join the broadcast networks when they made their original announcement, though they were encouraged to do so afterward. He said he thought that because cable has aired advisories for years, "a number of the broadcasters felt they had to catch up with cable in informing their viewers."

Representatives of cable companies have been meeting under the Television Violence Act, sponsored by Simon, which waived antitrust laws to permit discussions on the subject.

news from

PAUL SIMON

July 29 - Aug. 5, 1993

CONTACT: David Carle
202-224-7115

U.S. SENATOR

ILLINOIS

Simon Welcomes Cable Plan for Advance Parental Advisories on TV Violence

Sen. Paul Simon has endorsed the decision by 15 cable networks to adopt the Advance Parental Advisory Plan to forewarn viewers about violent programs.

"I welcome this move and commend the decision-makers at the cable networks who have made this a priority," said Simon, D-Ill. "Informing viewers with these messages is a step forward, but labeling violence is more of a bandage than a real cure. The best solution still is to reduce the overall levels of violence on television."

The 15 cable networks announced July 29 that they will join the program, which includes advisory messages that will accompany especially violent programs and the commitment to provide advance listings of shows with advisory messages. According to officials at the participating networks, they will apply the review process to all programs. The networks are: Arts and Entertainment, USA Networks, TNT, Showtime, Nickelodeon, Nick-at-Nite, Comedy Central, The Disney Channel, The Family Channel, Home Box Office, Lifetime, The Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, MTV Networks, and the (additional) Turner Entertainment Networks.

The announcement came on the eve of the unprecedented industrywide conference on television violence set for Monday, Aug. 2, in Los Angeles. ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC announced the advisory plan on June 30. The system -- and the industrywide conference -- are made possible under the Television Violence Act, which waives antitrust laws for three years to permit joint industry efforts to curb television violence. Simon is the author of the law, which expires Dec. 1, and was invited to offer the keynote speech to the conference.

news from

PAUL SIMON

July 28 - Aug. 4, 1993

CONTACT: David Carle
202-224-7115

U.S. SENATOR

ILLINOIS

Simon: New TV Violence Data Offered 'Hint of Change' On Eve of Industrywide Conference

A new report showing a slight dip in prime time TV violence added "cautious optimism" to efforts to address the issue on the eve of an unprecedented industrywide conference on the subject, Sen. Paul Simon said July 28.

The report, compiled by a team led by Dr. George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, tracks violence on three broadcast networks for three viewing seasons, including the current season. Gerbner has documented violence on television longer than any other researcher.

Gerbner credits some of the decline to the Television Violence Act, a three-year waiver of antitrust laws to allow joint efforts by the television industry to reduce violence on television. Simon, D-Ill., authored the law and is its chief Senate sponsor; chief House sponsor of the law is Rep. Dan Glickman, D-Kan. The broadcast networks used the Simon law last December to develop and implement their first joint standards on violence and was used again June 30 for a system of advance parental advisory messages that ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC will initiate this fall for violent programs. The law also made possible the Aug. 2nd industrywide meeting.

"This report brings us back to the basic issue: There is too much violence overall on television," said Simon. "Labeling will be helpful to a degree. But the real answer is to reduce the levels of violence on television. For that, self-regulation -- not government censorship -- is the best solution. In the final months of the Television Violence Act, the broadcast networks have taken initiative and accepted responsibility that remains lacking among others in the industry, up to now, cable in particular.

"On the eve of the conference, it's now possible to speculate that the era of indifference may be ending," Simon continued. "The industry is getting the message from the public, from the research community and from the Congress that television violence contributes to violence in our society. I take this modest decline as a hopeful sign and as a hint of the lasting change we hope to eventually see on this problem.

"There's nothing fundamentally new in these figures. Just the hint of change. But, for the first time, we have reason to hope that the next survey will be significantly different. On the basis of the steps that already have been taken, my guess is that these numbers a year from now will be noticeably better, for the new fall season on the broadcast networks," he said. "We should not expect dramatic, overnight solutions. A large industry, like a ship, has to slow down before it changes course.

"Three years ago, we urged the industry to use this window of opportunity for self-regulation under the Television Violence Act," said Simon. "For the first two years, we saw very little acceptance of responsibility for self-regulation. But we've now come farther in six months than in the previous six years of working on this issue. As we head into this conference, I'm hopeful; but I'm cautiously hopeful. We shouldn't hope for too much from this conference, but we also should not hope for too little."

PENN NEWS

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Contact: Kirby F. Smith
(215) 898-4820 (office)
(215) 649-5734 (home)

TELEVISION VIOLENCE ACT HAS MADE AN IMPACT: PENN STUDY FINDS VIOLENCE HAS DECLINED ON MAJOR NETWORK DRAMATIC SHOWS

PHILADELPHIA, PA -- The Television Violence Act, passed by Congress in 1990 and due to expire December 1 of this year, seems to have made a dent in the high levels of violence in major network dramatic programs. The Act exempts broadcasters and cable operators from antitrust action for the purpose of joint industry efforts to reduce violence.

The Cultural Indicators research team at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication released today its latest Violence Index, which shows that prime-time dramatic program violence dipped in the 1990-91 season and, despite some fluctuation, has remained below its 20-year average. Saturday morning children's programs became somewhat less violent only last year.

"Beyond these numbers are the lessons of the kind of violence discharged into the cultural environment," said George Gerbner, leader of the Cultural Indicators research team releasing the study. "Most of this is 'happy violence', which teaches that cool and painless mayhem leads to a happy ending. This is not an expression of creative freedom but of marketing formulas imposed on producers," said Gerbner.

The report is an update of the Violence Profile released periodically since 1967. It finds that 65 percent of prime-time fictional dramatic programs and nearly half of their casts are still involved in violence. But the frequency of violent scenes per hour is about half of what it had been before 1990. The Violence Index, a composite of several measures of violence developed for comparative purposes, shows a slight decline since 1990.

Saturday morning children's programs, traditionally the most violent, saw a slower, uneven decline. More than 9 out of 10 programs and 8 out of 10 characters are still involved in violence. But while children's programs in 1990 were saturated with a record high of 32 violent scenes per hour, by 1992-93 that rate declined to 18 violent scenes per hour. All measures of violence, however, did not share in the decline, and the current Violence Index is slightly higher than last year's.

Another study conducted by the Penn researchers focused on violence in cable-originated programs (those produced by cable networks rather than all programs carried by them) for the 1990-91

season. Cable-originated children's programs had substantially less violence than children's programs broadcast on the networks. On the other hand, cable-originated general programming and particularly action programs were more violent than similar programs broadcast on the networks.

In all of these studies violence was defined as overt physical action that hurts or kills, or threatens to do so. A violent scene was defined as continuous violent action among the same characters. Trained coders analyzed week-long videotaped samples of each season's dramatic programs.

The Violence Profile also includes results of the investigation of the consequences of long-term exposure to violence-laden television. The results show that heavy viewers are more likely than comparable groups of light viewers to express feelings of living in a mean world, and the inclination to act accordingly. "That of course affects different groups in different ways," commented George Gerbner. "Violence is a demonstration of power. It shows who can get away with what against whom. It means power for some and vulnerability for others. That is its most pervasive and invidious lesson."

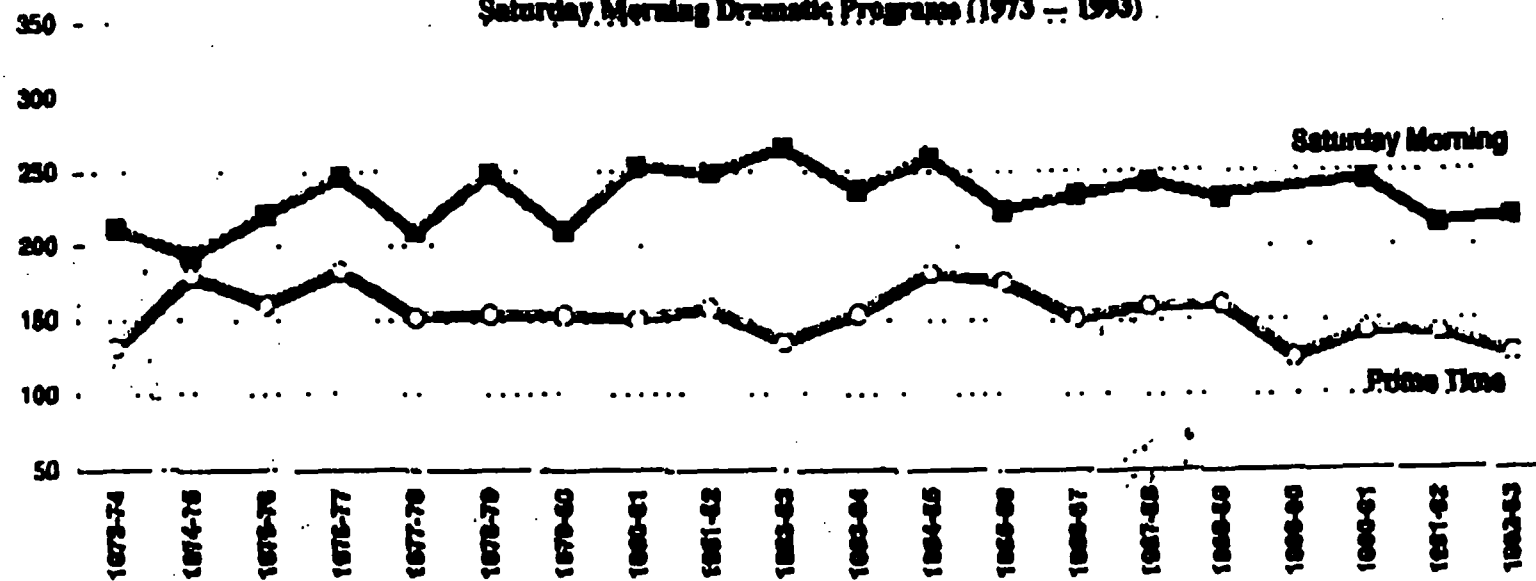
The Cultural Indicators research project consists of monitoring network television programs and determining their contributions to viewer perceptions of social reality. It is broadly based and designed to collect observations on the role and functions of many aspects of life presented on television, including health-related behaviors, women and minorities, violence, religion, science, aging, disability, education, children and adolescents. A comprehensive report of the last 20 years is expected in early 1984.

Collaborating with Gerbner in the Cultural Indicators project are Michael Morgan of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Nancy Signorile of the University of Delaware. Cynthia Kandra and Nejat Ozyegin assisted in the preparation of the report.

The Cultural Indicators research project began in 1967-68 with a study for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. It continued under the sponsorship of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, the National Institute of Mental Health, 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.

Note to print and broadcast journalists: For a copy of the Violence Profile report, please call George Gerbner (Annenberg School) at (215) 898-6776 or Kirby F. Smith (News and Public Affairs) at (215) 898-4820.

**Figure 1: Violence Index of Television Networks Prime Time and
Saturday Morning Dramatic Programs (1973 -- 1993)**



**TABLE 1: VIOLENCE IN
TELEVISION NETWORKS PRIME-TIME DRAMATIC PROGRAMS
(1973 - 1993)**

Season	S a m p l e s			Percent of progs with viol.	Violent Scenes per hr.	Duration of viol. min/hr.	Characters		Violence Index
	Ppms	Hrs	Chars				%V	%K	
1973-74	62	56.5	214	55.7	4.9	2.3	41.1	12.1	131.6
1974-75	58	60.0	224	77.6	5.5	2.0	58.5	20.5	178.8
1975-76	66	61.0	238	69.7	5.9	2.3	54.2	13.4	160.1
1976-77	61	58.5	172	80.3	5.8	3.3	67.4	12.2	182.8
1977-78	68	62.4	210	66.2	5.9	2.3	53.8	9.0	151.8
1978-79	63	63.0	191	74.6	4.5	1.5	52.9	7.9	153.5
1979-80	64	60.7	218	70.3	5.7	2.6	53.7	6.9	153.0
1980-81	64	59.2	229	73.4	5.7	2.5	50.7	4.8	150.8
1981-82	65	57.8	216	80.0	5.9	2.5	50.0	5.6	158.0
1982-83	77	60.6	247	63.6	4.6	2.3	48.2	6.5	134.7
1983-84	63	58.8	195	73.0	4.8	2.9	53.3	9.7	154.4
1984-85	65	60.0	221	78.5	6.9	3.3	63.3	12.7	181.1
1985-86	67	61.5	217	79.1	6.8	2.6	58.5	11.1	175.0
1986-87	67	61.5	178	71.6	5.2	1.7	47.2	12.9	151.8
1987-88	75	63.3	188	74.7	5.1	1.6	58.0	7.4	158.9
1988-89	77	66.0	195	74.0	6.2	2.3	53.3	10.3	160.4
1989-90	69	56.3	174	56.5	4.7	1.1	40.2	10.9	124.8
1990-91	54	45.0	159	74.1	4.0	1.6	47.2	5.7	141.8
1991-92	61	50.5	166	62.3	5.1	1.8	49.4	11.4	141.6
1992-93	60	50.0	147	65.0	2.9	1.3	45.6	6.1	127.2
1973-93	1,306	1,173	3,999	71.2	5.3	2.2	52.3	9.9	153.7

Ppms: Number of programs

Hrs: Number of program hours analyzed

Chars: Number of leading characters

%V: Percent of major characters involved in violence

%K: Percent of major characters involved in killing

Violence Index (VI)=

$\text{Pct of progs with viol.} + 2 \cdot (\text{Violent scenes per pgm}) + 2 \cdot (\text{Violent scenes per hr.}) + \%V + \%K$

**TABLE 5: VIOLENCE IN
TELEVISION NETWORKS SATURDAY MORNING DRAMATIC PROGRAMS
(1973 - 1993)**

Season	S a m p l e s			Percent of progs with viol.	Violent Scenes per hr.	Duration of viol. min/hr.	Characters		Violence Index
	Prgms	Hrs	Chars				%V	%K	
1973-74	37	18.7	145	94.5	13.2	3.4	77.2	0.7	212.2
1974-75	38	16.0	122	92.1	12.1	3.5	64.8	0.8	192.2
1975-76	45	16.3	126	91.1	16.3	4.6	84.9	0.8	221.1
1976-77	49	15.1	118	100.0	22.4	4.9	85.6	2.5	246.7
1977-78	53	16.5	145	90.6	15.6	4.0	77.2	0.0	208.8
1978-79	48	14.3	107	97.9	25.0	5.5	86.0	0.0	248.9
1979-80	62	16.5	163	91.9	17.2	3.4	74.8	0.0	210.3
1980-81	66	15.1	165	97.0	26.9	4.9	89.7	1.2	254.1
1981-82	69	13.5	186	91.3	30.9	6.1	83.9	0.0	249.2
1982-83	44	10.1	120	97.7	30.3	5.9	93.3	0.0	266.3
1983-84	54	13.7	142	92.6	25.5	6.0	80.3	0.0	237.0
1984-85	55	14.8	146	98.2	27.3	5.9	89.7	2.1	259.3
1985-86	53	15.3	149	92.5	21.3	3.2	75.8	0.7	223.9
1986-87	38	11.6	98	92.1	25.1	3.2	72.4	4.1	234.1
1987-88	36	13.3	85	100.0	25.5	4.8	72.9	0.0	242.7
1988-89	31	10.5	76	87.1	25.5	2.2	76.3	0.0	231.7
1990-91	40	9.7	90	82.5	32.0	3.9	78.9	3.3	244.4
1991-92	43	10.7	88	76.7	26.2	4.1	69.3	3.4	214.8
1992-93	31	10.5	63	90.3	17.9	3.3	81.0	0.0	219.2
1973-93	892	262	2,334	92.4	23.0	4.4	79.7	1.1	230.7

Prgms: Number of programs

Hrs: Number of program hours analysed

Chars: Number of leading characters

%V: Percent of major characters involved in violence

%K: Percent of major characters involved in killing

Violence Index (VI)=

Set of progs with viol. + 2*(Violent scenes per pgm) + 2*(Violent scenes per hr.) + %V + %K

ABC hot line tips off sensitive subject matter

By Donna Gable
USA TODAY

Beginning Sunday, viewers can call an 800 number to find out what ABC shows they may want to click off.

ABC's Advisory Hotline, 800-213-6222, will be updated twice a week with the title, air date and summary of ABC prime-time programs with sensitive subject matter.

The network unveiled the hot line Monday, a week before the industry hosts a meeting on TV violence. The issue has dominated the fall press tour ongoing in Los Angeles.

Monday, ABC Entertainment President Ted Harbert told critics that his network's movies will be less violent this season. While he defended last May's violent *Murder in the Heartland*, about serial killer Charles Starkweather, "If that movie came to me tomorrow, I don't think I'd pick it up."

Not that ABC will shy away from murder stories, "but we've got to find a different way to do them."

ABC's new adult drama *NYPD Blue* will not have a violence warning, but this advisory: "This police drama contains adult language and scenes of partial nudity. Viewer discretion is advised."

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., sees the hot line as "another step" in the war against TV violence.

And while labeling is helpful, "The best solution, still, is to scale down the overall levels of violence."

Networks Acknowledge Effect of TV Violence

TV VIOLENCE, From A1

dependent stations or first-run syndicators, which attract about 40 percent of the audience. "We urge the entire entertainment industry to follow our lead," said Warren Littlefield, president of NBC Entertainment. Ted Turner, head of Turner Broadcasting, has agreed to join the warning trial. A television summit conference has been scheduled for Aug. 2 in Los Angeles to discuss the issue.

More than 3,000 studies have been conducted in the past four decades, showing a consistent correlation between "viewing violence and aggressive behavior," according to a recent American Psychological Association (APA) report. By the time a child has finished elementary school, he will have seen 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence, the APA estimated. In addition to aggressive behavior, children also develop increased fearfulness of becoming a victim and become more fearful about violence directed at others, said a recent report by CQ Researcher. For years the entertainment industry maintained that the content of movies and television reflects society more than it influences it. Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) has worked for eight years to get the networks to acknowledge that "inappropriate" violence is bad.

MPAA President Jack Valenti said at yesterday's press conference that the film and television "creative community" would address violence in a series of small meetings with the producers, writers and directors who develop programs. The goal would be not just a reduction in violence that did not add to the drama, or violence committed without consequence, but what Littlefield called a "proactive" message about violence in society.

"We have done this before," said Valenti. "Four years ago we did it with the use of drugs and with the exhibition of smoking and alcohol consumption. We did it in the depiction of minorities, and in furthering the designated driver theme, and in promoting the use of seat belts in the story."

Valenti said later that "even if there is only a possibility of a con-

stant viewing audience will click their acts off? "It's all subjective," Valenti noted.

"We don't want to turn the vast wasteland into the dull wasteland," said Stringer, who seemed the most skeptical of the five executives at the press conference. "When anyone starts talking about the next step, I start to get nervous. It is the nature of violence and the absence of consequences that we are concerned about. We have, in effect, desensitized violence. There is no grief, no remorse, no feelings. That's the kind that sends a message to children that it's okay."

The networks expect to lose money as a result of the warning label, the executives said, because advertisers may be wary of shows labeled violent.

The key questions that may be answered during the two-year warning label trial are: What is gratuitous violence, and how is it eliminated—or at least reduced—without making the shows so boring that the thrill-

ing audience will click their acts off? "It's all subjective," Valenti noted.

"We don't want to turn the vast wasteland into the dull wasteland," said Stringer, who seemed the most skeptical of the five executives at the press conference. "When anyone starts talking about the next step, I start to get nervous. It is the nature of violence and the absence of consequences that we are concerned about. We have, in effect, desensitized violence. There is no grief, no remorse, no feelings. That's the kind that sends a message to children that it's okay."

The "next step," according to Markey, is the easy availability of the so-called "V-Chip" that would al-

low a viewer to block out certain programs to prevent children from watching them. The warning label, which should be published in programming guides in advance of the shows' air dates, would make it possible for a parent (at least a technologically literate one) to sit down on a Sunday afternoon and block out all the programs in the coming week that she did not want her children to watch. Markey will be holding a hearing at 9 this morning in the Rayburn Building to examine this technology, which is currently available but not required, as well as the warning label initiative.

The TV Violence Act, sponsored by Sen. Simon, exempted the networks from antitrust laws for three

years ending next December so they could jointly develop a way to deal with violence. Last December the networks agreed to some joint "principles on the depiction of violence," but that was not enough. At a hearing this past May, Sen. Howard Mankin (D-Ohio) warned the same panel of network presidents that "if you just do nothing, and if you just tell us you're doing something while giving us the May sweeps . . . we're going to come down harder on you than you would like us to do."

That day the executives had shown up with their new fall schedule, which appear to include fewer shows that depend on shooting and slaying, and acknowledged that some of the offerings during the May ratings sweep—such as "Murder in the Heartland" and "Ambush in Waco"—were less than great art.

While some anti-violence activists said the advisory label was a meager effort to deal with televised blood lust, industry executives were also criticized by Hollywood producers. They say the warning label could be the first step toward censorship and render the networks less competitive against the no-holds-barred cable industry.

Markey said the warning system was "admittedly crude," but, coupled with the V-chip blocking system, would "empower" parents to reduce the number of violent acts children are exposed to. He noted that in both the 1950s and 1960s, hearings had been convened to examine television violence, and that "once the hot flare of congressional attention turns elsewhere, violence in television tends to increase." Nonetheless, he has high hopes for this initiative. "I'm an optimist," he said.

Warning: TV Violence Is Harmful, Networks Concede

By Megan Rosenfeld
Washington Post Staff Writer

In announcing yesterday that violent television programs will be labeled with a parental advisory, heads of the four major networks and the motion picture association acknowledged a point they had long disputed—that gratuitous and glorified mayhem on television affects viewers.

"This is the dawning of a new era," said Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) at an unusual Capitol Hill

press conference yesterday with the heads of CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox Television and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). "For the last 40 years the debate has been whether violence on television affects antisocial behavior. Today we put an end to that debate."

Facing continued pressure from Congress and anti-violence lobbying groups, the network heads have gradually conceded over the past year that the research may be correct—that television could be a factor in the dramatic increase in mur-

ders, assaults and illegal weapon sales in this country. The networks came up with the advisory label as an alternative to a rating system similar to that followed by the motion picture industry, or to monitoring by the Federal Communications Commission.

The warning label unveiled yesterday says simply "Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised." Hammered out with at least 15 revisions in a series of meetings and conference calls during the past seven weeks, according to one in-

dustry source, the notice will appear before a program begins, during the midpoint station break and on promotional material. Each network's "standards" department will decide independently which shows to label. The only other measure the networks announced was a series of meetings organized by the MPAA to raise consciousness among the people who create programs.

The agreement to label is for a two-year "trial" and does not currently include the cable industry, in-

See TV VIOLENCE, A9, Col. 1

Networks' Plan for TV Program Warnings May Backfire

In trying to mollify Washington and counter criticism of television's preoccupation with gunplay and other violence, the networks may have only shot themselves in the foot.

The four major broadcast networks' new pact to step up program warnings on violent content may temporarily stave off government intervention. But it also threatens to encourage advertisers to pull out of risky programming, and it hasn't silenced the critics who prodded them into the new approach.

CBS, ABC, NBC and News Corp.'s Fox joined congressional critics yesterday in announcing the new warnings, which will signal a particularly violent miniseries or made-for-television movie riddled with gunfire and bodies by issuing a simple alert: "Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised."



ADVERTISING/By KATHY GOLDMAN

By doing that, the networks have handed skittish advertisers a ready-made excuse to forgo buying network time, some industry executives maintain. It would make it tougher for some sponsors to stick with a show that has been labeled by its own network as violent—even if the advertiser were otherwise willing. And rather than help parents keep their kids away from violent content, such warnings might unintentionally encourage kids to be sure to tune in.

"Make no mistake about it, this is going to cost us money," says Warren Littlefield, president of NBC Entertainment, a unit of General Electric. "There is a soft advertising market, and anyone looking for an excuse to get out of a movie or special has just been handed that excuse by the networks. There is going to be an adverse financial impact from advertisers."

Terry Rakolta, founder of Americans for Responsible Television, vows to make

sure that Mr. Littlefield is prophetic. "We will go after any advertiser appearing in a show that has a violence disclaimer," she declares, "and target that advertiser with a consumer boycott."

Such boycotts have failed in the past. And Ms. Rakolta refuses to differentiate between gratuitous violence and well-made programs whose violent scenes may be important to plot or message. In fact, she says the new disclaimer will make it easier to target sponsors. "Advertisers will no longer be able to claim ignorance on what kind of shows they are buying."

Ms. Rakolta adds that even the disclaimer pact amounts to "too little, too late. It gives children a road map to the violent material." She complains: "The networks are placing all responsibility back in the parents' hands." And what's wrong with that? Parents can't be around all the time to monitor what the kids are watching, she says.

But it appears that the call to halt violence on prime-time television comes mostly from politicians and pressure groups, such as Ms. Rakolta's, rather than from a massive, grass-roots outcry. "I haven't picked up a mass public movement," says Bill Barrett, executive vice president of SFM Media Corp., a media buying service.

Instead, many viewers simply voice their displeasure by turning the dial or shutting the television set off entirely. For example, ABC's violent miniseries "Murder in the Heartland," which ran in spring, based on a killing spree in the 1950s by a young couple, drew poor ratings and, according to a network official, cost Capital Cities/ABC about \$2 million in lost ad revenue because of skittish sponsors.

Prime time has been a somewhat gentler place this past TV season (and promises to be even milder come September, with a gaggle of family-oriented situation comedies). But it wasn't without its

Please Turn to Page B2, Column 3

ADVERTISING

New TV Program Warning System Could Backfire on the Networks

Continued From Page B1

share of shooting violence.

In ABC's recent miniseries "Wild Pines," Angie Dickinson gouged out a man's eye. "Murder in the Heartland" not only showed bloodbaths, but viewers saw the killer strapped into the electric chair and executed. NBC's miniseries, "In the Line of Duty: Ambush in Waco," had sustained violence when it showed the raid by federal agents on a religious cult's headquarters in the Texas town.

Network television is in a tough bind as it continues to suffer audience erosion to cable and other rivals. Pay cable, of course, has nudged and violence on some cable systems right next to more restricted broadcast competition.

That is one reason veteran producer Warren Beatty has said he wants to produce an R-rated series for network television. Although he didn't get to all freedom from ABC, Mr. Beatty's new series, "N.Y.P.D. Blue," promises to push the limits on sex and violence on broadcast television. (Ms. Rakolta says that sponsors of that show are destined for a consumer boycott—although she admits she hasn't even seen it yet.)

Not all violence on television, of course, is gratuitous. Mr. Beatty, for instance, pushed the envelope on violence in a 1980s series "The Street Blues" that was generally well received.

Ultimately, the networks may do worse if they simply crank out meaty-mounted programming fare. Indeed, in a joint statement yesterday, the four networks said: "It is relevant and important to understand that we cannot allow broadcast television to become barren of dramatic excitement. We cannot participate in a process that, while well-intended, condemns advertiser-supported television to such bland fare that it would forsake a higher, more sophisticated level of dramatic conflict and realistic portrayal of the full range of the human condition."

Translation: Instead of cutting out vio-

lence altogether, the networks will si-

tem warn viewers about it. That practice will force advertisers to proceed "more cautiously" in where place ads, says Steve Sternberg, vice president at ad agency Bozell's in buying division. "A lot of advertisers concerned about violence and po-

Further, the disclaimer won't what Mr. Barrett of SFM Media describes as "reverse magnetism" for sponsors may want to cash in on what could be highly rated, if violent, show. "This is a direct threat to advertisers of controversy," says. Television advertising is a buyer's market and sponsors aren't likely to be on controversial shows just the chance to be seen by million viewers, he says.

The networks indeed may be billing violence. CBS recently aired producer Chuck Norris series "Walker, Texas Rangers" to de-emphasize the violence. But violence on television seems sure to stay put, as does violence in life.

Scheduled for this fall: the CBS series "The Menendez Murders." The of the real-life movie: two ambitious brothers allegedly shotgun their par-

The Networks Run For

To avoid a warning label, violent shows are getting toned down—or dropped

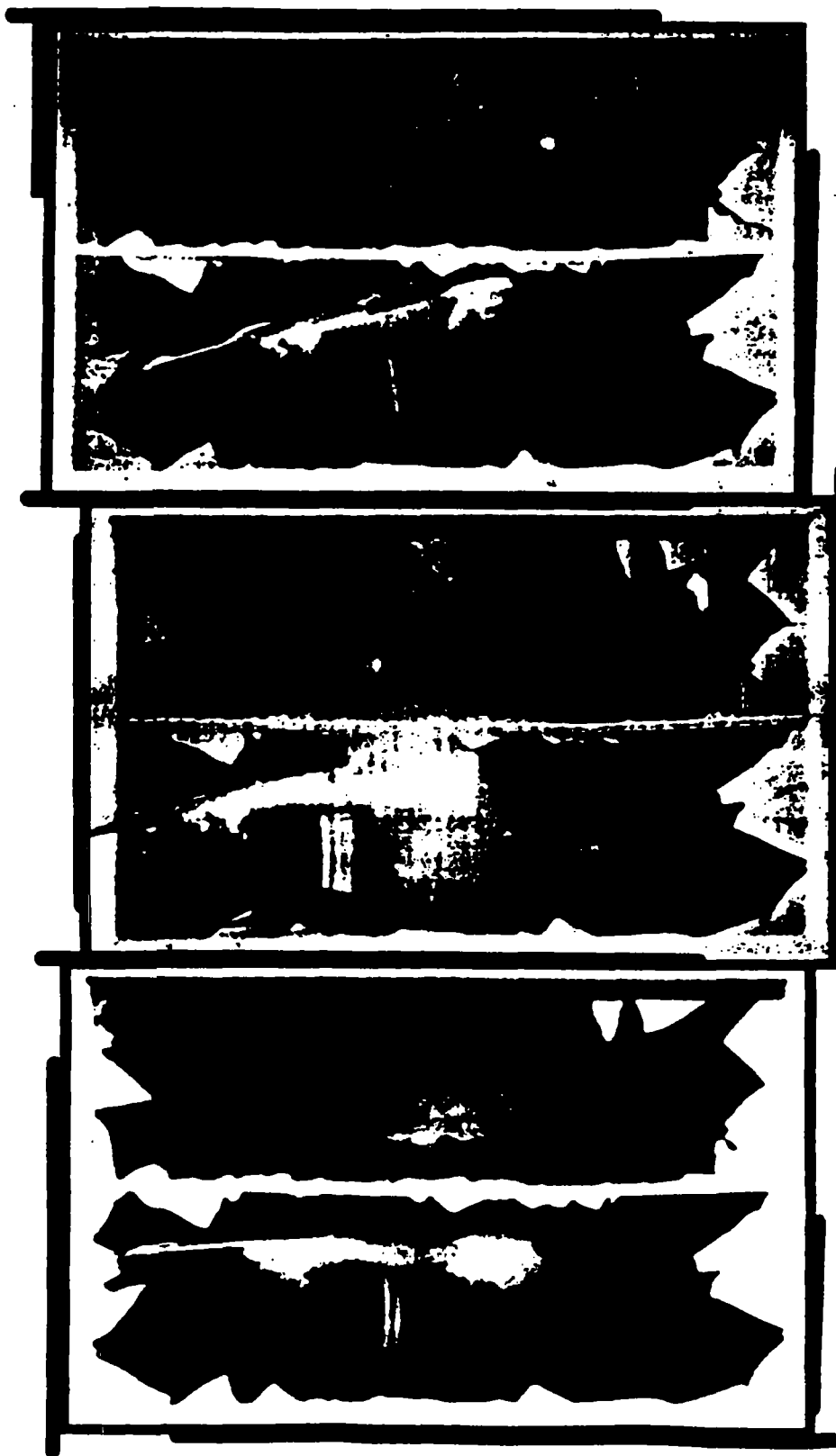
By RICHARD ZOGLIN

PRODUCER JOHN LANGLEY WAS screening a rough cut of his new Fox network show *Cop Files* a couple of weeks ago, and he wasn't happy. In one scene, a female police officer surprises a burglary suspect in a warehouse; he attacks her savagely, then she shoots him in self-defense. When Fox censors objected to the violence, Langley was forced to make drastic excisions. "It was absurd," he says. "The pressure was on us to de-emphasize the attack, so you wound up showing her shooting him without any motivation." Langley, like many others in Hollywood, knows the reason for this outbreak of squeamishness: the networks have suddenly got religion on the subject of violence.

After several rounds of congressional hearings that aired concerns about violence on TV, the four networks last month announced a joint response. Starting in September, they will attach a warning label—DUE TO SOME VIOLENT CONTENT, PARENTAL DISCRETION ADVISED—to shows with high levels of mayhem. Over the past two weeks, network executives have trooped before junketing TV journalists in Los Angeles to stress their concerns about violence—and assert that they aren't the only ones to blame. Next Monday a heavy-weight lineup of TV producers, network executives and other industry bigwigs will meet to explore the violence issue at a daylong "summit conference" sponsored by the National Council for Families and Television.

Initial reaction to the networks' labeling plan was predictably skeptical. Critics, from conservative watchdog Terry Raskolta to earnest newspaper columnists, complained that the warning label was a cop-out, a Band-Aid solution that would not reduce violence but would simply point out more clearly where to find it. But as production for the new season gets under way, the impact of the new label is shaping up as substantial, maybe even crippling. The Clean Up Your Network

Blasting away in NBC's *Ambush in Waco*



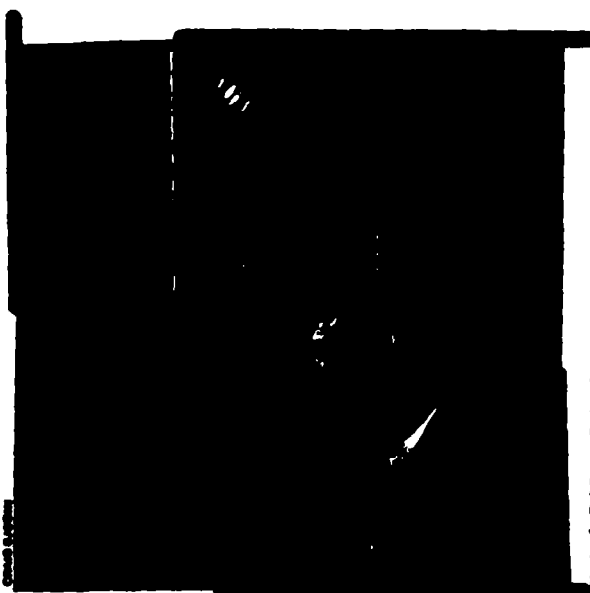
or Cover

campaign may help make TV safer for kids, but it will almost certainly make network programming even blander than it already is.

The irony of the current outcry is that it comes at a time when violence on the networks is at a low ebb. Five, 10 or 15 years ago, the prime-time schedules were packed with turbulent crime shows like *The A-Team*, *Miami Vice*, *Hunter* and *Hill Street Blues*. These have all but disappeared, replaced by sitcoms, magazine shows and "soft" dramas like *L.A. Law* and *Northern Exposure*. Violence is largely confined to a few reality shows, *Cops*, *America's Most Wanted*, and true-crime TV movies—which are abundant but whose violence looks positively prim beside the brutality of any *Lethal Weapon* sequel or Schwarzenegger extravaganza.

Still, faced with public concern about the effect TV violence might be having on young viewers, the networks have vowed to scrub their houses even cleaner. The label itself may turn out to be sparingly used. Network officials say few, if any, of their regular series will be so branded; only Steven Bochco's racy new cop show for ABC, *NYPD Blue*, has been singled out as likely to get a weekly warning. In general, the label will be applied on a case-by-case basis to certain TV movies and individual episodes of regular series.

The real question is whether a "V" label—like an R or NC-17 rating for feature films—will become a stigma to be avoided at almost all costs. The fear is that advertisers, always skittish about controversial



David Caruso and Dennis Franz of *NYPD Blue*

ing these advertisers support violence."

Producers are justifiably worried about the chilling effect this could have on provocative programming. "Once you get advertising redlining, you'll have a debilitating effect on some of TV's most powerful dramas," says Dick Wolf, executive producer of NBC's *Law & Order*. "When *Law & Order* started, we did episodes on subjects like abortion-clinic bombings. In this current environment, I don't know if those would ever have gotten made." The network standards-and-practices departments are already increasing their vigilance. "We're used to dealing with Standards & Practices on a daily basis in terms of language and violence," says Langley of *Cop Files*. "But they've become even more cautious recently." ABC Entertainment chief Ted Harbert, speaking to affiliates in June, promised that the network would "work to keep the violence to the absolute minimum" this fall. George Vradenburg 3d, executive vice president of Fox Inc.,

with rear nudity, relatively rough language ("You pissy little bitch"), and some strong violence. In the face of affiliate discomfort—roughly a third of ABC station executives polled at a recent network meeting said they might not run the show—Bochco said he would consider making some changes: "I'm trying to be sensitive to the concerns without compromising the show."

The anti-violence campaign may have an even greater impact in the shows that viewers won't see. All three networks have said they will back off from their overzealous pursuit of true-crime movies of the week. ABC, which drew fire for its two-parter in May about 1950s mass murder

derer Charles Starkweather, has turned down a proposed TV movie about 1960s mass murderer Richard Speck. Critics may cheer at the demise of this tawdry TV-movie crime wave, but good films may get hurt in the process. ABC had planned to air the explosively violent (and Oscar-winning) film *Goodfellas* this season, complete with an introduction by director Martin Scorsese in which he asserts the film is not a glorification of violence. In the current climate, the network has decided to pull the film from this season's schedule.

Meanwhile, network executives are complaining loudly about being made scapegoats for a larger problem in society. "The TV networks are a lot easier target than the National Rifle Association," notes CBS Entertainment president Jeff Sagansky. He and others point out that most TV violence is found not on the networks but on syndicated shows like *The Untouchables* and *Highlander*, and on cable channels, which are still free to air whatever they want. Not to mention video games, rented movies—and, of course, real life. "There's nothing more violent than watching the 11 o'clock news at night, and nothing more toxic," contends Peter Guber, chairman of Sony Pictures Entertainment. "Baby Falls Out of Window! Tune in at 11! We have to apply the same standards to all visual images—not just what we call entertainment, but news, information and reality-based programs."

The controversy over whether TV violence truly affects the way people act will continue to roll, with little chance of being resolved conclusively. For now, however, those alarmed by violence have the upper hand. Until viewers raise new alarms by tuning out in search of more stimulating entertainment, network TV seems headed for a dull, discreet stretch.

—Reported by
Georgia Harrison/New York and Jeffrey Rosenberg/
Los Angeles

"Advertisers will be lemming-like in their avoidance of these programs."

programs that might inspire a letter-writing campaign or an advertiser boycott, will be scared off by any show that carries the label. Madison Avenue veterans think they will. "Advertisers will be lemming-like in their avoidance of these programs," says Gene DeWitt, president of his own New York City media management firm, "because advertising on them will just be asking for trouble." Asserts Betsy Frank, a senior vice president of Saatchi & Saatchi: "You are shining a spotlight on certain programs and on advertisers who are supporting those programs. In effect, it's say-

ing "increased attention not only to the depiction of violence but also to whether there are appropriate ways to resolve conflicts without using violence." One CBS show has already been affected: *Walker, Texas Ranger*, a western starring Chuck Norris that premiered in the spring, will be less violent when it returns to the fall schedule, network programmers say.

The program drawing the most scrutiny is *NYPD Blue*; it is an admitted effort by Bochco, creator of *Hill Street Blues*, to do network TV's first R-rated series. The pilot episode contains a steamy sex scene

THE VICTIMS OF TV VIOLENCE

Do you despair at the sight of the youngster in a trance in front of the television set? You are not alone. With sets turned on in the inner city for 11 hours a day, with video, pay per view and multiplying cable channels, TV has become the closest and most constant companion for American children. It has become the nation's mom and pop, storyteller, baby sitter, preacher and teacher. Our children watch an astonishing 5,000 hours by the first grade and 19,000 hours by the end of high school—more time than they spend in class. The question more and more concerning parents, psychologists and public officials is this: What is all this viewing doing to them?

The greatest impact is on preadolescent children who do not yet have the capacity to gauge what is real and what is not. To them, TV is a report on how the world really works. There may be a comic side to it. One Indiana school board had to issue an advisory that there is no such thing as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles that the children had been crawling down storm drains to reach. But there is nothing amusing about the perception children gain from TV that violence is the easy solution to many problems, employed by good characters as much as bad and always leading to a happy ending.

The concern is that in later life, those conditioned to violence will intuitively continue to regard it as exciting, charismatic and effective. Consider how pervasive it is. By the age of 18, according to one estimate, a youngster will have seen 200,000 acts of violence on TV, including 40,000 murders. *TV Guide* looked at 10 channels on one normal 18-hour day and found 1,846 individual acts of violence—and every hour of prime time carries six to eight acts of violence. Violence has become normal, the Pied Piper to lure the vulnerable to a darker world.

The youthful world has become dramatically more violent. Consider this piece of anecdotal evidence turned up by CBS News: The seven top problems in public schools in 1940 were identified by teachers as talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress-code infractions and littering. By 1980, the seven top problems had been identified as suicide, assault, rob-

bery, rape, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and pregnancy.

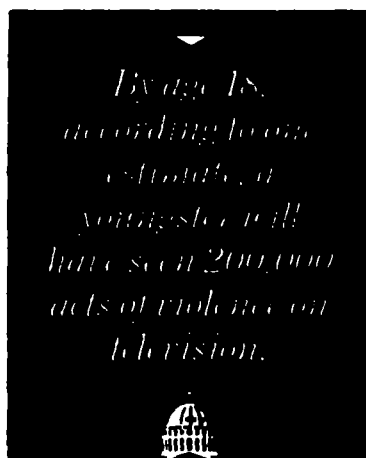
It is hard to avoid the judgment that TV, an acronym for too violent, has become an integral part of this problem. Research suggests that it increases physical aggression in children, such as getting into fights and disrupting the play of others. Does this increase in aggression contribute to the explosion of criminal violence? Many argue that it does. They point to studies such as one demonstrating that children who watched a lot of TV violence at 8 years of age have a higher propensity to commit violent crime by age 30, including the beating of their own children.

There are those who argue that TV violence is a cathartic rather than a stimulant. Indeed, precise malign connections may be difficult to prove. But common sense dictates that the effect cannot be good. Some 80 percent of Americans feel that TV violence is harmful to our society and that there is too much of it in our entertainment. The burden of proof should fall on those who continue to promote violence and use it as entertainment.

The TV networks recently made a concession by providing a rating system to alert viewers to impending violence. It is a gesture, but that is all it is. It identifies the violence but it does

not remove it. It puts the onus on the parents—and parents do have a duty to protect their children from the brutalizing effect of nightly sluggings. But parents cannot do it all, given absences for work and for travel; that many children watch TV in their own rooms, and that the alert system excludes cartoons, cable, videos and so forth.

The alert system is no more than a beginning, a recognition but not a resolution. The minimum next step is to take advantage of the technical capacity to manufacture TV sets with a computer chip that will allow parents, unilaterally, to block off programs carrying the V rating—just as we now mandate sets to help the deaf. And with that should go an earnest effort by the creative controllers to take the V out of much more of their television. It is not a happy prospect that a commercial Big Brother could substitute for the Orwellian Big Brother.



Hollywood
still doth
protest too
much, while
the stats on
video violence
pile up.
by Carl M.
Cannon

TIM ROBBINS AND SUSAN SARANDON IMPLORE THE nation to treat Haitians with AIDS more humanely. Robert Redford works for the environment. Harry Belafonte marches against the death penalty.

Actors and producers seem to be constantly speaking out for noble causes far removed from their lives. They seem even more vocal and visible now that there is a Democrat in the White House. But in the one area over which they have control—the excessive violence in the entertainment industry—Hollywood activists remain silent.

This summer, Washington was abuzz with talk about the movie *Dave*, in which Kevin Kline stars as the acting president. But every time I saw an ad featuring Kline, the movie I couldn't get out of my head was *Grand Canyon*. There are two scenes in it that explain much of what has gone wrong in America.

Kline's character has a friend, played by Steve Martin, who is a producer of the B-grade, violent movies that Hollywood euphemistically calls "action" films. But after an armed robber shoots Martin's character in the leg, he has an epiphany.

"I can't make those movies any more," he decides. "I can't make another : of art that glorifies violence and bloodshed and brutality.... No more exploding bodies, exploding buildings, exploding anything. I'm going to make the world a better place."

A month or two later, Kline calls on Martin at his Hollywood studio to congratulate him on the "new direction" his career has taken.

"What? Oh that," Martin says dismissively. "Fuck that. That's over. I must have been delirious for a few weeks there."

He then gins up every hoary excuse for Hollywood-generated violence you've ever heard, ending with: "My movies reflect what's going on; they don't make what's going on."

This is Hollywood's last line of defense for why it shows murder and mayhem on the big screen and the little one, in prime time and early in the morning, to children, adolescents, and adults:

We don't cause violence, we just report it.

Four years ago, I joined the legion of writers, researchers, and parents who have tried to force Hollywood to confront the more disturbing truth. I wrote a series of newspaper articles on the massive body of evidence that establishes a direct cause-and-effect relationship between violence on television and violence in society.

The orchestrated response from the industry—a series of letters seeking to discredit me—was something to behold.

Because the fact is, on the one issue over which they have power, the liberals in Hollywood don't act like progressive thinkers; they act like, say, the National Rifle Association:

Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

We don't cause violence in the world, we just reflect it.

kids

Passing the buck in Tinseltown

BY MICHAEL KRASNY



For seven years, Michael Krasny hosted a successful West Coast radio talk show widely recognized for discussing serious issues and showing respect for callers. Krasny left his commercial program to move to public radio in February 1993. Many saw Krasny's departure from commercial radio as symbolic of the industry trend toward sensationalism and controversy—and away from public trust and responsibility.

Mother Jones commissioned Krasny to explore the trend toward excess, particularly excess violence, in the entertainment industry. Film and TV producers, directors, and writers claim that they want to create works of artistic and social value, yet too often what we—and our children—see is only blood and gore. How can we reconcile the First Amendment with the cost to society of viewing such violence? And to what extent are these individuals responsible for the repercussions of their violent movies and television shows? Krasny asked a few players for their thoughts:

BRIAN GRAZER, Ron Howard's partner, has produced more than twenty movies. "Most of my films have been sweet-spirited: *Parenthood*, *Splash*, *My Girl*. I'm proud of them. Others I'm not so proud of. I learned a big lesson with *Kindergarten Cop*. No one objected to the violent confrontation scene, and there was no problem with it in our focus groups. Then I showed it to my five-year-old, and all of a sudden, reflexively, I put my hand over his eyes. I knew at that point that we'd made a mistake. It was too late to cut the scene, but I would cut it now.

"Usually bad movies aren't hits. I don't see Freddy Krueger [*Nightmare on Elm Street*] movies, and I wouldn't want my kids to see them. I don't know why people make such movies. They're sick."

BOB SHAYE, chief executive officer of New Line Cinema, is responsible for the *Nightmare on Elm Street* horror films. "There's an almost sardonic or dour humor to Freddy Krueger [the *Elm Street* killer], especially to fantasy horror buffs. The tales are useful and cautionary. They suggest that evil and harm are everywhere and that we need to be prepared. They're not intended for kids.

"We create a product. People buy it or they don't. It pains my aesthetic judgment, but I often feel a good movie is one that makes money. My interest is in entertaining people. *The Killers* and *Batman*? Too much for kids. I can draw my lines. Not everyone can."

SAM HAMM shares screenwriting credit for *Batman* and *Batman Returns*. "It was probably a bad idea to excite small children to see *Batman Returns*. The tie-in to McDonald's was the idea of marketing people.

"But I'm ambivalent about all of this. I can remember being scared as a kid at horror films and developing a craving for that sort of thing, but that's what may form imagination in a strong way and that's what creates narrative and inner life. It teaches you to look for stuff that's not safe in the art you enjoy later on.

"I'm not arguing to expose kids to *Friday* the 13th movies or porno, but I feel there's too much caution about what kids see. Gravitating toward the forbidden is a natural part of growing up.

"I'm dubious of stimulation and effect, wary of speaking of anyone's experience but my own. I knew as a kid very clearly the distinction between real violence and cartoon or film violence. I'm waiting for the legions of those affected by what they see to give testimony."

VIVIENNE VERDON-ROE directed the documentary film *Women For America, For The World*. "I can't go to most popular movies without checking them out with friends first, because I can't physically sit through [violent ones]. My body will not allow it. People really ought to think about the effects.

They may not faint like I do, but they're getting desensitized to violence, and it contributes to the social violence of gangs and the like.

"It's incredibly difficult when there are so few alternatives. Teens go to movies because there's often nothing else for them to do, and if they are gruesome or bad movies, no one in society seems to be saying so.

"I'm not an insider. I'm not living down there. But I know enough. It's all money. Everything's money. It's horrible."



RICHARD DONNER directed the *Lethal Weapon* movies, *Superman*, *The Omen*, and *The Goonies*, among others. "If people see gratuitous violence in any of the *Lethal Weapon* movies, I wonder if they've seen

the same movie. It's entertainment. That's my obligation. I brought social issues into the *Lethal Weapon* movies, like when Danny Glover's family comes down on him for eating tuna, or the 'Stamp out the NRA' sign up in the LA police station. In the last one the daughter wears a pro-choice T-shirt.

"You've got to prove [a connection between film violence and real violence] to me. Movies do provoke. I won't do gratuitous or animal violence. We went a little too far in the first *Lethal Weapon*, but I wanted to move more after that



THE FIRST CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS INTO THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION VIOLENCE took place in 1954. Although television was still relatively new, its extraordinary marketing power was already evident. The tube was teaching Americans what to buy and how to act, not only in advertisements, but in dramatic shows, too.

Everybody from Hollywood producers to Madison Avenue ad would boast about this power—and seek to utilize it on dual tracks: to make money and to remake society along better lines.

Because it seemed ludicrous to assert that there was only one area—the depiction of violence—where television did not influence behavior, the television industry came up with this theory: Watching violence is cathartic. A violent person might be sated by watching a murder.

The notion intrigued social scientists, and by 1956 they were studying it in earnest. Unfortunately, watching violence turned out to be anything but cathartic.

In the 1956 study, one dozen four-year-olds watched a "Woody Woodpecker" cartoon that was full of violent images. Twelve other preschoolers watched "Little Red Hen," a peaceful cartoon. Then the children were observed. The children who watched "Woody Woodpecker" were likely to hit other children, verbally accost their classmates, break toys, be disruptive, and engage in destructive behavior during free play.

For the next thirty years, researchers in all walks of the social sciences studied the question of whether television causes violence. The results have been stunningly conclusive.

"There is more published research on this topic than on almost any other social issue of our time," University of Kansas Professor Aletha C. Huston, chairwoman of the American Psychological Association's Task Force on Television and Society, told Congress in 1988. "Virtually all independent scholars agree that there is evidence that television can : aggressive behavior."

There have been some three thousand studies of this issue—eighty-five of them major research efforts—and they all say the same thing. Of the eighty-five major studies, the only one that failed to find a causal relationship between television violence and actual violence was paid for by NBC. When the study was subsequently reviewed by three independent social scientists, all three concluded that it actually did demonstrate a causal relationship.

Some highlights from the history of TV violence research:

- In 1973, when a town in mountainous western Canada was wired for television signals, University of British Columbia researchers observed first- and second-graders. Within two years, the incidence of hitting, biting, and shoving increased 160 percent in those classes.

- Two Chicago doctors, Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesmann, followed the viewing habits of a group of children for twenty-two years. They found that watching violence on television is the single best predictor of violent or aggressive behavior later in life, ahead of such commonly accepted factors as parents' behavior, poverty, and race.

"Television violence effects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels and all levels of intelligence," they told Congress in 1992. "The effect is not limited to children who are already disposed to being aggressive and is not restricted to this country."

- Fascinated by an explosion of murder rates in the United States and Canada that began in 1955, after a generation of North Americans come of age on television violence, University of Washington Professor Brandon Centerwall decided to see if the same phenomenon could be observed in South Africa, where the Afrikaner-dominated regime banned television until 1975.

He found that eight years after TV was introduced—showing mostly Hollywood-produced fare—South Africa's murder rate skyrocketed. His most telling finding was that the crime rate increased first in the white communities. This mirrors U.S. crime statistics in the 1950s and especially points the finger at television, because whites were the first to get it in both countries.

By the age of
eighteen, the
average child
has witnessed
eighteen
thousand
simulated
murders on TV.

Bolder than most researchers, Centerwall argues flatly that without violent television programming, there might be as many as ten thousand fewer murders in the United States each year.

• In 1983, University of California, San Diego, researcher David P. Phillips wanted to see if there was a correlation between televised boxing matches and violence in the streets of America.

Looking at crime rates after every televised heavyweight championship fight from 1973 to 1978, Phillips found that the homicide rate in the United States rose by an average of 11 percent for approximately one week. Phillips also found that the killers were likely to focus their aggression on victims similar to the losing fighter: if he was white, the increased number of victims were mostly

white. The converse was true if the losing fighter was black.

• In 1988, researchers Daniel G. Linz and Edward Donnerstein of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Steven Penrod of the University of Wisconsin studied the effects on young men of horror movies and "slasher" films.

They found that depictions of violence, not sex, are what desensitizes people.

They divided male students into four groups. One group watched no movies, a second watched nonviolent, X-rated movies, a third watched teenage sexual-innuendo movies, and a fourth watched the slasher films *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Friday the 13th Part 2*, *Maniac*, and *Toolbox Murders*.

All the young men were placed on a mock jury panel and asked a series of questions designed to measure their empathy for an alleged female rape victim. Those in the fourth group measured lowest in empathy for the specific victim in the experiment—and for rape victims in general.

THE ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE IS OFTEN MORE COMPELLING THAN THE SCIENTIFIC studies. Ask any homicide cop from London to Los Angeles to Bangkok if television violence induces real-life violence and listen carefully to the cynical, knowing laugh.

Ask David McCarthy, police chief in Greenfield, Massachusetts, why nineteen-year-old Mark Branch killed himself after stabbing an eighteen-year-old female college student to death. When cops searched his room they found ninety horror movies, as well as a machete and a goalie mask like those used by Jason, the grisly star of *Friday the 13th*.

Ask the families of thirty-five young men who committed suicide by playing Russian roulette after seeing the movie *The Deer Hunter*.

Ask George Gavito, a lieutenant in the Cameron County, Texas, sheriff's department, about a cult that sacrificed at least thirteen people on a ranch west of Matamoros, Mexico. The suspects kept mentioning a 1986 movie, *The Believers*, about rich families who engage in ritual sacrifice. "They talk about it like that had something to do with changing them," Gavito recalled later.

Ask LAPD lieutenant Mike Melton about Angel Regino of Los Angeles, who was picked up after a series of robberies and a murder in which he wore a blue bandanna and fedora identical to those worn by Freddy, the stic anti-hero of *Nightmare on Elm Street*. In case anybody missed the

toward a less real and more comic-book effect, despite the great reaction we had.

"Public trust comes into filmmaking. The filmmaker is ultimately accountable. I can defend my own work only on personal grounds. If I'm a provocateur of anything, I hope it's good emotion and humor. Censorship is in the ratings system. It works."



CALLIE KHOURI won an Academy Award for her screenplay of *Thelma and Louise*. "I have a hard time with violence just to entertain, but I believe it can be very effective in getting a point across. I resorted to it in my film, but there was a conscience to it. *Thelma and Louise* felt they had done something wrong, and there were big consequences—including psychic consequences.

"Outlaw movies have always been a catharsis for men, but denied to women. I was extremely frustrated with the literal interpretation of *Thelma and Louise*. Doesn't anyone read anymore or understand metaphor? The film was supposed to be complex, without easy answers, and with flawed characters. I thought when Louise shot that guy that there'd be dead silence in the theater. That scene was written carefully: it was an attempted rape, and I wanted to make what she did wrong. And yet people cheered. I was stunned."



LESLIE MOONVES is head of Lorimar Studios, often called the fifth network, which produced the TV movies "Jack the Ripper" and "Deliberate Strangers" (about serial killer Ted Bundy), as well as shows that Moonves has considerably more pride in, such as "I'll Fly Away" and "Home Front." "I'd love to do another 'I'll Fly Away,' but the corporate bosses won't let me. When you

get burned with quality programming you get gun-shy—you feel you need to stick to the shows that make money. You know what the problem is? Network change. Somebody like Bill Paley [former chairman of CBS] used to say that he didn't care if he got a twelve share, because there was a public trust and social responsibility to put on an 'I'll Fly Away.' GE buys a network, and you've got a different agenda.

"Network presidents don't keep their jobs based on the number of Emmy awards. Let's face it: there is more sensation and violence because it works. The movie of the week has become the killer of the week story.

"Do we have a responsibility to our public? Of course. I honestly don't know what to do about it. How's that for an answer?"

JOE ESZTERHAS has written the scripts for such major Hollywood films as *Betrayal*, *Jagged*

Edge, *Basic Instinct*, and *Silver*. His work has been criticized as sexist and homophobic. "I don't like to be a Monday morning quarterback on my own work."



DAWN STEEL became the first woman to head a major studio when she was made president of Columbia Pictures in 1987. During her career, she has worked on such films as *Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop II*, *Casualties of War*, *When Harry Met*

Sally, and *Look Who's Talking*. She now runs her own production company. "I believe I've never made a movie in bad taste or with excessive violence. But for profit, I've had to make movies not from my soul. If I want to make a film for passion, I have to make it for less money."

"I'm more cynical about the violence in LA than about violence in our business. It's unanswerable whether movies reflect the culture or vice versa. I monitor my kid's movies and won't let her see what's not appropriate for her. There's no way you can censor any movie in this country that's being made. That's our First Amendment."

MATT GROENING is creator and executive producer of the TV hit "*The Simpsons*." "Anytime you visualize something, it's difficult not to glorify it. Every antiwar film is pro-war, because its violence is stylized and an audience can be removed from it and enjoy it. Stylistically, violence is almost invariably glorified, even when you have an anti-violent point of view. Look at *Platoon*. Violence is invariably used in movies and TV as punctuation, and it does have a numbing effect on people after a time."



"Most TV, most movies, really, are less pernicious than tedious and boring. What's bad for kids is bad storytelling. Tell better stories."



BARRY DILLER, ex-chief executive officer and chairman of Fox and Matt Groening's former boss, now heads QVC Network. He couldn't disagree more with Groening about television's being mostly bad. "I can't imagine why he would say that. Pound for

pound, the hour and half-hour television series are very good. There's a lot of junk, but much more in the movie business, the record business, even legitimate theater. It's snobbery to call a show like '*Roseanne*' lowbrow or vulgar. It's funny and interesting and has a good moral value and tone."

significance of his disguise, Regino told his victims that they would never forget him, because he was another Freddy Krueger.

Ask Britain Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, who called for further actions on U.S.-produced films after Michael Ryan of Hungerford committed Britain's worst mass murder in imitation of *Rambo*, massacring sixteen people while wearing a U.S. combat jacket and a bandoleer of ammunition.

Ask Sergeant John O'Malley of the New York Police Department about a nine-year-old boy who sprayed a Bronx office building with gunfire. The boy explained to the astonished sergeant how he learned to load his Uzi-like firearm: "I watch a lot of TV."

Or ask Manteca, California, police detective Jeff Boyd about thirteen-year-old Juan Valdez, who, with another teenager, went to a man's house, kicked him, stabbed him, beat him with a fireplace poker, and then choked him to death with a dog chain.

Why, Boyd wanted to know, had the boys poured salt in the victim's wounds?

"Oh, I don't know," the youth replied with a shrug. "I just seen it on TV."

NUMEROUS GROUPS HAVE CALLED, OVER THE YEARS, FOR CURBING TELEVISION violence: the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1969), the U.S. Surgeon General (1972), the Canadian Royal Commission (1976), the National Institute of Mental Health (1982), the U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence (1984), the National Parents' Association (1987), and the American Psychological Association (1992).

During that time, cable television and movie rentals have made violence more readily available while at the same time pushing the envelope for network TV. But even leaving aside cable and movie rentals, a study of television programming from 1967 to 1989 showed only small ups and downs in violence, with the violent acts moving from one time slot to another; the overall violence rate remaining pretty steady—and pretty similar from network to network.

"The percent of prime-time programs using violence remains more or less seven out of ten, as it has been for the entire twenty-two-year period," researchers George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication and Nancy Signorielli of the University of Delaware wrote in 1990. For the past twenty-two years, they found, adults and children have been entertained by about sixteen violent acts, including two murders, in each evening's prime-time programming.

They also discovered that the rate of violence in children's programs is three times the rate in prime-time shows. By the age of eighteen, the average American child has witnessed at least eighteen thousand simulated murders on television.

By 1989, network executives were arguing that their violence was part of a larger context in which bad guys get their just desserts.

"We have never put any faith in mechanical measurements, such as counting punches or gunshots," said NBC's Alan Gerson. "Action and conflict must be evaluated within each specific dramatic context."

"Our policy," added Alfred R. Schneider of ABC, "... makes clear that when violence is portrayed [on TV], it must be reasonably related to plot development and character delineation."

Of course, what early-childhood experts could tell these executives is that children between the ages of four and seven simply make no connection between the murder at the beginning of a half-hour show and the lead away in handcuffs at the end. In fact, psychologists know that very young children do not even understand death to be a permanent condition.

But all of the scientific studies and reports, all of the wisdom of cops' grief of parents have run up against Congress's quite proper fear of censorship. For years, Democratic Congressman Peter Rodino of New Jersey chaired the House Judiciary Committee and looked at calls for some form of censorship with a jaundiced eye. At a hearing five years ago, Rodino told witnesses that Congress must be a "protector of commerce."

"Well, we have children that we need to protect," replied Frank M. Palumbo, a pediatrician at Georgetown University Hospital and a consultant to the American Academy of Pediatrics. "What we have here is a toxic substance in the environment that is harmful to children."

Arnold Fege of the national PTA added, "Clearly, this committee would not protect teachers who taught violence to children. Yet why would we condone children being exposed to a steady diet of TV violence year after year?"

Finally there is a reason to hope for progress.

Early this summer, Massachusetts Democrat Edward Markey, chair of the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on telecommunications, said that Congress may require manufacturers to build TV sets with a computer chip so that parents could block violent programs from those their children could select.

He joins the fight waged by Senator Paul Simon, a liberal Democrat from Illinois. Nine years ago, Simon flipped on a hotel television set hoping to catch the late news. "Instead," he has recalled many times, "I saw a man being sawed in half with a chainsaw, in living color."

Simon was unsettled by the image and even more unsettled when he wondered what repeatedly looking at such images would do to the mind of a fourteen-year-old.

When he found out, he called television executives, who told him that violence sells and that they would be at a competitive disadvantage if they acted responsibly.

Why not get together and adopt voluntary guidelines? Simon asked.

Oh, that would be a violation of antitrust law, they assured him.

Simon called their bluff in 1990 by pushing through Congress a law that allowed a three-year moratorium on antitrust considerations so that the industry could discuss ways to jointly reduce violence.

Halfway through that time, however, they had done nothing, and an angry Simon denounced the industry on the Senate floor. With a push from some prominent industry figures, a conference was set for this August 2 in Los Angeles. (See action card between pages 16 and 17.)

This spring, CBS broadcast group president Howard Stringer said his network was looking for ways to cut back on violence in its entertainment, because he was troubled by the cost to society of continuing business-as-usual.

"We must admit we have a responsibility," he said.

Jack Valenti, the powerful head of the Motion Picture Association of America, wrote to producers urging them to participate in the August 2 conference. "I think it's more than a bunch of talk," Simon said. "I think this conference will produce some results. I think the industry will adopt some standards."

The federal government, of course, possesses the power to regulate the airwaves through the FCC, and Simon and others believe that this latent power to control violence—never used—has put the fear of God in the producers. He also thinks some of them are starting to feel guilty.

"We now have more people in jail and prison per capita than any country that keeps records, including South Africa," Simon says. "We've spent billions putting people behind bars, and it's had no effect on the crime rate. None. People realize there have to be other answers, and as they've looked around, they have settled on television as one of them."

Maybe Simon is right. Maybe Hollywood executives will get together and make a difference.

Or maybe, like Steve Martin's character in *Grand Canyon*, producers and directors from New York to Beverly Hills will wake up after Simon's antitrust exemption expires December 1, shake off the effects of their holiday hangovers, and when asked about their new commitment to responsible filmmaking, answer:

"What? Oh that. Fuck that. That's over. We must have been delirious for a few weeks there."

Carl M. Cannon is the White House correspondent for the Baltimore Sun.

"TV movies are crummy. 'Hard Copy' is a lying, thieving, lowlife program of hideous, cynical purpose. It's not serious television. There are only a few tabloid shows, but they speak loudly."

"I think you look at society, and you see what is reflected on television in terms of violent action. Absolutely, [there is too much violence]. But we can be thoughtful and reasonable and change that, reduce it. I think plans over the last few years will help. Senator Simon's work with the networks will help."

PHILIP KAUFMAN co-wrote and directed *The Wanderers*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *Henry and June*, and wrote and directed *The Right Stuff*. "There is a fascist edge to a lot of the violence we see. I'm in favor of pushing the envelope, but when you push it in romance or eroticism you get an NC-17 rating. It's easier to get an R rating if you use senseless violence, because the ratings board is largely conservative and embraces violence before sex."



JOSH BRAND, along with his partner, has produced the TV hits "St. Elsewhere" and "Northern Exposure." "If something gets a high rating, say, 'The Army Fisher Story,' then advertisers pay more money. Now, did the networks create the audience for it, or do they pander to what the audience wanted? Is it okay to pollute the emotional and spiritual environment?"

"Now there are studies [that show] that violent images don't affect people, just as the tobacco industry has studies showing that cigarette smoking doesn't cause cancer. And they use the First Amendment to evince their rights and get into this study versus that study, and the whole thing becomes a wash, a miasma of moral mud. But I think that there is absolutely no question that the profusion of these kinds of images has a negative effect, not only on children but on human beings in general."

"But regulations are dangerous, particularly when dealing with the free expression of ideas. I do believe that some of those ideas are like pollutants, but there isn't one thing you can do. A panacea doesn't exist."

Although there may be no panacea, we must still look for solutions. How would you resolve the conflict between excessive violence in entertainment and the protections guaranteed under the First Amendment?

Write to Mother Jones, 1663 Mission St., 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103. Or fax us at (415) 863-5136.

Michael Krasny is currently the host of San Francisco radio station KQED's "Forum," a weekly talk show. Priscilla Yamin of Mother Jones and Karen Daar contributed research to these interviews.

news from

PAUL SIMON

U.S. SENATOR

December, 1992

CONTACT: David Carle
Christopher Ry
202-224-7115
202-224-7023
ILLINOIS

'Big Three' Television Networks Agree on Joint TV Violence Standards Under Simon's TV Violence Act

In a breakthrough for movement toward industry-wide efforts to reduce violence on television, U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., Friday announced Dec. 11 that ABC, CBS and NBC have agreed to joint standards on entertainment TV violence that will guide programming on the networks.

The networks invoked the antitrust exemption in the two-year-old Television Violence Act to draft and implement the standards, which draw upon their separate existing guidelines. The Television Violence Act, authored by Simon, exempts the television industry from antitrust limits to allow industry self-regulation to scale back depictions of violence in entertainment programs, through development of common standards. The law covers broadcasters, the cable industry and those who produce TV programs. Simon cites the "overwhelming" body of research that shows excessive violence on TV harms children and contributes to real-life violence in society.

Simon also announced that the three networks will convene an industry-wide conference on TV violence in Los Angeles next year to discuss further steps, and that Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, has agreed to participate. The networks say their joint standards are an attempt "to break this stalemate" over industry use of the Simon laws before the clock runs out on the antitrust exemption in December, 1993.

**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 the 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 are 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 or 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.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Senator Lights Fire Under TV Industry Over Violence

By Louise Sweeney

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON

TELEVISION violence, long a lethal staple of industry programming, has begun to crest again as a subject of public and congressional concern.

This week's TV Guide, the national magazine covering the industry, contains a section devoted totally to violence on the tube. Heather Borden, a spokeswoman for the magazine, says it did its own study of violence over 10 stations in the Washington area, started it with a symposium of experts, and is running the results in the Aug. 22-28 issue.

Sen. Paul Simon (D) of Illinois, author of the Television Violence Act, is so outraged by the saturation of violence in TV that he is talking about calling for hearings on the subject. "We may very well have a hearing after the first of the year." His subcommittee on constitutional rights would hold such a hearing.

Senator Simon says: "I think

the American people are not going to simply sit by and say, 'Well, if they're not going to regulate themselves, we're just not going to do anything about it.' I think there is going to be a demand for some type of action. And I think we have to be very careful in this field because we don't want violations of the first amendment."

When Simon began his study of TV violence, he asked industry representatives to work together to curb that violence. He started his campaign after being horrified by a feature film on TV of a chain-saw massacre.

He told industry spokesmen that there had been over 100 studies of the relationship between violence on TV and violence in society, that 85 of them were substantial, and that both the surgeon general and the Institute of Mental Health had issued studies on it — finding violence on TV is causing violence in society.

Industry representatives told him they couldn't do anything about it because to get together and establish standards would violate the antitrust laws. Undaunted, he then introduced spe-

cial legislation, which passed, giving them a three-year exemption from such laws.

A year and a half later, he is still waiting to see what the networks are going to do. He has heard that they have had two meetings in the last year and a half. The most recent one was July 24. An ABC source confirmed that meeting, saying that it included representatives of ABC,

EDITH MURPHY - AP/WIDEWORLD



SENATOR SIMON: He's outraged about violence on TV and threatens to hold hearings in 1993.

CBS, and NBC. Julie Hunter, an ABC spokeswoman, said: "They agreed to agree, and are now in the process of trying to draft language which will be edited and circulated actively. They're hoping to reach conclusions in the next couple of months."

"They're working on trying to create some statements of principle," she said. "We [the networks] already have departments of standards and practices, which review every program before it goes out over the air. We don't use this kind of standards and practices review evident anywhere on cable."

Simon says: "My hope is that both the networks as well as the independent and cable will pay attention to this. But clearly one of the alternatives is some kind of Federal Communications Commission action."

The FCC does have a great deal of power over individual stations [the threat of relieving individual affiliates of their licenses, for instance]....

Peggy Laramie, spokeswoman for the National Cable TV Association, says it has already acted:

"The cable industry's response to Senator Simon's bill was to commission a study by Dr. George Gerbner, one of the foremost experts on television violence." She says they hope to be able to share the results of the survey with Senator Simon this fall.

National Association of Broadcasters spokesman Doug Wills says his organization held meetings on the subject starting in June 1990.

"Our broad statement of principles is a document saying 'Grossly excessive sex and violence do not belong on television.' That's all that we can do without court challenges on antitrust."

As to a ratings system with a V for violent programs, Simon says: "Congress doesn't have the power to institute a ratings system, but the industry could begin it with voluntary standards." They could draw up such a code in "48 hours," he says.

"The problem is one of will. What we need is the CEOs of ABC and NBC and CBS saying to their people: 'Let's be responsible citizens. Let's get together and establish standards.'"

VIEWPOINTS

By Paul Simon

I CHECKED INTO a motel room late one night a few years ago after a long day of appointments in Illinois. I flipped on the room's TV set, hoping to catch the late news. Instead, I saw an actor being savaged in half with a chainsaw, in vivid color.

The scene unsettled me that night. I wondered what it would do to a 10-year-old or to a 14-year-old.

When I returned to Washington I asked my staff to gather studies on television violence. They discovered nearly 3,000 scholarly articles and studies.

As I dug deeper I found, first, a remarkable consensus in several research fields about the harm excessive TV violence does to children and adults; second, confirmation that U.S. television is more violent than ever before and may be the most violent of any industrialized country; and third, self-regulation not long ago was an accepted practice in the American television industry, but today it is illegal.

In the 1950s, when television violence was twice compared with that seen today, psychologists tended toward a theory that it had a cathartic effect that reduced viewers' aggressive behavior. Researchers today find no data to support that theory, but find abundant evidence of its harmful effects. The research generally identifies three problems connected with TV violence: Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others; they may become more fearful of the world around them; and they may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

The American Academy of Pediatrics finds "repeated exposure to televised violence promotes a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice." In 1982, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop reported a cause-and-effect relationship between viewing violence and aggressive behavior after asking the National Institute of Mental Health to review the sizable body of research.

Data published in the New England Journal of Medicine shows graphic depictions of suicide on television are often followed by a dramatic rise in teen suicides. Thirty-five boys and young men between the ages of 8 and 31 killed themselves playing Russian roulette while watching a scene from "The Deer Hunter," which they had seen on television. And after a televised depiction of the New Bedford pool hall rape was shown, a 15-year-old boy assaulted a 10-year-old girl on a pool table.

Researchers had a unique before-and-after testing opportunity when TV came to a small Canadian community that had never had it before. They found verbal and physical aggression rose among primary school children after television became a part of the town's life.

A study begun on a group of 8-year-olds and pursued for 10 years by Doctors Leonard Eron and Rudolf Huesmann of the University of Illinois tried to identify all causes of aggression in childhood: child-rearing practices in the family, neighborhood excursions and other factors. At the end of the 10 years, the single best predictor of violence in these

Coming Soon: An Act That Should Reduce Television Violence

children, now 18, was what they had watched on television when they were eight — not what their families did, not what their social class was, not any of the other things that were measured.

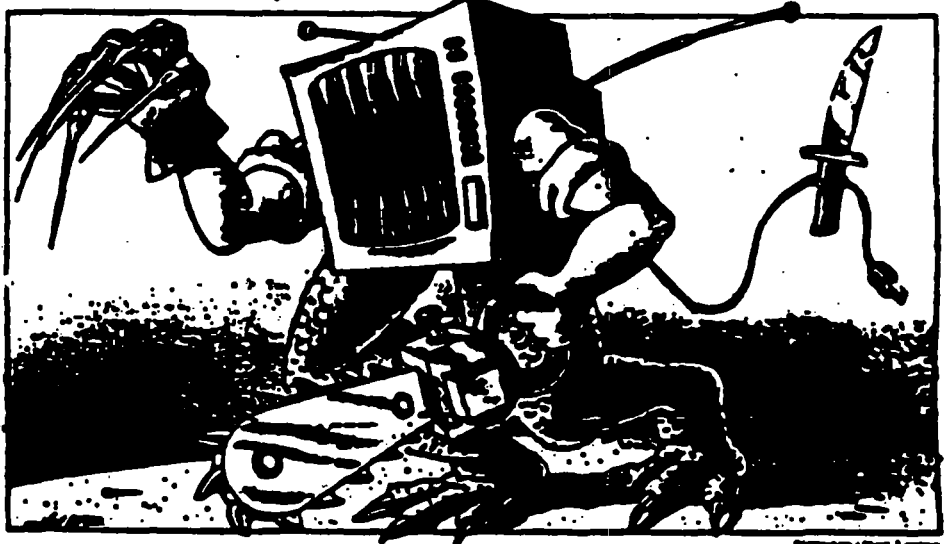
By age 18, the average American child has seen 300,000 acts of violence on TV, including 33,000 murders. The audience under 16 numbers about 50 million. If even one-tenth of one percent are harmed, we are needlessly exposing 50,000 young people with this gratuitous electronic mayhem.

As I digested these findings I began to ask my-

self this question: Is a free society like ours — one that shuns government censorship and has a commercial television industry — powerless to protect itself and its children from the harm caused by excessive TV violence?

After discussions with television policy makers and visits to the networks' divisions of standards and practices, I answered that question with the self this question: Is a free society like ours — one that shuns government censorship and has a commercial television industry — powerless to protect itself and its children from the harm caused by excessive TV violence?

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Cartoon by Dan Brown

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The Justice Department filed a case in 1979 challenging the advertising actions of the Nation-

while 30 seconds of exposure to a commercial has great impact. The obvious answer is that television sells — whether a political product, or soap, or violence.

In writing the bill, I wanted to focus on entertainment programming only, as I wrote report language and built a legislative history making clear that the exemption is not aimed at the content of news programs. One reason is that entertainment programs tend to glorify violence, while news programs do not.

Like our politicians, television can appeal to the best in us or to worst instincts. Too often, television today is contributing to a tide of violence. A democratic, pluralistic society can find ways to protect against excessive televised violence. It's time for the television industry to forge a partnership with America's families to scale back the atmosphere of violence that is erupting in our communities, on our Main Streets, even in our schoolyards.

'Is a free society like ours powerless to protect itself and its children?'



Sen. Paul Simon (D-N.J.) is a former editor and publisher who has written a weekly column for 41 yrs.

MEDIA

Critics Zero In on TV Violence

By Fred Elia

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

NEW YORK

TELEVISION violence — the gratuitous, graphically ugly, often sadistic kind — is under attack, and TV broadcasters are paying close and even anxious attention.

A meeting of top executives in the movie, broadcast-TV, and cable industries is planned for August in Los Angeles to examine the issue and the steps that might be taken to at least partially resolve it.

Last December, seeking to defuse the avalanche of criticism, the networks agreed on a number of vaguely worded standards aiming to cut down on violence and on scenes that "depict violence as glamorous."

Self-regulation urged

The Hollywood conference has been called at the instigation of Sen. Paul Simon (D) of Illinois, who has been in the forefront of those pointing to the growing incidence of violence on the small screen (and the big one, for that matter) and urging the broadcasters to find some means of regulating themselves when it comes to the production of violent incidents in drama.

"I have hopes, not expectations for that meeting," Senator Simon told the Monitor. "My hope is that there will be a general consensus that we really do have a problem that we have to deal with in a responsible way."

"I hope that this conference will create a general atmosphere that recognizes, on the part of all the people who have such influence on the public, that there is a responsibility to move away from the pattern of violence that we have."

There are top people in the television business who are sharply aware not only of the prevalence of violence and the growing objections to it, but also of the impact it has on viewers, particularly young ones. Unbridled violence has become an integral part not only of action drama, but also of the cartoon fare for the very young.

Children's shows are frequently interrupted by commercials featuring violence and brutality in trailers for forthcoming adult action movies.

"There is a cynicism in this society, and it is hard to believe that we may not have had some role in it," said Howard Burger, president of the CBS Broadcast Group, at a recent industry conference called by Wertheim Schroder and Variety, the trade publication.

"At CBS, we are going to become much tougher on violence in our lineup this fall," he said. "It is the chill of violence that worries me, not so much the physical action. It is the callousness involved and the role we have in shaping the attitudes of young people to their victims. Gratuitous violence has to be erased from the network. We must admit our responsibility."

It is the impact on the young that particularly concerns many of those who have watched the rise in the level of violence on TV. They perceive it as harmful not only because it is seen stimulating and encouraging aggressive acts, but also because the steady drumbeat of on-air violence threatens to desensitize youngsters to the pain of those on whom it is inflicted, and it diminishes their sense of reality and responsibility.

A survey run in Washington last year by TV Guide on 10 local

stations found no fewer than 100 violent scenes per hour. One-third of the violence involved life-threatening assaults. During an 18-hour span, the survey noted 1,846 individual acts of violence.

The American Psychological Association estimates that the average youngster will see 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of brutality by the time he or she finishes elementary school. The association finds a definite correlation between TV violence

told the Schroder/Variety symposium: "I am an implacable foe of censorship by any group, self-appointed or elected or otherwise. We must not tell creative people how to tell their stories."

The creative process, Valenti pointed out, "is so fragile, so easily shattered. I would like to direct a creative person to soften a violent scene and still get the same kind of impact."

Public awareness

Senator Simon, unlike others who favor a stronger approach — "If self-regulation doesn't work, let's legislate" — would prefer television cleaned its own house. "I don't want to get into the delicate First Amendment area," he says. "Ideally, we can solve the problem without the heavy hand of government, without setting a precedent which we may regret later."

The American public is sharply aware of the negative influence of violence on television. A recent Times Mirror survey found that 72 percent of Americans surveyed said there was too much of it on entertainment programs; an equal percentage of parents reported turning off the set to protect

Senator Simon sees an inconsistency in the public's when it comes to violence on TV. "It's the same inconsistency I see in the Senate," he says. "The public wants lower taxes, but services and the elimination of the deficit. The same thing with violence: The public objects to it, and yet it is somehow fascinated by it."

James Quello, the temporary chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, warned that an aroused viewing public might ask Congress to legislate against excessive violence. Outspoken Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia has indicated that it could eventually be considered a violation of the public trust on the part of the networks.

It is precisely this threat of censorship that worries men like Valenti and others who look on Hollywood's long and struggle against it. The don't deny that they have the legal means to do something about the abundance of violence on the air. They can act under Senator Simon's TV Violence Act, exempting them from antitrust limits allowing them to establish their own rules. The law runs in December 1983.

US-overseas differences

Katherine Masterson, who sells Westinghouse's famous Mutant Ninja Turtles series, underscores the difference between the United States and the rest of the world.

"At home, we don't get objections to violence in shows," she says. "Americans are used to it. But abroad. It's a very different story. The British wouldn't buy the Turtles unless they could edit out the violence."

"It's that version that we sold to the rest of the world. Otherwise the Turtles wouldn't have nearly as well."

Americans frequently edit programs for export to accommodate the international distaste for violence. "Over there they are, but are quite willing to accept sex on TV. We are the exact opposite," observes Brian Lacy, who markets the Zodiac company's series.

While there are objections to violence in entertainment, it occurs more often in the so-called "reality" programs that offer news footage or skillful, luscious recreations.

"TV news portrays violence but does not glamorize it," says, "but entertainment do just that. That is where the problem is, and that is the we must move away from."



Senator Paul Simon has set up an August conference in Los Angeles on TV film violence.

and aggressive behavior.

However, the practical success of the August conference clearly is not a foregone conclusion. Jack Valenti, the president of the Motion Picture Association of America, which represents the major Hollywood studios (who supply the vast majority of our television programs), sees a "political problem," but expresses the hope that the movie industry can tackle violence "as we did earlier in the case of drugs and alcohol on the screen."

At the same time, Mr. Valenti

their children from it.

Television executives, preferring not to be quoted by name, acknowledge that violence exists in TV drama programming because of the perception that it attracts viewers.

They are somewhat pessimistic at the prospects for a serious diminution of on-screen violence precisely because of the commercial aspects of it at a time when the networks are having trouble financially. "The networks will just pay the necessary lip service," observed one.

TV
GUIDETV VIOLENCE RATINGS:
THE NEXT SHOWDOWNJuly 17-23
89¢

LOT-



Showdown

Bullets will still fly. Thugs will still kill. Fists will crunch against noses—as always. But this fall, finally, parents eager to steer kids away from such familiar if disquieting images on broadcast television will get some long-delayed help.

Just how much help remains unclear. And just why Hollywood decided that this was the time to lend a hand to parents is a question worth asking. Still, a startling united front suddenly emerged last month with the announcement by ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox that beginning next season, programs containing violent scenes will carry warning messages in the form of parental advisories. TV violence won't go away, of course, any more than printing the Surgeon General's warning on every cigarette package stopped all smoking. But at least viewers will be forewarned.

And the networks will be off the hook. Or will they? The new initiative required an unusual degree of cooperation among the competing broadcasters, a unanimity forged by their mutual recognition that TV violence does indeed have ill effects, and by a shared need to do something in the face of

For TV
VIOLENCE

*For the first time,
Hollywood and
Washington are
joining forces to
limit the endless
Bang! Pow! and
Slash! of television
fare. Question is:
What weapons
will they use?*

By Neil Hickey



Clockwise from upper left
Scenes from "Stephen King's
It," "Murder in the Heartland,"
Kung Fu: The Legend
Continues, "Total Recall,"
FBI: The Untold Stories,
The Untouchables (above),
and The Modern (center)

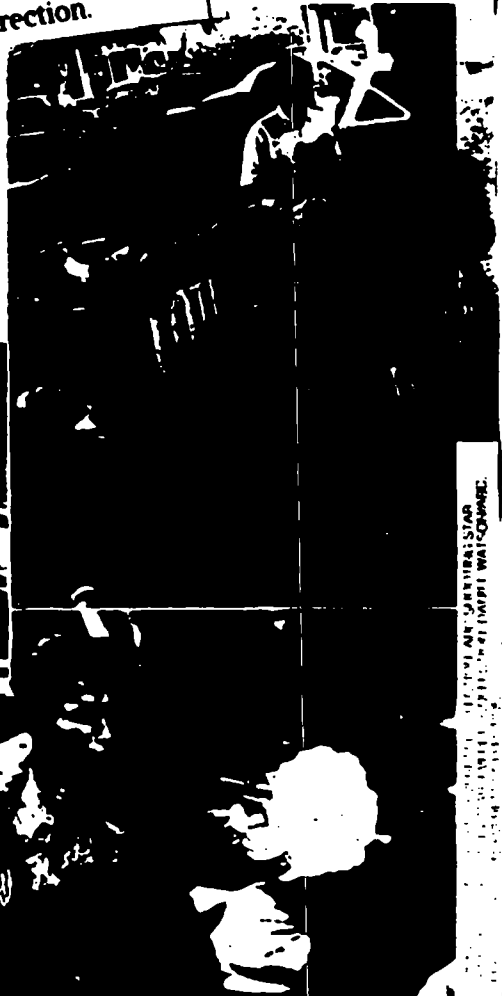
mounting criticism and possible Congressional legislation.

How successfully the collaborators defused the violence issue will be seen Aug. 2, when a "summit conference" on TV violence convenes in Los Angeles.



CHEERS

A special huzzah for the television industry finally addressing the violence issue seriously (see story, page 16). Guidelines for the new advisory system are still being worked out, so we're not sure what the real impact of a program-labeling plan will be. But the networks' decision to do something to facilitate parents' monitoring of their kids' TV watching may be an initial step in the right direction.



STYLING: ANNE GRIFFIN/STAR
HAIR: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/STYLING
MAKEUP: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/STYLING

The mass meeting will draw together more than 400 broadcast and cable officials, program makers, legislators, academicians, and members of watchdog groups, who will examine all the options for reducing violence, and ask some tough questions about the networks' announcement.

Still, it's "the dawning of a new era," and a wonderful first step, according to Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.). Most Hollywood programmers, he points out, now concur that violence in the media helps cause real violence—and are eager to cooperate in devising solutions to the problem. CBS president Howard Stringer told 1000 CBS station executives in a May speech that the medium should no longer "deny blindly the reality of television violence.... Death stings, pain hurts, loss devastates, fear terrifies.... Murder, even fighting, is not poetic or balletic. It is ugly and clumsy. Violence is vile." He won a standing ovation from his fellow broadcasters.

This new and welcome urge among TV people to reform has not happened spontaneously. Far from it. Leading up to the June 30 announcement and the August conference has been an unprecedented string of hearings in both the Senate and the House of Representatives in which the industry has been jolted as never before. A parade of witnesses pummeled the medium for dragging its feet on dealing with violence.

Dr. Leonard Eron, a psychology professor at the University of Michigan, sounded a clarion call: "Ladies and gentlemen of the Senate," he said, "the time has come for you to act. The TV industry has demonstrated...that it cannot or will not regulate itself." Cable mogul Ted Turner delivered a furious attack on his broadcast colleagues. Congress should forge a strict standard on violence for broadcasters and, if they resist, "ram

it down their throats," he thundered.

At hearings a few weeks earlier, Rep. Markey declared himself "discouraged" that TV people had given only lip service to the Television Violence Act of 1990, which paved the way for the networks to create some tough new guidelines. Instead, he complained, "another May sweeps finds us mired in murder and mayhem." Clearly, Markey said, the industry "has not gotten the message." To prove it he cited a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (commissioned by TV GUIDE for a special issue on violence last Aug. 22) that found more than 1800

*Cable mogul
Ted Turner
delivered
a furious
attack on his
colleagues.*



violent acts during one 18-hour period of television.

The floodgates were open. Violence was suddenly the hottest subject in television. Lawmakers and public officials of every stripe began checking in with schemes to bring the television industry to heel once and for all: Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.)—describing May as "one of the bloodiest months in TV history"—announced a nationwide petition drive calling for a violence ratings system for prime-time TV, children's programs, and movies. The expected lists of names would be delivered to the Aug. 2 Los An-

geles meeting. Masterminding the petition drive, Conrad said, would be a newly minted body called the Citizens Task Force on TV Violence.

Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) and Rep. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) introduced legislation to require the FCC to publish quarterly reports listing the acts of violence on prime-time, Saturday morning, and cable programming, and the names of the sponsors of those shows.

Underlying it all was the growing conviction



Media violence, says Gerbner, "has become the new civil-rights issue."

among lawmakers and regulators that the government would indeed step in if the industry didn't police itself. At the FCC, acting chairman James Quello said that Congress should give his agency authority to regulate TV violence as "a necessary next step." And the person who has been at the forefront of the anti-violence movement more than any other public official, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), hinted that if the fall TV schedules didn't show authentic improvement, "we're going to have to look at alternatives."

Into that atmosphere came the June 30 four-network announcement on warning labels. Lawmakers and activists were generally pleased with that news, but some felt that the advisories were too

tame a remedy. Others were concerned because children's cartoons will not be labeled. Rep. Markey said he still hoped for a lock-out box that would let parents block channels and programs deemed too violent. Sen. Simon said, "We're not suggesting no violence...we're suggesting no *glamorization* of violence." Networks worried that advertisers will not sponsor shows—even worthy ones—that contain the disclaimer. *The New*

York Times wrote off the advisories as a "mild slap," and said the networks would still get away with murder. Still other critics wondered if a "V" label would only attract unsupervised children.

So the question remains: What is different this time from all previous occasions when Congress and the public were up in arms over media violence, only to have promises made and then fade from view? "It is different now," says George Gerbner, professor at The Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. "It's like adding heat to a pot of water. For a long time it seems that nothing happens, and then all of a sudden it starts to boil—and it boils over."

Media violence, he says, has become "the new civil-rights issue." After "many years of semi-dormancy," Gerbner says, the current interest by government and the public was sparked by last August's special issue of *TV GUIDE*, which bore the cover line, "Is TV Violence Battering Our Kids?" and, he claims, "directly stimulated public debate and the current series of Congressional hearings."

Whatever the source, it now seems possible that a good-faith effort by Hollywood and the networks exists—even if forced—and that all parties may intend (for the first time in television's history) to build on that foundation to help spare children—and adults—exposure to the meaner forms of media mayhem. ■

'V' for Violence: Ten Talking Points

Ten questions we—and many of our readers—believe the Aug. 2 TV violence summit must address:

1. Parental advisories are a good step, but what are their guidelines, and will they be uniformly applied?

We need a full definition of TV violence—any act of aggression, or one depicted in graphic detail? What is “gratuitous” violence? What is violence that “glamorizes”? Until now, anonymous network “standards and practices” people decided what’s OK or not. Should this process now be public, spelled out?

2. Not all parents can supervise their children’s viewing. What technology exists to help parents lock out programs labeled violent?

Rep. Ed Markey’s proposed chip in TV sets would let viewers “lock out” programs labeled “V” for violent. Might this lead to rigid labeling, programming, or viewing decisions—*Roots* lumped together with a gratuitous shoot-’em-up series? Are there other solutions in the offing that give parents control more flexibly, with more information?

3. What about cable? Some pay channels show violent movies, uncut, that may run around the clock.

We cable viewers don’t always distinguish between network, basic-cable, or even pay-cable shows; we just flip around with the remote. So do our kids, despite our best efforts. But we *pay* for premium cable: Should there be time-of-day restrictions, or none at all?

4. What about syndicated reruns?

In TV GUIDE’s study last year, an independent station showing mostly reruns had the most violent over-the-air shows. Should station managers take responsibility? Should syndicators?

5. What about violence on national news? On prime-time magazines? On

local newscasts? On tabloid shows?

At one extreme, showing war, crime, or disaster is a necessary part of keeping citizens informed, young or old; at the other, “news” violence is presented as rowdy entertainment. Who will spell out the difference? Should anyone try?

6. Cartoons were exempted from advisories. Why?

It may seem silly to those of us brought up on Tom & Jerry, but studies have shown that “violent” cartoons can adversely affect the very young.

7. How about the rest of TV? Promos for violent shows and movies? What about music videos?

Again, TV GUIDE’s study showed these were contributors to TV violence.

8. VCRs are in most of our homes today. Are the present “advisories” for movies sufficient to guide parents in renting tapes for home TV viewing?

Parents often debate whether an R-rated film is a “hard R” or a “soft R,” or if a movie rated PG-13 in 1983 is the same as PG-13 in 1983. If TV is looking to clean its house, should the movie biz, too?

9. If advertisers boycott good shows labeled violent, will fewer good shows be made? Could this have a chilling effect on creativity and innovation?

Sure could. That’s why we should think carefully about overly simple, black-and-white solutions. CBS chief Howard Stringer warned—self-servingly but correctly—against turning a “vast wasteland” into a “dull wasteland.”

10. Isn’t the ultimate question, “What can we do about the frightening level of violence in U.S. society, rather than just on TV?” Should we take this moment in our national life to ask not merely what we can take off TV, but what we can put on TV to affirmatively help this cause?

—The Editors

CQ Researcher

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TV Violence

Will Hollywood tone it down — or face regulation?

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN CHILD WATCHES 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school — thanks to the miracle of television. Suggestions of a link between make-believe TV violence and aggression in real life have been raised since television's formative years in the 1950s — and always dismissed by the TV industry. But recently the three major networks signed a first-ever joint statement outlining practices aimed at reducing violence, and the cable, video and film industries are showing signs of cooperating. Some in Congress are encouraged and maintain hopes that change will come about voluntarily, without the need for federal regulation. But anti-violence activists and scholars of television accuse the industry of merely paying lip service to the problem.

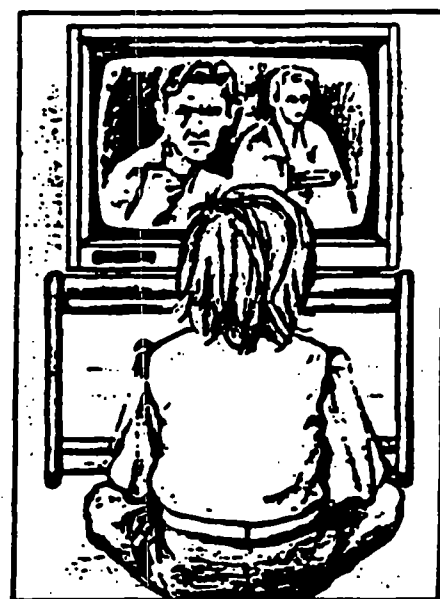


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EDITOR
Sandra Stencel

MANAGING EDITOR
Thomas J. Colvin

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Richard L. Worsnop

STAFF WRITERS
Charles S. Clark
Mary H. Cooper

PRODUCTION EDITOR
Sarah E. Merritt

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Michael M. Taylor

GRAPHICS
Jack Auldridge

PUBLISHED BY
Congressional Quarterly Inc.

CHAIRMAN
Andrew Barnes

VICE CHAIRMAN
Andrew P. Corry

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
Neil Skene

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Robert W. Merry

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
John J. Coyle

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TV Violence

BY CHARLES S. CLARK

THE ISSUES

The young gunshot victim in the Boston hospital emergency room astonished his doctors. He expressed surprise that his wound *actually* hurt.

"I thought, boy, he's really stupid, anybody knows that if you get shot it's going to hurt," recalled Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Smith, associate dean of the Harvard University School of Public Health and author of a recent book on violence. "But it dawned on me that what he sees on television is that when the superhero gets shot in the arm, he uses that arm to hold onto a truck going 85 miles an hour around a corner. He overcomes the driver and shoots a couple of hundred people while he's at it."

With American children glued to the TV for an average of 27 hours each week (in the inner city it's often 11 hours per day), the American Psychological Association (APA) now estimates that a typical child will watch 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school.

But in 1991 alone there were 25,000 murders in the United States. Coming at a time when the homicide rate is rising six times faster than the population, a longstanding debate — does TV violence cause actual violence? — has taken on a new urgency.¹

"There has never been a situation like this," George Gerbner, dean emeritus of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, told a congressional panel in December. Children "start viewing as infants. Most of the stories they hear are not told by the parents, the school, the church, neighbors. They are told by a handful of conglomerates who have something to sell."

The stories they tell in living rooms



across the country are as familiar as Arnold "The Terminator" Schwarzenegger taunting, "Hasta la vista, baby," or Clint "Dirty Harry" Eastwood growling, "Make my day." A full 25 percent of the prime-time shows in the 1992 fall season contained "very violent" material, according to the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV), a Champaign, Ill.-based monitoring and advocacy group. (See list, p. 168.)

The year 1992 set an all-time record for violence in children's shows — 32 violent acts per hour. That compares with six violent acts per hour during prime time, according to researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. The nightly dose of splattering blood, rapes, car wrecks and screaming victims on TV tripled during the 1980s, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. (See story p. 170.)

What sets today's TV apart from the 1960s and, say, the routine machine-gun volleys of Chicago mobsters and FBI agents on "The Untouchables" is the proliferation of formats — cable, pay-per-view, VCRs

— bringing an array of feature-length movies into the home. "The access to violence is different nowadays," says Edward Donnerstein, a professor of communications at the University of California-Santa Barbara. "There's lots of unsupervised TV-watching, and households often have two TVs."

Also new is a trend toward "reality-based" made-for-TV movies and tabloid news and video shows ("Top Cops," "Hard Copy," "A Current Affair" and "I Witness Video") on actual news events, many of them involving re-enactments of real crimes or replays of actual violence captured on tape by amateur camcorder operators. Still other violent ages come from promotions commercials for feature films, many of them R-rated. A New York psychotherapist recently wrote in *McCall's* magazine about how his 3-year-old daughter had trouble sleeping after she was confronted — during a "family" program — by an advertisement showing the terrifying slasher Freddy Krueger from "Nightmare on Elm Street."

Today's high-tech violence — achieved easily with computerized special effects — is aimed at a sophisticated young audience with increasingly high expectations for rapid-paced action. Hence a major source of the problem as measured by anti-violence advocates is the perennial head-smashing on children's cartoons. A national survey of elementary school teachers found that the popular "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" causes confusion between fantasy and reality. "Several children really thought it was OK to use physical violence with other children because [the turtles] do that," a teacher reported.²

Children in the inner city, who dodge bullets on the way home from school, are most affected by the culture of TV violence, says Leonard Eron, a

Prime Time, High Violence

Prime-time TV violence has increased markedly since 1980, when the two most violent shows each registered only 22 incidents of violence per hour. In 1984 and 1992, several programs racked up more than 40 violent incidents per hour, led by the action-packed Young Indiana Jones.

Fall 1980

Erin (22)
Sheriff Lobo (22)
Bj & the Bear (17)
Hart to Hart (17)
The Incredible Hulk (16)
Charlie's Angels (14)
Hill Street Blues (14)
Vegas (13)
Nero Wolfe (11)
Dukes of Hazard (11)

Fall 1984

Hammer (55)
A-Team (54)
V (52)
Matt Houston (40)
Cover-Up (38)
Fall Guy (37)
Airwolf (33)
Hunter (33)
Street Hawk (31)
Scarecrow & Mrs. King (31)

Fall 1992

Young Indiana Jones (60)
Covington Cross (45)
The Hat Squad (42)
Raven (42)
Angel Street (41)
Top Cops (38)
FBI: The Untold Stories (28)
Final Appeal (27)
Secret Service (24)
The Commish (17)

Source: National Coalition on Television Violence

University of Michigan psychology professor and longtime researcher on TV violence. "The child who has been watching programs with primarily aggressive content comes away with the impression that the world is a jungle fraught with dangerous threats, and the only way to survive is to be on the attack."

But the potential impact on young viewers, according to Harvard University developmental psychologist Ronald G. Slaby, goes beyond increasing the so-called aggressor effect (the heightened likelihood of violent behavior). Youngsters also experience a victim effect (increased fearfulness about becoming a victim) and a bystander effect (increased callousness toward violence directed at others).

In Congress and among advocacy groups across the political spectrum, alarmed citizens have taken up TV violence as a mobilizing issue. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a New York City-based liberal group, led a campaign this January to pressure the NBC television network to air a public service announcement about domestic violence during coverage of the Superbowl, citing some

studies asserting that violence increases on the day of the big game. "We are outraged!" showed full-page ads in newspapers across the country placed this February by the Tupelo, Miss.-based American Family Association. The conservative group attacked movies, records, music videos and TV for profanity, nudity, sex, violence and killings, asking, "Is it any wonder violence is epidemic?"

The public appears to agree there's a problem. A Times Mirror poll released March 23 found that 72 percent of Americans think TV entertainment shows contain too much violence. And a 1990 Gallup Poll showed 63 percent agreeing that TV shows that depict crime and violence encourage crime.

TV executives haven't ignored the complaints. This December, NBC, CBS and ABC produced an unprecedented joint statement outlining their policies intended to minimize violence and keep it in proper context (see below). But the networks also reiterated their decades-old rebuttal of the body of research linking TV violence to real violence, and blamed cable and independent stations for most of the violence. "Of

the 10 most-watched programs on television among children and teenagers, eight are situation comedies, which do not contain any violence." Rosalyn Weinman, vice president for standards and practices at NBC, told the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice Dec. 15.

Industry veterans also maintain that the content of programming has been and always will be in the hands of the public. "Television and motion pictures are market-driven," says Del Reisman, president of the Writers Guild of America, West. "If people don't go, the picture won't be made."

Civil libertarians have weighed in seeking to discourage Congress from interfering with First Amendment rights. "TV networks are free to make their own decisions," says Robert Peck, head of the Washington office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). If the television industry is toning down violence "in response to congressional pressure, we're concerned." Finally, defenders of the current TV menu point out that violence has been a central element of human drama for centuries. "Of course there was blood in fairy tales, gore in mythology, murder in Shakespeare," retorts Gerbner. "It is a violent world."

"But, the historical, limited, individually crafted, selectively used and often tragic symbolic violence has been swamped by 'happy violence,' produced on the dramatic assembly line and discharged into the mainstream of our culture. Happy violence shows no pain or tragic consequences. It is a swift and easy dramatic solution to many problems, employed by good characters as much as bad, and always leading to a happy ending."

Whether big changes take place in television violence will hinge largely on the following issues:

Does television violence lead to real violence?

In the mid-1980s, 13-year-old Juan Valdez of Manteca, Calif., confessed to

murdering a friend's father. Having kicked, stabbed, beaten and choked the man with a dog chain, the boy was asked why he also poured salt on the victim's wounds. "Oh, I don't know," he replied. "I just seen it on TV."

The suggested link between small-screen violence and flesh-and-blood violence is perhaps the most examined of sociological questions. It has prompted as many as 3,000 studies in the past four decades in numerous countries, though only a few hundred have added new information.

In a wide range of surveys and field and laboratory studies, researchers have examined the reactions of children to scenes showing a man who gets rewarded with candy if he punches an inflatable "Boho the clown" standup toy. They have compared children's aggressiveness after they have been shown cartoon combat featuring Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker and Tom and Jerry and gentler shows such as "Lassie." They have examined the increase in homicide rates immediately following televised boxing matches. They have examined the increase in suicide rates following TV dramas about suicide. They have examined changes in the homicide rates in communities that suddenly acquired television, as in apartheid-governed South Africa and an isolated Canadian town in the 1970s (scholars christened it "Notel").

The upshot, according to a variety of experts and advocates, is an overwhelming consensus of some causal effect, with measurable increases of 3-15 percent.¹¹ In the words of a recent American Psychological Association (APA) report, "the accumulated research clearly demonstrates a correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior — that is, heavy viewers behave more aggressively than light viewers."¹²

That summation was echoed by a new National Research Council study of violence, which also asserted that violent offenders are characterized by a low IQ, bullying, hyperactivity, low empa-

thy, erratic discipline, neglect, lack of nurturance and "abnormally frequent viewing of violence on television."¹³

University of Washington psychiatrist Brandon S. Centerwall, writing last June in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, reported that the arrival of television in South Africa coincided with a doubling of the murder rate. During the "critical period" of pre-adolescent childhood, he explained, exposure to TV violence has a particularly profound impact: "Whereas infants have an instinctive desire to imitate observed human behavior, they do not possess an instinct for gauging a priori whether a behavior ought to be imitated. They will imitate anything."

The University of Michigan's Leonard Eron, who chairs the APA Commission on Violence and Youth, has spent 36 years researching TV violence. His unique longitudinal studies beginning in 1960 traced the same group of 875 boys and girls from age 8 to age 30, examining crime rates and personal characteristics. He found that those who watched more violent TV were convicted of more serious crimes, were more aggressive under the influence of alcohol and more often used violence to punish their own children, who in turn showed signs of aggressiveness. "What one learns about life from the television screen seems to be transmit-

ted to the next generation," Eron says.

To experts such as Eron, Donnerstein and Slaby, "the scientific debate is over" on the effects of TV violence, and it is time to move on to decide what should be done. Because of quibbles by a few naysayers, who argue that measured effects are too small or the related anti-social behavior too trivial, a solid body of research on violence, the three write, has "for decades been actively ignored, denied, attacked and even misrepresented in presentations to the American public, and popular myths regarding the effects have been perpetuated."¹⁴

To UCLA psychologist Seymour Feshbach, the quibbling is stonewalling. "An unrealistic need for more definitive research," he writes, "may be used as a mechanism for delaying policy change, much as administrators often turn over troublesome issues to committees as a method for delaying action."¹⁵

Robin Crews, a professor at the University of Colorado who heads a group of activist academics called the Peace Studies Association, says, "I don't know anyone in peace studies who doesn't think ads, TV and movies in a very significant way affect violence against women and violence

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Who Are the Killers and Victims?

Characters portrayed as mentally ill are the most violent and most highly victimized group on TV, with 70 percent involved in violence and 20 percent portrayed as killers. Sixty percent of all men and 42 percent of the women are involved in violence.

	Involved in violence	Killers	Killed	For every 10 killers, number killed
Men	60%	11%	5%	4.5
Women	42%	4%	3%	7.5
"Mentally ill"	70%	20%	20%	10.0

Source: Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, Dec. 14, 1992

One Viewer's Violence Is Another Viewer's Action

The definition of violence "will always be a subjective judgment based on individual perceptions and sensibilities," Beth Waxman Bressan, vice president of the CBS Broadcast Group, told the House Crime and Criminal Justice Subcommittee in December.

The fact that one viewer's violence is another's dramatic action has led many in the television industry to complain about the ways anti-violence activists measure the problem. "Accidents, such as a man falling on a banana peel, are counted as acts of violence in the most widely used violence counts," says Horst Stipp, director of social and developmental research at NBC. "Slapstick comedy routines like the Keystone Kops, or even a magic trick directed at an unwilling person is interpreted as a violent act."†

Some activists agree. "Some rate the violence level by the number of violent acts without measuring the intensity and context," notes Marcy Kelly, president of Mediascope, a Los-Angeles-based nonprofit research organization. "Car crashes, for example, shown in the film [about the founding of Mothers Against Drunk Driving] would be counted as violent acts."

When *TV Guide* commissioned the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington to monitor prime-time programs for violence, it used the following definition: "Any deliberate act involving physical force or the use of a weapon in an attempt to achieve a goal, further a cause, stop the action of another, act out an angry impulse, defend oneself from attack, secure a material reward, or intimidate others." Not included were acts of unintended, or accidental violence, violence in sports and violence by animals in nature shows.††

At the National Coalition On Television Violence (NCTV), monitors are trained to count "physically violent hostile acts committed with the intention of hurting another person," according to Research Director Chitra Vemuri. Different weights are assigned to each type of violent act: a slap or a push, for example, is assigned a 1 while a murder or suicide is ranked as a 5. Accidents, verbal assaults and property damage are not included in the counts, and monitors' judgments are regularly tested by a backup monitor.

NCTV's rating system, however, is also subjective. A

modified version of the Motion Picture Association of America film ratings, it assigns films an overall rating that factors in the context of the violence and whether the overall message is pro- or anti-violence. "If one character shoots another, it can be very different from when another [person] shoots that character," says Carole Lieberman, NCTV chairperson. A lot depends on "whether the villain is punished and whether the hero has a glamorized lifestyle."

If the sex and violence are in the story line and are handled appropriately, "we add a 'constructive factor' in our monitoring," says the Rev. Billy A. Melvin, chairman of the Christian group CLEAR-TV. "We know violence, sex and profanity are part of life, but things are getting more graphic. They used to show the sound of a gun and then a dead body. Now they show the bullet entering the head and the brain on the wall."

One Day's TV Violence

	Number of Scenes	Percent of Total
Serious Assaults (excluding use of guns)	389	21
Gunplay	362	20
Isolated punches	273	15
Pushing/dragging	272	15
Menacing threat with weapon	226	12
Slaps	128	7
Deliberate property destruction	95	5
Simple assaults	73	4
All other types	28	1
Total	1,846	100%

Center for Media and Public Affairs, June 1992

At the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, the Cultural Indicators Project produces The Violence Index. It defines TV violence as "clear-cut, unambiguous and overt episodes of physical violence — burning or killing or the threat of hurting and/or killing — in any context," according to Prof. George Gerbner. Two trained coders have to agree that an act is violent. Gerbner's staff takes separate measures of the percentage of programs containing any violence, the rate of violent scenes per program and per hour and the percentage of major characters involved in violence, either as perpetrators or victims or both.

"Violence is a social relationship, a demonstration of power," Gerbner says. "It's who can do what to whom and get away with it. Cartoons are the most controversial and effective demonstrations of power, with humor as the sugar-coating pill."

As for the charge that his project counts slipping on a banana peel as a violent act, "That was invented by an NBC executive 25 years ago," he says.

† "Media Violence: Are Standards for TV and Film Possible?" a panel discussion produced by the Harvard University School of Public Health, May 11, 1992.

†† "Is TV Violence Battering Our Kids?" *TV Guide*, Aug. 22-28, 1992, p. 81.

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by gangs. The burden of proof needs to fall not on those trying to show a positive correlation, but on those who continue to promote violence and use it as entertainment."

Television executives, however, continue to characterize the research on violence as inconclusive. "The issue is so complex," says former 20th-Century Fox Film Corp. Chairman Barry Diller. "It's not appropriate to deal with this in some superficial way.... I don't think we know enough yet."

Networks cite an NBC-sponsored study published in 1982 that found no correlation between television violence and actual violence (though some scientists say the data were misinterpreted). The networks also point to the work of University of Toronto psychologist Jonathan L. Freedman, who argues that the mountain of research on violence has produced unconvincing results. Not only are researchers undecided over whether personal anger is a precondition for violence by TV viewers, he says, but "experimenter demand," or bias, for positive results, may be a factor.

Viewers "watch a mixture of violent, nonviolent, real and fantasy, exciting and boring, news and fiction programs," Freedman writes. "The question is how this mixture of programs affects the children, or more specifically, how the effect of this mixture would differ from one in which the violent programs were omitted."

Other scholars point with irony to the fact that some studies of such "pro-social" TV shows as "Sesame Street" have been found to increase aggressive behavior as much as violent shows. "Encouraging children to watch wholesome television is not the solution to ameliorating conduct problems and would appear on the basis of the available evidence to be counterproductive," wrote one team.

The general public, though willing to accept a link between TV violence and crime, does not believe that TV vi-

olence is the main source of society's horrors. In 1990, a Gallup Poll showed only 1 percent of the public considered television the main cause of crime, while 60 percent blamed drugs and 6 percent a breakdown of family social values. Yale University psychologists Jerome and Dorothy Singer, longtime students of children's TV, argue that the networks themselves contradict the argument that TV has no impact on behavior. A network executive, they note, once testified before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in praise of a child who had seen the Heimlich maneuver demonstrated on TV and went on to use it to save a choking person."

If TV has no effect on its viewers, asked Rep. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., at the hearings he conducted in December, "how do we explain the billions of dollars spent each year on commercial advertising?"

Is the television industry adequately addressing the problem of violence?

On Dec. 11, 1992, four days before a scheduled House field hearing in New York City on TV violence, the three major networks broke decades of precedent and released a joint statement outlining their policies on violence. "Conflict and strife are the essence of drama, and conflict often results in physical or psychological violence," it said. "However, all depictions of violence should be relevant and necessary to the development of character, or to the advancement of theme or plot."

The networks' statement vowed to limit gratuitous, excessive or redundant violence, glamorous depictions of violence and replicable, unique or "ingenious" methods of inflicting pain or injury. Realistic portrayals of violence in children's programs were to be avoided, as were gratuitous depictions of animal abuse. Caution was urged in scenes where children are victims and themes, plots or scenes mix sex and violence. And the networks advocated

showing the consequences of violence and scheduling programs with an eye toward the likely audience.

The statement was amplified at the hearings, during which network standards-and-practices officers explained how it was intended as a model for the rest of the industry that could "work the logjam" that has stymied progress on reducing violence. They also explained how feature films are carefully reviewed before being broadcast on TV.

"We estimate that we demand edits [of] up to 40 percent of the original submissions of R-rated movie commercials," said Christian Hikawa of Capital Cities/ABC. "We will even, on occasion, reject certain films as too violent to advertise." In cartoons, "We do not permit realistic weaponry or imitable gratuitous interpersonal violence. Moral messages in our children's programs are concrete."

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., sponsor of the 1990 law giving the networks an antitrust exemption to permit joint action against violence, applauded "initial steps." "Television can appeal to the best in us or the worst in us," he said. "Television entertainment violence too often does the latter. We have reason to hope for substantial improvement." In addition, Simon's secretary, David Carle, explained that the joint statement, plus an accompanying plan to organize an industry conference on violence, raised hopes that the cable and film industries would join the anti-violence efforts. "It puts us light years ahead of where we were year," he said.

But to many academics and anti-violence activists, the statement was merely a rehash of the current policies, a lot of "pious platitudes, with no teeth," in Gerbner's phrase. "All it is saying is that without these guidelines, the situation would be much worse."

Carole Lieberman, the Beverly Hills psychiatrist who heads the National Coalition on Television Violence, calls the new standards "utter nonsense. Lo

Rating Cartoons for Violence

Children's cartoons are among the most violent shows on television, often exceeding 24 acts of violence per hour and earning high violence ratings from the National Coalition on Television Violence.

	Acts of Violence per hour	NCTV Rating
Very High Violence		
Dark Water (Fox)	109	XV
Cookie's Cartoon Club (WGN)	100	RV
Tom and Jerry Kids (Fox)	88	RV
Dragon Warrior (Syndication)	85	XV
Lunney Tunes (Nickelodeon)	80	RV
G.I. Joe (Syndication)	78	RV
Bugs Bunny and Pals (TNT)	68	RV
Toxic Crusaders (Syndication)	63	RV
Capt. N. & Super Mano Bros. (NBC)	58	RV
Police Academy (Syndication)	58	RV
High Violence		
Wizard of Oz (ABC)	29	RV
DuckTales (Syndication)	29	RV
Beetlejuice (ABC)	28	XV
Popeye (Family Channel)	27	RV
Fantastic Max (Syndication)	26	RV
Dinosaucers (Family Channel)	26	RV
Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers (Syndication)	26	PGV
Cartoon Express (USA)	25	RV
Midnight Patrol (Syndication)	24	RV
Inspector Gadget (Nickelodeon)	24	RV
Low Violence (Highly recommended)		
Camp Candy (NTIC)	8	PG
Babar (HBO)	7	PG
Muppet Babies (CBS)	6	PG
Madeline (Family Channel)	3	G
David the Gnome (Nickelodeon)	2	G
New Kids on the Block (ABC)	1	PG
Davey and Goliath (Syndication)	1	G
Little Women (HBO)	0	PG
Little Koala (Nickelodeon)	0	G
Get Along Gang (Family Channel)	0	G
Maya the Bee (Nickelodeon)	0	G
Lunch Box (Disney Channel)	0	G

Source: National Coalition on Television Violence

whether to show two bullets or one, whether to use blood or not — is a matter of opinion, she says. The women who head the networks' standards and practices departments have no background in research about violence, she adds. "They are puppets who take direction from network superiors."

The University of California's Donnerstein says the networks deserve some credit for putting their policies in writing after years of denying the effects of TV violence. But he emphasizes that the Big Three should no longer absorb all the blame when there are VCRs, pay-per-view services and hundreds of channels of cable TV.

Representatives from the non-network television industries were represented at the House hearing. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) emphasized that its 25-year-old film rating system factors in violence along with sex. Witnesses pointed out that the Video Software Dealers Association offers a pledge to parents to help prevent the sale or rental of R- and X-rated films to minors.

Cable officials described results of a new study the industry had commissioned from George Gerbner, concluding that there is less violence on cable-originated children's TV programming than on the networks. They spoke of technological advantages that allow cable consumers to supervise children's viewing. With the available parental "lock box" — which must be offered by all cable companies under the 1984 cable deregulation act — and "with the advent of 'addressability' technology, parental control has taken a major step forward," said Patricia Falese of Cablevision Systems Corp. The addressable device allows each subscriber to program his own converter to prevent designated shows from being received. "However, the technology requires an actively engaged parent to make the programming decisions involved," she said.

Winton Cox, chairman of the Showtime premium channel, said the

and behold, after all these years, the networks unabashedly flaunt the fact that this is simply a written version of what each standard and practices department has been using all along. It's obvious what they've been doing is not

good enough."

Lieberman, who testified in December that children's minds are being "polluted by the drug of violence," complains that the language is deliberately ambiguous. Each judgment —

movies his channel shows are carefully screened for violence and their contents described in a program guide along with their ratings. "The protections offered to viewers by the subscription process itself," he said, "coupled with the scheduling and communications efforts of the premium networks, safeguard against unwanted exposure."

Critics, however, note that few parents are capable of such detailed control over their children's viewing habits. They disparage the cable industry's study of cable-originated programming by noting that the majority of cable programs are non-original, often-violent feature films. And monitoring has shown time and again, they contend, that what TV executives say is going over the airwaves is not always borne out.

Notwithstanding the vows that violent commercials are not shown during children's programming, *U.S. News & World Report* recently sampled 50 hours of network programming in the late afternoon or early evening. It found 12 questionable ads, including one for an episode of "In the Heat of the Night" in which a troubled girl gives birth to a dead baby. The magazine also sent children into video shops to rent such adult movies as "Basic Instinct" and "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and found that video dealers were not enforcing policies against underage rentals."

And as Marvin Kitman, TV critic for *Newsday*, points out, the new guidelines refer only to new programming and not to old programs made under previous policies. Kitman told a congressional hearing he doesn't trust TV executives to live up to their obligations because they've been saying for years that they have been. "The net-

works are like serial killers," he says. "Their programs are the equivalent of writing with lipstick on the mirrors in our homes: Stop me before I kill again."

Though hopes have been raised by the networks' new promise of cooperativeness, in the academic community mistrust runs deep. "The television industry is not in the business of selling programs to audiences," Centerwall writes. "It is in the business of selling audiences to advertisers. Issues of 'quality' and 'social responsibility' are

do not do any harm. I say, 'There is no question about the harm. The question is how are we going to deal with this problem in a free society?'"

All the players in the violence debate profess respect for First Amendment rights to free speech. But that hasn't prevented huge disagreements over what constitutes censorship and the degree to which the television industry should be free to determine its own treatment of violence. "I don't want to see anything more that looks

like censorship, no whether you call it business decisions or whether you call it taste," *New York* magazine TV critic John Leonard said in a *TV Guide* forum. "I think violence and sex and political dissent are all bed together, and if you start messing with you end up messing with the rest of them."

The National Coalition on Television Violence has created a nine-point proposal for federal regulation of TV violence. It includes:

- a rating system;
- warning "labels" before broadcasts ("The TV show you are about to watch may be hazardous to your psychological and/or physical health due to its highly



Researchers say children's aggressiveness increases measurably after viewing the cartoon violence of Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry and Woody Woodpecker, compared with "Lassie" and similarly gentle shows.

entirely peripheral to the issue of maximizing audience size within a competitive market — and there is no formula more tried and true than violence for reliably generating large audiences."

Are proposed cures for TV violence worse than the disease?

When network executives try to tell Sen. Paul Simon that research on TV violence is inconclusive, he says they "remind me of the Tobacco Institute people who come in here and say they have research that cigarettes

- violent content");
- ingredient labels used in publicity for shows;
- warning labels on TV ads;
- a staff psychiatrist or researcher at each network or cable channel;
- public service announcements about the harmful effects of violence;
- a ban on violent programming offered in government institutions such as jails and hospitals;
- tax breaks for networks, cable channels and production companies that fund research on violence;

William R. Gidycz, Davidson College

• and a public health campaign in schools that addresses violence the way current programs deal with drunk driving.

Proposals for a violence rating system do not impinge on freedom of speech, asserts Centerwall. "It is not reasonable to address the problem of motor vehicle fatalities by calling for a ban on cars," he says. "Instead, we emphasize safety seats, good traffic signs and driver education. Similarly, to address the problem of violence caused by exposure to television, we need to emphasize time-channel locks, program rating systems and education of the public regarding good viewing habits."

Others have proposed that the FCC regulate violence in the same way it polices indecency — using fines and withholding licenses. Harvard's Slaby says that requiring stations and cable networks to reduce violent programming and increase non-violent shows as a condition for license or contract renewal "would not restrict or alter the presentation of any violent program, as protected under the First Amendment. Rather it would promote a broader range of non-violent alternative programs from which viewers would be able to choose."

Such proposals would be welcomed by veteran children's TV writer Gene Ayres, whose Santa Fe, N.M.-based enterprise, Future Wave, prepares scripts for non-violent shows. "When these ideas are brought up inside the industry," he says, "they always roll out the First Amendment as if it's under threat. But they don't ask the difference between what's offered to children and adults. Those who resent [such proposed regulation] don't have responsibility for small children."

Labels, ratings and public service announcements, however, have yet to be embraced by Congress. Simon, as a former journalist, wants to protect the purity of free speech and prefers getting the players to sit

down and talk, says his press aide Carle, in the manner of "an arms control meeting."

Nor do the proposals sit well with longtime children's TV advocate Peggy Charren. "If you tell everybody, 'Hey, this program is going to be terribly violent and scare the wits out of you,' you'll get every teenager in America watching it," she says. "Charren has warned that 'the potential for closing down free speech in this country from ideas — liability for speech — is so horrendous that I'd rather put up with violence on television.'"

There is fear, even among anti-violence activists, that calls for a government crackdown risk encouraging what is seen as the censorship tendencies of the religious right, which, critics say, is more preoccupied with sex in media than with violence. "The religious people are getting so much power," says Lieberman. "We will have censorship some day if that happens."

The Rev. Billy A. Melvin is chairman of Christian Leaders for Responsible

Television (CLEAR-TV), a 1,600-member coalition that uses consumer boycotts of advertisers to pressure networks to reduce sex, violence and profanity. He says such criticism of the religious right masks attempts to censor his group. "We're bringing an idea into the marketplace," he says. "TV is destructive to the quality of life. We can do better and must do better for our children and our children's children."

A solid majority of the public, according to a 1989 *Los Angeles Times* poll, opposes a government crackdown on TV violence. Nearly half the respondents blamed TV audiences for the violence because they create the demand. But 71 percent favored a violence rating. "People do not see programming [sex and violence] as so affecting their lives that they're willing to give up their freedom for it," said Neil Malamuth, a communications professor at the University of Michigan. "It's a basic philosophy of American culture that we want independence and freedom."

BACKGROUND

Early Concerns

The first suspicions that the miracle of television might be a mixed blessing arose soon after the medium's debut as a popular pastime in 1947. The number of youths being arrested, which had declined immediately following World War II, rose dramatically, according to Justice Department statistics, from 31,750 in 1948 to 37,259 in 1951 to 149,806 in 1953 to 234,474 in 1956.

In June 1952, the first congressional hearing ever on violence in radio and television and its impact on children was held by the House Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. In 1954,

Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, opened a series of hearings on the effects of media violence. Following a sample viewing of TV's current cops-and-robbers fare, a British media expert told his panel that such shows would never be broadcast in England. And Clara Logan, president of the National Association for Better Radio and Television, called U.S. TV crime shows "mental poison" to youngsters.

In a pattern that would be repeated in later decades, network officials testified to the importance of industry self-regulation. ABC Vice President Robert Hinckley said he didn't believe TV "is a thing remotely approaching a factor in our problem." Russia and New Zealand, with limited or no TV facilities,

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Chronology

1950s *Rise in youth crime and juvenile delinquency prompts congressional hearings on television violence.*

June 1952

First congressional hearings on violence in radio and television and its impact on children and youth held by House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Subcommittee.

1954

Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn., chairs hearings of Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency on role of TV shows in youth crime. Networks say no link.

1960s *Urban violence prompts more congressional hearings and government funding of research on TV violence.*

1961

Kennedy administration Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton N. Minow tells National Association of Broadcasters that American TV is a "vast wasteland."

1967

University of Pennsylvania begins monitoring television programming.

1969

Formation of Boston-based Foundation to Improve Television.

Sept. 23, 1969

Report of National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence cites TV violence as contributor to society's violence problem.

1970s *Surgeon general's study prompts more congressional hearings; academic studies proliferate; court cases examine liability of TV in cases of real violence.*

1972

Surgeon general's report on violence cites evidence of link between screen violence and aggressive behavior.

1975

National PTA adopts resolution demanding that networks and local TV stations reduce the amount of violence in programs and commercials (reaffirmed in 1989).

1976

American Medical Association's House of Delegates calls TV violence an "environmental hazard."

1979

In *Zamora v. CBS et al*, parents of a Florida 15-year-old convicted of murdering a neighbor unsuccessfully sue all three networks for negligence for failing to prevent him from being incited to imitate TV.

1980s *Reagan-era deregulation gives media free rein; cable TV, VCRs and rise of independent networks diminish power of networks to control violence on TV.*

1980

Founding of National Coalition on Television Violence.

1982

National Institute of Mental Health study says there's a clear consensus on link between TV violence and aggression.

September 1984

Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence says evidence is overwhelming that TV violence contributes to real violence.

1984

American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Children and Television cautions physicians and parents that TV may promote aggression.

1985

American Psychological Association Commission on Youth and Violence notes research showing link between TV violence and real violence.

1990s *Networks issue a joint statement of policies on TV violence, made possible by anitrust exemption passed by Congress. Anti-violence advocates step up pressure.*

1990

Simon-Glickman Television Violence Act gives three major networks an antitrust exemption so they formulate joint policy on violence.

1991

Newton Minow declares: "In 1961, I worried that my children would benefit much from television, but in 1991 I worry that my children will actually be harmed by it."

1992

American Psychological Association study shows research on link to violence is ignored and calls for federal policy to protect society.

Dec. 11, 1992

Days before House hearings, the three major networks release joint violence policy and agree to an industry-wide conference.

Music Videos That Flirt With Violence

With their images of scantily clad women wearing lustful expressions and hurling themselves at nonchalant rock stars, MTV videos send out confusing and possibly harmful messages to the 57.3 million American households that receive MTV.

That's the thinking of Sut Jhally, a communications professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, whose criticisms of the popular videos have brought him face to face with the New York City-based cable network.

Seeking to raise his students' consciousness of the effects of television imagery, Jhally several years ago assembled "Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Rock Video," a 55-minute collection of highlights from 165 rock videos featuring superstar performers such as Motley Crue, Billy Idol and Rod Stewart.

Since students often were sidetracked by the pleasures of the music, Jhally substituted his own somber soundtrack and spliced in dramatic footage from the hit movie "The Accused," namely the scene (based on a true story) showing actress Jodie Foster being gang-raped on a bar-room pinball machine. He also added his own narration and a jarring recitation of statistics: "A woman is raped every six minutes," and "One in four women will be raped in their lifetime."

The result is a disturbing video critique of the way music videos use sex to sell recordings, ultimately dehumanizing women and possibly encouraging violence, according to Jhally.

The majority of MTV videos portray "the dreamworld of the adolescent male," where women are often sex objects or nymphomaniacs, he says. And though outright violence is not common on MTV, it is implied in the whips and the chains and the scenes in which women don't really mean no when they say it, he says. "Because women are presented as thinking only about sex, they don't object when they're handled," he says. "They don't object when they're touched even by someone whom they have just met. The messages don't have to be violent to encourage certain behavior. What is more important is that such images are seen as normal."

Jhally cautions that he is not arguing that MTV causes violence, noting that the roots of violence are complex and multiple. But such videos "help cultivate attitudes that in some instances may lead to certain types of behavior," he says. "The more TV you watch, the more you think the world is like TV. And you tend to act on the stories you have access to."

To promote his compilation, Jhally sent out brochures to colleges around the country. He has sold some 1,300 copies thus far (at \$100 for institutions and \$50 for individuals), with proceeds going to a nonprofit university trust fund.

MTV contends, however, that Jhally has violated its copyright by taking advantage of the "fair use" doctrine. The subsidiary of Viacom International Inc. in 1991 threatened to sue if he didn't destroy all remaining copies of "Dreamworlds." Jhally, in turn, says MTV is ignoring his contention that the video network is threatening legal action to silence substantive criticism of its product. "They are boxed in and hoping it will go away," Jhally says.

Meanwhile, MTV has continued to breed controversy. On Sept. 18, 1991, Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., took to the floor of the Senate to attack it as a reprehensible influence on children. "The central message of most of these music videos is clear," he thundered. "Human happiness and fulfillment are experienced by becoming a sociopath and rejecting all responsibility. If we in this nation continue to sow the images of murder, violence, drug abuse, sadism, arrogance, irreverence, perversion, pornography and aberration before the eyes of millions of children... we should not be surprised if the foundations of society rot away." And a 1992 study by the Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs found more violence on MTV than on the three major TV networks combined.

But at least one study has suggested that overt violence on MTV is a turnoff rather than an allure. When 400 male and female students at Oakland University in Rochester, Minn., were asked by psychologists to watch different music videos, the more violent videos made viewers feel more angry, fearful and aggressive, but less sexual, than less violent videos.[†]

"Our biggest beef with MTV is not that it's more violent or sexually degrading than other channels," says Thomas Radecki, former chairman of the National Coalition On Television Violence, "but that it's all mixed together so a viewer can't pick out a particular time period that you know there's going to be no sexually degrading material."[‡]

A 1992 study of 750 MTV videos by the coalition found that violence had increased in the past six years, averaging 20 acts of violence per hour. More than 60 per cent of the videos contained explicit violence, suggested violence, degrading sexual portrayals, sexually suggestive themes, profanity, smoking, and/or alcohol consumption, the study said. The most violent video: Guns 'N' Roses' "You Could Be Mine."

[†]Christine Hall Hansen and Ronald D. Hansen, "The Influence of Sex and Violence in the Appeal of Rock Music Videos," *Communication Research*, April 1990, p. 212.

[‡]Quoted in *Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 6, 1991.

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have major juvenile delinquency problems, he noted. An ABC script director said that TV adventure stories might even prevent delinquency by serving as "a release" for children's aggression. An FCC official testified against censorship, and a representative of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters said broadcasters had set up a code to help arrange programs addressing the topic of youth crime.

In 1956, one of the earliest studies on TV violence reported on 4-year-olds who were asked to watch an action-packed "Woody Woodpecker" cartoon. They were found to be more likely to hit and harass other kids and break toys than a control group that had watched the more peaceful "Little Red Hen."

The Senate held more hearings about TV's effects in the early 1960s, but the problem of violence reached undeniable crisis proportions following the mid-'60s urban riots in Los Angeles, Newark and elsewhere. It was in 1965, psychiatrist Centerwall observes, after the first of the television generation had become teenagers, that the biggest surge in U.S. homicides occurred.

This was a time when the airwaves were giving kids scenes of "The Three Stooges" poking each other in the eye. "ABC was the major crime center in the country," *Newsday's* Kitman recalls with sarcasm. "They had had much success with such educational TV series on machine gun usage as 'The Untouchables.' They were pioneers in the Bang-You're-Dead school of programming with such ungratuitous, unviolent programs as 'Route 66' and '77 Sunset Strip.'"

Movies also became more graphic. When the groundbreaking "Bonnie and Clyde" was released in 1967, *New Yorker* critic Pauline Kael wrote, "The dirty reality of death — not suggestions but blood and holes — is necessary. It is a kind of violence that says some-

thing to us; it is something that movies must be free to use."

Government Action

The government took action. Along with the American Medical Association, it funded the Cultural Indicators Project at the University of Pennsylvania, which began monitoring television programming for violence. President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a commission to study the roots of urban unrest. It would find that TV watching, while not the specific cause of society's violence, was a contributor. Bills were offered in Congress to prohibit TV violence, study the issue more and offer grants for improving children's TV, but none became law.

In 1969, Sen. John O. Pastore, D-R.I., petitioned the surgeon general to investigate the effects of TV violence. "What is at stake is no less than our most valuable resource — the hearts and minds of our young people," he said. While the top government doctor went to work, the Foundation to Improve Television, a new Boston-based group of business, academic and community leaders, filed a petition in 1970 demanding that the FCC ban "fictional violence and horror" programs at a time when children are likely to view them. The FCC postponed a decision pending the surgeon general's report.

The same year, the foundation also joined with some Washington, D.C., mothers of small children in a lawsuit against CBS Enterprises, the Television Advertising Representatives and the FCC to block broadcast of a TV rerun of the program "Wild, Wild West." An appeals court declined to overturn a lower court's decision denying the petition on the ground that the plaintiffs hadn't exhausted remedies at the FCC. While the foundation "does not expect or hope to become a board of censors," said its presi-

dent, Massachusetts education Commissioner William S. Abbott, it hopes to "further the development of an open, free society by proving that television entertainment is not the private domain of a few people intent on broadcasting for profit at children's expense."

Surgeon General's Report

In 1972, the surgeon general released the five-volume report, "Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence." Its controversial conclusion was that there is a causal effect from TV violence, but primarily in children presupposed to be aggressive. The report prompted Pastore to begin hearings in March.

For years "various groups have pointed to TV violence as a negative influence on human behavior," testified Rep. John M. Murphy, D-N.Y., "but they were lulled into inaction with promises from the industry that would be a diminishment of violence."

As in the 1950s, the networks came out in force, promising to address the problem. CBS/Broadcast Group President John A. Schneider pointed out that the surgeon general had argued for only a small effect in comparison with other causes of violence. "It is not clear what the net effect would be if broadcasters simply changed the quantitative balance between violent and other kinds of shows," he said, "since people and choose the kinds of stimulus material they want — and violent material is very popular." For its part, ABC promised to eliminate cartoons that depend solely on action not comedy, look more carefully at its overall amount of violence and budget \$1 million for four years of research.

The National Association of Broadcasters warned that government regulation would be "dangerous unwise." FCC Chairman Dean Burch declined to regulate violence, saying it was not for the FCC to "make fundamental programming judgments."

Imitating TV Violence?

By the mid-1970s, network TV was racking up new scores on the gore meter. CBS's 1976 gnm two-nighter "Helter Skelter," a drama on the Charles Manson cult killings, drew top ratings. A Canadian royal commission that year argued for a causal link between TV violence and aggression. In 1976, the American Medical Association's House of Delegates passed a resolution saying that TV violence "threatens the health and welfare of young Americans," and committed the AMA to remedial action.

It was in 1979 that two major court cases brought TV violence to the front pages. In *Zamora v. CBS et al.*, the parents of a 15-year-old Florida boy convicted of murdering a neighbor sued all three networks for negligence. They said the industry had failed to prevent their son from being incited to imitate violence on TV. They lost. In Rhode Island, a similar case stemmed from a May 23, 1979, broadcast of "The Tonight Show." A professional stuntman on the show had announced that he would "hang" host Johnny Carson on stage. After a noose was placed around the comedian's neck, he was dropped through a trapdoor and, of course, emerged unharmed. But young Nicholas DeFilippo, apparently viewing the stunt from home, was found dead with a rope around his neck in front of a TV set tuned to NBC. In their suit against NBC for "negligence, failure to warn, product liability and intentional trespass," his parents testified that their son regularly watched Carson. They also lost.

Debate over the issue, however, continued apace. When the R-rated 1978 anti-Vietnam War movie "The Deer Hunter" was shown on national TV, some 29 incidents of people imitating the famous Russian Roulette scene were reported, 26 of which were said to have caused deaths. The youngest victim was 8 years old.

At around that time, the National PTA passed a resolution demanding from networks and local stations "a

reduction in the amount of violence shown on television programs and commercials during the entire day, with particular attention to viewing hours between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m. and weekend morning hours, when impressionable children and young people are most likely to be watching." If self-regulation doesn't work, the group said, it would demand that the FCC establish and enforce regulations limiting violence.

The '80s Explosion

Despite the studies, congressional hearings and court cases, the government did not challenge the networks' demands for self-regulation. What had changed, however, was the arrival of consumer activists and protest groups, which began putting pressure against programs seen as sexist, anti-gay, anti-Christian, or dangerous to national security. By the early 1980s, writes Kathryn C. Montgomery of the Washington-based Center for Media Education, more than 250 advocacy groups were working to change TV, and industry officials declared at a conference that the pressure groups "must now be recognized as a permanent part of the television environment."

Even more important, the explosion of new technologies — cable and VCRs primarily — combined with Reagan-era deregulation to remake the media landscape, in particular, reducing the once-mighty clout of the three networks. Political momentum for a crack-down on violence dissipated. A relaxation of FCC requirements helped increase the amount of violence: A study by the Universities of Pennsylvania and Delaware would show that children's shows that in 1980 featured an average of 18.6 violent acts per hour would by 1990 rack up 26.4 violent acts every hour.

In 1982, the National Institute of

Mental Health produced a follow-up to the 1972 surgeon general's report: "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties." The conclusions were more far-reaching, arguing that TV violence affects all children, not just those predisposed to aggression. ABC responded by saying that TV violence had gone down in recent years. CBS called the government researchers "uncritical" and said the report was put together by individuals "who came to it with publicly identified positions on the role of television in society."

Congressional Action

It was in the mid-1980s that Sen. Paul Simon happened to flick on the TV in an Illinois motel and see an actor being sawed in half with a chainsaw. This led the outraged Simon to introduce the Television Violence Act, which was finally passed in 1990 with backing from the National PTA, the American Psychological Association and the Academy of Pediatrics. The bill granted the three major networks a three-year exemption from the Sherman Antitrust Act so they could pursue a joint agreement on curbing TV violence. It did not require the networks to act, but encouraged them.

"We should not and cannot dictate the content of television programming," said the bill's House sponsor, Rep. Dan Glickman, D-Kan. "An obstacle to a voluntary reduction in violence by the networks is that, in this intensely competitive business, it is commonly held that violence sells. Each network is reluctant to take unilateral steps to reduce violent programming for fear of slipping in the ratings."

The bill was opposed by the ACLU, which called it "a wholly inappropriate and unconstitutional effort to shape the content of American television." Leading the floor opposition was Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif.,

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International
comparison
= how violent in
other countries?

Video Games and Push-Button Aggression

Nothing altered childhood more visibly in the 1980s than the arrival of the age of Nintendo. Children huddling around the TV engrossed in Deadly Towers, Guerrilla War or Mighty Bomb Jack became a familiar sight, fueling the debate over simulated violence and its link to the real thing.

Research on the effects of video games is still in its infancy, but some authorities speculate that pulling triggers in interactive electronics may be more conducive to aggression in children than the passive viewing of a television show. "It's a matter of practice," says Leonard Eron of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. "The more a child practices, the more apt he is to use" the skill he's practicing.

In December 1989, the National Coalition On Television Violence (NCTV) released its monitoring results on 176 Nintendo games. It concluded that 80 percent contained "harmful violence," a substantial increase from several years earlier. The coalition slapped its X rating for extreme violence on 44 percent of the games and cited 27 academic studies of video games, 22 of which found harmful effects. "Players can now launch nuclear missiles, initiate revolutions and toss grenades into Asian villages," read an NCTV statement. "Combat is often one-on-one and exceedingly graphic. The final step takes players beyond the war theme — into the realm of gang warfare. Instead of battles between the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys,' there is now a significant lack of 'good guys.'"

Bill White, director of advertising and public relations at Nintendo's Redmond, Wash., office, says the Japanese man-

ufacturer is very concerned about the issues raised by the coalition. "But the reality is there is no scientific evidence linking video games to aggressive behavior," he says. "Our games feature lots of good versus evil. It's no different from Grimm's fairy tales, which are widely accepted."

Nintendo, which racked up \$4 billion in sales last year, follows standards modeled on the film rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America and the standards and practices principles used at the three major TV networks, White says. The standards prohibit exceptional violence, negative stereotypes and depictions of drugs, alcohol or tobacco.

Video games are violent, says Patricia Marks Greenfield, a psychology professor at the University of California-Los Angeles, because that is what attracts boys, who make up 65 percent of the market.†

Mental health professionals have taken both sides in the debate, many arguing that video games affect individual children differently. Psychiatrist Joseph Cassius of Memphis, Tenn., says the games "can develop a sense of proficiency without fear of conflict. Many children who are afraid to compete with others are not afraid with the video." But Cassius adds, "We are the parents, and we have the power. We can decide that we don't want to reinforce a child's disposition to aggression. But if he's a fairly mellow kid, playing an aggressive game is not going to change his personality."‡

†Quoted in *The Denver Globe*, Feb. 8, 1993.

‡Quoted in *The Washington Post*, Dec. 10, 1990.

Nintendo games rated X/Unfit have "constant, graphic violence," XV games have "high levels of very harmful violence," and RV games require players to "become more violent to win."

Rated X (unfit)

Adventures of Bayou Billy
Castlevania: The Vampire Strikes Back
Deadly Towers
Double Dragon
Gauntlet
Ghosts n' Goblins
Guerrilla War
Kung Fu
Metroid
Mighty Bomb Jack
Ninja Kid
Operation Wolf
Solomon's Key
Spoon
Star Voyager
Strider
Tiger Heli
Wizards & Warriors
Worldrunner

Source: National Coalition on Television Violence

Rated XV

Airwolf
Arzagon
Bionic Commando
Break Thru
Quest
Cobra Command
Evil Empire
Defender
Dragon Power
Freedom Force
Gun Smoke
Iron Tank
Kage
Kid Niki
Life Force
MAGMAX
Mike Tyson's Punch-out!!
Teenage Mutant Ninja
Xenious the Avenger

Rated RV

Athens
Blades of Steel
Bobbie Bubble
Clu Clu Land
Commando
Excitebike
Gotcha!
Gyromaze
Ice Climber
Karnov
Mach Rider
Mario Bros.
Popeye
Rad Racer
Renegade
Skate or Die
Spy Hunter
Robo Warrior
Super Mario Bros.

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who called it "indirect censorship," clear and simple.... Broadcasters understand the tremendous power of

Congress.... The message from 'Big Brother' to TV executives is clear: 'If you don't comply — watch out!' ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Pressuring the FCC

When the networks released their joint standards in December, Sen. Simon predicted that progress in reducing violence should be evident in the fall programming for 1993. But Rep. Schumer, while applauding the move, noted that the networks had rushed out their statement only days before his hearings in order to "have something nice to say." He said the statement alone wouldn't solve the problem and that he would like to see a violence rating system. He plans to consider legislation if the networks won't do it voluntarily.

The networks, however, added in a letter that "the amount of violence on television cannot be adequately addressed unless other segments of the industry join us." Cooperation from the cable and film industries and the independent networks such as Fox is expected to materialize at an industry conference on television violence planned for this summer in Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, in January the National Cable Television Association released results of a new study showing relatively little violence on cable-originated programming. "We believe that the depiction of violence is a legitimate dramatic and journalistic representation of an unavoidable part of human existence," the cable association said. "We also believe that the gratuitous use of violence depicted as an easy and convenient solution

to human problems is harmful to our industry and society."

Critics asked why the study did not examine violence in non-original feature films, to which cable association spokeswoman Peggy Laramie responded that violence in feature films has already been studied and that her group's plan was to "look at what cable brought to the mix." The group has promised a follow-up study.

The Foundation to Improve Television, though dormant since the mid-1970s, was recently reactivated to mount a campaign to get the FCC to crack down on TV violence. Late this March it plans to formally ask the regulatory body to make license renewal contingent on stations showing no programs containing an "excessive amount of dramatized violence" between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. The petition also is expected to ask for advance viewer advisories and visual warning signals during programs with violence, a ban on ads or promotions with dramatized violence, a ratings system for violence and additional guidelines to be developed by the FCC in consultation with the industry.

The foundation argues that countries such as Canada, France, Great Britain, Sweden and Australia have taken action, fining television companies that broadcast violence during children's hours. It is working with business leaders and community groups to provide information and legal advice to send a "powerful message" to the TV industry.

The FCC, which received 79 complaints about violence in 1992 and 85 in 1991, does not police the amount of violence on America's TV stations. A spokesman cites Section 326 of the 1934 Federal Communications Act,

which prohibits censorship. If the FCC were to regulate violence in the way it regulates indecency, he says, Congress would have to pass a statute. "All we can do," said James H. Quello, interim chairman of the FCC, "is mention in a speech that Hollywood and cable and the networks are actually flooding the airwaves with too many violent programs, and some of these kids are starting to imitate the violence they see." Quello applauds the work of Americans for Responsible Television, founded several years ago by Michigan housewife Terry Rakolta, who became offended at vulgarity on the TV show "Married...With Children," and who has also launched a campaign to persuade Congress to limit TV violence.

The National Coalition on Television Violence continues to release its regular rankings of the most violent shows. Its February list tagged the Fox network as the most violent broadcast network, with 11 violent acts per hour. "We were stunned," said Betsy Hoffman, Fox vice president for publicity, noting that the shows the coalition is counting include "America's Most Wanted" and "The Edge." "'America's Most Wanted' is responsible for the capture of 243 fugitives," she says. "It's the one show dedicated to ending violence. 'The Edge' is a parody and satire of violence. The whole claim is ridiculous."

In Santa Fe, the scriptwriters working for Future Wave are nearing the production phase of a non-violent children's cartoon called "Astrocops." It uses a former Los Angeles police officer as a consultant. "The challenge of being non-violent can bring out the best in writers," says Gene Ayres, who's written more than 50 cartoon episodes for such shows as "Scooby Doo" and "The Smurfs." "It's more interesting if you don't do the expected — the slug in the jaw and the hero who's faster on the draw and bigger than the bad guy. We're not asking the industry to kill Bugs Bunny, just to provide an alternative."

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At Issue:

Should the television industry do more to curb depictions of violence?

LEONARD D. ERON

Professor of psychology, University of Michigan
FROM "MEDIA VIOLENCE: ARE STANDARDS FOR TV AND
FILM POSSIBLE?" HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
PANEL DISCUSSION, MAY 11, 1992

a recent summary of over 200 studies, published in 1990, offers convincing evidence that the observation of violence, as seen in standard everyday television entertainment, does affect the aggressive behavior of the viewer...

What can be done? As soon as the suggestion for action comes up, the TV industry raises the issue of censorship, violation of First Amendment rights and abrogation of the Constitution. For many years now Western European countries have monitored TV and films and have not permitted the showing of excess violence, especially during child viewing hours. I have never heard of any complaints by citizens in those democratic countries that their rights have been violated. But in the U.S., youth violence is a public health problem, so designated by the Centers for Disease Control (as Prevention)... No one is claiming that TV violence is the sole cause of the epidemic. However, it is certainly *one* of the causes, and one which we at least can do something about. Is it too much to ask the industry to police itself? It has done so before with some success.

I don't favor censorship and I am jealous of my First Amendment rights. But I don't think some serious self-regulation and monitoring by the TV and film industry is a threat to our constitutional rights.

It would be appropriate for the FCC to require stations to document what they have done to lower the violence in their programming before their licenses are renewed...

In the spring [of 1992] we had to face the implications of the uncontrolled violence in Los Angeles. TV cannot escape its share of the responsibility for this outburst. We know that children living in the inner city watch more TV than other children. Children living in the inner city are increasingly surrounded by violence — at home, in the neighborhood, on the way to and from school. They are constantly dodging bullets, cowering in hallways, hiding under tables, because the streets are so dangerous from drive-by shootings and other violence. They spend more and more time indoors watching TV.

And what do they see on TV? More violence. This validates what the children have seen in the neighborhood, it makes violence normative — everyone's doing it, not just in their neighborhood but all over. TV represents violence as an appropriate way to solve interpersonal problems, to get what you want out of life, avenge slights and insults and make up for perceived injustices

DE RENZI

President, National Cable Television Association, Washington, D.C.
FROM "MEDIA VIOLENCE: ARE STANDARDS FOR TV AND
FILM POSSIBLE?" HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
PANEL DISCUSSION, MAY 11, 1992

the only way to significantly reduce violence, or the threat of violence, in storytelling is for networks and cable to simply not order series or special films which are, virtually by definition, inherently violent, such as action-adventure, crime, futuristic melodrama, etc., and use instead the softer genres, such as we see on the networks now, shows such as *Homefront*, *Sisters*, *Northern Exposure*, and so on. Not a very realistic possibility, however.

Networks, as you know, follow. They do not lead. Networks react to social change and community standards. I know. I have served as a story editor on many weekly series. Story editors scan the headlines, searching for ways to paraphrase the truth and put it into fictional form...

I believe that additional guidelines for violence should not be called for because they will simply reduce the actual sights of some violence but not the threatening storytelling that builds to it, and therefore such guidelines would be a crumb thrown to those who believe in a causal relationship.

I believe that writers should continue to tell the stories of our time. Abuse in the home toward children, or parents, or grandparents is out of the closet now, thanks to its dramatization on television. Child custody struggles, in which the losing parent literally kidnaps a child, at last is before the American public as the serious social problem that it is. Fictional television has seen this dramatized frequently. Gay bashing has found its way from the dark alleys of our cities to the films of both weekly series and movies-of-the-week. The violence on the home screen follows the violence in our lives.

We've lived with Broadcast Standards for 40 years, fighting the departments frequently, losing most of the fights, but reacting positively as networks followed changes in community standards from the days of no "hells" and no "damns" to today's relatively explicit language, frank relationships and open dramatizations of dysfunctional families. Writers want to involve audiences in our stories. Writers are family people, too. We're parents and children and siblings and grandparents and grandchildren. We are community-minded and we care deeply about the world around us. We are as shocked and concerned by what is happening on our streets, on our schoolyards, in our classrooms and in our homes, as any of you. We agree on very little but we do agree on fundamentals, such as freedom of expression and freedom from censorship, the official kind and the unofficial kind which induces self-censorship.

TV News: Violence Is Part of Our World Tonight

"If it bleeds, it leads," goes the cynics' view of television news. But now stations that start off newscasts with generous doses of gore and mayhem are being held responsible for their role in feeding Americans their steady diet of television violence.

The issue was dramatized in January after a North Lauderdale, Fla., station aired footage of a man shooting his ex-wife at their daughter's grave. Emilio Nunez's deadly act was taped by a stunned camera crew for the Spanish-language station, which had been alerted to a possible confrontation. Stations around the country aired the shooting, and many were taken to task.

Los Angeles Times TV critic Howard Rosenberg slammed the use of the "unnecessary" and "valueless" footage, even wondering whether the station had set up the confrontation. "The self-serving hucksters snapped it up, capitalizing on tragedy for the sake of creating unforgettable ghastly TV," Rosenberg wrote.† He noted that Channel 2 in Los Angeles, whose news director reportedly urges his editorial staff to "scare viewers to death," had used the arrest of Nunez as a pretext for rebroadcasting the tape a few days later.

At Los Angeles Channel 5, News Director Warren Cerghino defended the footage, saying it aptly illustrated "unfortunate domestic violence and emotion escalating to such a violent level." The news producer at LA's Channel 9 justified the airing by saying it was part of the "ethical debate" on whether such visuals should be shown. Other news executives noted that the scene wasn't gory and didn't show blood or contorted faces. But some stations that used the tape later apologized.

In an era when real-life violence — be it the Persian Gulf War or the police beating of motorist Rodney King — are commonly caught by cameras, viewers' tolerance for grisly sights is clearly being expanded. "But a Gulf war is only once in a while," notes University of Pennsylvania communications Professor George Gerbner. "The

everyday crime the media cover is more graphic and appeals to the sensational and the spectacular. It adds to the general sense of vulnerability" among the population.

Some observers feel that local news coverage of violence often glorifies the bad guys. "When a cop gets blown away," complains *Newsday* TV critic Marvin Kitman, "his killer gets more coverage than the cop's funeral on TV news."

Many critics of TV violence, however, make clear distinctions between entertainment and news. "There are people who say, 'Well, if you are going to take off violence [from television], then you are going to have to remove Bosnia from the television news,'" Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., told the Senate last June. "The reality is that violence on the news does not glamorize violence. Entertainment violence glamorizes violence."

"News violence is enough and should be handled case by case," says Edward Donnerstein, a professor of communications at the University of California-Santa Barbara. "You don't want to sanitize the world; there are horrors out there."

"As soon as you try to draw lines" about what should be shown on TV, says Robert Peck of the American Civil Liberties Union, "you affect news and information that people need to have."

Faced with the twin obligations of reporting the truth and keeping ratings high, TV news departments are unlikely to establish formal rules about reducing violence. But producers with dramatic footage have been known to finesse the problem with an advance warning. When circus tightrope walker Karl Wallenda plunged to his death in 1978, news anchors didn't prevent viewers from witnessing the event. But many anchors somberly warned, "Some of you may not wish to watch."

† *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 22, 1993.

In Los Angeles, the nonprofit group Mediascope is putting on workshops, seminars and public education campaigns — often on location in Hollywood studios — to promote a more accurate and balanced depiction of violence in films and TV. The group has received a \$675,000 grant from the Carnegie Corp. of New York City, as well as a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Mediascope is also working with film schools to encourage a code of ethics

and promoting the need for research on the effects of violence that is up-to-date and practical. "The research community sees the entertainment media as negative," says Mediascope President Marcy Kelly. "The media dismiss the research. There's a need to come together and bridge the gap." Much of modern TV violence is highly unrealistic, she adds. "There are no consequences. You don't see children who've lost their parents, parents who've lost their children, people who can't walk, who've lost

their homes because of nine months spent recuperating. You just see this unbelievable aggression, and then they cut to the hero at a cocktail party!"

"The whole issue is very circular," she continues. "The writer will say, 'That's what the producer wants me to write.' The producer will say, 'That's what the network wants.' The network will say, 'That's what the advertisers want.' The advertisers will say, 'That's what the public wants.' The question is, how can we break the circle?"

OUTLOOK

What Can Be Done?

If television had never been invented, society would have been spared 10,000 homicides, 70,000 rapes and 700,000 assaults, hypothesizes psychiatrist Centerwall.

On the other hand, "By having television, entertainment with adequate sex and violence," argues Jib Fowles, a University of Houston-Clear Lake media studies professor, "Americans are nightly able to empty their subconscious; aggressive fantasies produce tranquil minds."

The reason TV viewers gawk at faked violence like passersby rubbernecking at an auto wreck is because "males are taught a lot of things to embrace — be strong, not to feel, see power at all costs, win/lose, be a soldier — they're all presented as appropriate male attitudes," says peace studies Professor Crews. "Most of it is nurture, not nature. It's a social reality that is constructed."

"The male demand for violent entertainment comes about not because males innately want to see violence, but because these shows put forth strong male role models," says Harvard's Prothrow-Stith. "Men are looking for heroes. They look for men who are effective. And in watching television, particularly if there's not a father in the home, you find the male heroes are presented in terms of violent action."

Actually, violence doesn't seem so popular if you look at the top-rated shows,* which are predominantly sit-

coms, says Gerbner. But, he adds, "Violence travels well, unlike humor," which means that Hollywood is likely to continue producing more violence as its products are marketed overseas because it needs no translation.

Activists at Harvard and elsewhere have argued that the movement against TV violence should take a cue from the anti-smoking, anti-drunken-driving and environmental movements, all of which have had success in winning cooperation from scriptwriters, producers and directors in Hollywood to highlight their causes. But creative people wield limited power in the entertainment industry. Hollywood writer and actor Ben Stein says: "I remember so many times coming [to the Warner Bros. lot] and pitching [scripts to executives]. Pitching and thinking, 'I've got to sell this, no matter what, I have to sell this, I've just got to sell this. It doesn't matter. Ask me to put in a scene of torturing nuns, I'll do it. I'll do anything to make this sale.'"

Alternatives for Parents

On a personal level, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that parents limit children's TV viewing to one to two hours per day. The National PTA advises parents to watch children's favorite programs as well as the news with their children, discuss the violence, explain how violence is faked on entertainment shows and encourage children to watch programs with characters who cooperate with each other rather than fight.

Advice columnist Ann Landers recently recommended, when a reader complained about sex and violence on TV, that viewers call local stations with their complaints. "I, too, deplore the garbage on TV, but it is vitally important that we not interfere with the rights of those who like it," she wrote. "Written protests to the sponsors are effective, but the most immediate censor is simply to use the off button."

Beth Waxman Bressan, CBS Broadcast Group vice president, recently testified that her network receives upwards of 600,000 pieces of mail each year but that less than 1 percent complain about violence. On the other hand, at least one sponsor of cable programming, Time-Life Books, recently withdrew its ad for a series of books on crime featuring serial killers Ted Bundy, Charles Manson and Richard Speck because of viewer complaints about poor taste.

"If I were a parent or a PTA group, I'd pick up the phone and call the local TV station," says Doug Wills, a spokesman for the National Association of Broadcasters. "The programming manager there doesn't want to alienate his audience, and it is in his interest to be responsive for competitiveness reasons." In general, Wills adds, "with some exceptions, such as the three recent movies on the Army Fisher case that made executives uncomfortable, most of television meets the viewing needs of the public and doesn't set out to offend anyone."

TV critic Kitman says the solution to TV violence is for the networks to use their power to produce hour-long Michael Jackson or Madonna specials with the message that "only creeps carry guns."

More important, says children's activist Peggy Charren, "we need public policy to focus on the root causes of violence in this country. Poverty is what you fix if you want to do something about violence."

"Other countries find us strange," says Donnerstein. "Violence is as American as apple pie. But sex and profanity upset people the most. There's an outcry if you show partial nudity, but viewers don't care if people get hacked up."

The best chance for a federal effort against TV violence would come if the issue were taken up by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton or a group like the Children's Defense Fund, says scriptwriter Ayres. "A heavy-

*The top 20 network prime-time shows during the week of March 8, according to the A.C. Nielsen Co., were: "Home Improvement," "60 Minutes," "Men Don't Tell," "Coach," "Roseanne," "PrimeTime Live," "Rescue 911," "Murder, She Wrote," "Seinfeld," "Cheers," "20/20," "Northern Exposure," "Murphy Brown," "Full House," "Dr. Quinn," "Medicine Woman," "Unsolved Mysteries," "People's Choice Awards," "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "The Simpsons" and "Dateline."

weight political lobby would be needed because the industry will fight tooth and nail."

In November, then-President-elect Clinton told *TV Guide* that makers of films and TV programs "could, without undermining their artistic integrity, have a major new impact on the way people view the world.... There's no question the cumulative impact of this banalization of sex and violence in the popular culture is a net negative for America."¹⁰

"When I first came to Los Angeles and warned of the effects of TV violence," says the NCTV's Lieberman, "I thought they'd say 'Oh, OK, we'll fix it.' But 10 years later, I'm still beating my head against the wall. The people here are literally getting away with murder."

Notes

¹ Quoted in *TV Guide*, "Is Violence Battering Our Kids?" Aug. 22-28, 1992, p. 8. Prothlow-Smith's book, *Deadly Consequences: How Violence Is Destroying Our Teenage Population*, was published in 1991.

² Figures taken from a special report on violence in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 10, 1992.

³ Gerbner testified Dec. 15, 1992, at hearings

on TV violence held by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice.

⁴ Ron Taffel, "Making Your Child Feel Safe in a Scary World," *McCall's*, February 1993, p. 60.

⁵ See Nancy Carlsson-Paige and Diane E. Levin, "The Subversion of Healthy Development and Play: Teachers' Reactions to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," *Day Care and Early Education*, winter 1991.

⁶ Testimony before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, March 1992.

⁷ Testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice, Dec. 15, 1992.

⁸ Speaking in a panel discussion on TV violence at the Harvard School of Public Health, May 11, 1992, published by *Mediascope*, January 1993.

⁹ Carl M. Cannon, "Violent Verdict: Connecting TV and Real-Life Aggression," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 19, 1989.

¹⁰ Stuart Oskamp (ed.), *Television as a Social Issue*, (1988), p. 190.

¹¹ Quoted in *TV Guide*, op. cit.

¹² Albert J. Reiss Jr. and Jeffrey A. Roth, editors, *Understanding and Preventing Violence*, (1993) p. 7.

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¹⁴ Oskamp, op. cit., p. 199.

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¹⁷ Kenneth D. Gadow and Joyce Sprafkin, "Field Experiments of Television Violence with Children: Evidence for an Environmental Hazard?" *Pediatrics*, March 3, 1989, p. 399.

¹⁸ Oskamp, op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁹ *U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 1, 1993, p. 65.

²⁰ *Journal of the American Medical Association*, op. cit.

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²⁴ Quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 24, 1989.

²⁵ Quoted in *Newsweek*, April 1, 1991, p. 52.

²⁶ Robert Wharton and Frederick Mandell, "Violence on Television and Imitative Behavior," *Pediatrics*, June 1985, p. 1121.

²⁷ Kathryn C. Montgomery, *Target: Prime Time: Advocacy Groups and the Struggle Over Entertainment Television*, (1989) p. 6.

²⁸ *The Washington Post*, Jan. 29, 1990.

²⁹ Quoted in *Newsweek*, Dec. 21, 1992.

³⁰ Quoted by The Associated Press, March 12, 1993.

³¹ J.B. Fowles, *Why Viewers Watch: A Reappraisal of Television's Effects*, (1992) p. 244.

³² Harvard panel, op. cit.

³³ Panel discussion directed by Independent Feature Project/West, Oct. 20, 1990, published by *Mediascope*, Oct. 1992.

³⁴ Ann Landers column, Feb. 20, 1993.

³⁵ Harvard panel discussion, op. cit.

³⁶ Quoted in *The Washington Post*, Nov. 13, 1992.

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And now, a word from a Mother

THE WASHINGTON POST

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 1993

**Forget the First Amendment.
When it Comes to TV Violence,
All I Care About
Is Protecting My Kids.**

By Megan Rosenfeld
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two weeks ago I was sent to the Capitol Hill press conference at which the major networks announced their new plan to label violent television shows. It was a last-minute assignment, and I grabbed the only note-pad I could find in the house. Once I sat down in the crowded and tension-filled hearing room in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, I turned to the top page of the note pad and found a drawing by my 9-year-old son—of a beautifully detailed weapon carefully labeled "infinity war mutant bounty gun."

So, guys, I said to myself as I leaned back and looked at the suits lined up at the microphone, tell me about violence on TV.

There has been a lot of moaning in reaction to these labels. One side, the anti-violence lobby, says they're a pthalative, a crumb tossed at the mob to stall legislators from actually regulating the airwaves, a license to produce even more violence as long as it's labeled. The other side, the so-called "creative community" and the civil liberties dogmatists, is crying about artistic freedom and the First Amendment. Labeling, they say, is the first step down the slippery slope of censorship. "I think we are being enormously scapegoated," producer Dick Wolf ("Law & Order") told this newspaper. "If you listen to Congress, it's [as if] television is the root of all social ills in this country."

Oh, please. I find myself curiously unmoved by television producers covering themselves with a First

Amendment flag. As far as I'm concerned, they have abdicated their rights to freedom of speech by being so resolutely unconcerned about the impact of what they put on television. That includes the 100,000 acts of violence, ranging from a "measuring threat with a weapon" (226 examples in one day's monitoring by the Center for Media and Public Affairs) to "serious assaults excluding use of guns" (389 incidents), that the average child will have watched by the end of elementary school. Too often, television is not about pro-

tecting speech, it is about protecting a business, and pretending otherwise is foolish.

The much-lauded Steven Bochco is offering a new series this fall on ABC, "NYPD Blue," which, it has been widely predicted, will "push the edge of the envelope" of profanity, nudity and artistic violence. This show is often cited as the work of a highly creative mind that could be hindered by the imposition of taste standards, even the puny one of labeling. I'm sure that Bochco will be just artistic as all get-out, but what happens when he gets bored with the show, as

See WOLFE, C3, C4, 1

TV

VIOLENCE. From G1

he did with "L.A. Law," and leaves it in the hands of lesser mortals? We'll be left with a flabby envelope and no art.

We have an unfortunate tradition in this country of putting the "rights" of adults before the needs of children. You can see that demonstrated every day in courthouses, classrooms and social work bureaucracies everywhere. Television is no exception: Every socially useful change that has been made in recent years—like the elimination of cigarette and liquor advertising or identifying the early evening hours for "family" viewing—has been forced down the networks' throats. Somehow, I am not convinced that they want to use the First Amendment in my family's interest.

"The whole issue is very circular," Marcy Kelly, president of a watchdog and education group based in Los Angeles called Mediascope, told

Let's segregate all the violent shows on one channel—the V Network. If that works, we can move on to the Stupid Sitcom Network, the Humiliating Game Show Channel and the Grotesque Talk Show Broadcasting System.

CQ Researcher. "The writer will say, 'That's what the producer wants me to write.' The producer will say, 'That's what the network wants.' The network will say, 'That's what the advertisers want.' The advertisers will say, 'That's what the public wants.' The question is, how can we break the circle?"

Well, I have a few ideas.

911" and "Unsolved Mysteries"—that could conceivably be classified as violent. Most of the top-rated shows are sitcoms or newsmagazines—in other words, just programs that consist of tasteless jokes, sexual and racial stereotypes, and the occasional thoughtful, well-researched expose. But not violence.

A Times-Mirror survey of more than 1,500 adults released last March found that 80 percent thought that television violence—whether on the networks or cable—was harmful to society, compared with 64 percent who thought so in 1983. The number who thought it was "very harmful" (as opposed to just plain harmful) increased from 26 percent to 47 percent. The most frequent viewers of violent programs were those under the age of 30.

Do people watch violent shows because they want violence or because that is what's there? If television producers really confronted the issue, they would have to admit that throwing another fistfight or choke hold into the script is an easy way to create tension and drama, while doing it with words and nonviolent plot twists is much harder. I suspect it is the "creative community" that is addicted to violence, not the viewers.

One way to find out how big the audience for violence really is would be to segregate all the violent shows onto one channel—the V Network, we'll call it—which would be available to cable subscribers, for a fee. If that works we can move on to the Stupid Sitcom Network, the Humiliating Game Show Channel and the Grotesque Talk Show Broadcasting System, and make things a lot easier for the consumer.

At the press conference, it was interesting to hear the big network cheeses refer to their own children as they pledged to serve up more programming they are not ashamed of. Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), who is the anti-violence point man on this issue, also spoke about a CBS meeting he'd been told about in which one executive asked the others, "Would you like our children to be watching these programs?" Howard Stringer (CBS) mentioned his 5-month-old and Warren Littlefield (NBC) his three children, to demonstrate how genuine their concern is about the quality of television. Funny how people feel differently when it's their own kids.

Whenever I interview people in the film or television business I always ask them if they restrict or monitor their child's television watching. They always say they do maybe just to seem like better par-

And when asked about the question of violence on television, he said, "There's nothing we can do about it except continue to be critical. To protect our children we must be hypocrites."

I guess that's me.
I am not a person who wants to eradicate all trash on television. Nor

the day that my kids don't ask, "Can I watch TV?" And then, "Why not?"

I could use some help. I feel as if I spend too much time as a parent censoring and saying no, and fighting off the unceasing lures thrown out by the Howard Stringers of the world.

Network executives sold advertising on the premise that commercials would prod us lowly viewers to buy products, but refused to admit that the programs surrounding the commercials could possibly influence anyone to do anything.

do I think Looney Tunes should be listed among the most violent shows, as the National Coalition on Television Violence does. I have friends, and even relatives, who write for and act on television, and other friends who would love to do so. I am happy to assert my responsibility as a parent and issue dictums that make my children think I am Cruella de Vil. I know that little boys will draw pictures of guns, and always have drawn pictures of guns, regardless of how much violence they see on television. And I do not think a television show causes someone to go out and commit murder; it just gives them an excuse after the fact.

But I admit it: If there were such a thing as the Taste Police, I would want to be the chief. We all think we know what's best, especially when it comes to our children. And tell me, have the presidents of NBC, CBS, ABC and the schlock-specialists at Fox Broadcasting done such a great job of looking out for our interests?

I have always believed that television is a tool you should teach your children to master, not avoid, because it is unavoidable. Throwing it out is a solution, but that doesn't teach children to make choices. In my household, we don't allow television on school nights, for example, and we try to limit it at other times. But the pull of the black box in the corner is always there, and rare is

A technological aid—a device that would allow me to block out programs I expect to be inappropriate—fills me with a combination of dread and curiosity. I will never buy those 500 channels we are being promised (aren't you glad some of our best minds are working on giving us that television breakthrough instead of conquering world hunger?). But spending some of my rare non-working hours programming a week's worth of television blockage is not my idea of quality time.

A call to Circuit City elicited the information that I can now buy a television with a "parent control capability." I could program when it would turn on and off, and block out some channels. This would cost me only between \$600 and \$700. Perhaps Dick Wolf or Steven Bochco would like to buy me one.

My stepson told me someone has invented a bicycle-powered television, which would certainly cut down on viewing in our household. I'm not sure it really deals with the violence question, however.

So, for now, I'll take the labels. I would prefer that the creators of television would produce less violence (and less garbage in general), but perhaps this initiative will help make that happen. It is, at least, an acknowledgment that what they put on the air really does affect human life, and for that I am grateful. Previously, network executives sold advertising on the premise that commercials would prod us lowly viewers to buy products, but refused to admit that the programs surrounding the commercials could possibly influence anyone to do anything.

I hope the industry, including the cable operators and independent producers who refused to sign on to the two-year labeling experiment, will take seriously the companion plan to sensitize producers, writers and program developers to violence. The objective is to do for violence what they did for seat belts, drug use and cigarette and alcohol consumption—glamorize the good stuff and downplay the bad.

There is a real possibility that nothing will change. In that case I will have no choice. I will have to take the television out and throw a bomb at it. I sure hope nobody else will be hit by the flying debris.

RECENT COMMENTS ON TELEVISION VIOLENCE as of July 1992

"Violence: Merely Entertaining or Mainly Evil?" Dr. Carole Lieberman, Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1992

"We readily accept that children learn the alphabet from 'Sesame Street,' why can't we accept that they learn the ABCs of murder and mayhem from gratuitously violent entertainment?"

"Violence sells. So does crack cocaine. Does that make it O.K.?"

"Individual writers, producers and executives feel overwhelmed by the concept that what they write, produce or choose to air could change the lives of millions of people, so they deny the power of their work to avoid a responsibility they often feel ill-equipped to handle?"

"Television and Violence: The Scale of the Problem and Where to Go from Here." Dr. Brandon S. Centerwall, The Journal of the American Medical Association, June 10, 1992

"In light of recent research findings, in 1990 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement: Pediatricians should advise parents to limit their children's television viewing to one to two hours per day."

"Whereas infants have instinctive desire to imitate observed human behavior, they do not possess an instinct for gauging a priori whether a behavior ought to be imitated. They will imitate anything, including behaviors that most adults would regard as destructive and antisocial."

"...up through ages three and four years, many children are unable to distinguish fact from fantasy in television programs and remain unable to do so despite adult coaching. In the minds of such young children, television is a source of entirely factual information regarding how the world works."

"In a national opinion poll, 43 percent of adult Americans affirm that television violence 'plays a part in making America a violent society,' and an additional 37 percent find the thesis at least plausible (only 16 percent frankly disbelieve the proposition.)"

"...the epidemiologic evidence indicates that if, hypothetically, television technology had never been developed, there would be 10,000 fewer homicides each year in the United States, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults."

"Issues of 'quality' and 'social responsibility' are entirely peripheral to the issue of maximizing audience size within a competitive market-and there is no formula more tried and true than violence for reliably generating large audiences that can be sold to advertisers."

"Children's exposure to television and television violence should become part of the public health agenda, along with safety seats, bicycle helmets, immunizations and good nutrition."

Fateful Choices, Fred M. Hechinger, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992

"It is estimated by the time youngsters graduate from high school, many of them will have watched television 22,000 hours, compared to only half that number spent in school. By eighteen, young people will have been exposed to as many as 18,000 televised murders and 800 suicides."

An average of 80.3 percent of all television programs contain violent acts, and a typical program includes 5.21 such incidents.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith, an assistant dean in Harvard's School of Public Health, "calls for a movement like that fueling the anti-smoking and drunk driving campaigns ... Television and movies should portray the pain and suffering, the bad outcomes of violence."

[MORE]

**"Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society,"
American Psychological Association (APA), 1992**

The rate of violence on prime-time television is about five to six incidents per hour, whereas the rate of violence on children's Saturday morning programs is 20 to 25 acts per hour.

The average child witnesses 8,000 murders by the time he/she graduates from elementary school and witnesses more than 100,000 assorted acts of violence.

"Many of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in our society are also the heaviest users of television, in part because television is a default option used when other activities are not available."

**"Does Media Violence Beget the Real Thing?" Jeremy Iggers, Minneapolis
Star Tribune, June 13, 1992**

Almost twenty years ago, sociologist Rose Goldsen of the University of Pennsylvania warned that America is engaged in the world's first coast-to-coast experiment in behavior modification, and no one can foretell what the consequences will be.

"...(Rose Goldsen) wrote an essay in which she argued that viewers of television violence experienced a pattern of alternating stimulation and abrupt interruption (caused by commercials) that closely resembles the desensitization techniques used by psychologists to modify behavior. After repeated treatments with these techniques, said Goldsen, even the strongest psychological connections can be broken down."

"Contemporary heroes and villains are different The enemy is usually totally vicious and depraved, and in some cases not human. The hero's job is not to bring the villain to justice, but rather to destroy him or it."

"In a world where the violence that looks real is really just make-believe, and the real violence is made to look like a game, can we expect people to have a serious understanding of the meaning of violence?"

**"TV, Film Link to Reality of Violence," Diego Ribadeneira, The Boston Globe,
May 12, 1992**

"Any form of legal restriction should not be attempted and would not be attempted and would not work because of the threat it would pose for the First Amendment."
— Edward Donnerstein, a professor in the department of communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

"No one is claiming that television violence is the sole cause of this epidemic" of youth violence, said Leonard D. Eron, a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois in Chicago. "However, it is one of the causes and it is one that something can be done about. Is it too much to ask the television industry to police itself?"

**"Just Another Murder, Just Another Show," Judy Mann, The Washington Post,
May 13, 1992**

"In the report, Deborah Prothrow-Stith, an assistant dean in Harvard's School of Public Health, told of a 13-year-old who was hospitalized for a gunshot wound: 'He was surprised because it hurt.'"

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

BACKGROUNDER/BACKGROUNDER/BACKGROUNDER/BACKGROUNDER
BACKGROUNDER
BACKGROUNDER: TELEVISION VIOLENCE
BACKGROUNDER
BACKGROUNDER/BACKGROUNDER/BACKGROUNDER/BACKGROUNDER

Office of U.S. Senator Paul Simon

Illinois

ALMANAC. More than 96 percent of American homes have at least one television set. Television is a major source of information and influence in children's lives. The average child spends more time watching television than in the classroom. • • • According to the Nielsen Index the average American child watches 18,000 television murders before he or she graduates from high school. • • • An average child between the ages of 2 and 11 now views 27.3 hours of television per week. By age 16, he or she has watched over 20,000 hours of television.

RESEARCH. The report of the U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence concludes that "evidence is becoming overwhelming that, just as witnessing violence in the home may contribute to normal adults and children learning and acting out violent behavior, violence on television...may contribute to the same result."

Drs. Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesmann of the University of Illinois-Chicago and other researchers have found that children with aggressive tendencies tend to watch violent programs and are more likely to believe that TV violence mirrors real life.

In 1982, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop reported there is a causal correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior. The National Institute of Mental Health, which had examined the issue for the Surgeon General, provided testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice in 1984 that a "sizeable number of studies did support the inference that there was a causal connection between the viewing of televised violence and later aggressive behaviors."

Research has shown three possible effects of viewing television violence: (1) Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others; (2) They may be more fearful of the world around them; and (3) They may be more likely to behave in an aggressive or harmful way toward others. -- John P. Murray and Barbara Lonnberg, "Violence on TV: Do Children Learn From It?"

The American Academy of Pediatrics' Policy Statement on Children, Adolescents, and Television finds that "repeated exposure to televised violence promotes a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice." -- June, 1985.

"In one study, children who had watched a violent television program were found to be more likely to hurt another child than

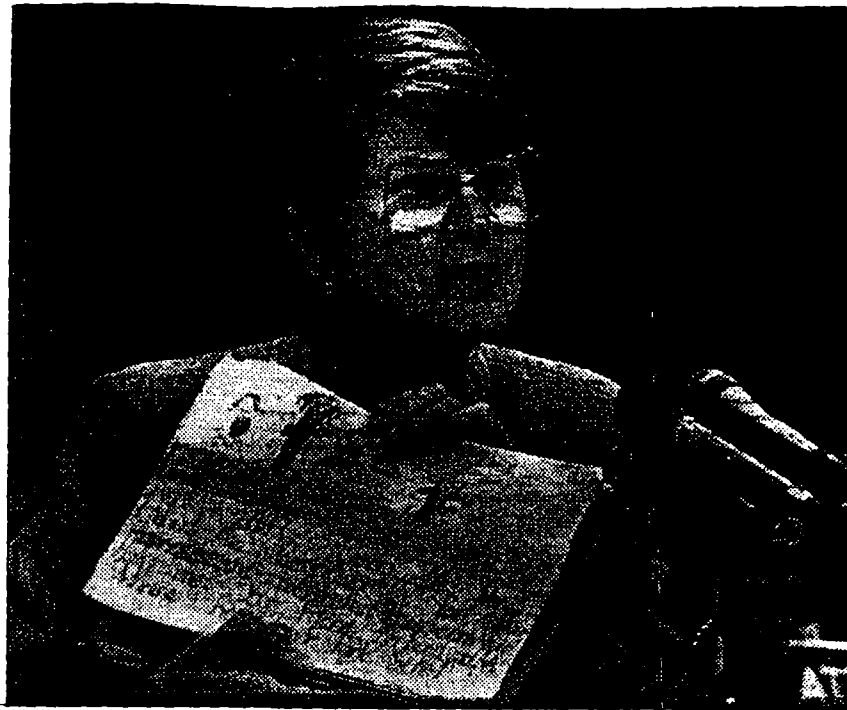
were those who had watched a nonviolent program. In non-laboratory settings, children have injured themselves by imitating behaviors viewed on TV. Another study suggested that children may learn to perceive aggressive behavior as normal and acceptable." e e e "Other studies have shown that these findings persist even when factors such as family background are taken into account. In a study of 158 elementary school children from a middle-class suburb, children who watched more violent television programs were rated by their teachers as less cooperative, less successful in interpersonal relationships and less happy; these findings were statistically significant regardless of the children's age, sex, social class, IQ or parents' television viewing habits." -- E. James Holroyd, M.D., Pediatrics, Feb., 1985.

"...35 young men between the ages of 8 to 31 years have killed themselves playing Russian Roulette while imitating a scene from the movie, 'The Deer Hunter,' which they had seen on television." e e e "...the pain of victims and anguish of relatives are rarely portrayed. Thus, the child learns that violence may be a quick and easy solution to conflicts while being deprived of any opportunity to feel empathy for the victim." -- Robert Wharton, M.D, and Frederick Mandell, M.D., Pediatrics, June, 1985.

"In a comprehensive review of the research literature on television content, Signorielli and colleagues concluded that consistently high levels of violence and aggression have been reported in studies of television programming, regardless of the measures used to define or assess violence. They reported that children's television programs are six times as violent as adults' television programs." e e e "Dozens of laboratory studies have consistently demonstrated that children imitate the violence that they have just watched on television." e e e "Despite psychologists' suggestions in the 1950's that watching television violence has a cathartic effect, and thus reduces viewers' aggressive behavior, there are no data from recent years to support that theory." e e e "A special opportunity to assess the impact of televised violence in a community setting occurred with the introduction of television in a small Canadian community that had never had access to television before. The results demonstrated that verbal and physical aggression increased among primary school children in this community after television became available." e e e "One of the few studies that contradicts these findings was conducted by researchers at the National Broadcasting Company. They found the relationship between viewing television violence and aggressive behavior several years later became insignificant when social class was controlled. The study had several important limitations. First, children's aggressive behavior was defined strictly to include only 'physical or verbal acts intended or known in advance to cause injuries to others' and did not include rough play or other unintended aggressive behavior." -- Diana M. Zuckerman, Ph.D., and Barry S. Zuckerman, M.D., Pediatrics.

"American viewers have more access to violent television programming than the citizens of several other nations (Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, West Germany and Spain) monitored by the International Coalition on Television. According to TV monitoring by the 88-country coalition, the United States also has the dubious distinction of exporting programs which account for 65 percent of all the violence shown on Canadian, English, Australian and New Zealand television." -- American Family Physician, April 1984.

• • • • •



BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Attorney General Janet Reno holds up children's letters on TV violence.

Reno: Curb TV Violence

Regulation Not Unconstitutional, Panel Told

By Ellen Edwards
Washington Post Staff Writer

Attorney General Janet Reno jumped into the television violence melee yesterday, telling the entertainment industry to clean up its act or legislative action would be "imperative."

"The regulation of violence is constitutionally permissible," she told the Senate Commerce Committee, which was holding hearings on three bills that would mandate it. She said those bills would have no constitutional problems if they were enacted.

At the same time, Reno urged the industry to find its own solutions first.

"All I am asking today," she told the committee, "is that the entertainment industry—and that includes the movies, the broadcasting

networks, cable TV and the independents—acknowledge their role and their responsibilities, and pledge to work with us to use every tool they have to address the problem. And more than pledging, start doing something about it now."

Reno said she had met with representatives of the industry earlier in the week and had been prepared to suggest that they be given a year to put their houses in order—until, she said, she realized how many times they had promised to do so over the last two decades.

She diverged from her prepared text to urge the committee to set a Jan. 1 deadline, much along the lines suggested by Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.). And she warned that if "immediate further voluntary steps are not taken, and deadlines set," she would encourage legislative action.

See RENO, A13, Col. 1

WASH. POST 10/21/93

Reno Says Congress Should Regulate TV Violence if Broadcasters Won't

RENO, From A1

She admitted that such legislation would apply only to broadcast networks, and that cable could not be regulated in the same way. Much of the testimony today from others charged that cable and syndicated programming are the worst offenders.

Reno urged advertisers to "re-evaluate the nature of the messages they wish to subsidize" and the industry to reexamine the programs it buys and the times it chooses to air them. She went so far as to suggest that programs be designed to repudiate violence.

The three bills that were the subject of yesterday's hearing would prohibit violent programming during hours when children are likely to be watching; require the FCC to compile a violence report card; and require warning labels about violent content and "unsafe gun practices." A number of other bills have been introduced in the House, but Reno said she had not yet reviewed them for their constitutionality.

"The cat is out of the bag in terms of legislation," said one industry official later, voicing one of the entertainment industry's worst fears.

Reno made her comments in the context of her concerns for children, beginning with a plea for more responsibility by parents and by the educational system. She personalized her testimony, saying, "My mother didn't allow our family to have a television because she said it contributed to mind rot."

She added, "I think too often America has become numb to violence because it just drowns in it day in and day out."

While she said she did not intend to "bash" the networks, and acknowledged that they had taken some positive action, she said, "They are extremely small steps. They're little itty-bitty steps."

Robert S. Peck, the legislative counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union, later disputed Reno's suggestion that there would be no constitutional problems for the pending legislation, saying, "All these bills are unconstitutionally vague." He said the kind of speech being prohibited must be specified and so far the only speech that has stood that test is the so-called "seven dirty words" prohibited by the Supreme Court in a 1978 decision.



BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Attorney General Janet Reno works on her statement on TV violence before testifying in the Senate.

Peck said other cases that have attempted to expand the regulation of prohibited speech have been struck down by the federal court of appeals in Washington. Earlier, when she was asked about those cases by Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.), Reno said she was not aware of them.

The Supreme Court has never squarely confronted the constitutionality of government restrictions on the content of televised entertainment. Unlike newspapers and magazines, television has generally been more subject to government regulation because the airwaves are considered a public trust and licensed in a variety of ways.

The committee, chaired by Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.), gave a warm welcome to the witnesses who were critical of televised violence, while a panel of industry representatives got a much cooler reception.

"You folks are coming in through the back door," Hollings told them, adding that he had felt he had heard it all before when it came to industry promises of self-regulation.

"There's no education in the secondkick of a mule," he said.

Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) followed in tone, telling the industry representatives, "You're sounding like someone who sells cigarettes."

Earlier, Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) said he was tired of the industry constantly holding black-tie

awards ceremonies for itself. "I think somebody should sponsor a sleazebag ceremony," he suggested, with everyone dressed as garbage men.

Hollings surprised CBS President Howard Stringer by playing a videotape of Monday night's episode of the network's comedy "Love and War" not long after Stringer had pointed out that the network's schedule had the least violence in any in 25 years. "Nobody dies Monday night," Stringer told the committee.

The tape showed a barroom brawl that went on at great length, punctuated by one character's plea to "stop fighting—you're seeing too much violence on television." When the extended scene ended, Motion Picture Association President Jack Valenti, also testifying as part of a panel of industry representatives, joked that Stringer had been right—"Nobody died."

"Nobody died except the credibility of the panel," shot back Hollings.

Stringer, clearly uncomfortable, said the action was "slapstick. [The producer] was satirizing television violence," although he admitted that its airing two days before the hearing was "not the most auspicious time for me." Later, he said he had not felt sandbagged. "All's fair in love and war," he said.

The committee also heard from a panel of people urging legislative action and emphasizing their frustration at having confronted the issue over many years to no avail, they said.

Catherine A. Belter of the National PTA told the senators, "We've been coming before committees like this since 1973. The frustration level is growing."

(Coincidentally, the Harvard Project on Guns, Violence and Public Health will announce a program today to lobby Hollywood producers and writers, government officials and communications and business leaders as a means of preventing TV violence.)

Hollings got an unintentional laugh when he was talking about the popular MTV program "Beavis and Butt-head" but couldn't get the name right. "Buffcoat and Beaver" he called it, but later corrected himself to more laughter after a staff member passed him a note.

Staff writer Jacqueline Trescott contributed to this report.

FIREARM INJURIES AND COST

- Firearms are the second leading cause of injury and death in the U.S.

Firearms are the second most frequent cause of death overall for people 18-34.

**85% of the national hospital cost for firearm injuries are uncompensated.
Taxpayers pay for this through higher taxes and higher insurance premiums.**

Lifetime Cost: Firearms injuries incurred in 1990 cost \$20.4 billion, including \$17.5 billion for fatalities, \$2.8 billion for hospitalized injuries, and \$100 million for non-hospitalized injuries.

Ex: In 1992, cardiovascular gunshot wound patients average hospitalization cost was \$15,000 nationwide.

[University of California, S.F. School of Nursing, July 1993]

- Per Person Cost: The **average per person** cost of a firearm injury is \$53,831 (including fatalities). 85% of that = **\$45,750 paid by taxpayers!***

The **average per person** cost of a **fatality**, \$373,520 is the highest of any cause of injury. 85% of that = **\$317,500 paid by taxpayers!***

* '93 percentile applied to '91 figures

[A Report to Congress, Cost of Injury in the U.S., Rice et al. 1991]

- According to the GOA, approximately 80% of patients who suffer injuries from violence are uninsured or eligible for government medical care cost assistance.

[Journal of Trauma, Initial and Subsequent Hospital Costs of Firearm Injuries, 1992, Garen Wintemute, et al.]

- The overall cost of firearm injuries to our health care system is more than \$4 billion.
[Chair of the 1991 Advisory Council on Social Security]

Firearms Injury Info:**Oct 7, 93**

From Patty Murray's office:

--They would like some recognition!

July '93, U. of California S.F. School of Nursing:

Lifetime cost of firearm injuries incurred in 1990 was \$20.4 billion, including \$17.5 billion for fatalities, \$2.8 billion for hospitalized injuries, and \$100 million for non-hospitalized injuries.

Firearms = 2nd leading cause of injury and death in the U.S.

= 2nd most frequent cause of death overall for people 18-34 years of age.

1992 Cardiovascular gunshot wound patients average hospitalization cost = \$ 15,000 nationwide.

Dr. Rivara from U. of Washington at press conference yesterday:

Cost of gun related injuries = more than \$14 billion nationwide.

More than 80% of cost of gunshot injuries = payed by public funds. .

Seattle

Over last seven years, the number and cost of gunshot admissions have doubled, from 1 million to 2 million.

Average cost of gunshot injury admission at Harborview Hospital in Seattle = \$8,000. (Other states show figures b/w \$7,000 and \$12,000.)

Contact: American Academy of Pediatrics



Li# -
Have you seen this
marked ~~statistic~~ before?
Is it correct?

Thanks -
— Kim

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service
Office of the Surgeon General
200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 736-E
Washington, DC 20201

Telephone: 202-690-8335
Fax: 202-690-6498

DATE: 11-2-93

TO: Amy Meko

FAX: _____

FROM: Mike Russell

Office of Surgeon General

ADDITIONAL MESSAGE:

Total number of pages this transmission (including cover): 11

WASHINGTON (AP) Violence in America has reached epidemic proportions and added \$13.5 billion to the nation's medical bill last year, Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders said Monday.

The administration's top medical official told a House Government Operations Committee panel that the cost of firearm injuries alone is nearly \$3 billion a year.

For too many young people, she said, "it's easier to find a gun than a good friend, a good teacher, a good school."

She said the 50,000 deaths caused by violence yearly exceeds the 30,000 who die from AIDS and the 18,000 killed as a result of drunk driving.

The panel on violence as a public health issue heard from a Brooklyn high school student who said his hospital care after he was shot in the back, including 14 operations and the amputation of a leg, cost more than \$1 million.

"How many million-dollar bullets will it take before someone wakes up?" asked 17-year-old Ralph Green. "Aren't these gunshots loud enough?"

Frederick D. Alley, president of the Brooklyn Hospital Center, said 10 percent of hospital admissions last year were injury related, most from acts of violence, and that care for violence victims cost the hospital at least \$12.5 million.

Elders said 85 percent of hospital costs for treatment of firearm injuries is unreimbursed.

"Our society is self-destructing as a consequence of violence that engulfs families, neighborhoods and communities," said Rep. Ed Towns, D-N.Y., chairman of the human resources and intergovernmental relations subcommittee.

"It is an epidemic that is destroying the lives of our young people and endangering this nation's future," said Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio.

Elders blamed poverty and the availability of drugs and firearms to young people as key reasons for the increase in violence.

She said 40 percent of all homicides are related to drugs and 80 percent of homicide victims in Washington, D.C. had evidence of cocaine in their bodies.

She also criticized television and other media, saying that "by portraying violence as the normal means of conflict resolution, the media gives youth the message that violence is socially acceptable, 'cool,' and the best way to resolve problems."

Another 17 year old, Shantae Edwards of Baltimore, testified that she had grown up seeing people killed and fighting over drugs. "I saw violence so I chose violence as a way of life," she said.

COMMUNICATIONS

TV Violence: Hill May Not Wait For More Industry Action

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., a longtime defender of free speech rights, flipped on his television in a hotel room in La Salle County after a long day on the campaign trail in 1984 and knew he had seen enough: a person being murdered with a chain saw.

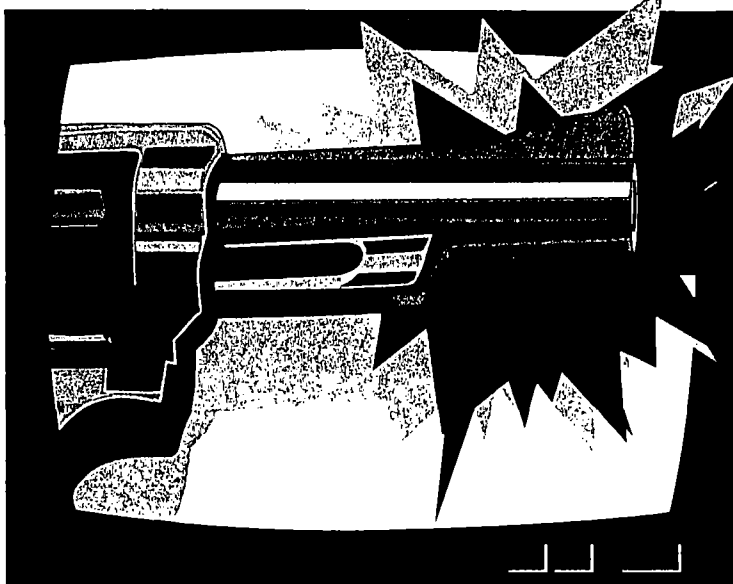
It was a scene so grisly and devoid of entertainment value that it drove the former newspaperman, upon his election, to take a lead role in reining in television violence, even at the risk of being a liberal accused of advocating censorship.

In 1990, President George Bush signed into law a provision Simon authored that gave the major broadcast networks three years to take voluntary steps to curb depictions of blood and gore on American television screens. In June, Hollywood responded to that effort by promising to tone down TV violence and air new advisories about programs unsuitable for children.

But judging by the fall lineup of legislation introduced that would further curb violence on TV, Congress is not about to let the industry off that easily.

Lawmakers eager to cast votes against violence will have plenty of opportunities to do so this fall, ranging from one bill giving the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the power to define "violence" to another requiring television sets to include a computer chip that would allow viewers to block objectionable TV shows.

The bottom line for TV executives: Unless they take further voluntary steps, beyond their new parental warnings, lawmakers will be all the more eager to step in — a possibility that



MARILYN GATES-DAVIS

Studies show a link between TV violence and street violence. Congress, which may not be satisfied with recent industry measures, has struggled to address the problem without trampling First Amendment rights.

"We are opposed to any commission made of mortals who are going to tell creative people what is right or wrong."

Motion Picture Association of America

worries Simon and others who are wary of trampling First Amendment rights.

"The answer really rests with the industry," said Simon. Hollywood, he said, "has to make a greater show of seriousness than has been shown up to this point."

Simon does not want legislation and has hinted that he would oppose bills that go too far. Instead, he wants the industry to take voluntary steps, including setting up a citizens' group to monitor the level of violence on television. He also calls for self-restraint by writers and producers, more leadership on the issue from executives and the elimination of violence-laden promotions for television shows.

Many broadcasters and cable pro-

grammers seem amenable to the watchdog group idea, but Hollywood writers and producers are incensed: They fear a revival of the climate of censorship that enveloped the industry from 1922 to 1945 when the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, run by entertainment lawyer and former Postmaster General Will H. Hays, required a "purity seal" on all productions.

For an industry accustomed to fending off attacks from the political right over depictions of explicit sex on television, it is all the more shocking to Hollywood that liberals such as Simon would

be asking them to relinquish control over their product.

"We are opposed to any commission made of mortals who are going to tell creative people what is right or wrong," said Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America. He denounced what he called "this gradual, slow, remorseless intrusion by the government into the content of television."

But many outside Congress fear political momentum could force the issue to its extreme and lead to legislation so broad as to restrict TV content.

Because there is simply no political constituency in Congress for violence on television, lawmakers are left with little reason to vote against any bill that purports to curb it. Martin D. Franks, Washington vice president for CBS Inc., said he harbors an "apocalyptic" fear that lawmakers will roll the array of bills pending in Congress on the issue into one big measure to restrain TV.

"Other than Paul Simon, I cannot find a single member who has even suggested he might oppose [television violence] legislation," Franks said. "At

By Mike Mills

Congress and TV: A Chronology

1950s — Rise in youth crime and juvenile delinquency prompts congressional hearings on television violence.

- **June 1952:** First congressional hearings on violence in radio and television and its impact on children and youth are held by House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Subcommittee.
- **1954:** Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn., chairs hearings of Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency on role of TV shows in youth crime. Networks say no link.

1960s — Urban violence prompts more congressional hearings and government funding of research on TV violence.

- **1961:** Kennedy administration Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton N. Minow tells National Association of Broadcasters that American TV is a "vast wasteland."
- **1967:** University of Pennsylvania begins monitoring television programming.
- **1969:** Formation of Boston-based Foundation to Improve Television.
- **Sept. 23, 1969:** Report of National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence cites TV violence as contributor to society's violence problem.

1970s — Surgeon general's study prompts more congressional hearings; academic studies proliferate; court cases examine liability of TV in cases of real violence.

- **1972:** Surgeon general's report on violence cites evidence of link between screen violence and aggressive behavior.
- **1975:** National PTA adopts resolution demanding that networks and local TV stations reduce the amount of violence in programs and commercials (reaffirmed in 1989).
- **1976:** American Medical Association's House of Delegates calls TV violence an "environmental hazard."
- **1979:** In *Zamora v. CBS et al.*, parents of a Florida 15-year-old convicted of murdering a neighbor sue all three networks, unsuccessfully, for negligence in failing to prevent him from being incited to imitate TV.

1980s — Reagan-era deregulation gives media free rein; cable TV, VCRs and rise of independent networks diminish power of networks to control violence on TV.

- **1980:** Founding of National Coalition on Television Violence.
- **1982:** National Institute of Mental Health study says there is a clear consensus on link between TV violence and aggression.
- **September 1984:** Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence says evidence is overwhelming that TV violence contributes to real violence.
- **1984:** American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Children and Television cautions physicians and parents that TV may promote aggression.
- **1985:** American Psychological Association Commission on Youth and Violence notes research showing link between TV violence and real violence.

1990s — Networks issue a joint statement of policies on TV violence, made possible by an antitrust exemption passed by Congress. Anti-violence advocates step up pressure.

- **1990:** Simon-Glickman Television Violence Act gives three major networks an antitrust exemption so they can formulate joint policy on violence.
- **1991:** Minow declares: "In 1961, I worried that my children would not benefit much from television, but in 1991 I worry that my children will actually be harmed by it."
- **1992:** American Psychological Association study shows research on link to real violence is ignored and calls for federal policy to protect society.
- **Dec. 11, 1992:** Days before House hearings, the three major networks release joint policy on violence and agree to hold an industrywide conference.
- **June 30, 1993:** The four major TV networks announce their agreement to air parental advisories when shows the networks deem violent are aired. Fifteen major cable networks announce July 29 that they will join in the policy.

SOURCE: CQ Researcher, "TV Violence," by Charles S. Clark, March 26, 1993

the moment I assume everything could be law by Columbus Day."

Forty Years of Debate

The average American child watches 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school, according to a much-cited study by the American Psychological Association.

Since the advent of television in

the late 1940s, as many as 3,000 studies have examined links between TV violence and real violence. (*Box, this page*)

One of the most controversial, a 1972 report by the U.S. surgeon general, concluded that there is a causal relationship between TV violence and acts of violence, but only in children presupposed to be aggressive. Since then, other studies have found

broader links between TV and actual violence.

For the last 40 years, the issue has waxed and waned in the public consciousness, with Congress threatening to legislate tough content controls and the broadcast industry promising self-restraint. The proliferation of TV competitors, from cable television to satellite channels to rental videos, has only boosted pressure on Congress to act.

Attention is only magnified by a congressional deadline set in the 1990 provision by Simon. The provision, which was attached to a federal judge-ships bill (PL 101-650), gave the broadcast networks a three-year anti-trust waiver allowing them to get together and agree on voluntary steps to reduce violence on television. That waiver expires Dec. 1. (1990 *Almanac*, p. 374)

In response, the four major networks — NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox — on June 30 announced their agreement to air parental advisories when shows the networks deem violent are aired. The 15 major cable networks announced July 29 they would join in the policy.

It was the most television has ever bowed to congressional pressure in 40 years of debate on the issue. But critics immediately dismissed the advisories as merely a token gesture. For one thing, the programmers themselves will be responsible for deciding which shows merit warning labels. And children's programs or morning talk shows such as "Oprah" or "Geraldo" would not be affected, only shows airing during nightly prime-time schedules.

The 'V-Chip'

Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, called the parental advisories "a good first step."

He then introduced a second step: a bill (HR 2888) that would require every new television set sold in the United States to be equipped with a computer chip that would allow viewers to disable their TVs from receiving programs that are given a "V" rating by broadcasters or cable programmers to warn parents of the show's violent content.

The bill straddles the edge of congressional control over program content. It does not require that broadcasters or cable operators send the electronic signal needed to allow televisions to automatically block V-rated programs.

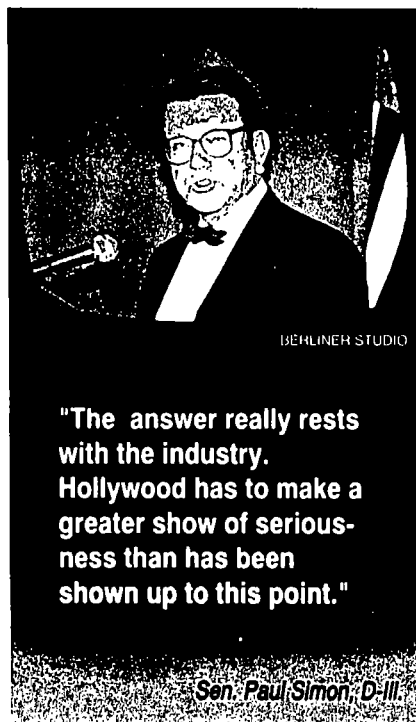
But should broadcasters refuse to do so, the Markey bill stipulates, the device still would give consumers the option of blocking out channels and time slots of any programs they deem too violent.

Markey's bill has won endorsements by such luminaries as former Kennedy administration FCC Chairman Newton N. Minow and cable in-

dustry titan Ted Turner.

"Unless you keep the gun pointed to their heads, all you'll get is mumbly, mealy-mouthed B.S.," Turner testified at a Markey hearing this summer. Television industry officials, he added, "just hope the subject will go away."

Critics of the Markey plan range from broadcast and movie-industry executives who fear a loss of advertising revenues to TV violence opponents who say many families either cannot afford new televisions or lack the skills to program their sets to block certain programs. Even Peggy Charren, the children's television ad-



"The answer really rests with the industry. Hollywood has to make a greater show of seriousness than has been shown up to this point."

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill.

vocate who along with Markey prompted Congress to enact new program standards for children's television, said she opposes any congressional action on the violence issue, preferring instead that parents simply shut televisions off.

George Gerbner, dean emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, who since 1967 has conducted the longest continuing surveys of television violence, called the V-chip "a terrible idea" because it does not reduce the amount of violent programs.

"To say we should trust the industry to flag programs they think are too violent is kind of silly. It's like the fox guarding the chicken coop," Gerbner said.

Rather, he said, violence can be reduced only by applying government, marketplace and interest-group pressures on the industry to offer more diverse types of programming rather than appealing to the basest mass-market interests.

Markey's proposal, while perhaps the most visible, is by no means without competition.

Time-Slot Restrictions

On Aug. 5, the day Markey introduced his bill, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., offered a bill (S 1383) that would direct the FCC to limit violent programs to certain time slots when children will be least likely to be watching, much as the agency now limits "indecent" broadcasts. Several courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, have upheld the FCC's right to restrict what it deems indecent.

Hollings calls his bill "the least restrictive means by which we can limit children's exposure to violent programming."

Other bills include efforts by:

- Sen. Byron L. Dorgan, D-N.D., and Rep. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., that would require the FCC to file quarterly "violence report cards" to provide the public with information about the frequency of violence by each television program and its sponsors (S 973, HR 2159).

- Rep. John Bryant, D-Texas, (HR 2837) that would require the FCC to establish standards of acceptable levels of violence on television and radio shows, including cartoons.

Television industry executives say the Bryant effort treads the closest toward government control of television content.

- Joseph P. Kennedy II, D-Mass., (HR 2756) that would require the FCC to set up a toll-free number for the public to call with complaints, comments, and suggestions regarding television violence. The FCC would be required to publish summaries of the comments quarterly and to forward them to the cable or broadcast station that aired the violent program.

The comments and complaints would be weighed when broadcasters' licenses are up for renewal.

- Rep. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., (HR 2609) that would set up a presidential commission to report within one year on ways to curb TV violence. The group would include the U.S. surgeon general, attorney general, repre-

sentatives from the entertainment industry, crime and education experts and parents.

Hollywood Is Adamant

Rather than face the wrath of restrictive legislation, Gerbner predicts that the television industry — broadcasters, cable executives, producers and writers — will soon take further voluntary steps toward curbing TV violence.

"The leaders of the industry are going to do what they can to avoid any kind of legislation," Gerbner said. "It seems to me that as long as they move forward and provide some evidence of progress, there's only a very slight chance of any other legislation going through."

But Valenti is adamant that no such further "progress" is warranted. He continues to dismiss decades of studies pointing to what most academics involved with the issue now take as a given: that TV violence does have an impact on the aggressive behavior of those who view it.

Valenti maintains that there is little gratuitous violence on nighttime television, save for perhaps the occasional movie of the week. Network officials agree, and are promoting their new fall schedules as containing few, if any, examples of the kinds of violence critics rail against.

Faulting 'Porous' Research

"The research as we have examined it is very porous, very loosely fibered and does not withstand scrutiny," Valenti said. "It's a terrible dilemma. I want to respond to what Congress is saying, but where, first of all, is this violence taking place? And what is the definition of 'violence'?"

Simon and other critics of TV violence liken Valenti's dismissal of the correlation between television violence and street crime to the tobacco industry's practice of disputing research linking smoking with cancer.

Simon has been talking with Valenti and others in the industry, but the senator is not optimistic about being able to fend off restrictive legislation by crafting new voluntary steps to curb violent programming.

"All or none of these [bills] might pass," Simon said at a rare meeting of industry representatives and TV violence critics Aug. 2. "I can tell you that none of the sponsors of these initiatives is losing votes back home with these ideas."

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Bill Outlines Strategy for Gore's Government Efficiency Plan

White House proposal to 'reinvent' bureaucracy would be guided through maze of committees

Vice President Al Gore will unveil his critique of the federal bureaucracy Sept. 7, but neither chamber of Congress is ready to "reinvent government."

Roughly half of Gore's suggestions for cutting red tape, improving service and lowering costs require some congressional action, a draft of Gore's final report indicates. The rest can be accomplished by the executive branch, a process President Clinton has promised to start the day Gore's report is released.

Because the proposals cross virtually every congressional committee's turf, enacting them could be a procedural nightmare. To simplify the task, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee has proposed using a new commission and special procedural rules to bring Gore's recommendations to the House and Senate in a single package.

The committee's proposal, which is expected to be placed on the Senate calendar soon, has bipartisan support and the administration's belated blessings. Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell, though, said in an interview Sept. 1 that he has not decided whether to support such an approach.

House leadership aides from both parties say there has been little discussion of how to handle Gore's report. The House Government Operations Committee, which claims at least a share of the jurisdiction over government streamlining, has no bill in the works akin to its Senate counterpart's proposal.

There is some sentiment in the House for letting the Senate take the first step. There is skepticism, too, about the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's ability to push its proposed commission through the Senate.



Al Gore

The main hurdle may be lawmakers who have made careers out of defending some of the programs that Gore wants to reinvent. Weeks before Gore's report was to be released, lawmakers launched a number of preemptive strikes against moves that Gore's staff was considering.

For example, when Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., learned that a Gore aide had recommended deregulating the maritime industry, he quickly introduced a bill to hold off such a move until another special commission studied the industry.

Other lawmakers inserted provisions in various appropriations bills to prevent the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms from being consolidated with the FBI and to bar the Agriculture Department from closing Forest Service field offices — two proposals considered by Gore.

Another potential hurdle is the difference between the Democrats' vision of reinventing government and the Republicans'. As Gore states in his report, the Democrats' goal is to make government do what it does better. Republicans, on the other hand, are mainly interested in making government do fewer things.

Said Rep. Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., "Nobody yields power gracefully, and the Democrats have all the power. So based on that, one must look with a magnifying glass at every word that they propose as reform."

The draft circulated in the last week of August included more than 110 separate proposals that touched every federal agency. The final report drops some of those proposals, yet it is expected to recommend enough substantial changes to cut spending by tens of billions of dollars over five years — much of it by thinning the ranks of management in the federal government.

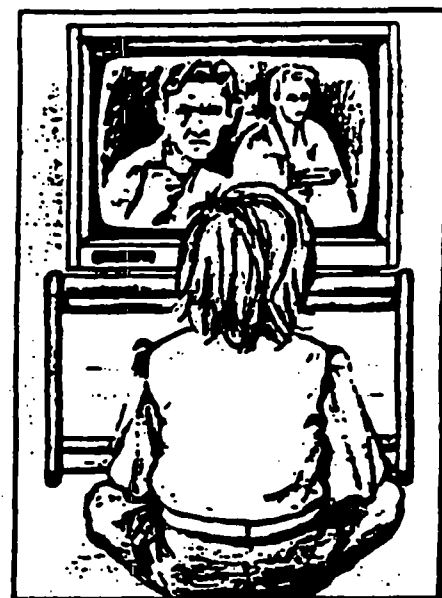
By Jon Healey

CQ Researcher

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TV Violence

Will Hollywood tone it down — or face regulation?



THE AVERAGE AMERICAN CHILD WATCHES 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school — thanks to the miracle of television. Suggestions of a link between make-believe TV violence and aggression in real life have been raised since television's formative years in the 1950s — and always dismissed by the TV industry. But recently the three major networks signed a first-ever joint statement outlining practices aimed at reducing violence, and the cable, video and film industries are showing signs of cooperating. Some in Congress are encouraged and maintain hopes that change will come about voluntarily, without the need for federal regulation. But anti-violence activists and scholars of television accuse the industry of merely paying lip service to the problem.

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CQ

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TV VIOLENCE

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EDITOR
Sandra Miesel

MANAGING EDITOR
Thomas J. Calkin

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Richard L. Worsnop

STAFF WRITERS
Charles S. Clark
Mary H. Cooper

PRODUCTION EDITOR
Sarah E. Merritt

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Michael M. Taylor

GRAPHICS
Jack Auldridge

PUBLISHED BY
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CHAIRMAN
Andrew Barnes

VICE CHAIRMAN
Andrew P. Corty

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
Neil Skene

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Robert W. Merry

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
John J. Coyle

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COVER ART: BARBARA SASSA-DANIELS

TV Violence

BY CHARLES S. CLARK

THE ISSUES

The young gunshot victim in the Boston hospital emergency room astonished his doctors. He expressed surprise that his wound *actually* hurt.

"I thought, boy, he's really stupid, anybody knows that if you get shot it's going to hurt," recalled Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, associate dean of the Harvard University School of Public Health and author of a recent book on violence. "But it dawned on me that what he sees on television is that when the superhero gets shot in the arm, he uses that arm to hold onto a truck going 85 miles an hour around a corner. He overcomes the driver and shoots a couple of hundred people while he's at it."

With American children glued to the TV for an average of 27 hours each week (in the inner city it's often 11 hours per day), the American Psychological Association (APA) now estimates that a typical child will watch 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school.

But in 1991 alone there were 25,000 murders in the United States. Coming at a time when the homicide rate is rising six times faster than the population, a longstanding debate — does TV violence cause actual violence? — has taken on a new urgency.¹

"There has never been a situation like this," George Gerbner, dean emeritus of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, told a congressional panel in December. Children "start viewing as infants. Most of the stories they hear are not told by the parents, the school, the church, neighbors. They are told by a handful of conglomerates who have something to sell."

The stories they tell in living rooms



across the country are as familiar as Arnold "The Terminator" Schwarzenegger taunting, "Hasta la vista, baby," or Clint "Dirty Harry" Eastwood growling, "Make my day." A full 25 percent of the prime-time shows in the 1992 fall season contained "very violent" material, according to the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV), a Champaign, Ill.-based monitoring and advocacy group. (See list, p. 168.)

The year 1992 set an all-time record for violence in children's shows — 32 violent acts per hour. That compares with six violent acts per hour during prime time, according to researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. The nightly dose of splattering blood, rapes, car wrecks and screaming victims on TV tripled during the 1980s, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. (See story p. 170.)

What sets today's TV apart from the 1960s and, say, the routine machine-gun volleys of Chicago mobsters and FBI agents on "The Untouchables" is the proliferation of formats — cable, pay-per-view, VCRs

— bringing an array of feature-length movies into the home. "The access to violence is different nowadays," says Edward Donnerstein, a professor of communications at the University of California-Santa Barbara. "There's lots of unsupervised TV-watching, and households often have two TVs."

Also new is a trend toward "reality-based" made-for-TV movies and tabloid news and video shows ("Top Cops," "Hard Copy," "A Current Affair" and "I Witness Video") based on actual news events, many of them involving re-enactments of real crimes or replays of actual violence captured on tape by amateur camcorder operators. Still other violent ages come from promotions commercials for feature films, many of them R-rated. A New York psychotherapist recently wrote in *McCall's* magazine about how his 3-year-old daughter had trouble sleeping after she was confronted — during a "family" program — by an advertisement showing the terrifying slasher Freddy Krueger from "Nightmare on Elm Street."

Today's high-tech violence — achieved easily with computerized special effects — is aimed at a sophisticated young audience with increasingly high expectations for rapid-paced action. Hence a major source of the problem as measured by anti-violence advocates is the perennial smashing on children's cartoons. A national survey of elementary school teachers found that the popular "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" causes confusion between fantasy and reality. "Several children really thought it was OK to use physical violence with other children because [the turtles] do that," a teacher reported.²

Children in the inner city, who dodge bullets on the way home from school, are most affected by the culture of TV violence, says Leonard Eron, a

Prime Time, High Violence

Prime-time TV violence has increased markedly since 1980, when the two most violent shows each registered only 22 incidents of violence per hour. In 1984 and 1992, several programs racked up more than 40 violent incidents per hour, led by the action-packed Young Indiana Jones.

Fall 1980	Fall 1984	Fall 1992
Enns (22)	Hammer (55)	Young Indiana Jones (60)
Sheriff Lobo (22)	A-Team (54)	Covington Cross (45)
BJ & the Bear (17)	V (52)	The Hat Squad (42)
Han to Han (17)	Matt Houston (40)	Raven (42)
The Incredible Hulk (16)	Cover-Up (38)	Angel Street (41)
Charlie's Angels (14)	Fall Guy (37)	Top Cops (38)
Hill Street Blues (14)	Airwolf (33)	FBI: The Untold Stories (28)
Vegas (13)	Hunter (33)	Final Appeal (27)
Nero Wolfe (11)	Street Hawk (31)	Secret Service (24)
Dukes of Hazard (11)	Scarecrow & Mrs. King (31)	The Commish (17)

Source: National Coalition on Television Violence

University of Michigan psychology professor and longtime researcher on TV violence. "The child who has been watching programs with primarily aggressive content comes away with the impression that the world is a jungle fraught with dangerous threats, and the only way to survive is to be on the attack."

But the potential impact on young viewers, according to Harvard University developmental psychologist Ronald G. Slaby, goes beyond increasing the so-called aggressor effect (the heightened likelihood of violent behavior). Youngsters also experience a victim effect (increased fearfulness about becoming a victim) and a bystander effect (increased callousness toward violence directed at others).

In Congress and among advocacy groups across the political spectrum, alarmed citizens have taken up TV violence as a mobilizing issue. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a New York City-based liberal group, led a campaign this January to pressure the NBC television network to air a public service announcement about domestic violence during coverage of the Superbowl, citing some

studies asserting that violence increases on the day of the big game. "We are outraged!" showed full-page ads in newspapers across the country placed this February by the Tupelo, Miss.-based American Family Association. The conservative group attacked movies, records, music videos and TV for profanity, nudity, sex, violence and killings, asking, "Is it any wonder violence is epidemic?"

The public appears to agree there's a problem. A Times Mirror poll released March 23 found that 72 percent of Americans think TV entertainment shows contain too much violence. And a 1990 Gallup Poll showed 63 percent agreeing that TV shows that depict crime and violence encourage crime.

TV executives haven't ignored the complaints. This December, NBC, CBS and ABC produced an unprecedented joint statement outlining their policies intended to minimize violence and keep it in proper context (see below). But the networks also reiterated their decades-old rebuttal of the body of research linking TV violence to real violence, and blamed cable and independent stations for most of the violence. "Of

the 10 most-watched programs on television among children and teenagers, eight are situation comedies, which do not contain any violence." Rosalyn Weinman, vice president for standards and practices at NBC, told the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice Dec. 15.

Industry veterans also maintain that the content of programming has been and always will be in the hands of the public. "Television and motion pictures are market-driven," says Del Reisman, president of the Writers Guild of America, West. "If people don't go, the picture won't be made."

Civil libertarians have weighed in seeking to discourage Congress from interfering with First Amendment rights. "TV networks are free to make their own decisions," says Robert Peck, head of the Washington office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). If the television industry is toning down violence "in response to congressional pressure, we're concerned."

Finally, defenders of the current TV menu point out that violence has been a central element of human drama for centuries. "Of course there was blood in fairy tales, gore in mythology, murder in Shakespeare," retorts Gerbner. "It is a violent world."

"But, the historical, limited, individually crafted, selectively used and often tragic symbolic violence has been swamped by 'happy violence,' produced on the dramatic assembly line and discharged into the mainstream of our culture. Happy violence shows no pain or tragic consequences. It is a swift and easy dramatic solution to many problems, employed by good characters as much as bad, and always leading to a happy ending."

Whether big changes take place in television violence will hinge largely on the following issues:

Does television violence lead to real violence?

In the mid-1980s, 13-year-old Juan Valdez of Manteca, Calif., confessed to

murdering a friend's father. Having kicked, stabbed, beaten and choked the man with a dog chain, the boy was asked why he also poured salt on the victim's wounds. "Oh, I don't know," he replied. "I just seen it on TV."

The suggested link between small-screen violence and flesh-and-blood violence is perhaps the most examined of sociological questions. It has prompted as many as 3,000 studies in the past four decades in numerous countries, though only a few hundred have added new information.

In a wide range of surveys and field and laboratory studies, researchers have examined the reactions of children to scenes showing a man who gets rewarded with candy if he punches an inflatable "Bobo the clown" standup toy. They have compared children's aggressiveness after they have been shown cartoon combat featuring Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker and Tom and Jerry and gentler shows such as "Lassie." They have examined the increase in homicide rates immediately following televised boxing matches. They have examined the increase in suicide rates following TV dramas about suicide. They have examined changes in the homicide rates in communities that suddenly acquired television, as in apartheid-governed South Africa and an isolated Canadian town in the 1970s (scholars christened it "Notel").

The upshot, according to a variety of experts and advocates, is an overwhelming consensus of some causal effect, with measurable increases of 3-15 percent.¹¹ In the words of a recent American Psychological Association (APA) report, "the accumulated research clearly demonstrates a correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior — that is, heavy viewers behave more aggressively than light viewers."¹²

That summation was echoed by a new National Research Council study of violence, which also asserted that violent offenders are characterized by a low IQ, bullying, hyperactivity, low empa-

thy, erratic discipline, neglect, lack of nurturance and "abnormally frequent viewing of violence on television."¹³

University of Washington psychiatrist Brandon S. Centerwall, writing last June in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, reported that the arrival of television in South Africa coincided with a doubling of the murder rate. During the "critical period" of pre-adolescent childhood, he explained, exposure to TV violence has a particularly profound impact: "Whereas infants have an instinctive desire to imitate observed human behavior, they do not possess an instinct for gauging a priori whether a behavior ought to be imitated. They will imitate anything."

The University of Michigan's Leonard Eron, who chairs the APA Commission on Violence and Youth, has spent 36 years researching TV violence. His unique longitudinal studies beginning in 1960 traced the same group of 875 boys and girls from age 8 to age 30, examining crime rates and personal characteristics. He found that those who watched more violent TV were convicted of more serious crimes, were more aggressive under the influence of alcohol and more often used violence to punish their own children, who in turn showed signs of aggressiveness. "What one learns about life from the television screen seems to be transmit-

ted to the next generation," Eron says.

To experts such as Eron, Donnerstein and Slaby, "the scientific debate is over" on the effects of TV violence, and it is time to move on to decide what should be done. Because of quibbles by a few naysayers, who argue that measured effects are too small or the related anti-social behavior too trivial, a solid body of research on violence, the three write, has "for decades been actively ignored, denied, attacked and even misrepresented in presentations to the American public, and popular myths regarding the effects have been perpetuated."¹⁴

To UCLA psychologist Seymour Feshbach, the quibbling is classic stonewalling. "An unrealistic need for more definitive research," he writes, "may be used as a mechanism for delaying policy change, much as administrators often turn over troublesome issues to committees as a method for delaying action."¹⁵

Robin Crews, a professor at the University of Colorado who is a group of activist academics called the Peace Studies Association, says, "I don't know anyone in peace studies who doesn't think ads, TV and movies in a very significant way affect violence against women and vi-

Continued on p. 171

Who Are the Killers and Victims?

Characters portrayed as mentally ill are the most violent and most highly victimized group on TV, with 70 percent involved in violence and 20 percent portrayed as killers. Sixty percent of all men and 42 percent of the women are involved in violence.

	Involved in violence	Killers	Killed	For every 10 killers, number killed
Men	60%	11%	5%	4.5
Women	42%	4%	3%	7.5
"Mentally ill"	70%	20%	20%	10.0

Source: Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, Dec. 14, 1992

One Viewer's Violence Is Another Viewer's Action

The definition of violence "will always be a subjective judgment based on individual perceptions and sensibilities," Beth Waxman Bressan, vice president of the CBS Broadcast Group, told the House Crime and Criminal Justice Subcommittee in December.

The fact that one viewer's violence is another's dramatic action has led many in the television industry to complain about the ways anti-violence activists measure the problem. "Accidents, such as a man falling on a banana peel, are counted as acts of violence in the most widely used violence counts," says Horst Stipp, director of social and developmental research at NBC. "Slapstick comedy routines like the Keystone Kops, or even a magic trick directed at an unwilling person is interpreted as a violent act."†

Some activists agree. "Some rate the violence level by the number of violent acts without measuring the intensity and context," notes Marcy Kelly, president of Mediascope, a Los-Angeles-based nonprofit research organization. "Car crashes, for example, shown in the film [about the founding of Mothers Against Drunk Driving] would be counted as violent acts."

When *TV Guide* commissioned the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington to monitor prime-time programs for violence, it used the following definition: "Any deliberate act involving physical force or the use of a weapon in an attempt to achieve a goal, further a cause, stop the action of another, act out an angry impulse, defend oneself from attack, secure a material reward, or intimidate others." Not included were acts of unintended, or accidental violence, violence in sports and violence by animals in nature shows.††

At the National Coalition On Television Violence (NCTV), monitors are trained to count "physically violent hostile acts committed with the intention of hurting another person," according to Research Director Chitra Vemuri. Different weights are assigned to each type of violent act: a slap or a push, for example, is assigned a 1 while a murder or suicide is ranked as a 5. Accidents, verbal assaults and property damage are not included in the counts, and monitors' judgments are regularly tested by a backup monitor.

NCTV's rating system, however, is also subjective. A

modified version of the Motion Picture Association of America film ratings, it assigns films an overall rating that factors in the context of the violence and whether the overall message is pro- or anti-violence. "If one character shoots another, it can be very different from when another [person] shoots that character," says Carole Lieberman, NCTV chairperson. A lot depends on "whether the villain is punished and whether the hero has a glamorized lifestyle."

If the sex and violence are in the story line and are handled appropriately, "we add a 'constructive factor' in our monitoring," says the Rev. Billy A. Melvin, chairman of the Christian group CLEAR-TV. "We know violence, sex and profanity are part of life, but things are getting more graphic. They used to show the sound of a gun and then a dead body. Now they show the bullet entering the head and the brain on the wall."

One Day's TV Violence

	Number of Scenes	Percent of Total
Serious Assaults (excluding use of guns)	389	21
Gunplay	362	20
Isolated punches	273	15
Pushing/dragging	272	15
Menacing threat with weapon	226	12
Slaps	128	7
Deliberate property destruction	95	5
Simple assaults	73	4
All other types	28	1
Total	1,846	100%

Center for Media and Public Affairs, June 1992

At the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, the Cultural Indicators Project produces The Violence Index. It defines TV violence as "clear-cut, unambiguous and overt episodes of physical violence — hurting or killing or the threat of hurting and/or killing — in any context," according to Prof. George Gerbner. Two trained coders have to agree that an act is violent. Gerbner's staff takes separate measures of the percentage of programs containing any violence, the rate of violent scenes per program and per hour and the percentage of major characters involved in violence, either as perpetrators or victims or both.

"Violence is a social relationship, a demonstration of power," Gerbner says. "It's who can do what to whom and get away with it. Cartoons are the most controversial and effective demonstrations of power, with humor as the sugar-coating pill."

As for the charge that his project counts slipping on a banana peel as a violent act, "That was invented by an NBC executive 25 years ago," he says.

† "Media Violence: Are Standards for TV and Film Possible?" a panel discussion produced by the Harvard University School of Public Health, May 11, 1992.

†† "Is TV Violence Battering Our Kids?" *TV Guide*, Aug. 22-28, 1992, p. 81.

Continued from p. 169

by gangs. The burden of proof needs to fall not on those trying to show a positive correlation, but on those who continue to promote violence and use it as entertainment."

Television executives, however, continue to characterize the research on violence as inconclusive. "The issue is so complex," says former 20th-Century Fox Film Corp. Chairman Barry Diller. "It's not appropriate to deal with this in some superficial way.... I don't think we know enough yet."

Networks cite an NBC-sponsored study published in 1982 that found no correlation between television violence and actual violence (though some scientists say the data were misinterpreted). The networks also point to the work of University of Toronto psychologist Jonathan L. Freedman, who argues that the mountain of research on violence has produced unconvincing results. Not only are researchers undecided over whether personal anger is a precondition for violence by TV viewers, he says, but "experimenter demand," or bias, for positive results, may be a factor.

Viewers "watch a mixture of violent, nonviolent, real and fantasy, exciting and boring, news and fiction programs," Freedman writes. "The question is how this mixture of programs affects the children, or more specifically, how the effect of this mixture would differ from one in which the violent programs were omitted."

Other scholars point with irony to the fact that some studies of such "pro-social" TV shows as "Sesame Street" have been found to increase aggressive behavior as much as violent shows. "Encouraging children to watch 'wholesome' television is not the solution to ameliorating conduct problems and would appear on the basis of the available evidence to be counterproductive," wrote one team.

The general public, though willing to accept a link between TV violence and crime, does not believe that TV vi-

olence is the main source of society's horrors. In 1990, a Gallup Poll showed only 1 percent of the public considered television the main cause of crime, while 60 percent blamed drugs and 6 percent a breakdown of family social values. Yale University psychologists Jerome and Dorothy Singer, longtime students of children's TV, argue that the networks themselves contradict the argument that TV has no impact on behavior. A network executive, they note, once testified before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in praise of a child who had seen the Heimlich maneuver demonstrated on TV and went on to use it to save a choking person."

If TV has no effect on its viewers, asked Rep. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., at the hearings he conducted in December, "how do we explain the billions of dollars spent each year on commercial advertising?"

Is the television industry adequately addressing the problem of violence?

On Dec. 11, 1992, four days before a scheduled House field hearing in New York City on TV violence, the three major networks broke decades of precedent and released a joint statement outlining their policies on violence. "Conflict and strife are the essence of drama, and conflict often results in physical or psychological violence," it said. "However, all depictions of violence should be relevant and necessary to the development of character, or to the advancement of theme or plot."

The networks' statement vowed to limit gratuitous, excessive or redundant violence, glamorous depictions of violence and replicable, unique or "ingenious" methods of inflicting pain or injury. Realistic portrayals of violence in children's programs were to be avoided, as were gratuitous depictions of animal abuse. Caution was urged in scenes where children are victims and themes, plots or scenes mix sex and violence. And the networks advocated

showing the consequences of violence and scheduling programs with eye toward the likely audience.

The statement was amplified at the hearings, during which network standards-and-practices officers explained how it was intended as a model for the rest of the industry that could "fill the logjam" that has stymied progress on reducing violence. They also explained how feature films are carefully reviewed before being broadcast on TV.

"We estimate that we demand edits [of] up to 40 percent of the original submissions of R-rated movie commercials," said Christian Hikawa of Capital Cities/ABC. "We will even, on occasion, reject certain films as too violent to advertise." In cartoons, "We do not permit realistic weaponry or imitable gratuitous interpersonal violence. Moral messages in our children's programs are concrete."

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., sponsor of the 1990 law giving the networks antitrust exemption to permit joint action against violence, applauded "initial steps." "Television can appeal to the best in us or the worst in us," said. "Television entertainment violence too often does the latter. We have reason to hope for substantial improvement." In addition, Simon's secretary, David Carle, explained that the joint statement, plus an accompanying plan to organize an industry conference on violence, raised hopes that the cable and film industries would join the anti-violence efforts. "It puts us light years ahead of where we were year," he said.

But to many academics and anti-violence activists, the statement was merely a rehash of the current policies, a of "pious platitudes, with no teeth," in Gerbner's phrase. "All it is saying is that without these guidelines, the situation would be much worse."

Carole Lieberman, the Beverly Hills psychiatrist who heads the National Coalition on Television Violence, calls the new standards "utter nonsense. Lo

Rating Cartoons for Violence

Children's cartoons are among the most violent shows on television, often exceeding 24 acts of violence per hour and earning high violence ratings from the National Coalition on Television Violence.

	Acts of Violence per hour	NCTV Rating
Very High Violence		
Dark Water (Fox)	109	XV
Cookie's Cartoon Club (WGN)	100	RV
Tom and Jerry Kids (Fox)	88	RV
Dragon Warrior (Syndication)	85	XV
Louney Tunes (Nickelodeon)	80	RV
G.I. Joe (Syndication)	78	RV
Bugs Bunny and Pals (TNT)	68	RV
Toxic Crusaders (Syndication)	63	RV
Capt. N. & Super Mario Bros. (NBC)	58	RV
Police Academy (Syndication)	58	RV
High Violence		
Wizard of Oz (ABC)	29	RV
DuckTales (Syndication)	29	RV
Beetlejuice (ABC)	28	XV
Popeye (Family Channel)	27	RV
Fantastic Max (Syndication)	26	RV
Dinosaucers (Family Channel)	26	RV
Chip 'N' Dale's Rescue Rangers (Syndication)	26	PGV
Cartoon Express (USA)	25	RV
Midnight Patrol (Syndication)	24	RV
Inspector Gadget (Nickelodeon)	24	RV
Low Violence (Highly recommended)		
Camp Candy (NBC)	8	PG
Babar (HBO)	7	PG
Muppet Babies (CBS)	6	PG
Madeline (Family Channel)	3	G
David the Gnome (Nickelodeon)	2	G
New Kids on the Block (ABC)	1	PG
Davey and Goliath (Syndication)	1	G
Little Women (HBO)	0	PG
Little Kixla (Nickelodeon)	0	G
Get Along Gang (Family Channel)	0	G
Maya the Bee (Nickelodeon)	0	G
Lunch Box (Disney Channel)	0	G

Source: National Coalition on Television Violence

whether to show two bullets or one, whether to use blood or not — is a matter of opinion, she says. The women who head the networks' standards and practices departments have no background in research about violence, she adds. "They are puppets who take direction from network superiors."

The University of California's Donnerstein says the networks deserve some credit for putting their policies in writing after years of denying the effects of TV violence. But he emphasizes that the Big Three should no longer absorb all the blame when there are VCRs, pay-per-view services and hundreds of channels of cable TV.

Representatives from the non-network television industries were represented at the House hearing. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) emphasized that its 25-year-old film rating system factors in violence along with sex. Witnesses pointed out that the Video Software Dealers Association offers a pledge to parents to help prevent the sale or rental of R- and X-rated films to minors.

Cable officials described results of a new study the industry had commissioned from George Gerbner, concluding that there is less violence on cable-originated children's TV programming than on the networks. They spoke of technological advantages that allow cable consumers to supervise children's viewing. With the available parental "lock box" — which must be offered by all cable companies under the 1984 cable deregulation act — and "with the advent of "addressability" technology, parental control has taken a major step forward," said Patricia Falese of Cablevision Systems Corp. The addressable device allows each subscriber to program his own converter to prevent designated shows from being received. "However, the technology requires an actively engaged parent to make the programming decisions involved," she said.

Winton Cox, chairman of the Showtime premium channel, said the

and behold, after all these years, the networks unabashedly flaunt the fact that this is simply a written version of what each standard and practices department has been using all along. It's obvious what they've been doing is not

good enough."

Lieberman, who testified in December that children's minds are being "polluted by the drug of violence," complains that the language is deliberately ambiguous. Each judgment —

movies his channel shows are carefully screened for violence and their contents described in a program guide along with their ratings. "The protections offered to viewers by the subscription process itself," he said, "coupled with the scheduling and communications efforts of the premium networks, safeguard against unwanted exposure."

Critics, however, note that few parents are capable of such detailed control over their children's viewing habits. They disparage the cable industry's study of cable-originated programming by noting that the majority of cable programs are non-original, often-violent feature films. And monitoring has shown time and again, they contend, that what TV executives say is going over the airwaves is not always borne out.

Notwithstanding the vows that violent commercials are not shown during children's programming, *U.S. News & World Report* recently sampled 50 hours of network programming in the late afternoon or early evening. It found 12 questionable ads, including one for an episode of "In the Heat of the Night" in which a troubled girl gives birth to a dead baby. The magazine also sent children into video shops to rent such adult movies as "Basic Instinct" and "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and found that video dealers were not enforcing policies against underage rentals."

And as Marvin Kitman, TV critic for *Newsday*, points out, the new guidelines refer only to new programming and not to old programs made under previous policies. Kitman told a congressional hearing he doesn't trust TV executives to live up to their obligations because they've been saying for years that they have been. "The net-

works are like serial killers," he says. "Their programs are the equivalent of writing with lipstick on the mirrors in our homes: Stop me before I kill again."

Though hopes have been raised by the networks' new promise of cooperativeness, in the academic community mistrust runs deep. "The television industry is not in the business of selling programs to audiences," Centerwall writes. "It is in the business of selling audiences to advertisers. Issues of 'quality' and 'social responsibility' are

do not do any harm. I say. 'There is no question about the harm. The question is how are we going to, with this problem in a free society?'"

All the players in the violence debate profess respect for First Amendment rights to free speech. But that hasn't prevented huge disagreements over what constitutes censorship and the degree to which the television industry should be free to determine its own treatment of violence. "I don't want to see anything more that looks

like censorship, no matter whether you call it business decisions or whether you call it taste."

York magazine TV critic John Leonard said in a *TV Guide* forum. "I think violence and sex and political dissent are all in bed together, and if you start messing with you end up messing with the rest of them."

The National Coalition on Television Violence has created a nine-point proposal for federal regulation of TV violence. It includes:

- a rating system;
- warning "labels" before broadcasts ("The TV show you are about to watch may be hazardous to your psychological and/or physical health due to its highly



Researchers say children's aggressiveness increases measurably after viewing the cartoon violence of Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry and Woody Woodpecker, compared with "Lassie" and similarly gentle shows.

entirely peripheral to the issue of maximizing audience size within a competitive market — and there is no formula more tried and true than violence for reliably generating large audiences."

Are proposed cures for TV violence worse than the disease?

When network executives try to tell Sen. Paul Simon that research on TV violence is inconclusive, he says they "remind me of the Tobacco Institute people who come in here and say they have research that cigarettes

violent content");

- ingredient labels used in publicity for shows;
- warning labels on TV ads;
- a staff psychiatrist or researcher each network or cable channel;
- public service announcements about the harmful effects of violence;
- a ban on violent programming offered in government institutions such as jails and hospitals;
- tax breaks for networks, cable channels and production companies that fund research on violence;

• and a public health campaign in schools that addresses violence the way current programs deal with drunk driving.

Proposals for a violence rating system do not impinge on freedom of speech, asserts Centerwall. "It is not reasonable to address the problem of motor vehicle fatalities by calling for a ban on cars," he says. "Instead, we emphasize safety seats, good traffic signs and driver education. Similarly, to address the problem of violence caused by exposure to television, we need to emphasize time-channel locks, program rating systems and education of the public regarding good viewing habits."

Others have proposed that the FCC regulate violence in the same way it polices indecency — using fines and withholding licenses. Harvard's Slaby says that requiring stations and cable networks to reduce violent programming and increase non-violent shows as a condition for license or contract renewal "would not restrict or alter the presentation of any violent program, as protected under the First Amendment. Rather it would promote a broader range of non-violent alternative programs from which viewers would be able to choose."

Such proposals would be welcomed by veteran children's TV writer Gene Ayres, whose Santa Fe, N.M.-based enterprise, Future Wave, prepares scripts for non-violent shows. "When these ideas are brought up inside the industry," he says, "they always roll out the First Amendment as if it's under threat. But they don't ask the difference between what's offered to children and adults. Those who resent [such proposed regulation] don't have responsibility for small children."

Labels, ratings and public service announcements, however, have yet to be embraced by Congress. Simon, as a former journalist, wants to protect the purity of free speech and prefers getting the players to sit

down and talk, says his press aide Carle, in the manner of "an arms control meeting."

Nor do the proposals sit well with longtime children's TV advocate Peggy Charren. "If you tell everybody, 'Hey, this program is going to be terribly violent and scare the wits out of you,' you'll get every teenager in America watching it," she says. "Charren has warned that 'the potential for closing down free speech in this country from ideas — liability for speech — is so horrendous that I'd rather put up with violence on television.'"

There is fear, even among anti-violence activists, that calls for a government crackdown risk encouraging what is seen as the censorship tendencies of the religious right, which, critics say, is more preoccupied with sex in media than with violence. "The religious people are getting so much power," says Lieberman. "We will have censorship some day if that happens."

The Rev. Billy A. Melvin is chairman of Christian Leaders for Responsible

Television (CLEAR-TV), a 1,600-member coalition that uses consumer boycotts of advertisers to pressure networks to reduce sex, violence and profanity. He says such criticism of the religious right masks attempts to censor his group. "We're bringing an idea into the marketplace," he says. "TV is destructive to the quality of life. We can do better and must do better for our children and our children's children."

A solid majority of the public, according to a 1989 *Los Angeles Times* poll, opposes a government crackdown on TV violence. Nearly half the respondents blamed TV audiences for the violence because they create the demand. But 71 percent favored a violence rating. "People do not see programming [sex and violence] as so affecting their lives that they're willing to give up their freedom for it," said Neil Malamuth, a communications professor at the University of Michigan. "It's a basic philosophy of American culture that we want independence and freedom."

BACKGROUND

Early Concerns

The first suspicions that the miracle of television might be a mixed blessing arose soon after the medium's debut as a popular pastime in 1947. The number of youths being arrested, which had declined immediately following World War II, rose dramatically, according to Justice Department statistics, from 31,750 in 1948 to 37,259 in 1951 to 149,806 in 1953 to 234,474 in 1956.

In June 1952, the first congressional hearing ever on violence in radio and television and its impact on children was held by the House Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. In 1954,

Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, opened a series of hearings on the effects of media violence. Following a sample viewing of TV's current cops-and-robbers fare, a British media expert told his panel that such shows would never be broadcast in England. And Clara Logan, president of the National Association for Better Radio and Television, called U.S. TV crime shows "mental poison" to youngsters.

In a pattern that would be repeated in later decades, network officials testified to the importance of industry self-regulation. ABC Vice President Robert Hinckley said he didn't believe TV "is a thing remotely approaching a factor in our problem." Russia and New Zealand, with limited or no TV facilities,

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Chronology

1950s *Rise in youth crime and juvenile delinquency prompts congressional hearings on television violence.*

June 1952

First congressional hearings on violence in radio and television and its impact on children and youth held by House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Subcommittee.

1954

Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn., chairs hearings of Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency on role of TV shows in youth crime. Networks say no link.

1960s *Urban violence prompts more congressional hearings and government funding of research on TV violence.*

1961

Kennedy administration Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton N. Minow tells National Association of Broadcasters that American TV is a "vast wasteland."

1967

University of Pennsylvania begins monitoring television programming.

1969

Formation of Boston-based Foundation to Improve Television.

Sept. 23, 1969

Report of National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence cites TV violence as contributor to society's violence problem.

1970s *Surgeon general's study prompts more congressional hearings; academic studies proliferate; court cases examine liability of TV in cases of real violence.*

1972

Surgeon general's report on violence cites evidence of link between screen violence and aggressive behavior.

1975

National PTA adopts resolution demanding that networks and local TV stations reduce the amount of violence in programs and commercials (reaffirmed in 1989).

1976

American Medical Association's House of Delegates calls TV violence an "environmental hazard."

1979

In *Zamora v. CBS et al*, parents of a Florida 15-year-old convicted of murdering a neighbor unsuccessfully sue all three networks for negligence for failing to prevent him from being incited to imitate TV.

1980s *Reagan-era deregulation gives media free rein; cable TV, VCRs and rise of independent networks diminish power of networks to control violence on TV.*

1980

Founding of National Coalition on Television Violence.

1982

National Institute of Mental Health study says there's a clear consensus on link between TV violence and aggression.

September 1984

Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence says evidence is overwhelming that TV violence contributes to real violence.

1984

American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Children and Television cautions physicians and parents that TV may promote aggression.

1985

American Psychological Association Commission on Youth and Violence notes research showing link between TV violence and real violence.

1990s *Networks issue a joint statement of policies on TV violence, made possible by an trust exemption passed by Congress. Anti-violence advocates step up pressure.*

1990

Simon-Glickman Television Violence Act gives three major networks an antitrust exemption so they can formulate joint policy on violence.

1991

Newton Minow declares: "In 1961, I worried that my children would not benefit much from television, but in 1991 I worry that my children will actually be harmed by it."

1992

American Psychological Association study shows research on link to real violence is ignored and calls for federal policy to protect society.

Dec. 11, 1992

Days before House hearings, the three major networks release joint violence policy and agree to an industry-wide conference.

Music Videos That Flirt With Violence

With their images of scantily clad women wearing lustful expressions and hurling themselves at nonchalant rock stars, MTV videos send out confusing and possibly harmful messages to the 57.3 million American households that receive MTV.

That's the thinking of Sut Jhally, a communications professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, whose criticisms of the popular videos have brought him face to face with the New York City-based cable network.

Seeking to raise his students' consciousness of the effects of television imagery, Jhally several years ago assembled "Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Rock Video," a 55-minute collection of highlights from 165 rock videos featuring superstar performers such as Mötley Crüe, Billy Idol and Rod Stewart.

Since students often were sidetracked by the pleasures of the music, Jhally substituted his own somber soundtrack and spliced in dramatic footage from the hit movie "The Accused," namely the scene (based on a true story) showing actress Jodie Foster being gang-raped on a bar-room pinball machine. He also added his own narration and a jarring recitation of statistics: "A woman is raped every six minutes," and "One in four women will be raped in their lifetime."

The result is a disturbing video critique of the way music videos use sex to sell recordings, ultimately dehumanizing women and possibly encouraging violence, according to Jhally.

The majority of MTV videos portray "the dreamworld of the adolescent male," where women are often sex objects or nymphomaniacs, he says. And though outright violence is not common on MTV, it is implied in the whips and the chains and the scenes in which women don't really mean no when they say it, he says. "Because women are presented as thinking only about sex, they don't object when they're handled," he says. "They don't object when they're touched even by someone whom they have just met. The messages don't have to be violent to encourage certain behavior. What is more important is that such images are seen as normal."

Jhally cautions that he is not arguing that MTV causes violence, noting that the roots of violence are complex and multiple. But such videos "help cultivate attitudes that in some instances may lead to certain types of behavior," he says. "The more TV you watch, the more you think the world is like TV. And you tend to act on the stories you have access to."

To promote his compilation, Jhally sent out brochures to colleges around the country. He has sold some 1,300 copies thus far (at \$100 for institutions and \$50 for individuals), with proceeds going to a nonprofit university trust fund.

MTV contends, however, that Jhally has violated its copyright by taking advantage of the "fair use" doctrine. The subsidiary of Viacom International Inc. in 1991 threatened to sue if he didn't destroy all remaining copies of "Dreamworlds." Jhally, in turn, says MTV is ignoring his contention that the video network is threatening legal action to silence substantive criticism of its product. "They are boxed in and hoping it will go away," Jhally says.

Meanwhile, MTV has continued to breed controversy. On Sept. 18, 1991, Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., took to the floor of the Senate to attack it as a reprehensible influence on children. "The central message of most of these music videos is clear," he thundered. "Human happiness and fulfillment are experienced by becoming a sociopath and rejecting all responsibility. If we in this nation continue to sow the images of murder, violence, drug abuse, sadism, arrogance, irreverence, perversion, pornography and aberration before the eyes of millions of children... we should not be surprised if the foundations of society rot away." And a 1992 study by the Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs found more violence on MTV than on the three major TV networks combined.

But at least one study has suggested that overt violence on MTV is a turnoff rather than an allure. When 400 male and female students at Oakland University in Rochester, Minn., were asked by psychologists to watch different music videos, the more violent videos made viewers feel more angry, fearful and aggressive, but less sexual, than less violent videos.[†]

"Our biggest beef with MTV is not that it's more violent or sexually degrading than other channels," says Thomas Radecki, former chairman of the National Coalition On Television Violence, "but that it's all mixed together so a viewer can't pick out a particular time period that you know there's going to be no sexually degrading material."[‡]

A 1992 study of 750 MTV videos by the coalition found that violence had increased in the past six years, averaging 20 acts of violence per hour. More than 60 per cent of the videos contained explicit violence, suggested violence, degrading sexual portrayals, sexually suggestive themes, profanity, smoking, and/or alcohol consumption, the study said. The most violent video: Guns 'N' Roses' "You Could Be Mine."

[†]Christine Hall Hansen and Ronald D. Hansen, "The Influence of Sex and Violence in the Appeal of Rock Music Videos," *Communication Research*, April 1990, p. 212.

[‡]Quoted in *Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 6, 1991.

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have major juvenile delinquency problems, he noted. An ABC script director said that TV adventure stories might even prevent delinquency by serving as "a release" for children's aggression. An FCC official testified against censorship, and a representative of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters said broadcasters had set up a code to help arrange programs addressing the topic of youth crime.

In 1956, one of the earliest studies on TV violence reported on 4-year-olds who were asked to watch an action-packed "Woody Woodpecker" cartoon. They were found to be more likely to hit and harass other kids and break toys than a control group that had watched the more peaceful "Little Red Hen."

The Senate held more hearings about TV's effects in the early 1960s, but the problem of violence reached undeniable crisis proportions following the mid-'60s urban riots in Los Angeles, Newark and elsewhere. It was in 1965, psychiatrist Centerwall observes, after the first of the television generation had become teenagers, that the biggest surge in U.S. homicides occurred.

This was a time when the airwaves were giving kids scenes of "The Three Stooges" poking each other in the eye. "ABC was the major crime center in the country," *Newsday's* Kitman recalls with sarcasm. "They had had much success with such educational TV series on machine gun usage as 'The Untouchables.' They were pioneers in the Bang-You're-Dead school of programming with such ungratuitous, unviolent programs as 'Route 66' and '77 Sunset Strip.'"

Movies also became more graphic. When the groundbreaking "Bonnie and Clyde" was released in 1967, *New Yorker* critic Pauline Kael wrote, "The dirty reality of death — not suggestions but blood and holes — is necessary. It is a kind of violence that says some-

thing to us; it is something that movies must be free to use."

Government Action

The government took action. Along with the American Medical Association, it funded the Cultural Indicators Project at the University of Pennsylvania, which began monitoring television programming for violence. President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a commission to study the roots of urban unrest. It would find that TV watching, while not the specific cause of society's violence, was a contributor. Bills were offered in Congress to prohibit TV violence, study the issue more and offer grants for improving children's TV, but none became law.

In 1969, Sen. John O. Pastore, D-R.I., petitioned the surgeon general to investigate the effects of TV violence. "What is at stake is no less than our most valuable resource — the hearts and minds of our young people," he said. While the top government doctor went to work, the Foundation to Improve Television, a new Boston-based group of business, academic and community leaders, filed a petition in 1970 demanding that the FCC ban "fictional violence and horror" programs at a time when children are likely to view them. The FCC postponed a decision pending the surgeon general's report.

The same year, the foundation also joined with some Washington, D.C., mothers of small children in a lawsuit against CBS Enterprises, the Television Advertising Representatives and the FCC to block broadcast of a TV rerun of the program "Wild, Wild West." An appeals court declined to overturn a lower court's decision denying the petition on the ground that the plaintiffs hadn't exhausted remedies at the FCC. While the foundation "does not expect or hope to become a board of censors," said its presi-

dent, Massachusetts education Commissioner William S. Abbott, it hopes to "further the development of an open, free society by proving that television entertainment is not the private domain of a few people intent on broadcasting for profit at children's expense."

Surgeon General's Report

In 1972, the surgeon general released the five-volume report, "Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence." Its controversial conclusion was that there is a causal effect from TV violence, but primarily in children presupposed to be aggressive. The report prompted Pastore to begin hearings in March.

For years "various groups have pointed to TV violence as a negative influence on human behavior," testified Rep. John M. Murphy, D-N.Y., "but they were lulled into inaction with promises from the industry that would be a diminishment of violence."

As in the 1950s, the networks came out in force, promising to address the problem. CBS/Broadcast Group President John A. Schneider pointed out that the surgeon general had argued for only a small effect in comparison with other causes of violence. "It is not clear what the net effect would be if broadcasters simply changed the quantitative balance between violent and other kinds of shows," he said, "since people and choose the kinds of stimulus material they want — and violent material is very popular." For its part, ABC promised to eliminate cartoons that depend solely on action not comedy, look more carefully at its overall amount of violence and budget \$1 million for four years of research.

The National Association of Broadcasters warned that government regulation would be "dangerous unwise." FCC Chairman Dean Burch declined to regulate violence, saying it was not for the FCC to "make fundamental programming judgments."

Imitating TV Violence?

By the mid-1970s, network TV was racking up new scores on the gore meter. CBS's 1976 grim two-nighter "Helter Skelter," a drama on the Charles Manson cult killings, drew top ratings. A Canadian royal commission that year argued for a causal link between TV violence and aggression. In 1976, the American Medical Association's House of Delegates passed a resolution saying that TV violence "threatens the health and welfare of young Americans," and committed the AMA to remedial action.

It was in 1979 that two major court cases brought TV violence to the front pages. In *Zamora v. CBS et al.*, the parents of a 15-year-old Florida boy convicted of murdering a neighbor sued all three networks for negligence. They said the industry had failed to prevent their son from being incited to imitate violence on TV. They lost. In Rhode Island, a similar case stemmed from a May 23, 1979, broadcast of "The Tonight Show." A professional stuntman on the show had announced that he would "hang" host Johnny Carson on stage. After a noose was placed around the comedian's neck, he was dropped through a trapdoor and, of course, emerged unharmed. But young Nicholas DeFilippo, apparently viewing the stunt from home, was found dead with a rope around his neck in front of a TV set tuned to NBC. In their suit against NBC for "negligence, failure to warn, product liability and intentional tort-trespass," his parents testified that their son regularly watched Carson. They also lost.

Debate over the issue, however, continued apace. When the R-rated 1978 anti-Vietnam War movie "The Deer Hunter" was shown on national TV, some 29 incidents of people imitating the famous Russian Roulette scene were reported, 26 of which were said to have caused deaths. The youngest victim was 8 years old.¹⁸

At around that time, the National PTA passed a resolution demanding from networks and local stations "a

reduction in the amount of violence shown on television programs and commercials during the entire day, with particular attention to viewing hours between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m. and weekend morning hours, when impressionable children and young people are most likely to be watching." If self-regulation doesn't work, the group said, it would demand that the FCC establish and enforce regulations limiting violence.

The '80s Explosion

Despite the studies, congressional hearings and court cases, the government did not challenge the networks' demands for self-regulation. What had changed, however, was the arrival of consumer activists and protest groups, which began putting pressure against programs seen as sexist, anti-gay, anti-Christian, or dangerous to national security. By the early 1980s, writes Kathryn C. Montgomery of the Washington-based Center for Media Education, more than 250 advocacy groups were working to change TV, and industry officials declared at a conference that the pressure groups "must now be recognized as a permanent part of the television environment."¹⁹

Even more important, the explosion of new technologies — cable and VCRs primarily — combined with Reagan-era deregulation to remake the media landscape, in particular, reducing the once-mighty clout of the three networks. Political momentum for a crack-down on violence dissipated. A relaxation of FCC requirements helped increase the amount of violence: A study by the Universities of Pennsylvania and Delaware would show that children's shows that in 1980 featured an average of 18.6 violent acts per hour would by 1990 rack up 26.4 violent acts every hour.²⁰

In 1982, the National Institute of

Mental Health produced a follow-up to the 1972 surgeon general's report: "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties." The conclusions were more far-reaching, arguing that TV violence affects all children, not just those predisposed to aggression. ABC responded by saying that TV violence had gone down in recent years. CBS called the government researchers "uncritical" and said the report was put together by individuals "who came to it with publicly identified positions on the role of television in society."

Congressional Action

It was in the mid-1980s that Sen. Paul Simon happened to flick on the TV in an Illinois motel and see an actor being sawed in half with a chainsaw. This led the outraged Simon to introduce the Television Violence Act, which was finally passed in 1990 with backing from the National PTA, the American Psychological Association and the Academy of Pediatrics. The bill granted the three major networks a three-year exemption from the Sherman Antitrust Act so they could pursue a joint agreement on curbing TV violence. It did not require the networks to act, but encouraged them.

"We should not and cannot dictate the content of television programming," said the bill's House sponsor, Rep. Dan Glickman, D-Kan. "An obstacle to a voluntary reduction in violence by the networks is that, in this intensely competitive business, it is commonly held that violence sells. Each network is reluctant to take unilateral steps to reduce violent programming for fear of slipping in the ratings."

The bill was opposed by the ACLU, which called it "a wholly inappropriate and unconstitutional effort to shape the content of American television." Leading the floor opposition was Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif.,

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Video Games and Push-Button Aggression

Nothing altered childhood more visibly in the 1980s than the arrival of the age of Nintendo. Children huddling around the TV engrossed in Deadly Towers, Guerrilla War or Mighty Bomb Jack became a familiar sight, fueling the debate over simulated violence and its link to the real thing.

Research on the effects of video games is still in its infancy, but some authorities speculate that pulling triggers in interactive electronics may be more conducive to aggression in children than the passive viewing of a television show. "It's a matter of practice," says Leonard Eron of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. "The more a child practices, the more apt he is to use the skill he's practicing."

In December 1989, the National Coalition On Television Violence (NCTV) released its monitoring results on 176 Nintendo games. It concluded that 80 percent contained "harmful violence," a substantial increase from several years earlier. The coalition slapped its X rating for extreme violence on 44 percent of the games and cited 27 academic studies of video games, 22 of which found harmful effects. "Players can now launch nuclear missiles, initiate revolutions and toss grenades into Asian villages," read an NCTV statement. "Combat is often one-on-one and exceedingly graphic. The final step takes players beyond the war theme — into the realm of gang warfare. Instead of battles between the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys,' there is now a significant lack of 'good guys.'"

Bill White, director of advertising and public relations at Nintendo's Redmond, Wash., office, says the Japanese man-

ufacturer is very concerned about the issues raised by the coalition. "But the reality is there is no scientific evidence linking video games to aggressive behavior," he says. "Our games feature lots of good versus evil. It's no different from Grimm's fairy tales, which are widely accepted."

Nintendo, which racked up \$4 billion in sales last year, follows standards modeled on the film rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America and the standards and practices principles used at the three major TV networks, White says. The standards prohibit exceptional violence, negative stereotypes and depictions of drugs, alcohol or tobacco.

Video games are violent, says Patricia Marks Greenfield, a psychology professor at the University of California-Los Angeles, because that is what attracts boys, who make up 65 percent of the market.†

Mental health professionals have taken both sides in the debate, many arguing that video games affect individual children differently. Psychiatrist Joseph Cassius of Memphis, Tenn., says the games "can develop a sense of proficiency without fear of conflict. Many children who are afraid to compete with others are not afraid with the video."

But Cassius adds, "We are the parents, and we have the power. We can decide that we don't want to reinforce a child's disposition to aggression. But if he's a fairly mellow kid, playing an aggressive game is not going to change his personality." ‡

†Quoted in *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 8, 1993.

‡Quoted in *The Washington Post*, Dec. 10, 1990.

Nintendo games rated X/Unfit have "constant, graphic violence," XV games have "high levels of very harmful violence," and RV games require players to "become more violent to win."

Rated X (unfit)

Adventures of Bayou Billy
Castlevania: The Vampire Strikes Back
Deadly Towers
Double Dragon
Gauntlet
Ghosts n' Goblins
Guerrilla War
Kung Fu
Metroid
Mighty Bomb Jack
Ninja Kid
Operation Wolf
Solomon's Key
Spoon
Star Voyager
Sunder
Tiger Heli
Wizards & Warriors
Worldrunner

Source: National Coalition on Television Violence

Rated XV

Airwolf
Armagon
Bionic Commando
Break Thru
Quest
Cobra Command
Evil Empire
Defender
Dragon Power
Freedom Force
Gun Smoke
Iron Tank
Kage
Kid Niki
Life Force
MAGMAX
Mike Tyson's Punch-out!
Teenage Mutant Ninja
Venom the Avenger

Rated RV

Athena
Blades of Steel
Bobbie Bubble
Clu Clu Land
Commando
Excitebike
Gotcha!
Gyromike
Ice Climber
Karnov
Mach Rider
Mario Bros.
Popeye
Rad Racer
Renegade
Skate or Die
Spy Hunter
Robo Warrior
Super Mario Bros.

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who called it "indirect censorship, clear and simple.... Broadcasters understand the tremendous power of

Congress.... The message from 'Big Brother' to TV executives is clear: 'If you don't comply — watch out!' ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Pressuring the FCC

When the networks released their joint standards in December, Sen. Simon predicted that progress in reducing violence should be evident in the fall programming for 1993. But Rep. Schumer, while applauding the move, noted that the networks had rushed out their statement only days before his hearings in order to "have something nice to say." He said the statement alone wouldn't solve the problem and that he would like to see a violence rating system. He plans to consider legislation if the networks won't do it voluntarily.

The networks, however, added in a letter that "the amount of violence on television cannot be adequately addressed unless other segments of the industry join us." Cooperation from the cable and film industries and the independent networks such as Fox is expected to materialize at an industry conference on television violence planned for this summer in Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, in January the National Cable Television Association released results of a new study showing relatively little violence on cable-originated programming. "We believe that the depiction of violence is a legitimate dramatic and journalistic representation of an unavoidable part of human existence," the cable association said. "We also believe that the gratuitous use of violence depicted as an easy and convenient solution

to human problems is harmful to our industry and society."

Critics asked why the study did not examine violence in non-original feature films, to which cable association spokeswoman Peggy Laramie responded that violence in feature films has already been studied and that her group's plan was to "look at what cable brought to the mix." The group has promised a follow-up study.

The Foundation to Improve Television, though dormant since the mid-1970s, was recently reactivated to mount a campaign to get the FCC to crack down on TV violence. Late this March it plans to formally ask the regulatory body to make license renewal contingent on stations showing no programs containing an "excessive amount of dramatized violence" between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. The petition also is expected to ask for advance viewer advisories and visual warning signals during programs with violence, a ban on ads or promotions with dramatized violence, a ratings system for violence and additional guidelines to be developed by the FCC in consultation with the industry.

The foundation argues that countries such as Canada, France, Great Britain, Sweden and Australia have taken action, fining television companies that broadcast violence during children's hours. It is working with business leaders and community groups to provide information and legal advice to send a "powerful message" to the TV industry.

The FCC, which received 79 complaints about violence in 1992 and 85 in 1991, does not police the amount of violence on America's TV stations. A spokesman cites Section 326 of the 1934 Federal Communications Act,

which prohibits censorship. If the FCC were to regulate violence in the way it regulates indecency, he says, Congress would have to pass a statute. "All we can do," said James H. Quello, interim chairman of the FCC, "is mention in a speech that Hollywood and cable and the networks are actually flooding the airwaves with too many violent programs, and some of these kids are starting to imitate the violence they see." Quello applauds the work of Americans for Responsible Television, founded several years ago by Michigan housewife Terry Rakolta, who became offended at vulgarity on the TV show "Married...With Children," and who has also launched a campaign to persuade Congress to limit TV violence.

The National Coalition on Television Violence continues to release its regular rankings of the most violent shows. Its February list tagged the Fox network as the most violent broadcast network, with 11 violent acts per hour. "We were stunned," said Betsy Hoffman, Fox vice president for publicity, noting that the shows the coalition is counting include "America's Most Wanted" and "The Edge." "'America's Most Wanted' is responsible for the capture of 243 fugitives," she says. "It's the one show dedicated to ending violence. The Edge' is a parody and satire of violence. The whole claim is ridiculous."

In Santa Fe, the scriptwriters working for Future Wave are nearing the production phase of a non-violent children's cartoon called "Astrocops." It uses a former Los Angeles police officer as a consultant. "The challenge of being non-violent can bring out the best in writers," says Gene Ayres, who's written more than 50 cartoon episodes for such shows as "Scooby Doo" and "The Smurfs." "It's more interesting if you don't do the expected — the slug in the jaw and the hero who's faster on the draw and bigger than the bad guy. We're not asking the industry to kill Bugs Bunny, just to provide an alternative."

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At Issue:

Should the television industry do more to curb depictions of violence?

LEONARD D. ERON

Professor of psychology, University of Michigan

FROM "MEDIA VIOLENCE: ARE STANDARDS FOR TV AND FILM POSSIBLE?" HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH PANEL DISCUSSION, MAY 11, 1992

a recent summary of over 200 studies, published in 1990 offers convincing evidence that the observation of violence, as seen in standard everyday television entertainment, does affect the aggressive behavior of the viewer. . . .

What can be done? As soon as the suggestion for action comes up, the TV industry raises the issue of censorship, violation of First Amendment rights and abrogation of the Constitution. For many years now Western European countries have monitored TV and films and have not permitted the showing of excess violence, especially during child viewing hours. I have never heard of any complaints by citizens in those democratic countries that their rights have been violated. But in the U.S., youth violence is a public health problem, so designated by the Centers for Disease Control [an. Prevention]. . . . No one is claiming that TV violence is the sole cause of the epidemic. However, it is certainly *one* of the causes, and one which we at least can do something about. Is it too much to ask the industry to police itself? It has done so before with some success.

I don't favor censorship and I am jealous of my First Amendment rights. But I don't think some serious self-regulation and monitoring by the TV and film industry is a threat to our constitutional rights.

It would be appropriate for the FCC to require stations to document what they have done to lower the violence in their programming before their licenses are renewed. . . .

In the spring [of 1992] we had to face the implications of the uncontrolled violence in Los Angeles. TV cannot escape its share of the responsibility for this outburst. We know that children living in the inner city watch more TV than other children. Children living in the inner city are increasingly surrounded by violence — at home, in the neighborhood, on the way to and from school. They are constantly dodging bullets, cowering in hallways, hiding under tables, because the streets are so dangerous from drive-by shootings and other violence. They spend more and more time indoors watching TV.

And what do they see on TV? More violence. This validates what the children have seen in the neighborhood. It makes violence normative — everyone's doing it, not just in their neighborhood but all over. TV represents violence as an appropriate way to solve interpersonal problems, to get what you want out of life, avenge slights and insults and make up for perceived injustices.

DEL ROSSA

President, Writers Guild of America, West

FROM "MEDIA VIOLENCE: ARE STANDARDS FOR TV AND FILM POSSIBLE?" HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH PANEL DISCUSSION, MAY 11, 1992

the only way to significantly reduce violence, or the threat of violence, in storytelling is for networks and cable to simply not order series or special films which are, virtually by definition, inherently violent, such as action-adventure, crime, futuristic melodrama, etc., and use instead the softer genres, such as we see on the networks now, shows such as *Homefront*, *Sisters*, *Northern Exposure*, and so on. Not a very realistic possibility, however.

Networks, as you know, follow. They do not lead. Networks react to social change and community standards. I know. I have served as a story editor on many weekly series. Story editors scan the headlines, searching for ways to paraphrase the truth and put it into fictional form. . . .

I believe that additional guidelines for violence should not be called for because they will simply reduce the actual sights of some violence but not the threatening storytelling that builds to it, and therefore such guidelines would be a crumb thrown to those who believe in a causal relationship.

I believe that writers should continue to tell the stories of our time. Abuse in the home toward children, or parents, or grandparents is out of the closet now, thanks to its dramatization on television. Child custody struggles, in which the losing parent literally kidnaps a child, at last is before the American public as the serious social problem that it is. Fictional television has seen this dramatized frequently. Gay bashing has found its way from the dark alleys of our cities to the films of both weekly series and movies-of-the-week. The violence on the home screen follows the violence in our lives.

We've lived with Broadcast Standards for 40 years, fighting the departments frequently, losing most of the fights, but reacting positively as networks followed changes in community standards from the days of no "hells" and no "damns" to today's relatively explicit language, frank relationships and open dramatizations of dysfunctional families. Writers want to involve audiences in our stories. Writers are family people, too. We're parents and children and siblings and grandparents and grandchildren. We are community-minded and we care deeply about the world around us. We are as shocked and concerned by what is happening on our streets, on our schoolyards, in our classrooms and in our homes, as any of you. We agree on very little but we do agree on fundamentals, such as freedom of expression and freedom from censorship, the official kind and the unofficial kind which induces self-censorship.

TV News: Violence Is Part of Our World Tonight

"If it bleeds, it leads," goes the cynics' view of television news. But now stations that start off newscasts with generous doses of gore and mayhem are being held responsible for their role in feeding Americans their steady diet of television violence.

The issue was dramatized in January after a North Lauderdale, Fla., station aired footage of a man shooting his ex-wife at their daughter's grave. Emilio Nunez's deadly act was taped by a stunned camera crew for the Spanish-language station, which had been alerted to a possible confrontation. Stations around the country aired the shooting, and many were taken to task.

Los Angeles Times TV critic Howard Rosenberg slammed the use of the "unnecessary" and "valueless" footage, even wondering whether the station had set up the confrontation. "The self-serving hucksters snapped it up, capitalizing on tragedy for the sake of creating unforgettable ghastly TV," Rosenberg wrote.[†] He noted that Channel 2 in Los Angeles, whose news director reportedly urges his editorial staff to "scare viewers to death," had used the arrest of Nunez as a pretext for rebroadcasting the tape a few days later.

At Los Angeles Channel 5, News Director Warren Cereghino defended the footage, saying it aptly illustrated "unfortunate domestic violence and emotion escalating to such a violent level." The news producer at LA's Channel 9 justified the airing by saying it was part of the "ethical debate" on whether such visuals should be shown. Other news executives noted that the scene wasn't gory and didn't show blood or contorted faces. But some stations that used the tape later apologized.

In an era when real-life violence — be it the Persian Gulf War or the police beating of motorist Rodney King — are commonly caught by cameras, viewers' tolerance for grisly sights is clearly being expanded. "But a Gulf war is only once in a while," notes University of Pennsylvania communications Professor George Gerbner. "The

everyday crime the media cover is more graphic and appeals to the sensational and the spectacular. It adds to the general sense of vulnerability" among the population.

Some observers feel that local news coverage of violence often glorifies the bad guys. "When a cop gets blown away," complains *Newsday* TV critic Marvin Korman, "his killer gets more coverage than the cop's funeral on TV news."

Many critics of TV violence, however, make clear distinctions between entertainment and news. "There are people who say, 'Well, if you are going to take off violence [from television], then you are going to have to remove Bosnia from the television news,'" Sen. Paul Simon, D-III, told the *Senate* last June. "The reality is that violence on the news does not glamorize violence. Entertainment violence glamorizes violence."

"News violence is a tough call and should be handled case by case," says Edward Donnerstein, a professor of communications at the University of California-Santa Barbara. "You don't want to sanitize the world; there are horrors out there."

"As soon as you try to draw lines" about what should be shown on TV, says Robert Peck of the American Civil Liberties Union, "you affect news and information that people need to live."

Faced with the twin obligations of reporting the truth and keeping ratings high, TV news departments are unlikely to establish formal rules about reducing violence. But producers with dramatic footage have been known to finesse the problem with an advance warning. When circus tightrope walker Karl Wallenda plunged to his death in 1978, news anchors didn't prevent viewers from witnessing the event. But many anchors somberly warned, "Some of you may not wish to watch."

[†] *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 22, 1993.

In Los Angeles, the nonprofit group Mediascope is putting on workshops, seminars and public education campaigns — often on location in Hollywood studios — to promote a more accurate and balanced depiction of violence in films and TV. The group has received a \$675,000 grant from the Carnegie Corp. of New York City, as well as a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Mediascope is also working with film schools to encourage a code of ethics

and promoting the need for research on the effects of violence that is up-to-date and practical. "The research community sees the entertainment media as negative," says Mediascope President Marcy Kelly. "The media dismiss the research. There's a need to come together and bridge the gap." Much of modern TV violence is highly unrealistic, she adds. "There are no consequences. You don't see children who've lost their parents, parents who've lost their children, people who can't walk, who've lost

their homes because of nine months spent recuperating. You just see this believable aggression, and then they cut to the hero at a cocktail party!"

"The whole issue is very circular," she continues. "The writer will say, 'That's what the producer wants me to write.' The producer will say, 'That's what the network wants.' The network will say, 'That's what the advertisers want.' The advertisers will say, 'That's what the public wants.' The question is, how can we break the circle?"

OUTLOOK

What Can Be Done?

If television had never been invented, society would have been spared 10,000 homicides, 70,000 rapes and 700,000 assaults, hypothesizes psychiatrist Centerwall.

On the other hand, "By having television entertainment with adequate sex and violence," argues Jib Fowles, a University of Houston-Clear Lake media studies professor, "Americans are nightly able to empty their subconscious; aggressive fantasies produce tranquil minds."

The reason TV viewers gawk at faked violence like passersby rubbernecking at an auto wreck is because "males are taught a lot of things to embrace — be strong, not to feel, see power at all costs, win/lose, be a soldier — they're all presented as appropriate male attitudes," says peace studies Professor Crews. "Most of it is nurture, not nature. It's a social reality that is constructed."

"The male demand for violent entertainment comes about not because males innately want to see violence, but because these shows put forth strong male role models," says Harvard's Prothrow-Stith. "Men are looking for heroes. They look for men who are effective. And in watching television, particularly if there's not a father in the home, you find the male heroes are presented in terms of violent action."

Actually, violence doesn't seem so popular if you look at the top-rated shows,* which are predominantly sit-

coms, says Gerbner. But, he adds, "Violence travels well, unlike humor," which means that Hollywood is likely to continue producing more violence as its products are marketed overseas because it needs no translation.

Activists at Harvard and elsewhere have argued that the movement against TV violence should take a cue from the anti-smoking, anti-drunken-driving and environmental movements, all of which have had success in winning cooperation from scriptwriters, producers and directors in Hollywood to highlight their causes. But creative people wield limited power in the entertainment industry. Hollywood writer and actor Ben Stein says: "I remember so many times coming [to the Warner Bros. lot] and pitching [scripts to executives]. Pitching and thinking, 'I've got to sell this, no matter what, I have to sell this, I've just got to sell this. It doesn't matter. Ask me to put in a scene of torturing nuns, I'll do it. I'll do anything to make this sale.'"

Alternatives for Parents

On a personal level, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that parents limit children's TV viewing to one to two hours per day. The National PTA advises parents to watch children's favorite programs as well as the news with their children, discuss the violence, explain how violence is faked on entertainment shows and encourage children to watch programs with characters who cooperate with each other rather than fight.

Advice columnist Ann Landers recently recommended, when a reader complained about sex and violence on TV, that viewers call local stations with their complaints. "I, too, deplore the garbage on TV, but it is vitally important that we not interfere with the rights of those who like it," she wrote. "Written protests to the sponsors are effective, but the most immediate censor is simply to use the off button."

Beth Waxman Bressan, CBS Broadcast Group vice president, recently testified that her network receives upwards of 600,000 pieces of mail each year but that less than 1 percent complain about violence. On the other hand, at least one sponsor of cable programming, Time-Life Books, recently withdrew its ad for a series of books on crime featuring serial killers Ted Bundy, Charles Manson and Richard Speck because of viewer complaints about poor taste.

"If I were a parent or a PTA group, I'd pick up the phone and call the local TV station," says Doug Wills, a spokesman for the National Association of Broadcasters. "The programming manager there doesn't want to alienate his audience, and it is in his interest to be responsive for competitiveness reasons." In general, Wills adds, "with some exceptions, such as the three recent movies on the Amy Fisher case that made executives uncomfortable, most of television meets the viewing needs of the public and doesn't set out to offend anyone."

TV critic Kitman says the solution to TV violence is for the networks to use their power to produce hour-long Michael Jackson or Madonna specials with the message that "only creeps carry guns."

More important, says children's activist Peggy Charren, "we need public policy to focus on the root causes of violence in this country. Poverty is what you fix if you want to do something about violence."

"Other countries find us strange," says Donnerstein. "Violence is as American as apple pie. But sex and profanity upset people the most. There's an outcry if you show partial nudity, but viewers don't care if people get hacked up."

The best chance for a federal effort against TV violence would come if the issue were taken up by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton or a group like the Children's Defense Fund, says scriptwriter Ayres. "A heavy-

*The top 20 network prime-time shows during the week of March 8, according to the A.C. Nielsen Co., were: "Home Improvement," "60 Minutes," "Men Don't Tell," "Coach," "Roseanne," "PrimeTime Live," "Rescue 911," "Murder, She Wrote," "Seinfeld," "Cheers," "20/20," "Northern Exposure," "Murphy Brown," "Full House," "Dr. Quinn," "Medicine Woman," "Unsolved Mysteries," "People's Choice Awards," "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "The Simpsons" and "Day One."

weight political lobby would be needed because the industry will fight tooth and nail."

In November, then-President-elect Clinton told *TV Guide* that makers of films and TV programs "could, without undermining their artistic integrity, have a major new impact on the way people view the world.... There's no question the cumulative impact of this banalization of sex and violence in the popular culture is a net negative for America."¹

"When I first came to Los Angeles and warned of the effects of TV violence," says the NCTV's Lieberman, "I thought they'd say 'Oh, OK, we'll fix it.' But 10 years later, I'm still beating my head against the wall. The people here are literally getting away with murder." ■

Notes

¹ Quoted in *TV Guide*, "Is Violence Battering Our Kids?" Aug. 22-28, 1992, p. 8. Prothow-Stash's book, *Deadly Consequences: How Violence Is Destroying Our Teenage Population*, was published in 1991.

² Figures taken from a special report on violence in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 10, 1992.

³ Gerbner testified Dec. 15, 1992, at hearings

on TV violence held by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice.

⁴ Ron Taffel, "Making Your Child Feel Safe in a Scary World," *McCall's*, February 1993, p. 60.

⁵ See Nancy Carlsson-Paige and Diane E. Levin, "The Subversion of Healthy Development and Play: Teachers' Reactions to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Day Care and Early Education," winter 1991.

⁶ Testimony before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, March 1992.

⁷ Testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice, Dec. 15, 1992.

⁸ Speaking in a panel discussion on TV violence at the Harvard School of Public Health, May 11, 1992, published by *Mediascope*, January 1993.

⁹ Carl M. Cannon, "Violent Verdict: Connecting TV and Real-Life Aggression," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 19, 1989.

¹⁰ Stuart Oskamp (ed.), *Television as a Social Issue*, (1988), p. 190.

¹¹ Quoted in *TV Guide*, op. cit.

¹² Albert J. Reiss Jr. and Jeffrey A. Roth, editors, *Understanding and Preventing Violence*, (1993) p. 7.

¹³ Forthcoming APA paper quoted in David S. Barry, "Screen Violence and America's Children," *The Journal of the Writers Guild of America, West*, December/January, 1993, p. 16.

¹⁴ Oskamp, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁵ Quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1992.

¹⁶ Oskamp, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁷ Kenneth D. Gadow and Joyce Sprafkin, "Field Experiments of Television Violence with Children: Evidence for an Environmental Hazard?" *Pediatrics*, March 3, 1989, p. 399.

¹⁸ Oskamp, op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁹ *U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 1, 1993, p. 65.

²⁰ *Journal of the American Medical Association*, op. cit.

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²² Harvard panel discussion, op. cit.

²³ *TV Guide*, op. cit.

²⁴ Quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 24, 1989.

²⁵ Quoted in *Newsweek*, April 1, 1991, p. 52.

²⁶ Robert Wharton and Frederick Mandell, "Violence on Television and Imitative Behavior," *Pediatrics*, June 1985, p. 1121.

²⁷ Kathryn C. Montgomery, *Target: Prime Time: Advocacy Groups and the Struggle Over Entertainment Television*, (1989) p. 6.

²⁸ *The Washington Post*, Jan. 29, 1990.

²⁹ Quoted in *Newsweek*, Dec. 21, 1992.

³⁰ Quoted by The Associated Press, March 12, 1993.

³¹ Jib Fowles, *Why Viewers Watch: A Reappraisal of Television's Effects*, (1992) p. 244.

³² Harvard panel, op. cit.

³³ Panel discussion directed by Independent Feature Project/West, Oct. 20, 1990, published by *Mediascope*, Oct. 1992.

³⁴ Ann Landers column, Feb. 20, 1993.

³⁵ Harvard panel discussion, op. cit.

³⁶ Quoted in *The Washington Post*, Nov. 13, 1992.

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Two University of Illinois-Chicago psychologists edited this survey of the academic literature on the link between television violence and real-life aggression. They examine how other countries have dealt with the problem.

Montgomery, Kathryn C., *Target: Prime Time: Advocacy Groups and the Struggle Over Entertainment Television*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

A communications professor now working with the Center for Media Education explores the rise of advocacy groups that began pressuring the television industry during the 1970s, addressing such issues as sexism, gay bashing and anti-Americanism on TV.

Oskamp, Stuart (ed.), *Television as a Social Issue: Applied Social and Psychology Annual*, Sage Publications, 1988.

A psychologist edited this compendium of essays on the much-studied conundrum of whether TV violence causes real violence. Includes academic papers as well as contributions from TV executives and civil libertarians.

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A screenwriter and journalist examines how violence on television has intensified since TV's embryonic days in the 1950s. He surveys recent studies and asks screenwriters to "face the evidence" about TV's potential harms.

Centerwall, Brandon S., "Television and Violence: The Scale of the Problem and Where to Go From Here," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 10 1992.

A University of Washington psychiatrist reports on his examination of the rise in homicide rates in South Africa following the introduction of television. He gives his prescription for dealing with the problem in the United States in this special issue devoted to violence.

Harvard School of Public Health, "Media Violence: Standards for TV and Film Possible?", transcript of a panel discussion, May 11, 1992, published by *Isoscope*, January 1993.

Academics, advocates and television professionals debate the adequacy of current industry standards on violence and whether the proposed cures for the epidemic of TV violence risk censorship.

Pristin, Terry, "Soul-Searching on Violence by the Industry," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1992.

A Hollywood journalist reports on inter-industry conflicts over the risks of portraying violence, noting many of the obstacles facing those who propose remedies.

"Violence on Television: A Symposium and Sponsored by the Editors of *TV Guide*," *Editors of TV Guide*.

This is an expanded version of the roundtable discussion among experts on TV violence that appeared in the Aug 22-28, 1992, issue of the national weekly. Panelists include TV executives, TV critics, academics and policy advocates.

"Violence in Our Culture: As America binges on believe gore, you have to ask: What are we doing to ourselves?" *Newsweek*, April 1, 1991.

A leading newsweekly's roundup of what critics, producers and academics believe are the risks of society's titillation with fictional violence and horror.

The Next Step

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Cable television

Hall, Jane, "Standards on violence urged for cable TV," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 16, 1992, p. D3.

During a Dec. 15, 1992, congressional subcommittee meeting, the cable TV industry came under added pressure to enact industrywide guidelines on depicting violence.

Jackson, Robert L., "Cable vows to tackle issue of violence on TV," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 28, 1993, p. A14.

The cable TV industry promised on Jan. 27, 1993, to address the problem of violence on its programs.

Children and television

Ingersoll, Brenda, "Dramatic re-enactments may hurt kids," *Detroit News & Free Press*, Dec. 6, 1992, p. C1.

TV's popular "reality" shows, such as "Rescue 911," are attracting a greater number of child viewers and generating concern among parents and experts in child psychology.

Silver, Marc, "Troubling TV ads," *U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 1, 1993, pp. 65-67.

Parents may feel safe about letting their children watch some prime-time TV programs, but they may not be aware of the violent commercials airing during the shows.

Williams, Michael, "He-Men yield to humor as Kidvid defends niche," *Variety*, July 27, 1992, p. 39.

Programmers of children's shows are increasingly blending animated programming with news, documentaries and drama series. They are also calling for less violence.

Community response

Braxton, Greg, "Hitting TV violence with the 'off switch,'" *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 12, 1992, p. F3.

Nov. 13, 1992 will be the second annual grass-roots "Turn Off the TV Day," a nationwide effort of a group of people fed up with the sex and violence on TV.

Came, Barry, "A child's crusade," *Maclean's*, Dec. 7, 1992, pp. 46-47.

Virginia Lariviere felt the person who killed her sister may have been influenced by TV. She and her family gathered nearly 1.3 million signatures on a petition to curb and eventually eliminate violence on Canadian TV.

Dennis, Everette E., "Mounting a campaign against

media illiteracy," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 8, 1992, pp. B1-B2.

Dennis argues that viewers must understand that the media form a powerful social institution with the potential to foster violence.

Perkins, Joseph, "Tawdry search for ratings," *The Washington Times*, Jan. 17, 1993, p. B3.

Perkins comments on the three TV networks' made-for-television movies about "trollup-cum-attempted murderess Amy Fisher" and says the networks are only interested in "exploiting violence and mayhem for ratings and profits."

Stark, Steven, "Prime-time criminals," *Boston Globe*, Jan. 4, 1993, p. 11.

Stark decries the glorification of persons who commit "spectacular" crimes by the media via television movies and quasi-news programs, noting the cases of Mark David Chapman, who shot and killed John Lennon, and teenager Amy Fisher, the "Long Island Lolita" who shot the wife of her alleged adult lover.

Braxton, Greg, "TV described as being catalyst for lawlessness," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 22, 1992, p. A31.

Live TV coverage of the Los Angeles riots was a catalyst for further looting and violence, according to the special panel investigating police response to the civil unrest.

Braxton, Greg and Steve, "Fla. killing shocks L.A. viewers," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 21, 1993, p. F1.

Many viewers called to criticize the Los Angeles TV stations that showed a man shooting his estranged wife in a Florida cemetery.

Freeman, Mike, "L.A.'s local news takes to the streets," *Broadcasting*, May 4, 1992, p. 11.

When violence erupted in South-Central Los Angeles following the verdict in the Rodney King trial, local TV stations offered graphic live transmissions of it. Other coverage of the riots, looting and fires is discussed.

Kolbert, Elizabeth, "Killing shown on TV prompts debate," *The New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1993, p. A10.

The decisions by TV news shows around the nation to broadcast a videotape of the brutal killing of Maritza Nunez has prompted calls of outrage.

Rondell, Avital, "Haunted TV: Rodney King/video/trauma," *Artforum*, September 1992, pp. 71-73.

The beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers is examined in relation to TV's representation of violence and crime, making them a media event.

Waters, Harry F., "America's ugliest home videos," *Newsweek*, June 15, 1992, pp. 59-60.

The proliferation of shows that air home video recordings of murders and other grisly events for viewing is discussed.

Weiner, Stewart, "Shock TV," *TV Guide*, April 4, 1992, pp. 30-32.

"I Witness Vicks" is discussed for its impact in bringing harrowing, real-life incidents to U.S. TV audiences.

Legislation

Foale, Geoffrey and Randy Sukow, "Schumer wants violence rating for TV shows," *Broadcasting*, Dec. 21, 1992, pp. 38-39.

House Crime and Criminal Justice Subcommittee Chairman Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., has proposed special warnings or a ratings system, like that used for films, to alert parents about violence levels on TV shows.

Hodges, Ann, "TV violence can be dangerous," *Houston Chronicle*, Jan. 24, 1993, p. Z11.

Hodges comments on an initiative by Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., aimed at making TV networks restrict the violence that they allow to be broadcast on their programs.

Kurtz, Howard, "Clinton takes shot at Hollywood, TV," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 13, 1992, p. A4.

President-elect Clinton says he is "mortified" by some of what is shown on TV and that Hollywood should take the lead in "deglamorizing mindless sex and violence."

Rosenberg, Howard, "Conferences won't end TV carnage," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 1, 1993, p. F1.

Rosenberg discusses the proliferation of TV violence, despite the 1990 Television Improvement Act.

Network response

Goodman, Adam and Robert L., "Networks to limit violence," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 12, 1992, p. A12.

The nation's three largest television networks have agreed on voluntary standards to limit TV violence.

Hodges, Ann, "Rallying cry at CBS is family values," *Houston Chronicle*, Jan. 14, 1993, p. E1.

The TV networks are responding to complaints about too much sex and violence on TV programming by softening their plot lines and adding more romance.

"Violence-free TV," *Denver Post*, Dec. 17, 1992, p. B12.

An editorial says that while anti-violence guidelines adopted by the three major television networks look good in theory, they probably won't have much effect.

Regulation

Ostrow, Joanne, "Those who value free speech tune out TV violence," *Denver Post*, Dec. 12, 1992, p. A21.

Ostrow opposes the regulation of violence on TV for of infringing on the First Amendment and concern who creates the guidelines.

Shah, Sonia, "Couch potatoes like big guns," *Nuclear Times*, Winter 1991, pp. 41-42.

The epidemic of TV depictions of violence and harassment has bred a generation of hostile, alienated, paranoid Americans. The effects of TV violence and the difficulty of regulating levels of violence on TV are discussed.

Research and studies

Brady, Diane, "The power of 'cowabunga,'" *Teen's*, Dec. 7, 1992, p. 50.

The American Psychological Association states that TV violence can encourage aggressive behavior.

Clark, Kenneth R., "Yes, TV violence is awful, what's the cure?" *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1992, p. 1.

Kenneth R. Clark discusses case studies that indicate that TV is a prime factor in the increase of U.S. violence.

Johnson, Bill, "Exposure to on-screen violence our children," *Detroit News*, Jan. 8, 1993, p. A8.

Johnson comments on the proposed reduction in TV violence, concluding there is a link between excessive violence on TV and real-life aggression.

Price, James H., Elaine A. Merrill and Michael E. Clause, "The depiction of guns on prime time television," *Journal of School Health*, January 1992, pp. 15-18.

The role of violence on prime-time TV was assessed by studying two weeks of regular prime-time programming four major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox) for scenes in which guns were either used or displayed.

Vobejda, Barbara, "Home alone, glued to the TV," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 10, 1992, p. A3.

Millions of American teenagers spend much of their time without supervision, a Carnegie Corporation study found, issuing a bleak description of young people who rarely read but often devote themselves to watching television and involvement in drugs, gangs, violence and sex.

And now, a word from a Mother

THE WASHINGTON POST

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 1993

**Forget the First Amendment.
When it Comes to TV Violence,
All I Care About
Is Protecting My Kids.**

By Megan Rosenfeld
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two weeks ago I was sent to the Capitol Hill press conference at which the major networks announced their new plan to label violent television shows. It was a last-minute assignment, and I grabbed the only note-pad I could find in the house. Once I sat down in the crowded and tension-filled hearing room in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, I turned to the top page of the note pad and found a drawing by my 9-year-old son—of a beautifully detailed weapon carefully labeled "infinity war mutant bounty gun."

So, guys, I said to myself as I leaned back and looked at the suits lined up at the microphone, tell me about violence on TV.

There has been a lot of moaning in reaction to these labels. One side, the anti-violence lobby, says they're a palliative, a crumb tossed at the mob to stall legislators from actually regulating the airwaves, a license to produce even more violence as long as it's labeled. The other side, the so-called "creative community" and the civil liberties dogmatists, is crying about artistic freedom and the First Amendment. Labeling, they say, is the first step down the slippery slope of censorship. "I think we are being enormously scapegoated," producer Dick Wolf ("Law & Order") told this newspaper. "If you listen to Congress, it's [as if] television is the root of all social ills in this country."

Oh, please. I find myself curiously unmoved by television producers covering themselves with a First

Amendment flag. As far as I'm concerned, they have abrogated their rights to freedom of speech by being so resolutely unconcerned about the impact of what they put on television. That includes the 100,000 acts of violence, ranging from a "menacing threat with a weapon" (226 examples in one day's monitoring by the Center for Media and Public Affairs) to "serious assaults excluding use of guns" (389 incidents), that the average child will have watched by the end of elementary school. Too often, television is not about pro-

tecting speech, it is about protecting a business, and pretending otherwise is foolish.

The much-lauded Steven Bochco is offering a new series this fall on ABC, "NYPD Blue," which, it has been widely predicted, will "push the edge of the envelope" of profanity, nudity and artistic violence. This show is often cited as the work of a highly creative mind that could be hindered by the imposition of taste standards, even the puny one of labeling. I'm sure that Bochco will be just artistic as all get-out, but what happens when he gets bored with the show, as

See VIOLENCE, C3, C4, 1

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he did with "L.A. Law," and leaves it in the hands of lesser mortals? We'll be left with a flabby envelope and no art.

We have an unfortunate tradition in this country of putting the "rights" of adults before the needs of children. You can see that demonstrated every day in courthouses, classrooms and social work bureaucracies everywhere. Television is no exception: Every socially useful change that has been made in recent years—like the elimination of cigarette and liquor advertising or identifying the early evening hours for "family" viewing—has been forced down the networks' throats. Somehow, I am not convinced that they want to use the First Amendment in my family's interest.

"The whole issue is very circular," Marcy Kelly, president of a watchdog and education group based in Los Angeles called Mediascope, told

Let's segregate all the violent shows on one channel—the V Network. If that works, we can move on to the Stupid Sitcom Network, the Humiliating Game Show Channel and the Grotesque Talk Show Broadcasting System.

CQ Researcher. "The writer will say, 'That's what the producer wants me to write.' The producer will say, 'That's what the network wants.' The network will say, 'That's what the advertisers want.' The advertisers will say, 'That's what the public wants.' The question is, how can we break the circle?"

Well, I have a few ideas

911" and "Unsolved Mysteries"—that could conceivably be classified as violent. Most of the top-rated shows are sitcoms or newsmagazines—in other words, just programs that consist of tasteless jokes, sexual and racial stereotypes, and the occasional thoughtful, well-researched exposé. But not violence.

A Times-Mirror survey of more than 1,500 adults released last March found that 80 percent thought that television violence—whether on the networks or cable—was harmful to society, compared with 64 percent who thought so in 1983. The number who thought it was "very harmful" (as opposed to just plain harmful) increased from 26 percent to 47 percent. The most frequent viewers of violent programs were those under the age of 30.

Do people watch violent shows because they want violence or because that is what's there? If television producers really confronted the issue, they would have to admit that throwing another fistfight or choke hold into the script is an easy way to create tension and drama, while doing it with words and nonviolent plot twists is much harder. I suspect it is the "creative community" that is addicted to violence, not the viewers.

One way to find out how big the audience for violence really is would be to segregate all the violent shows onto one channel—the V Network, we'll call it—which would be available to cable subscribers, for a fee. If that works we can move on to the Stupid Sitcom Network, the Humiliating Game Show Channel and the Grotesque Talk Show Broadcasting System, and make things a lot easier for the consumer.

At the press conference, it was interesting to hear the big network cheeses refer to their own children as they pledged to serve up more programming they are not ashamed of. Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), who is the anti-violence point man on this issue, also spoke about a CBS meeting he'd been told about in which one executive asked the others, "Would you like our children to be watching these programs?" Howard Stringer (CBS) mentioned his 5-month-old and Warren Littlefield (NBC) his three children, to demonstrate how genuine their concern is about the quality of television. Funny how people feel differently when it's their own kids.

Whenever I interview people in the film or television business I always ask them if they restrict or monitor their child's television watching. They always say they do (maybe just to seem like better par-

And when asked about the question of violence on television, he said, "There's nothing we can do about it except continue to be critical. To protect our children we must be hypocrites."

I guess that's me.

I am not a person who wants to eradicate all trash on television. Nor

the day that my kids don't ask, "Can I watch TV?" And then, "Why not?"

I could use some help. I feel as if I spend too much time as a parent censoring and saying no, and fighting off the unceasing lures thrown out by the Howard Stringers of the world.

Network executives sold advertising on the premise that commercials would prod us lowly viewers to buy products, but refused to admit that the programs surrounding the commercials could possibly influence anyone to do anything.

do I think Looney Tunes should be listed among the most violent shows, as the National Coalition on Television Violence does. I have friends, and even relatives, who write for and act on television, and other friends who would love to do so. I am happy to assert my responsibility as a parent and issue dictums that make my children think I am Cruella de Vil. I know that little boys will draw pictures of guns, and always have drawn pictures of guns, regardless of how much violence they see on television. And I do not think a television show causes someone to go out and commit murder; it just gives them an excuse after the fact.

But I admit it: If there were such a thing as the Taste Police, I would want to be the chief. We all think we know what's best, especially when it comes to our children. And tell me, have the presidents of NBC, CBS, ABC and the schlock-specialists at Fox Broadcasting done such a great job of looking out for our interests?

I have always believed that television is a tool you should teach your children to master, not avoid, because it is unavoidable. Throwing it out is a solution, but that doesn't teach children to make choices. In my household, we don't allow television on school nights, for example, and we try to limit it at other times. But the pull of the black box in the corner is always there, and rare is

A technological aid—a device that would allow me to block out programs I expect to be inappropriate—fills me with a combination of dread and curiosity. I will never buy those 500 channels we are being promised (aren't you glad some of our best minds are working on giving us that television breakthrough instead of conquering world hunger?). But spending some of my rare non-working hours programming a week's worth of television blockage is not my idea of quality time.

A call to Circuit City elicited the information that I can now buy a television with a "parent control capability." I could program when it would turn on and off, and block out some channels. This would cost me only between \$600 and \$700. Perhaps Dick Wolf or Steven Bochco would like to buy me one.

My stepson told me someone has invented a bicycle-powered television, which would certainly cut down on viewing in our household. I'm not sure it really deals with the violence question, however.

So, for now, I'll take the labels. I would prefer that the creators of television would produce less violence (and less garbage in general), but perhaps this initiative will help make that happen. It is, at least, an acknowledgment that what they put on the air really does affect human life, and for that I am grateful. Previously, network executives sold advertising on the premise that commercials would prod us lowly viewers to buy products, but refused to admit that the programs surrounding the commercials could possibly influence anyone to do anything.

I hope the industry, including the cable operators and independent producers who refused to sign on to the two-year labeling experiment, will take seriously the companion plan to sensitize producers, writers and program developers to violence. The objective is to do for violence what they did for seat belts, drug use and cigarette and alcohol consumption—glamorize the good stuff and downplay the bad.

There is a real possibility that nothing will change. In that case I will have no choice: I will have to take the television out and throw a bomb at it. I sure hope nobody else will be hit by the flying debris.

RECENT COMMENTS ON TELEVISION VIOLENCE as of July 1992

"Violence: Merely Entertaining or Mainly Evil?" Dr. Carole Lieberman, Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1992

"We readily accept that children learn the alphabet from 'Sesame Street,' why can't we accept that they learn the ABCs of murder and mayhem from gratuitously violent entertainment?"

"Violence sells. So does crack cocaine. Does that make it O.K.?"

"Individual writers, producers and executives feel overwhelmed by the concept that what they write, produce or choose to air could change the lives of millions of people, so they deny the power of their work to avoid a responsibility they often feel ill-equipped to handle?"

"Television and Violence: The Scale of the Problem and Where to Go from Here." Dr. Brandon S. Centerwall, The Journal of the American Medical Association, June 10, 1992

"In light of recent research findings, in 1990 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement: Pediatricians should advise parents to limit their children's television viewing to one to two hours per day."

"Whereas infants have instinctive desire to imitate observed human behavior, they do not possess an instinct for gauging a priori whether a behavior ought to be imitated. They will imitate anything, including behaviors that most adults would regard as destructive and antisocial."

"...up through ages three and four years, many children are unable to distinguish fact from fantasy in television programs and remain unable to do so despite adult coaching. In the minds of such young children, television is a source of entirely factual information regarding how the world works."

"In a national opinion poll, 43 percent of adult Americans affirm that television violence 'plays a part in making America a violent society,' and an additional 37 percent find the thesis at least plausible (only 16 percent frankly disbelieve the proposition.)"

"...the epidemiologic evidence indicates that if, hypothetically, television technology had never been developed, there would be 10,000 fewer homicides each year in the United States, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults."

"Issues of 'quality' and 'social responsibility' are entirely peripheral to the issue of maximizing audience size within a competitive market-and there is no formula more tried and true than violence for reliably generating large audiences that can be sold to advertisers."

"Children's exposure to television and television violence should become part of the public health agenda, along with safety seats, bicycle helmets, immunizations and good nutrition."

Fateful Choices, Fred M. Hechinger, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992

"It is estimated by the time youngsters graduate from high school, many of them will have watched television 22,000 hours, compared to only half that number spent in school. By eighteen, young people will have been exposed to as many as 18,000 televised murders and 800 suicides."

An average of 80.3 percent of all television programs contain violent acts, and a typical program includes 5.21 such incidents.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith, an assistant dean in Harvard's School of Public Health, "calls for a movement like that fueling the anti-smoking and drunk driving campaigns ... Television and movies should portray the pain and suffering, the bad outcomes of violence."

**"Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society,"
American Psychological Association (APA), 1992**

The rate of violence on prime-time television is about five to six incidents per hour, whereas the rate of violence on children's Saturday morning programs is 20 to 25 acts per hour.

The average child witnesses 8,000 murders by the time he/she graduates from elementary school and witnesses more than 100,000 assorted acts of violence.

"Many of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in our society are also the heaviest users of television, in part because television is a default option used when other activities are not available."

**"Does Media Violence Beget the Real Thing?" Jeremy Iggers, Minneapolis
Star Tribune, June 13, 1992**

Almost twenty years ago, sociologist Rose Goldsen of the University of Pennsylvania warned that America is engaged in the world's first coast-to-coast experiment in behavior modification, and no one can foretell what the consequences will be.

"...(Rose Goldsen) wrote an essay in which she argued that viewers of television violence experienced a pattern of alternating stimulation and abrupt interruption (caused by commercials) that closely resembles the desensitization techniques used by psychologists to modify behavior. After repeated treatments with these techniques, said Goldsen, even the strongest psychological connections can be broken down."

"Contemporary heroes and villains are different The enemy is usually totally vicious and depraved, and in some cases not human. The hero's job is not to bring the villain to justice, but rather to destroy him or it."

"In a world where the violence that looks real is really just make-believe, and the real violence is made to look like a game, can we expect people to have a serious understanding of the meaning of violence?"

**"TV, Film Link to Reality of Violence," Diego Ribadenelra, The Boston Globe,
May 12, 1992**

"Any form of legal restriction should not be attempted and would not be attempted and would not work because of the threat it would pose for the First Amendment."
— Edward Donnerstein, a professor in the department of communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

"No one is claiming that television violence is the sole cause of this epidemic" of youth violence, said Leonard D. Eron, a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois in Chicago. "However, it is one of the causes and it is one that something can be done about. Is it too much to ask the television industry to police itself?"

**"Just Another Murder, Just Another Show," Judy Mann, The Washington Post,
May 13, 1992**

"In the report, Deborah Prothrow-Stith, an assistant dean in Harvard's School of Public Health, told of a 13-year-old who was hospitalized for a gunshot wound: "He was surprised because it hurt."

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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Office of U.S. Senator Paul Simon

Illinois

ALMANAC. More than 96 percent of American homes have at least one television set. Television is a major source of information and influence in children's lives. The average child spends more time watching television than in the classroom. * * * According to the Nielsen Index the average American child watches 18,000 television murders before he or she graduates from high school. * * * An average child between the ages of 2 and 11 now views 27.3 hours of television per week. By age 16, he or she has watched over 20,000 hours of television.

RESEARCH. The report of the U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence concludes that "evidence is becoming overwhelming that, just as witnessing violence in the home may contribute to normal adults and children learning and acting out violent behavior, violence on television...may contribute to the same result."

Drs. Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesmann of the University of Illinois-Chicago and other researchers have found that children with aggressive tendencies tend to watch violent programs and are more likely to believe that TV violence mirrors real life.

In 1982, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop reported there is a causal correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior. The National Institute of Mental Health, which had examined the issue for the Surgeon General, provided testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice in 1984 that a "sizable number of studies did support the inference that there was a causal connection between the viewing of televised violence and later aggressive behaviors."

Research has shown three possible effects of viewing television violence: (1) Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others; (2) They may be more fearful of the world around them; and (3) They may be more likely to behave in an aggressive or harmful way toward others. -- John P. Murray and Barbara Lonnberg, "Violence on TV: Do Children Learn From It?"

The American Academy of Pediatrics' Policy Statement on Children, Adolescents, and Television finds that "repeated exposure to televised violence promotes a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice." -- June, 1985.

"In one study, children who had watched a violent television program were found to be more likely to hurt another child than

(MORE)

were those who had watched a nonviolent program. In non-laboratory settings, children have injured themselves by imitating behaviors viewed on TV. Another study suggested that children may learn to perceive aggressive behavior as normal and acceptable." e e e "Other studies have shown that these findings persist even when factors such as family background are taken into account. In a study of 158 elementary school children from a middle-class suburb, children who watched more violent television programs were rated by their teachers as less cooperative, less successful in interpersonal relationships and less happy; these findings were statistically significant regardless of the children's age, sex, social class, IQ or parents' television viewing habits." -- H. James Holroyd, M.D., Pediatrics, Feb., 1985.

"...35 young men between the ages of 8 to 31 years have killed themselves playing Russian Roulette while imitating a scene from the movie, 'The Deer Hunter,' which they had seen on television." e e e "...the pain of victims and anguish of relatives are rarely portrayed. Thus, the child learns that violence may be a quick and easy solution to conflicts while being deprived of any opportunity to feel empathy for the victim." -- Robert Wharton, M.D., and Frederick Mandell, M.D., Pediatrics, June, 1985.

"In a comprehensive review of the research literature on television content, Signorielli and colleagues concluded that consistently high levels of violence and aggression have been reported in studies of television programming, regardless of the measures used to define or assess violence. They reported that children's television programs are six times as violent as adults' television programs." e e e "Dozens of laboratory studies have consistently demonstrated that children imitate the violence that they have just watched on television." e e e "Despite psychologists' suggestions in the 1950's that watching television violence has a cathartic effect, and thus reduces viewers' aggressive behavior, there are no data from recent years to support that theory." e e e "A special opportunity to assess the impact of televised violence in a community setting occurred with the introduction of television in a small Canadian community that had never had access to television before. The results demonstrated that verbal and physical aggression increased among primary school children in this community after television became available." e e e "One of the few studies that contradicts these findings was conducted by researchers at the National Broadcasting Company. They found the relationship between viewing television violence and aggressive behavior several years later became insignificant when social class was controlled. The study had several important limitations. First, children's aggressive behavior was defined strictly to include only 'physical or verbal acts intended or known in advance to cause injuries to others' and did not include rough play or other unintended aggressive behavior." -- Diana M. Zuckerman, Ph.D., and Barry S. Zuckerman, M.D., Pediatrics.

"American viewers have more access to violent television programming than the citizens of several other nations (Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, West Germany and Spain) monitored by the International Coalition on Television. According to TV monitoring by the 88-country coalition, the United States also has the dubious distinction of exporting programs which account for 65 percent of all the violence shown on Canadian, English, Australian and New Zealand television." -- American Family Physician, April 1984.

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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1302

Background on Television Violence

Joint efforts such as the Advance Parental Advisory Plan and the industrywide conference on television violence in Los Angeles are enabled by the Television Violence Act, which waives antitrust laws for three years to allow self-regulation by the television and film industries in addressing TV violence. The Simon law was enacted in 1990 and expires on Dec. 1.

Contact: David Carle, 202-224-7115

SIMON TELEVISION VIOLENCE LAW

ENACTED DECEMBER 1990

TITLE V—TELEVISION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Television
Program
Improvement
Act of 1990.

SEC. 501. TELEVISION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

47 USC 303c.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the “Television Program Improvement Act of 1990”.

(b) **DEFINITIONS.**—For purposes of this section—

(1) the term “antitrust laws” has the meaning given it in subsection (a) of the first section of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. 12(a)), except that such term includes section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 45) to the extent that such section 5 applies to unfair methods of competition;

(2) the term “person in the television industry” means a television network, any entity which produces programming (including theatrical motion pictures) for telecasting or telecasts programming, the National Cable Television Association, the Association of Independent Television Stations, Incorporated, the National Association of Broadcasters, the Motion Picture Association of America, the Community Antenna Television Association, and each of the networks’ affiliate organizations, and shall include any individual acting on behalf of such person; and

(3) the term “telecast” means—

(A) to broadcast by a television broadcast station; or

(B) to transmit by a cable television system or a satellite television distribution service.

(c) **EXEMPTION.**—The antitrust laws shall not apply to any joint discussion, consideration, review, action, or agreement by or among persons in the television industry for the purpose of, and limited to, developing and disseminating voluntary guidelines designed to alleviate the negative impact of violence in telecast material.

(d) **LIMITATIONS.**—(1) The exemption provided in subsection (c) shall not apply to any joint discussion, consideration, review, action, or agreement which results in a boycott of any person.

104 STAT. 5128

PUBLIC LAW 101-650—DEC. 1, 1990

(2) The exemption provided in subsection (c) shall apply only to any joint discussion, consideration, review, action, or agreement engaged in only during the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this section.

Television Violence:

A Recent Chronology

DECEMBER 1, 1990: President George Bush signs Sen. Paul Simon's Television Violence Act, exempting the television industry from federal antitrust limits for three years to allow industry self-regulation to scale back depictions of violence in entertainment programs through development of common standards affecting content. The law covers broadcasters, the cable industry, Hollywood and others.

JUNE 30, 1992: Midway through the three-year Television Violence Act, in an address on the floor of the United States Senate, Simon faults the television industry for its inaction under the law. Simon suggests, "... the industry seems to be in a test-pattern, hoping the law will lapse before the public notices."

DECEMBER 11, 1992: Sen. Paul Simon announces first joint standards for the depiction of violence in television programs on behalf of ABC, CBS and NBC. It is the first substantial use of the Television Violence Act and will affect programming on the networks beginning with the 1993-94 television season.

MAY 12, 1993: Sen. David Durenberger, R-Minn., introduces the Children's Television Violence Protection Act of 1993 in the United States Senate. The bill would require both television broadcast licensees and cable operators to notify viewers through the use of a video and audio warning label that certain programming may contain violence or unsafe gun practices and may adversely affect the mental or physical health of a child. The bill is designed to assist parents and other adults in making responsible and informed decisions about the programming children should watch.

MAY 12, 1993: The House Energy and Commerce telecommunications subcommittee holds a hearing to coincide with the May sweeps period.

MAY 18, 1993: Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Rep. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., introduce legislation to require the Federal Communications Commission to compile quarterly reports on television violence. The reports would list programs containing the most acts of violence and the companies purchasing advertising on such programs.

MAY 21, 1993: Simon convenes Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution for a hearing on television violence which features for the first time executives from the broadcast and cable segments of the television industry who acknowledge that they are 'part of the problem of violence in American society.' They release their fall 1993 programming schedules.

Thomas Murphy, Chairman of the Board of Capital Cities/ABC says "the increased sensitivity of the American people to depictions of violence on television has led us to be more sensitive in ordering shows for our new schedules."

Howard Stringer, president, CBS Broadcast Group, says: "We are guests in the living rooms of America, so our personal values should be the most useful litmus test of taste and the surest guide to decency and sensitivity."

George Vradenburg, executive vice president of Fox, Inc., the newest over-the-air television broadcast services, suggests: "The hypothesis that televising certain kinds of violent behavior may, in turn, affect public behaviors and attitudes is, to be, quite plausible; and repetition of violence on television, one reasonably fears, can desensitize us to violence in society."

JUNE 7, 1993: Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., announces formation of the Citizens Task Force on TV Violence and launches a national petition drive to reduce TV violence. Groups participating in the drive include the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National PTA, American Medical Association, National Foundation to Improve Television, Americans for Responsible Television, National Council for Children's TV and Media, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Council of Churches, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, American Nurses Association -- American Academy of Nursing, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Alliance Against Violence in Entertainment for Children, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Social Workers. Signatures acquired during the petition drive will be presented to television, cable and movie executives at a meeting August 2nd in Los Angeles by Conrad.

JUNE 8, 1993: Simon continues oversight hearings on use of the Television Violence Act. Studio executives testify about Hollywood's contributions to television violence and are asked what their industry intends to do about it.

The president of the leading manufacturer of television programming in Hollywood, Leslie Moonves of Lorimar Television (with 33 pilots in 1992-1993 alone), explains the entertainment industry is an extraordinarily collaborative business involving the studios, the writers, the networks and advertisers. Each represents a vital component of the industry and working together, can improve programming offered to American households.

Stephen Palley, executive vice president and chief operating officer of King World Productions, one of the nation's leading syndicators of first-run original television programming, concludes "The American public has, through its viewing preferences and habits, made clear that gratuitous or excessive violence on television programs is unacceptable. As corporate and individual citizens with families, we share that judgment; and we -- and the television stations which air our shows -- exercise our editorial discretion consistent with that principle."

JUNE 24, 1993: The House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee holds its second hearing. Ted Turner, chairman of Turner Broadcasting Systems Inc., says he is convinced that TV violence is a direct cause of the street violence that he says makes U.S. society "by far the most violent on earth." Turner says his company and broadcasters airing violent programs are guilty of "murder." Turner contends that if the entertainment industry fails to voluntarily cut violent programming, Congress should write its own anti-violence statute and "ram it down their throats." Turner contends "television violence is the single most significant factor contributing to violence in America."

JUNE 30, 1993: Sen Paul Simon convenes news conference with Rep. Edward Markey and executives from NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox, and Jack Valenti to announce the implementation by the networks of the advance parental advisory plan for the next two years. Beginning with their programming this fall, the networks will label violence-prone shows with an eight-word advisory: *"Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised."*

Each network will decide for itself when to issue the advisory. It will run at the beginning of the program and during commercial breaks, and also will be included in advertising and promotional material for the program as well as being offered to newspapers and magazines that print television schedules.

Simon calls the parental warning label "a significant step in the direction of assuring that a powerful medium can be a force for good in our society."

JULY 1, 1993: A House Energy and Commerce telecommunications subcommittee hearing examines the parental warning program. Some lawmakers suggest the warnings need to be accompanied by technology enabling parents to block certain shows they deem unsuitable for children. The latest technological development to accomplish this is the so-called v-chip, a concept envisioned by Rep. Markey, which could be inserted into new tv sets.

MPAA president Jack Valenti says that as configured, the v-chip would encourage parents to block all violent programs without proper consideration. "I'm opposed to indictment without appraisal," he tells the panel. "Parental discretion means it ought to be done individually."

JULY 29, 1993: The National Cable Television Association announces that 15 cable networks will join broadcast networks in implementing the Advance Parental Advisory program for violent programs.

Caging the Beast, Continued

Are the networks serious about curbing violence? An upcoming meeting looms as a key test, as a wary Congress awaits action

By DANIEL CERONE

Ever since Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) turned on a hotel television set in 1985 and saw a movie in which a body being dismembered with a chain saw, he has been on a personal crusade to clean up violence on television. For several years he compiled mountains of research to give weight to his urgent message: that the alarming rise of violence in society can be linked to the rise of violence on television.

In December, 1990, Simon used his information to persuade lawmakers in Washington to pass what amounted to a challenge—signed into law by President Bush—giving the TV industry three years to clean up its act, or else have the government step in and do it.

After 2½ years of virtual silence, Hollywood is suddenly responding to what says.

The top brass at CBS, ABC, NBC and Fox flew to Washington last month and announced, beginning this fall, that the networks will voluntarily attach parental advisory labels to TV series and movies that contain what the networks deem to be a high level of violence.

And in two weeks, an unprecedented summit meeting of media minds will take place in Los Angeles when key members of the broadcast and cable TV industries sit down together in a daylong conference, organized by the National Council for Families & Television, or NCFT, to explore the effect of violent TV programming on society—especially children.

Coming in the wake of highly charged congressional hearings on TV violence—during which cable mogul Ted Turner even the harshest congressional critic by referring to himself and other TV programmers as murderers—and with the year-end deadline set by Simon's bill only months away, the Aug. 2 conference has taken on nearly epic significance. The networks' warning label has served only to focus greater attention on the meeting, the tag is aimed at identifying violence and reducing it, as the critics insist is necessary.

But conflicting expectations seem certain to undermine any chance of accord.

For Simon and other lawmakers who have been waiting for the industry to act, the law was passed in 1990, the conference represents the end of one phase in a battle against TV violence that has waged in some form almost since the medium's inception. Many express a desire to see some concrete plan of action emerge. For Hollywood, however, the conference is only a beginning step in defining the problem and the industry's role in it.

"I'm concerned that an unfair burden be placed on this conference by expecting to find the magic pill in one day,"

Bill Allen, president of MTM Television, vice chairman of the nonprofit NCFT. "This is the first time the entire TV

industry will sit down in a room, a rather public room, and look for solutions to violence. Easy and facile solutions might not be the best ones."

That attitude riles industry critics. "I've just lost all patience, and I think everybody else has too," said Rep. John Bryant (D-Tex.). "I don't know why everyone wants to spend the day in a group grope discussing a subject that's obvious to everybody already."

If there was ever an industry in need of a quick fix, this is it. Controversy over the effect of TV violence has snowballed

through Capitol Hill with all the speed and momentum of an avalanche.

Although violence in news and sports is also of concern, the main assault has been on gratuitous, glorified mayhem in entertainment programming—TV movies, theatrical movies and reality-based crime series—that portray people using force to deal with crises. In the last eight months, the attacks have become relentless.

In November, President-elect Clinton said in a TV Guide interview that he was "mortified" by some of what is shown on television and that Hollywood should take the lead in "deglamorizing mindless sex

and violence." A Times Mirror survey subsequently found that 80% of Americans believe TV violence is harmful to society, and 73% believe there is too much violence in entertainment programming.

In May, a wave of Democratic politicians convened a dramatic series of congressional hearings on the subject. They were backed by three decades of voluminous research indicating that TV violence leads to more aggressive behavior in viewers, plus new studies citing a rise in violence on television today. During one of the hearings, acting Federal Communications Commission Chairman James Quello voiced his support for imposing strict on when programs with violence could be shown.

Last month, 19 major organizations, including the National PTA, the American Medical Assn. and the National Council of Churches, formed a letter-writing Citizens Task Force to combat TV violence.

All the while, a growing number of bills have been introduced that—if enacted—seem likely to pit Hollywood Washington in a monumental battle First Amendment rights.

Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the telecommunications finance subcommittee of the House and Commerce Committee, has proposed a TV-ratings system similar to the one used by theatrical movies and a government-mandated device on new TV sets that would let parents lock out violent programming. Other anti-violence bills to toughen the license-renewal process for TV stations, to remove tax breaks for advertisers and to issue a quarterly "violence report card" to shame the programmers and advertisers behind violent

"I'm trying to make it a health said Rep. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), who authored a bill calling for a presidential commission to seek solutions to the problem. "I think we're at the stage cigarettes were 30 years ago—before the surgeon general issued his study but when there were private studies that started to show quite conclusively that smoking was bad for you."

What Simon essentially had in mind with his 1990 Television Violence Act—which granted the programmers and producers immunity from federal antitrust prosecution so they could meet voluntarily and devise a plan to self-regulate the industry—was a temporary cease-fire between the network, cable and syndication competitors to hammer out an agreement, right down to what kind of violence be portrayed on the screen.

The networks' first response to Congress came last December, when, in an unusual joint letter to Simon, ABC, CBS and NBC agreed to issue a uniform set of guidelines for the depiction of violence and to convene an industrywide conference about the subject. When the 15-point set of standards was released—including "all depictions of



Violence

Continued from Page 3

violence should be relevant and necessary to the development of character, or to the advancement of theme or plot" and "depictions of violence may not be used to shock or stimulate the audience"—critics quickly dismissed them because they contained no notable differences from the standards already in place at each network.

Similarly, last month's press conference announcing an experimental, two-year "advance parent advisory plan" failed to impress the critics. The advisories will run before and during entertainment programs whose "violent content is unexpected, graphic or pervasive" to help parents make informed decisions about what to let their children watch. Politicians and activist groups say the networks are simply using the labels to abandon their responsibility as caretakers of the public airwaves by tossing the problem back to parents, rather than addressing it through programming.

"The networks have made noises in the past about dealing with this violence problem," Rep. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said with a sigh. "If you look at the history of this issue, you will see that Congress would focus and the networks would respond with rhetoric. But I don't think anyone is going to be fooled this time. It's got to be more than some catchy oratory at a press conference."

After the cool reception of the parental-advisory labels, the Aug. 2 conference has become what might be the last chance for Hollywood to show Washington its commitment before Simon's grace period runs out in December.

"I think the networks figure that the attention span of Congress is short, that this issue has been battered around for 30 to 40 years, that if they can fly by this period with fairly minimal or modest steps, then Congress will go away and think about something else," Wyden said. "My own sense is that this is the time. The public is up in arms. Congress has extended the olive branch. Now it's time for the networks and broadcast people to show they're serious."

But the networks maintain that they have already demonstrated their seriousness by arranging this conference to raise awareness, by agreeing to affix labels where necessary and by affirming in general their intention to "eliminate inappropriate depictions of violence." They say they are not planning any more joint actions to address the subject before or even after the meeting—although they have not completely closed the door to the possibility. "We can't say nothing will happen after the conference," said a senior executive at one of the networks. "Someone may have an idea at the conference that's so brilliant . . . but that's not the idea behind the conference."

The NCFT has been putting on annual TV conferences for 15 years, usually small, two-day retreats in Santa Barbara to sensitize the 100 or so producers, writers and network executives in attendance on how to responsibly portray such subjects as health, education and drug abuse.

This year, network executives asked the organization to independently organize a meeting on violence. The program was compressed to one day to accommodate the nearly 500 members of the broadcasting, cable, production and distribution communities who are expected to attend.

"The essential goal of the violence conference is to educate people about ways in which violence on television is being perceived by viewers and the impact that it's having on viewers," said Geoff Cowan, a public-interest lawyer and lecturer on mass media and law at UCLA who also serves as a vice chairman of the NCFT.

The first morning session at the Beverly Hilton Hotel will call on academics and researchers to explain their studies, to be followed by another morning session to focus on the effects of TV violence on children. The afternoon session will be a sort of Socratic dialogue between TV industry leaders and anti-violence activists. For the first time, the press has been invited to cover the conference.

Cowan hopes the meetings will serve a dual purpose by guiding network executives in what kind of projects they order into production, while suggesting ways for the creative community to avoid showing gratuitous violence. Cowan agrees that having a set of standards simply isn't enough.

"That's not the real problem," he said. "Standards and practices [departments] tell you what to keep out of a movie once you've ordered a movie about a murder. They can all agree what to keep out of the Amy Fisher story, but there is still a problem that all three [major] networks ordered the Amy Fisher story."

"A lot of great human themes deal with violence. The problem with movies for television is not that they have some violence in them, but the themes are themes of current perversity, rather than themes of great human importance. I don't think we would have people in Washington, or in their homes throughout America, complaining about violence in 'Roots' or 'Holocaust' or 'Winds of War,' even though they have significant violence."

MTM President Allen says it is unrealistic to expect that solutions can be found to such vexing problems in a day. "People may come up with very interesting ideas at this conference, which will require some thought and refinement," he argues. "Television is created by a creative process of thought and refinement, and that's how I expect this problem to be dealt with—in-
stead of hoping that by 5 p.m. at

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Violence

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the close of the conference we can hand out the answer."

David Grant, executive vice president of business operations for Fox, has a lot of questions he would like answered at the meeting: "What happens to kids when they watch violent programs? Is there a difference between action and violence? Is the impact on people the same when a robot blows up as when a person is shot? I want to know those things."

"Violence in dramatic works has been around forever," explained Grant, who says he is making attendance mandatory for many Fox executives. "What we need to do is meld our responsibility with our sense of dramatic creation, and not go nuts one way or another."

The networks have maintained for the most part that they do not show excessive violence—which is why the new parental-advisory warnings are not expected to be seen much in their fall programming. Most of their weekly series are benign comedies, executives point out, and their standards departments edit inappropriate material from drama series and movies.

So the networks seem to be approaching the conference warily. They resoundingly reject the concept of a ratings system or any plan that would dictate what they can or can't put on the screen.

"The decision-making process is subjective, and in a free, democratic society needs to remain so," said Beth Bressan, vice president of the CBS Broadcast Group. "The process is also a creative one. To be too mechanistic in our approach will only inhibit creativity and stop diverse programming."

Christine Hikawa, vice president of standards and practices at ABC, believes the networks have become scapegoats. "Because people are very concerned with violence in society, as we are, we think there's a greater perception of violence on TV," she said.

In addition, Hikawa believes the growth of cable television has added to that perception. "There appears to be more violence on TV because now there are 35 channels to choose from," she explained. "Quite frankly, the networks have less violence than ever before."

According to Sen. Simon, however, many TV executives have privately acknowledged to him over the years that too much violence is coming out of the tube. The dilemma is that violence often means ratings, and if network programmers lose their guns—both on screen and off—then other networks, syndicators or cable services will hold the competitive edge. TV producers, in turn, say they make violent programs because that's what the networks order.

The networks have been much more cautious in recent months as a result of the heightened focus on violence; they're simply not getting credit for the behind-the-scenes decisions they're making

said Rosalyn Weinman, vice president of broadcast standards for NBC.

For instance, NBC recently created two different versions of a promo for the theatrical movie "Mobsters"—a tame version for the early evening and a more graphic one for late at night. And even though a movie about a substitute teacher killing students would deliver huge ratings, Weinman said, NBC not long ago rejected that exact movie pitch, which was picked up later as a feature film.

"We have been much more careful and sensitive to the [violence] issue," she said. "There have been a lot of discussions about how to filter it down to the program level. And we ourselves are trying to do this in a thoughtful way, and not in a knee-jerk reaction."

If nothing else comes out of the NCFT conference, all agree that there clearly needs to be a better definition of violence if Washington and Hollywood are ever going to come together.

A recent study by George Gerbner, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, found that the average 16-year-old in America has watched 200,000 acts of violence on TV, including 33,000 murders. The study said that Saturday morning cartoons are among the worst offenders.

For that reason, Geraldine Laybourne, president of the children's cable channel Nickelodeon, has a problem with studies that attempt to quantify violence. She recalls her network once being cited for excessive violence in "You Can't Do That on Television," a slapstick series for kids.

"They said we had the same number of violent acts as a movie of the week that had decapitations," said Laybourne, who is also a panelist at the conference. "They counted a pie in the face the same as a decapitation. To me, it was so ludicrous." Gerbner's "Violence Index" defines violence as any "clear-cut and overt episodes of physical violence—hurling or killing or the threat of hurting and/or killing—in any context."

Another key function the conference may serve is to pull together the broadcast and cable communities. So far, the cable programmers have remained largely uncathed because cable is an unregulated service that people pay to bring into their homes, whereas broadcasters are licensed by the federal government to use the public airwaves.

"Right now there are not very many cable entities out there using any standards or guidelines," sniped CBS' Bressan. "When there are so many cable outlets out there saying, in effect, 'Come watch us because we do not self-regulate,' how much of the television landscape is really going to change? It's very unfair to say the networks should do more when the networks are the only ones who have done anything to date."

As part of an action plan that includes participating in the Aug. 2 conference, cable networks have agreed to develop their own sets of internal standards by the end of the year. A study commissioned by the National Cable Television Assn. concluded in January that "when all kinds of dramatic programs are taken into account, the level of violence on cable-originated programming is about the same as the violence on broadcast network programming."

To the critics, however, that's too little, too late. So too may be the conference.

"I think the underlying reason for this meeting is to call the dogs off, to get the government off their back, to go through the motions of pleasing Sen. Simon," said Terry Rakolta, founder of Americans for Responsible TV, a grass-roots organization that claims 300,000 members. Rakolta, who advocates banning violent programs between 4 and 9 p.m., will be a panelist at the conference.

She sees the whole NCFT event as a smoke screen: "There is a veiled threat of government intervention if they don't come up with something soon."

And what if the industry can't, or won't, come up with a satisfactory solution for the lawmakers?

"The conference is a useful discussion, but I honestly don't have high hopes that the industry, whose behavior is fueled by the competitive juices to win ratings, will ever be able to resist the more sensational, more violent television programming," said Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.). He is one of several lawmakers who expressed a clear intention to go ahead and press legal solutions if the NCFT conference does not yield a firm plan of action.

"I think it's likely that some legislation will move," he said.

Bob Peck, a legal counselor for the American Civil Liberties Union, said that any federal legislation attempting to govern the airwaves won't wash. "It can't, constitutionally," he said. "As soon as they say what people can say, read or see through their television sets, then they're engaging in censorship, which the First Amendment clearly protects against."

The Federal Communications Commission has a regulation prohibiting radio and TV stations from broadcasting sexually explicit, indecent programming between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., when children are likely to be in the audience, and there has been talk of creating similar legislation for violent programming. But Peck said even the indecency ruling has been tough to enforce in court.

"The fact of the matter remains that the most powerful restraint on television programming remains the viewers," he said. "What they will watch and won't watch has more effect than anything that Washington will pass." □

Daniel Ceroni is a Times staff writer.

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AM-TELEVISION-VIOLENCE (SCHEDULED)

TELEVISION 'SUMMIT' WILL SPOTLIGHT VIOLENCE ON SMALL SCREEN

By Michael Miller

LOS ANGELES (Reuter) - Key members of the four major television networks and representatives of the cable industry will meet in an unprecedented media summit to explore the effects of TV violence on society, particularly children.

The conference, to be held Monday in Los Angeles, comes under mounting pressure from Washington for the industry to tone down violence on a voluntary basis, or be forced to do so by a welter of legislation waiting in the wings on Capitol Hill.

In December 1990, then-President Bush signed into law Democratic Sen. Paul Simon's Television Violence Act which, in effect, gave the television industry three years to clean up its act, or have the government do it.

With the December 1993 deadline fast approaching, the four networks, ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox, announced last month a voluntary parental advisory which they would attach to programs containing violent scenes so parents could use their discretion as to whether those programs should be seen by their children.

Monday's conference, which will be attended by academics and public watchdog groups critical of the industry's efforts to clean up its act, as well as by writers, producers and television executives, is expected to focus, at least in part, on the new advisories, which will be introduced in the Fall season.

Simon, one of the television industry's most powerful critics, who will address Monday's conference, said of the survey: "We hope it is a hint of things to come."

The 1990 Television Violence Act which he drafted granted television programmers and producers immunity from Federal antitrust prosecution for three years so they could meet voluntarily and devise a plan to self-regulate their industry.

It was seen as a temporary cease-fire between the network, cable and syndication competitors in order for them to reach an agreement on how the industry should be run, including how much violence could be portrayed on television.

Critics of the advisory system drawn up in June by the networks argue the industry is merely paying lip service to nationwide concerns over gratuitous scenes of sex and violence.

They also argue that "parental empowerment," as the networks describe the advisories, merely transfers the responsibility from the networks to parents, and that the networks have no intention of reducing violent programming.

"I anticipate a lively discussion," said Geoffrey Cowan, a vice president of the National Council for Families and Television, an education body that organized the conference.

Although critics of the conference have said it cannot

succeed in reducing TV violence in just one day, Cowan, a lawyer, Emmy Award-winning movie producer and lecturer in communications at the University of California at Los Angeles, disagreed.

"This conference will have an impact. It will have succeeded if it makes the people in this industry that much more knowledgeable about the ways in which programming has an impact on society and what they can do about it," he said.

The industry received a boost earlier this week with the release of a study by the University of Pennsylvania showing that the frequency of violent scenes on television was now about 50 percent less than before 1990.

Cowan, who won an Emmy last year for Best Prime Time Programming for Children for his made-for-TV movie "Mark Twain and Me," said he believed Monday's conference would not only result in even less violence but it may encourage the industry to be more concerned with themes that tend to reduce violence.

But others remain skeptical. Democratic Rep. John Bryant of Texas, in a recent interview with the Los Angeles Times, said he had lost all patience with the television industry over its inaction on reducing violence.

"I don't know why everyone wants to spend the day (Monday) in a group grope discussing a subject that's obvious to everyone already," he said.

In November last year then President-elect Clinton also put the spotlight on television violence, declaring in an interview with TV Guide that he was "mortified" by what was being shown on TV and calling on Hollywood to take the lead in "deglamorizing mindless sex and violence."

Although the industry established a uniform, 15-point set of guidelines on violence a month after Clinton's interview, critics have been quick to point out they are no different to the in-house guidelines already in place at each network and do not advocate a reduction in violence.

REUTER

Cable to Air Violence Warnings

15 Networks Agree To Parental Advisory

By Ellen Edwards
Washington Post Staff Writer

The major players in cable television, following the lead of the broadcast networks, yesterday agreed to air a warning to parents on violent programs.

Fifteen networks—including HBO, Showtime, USA, the Disney Channel, MTV, Nickelodeon, A&E, the Discovery Channel and the Turner Entertainment Networks—accepted the advisory, which could be applied to anything shown on cable, including movies. The criteria for determining what is violent will be left up to each network.

While the agreement was endorsed by Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), one of Capitol Hill's most vocal critics of television violence, he said in a statement that "labeling violence is more of a bandage than a real cure. The best solution still is to reduce the overall levels of violence on television."

The action, announced by the National Cable Television Association, comes just days before an industry-wide conference on television violence to be held in Los Angeles. "You want to come in with something concrete agreed upon," said one cable spokesman.

The networks and the producers of television programs are doing all

See CABLE, G6, Col. 1

Cable Adopts Advisory

CABLE, From G1

they can to head off any congressional restrictions. They are particularly afraid that Congress might require a "V-chip," a device within a TV that parents could activate to blank out any programs that the networks coded as violent.

The cable label, identical to what the broadcast networks have adopted, will say: "Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised." Networks are free to go beyond this basic language; HBO, for one, is likely to make its advisories more explicit, perhaps describing the acts of violence.

Like movie ratings, the label is an attempt at self-regulation by an industry that has come under widespread criticism in the last several months, especially after the unusually bloody May ratings sweeps.

In fact, its effect may be very limited. Many of the cable networks already air a variety of disclaimers. HBO and Showtime, for example, show the Motion Picture Association of America ratings for feature movies, as well as advisories for sex, violence and language. HBO has carried disclaimers for 15 years, said spokesman Quentin Schaffer. He said the spy movie "Blue Ice," which will air this fall, would carry a disclaimer, as does the "Tales From the Crypt" anthology.

On Showtime, the film noir series "Fallen Angels," which begins Sunday night, will carry a "mature advisory," said McAdory Lipscomb Jr., senior vice president for corporate affairs.

MTV spokesman Carole Robinson said every video submitted for airing is reviewed by a standards committee, and "gratuitous violence is not something you would see on MTV." The net-

work has occasionally aired warnings in the past, she said.

The USA Network has carried advisories warning of mature subject matter or adult situations for about 10 years but has never had a violence warning, according to spokesman Dan Martinsen. He said no programs have yet been designated to carry the new advisory.

Peggy Binzel, director of government affairs for Turner Broadcasting, said although her network edits movies "heavily" for violence, some might still merit the warning. She cited some Clint Eastwood movies as an example.

"Pretty soon labels will get so ubiquitous that we will pay as little attention to them as we do to the warnings on tobacco advertising," said Peggy Charren, founder of the watchdog group Action for Children's Television, who has criticized labeling as ineffective.

Cable has long been viewed as a worse offender in airing violent programs than broadcast television. A recent study commissioned by the National Cable Television Association showed that to be true for cable-originated dramatic programs, but not for children's shows.

The study excluded any programs or movies that were not made specifically for cable, such as feature-length movies, which are often considerably more violent than other fare and are the staple of some cable networks. The study was done by George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication.

Lipscomb said the cable networks were not invited to join the broadcast networks when they made their original announcement, though they were encouraged to do so afterward. He said he thought that because cable has aired advisories for years, "a number of the broadcasters felt they had to catch up with cable in informing their viewers."

Representatives of cable companies have been meeting under the Television Violence Act, sponsored by Simon, which waived antitrust laws to permit discussions on the subject.

news from

PAUL SIMON

July 29 - Aug. 5, 1993

CONTACT: David Carle
202-224-7115

U.S. SENATOR

ILLINOIS

Simon Welcomes Cable Plan for Advance Parental Advisories on TV Violence

Sen. Paul Simon has endorsed the decision by 15 cable networks to adopt the Advance Parental Advisory Plan to forewarn viewers about violent programs.

"I welcome this move and commend the decision-makers at the cable networks who have made this a priority," said Simon, D-Ill. "Informing viewers with these messages is a step forward, but labeling violence is more of a bandage than a real cure. The best solution still is to reduce the overall levels of violence on television."

The 15 cable networks announced July 29 that they will join the program, which includes advisory messages that will accompany especially violent programs and the commitment to provide advance listings of shows with advisory messages. According to officials at the participating networks, they will apply the review process to all programs. The networks are: Arts and Entertainment, USA Networks, TNT, Showtime, Nickelodeon, Nick-at-Nite, Comedy Central, The Disney Channel, The Family Channel, Home Box Office, Lifetime, The Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, MTV Networks, and the (additional) Turner Entertainment Networks.

The announcement came on the eve of the unprecedented industrywide conference on television violence set for Monday, Aug. 2, in Los Angeles. ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC announced the advisory plan on June 30. The system - and the industrywide conference - are made possible under the Television Violence Act, which waives antitrust laws for three years to permit joint industry efforts to curb television violence. Simon is the author of the law, which expires Dec. 1, and was invited to offer the keynote speech to the conference.

news from

PAUL SIMON

July 28 - Aug. 4, 1993

CONTACT: David Carle
202-224-7115

U.S. SENATOR

ILLINOIS

Simon: New TV Violence Data Offered 'Hint of Change' On Eve of Industrywide Conference

A new report showing a slight dip in prime time TV violence added "cautious optimism" to efforts to address the issue on the eve of an unprecedented industrywide conference on the subject, Sen. Paul Simon said July 28.

The report, compiled by a team led by Dr. George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, tracks violence on three broadcast networks for three viewing seasons, including the current season. Gerbner has documented violence on television longer than any other researcher.

Gerbner credits some of the decline to the Television Violence Act, a three-year waiver of antitrust laws to allow joint efforts by the television industry to reduce violence on television. Simon, D-Ill., authored the law and is its chief Senate sponsor; chief House sponsor of the law is Rep. Dan Glickman, D-Kan. The broadcast networks used the Simon law last December to develop and implement their first joint standards on violence and was used again June 30 for a system of advance parental advisory messages that ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC will initiate this fall for violent programs. The law also made possible the Aug. 2nd industrywide meeting.

"This report brings us back to the basic issue: There is too much violence overall on television," said Simon. "Labeling will be helpful to a degree. But the real answer is to reduce the levels of violence on television. For that, self-regulation -- not government censorship -- is the best solution. In the final months of the Television Violence Act, the broadcast networks have taken initiative and accepted responsibility that remains lacking among others in the industry, up to now, cable in particular.

"On the eve of the conference, it's now possible to speculate that the era of indifference may be ending," Simon continued. "The industry is getting the message from the public, from the research community and from the Congress that television violence contributes to violence in our society. I take this modest decline as a hopeful sign and as a hint of the lasting change we hope to eventually see on this problem.

"There's nothing fundamentally new in these figures. Just the hint of change. But, for the first time, we have reason to hope that the next survey will be significantly different. On the basis of the steps that already have been taken, my guess is that these numbers a year from now will be noticeably better, for the new fall season on the broadcast networks," he said. "We should not expect dramatic, overnight solutions. A large industry, like a ship, has to slow down before it changes course.

"Three years ago, we urged the industry to use this window of opportunity for self-regulation under the Television Violence Act," said Simon. "For the first two years, we saw very little acceptance of responsibility for self-regulation. But we've now come farther in six months than in the previous six years of working on this issue. As we head into this conference, I'm hopeful; but I'm cautiously hopeful. We shouldn't hope for too much from this conference, but we also should not hope for too little."

PENN NEWS

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Contact: Kirby F. Smith
(215) 896-4820 (office)
(215) 646-5734 (home)

TELEVISION VIOLENCE ACT HAS MADE AN IMPACT: PENN STUDY FINDS VIOLENCE HAS DECLINED ON MAJOR NETWORK DRAMATIC SHOWS

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Television Violence Act, passed by Congress in 1990 and due to expire December 1 of this year, seems to have made a dent in the high levels of violence in major network dramatic programs. The Act exempts broadcasters and cable operators from antitrust action for the purpose of joint industry efforts to reduce violence.

The Cultural Indicators research team at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication released today its latest Violence Index, which shows that prime-time dramatic program violence dipped in the 1992-93 season and, despite some fluctuation, has remained below its 20-year average. Saturday morning children's programs became somewhat less violent only last year.

"Beyond these numbers are the lessons of the kind of violence discharged into the cultural environment," said George Gerbner, leader of the Cultural Indicators research team releasing the study. "Most of this is 'happy violence', which teaches that cool and painless mayhem leads to a happy ending. This is not an expression of creative freedom but of marketing formulas imposed on producers," said Gerbner.

The report is an update of the Violence Profile released periodically since 1967. It finds that 65 percent of prime-time fictional dramatic programs and nearly half of their casts are still involved in violence. But the frequency of violent scenes per hour is about half of what it had been before 1990. The Violence Index, a composite of several measures of violence developed for comparative purposes, shows a slight decline since 1990.

Saturday morning children's programs, traditionally the most violent, saw a slower, uneven decline. More than 9 out of 10 programs and 8 out of 10 characters are still involved in violence. But while children's programs in 1990 were saturated with a record high of 32 violent scenes per hour, by 1992-93 that rate declined to 18 violent scenes per hour. All measures of violence, however, did not share in the decline, and the current Violence Index is slightly higher than last year's.

Another study conducted by the Penn researchers focused on violence in cable-originated programs (those produced by cable networks rather than all programs carried by them) for the 1990-91

season. Cable-originated children's programs had substantially less violence than children's programs broadcast on the networks. On the other hand, cable-originated general programming and particularly action programs were more violent than similar programs broadcast on the networks.

In all of these studies violence was defined as overt physical action that hurts or kills, or threatens to do so. A violent scene was defined as continuous violent action among the same characters. Trained coders analyzed week-long videotaped samples of each season's dramatic programs.

The Violence Profile also includes results of the investigation of the consequences of long-term exposure to violence-laden television. The results show that heavy viewers are more likely than comparable groups of light viewers to express feelings of living in a mean world, and the inclination to act accordingly. "That of course affects different groups in different ways," commented George Gerbner. "Violence is a demonstration of power. It shows who can get away with what against whom. It means power for some and vulnerability for others. That is its most pervasive and invidious lesson."

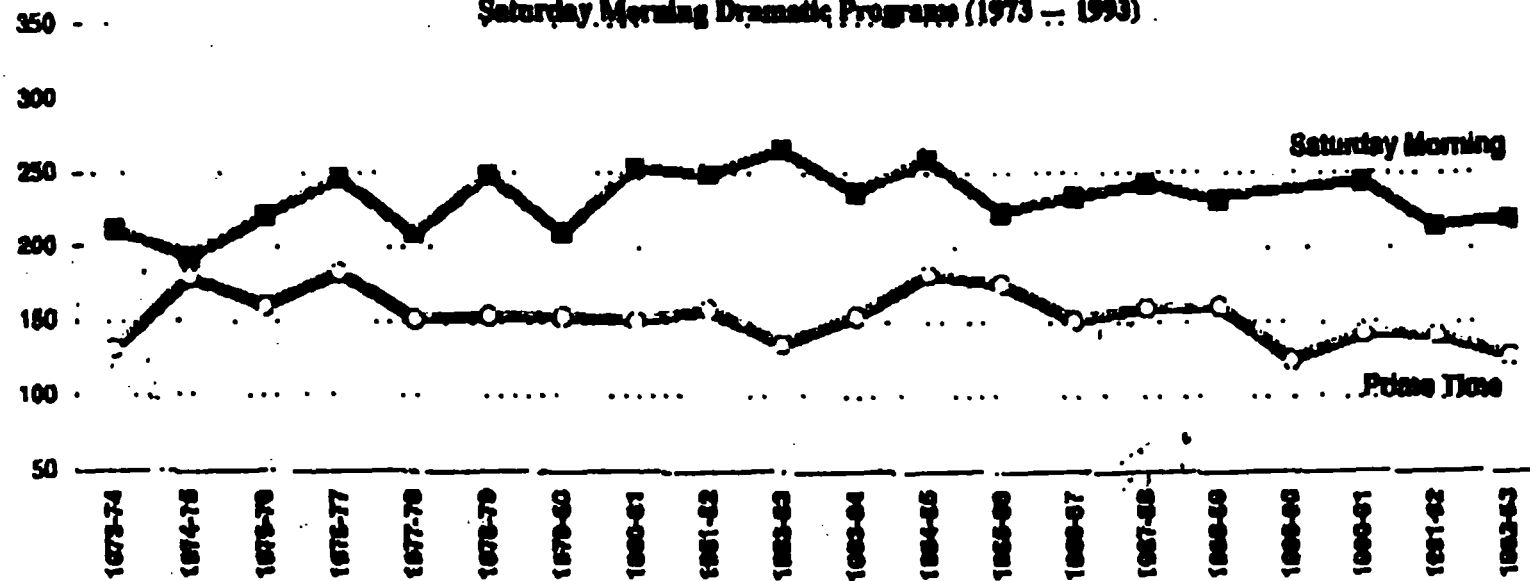
The Cultural Indicators research project consists of monitoring network television programs and determining their contributions to viewer perceptions of social reality. It is broadly based and designed to collect observations on the role and functions of many aspects of life presented on television, including health-related behaviors, women and minorities, violence, religion, science, aging, disability, education, children and adolescents. A comprehensive report of the last 20 years is expected in early 1984.

Collaborating with Gerbner in the Cultural Indicators project are Michael Morgan of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Nancy Signoriello of the University of Delaware. Cynthia Kandra and Nejat Ozyegin assisted in the preparation of the report.

The Cultural Indicators research project began in 1967-68 with a study for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. It continued under the sponsorship of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, the National Institute of Mental Health, 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.

Note to print and broadcast journalists: For a copy of the Violence Profile report, please call George Gerbner (Annenberg School) at (215) 898-6776 or Kirby F. Smith (News and Public Affairs) at (215) 898-4820.

**Figure 1: Violence Index of Television Networks Prime Time and
Saturday Morning Dramatic Programs (1973 -- 1993)**



**TABLE 1: VIOLENCE IN
TELEVISION NETWORKS PRIME-TIME DRAMATIC PROGRAMS
(1973 - 1993)**

Season	S a m p l e s			Percent of progrs with viol.	Violent Scenes per hr.	Duration of viol. min/hr.	Characters		Violence Index
	Pgrms	Hrs	Chars				%V	%K	
1973-74	62	56.5	214	55.7	4.9	2.3	41.1	12.1	131.6
1974-75	58	60.0	224	77.6	5.5	2.8	58.5	20.5	178.8
1975-76	66	61.0	238	69.7	5.9	2.3	54.2	13.4	160.1
1976-77	61	58.5	172	80.3	5.8	3.3	67.4	12.2	182.8
1977-78	68	62.4	210	66.2	5.9	2.3	53.8	9.0	151.8
1978-79	63	63.0	191	74.6	4.5	1.5	52.9	7.9	153.5
1979-80	64	60.7	218	70.3	5.7	2.6	53.7	6.9	153.0
1980-81	64	59.2	229	73.4	5.7	2.5	50.7	4.8	150.8
1981-82	65	57.8	216	80.0	5.9	2.5	50.0	5.6	158.0
1982-83	77	60.6	247	63.6	4.6	2.3	48.2	6.5	134.7
1983-84	63	58.8	195	73.0	4.8	2.9	53.3	9.7	154.4
1984-85	65	60.0	221	78.5	6.9	3.3	63.3	12.7	181.1
1985-86	67	61.5	217	79.1	6.8	2.6	58.5	11.1	175.0
1986-87	67	61.5	178	71.6	5.2	1.7	47.2	12.9	151.5
1987-88	75	63.3	188	74.7	5.1	1.6	58.0	7.4	158.9
1988-89	77	66.0	195	74.0	6.2	2.3	53.3	10.3	160.4
1989-90	69	56.3	174	56.5	4.7	1.1	40.2	10.9	124.8
1990-91	54	45.0	159	74.1	4.0	1.6	47.2	5.7	141.8
1991-92	61	50.5	166	62.3	5.1	1.8	49.4	11.4	141.6
1992-93	60	50.0	147	65.0	2.9	1.3	45.6	6.1	127.2
1973-93	1,306	1,173	3,999	71.2	5.3	2.2	52.3	9.9	153.7

Pgrms: Number of programs

Hrs: Number of program hours analyzed

Chars: Number of leading characters

%V: Percent of major characters involved in violence

%K: Percent of major characters involved in killing

Violence Index (VI)=

$\text{Pct of progrs with viol.} + 2 \times (\text{Violent scenes per pgr}) + 2 \times (\text{Violent scenes per hr.}) + \%V + \%K$

**TABLE 5: VIOLENCE IN
TELEVISION NETWORKS SATURDAY MORNING DRAMATIC PROGRAMS
(1973 - 1993)**

Season	S a m p l e s			Percent of progr with viol.	Violent Scenes per hr.	Duration of viol. min/hr.	Characters		Violence Index
	Pgrms	Hrs	Chars				%V	%K	
1973-74	37	18.7	145	94.5	13.2	3.4	77.2	0.7	212.2
1974-75	38	16.0	122	92.1	12.1	3.5	64.8	0.8	192.2
1975-76	45	16.3	126	91.1	16.3	4.6	84.9	0.8	221.1
1976-77	49	15.1	118	100.0	22.4	4.9	85.6	2.5	246.7
1977-78	53	16.5	145	90.6	15.6	4.0	77.2	0.0	208.8
1978-79	48	14.3	107	97.9	25.0	5.5	86.0	0.0	248.9
1979-80	62	16.5	163	91.9	17.2	3.4	74.8	0.0	210.3
1980-81	66	15.1	165	97.0	26.9	4.9	89.7	1.2	254.1
1981-82	69	13.5	186	91.3	30.9	6.1	83.9	0.0	249.2
1982-83	44	10.1	120	97.7	30.3	5.9	93.3	0.8	266.3
1983-84	54	13.7	142	92.6	25.5	6.0	80.3	0.0	237.0
1984-85	55	14.8	146	98.2	27.3	5.9	89.7	2.1	259.3
1985-86	53	15.3	149	92.5	21.3	3.2	75.8	0.7	223.9
1986-87	38	11.6	98	92.1	25.1	3.2	72.4	4.1	234.1
1987-88	36	13.3	85	100.0	25.5	4.8	72.9	0.0	242.7
1988-89	31	10.5	76	87.1	25.5	2.2	76.3	0.0	231.7
1990-91	40	9.7	90	82.5	32.0	3.9	78.9	3.3	244.4
1991-92	43	10.7	88	76.7	26.2	4.1	69.3	3.4	214.8
1992-93	31	10.5	63	90.3	17.9	3.3	81.0	0.0	219.2
1973-93	892	262	2,334	92.4	23.0	4.4	79.7	1.1	230.7

Pgrms: Number of programs

Hrs: Number of program hours analysed

Chars: Number of leading characters

%V: Percent of major characters involved in violence

%K: Percent of major characters involved in killing

Violence Index (VI) =

Set of progrs with viol. + 2*(Violent scenes per pgm) + 2*(Violent scenes per hr.) + %V + %K

ABC hot line tips off sensitive subject matter

By Donna Gable
USA TODAY

Beginning Sunday, viewers can call an 800 number to find out what ABC shows they may want to click off.

ABC's Advisory Hotline, 800-213-6222, will be updated twice a week with the title, air date and summary of ABC prime-time programs with sensitive subject matter.

The network unveiled the hot line Monday, a week before the industry hosts a meeting on TV violence. The issue has dominated the fall press tour ongoing in Los Angeles.

Monday, ABC Entertainment President Ted Harbert told critics that his network's movies will be less violent this season. While he defended last May's violent *Murder in the Heartland*, about serial killer Charles Starkweather, "If that movie came to me tomorrow, I don't think I'd pick it up."

Not that ABC will shy away from murder stories, "but we've got to find a different way to do them."

ABC's new adult drama *NYPD Blue* will not have a violence warning, but this advisory: "This police drama contains adult language and scenes of partial nudity. Viewer discretion is advised."

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., sees the hot line as "another step" in the war against TV violence.

And while labeling is helpful, "The best solution, still, is to scale down the overall levels of violence."

Networks Acknowledge Effect of TV Violence

TV VIOLENCE, From A1

dependent stations or first-run syndicators, which attract about 40 percent of the audience. "We urge the entire entertainment industry to follow our lead," said Warren Littlefield, president of NBC Entertainment. Ted Turner, head of Turner Broadcasting, has agreed to join the warning trial. A television summit conference has been scheduled for Aug. 2 in Los Angeles to discuss the issue.

More than 3,000 studies have been conducted in the past four decades, showing a consistent correlation between "viewing violence and aggressive behavior," according to a recent American Psychological Association (APA) report. By the time a child has finished elementary school, he will have seen 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence, the APA estimated. In addition to aggressive behavior, children also develop increased fearfulness of becoming a victim and become more callous about violence directed at others, said a recent report by CQ Researcher. For years the entertainment industry maintained that the content of movies and television reflects society more than it influences it. Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) has worked for eight years to get the networks to acknowledge that "inappropriate" violence is bad.

MPAA President Jack Valenti said at yesterday's press conference that the film and television "creative community" would address violence in a series of small meetings with the producers, writers and directors who develop programs. The goal would be not just a reduction in violence that did not add to the drama, or violence committed without consequence, but what Littlefield called a "proactive" message about violence in society.

"We have done this before," said Valenti. "Four years ago we did it with the use of drugs and with the exhibition of smoking and alcohol consumption. We did it in the depiction of minorities, and in furthering the designated driver theme, and in promoting the use of seat belts in the line."

Valenti said later that "even if there is only a possibility of a con-

stant viewing audience will click their sets off. "It's all subjective," Valenti noted.

"We don't want to turn the vast wasteland into the dull wasteland," said Stringer, who seemed the most skeptical of the five executives at the press conference. "When anyone starts talking about the next step, I start to get nervous. It is the nature of violence and the absence of consequences that we are concerned about. We have, in effect, depersonalized violence. There is no grief, no remorse, no feelings. That's the kind that sends a message to children that it's okay."

The "next step," according to Markey, is the easy availability of the so-called "V-Chip" that would al-

low a viewer to block out certain programs to prevent children from watching them. The warning label, which should be published in programming guides in advance of the shows' air dates, would make it possible for a parent (at least a technologically literate one) to sit down on a Sunday afternoon and block out all the programs in the coming week that she did not want her children to watch. Markey will be holding a hearing at 9 this morning in the Rayburn Building to examine this technology, which is currently available but not required, as well as the warning label initiative.

The TV Violence Act, sponsored by Sen. Simon, exempted the networks from antitrust laws for three

years ending next December so they could jointly develop a way to deal with violence. Last December the networks agreed to some joint "principles on the depiction of violence," but that was not enough. At a hearing this past May, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) warned the same panel of network presidents that "if you just do nothing, and if you just tell us you're doing something while giving us the May sweeps . . . we're going to come down harder on you than you would like us to do."

That day the executives had shown up with their new fall schedule, which appear to include fewer shows that depend on shooting and slinking, and acknowledged that some of the offerings during the May ratings sweep—such as "Murder in the Heartland" and "Ambush in Waco"—were less than great art.

While some anti-violence activists said the advisory label was a meager effort to deal with televised blood lust, industry executives were also criticized by Hollywood producers. They say the warning label could be the first step toward censorship and render the networks less competitive against the no-holds-barred cable industry.

Markey said the warning system was "admittedly crude," but, coupled with the V-chip blocking system, would "empower" parents to reduce the number of violent acts children are exposed to. He noted that in both the 1950s and 1960s, hearings had been convened to examine television violence, and that "once the hot flare of congressional attention turns elsewhere, violence in television tends to increase." Nonetheless, he has high hopes for this initiative. "I'm an optimist," he said.

Warning: TV Violence Is Harmful, Networks Concede

By Megan Rosenfield
Washington Post Staff Writer

In announcing yesterday that violent television programs will be labeled with a parental advisory, heads of the four major networks and the motion picture association acknowledged a point they had long disputed—that gratuitous and glamorized mayhem on television affects viewers.

"This is the dawning of a new era," said Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) at an unusual Capitol Hill

press conference yesterday with the heads of CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox Television and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). "For the last 40 years the debate has been whether violence on television affects antisocial behavior. Today we put an end to that debate."

Facing continued pressure from Congress and anti-violence lobbying groups, the network heads have gradually conceded over the past year that the research may be correct—that television could be a factor in the dramatic increase in mur-

ders, assaults and illegal weapon sales in this country. The networks came up with the advisory label as an alternative to a rating system similar to that followed by the motion picture industry, or to monitoring by the Federal Communications Commission.

The warning label unveiled yesterday says simply "Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised." Hammered out with at least 15 revisions in a series of meetings and conference calls during the past seven weeks, according to one in-

dustry source, the notice will appear before a program begins, during the midpoint station break and on promotional material. Each network's "standards" department will decide independently which shows to label. The only other measure the networks announced was a series of meetings organized by the MPAA to raise consciousness among the people who create programs.

The agreement to label is for a two-year "trial" and does not currently include the cable industry. ■

See TV VIOLENCE, A8, Col. 1

Networks' Plan for TV Program Warnings May Backfire

In trying to mollify Washington and counter criticism of television's preoccupation with gunplay and other violence, the networks may have only shot themselves in the foot.

The four major broadcast networks' new pact to step up program warnings on violent content may temporarily stave off government intervention. But it also threatens to encourage advertisers to pull out of risky programming, and it hasn't silenced the critics who produced them into the new approach.

CBS, ABC, NBC and News Corp.'s Fox joined congressional critics yesterday in announcing the new warnings, which will signal a particularly violent mini-series or made-for-television movie riddled with gunfire and bodies by issuing a simple alert: "Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised."



ADVERTISING/By KEVIN GOLDMAN

By doing that, the networks have handed skittish advertisers a ready-made excuse to forgo buying network time, some industry executives maintain. It would make it tougher for some sponsors to stick with a show that has been labeled by its own network as violent — even if the advertiser were otherwise willing. And rather than help parents keep their kids away from violent content, such warnings might unintentionally encourage kids to be sure to tune in.

"Make no mistake about it, this is going to cost us money," says Warren Littlefield, president of NBC Entertainment, a unit of General Electric. "There is a soft advertising market, and anyone looking for an excuse to get out of a movie or special has just been handed that excuse by the networks. There is going to be an adverse financial impact from advertisers."

Terry Rakolta, founder of Americans for Responsible Television, vows to make

sure that Mr. Littlefield is prophetic. "We will go after any advertiser appearing in a show that has a violence disclaimer," she declares, "and target that advertiser with a consumer boycott."

Such boycotts have failed in the past. And Ms. Rakolta refuses to differentiate between gratuitous violence and well-made programs whose violent scenes may be important to plot or message. In fact, she says the new disclaimer will make it easier to target sponsors. "Advertisers will no longer be able to claim ignorance on what kind of shows they are buying."

Ms. Rakolta adds that even the disclaimer pact amounts to "too little, too late. It gives children a road map to the violent material." She complains: "The networks are placing all responsibility back in the parents' hands." And what's wrong with that? Parents can't be around all the time to monitor what the kids are watching, she says.

But it appears that the call to halt violence on prime-time television comes mostly from politicians and pressure groups, such as Ms. Rakolta's, rather than from a massive, grass-roots outcry. "I haven't picked up a mass public movement," says Bill Barrett, executive vice president of SFM Media Corp., a media buying service.

Instead, many viewers simply voice their displeasure by turning the dial or shutting the television set off entirely. For example, ABC's violent mini-series "Murder in the Heartland," which ran in spring, based on a killing spree in the 1950s by a young couple, drew poor ratings and, according to a network official, cost Capital Cities/ABC about \$2 million in lost ad revenue because of skittish sponsors.

Prime time has been a somewhat gentler place this past TV season (and promises to be even milder come September, with a gaggle of family-oriented situation comedies). But it wasn't without its

Please Turn to Page B2, Column 3

ADVERTISING

New TV Program Warning System Could Backfire on the Networks

Continued From Page B1

share of shooting violence.

In ABC's recent mini-series "Wild Palms," Angie Dickinson gouged out a man's eyes. "Murder in the Heartland" not only showed shootings, but viewers saw the killer strapped into the electric chair and executed. NBC's mini-series, "In the Line of Duty: Ambush in Waco," had sustained violence when it showed the raid by federal agents on a religious cult's headquarters in the Texas town.

Network television is in a tough bind as it continues to suffer audience erosion to cable and other rivals. Pay cable, of course, has nudged and violent on some cable systems right next to more restrained broadcast competition.

That is one reason veteran producer Steven Bochco has said he wants to produce an R-rated series for network television. Although he didn't get to all freedom from ABC, Mr. Bochco's new series, "N.Y.P.D. Blue," promises to push the limits on sex and violence on broadcast television. (Mr. Rakolta says that sponsors of that show are desirous for a consumer boycott — although she admits she hasn't even seen it yet.)

Not all violence on television, of course, is gratuitous. Mr. Bochco, for instance, pushed the envelope on violence in a 1980s series "Hill Street Blues" that was given a mature rating.

Ultimately, the networks may do worse if they simply crank out newly-minted programming fare, loaded, in a joint statement, yesterday, the four networks said: "It is relevant and important to understand that we cannot allow broadcast television to become barren of dramatic excitement. We cannot participate in a process that, while well-intended, condemns advertiser-supported television to such bland fare that it would forsake a higher, more sophisticated level of dramatic conflict and realistic portrayal of the full range of the human condition."

Translation: Instead of cutting out vio-

lence altogether, the networks will stave off government intervention.

That practice will force advertisers to proceed "more cautiously" in where they place ads, says Steve Sternberg, senior vice president at ad agency Bozell's advertising division. "A lot of advertisers are concerned about violence and potential backlash."

Further, the disclaimer won't help what Mr. Barrett of SFM Media deems as "reverse magnetism" for sponsors who may want to cash in on what could be highly rated, if violent, show. "This is a natural attraction for advertisers," he says. Television advertising is a buyer's market and sponsors aren't likely to be on controversial shows just for the chance to be seen by millions of viewers, he says.

The networks indeed may be killing violence. CBS recently asked producer of the Chuck Norris series "Walker, Texas Ranger" to de-emphasize the violent content. The producers agreed with CBS. But violence on television seems to be sure to stay put, as does violence in life.

Scheduled for this fall: the CBS series "The Menendez Murders." The real-life movie: two ambitious brothers allegedly shotgun their parents.

The Networks Run For

To avoid a warning label, violent shows are getting toned down—or dropped

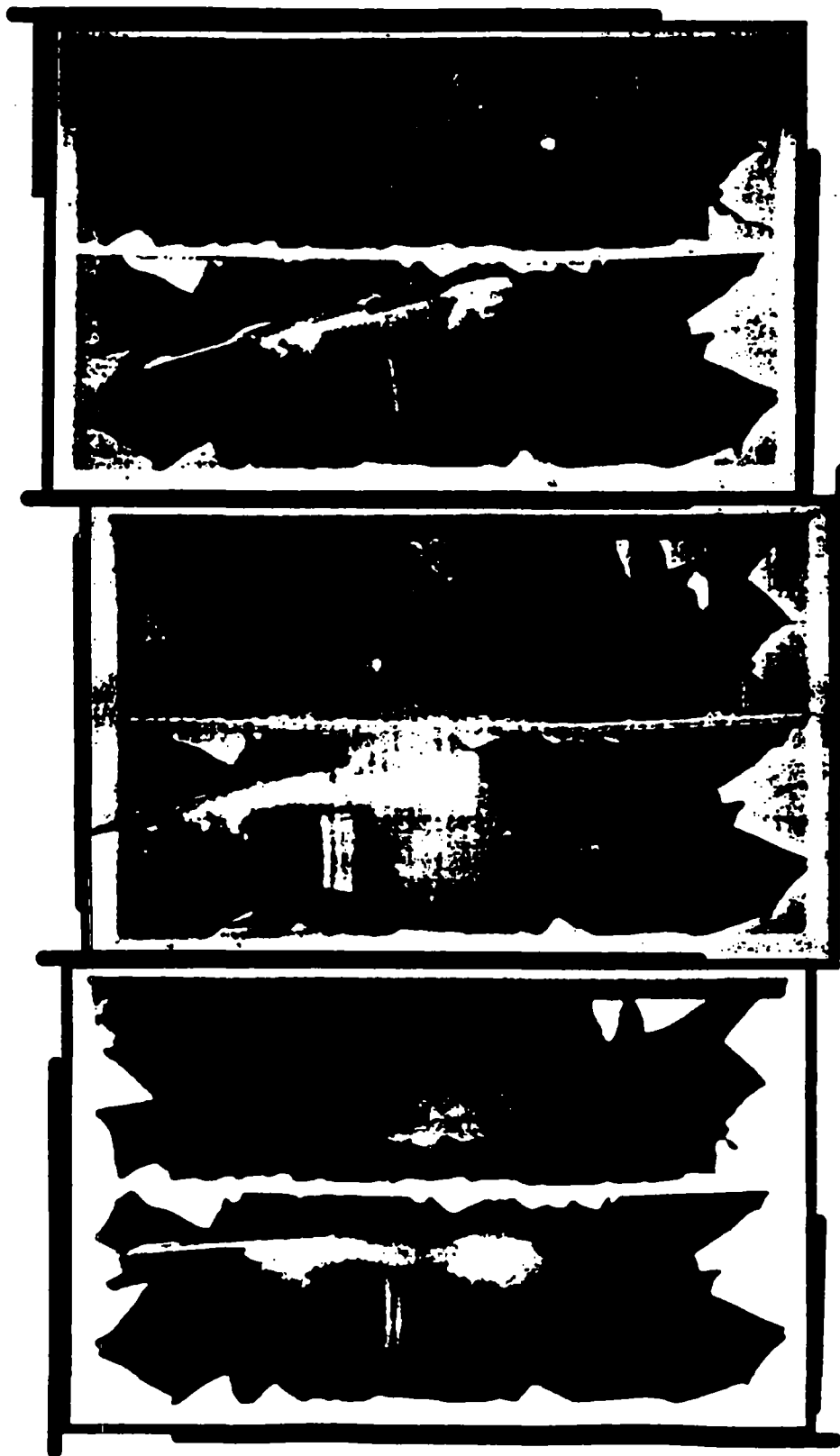
By RICHARD ZOGLIN

PRODUCER JOHN LANGLEY WAS screening a rough cut of his new Fox network show *Cop Files* a couple of weeks ago, and he wasn't happy. In one scene, a female police officer surprises a burglary suspect in a warehouse; he attacks her savagely, then she shoots him in self-defense. When Fox censors objected to the violence, Langley was forced to make drastic excisions. "It was absurd," he says. "The pressure was on us to de-emphasize the attack, so you wound up showing her shooting him without any motivation." Langley, like many others in Hollywood, knows the reason for this outbreak of squeamishness: the networks have suddenly got religion on the subject of violence.

After several rounds of congressional hearings that aired concerns about violence on TV, the four networks last month announced a joint response. Starting in September, they will attach a warning label—DUE TO SOME VIOLENT CONTENT, PARENTAL DISCRETION ADVISED—to shows with high levels of mayhem. Over the past two weeks, network executives have trooped before junketing TV journalists in Los Angeles to stress their concerns about violence—and assert that they aren't the only ones to blame. Next Monday a heavyweight lineup of TV producers, network executives and other industry bigwigs will meet to explore the violence issue at a daylong "summit conference" sponsored by the National Council for Families and Television.

Initial reaction to the networks' labeling plan was predictably skeptical. Critics, from conservative watchdog Terry Raskolka to earnest newspaper columnists, complained that the warning label was a cop-out, a Band-Aid solution that would not reduce violence but wou! simply point out more clearly where to find it. But as production for the new season gets under way, the impact of the new label is shaping up as substantial, maybe even crippling. The Clean Up Your Network

Blasting away in NBC's *Ambush in Waco*



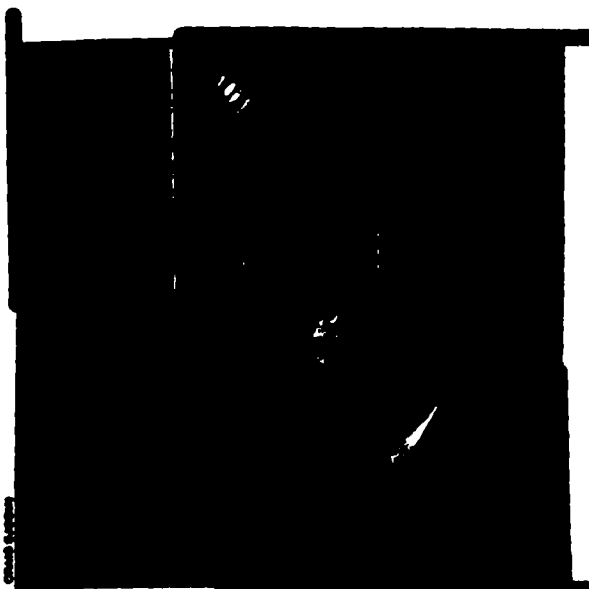
or Cover

campaign may help make TV safer for kids, but it will almost certainly make network programming even blander than it already is.

The irony of the current outcry is that it comes at a time when violence on the networks is at a low ebb. Five, 10 or 15 years ago, the prime-time schedules were packed with turbulent crime shows like *The A-Team*, *Miami Vice*, *Hunter* and *Hill Street Blues*. These have all but disappeared, replaced by sitcoms, magazine shows and "soft" dramas like *L.A. Law* and *Northern Exposure*. Violence is largely confined to a few reality shows, *Cops*, *America's Most Wanted*, and true-crime TV movies—which are abundant but whose violence looks positively prim beside the brutality of any *Lethal Weapon* sequel or Schwarzenegger extravaganza.

Still, faced with public concern about the effect TV violence might be having on young viewers, the networks have vowed to scrub their houses even cleaner. The label itself may turn out to be sparingly used. Network officials say few, if any, of their regular series will be so branded; only Steven Bochco's racy new cop show for ABC, *NYPD Blue*, has been singled out as likely to get a weekly warning. In general, the label will be applied on a case-by-case basis to certain TV movies and individual episodes of regular series.

The real question is whether a "V" label—like an R or NC-17 rating for feature films—will become a stigma to be avoided at almost all costs. The fear is that advertisers, always skittish about controversial



David Caruso and Dennis Franz of *NYPD Blue*

ing these advertisers support violence."

Producers are justifiably worried about the chilling effect this could have on provocative programming. "Once you get advertising redlining, you'll have a debilitating effect on some of TV's most powerful dramas," says Dick Wolf, executive producer of NBC's *Law & Order*. "When *Law & Order* started, we did episodes on subjects like abortion-clinic bombings. In this current environment, I don't know if those would ever have gotten made." The network standards-and-practices departments are already increasing their vigilance. "We're used to dealing with Standards & Practices on a daily basis in terms of language and violence," says Langley of *Cop Files*. "But they've become even more cautious recently." ABC Entertainment chief Ted Harbert, speaking to affiliates in June, promised that the network would "work to keep the violence to the absolute minimum" this fall. George Vradenburg 3d, executive vice president of Fox Inc.,

with rear nudity, relatively rough language ("You pissy little bitch"), and some strong violence. In the face of affiliate discomfort—roughly a third of ABC station executives polled at a recent network meeting said they might not run the show—Bochco said he would consider making some changes: "I'm trying to be sensitive to the concerns without compromising the show."

The anti-violence campaign may have an even greater impact in the shows that viewers won't see. All three networks have said they will back off from their overzealous pursuit of true-crime movies of the week. ABC, which drew fire for its two-parter in May about 1950s mass mur-

derer Charles Starkweather, has turned down a proposed TV movie about 1980s mass murderer Richard Speck. Critics may cheer at the demise of this tawdry TV-movie crime wave, but good films may get hurt in the process. ABC had planned to air the explosively violent (and Oscar-winning) film *Goodfellas* this season, complete with an introduction by director Martin Scorsese in which he asserts the film is not a glorification of violence. In the current climate, the network has decided to pull the film from this season's schedule.

Meanwhile, network executives are complaining loudly about being made scapegoats for a larger problem in society. "The TV networks are a lot easier target than the National Rifle Association," notes CBS Entertainment president Jeff Saksansky. He and others point out that most TV violence is found not on the networks but on syndicated shows like *The Untouchables* and *Highlander*, and on cable channels, which are still free to air whatever they want. Not to mention video games, rented movies—and, of course, real life. "There's nothing more violent than watching the 11 o'clock news at night, and nothing more toxic," contends Peter Guber, chairman of Sony Pictures Entertainment. "Baby Falls Out of Window! Tune in at 11! We have to apply the same standards to all visual images—not just what we call entertainment, but news, information and reality-based programs."

The controversy over whether TV violence truly affects the way people act will continue to roll, with little chance of being resolved conclusively. For now, however, those alarmed by violence have the upper hand. Until viewers raise new alarms by tuning out in search of more stimulating entertainment, network TV seems headed for a dull, discreet stretch.

—Reported by Georgia Harbison/New York and Jeffrey Roesser/Los Angeles

"Advertisers will be lemming-like in their avoidance of these programs."

programs that might inspire a letter-writing campaign or an advertiser boycott, will be scared off by any show that carries the label. Madison Avenue veterans think they will. "Advertisers will be lemming-like in their avoidance of these programs," says Gene DeWitt, president of his own New York City media management firm, "because advertising on them will just be asking for trouble." Asserts Betsy Frank, a senior vice president of Saatchi & Saatchi: "You are shining a spotlight on certain programs and on advertisers who are supporting those programs. In effect, it's say-

vows "increased attention not only to the depiction of violence but also to whether there are appropriate ways to resolve conflicts without using violence." One CBS show has already been affected: *Walker, Texas Ranger*, a western starring Chuck Norris that premiered in the spring, will be less violent when it returns to the fall schedule, network programmers say.

The program drawing the most scrutiny is *NYPD Blue*; it is an admitted effort by Bochco, creator of *Hill Street Blues*, to do network TV's first R-rated series. The pilot episode contains a steamy sex scene

THE VICTIMS OF TV VIOLENCE

Do you despair at the sight of the youngster in a trance in front of the television set? You are not alone. With sets turned on in the inner city for 11 hours a day, with video, pay per view and multiplying cable channels, TV has become the closest and most constant companion for American children. It has become the nation's mom and pop, storyteller, baby sitter, preacher and teacher. Our children watch an astonishing 5,000 hours by the first grade and 19,000 hours by the end of high school—more time than they spend in class. The question more and more concerning parents, psychologists and public officials is this: What is all this viewing doing to them?

The greatest impact is on preadolescent children who do not yet have the capacity to gauge what is real and what is not. To them, TV is a report on how the world really works. There may be a comic side to it. One Indiana school board had to issue an advisory that there is no such thing as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles that the children had been crawling down storm drains to reach. But there is nothing amusing about the perception children gain from TV that violence is the easy solution to many problems, employed by good characters as much as bad and always leading to a happy ending.

The concern is that in later life, those conditioned to violence will intuitively continue to regard it as exciting, charismatic and effective. Consider how pervasive it is. By the age of 18, according to one estimate, a youngster will have seen 200,000 acts of violence on TV, including 40,000 murders. *TV Guide* looked at 10 channels on one normal 18-hour day and found 1,846 individual acts of violence—and every hour of prime time carries six to eight acts of violence. Violence has become normal, the Pied Piper to lure the vulnerable to a darker world.

The youthful world has become dramatically more violent. Consider this piece of anecdotal evidence turned up by CBS News: The seven top problems in public schools in 1940 were identified by teachers as talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress-code infractions and littering. By 1980, the seven top problems had been identified as suicide, assault, rob-

bery, rape, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and pregnancy.

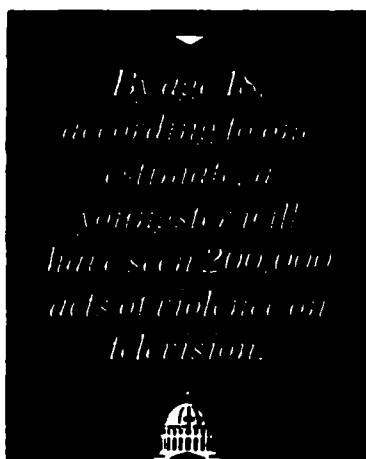
It is hard to avoid the judgment that TV, an acronym for too violent, has become an integral part of this problem. Research suggests that it increases physical aggression in children, such as getting into fights and disrupting the play of others. Does this increase in aggression contribute to the explosion of criminal violence? Many argue that it does. They point to studies such as one demonstrating that children who watched a lot of TV violence at 8 years of age have a higher propensity to commit violent crime by age 30, including the beating of their own children.

There are those who argue that TV violence is a cathartic rather than a stimulant. Indeed, precise malign connections may be difficult to prove. But common sense dictates that the effect cannot be good. Some 80 percent of Americans feel that TV violence is harmful to our society and that there is too much of it in our entertainment. The burden of proof should fall on those who continue to promote violence and use it as entertainment.

The TV networks recently made a concession by providing a rating system to alert viewers to impending violence. It is a gesture, but that is all it is. It identifies the violence but it does

not remove it. It puts the onus on the parents—and parents do have a duty to protect their children from the brutalizing effect of nightly sluggings. But parents cannot do it all, given absences for work and for travel; that many children watch TV in their own rooms, and that the alert system excludes cartoons, cable, videos and so forth.

The alert system is no more than a beginning, a recognition but not a resolution. The minimum next step is to take advantage of the technical capacity to manufacture TV sets with a computer chip that will allow parents, unilaterally, to block off programs carrying the V rating—just as we now mandate sets to help the deaf. And with that should go an earnest effort by the creative controllers to take the V out of much more of their television. It is not a happy prospect that a commercial Big Brother could substitute for the Orwellian Big Brother. ■



Hollywood
still doth
protest too
much, while
the stats on
video violence
pile up.
by Carl M.
Cannon

TIM ROBBINS AND SUSAN SARANDON IMPORE THE nation to treat Haitians with AIDS more humanely. Robert Redford works for the environment. Harry Belafonte marches against the death penalty.

Actors and producers seem to be constantly speaking out for noble causes far removed from their lives. They seem even more vocal and visible now that there is a Democrat in the White House. But in the one area over which they have control—the excessive violence in the entertainment industry—Hollywood activists remain silent.

This summer, Washington was abuzz with talk about the movie *Dave*, in which Kevin Kline stars as the acting president. But every time I saw an ad featuring Kline, the movie I couldn't get out of my head was *Grand Canyon*. There are two scenes in it that explain much of what has gone wrong in America.

Kline's character has a friend, played by Steve Martin, who is a producer of the B-grade, violent movies that Hollywood euphemistically calls "action" films. But after an armed robber shoots Martin's character in the leg, he has an epiphany:

"I can't make those movies any more," he decides. "I can't make another piece of art that glorifies violence and bloodshed and brutality.... No more exploding bodies, exploding buildings, exploding anything. I'm going to make the world a better place."

A month or two later, Kline calls on Martin at his Hollywood studio to congratulate him on the "new direction" his career has taken.

"What? Oh that," Martin says dismissively. "Fuck that. That's over. I must have been delirious for a few weeks there."

He then gins up every hoary excuse for Hollywood-generated violence you've ever heard, ending with: "My movies reflect what's going on; they don't make what's going on."

This is Hollywood's last line of defense for why it shows murder and mayhem on the big screen and the little one, in prime time and early in the morning, to children, adolescents, and adults:

We don't cause violence, we just report it.

Four years ago, I joined the legion of writers, researchers, and parents who have tried to force Hollywood to confront the more disturbing truth. I wrote a series of newspaper articles on the massive body of evidence that establishes a direct cause-and-effect relationship between violence on television and violence in society.

The orchestrated response from the industry—a series of letters seeking to discredit me—was something to behold.

Because the fact is, on the one issue over which they have power, the liberals in Hollywood don't act like progressive thinkers; they act like, say, the National Rifle Association:

Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

We don't cause violence in the world, we just reflect it.

kids

Passing the buck in Tinseltown

BY MICHAEL KRASNY



For seven years, Michael Krasny hosted a successful West Coast radio talk show widely recognized for discussing serious issues and showing respect for callers. Krasny left his commercial program to move to public radio in February 1993. Many saw Krasny's departure from commercial radio as symbolic of the industry trend toward sensationalism and controversy—and away from public trust and responsibility.

Mother Jones commissioned Krasny to explore the trend toward excess, particularly excess violence, in the entertainment industry. Film and TV producers, directors, and writers claim that they want to create works of artistic and social value, yet too often what we—and our children—see is only blood and gore. How can we reconcile the First Amendment with the cost to society of viewing such violence? And to what extent are these individuals responsible for the repercussions of their violent movies and television shows? Krasny asked a few players for their thoughts:

BRIAN GRAZER, Ron Howard's partner, has produced more than twenty movies. "Most of my films have been sweet-spirited: *Parenthood*, *Splash*, *My Girl*. I'm proud of them. Others I'm not so proud of. I learned a big lesson with *Kindergarten Cop*. No one objected to the violent confrontation scene, and there was no problem with it in our focus groups. Then I showed it to my five-year-old, and all of a sudden, reflexively, I put my hand over his eyes. I knew at that point that we'd made a mistake. It was too late to cut the scene, but I would cut it now.

"Usually bad movies aren't hits. I don't see Freddy Krueger [*Nightmare on Elm Street*] movies, and I wouldn't want my kids to see them. I don't know why people make such movies. They're sick."

BOB SHAYE, chief executive officer of New Line Cinema, is responsible for the *Nightmare on Elm Street* horror films. "There's an almost sardonic or dour humor to Freddy Krueger [the *Elm Street* killer], especially to fantasy horror buffs. The tales are useful and cautionary. They suggest that evil and harm are everywhere and that we need to be prepared. They're not intended for kids.

"We create a product. People buy it or they don't. It pains my aesthetic judgment, but I often feel a good movie is one that makes money. My interest is in entertaining people. *The Killers* and *Batman*? Too much for kids. I can draw my lines. Not everyone can."

SAM HAMM shares screenwriting credit for *Batman* and *Batman Returns*. "It was probably a bad idea to excite small children to see *Batman Returns*. The tie-in to McDonald's was the idea of marketing people.

"But I'm ambivalent about all of this. I can remember being scared as a kid at horror films and developing a craving for that sort of thing, but that's what may form imagination in a strong way and that's what creates narrative and inner life. It teaches you to look for stuff that's not safe in the art you enjoy later on.

"I'm not arguing to expose kids to *Friday the 13th* movies or porno, but I feel there's too much caution about what kids see. Gravitating toward the forbidden is a natural part of growing up.

"I'm dubious of stimulation and effect, wary of speaking of anyone's experience but my own. I knew as a kid very clearly the distinction between real violence and cartoon or film violence. I'm waiting for the legions of those affected by what they see to give testimony."

VIVIENNE VERDON-ROE directed the documentary film *Women For America, For The World*. "I can't go to most popular movies without checking them out with friends first, because I can't physically sit through [violent ones]. My body will not allow it. People really ought to think about the effects. They may not faint like I do, but they're getting desensitized to violence, and it contributes to the social violence of gangs and the like.

"It's incredibly difficult when there are so few alternatives. Teens go to movies because there's often nothing else for them to do, and if they are gruesome or bad movies, no one in society seems to be saying so.

"I'm not an insider. I'm not living down there. But I know enough. It's all money. Everything's money. It's horrible."



RICHARD DONNER directed the *Lethal Weapon* movies, *Superman*, *The Omen*, and *The Goonies*, among others. "If people see gratuitous violence in any of the *Lethal Weapon* movies, I wonder if they've seen

the same movie. It's entertainment. That's my obligation. I brought social issues into the *Lethal Weapon* movies, like when Danny Glover's family comes down on him for eating tuna, or the 'Stamp out the NRA' sign up in the LA police station. In the last one the daughter wears a pro-choice T-shirt.

"You've got to prove [a connection between film violence and real violence] to me. Movies do provoke. I won't do gratuitous or animal violence. We went a little too far in the first *Lethal Weapon*, but I wanted to move more after that



THE FIRST CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS INTO THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION VIOLENCE took place in 1954. Although television was still relatively new, its extraordinary marketing power was already evident. The tube was teaching Americans what to buy and how to act, not only in advertisements, but in dramatic shows, too.

Everybody from Hollywood producers to Madison Avenue ad would boast about this power—and seek to utilize it on dual tracks: to make money and to remake society along better lines.

Because it seemed ludicrous to assert that there was only one area—the depiction of violence—where television did not influence behavior, the television industry came up with this theory: Watching violence is cathartic. A violent person might be sated by watching a murder.

The notion intrigued social scientists, and by 1956 they were studying it in earnest. Unfortunately, watching violence turned out to be anything but cathartic.

In the 1956 study, one dozen four-year-olds watched a "Woody Woodpecker" cartoon that was full of violent images. Twelve other preschoolers watched "Little Red Hen," a peaceful cartoon. Then the children were observed. The children who watched "Woody Woodpecker" were likely to hit other children, verbally accost their classmates, break toys, be disruptive, and engage in destructive behavior during free play.

For the next thirty years, researchers in all walks of the social sciences studied the question of whether television causes violence. The results have been stunningly conclusive.

"There is more published research on this topic than on almost any other social issue of our time," University of Kansas Professor Aletha C. Huston, chairwoman of the American Psychological Association's Task Force on Television and Society, told Congress in 1988. "Virtually all independent scholars agree that there is evidence that television can aggressive behavior."

There have been some three thousand studies of this issue—eighty-five of them major research efforts—and they all say the same thing. Of the eighty-five major studies, the only one that failed to find a causal relationship between television violence and actual violence was paid for by NBC. When the study was subsequently reviewed by three independent social scientists, all three concluded that it actually did demonstrate a causal relationship.

Some highlights from the history of TV violence research:

- In 1973, when a town in mountainous western Canada was wired for television signals, University of British Columbia researchers observed first- and second-graders. Within two years, the incidence of hitting, biting, and shoving increased 160 percent in those classes.

- Two Chicago doctors, Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesmann, followed the viewing habits of a group of children for twenty-two years. They found that watching violence on television is the single best predictor of violent or aggressive behavior later in life, ahead of such commonly accepted factors as parents' behavior, poverty, and race.

"Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels and all levels of intelligence," they told Congress in 1992. "The effect is not limited to children who are already disposed to being aggressive and is not restricted to this country."

- Fascinated by an explosion of murder rates in the United States and Canada that began in 1955, after a generation of North Americans came of age on television violence, University of Washington Professor Brandon Centerwall decided to see if the same phenomenon could be observed in South Africa, where the Afrikaner-dominated regime banned television until 1975.

He found that eight years after TV was introduced—showing mostly Hollywood-produced fare—South Africa's murder rate skyrocketed. His most telling finding was that the crime rate increased first in the white communities. This mirrors U.S. crime statistics in the 1950s and especially points the finger at television, because whites were the first to get it in both countries.

By the age of
eighteen, the
average child
has witnessed
eighteen
thousand
simulated
murders on TV.

white. The converse was true if the losing fighter was black.

• In 1988, researchers Daniel G. Linz and Edward Donnerstein of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Steven Penrod of the University of Wisconsin studied the effects on young men of horror movies and "slasher" films.

They found that depictions of violence, not sex, are what desensitizes people.

They divided male students into four groups. One group watched no movies, a second watched nonviolent, X-rated movies, a third watched teenage sexual-innuendo movies, and a fourth watched the slasher films *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Friday the 13th Part 2*, *Maniac*, and *Toolbox Murders*.

All the young men were placed on a mock jury panel and asked a series of questions designed to measure their empathy for an alleged female rape victim. Those in the fourth group measured lowest in empathy for the specific victim in the experiment—and for rape victims in general.

THE ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE IS OFTEN MORE COMPELLING THAN THE SCIENTIFIC studies. Ask any homicide cop from London to Los Angeles to Bangkok if television violence induces real-life violence and listen carefully to the cynical, knowing laugh.

Ask David McCarthy, police chief in Greenfield, Massachusetts, why nineteen-year-old Mark Branch killed himself after stabbing an eighteen-year-old female college student to death. When cops searched his room they found ninety horror movies, as well as a machete and a goalie mask like those used by Jason, the grisly star of *Friday the 13th*.

Ask the families of thirty-five young men who committed suicide by playing Russian roulette after seeing the movie *The Deer Hunter*.

Ask George Gavito, a lieutenant in the Cameron County, Texas, sheriff's department, about a cult that sacrificed at least thirteen people on a ranch west of Matamoros, Mexico. The suspects kept mentioning a 1986 movie, *The Believers*, about rich families who engage in ritual sacrifice. "They talk about it like that had something to do with changing them," Gavito recalled later.

Ask LAPD lieutenant Mike Melton about Angel Regino of Los Angeles, who was picked up after a series of robberies and a murder in which he wore a blue bandanna and fedora identical to those worn by Freddy, the sadistic anti-hero of *Nightmare on Elm Street*. In case anybody missed the

Bolder than most researchers, Centerwall argues flatly that without violent television programming, there might be as many as ten thousand fewer murders in the United States each year.

• In 1983, University of California, San Diego, researcher David P. Phillips wanted to see if there was a correlation between televised boxing matches and violence in the streets of America.

Looking at crime rates after every televised heavyweight championship fight from 1973 to 1978, Phillips found that the homicide rate in the United States rose by an average of 11 percent for approximately one week. Phillips also found that the killers were likely to focus their aggression on victims similar to the losing fighter: if he was white, the increased number of victims were mostly

toward a less real and more comic-book effect, despite the great reaction we had.

"Public trust comes into filmmaking. The filmmaker is ultimately accountable. I can defend my own work only on personal grounds. If I'm a provocateur of anything, I hope it's good emotion and humor. Censorship is in the ratings system. It works."



CALLIE KHOURI won an Academy Award for her screenplay of *Thelma and Louise*. "I have a hard time with violence just to entertain, but I believe it can be very effective in getting a point across. I resorted to it in my film, but there was a conscience to it. *Thelma and Louise* felt they had done something wrong, and there were big consequences—including psychic consequences.

"Outlaw movies have always been a catharsis for men, but denied to women. I was extremely frustrated with the literal interpretation of *Thelma and Louise*. Doesn't anyone read anymore or understand metaphor? The film was supposed to be complex, without easy answers, and with flawed characters. I thought when Louise shot that guy that there'd be dead silence in the theater. That scene was written carefully: it was an attempted rape, and I wanted to make what she did wrong. And yet people cheered. I was stunned."



LESLIE MOONVES is head of Lorimar Studios, often called the fifth network, which produced the TV movies "Jack the Ripper" and "Deliberate Strangers" (about serial killer Ted Bundy), as well as shows that Moonves has considerably more pride in, such as "I'll Fly Away" and "Home Front." "I'd love to do another 'I'll Fly Away,' but the corporate bosses won't let me. When you

get burned with quality programming you get gun-shy—you feel you need to stick to the shows that make money. You know what the problem is? Network change. Somebody like Bill Paley [former chairman of CBS] used to say that he didn't care if he got a twelve share, because there was a public trust and social responsibility to put on an 'I'll Fly Away.' GE buys a network, and you've got a different agenda.

"Network presidents don't keep their jobs based on the number of Emmy awards. Let's face it: there is more sensation and violence because it works. The movie of the week has become the killer of the week story.

"Do we have a responsibility to our public? Of course. I honestly don't know what to do about it. How's that for an answer?"

JOE ESZTERHAS has written the scripts for such major Hollywood films as *Betrayal*, *Jagged*

Edge, *Basic Instinct*, and *Silver*. His work has been criticized as sexist and homophobic. "I don't like to be a Monday morning quarterback on my own work."



DAWN STEEL became the first woman to head a major studio when she was made president of Columbia Pictures in 1987. During her career, she has worked on such films as *Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop II*, *Casualties of War*, *When Harry Met*

Sally, and *Look Who's Talking*. She now runs her own production company. "I believe I've never made a movie in bad taste or with excessive violence. But for profit, I've had to make movies not from my soul. If I want to make a film for passion, I have to make it for less money."

"I'm more cynical about the violence in LA than about violence in our business. It's unanswerable whether movies reflect the culture or vice versa. I monitor my kid's movies and won't let her see what's not appropriate for her. There's no way you can censor any movie in this country that's being made. That's our First Amendment."

MATT GROENING is creator and executive producer of the TV hit "*The Simpsons*." "Anytime you visualize something, it's difficult not to glorify it. Every antiwar film is pro-war, because its violence is stylized and an audience can be removed from it and enjoy it. Stylistically, violence is almost invariably glorified, even when you have an anti-violent point of view. Look at *Pleasant*. Violence is invariably used in movies and TV as punctuation, and it does have a numbing effect on people after a time."



"Most TV, most movies, really, are less pernicious than tedious and boring. What's bad for kids is bad storytelling. Tell better stories."



BARRY DILLER, ex-chief executive officer and chairman of Fox and Matt Groening's former boss, now heads QVC Network. He couldn't disagree more with Groening about television's being mostly bad. "I can't imagine why he would say that. Pound for

pound, the hour and half-hour television series are very good. There's a lot of junk, but much more in the movie business, the record business, even legitimate theater. It's snobbery to call a show like '*Roseanne*' lowbrow or vulgar. It's funny and interesting and has a good moral value and tone."

significance of his disguise, Regino told his victims that they would never forget him, because he was another Freddy Krueger.

Ask Britain Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, who called for further restrictions on U.S.-produced films after Michael Ryan of Hungerford committed Britain's worst mass murder in imitation of *Rambo*, massacring sixteen people while wearing a U.S. combat jacket and a bandoleer of ammunition.

Ask Sergeant John O'Malley of the New York Police Department about a nine-year-old boy who sprayed a Bronx office building with gunfire. The boy explained to the astonished sergeant how he learned to load his Uzi-like firearm: "I watch a lot of TV."

Or ask Manteca, California, police detective Jeff Boyd about thirteen-year-old Juan Valdez, who, with another teenager, went to a man's home, kicked him, stabbed him, beat him with a fireplace poker, and then choked him to death with a dog chain.

Why, Boyd wanted to know, had the boys poured salt in the victim's wounds?

"Oh, I don't know," the youth replied with a shrug. "I just seen it on TV."

NUMEROUS GROUPS HAVE CALLED, OVER THE YEARS, FOR CURBING TELEVIOLENCE: the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1969), the U.S. Surgeon General (1972), the Canadian Royal Commission (1976), the National Institute of Mental Health (1982), the U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence (1984), the National Parents Teachers Association (1987), and the American Psychological Association (1992).

During that time, cable television and movie rentals have made violence more readily available while at the same time pushing the envelope for network TV. But even leaving aside cable and movie rentals, a study of television programming from 1967 to 1989 showed only small ups and downs in violence, with the violent acts moving from one time slot to another but the overall violence rate remaining pretty steady—and pretty similar from network to network.

"The percent of prime-time programs using violence remains more seven out of ten, as it has been for the entire twenty-two-year period," researchers George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication and Nancy Signorielli of the University of Delaware wrote in 1990. For the past twenty-two years, they found, adults and children have been entertained by about sixteen violent acts, including two murders, in each evening's prime-time programming.

They also discovered that the rate of violence in children's programs is three times the rate in prime-time shows. By the age of eighteen, the average American child has witnessed at least eighteen thousand simulated murders on television.

By 1989, network executives were arguing that their violence was part of a larger context in which bad guys get their just desserts.

"We have never put any faith in mechanical measurements, such as counting punches or gunshots," said NBC's Alan Gerson. "Action and conflict must be evaluated within each specific dramatic context."

"Our policy," added Alfred R. Schneider of ABC, "...makes clear that when violence is portrayed [on TV], it must be reasonably related to plot development and character delineation."

Of course, what early-childhood experts could tell these executives is that children between the ages of four and seven simply make no connection between the murder at the beginning of a half-hour show and the led away in handcuffs at the end. In fact, psychologists know that very young children do not even understand death to be a permanent condition.

But all of the scientific studies and reports, all of the wisdom of cops' grief of parents have run up against Congress's quite proper fear of censorship. For years, Democratic Congressman Peter Rodino of New Jersey chaired the House Judiciary Committee and looked at calls for some form of censorship with a jaundiced eye. At a hearing five years ago, Rodino told witnesses that Congress must be a "protector of commerce."

"Well, we have children that we need to protect," replied Frank M. Palumbo, a pediatrician at Georgetown University Hospital and a consultant to the American Academy of Pediatrics. "What we have here is a toxic substance in the environment that is harmful to children."

Arnold Fege of the national PTA added, "Clearly, this committee would not protect teachers who taught violence to children. Yet why would we condone children being exposed to a steady diet of TV violence year after year?"

Finally there is a reason to hope for progress.

Early this summer, Massachusetts Democrat Edward Markey, chair of the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on telecommunications, said that Congress may require manufacturers to build TV sets with a computer chip so that parents could block violent programs from those their children could select.

He joins the fight waged by Senator Paul Simon, a liberal Democrat from Illinois. Nine years ago, Simon flipped on a hotel television set hoping to catch the late news. "Instead," he has recalled many times, "I saw a man being sawed in half with a chainsaw, in living color."

Simon was unsettled by the image and even more unsettled when he wondered what repeatedly looking at such images would do to the mind of a fourteen-year-old.

When he found out, he called television executives, who told him that violence sells and that they would be at a competitive disadvantage if they acted responsibly.

Why not get together and adopt voluntary guidelines? Simon asked.

Oh, that would be a violation of antitrust law, they assured him.

Simon called their bluff in 1990 by pushing through Congress a law that allowed a three-year moratorium on antitrust considerations so that the industry could discuss ways to jointly reduce violence.

Halfway through that time, however, they had done nothing, and an angry Simon denounced the industry on the Senate floor. With a push from some prominent industry figures, a conference was set for this August 2 in Los Angeles. (See action card between pages 16 and 17.)

This spring, CBS broadcast group president Howard Stryker said his network was looking for ways to cut back on violence in its entertainment, because he was troubled by the cost to society of continuing business-as-usual.

"We must admit we have a responsibility," he said.

Jack Valenti, the powerful head of the Motion Picture Association of America, wrote to producers urging them to participate in the August 2 conference. "I think it's more than a bunch of talk," Simon said. "I think this conference will produce some results. I think the industry will adopt some standards."

The federal government, of course, possesses the power to regulate the airwaves through the FCC, and Simon and others believe that this latent power to control violence—never used—has put the fear of God in the producers. He also thinks some of them are starting to feel guilty.

"We now have more people in jail and prison per capita than any country that keeps records, including South Africa," Simon says. "We've spent billions putting people behind bars, and it's had no effect on the crime rate. None. People realize there have to be other answers, and as they've looked around, they have settled on television as one of them."

Maybe Simon is right. Maybe Hollywood executives will get together and make a difference.

Or maybe, like Steve Martin's character in *Grand Canyon*, producers and directors from New York to Beverly Hills will wake up after Simon's antitrust exemption expires December 1, shake off the effects of their holiday hangovers, and when asked about their new commitment to responsible filmmaking, answer:

"What? Oh that. Fuck that. That's over. We must have been delirious for a few weeks there." □

Carl M. Cannon is the White House correspondent for the Baltimore Sun.

"TV movies are crummy. 'Hard Copy' is a lying, thieving, lowlife program of hideous, cynical purpose. It's not serious television. There are only a few tabloid shows, but they speak loudly.

"I think you look at society, and you see what is reflected on television in terms of violent action. Absolutely, [there is too much violence]. But we can be thoughtful and reasonable and change that, reduce it. I think plans over the last few years will help. Senator Simon's work with the networks will help."

PHILIP KAUFMAN co-wrote and directed *The Wanderers*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *Henry and June*, and wrote and directed *The Right Stuff*. "There is a fascist edge to a lot of the violence we see. I'm in favor of pushing the envelope, but when you push it in romance or eroticism you get an NC-17 rating. It's easier to get an R rating if you use senseless violence, because the ratings board is largely conservative and embraces violence before sex."



JOSH BRAND, along with his partner, has produced the TV hits "St. Elsewhere" and "Northern Exposure." "If something gets a high rating, say, 'The Amy Fisher Story,' then advertisers pay more money. Now, did the networks create the audience for it, or do they pander to what the audience wanted? Is it okay to pollute the emotional and spiritual environment?

"Now there are studies [that show] that violent images don't affect people, just as the tobacco industry has studies showing that cigarette smoking doesn't cause cancer. And they use the First Amendment to evince their rights and get into this study versus that study, and the whole thing becomes a wash, a miasma of moral mud. But I think that there is absolutely no question that the profusion of these kinds of images has a negative effect, not only on children but on human beings in general.

"But regulations are dangerous, particularly when dealing with the free expression of ideas. I do believe that some of those ideas are like pollutants, but there isn't one thing you can do. A panacea doesn't exist."

Although there may be no panacea, we must still look for solutions. How would you resolve the conflict between excessive violence in entertainment and the protections guaranteed under the First Amendment?

Write to Mother Jones, 1663 Mission St., 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103. Or fax us at (415) 863-5136.

Michael Krasny is currently the host of San Francisco radio station KQED's "Forum," a week-day talk show. Priscilla Yamin of Mother Jones and Karen Daar contributed research to these interviews. □

news from

PAUL SIMON

U.S. SENATOR

December, 1992

CONTACT: David Carle
Christopher R.
202-224-7115
202-224-7023
ILLINOIS

'Big Three' Television Networks Agree on Joint TV Violence Standards Under Simon's TV Violence Act

In a breakthrough for movement toward industry-wide efforts to reduce violence on television, U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., Friday announced Dec. 11 that ABC, CBS and NBC have agreed to joint standards on entertainment TV violence that will guide programming on the networks.

The networks invoked the antitrust exemption in the two-year-old Television Violence Act to draft and implement the standards, which draw upon their separate existing guidelines. The Television Violence Act, authored by Simon, exempts the television industry from antitrust limits to allow industry self-regulation to scale back depictions of violence in entertainment programs, through development of common standards. The law covers broadcasters, the cable industry and those who produce TV programs. Simon cites the "overwhelming" body of research that shows excessive violence on TV harms children and contributes to real-life violence in society.

Simon also announced that the three networks will convene an industry-wide conference on TV violence in Los Angeles next year to discuss further steps, and that Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, has agreed to participate. The networks say their joint standards are an attempt "to break this stalemate" over industry use of the Simon laws before the clock runs out on the antitrust exemption in December, 1993.

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 the 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 are 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 or 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.



THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Senator Lights Fire Under TV Industry Over Violence

By Louise Sweeney

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON

TELEVISION violence, long a ritual staple of industry programming, has begun to crest again as a subject of public and congressional concern.

This week's TV Guide, the national magazine covering the industry, contains a section devoted totally to violence on the tube. Heather Borden, a spokeswoman for the magazine, says it did its own study of violence over 10 stations in the Washington area, started it with a symposium of experts and is running the results in the Aug. 22-28 issue.

Sen. Paul Simon (D) of Illinois, author of the Television Violence Act, is so outraged by the saturation of violence in TV that he is talking about calling for hearings on the subject. "We may very well have a hearing after the first of the year." This subcommittee on constitutional rights would hold such a hearing.

Senator Simon says: "I think

the American people are not going to simply sit by and say, 'Well, if they're not going to regulate themselves, we're just not going to do anything about it.' I think there is going to be a demand for some type of action. And I think we have to be very careful in this field because we don't want violations of the first amendment."

When Simon began his study of TV violence, he asked industry representatives to work together to curb that violence. He started his campaign after being horrified by a feature film on TV of a chain-saw massacre.

He told industry spokesmen that there had been over 100 studies of the relationship between violence on TV and violence in society, that 85 of them were substantial, and that both the Surgeon General and the Institute of Mental Health had issued studies on it — finding violence on TV is causing violence in society.

Industry representatives told him they couldn't do anything about it because to get together and establish standards would violate the antitrust laws. Undaunted, he then introduced spe-

cial legislation, which passed, giving them a three-year exemption from such laws.

A year and a half later, he is still waiting to see what the networks are going to do. He has heard that they have had two meetings in the last year and a half. The most recent one was July 24. An ABC source confirmed that meeting, saying that it included representatives of ABC,



SENATOR SIMON: He's outraged about violence on TV and threatens to hold hearings in 1993.

CBS, and NBC. Julie Hunter, an ABC spokeswoman, said: "They agreed to agree, and are now in the process of trying to draft language which will be edited and circulated actively. They're hoping to reach conclusions in the next couple of months."

"They're working on trying to create some statements of principle," she said. "We [the networks] already have departments of standards and practices, which review every program before it goes out over the air. We don't see this kind of standards and practices review evident anywhere on cable."

Simon says: "My hope is that both the networks as well as the independent and cable will pay attention to this. But clearly one of the alternatives is some kind of Federal Communications Commission action."

The FCC does have a great deal of power over individual stations [the threat of relieving unlicensed affiliates of their licenses, for instance]...."

Ivgy Larnack, spokeswoman for the National Cable TV Association, says it has already acted:

"The cable industry's response to Senator Simon's bill was to commission a study by Dr. George Gerbner, one of the foremost experts on television violence." She says they hope to be able to share the results of the survey with Senator Simon this fall.

National Association of Broadcasters spokesman Doug Willis says his organization held meetings on the subject starting in June 1990.

"Our broad statement of principles is a document saying 'Grossly violent sex and violence do not belong on television.' That's all that we can do without court challenges on antitrust."

As to a ratings system with a V for violent programs, Simon says: "Congress doesn't have the power to institute a ratings system, but the industry could begin it with voluntary standards." They could draw up such a code in 748 hours, he says.

"The problem is one of will. What we need is the CEOs of ABC and NBC and CBS saying to their people 'Let's be responsible citizens. Let's get together and establish standards.'"

VIEWPOINTS

By Paul Simon

CHECKED INTO a motel room late one night a few years ago after a long day of appointments in Illinois. I slipped on the room's TV set, hoping to catch the late news. Instead, I saw an actor being sawed in half with a chainsaw, in vivid color.

The scene unsettled me that night. I wondered what it would do to a 10-year-old or to a 14-year-old.

When I returned to Washington I asked my staff to gather studies on television violence. They discovered nearly 3,000 scholarly articles and studies.

As I dug deeper I found, first, a remarkable consensus in several research fields about the harm excessive TV violence does to children and adults; second, confirmation that U.S. television is more violent than ever before and may be the most violent of any industrialized society; and third, self-regulation not long ago was an accepted practice in the American television industry, but today it is illegal.

In the 1950s, when television violence was first compared with that seen today, psychologists tended toward a theory that it had a cathartic effect that reduced viewers' aggressive behavior. Researchers today find no data to support that theory, but find abundant evidence of its harmful effects. The research generally identifies three problems connected with TV violence: Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others; they may become more fearful of the world around them; and they may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

The American Academy of Pediatrics finds "repeated exposure to televised violence promotes a proclivity to violence and a passive response to its practice." In 1982, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop reported a cause-and-effect relationship between viewing violence and aggressive behavior after asking the National Institute of Mental Health to review the sizable body of research.

Data published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows graphic depictions of suicide on television are often followed by a dramatic rise in teen suicides. Thirty-five boys and young men between the ages of 8 and 31 killed themselves playing Russian roulette while watching a scene from "The Deer Hunter," which they had seen on television. And after a televised depiction of the New Bedford pool hall rape was shown, a 12-year-old boy assaulted a 16-year-old girl on a pool table.

Researchers had a unique before-and-after testing opportunity when TV came to a small Canadian community that had never had it before. They found verbal and physical aggression rose among primary school children after television became a part of the town's life.

A study begun on a group of 8-year-olds and pursued for 10 years by Doctors Leonard Eron and Russell Huesmann of the University of Illinois tried to identify all causes of aggression in childhood: child-rearing practices in the family, neighborhood experiences and other factors. At the end of the 10 years, the single best predictor of violence in these

Coming Soon: An Act That Should Reduce Television Violence

children, now 18, was what they had watched on television when they were eight — not what their families did, not what their social class was, not any of the other things that were measured.

By age 18, the average American child has seen 200,000 acts of violence on TV, including 21,000 murders. The audience under 18 numbers about 80 million. If even one-tenth of one percent are harmed, we are needlessly maiming 80,000 young people with this gratuitous electronic mayhem.

As I digested these findings I began to ask my-

self this question: Is a free society like ours — one that shuns government censorship and has a commercial television industry — powerless to protect itself and its children from the harm caused by excessive TV violence?

After discussions with television policy makers and visits to the networks' divisions of standards and practices, I answered that question with the self this question: Is a free society like ours — one that shuns government censorship and has a commercial television industry — powerless to protect itself and its children from the harm caused by excessive TV violence?

While 20 minutes of exposure to a commercial

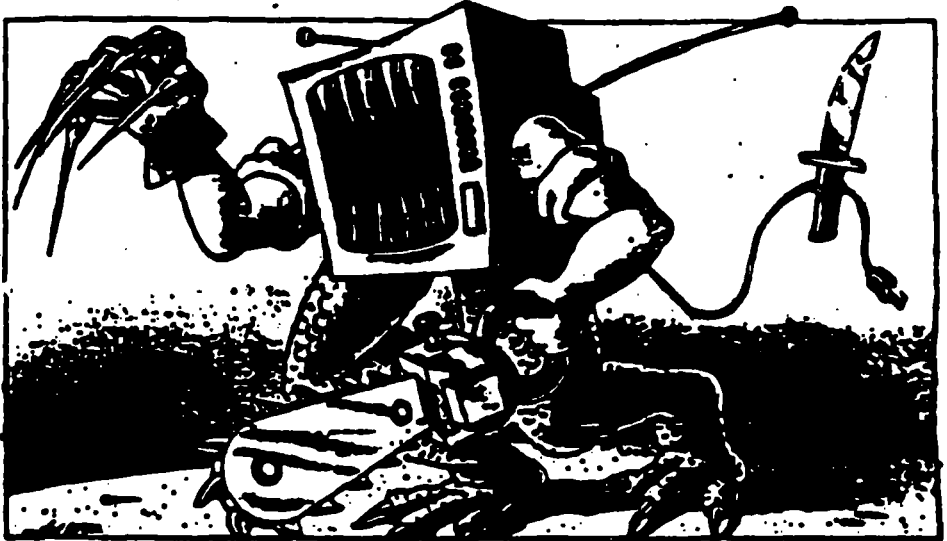


Illustration by Bob Levine

while 20 minutes of exposure to a commercial

great impact. The obvious answer is that television sets — whether a political product, or soap, or violence.

In writing the bill, I wanted to focus on entertainment programming only, as I wrote report language and built a legislative history making that the assumption is not aimed at the content of news programs. One reason is that entertainment programs tend to glorify violence, while news programs do not.

Like our politicians, television can appeal to the best in us or to worst instincts. Too often, television today is contributing to a tide of violence. A democratic, pluralistic society can find ways to protect against excessive televised violence. It's time for the television industry to forge a partnership with America's families to scale back the atmosphere of violence that is erupting in our communities, on our Main Streets, even in our schoolyards.

'Is a free society like ours powerless to protect itself and its children?'

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The Justice Department filed a case in 1979 challenging the advertising sections of the Nation-



Sen. Paul Simon (D-N.J.) is a former editor and publisher who has written a weekly column for 41 yrs.

MEDIA

Critics Zero In on TV Violence

By Fred Elit

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

NEW YORK

TELEVISION violence - the gratuitous, graphically ugly, often sadistic kind - is under attack, and TV broadcasters are paying close and even anxious attention.

A meeting of top executives in the movie, broadcast-TV, and cable industries is planned for August in Los Angeles to examine the issue and the steps that might be taken to at least partially resolve it.

Last December, seeking to defuse the avalanche of criticism, the networks agreed on a number of vaguely worded standards aiming to cut down on violence and on scenes that "depict violence as glamorous."

Self-regulation urged

The Hollywood conference has been called at the instigation of Sen. Paul Simon (D) of Illinois, who has been in the forefront of those pointing to the growing incidence of violence on the small screen (and the big one, for that matter) and urging the broadcasters to find some means of regulating themselves when it comes to the production of violent incidents in drama.

"I have hopes, not expectations for that meeting," Senator Simon told the Monitor. "My hope is that there will be a general consensus that we really do have a problem that we have to deal with in a responsible way."

"I hope that this conference will create a general atmosphere that recognizes, on the part of all the people who have such influence on the public, that there is a responsibility to move away from the pattern of violence that we have."

There are top people in the television business who are sharply aware not only of the prevalence of violence and the growing objections to it, but also of the impact it has on viewers, particularly young ones. Unbridled violence has become an integral part not only of action drama, but also of the cartoon fare for the very young.

Children's shows are frequently interrupted by commercials featuring violence and brutality in trailers for forthcoming adult action movies.

"There is a cynicism in this society, and it is hard to believe that we may not have had some role in it," said Howard Springer, president of the CBS Broadcast Group, at a recent industry conference called by Wertheim Schroder and Variety, the trade publication.

"At CBS, we are going to become much tougher on violence in our lineup this fall," he said. "It is the chill of violence that worries me, not so much the physical action. It is the callousness involved and the role we have in shaping the attitudes of young people to their victims. Gratuitous violence has to be erased from the network. We must admit our responsibility."

It is the impact on the young that particularly concerns many of those who have watched the rise in the level of violence on TV. They perceive it as harmful not only because it is seen stimulating and encouraging aggressive acts, but also because the steady drumbeat of on-air violence threatens to desensitize youngsters to the pain of those on whom it is inflicted, and it diminishes their sense of reality and responsibility.

A survey run in Washington last year by TV Guide on 10 local

stations found no fewer than 100 violent scenes per hour. One-third of the violence involved life-threatening assaults. During an 18-hour span, the survey noted 1,846 individual acts of violence.

The American Psychological Association estimates that the average youngster will see 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of brutality by the time he or she finishes elementary school. The association finds a definite correlation between TV violence

told the Schroder/Variety symposium: "I am an implacable foe of censorship by any group, self-appointed or elected or otherwise. We must not tell creative people how to tell their stories."

The creative process, Valenti pointed out, "is so fragile, so easily shattered. I would try to direct a creative person to soften a violent scene and still get the same kind of impact."

Public awareness

Senator Simon, unlike others who favor a stronger approach - "If self-regulation doesn't work, let's legislate" - would prefer television cleaned its own house. "I don't want to get into the delicate First Amendment area," he says. "Ideally, we can solve the problem without the heavy hand of government, without setting a precedent which we may regret later."

The American public is sharply aware of the negative influence of violence on television. A recent Times Mirror survey found that 72 percent of Americans surveyed said there was too much of it on entertainment programs; an equal percentage turning off the set to protect their children from it.

Television executives, preferring not to be quoted by name, acknowledge that violence exists in TV drama programming because of the perception that it attracts viewers.

They are somewhat pessimistic at the prospects for a serious diminution of on-screen violence precisely because of the commercial aspects of it at a time when the networks are having trouble financially. "The networks will just pay the necessary lip service," observed one.

At the same time, Mr. Valenti

Senator Simon sees an inconsistency in the public's when it comes to violence on TV. "It's the same inconsistency I see in the Senate," he says. "The public wants lower taxes, but services and the elimination of the deficit. The same thing with violence: The public objects to it, and yet it is somehow fascinated by it."

James Quello, the temporary chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, warned that an aroused public might ask Congress to legislate against excessive violence. Outspoken Sen. Robert Byrd (D) of West Virginia has indicated that it could eventually be considered a violation of the public trust on the part of the networks.

It is precisely this threat of censorship that worries men like Valenti and others who look on Hollywood's long and struggle against it. The networks don't deny that they have the legal means to do something about the abundance of violence on the air. They can act under Senator Simon's TV Violence Act, exempting them from antitrust laws allowing them to establish mon rules. The law runs in December 1983.

US-overseas differences

Katherine Masterson, who sells Westinghouse's famous Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles series, underscores the difference between the United States and the rest of the world.

"At home, we don't get objections to violence in shows," she says. "Americans are used to it. But abroad, it's a very different story. The British wouldn't buy the Turtles unless they could edit out some of the violence."

"It's that version that we sold to the rest of the world. Otherwise the Turtles wouldn't have nearly as well."

Americans frequently edit programs for export to accommodate the international distaste for violence. "Over there they are quite willing to accept sex on TV. We are the exact opposite," observes Brian Lacy, who markets the Zedac company's animated series.

While there are objections to violence in entertainment, it occurs more often in the so-called "reality" programs that offer news footage or skilful, luscious recreations.

"TV news portrays violence but does not glamorize it," says Lacy, "but entertainment does just that. That is the problem is, and that is the pattern we must move away from."



Simon, The Illinois senator has set up an August conference in Los Angeles on TV/film violence.

TV
GUIDETV VIOLENCE RATINGS:
THE NEXT SHOWDOWNJuly 17-23
89¢

WOT-



Showdown

Bullets will still fly. Thugs will still kill. Fists will still crunch against noses—as always. But this fall, finally, parents eager to steer kids away from such familiar if disquieting images on broadcast television will get some long-delayed help.

Just how much help remains unclear. And just why Hollywood decided that this was the time to lend a hand to parents is a question worth asking. Still, a startling united front suddenly emerged last month with the announcement by ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox that beginning next season, programs containing violent scenes will carry warning messages in the form of parental advisories. TV violence won't go away, of course, any more than printing the Surgeon General's warning on every cigarette package stopped all smoking. But at least viewers will be forewarned.

And the networks will be off the hook. Or will they? The new initiative required an unusual degree of cooperation among the competing broadcasters, a unanimity forged by their mutual recognition that TV violence does indeed have ill effects, and by a shared need to do something in the face of

For TV
VIOLENCE

For the first time, Hollywood and Washington are joining forces to limit the endless Bang! Pow! and Slash! of television fare. Question is: What weapons will they use?

By Neil Hickey



Clockwise from upper left: Scenes from "Stephen King's It," "Murder in the Heartland," Kung Fu: The Legend Continues, "Total Recall," FBI: The Untold Stories, The Untouchables (above), and The Hidden (center).

mounting criticism and possible Congressional legislation.

How successfully the collaborators defused the violence issue will be seen Aug. 2, when a "summit conference" on TV violence convenes in Los Angeles.



CHEERS

A special huzzah for the television industry finally addressing the violence issue seriously (see story, page 16). Guidelines for the new advisory system are still being worked out, so we're not sure what the real impact of a program-labeling plan will be. But the networks' decision to do *something* to facilitate parents' monitoring of their kids' TV watching may be an initial step in the right direction.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The mass meeting will draw together more than 400 broadcast and cable officials, program makers, legislators, academicians, and members of watchdog groups, who will examine all the options for reducing violence, and ask some tough questions about the networks' announcement.

Still, it's "the dawning of a new era," and a wonderful first step, according to Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.). Most Hollywood programmers, he points out, now concur that violence in the media helps cause real violence—and are eager to cooperate in devising solutions to the problem. CBS president Howard Stringer told 1000 CBS station executives in a May speech that the medium should no longer "deny blindly the reality of television violence.... Death stings, pain hurts, loss devastates, fear terrifies.... Murder, even fighting, is not poetic or balletic. It is ugly and clumsy. Violence is vile." He won a standing ovation from his fellow broadcasters.

This new and welcome urge among TV people to reform has not happened spontaneously. Far from it. Leading up to the June 30 announcement and the August conference has been an unprecedented string of hearings in both the Senate and the House of Representatives in which the industry has been jolted as never before. A parade of witnesses pummeled the medium for dragging its feet on dealing with violence.

Dr. Leonard Eron, a psychology professor at the University of Michigan, sounded a clarion call: "Ladies and gentlemen of the Senate," he said, "the time has come for you to act. The TV industry has demonstrated...that it cannot or will not regulate itself." Cable mogul Ted Turner delivered a furious attack on his broadcast colleagues. Congress should forge a strict standard on violence for broadcasters and, if they resist, "ram

it down their throats," he thundered.

At hearings a few weeks earlier, Rep. Markey declared himself "discouraged" that TV people had given only lip service to the Television Violence Act of 1990, which paved the way for the networks to create some tough new guidelines. Instead, he complained, "another May sweeps finds us mired in murder and mayhem." Clearly, Markey said, the industry "has not gotten the message." To prove it he cited a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (commissioned by TV GUIDE for a special issue on violence last Aug. 22) that found more than 1800

*Cable mogul
Ted Turner
delivered
a furious
attack on his
colleagues.*



violent acts during one 18-hour period of television.

The floodgates were open. Violence was suddenly the hottest subject in television. Lawmakers and public officials of every stripe began checking in with schemes to bring the television industry to heel once and for all: Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.)—describing May as "one of the bloodiest months in TV history"—announced a nationwide petition drive calling for a violence ratings system for prime-time TV, children's programs, and movies. The expected lists of names would be delivered to the Aug. 2 Los An-

geles meeting. Masterminding the petition drive, Conrad said, would be a newly minted body called the Citizens Task Force on TV Violence.

Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) and Rep. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) introduced legislation to require the FCC to publish quarterly reports listing the acts of violence on prime-time, Saturday morning, and cable programming, and the names of the sponsors of those shows.

Underlying it all was the growing conviction



Media violence, says Gerbner, "has become the new civil-rights issue."

among lawmakers and regulators that the government would indeed step in if the industry didn't police itself. At the FCC, acting chairman James Quello said that Congress should give his agency authority to regulate TV violence as "a necessary next step." And the person who has been at the forefront of the anti-violence movement more than any other public official, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), hinted that if the fall TV schedules didn't show authentic improvement, "we're going to have to look at alternatives."

Into that atmosphere came the June 30 four-network announcement on warning labels. Lawmakers and activists were generally pleased with that news, but some felt that the advisories were too

tame a remedy. Others were concerned because children's cartoons will not be labeled. Rep. Markey said he still hoped for a lock-out box that would let parents block channels and programs deemed too violent. Sen. Simon said, "We're not suggesting no violence...we're suggesting no *glamorization* of violence." Networks worried that advertisers will not sponsor shows—even worthy ones—that contain the disclaimer. *The New*

York Times wrote off the advisories as a "mild slap," and said the networks would still get away with murder. Still other critics wondered if a "V" label would only attract unsupervised children.

So the question remains: What is different this time from all previous occasions when Congress and the public were up in arms over media violence, only to have promises made and then fade from view? "It is different now," says George Gerbner, professor at The Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. "It's like adding heat to a pot of water. For a long time it seems that nothing happens, and then all of a sudden it starts to boil—and it boils over."

Media violence, he says, has become "the new civil-rights issue." After "many years of semi-dormancy," Gerbner says, the current interest by government and the public was sparked by last August's special issue of *TV GUIDE*, which bore the cover line, "Is TV Violence Battering Our Kids?" and, he claims, "directly stimulated public debate and the current series of Congressional hearings."

Whatever the source, it now seems possible that a good-faith effort by Hollywood and the networks exists—even if forced—and that all parties may intend (for the first time in television's history) to build on that foundation to help spare children—and adults—exposure to the meaner forms of media mayhem. ■

'V' for Violence: Ten Talking Points

Ten questions we—and many of our readers—believe the Aug. 2 TV violence summit must address:

1. Parental advisories are a good step, but what are their guidelines, and will they be uniformly applied?

We need a full definition of TV violence—any act of aggression, or one depicted in graphic detail? What is “gratuitous” violence? What is violence that “glamorizes”? Until now, anonymous network “standards and practices” people decided what’s OK or not. Should this process now be public, spelled out?

2. Not all parents can supervise their children’s viewing. What technology exists to help parents lock out programs labeled violent?

Rep. Ed Markey’s proposed chip in TV sets would let viewers “lock out” programs labeled “V” for violent. Might this lead to rigid labeling, programming, or viewing decisions—*Roots* lumped together with a gratuitous shoot-em-up series? Are there other solutions in the offing that give parents control more flexibly, with more information?

3. What about cable? Some pay channels show violent movies, uncut, that may run around the clock.

We cable viewers don’t always distinguish between network, basic-cable, or even pay-cable shows; we just flip around with the remote. So do our kids, despite our best efforts. But we *pay* for premium cable: Should there be time-of-day restrictions, or none at all?

4. What about syndicated reruns?

In TV GUIDE’s study last year, an independent station showing mostly reruns had the most violent over-the-air shows. Should station managers take responsibility? Should syndicators?

5. What about violence on national news? On prime-time magazines? On

local newscasts? On tabloid shows?

At one extreme, showing war, crime, or disaster is a necessary part of keeping citizens informed, young or old; at the other, “news” violence is presented as rowdy entertainment. Who will spell out the difference? Should anyone try?

6. Cartoons were exempted from advisories. Why?

It may seem silly to those of us brought up on Tom & Jerry, but studies have shown that “violent” cartoons can adversely affect the very young.

7. How about the rest of TV? Promos for violent shows and movies? What about music videos?

Again, TV GUIDE’s study showed these were contributors to TV violence.

8. VCRs are in most of our homes today. Are the present “advisories” for movies sufficient to guide parents in renting tapes for home TV viewing?

Parents often debate whether an R-rated film is a “hard R” or a “soft R,” or if a movie rated PG-13 in 1993 is the same as PG-13 in 1983. If TV is looking to clean its house, should the movie biz, too?

9. If advertisers boycott good shows labeled violent, will fewer good shows be made? Could this have a chilling effect on creativity and innovation?

Sure could. That’s why we should think carefully about overly simple, black-and-white solutions. CBS chief Howard Stringer warned—self-servingly but correctly—against turning a “vast wasteland” into a “dull wasteland.”

10. Isn’t the ultimate question, “What can we do about the frightening level of violence in U.S. society, rather than just on TV?” Should we take this moment in our national life to ask not merely what we can take off TV, but what we can put on TV to affirmatively help this cause?

—The Editors

STATEMENT OF

**M. JOYCELYN ELDERS, M.D.
SURGEON GENERAL
U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Government Operations
Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations**

Room 2247 Rayburn House Office Building

**Monday, November 1, 1993
10:30AM**

Good morning!

Chairman Towns, Mr. Schiff, and members of the Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations of the House Committee on Government Operations,

I am Dr. Joycelyn Elders, your Surgeon General. I am a pediatrician, a mother, a teacher and a citizen in a country and a city where violence has reached epidemic proportions.

You have asked me here today to talk about "Violence as a Public Health Issue", particularly the public health consequences of violence, our efforts at prevention and the implications for health care professionals and institutions.

We ordinarily think of violence as a crime, and it is, but violence is a public health problem because it kills and injures so many people, especially our young people and our children.

In 1987, there were over 20,000 homicides and 31,000 suicides in this country. The number of deaths caused by violence, which kills over 50,000 persons yearly -- that is 1 every 10 minutes and 137 per day --, is greater than deaths caused by AIDS -- over 30,000 per year or 1 every 16 minutes and 90 per day -- and greater than those caused by drunk driving -- nearly 18,000 persons per year or

1 every 30 minutes and 49 per day. Rape increased 21 percent from 1977 to 1984 and 20 percent of adult women have been physically abused at least once.

Second, violence must be considered a public health problem because the criminal justice approach is not enough; it treats the problem after it occurs! Our prisons are overcrowded, our courts are backlogged, our police are overworked, and, still, our streets are not safe. We must couple prevention with our criminal justice system of treatment.

Finally, violence is a public health problem because it is a problem to be solved and must not be considered a fact of life. Violence is preventable. It is a learned behavior. As your Surgeon General, I am about preventing problems before they happen.

VIOLENCE HAS PUBLIC HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

In recent years, there have been extraordinary increases in the rates of both homicide and suicide among our young people. Since the 1950's suicide rates among our youth have almost quadrupled, and homicide rates among young men are 20 times as high as most other industrialized countries -- 40 times higher in young African American males.

As these rates have increased, the average age of both the perpetrators and the victims has fallen, so today we have a problem of children killing children.

- o Today, in America, 14 children under the age of 19 will die in suicides, homicides or accidental shootings. Many more than that will be injured.**
- o Fifty-seven percent of all African American teenage males who died in 1990 were killed with guns. This is up from 48% of in 1988.**

Children are killing children.

To me, as your Surgeon General, this is totally unacceptable. If we are to have true security in health care reform, we must restore security in our homes, our schools, our streets and our nation.

The costs to this country are too great to ignore:

- o The cost of firearm injuries alone to our health care system is nearly \$3 billion a year.**
- o The total medical cost of all violence in the U.S. was \$13.5**

billion in 1992.

- o In the District of Columbia alone, the costs of criminal violence to hospitals totalled \$20.4 million in 1989.**
- o The vast majority -- 85%-- of the hospital costs for treatment of firearm injuries is unreimbursed care.**

In addition to the financial cost, the emotional and psychological costs are enormous.

What causes violence and what can we do to prevent it? Although many factors contribute to this epidemic, at its root is poverty. Related to poverty are changing family structures, the plight of our inner-cities, and the difficulties in our schools. Other key factors are the availability of alcohol, drugs, and firearms to our children.

Let me remind you that more children live in poverty today than in 1970. In 1970, one in 7 children were poor; in 1990, one in five were living below the poverty line; in 1992, one in four were living in poverty. One of two African American children is poor. One out of three Hispanic children is poor. Up to 90% of all Native American children live in poverty.

There are over 200 million firearms in this country, 67 million hand

guns, and over 1 million semi-automatic assault weapons. It is often easier for our children to obtain a gun than it is to find a good friend, a good teacher, a good school or even a good minister.

I have already testified before this Congress on the role the media, the entire entertainment industry, can play to address the problem. By airing "prosocial" programming, by helping with public service announcements, by showing the emotional consequences of violence, I hope we can work together to turn this around. I look forward to the media's response.

But, to me, more significant is the violence children see in their homes, their communities, and on the streets. The newscast is very real to them. Too many of our children witness fighting among their parents, and, unfortunately, too many see one parent beat or murder another parent. These scars last a lifetime.

How do we prevent this tragic public health problem?

- 1. We must keep the tools of violence out of the hands of our children. I strongly support the passage of the Brady bill. In addition, I support the ban of semi-automatic assault weapons that serve no other purpose but to kill in our society.**

2. We must incorporate violence prevention into our school curricula. I am convinced that school offers us the best and easiest way to reach as many children as possible.
3. We must educate our parents, beginning with prenatal classes.
4. We must offer and support early childhood education classes like Head Start.
5. We must provide comprehensive health education in all our schools, from kindergarten through high school.
6. The final shot of prevention is labeled HOPE. We must develop programs to train young people and make jobs available for them. I am concerned that children today are not learning the skills they need to be employable and productive in today's work force. I am worried that 1/4 of all young African American males ages 20-29 are incarcerated, on probation or on parole, while only 1/5 are enrolled in higher education.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

You have asked me to address the implications of violence for

health care professionals. I join with my predecessor Surgeon General in urging our colleagues to recognize violence as a public health threat -- and a potential immediate threat to many of their patients. Let me add, when I talk about "health care professionals", I am talking in the broadest sense to include not physicians, but also school nurses, social workers, psychologists, mental health workers and even teachers.

Health care providers can provide credible information to their patients by encouraging them to safely store guns where they pose less of a risk. Second, they can be alert to warning signs of violence in their patients and in the emergency room -- substance abuse, threats, injuries from battering.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I want to highlight what we can do together.

We must care enough to change our Concern to Commitment, sharing our time, our talents, and our treasure.

We must increase our own Awareness, and the awareness of every citizen, of the magnitude and cost of this epidemic -- and we must Advocate for change, and develop Action plans at every level to attack this problem.

We must Reach out to those in our community who may be at risk; we must take responsibility, and we must use our resources.

And, finally, we must Educate our children and each other about violence and how to prevent it -- we must empower ourselves to make changes and then go out and make them. To do anything else is to sit back and watch our children die.

As Surgeon General, I know that this is a preventable problem and I will be more than willing to lead this fight. Thank you.

File
BS/HRC-TWT

President William Jefferson Clinton
Remarks at National Italian American Foundation Dinner
Washington Hilton
October 23, 1993

Good evening. Thank you, Frank Stella... Foundation
President Guarini... Executive Director Rotondaro... Dinner
Chairman LaFalce... members of the Italian-American
Congressional delegation... and foundation members and
friends.

I want to thank my wife for her remarks tonight. She
proved once again that she is a tough act to follow.

Being here tonight brings back fond memories of one
year ago. I was a candidate then, and I was honored to speak
for the first time at the foundation's dinner.

NIAF has been an important leader in forging and growing our economic and cultural ties with Italy. Its good works are many... from the scholarship and internship programs that are helping to cultivate a new generation of Italian-American genius... to its undertakings to help Americans of every background.

I'm honored to be in the presence of tonight's award winners... each of whom embodies the continuing legacy of excellence that Italian Americans have given our great nation.

Armed with little more than determination and quick mind and an accounting degree, Richard Grasso worked his way to the highest reaches of the financial world.

Phil Rizzutto, the greatest shortstop in Yankee history, who gave baseball fans some of their greatest thrills, and who taught all of us how to say "Holy Cow."

And whether he's been the Penguin, or Jack the Bear or Louie DePalma... Danny DeVito has stolen almost at least as many scenes as Phil has stolen bases. I think they each hold a record.

Matilda Cuomo -- a ceaseless defender of at-risk children, an advocate for all young people, and a great First Lady in her own right.

I see so many faces that I know well. I'm happy to say that many of the people who were here last year are back this year. But now, a lot of them are in my Administration. I can't mention all of them, but I'd like to acknowledge some of the Italian-Americans who are in key positions.

Two of our first appointments at the Cabinet level were two of our most important ones... because they are crucial to helping put America's financial house in order: Leon Panetta, Director of the Office of Management and Budget... and Dr. Laura D'Andrea Tyson, chair of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Andrew Cuomo is a proud son tonight because Matilda Cuomo is his mother; we're all proud of him at HUD, where he is Assistant Secretary for Planning and Development; Joseph Cicippio... a patriot and an inspiration to us all... is Deputy Administrator in the Agency for International Development.

And during the summer, when we looked for a new director of the F-B-I... someone who would send the strongest signal possible about how serious we were about fighting crime... we hit a gold mine. I found a man who combined a brilliant career at the F-B-I with a tough record as a judge and prosecutor.

That man is Judge Louis Freeh... the first American of Italian heritage to head the F-B-I... and I predict he will help us make important progress and he will be a great director for the bureau.

We also have some new appointments. I am naming Geraldine Ferraro as a Permanent Member to the U-N Commission on Human Rights. And, in the very near future, when I formally call a White House Conference on Aging... its Executive Director will be someone a few of you may know: Bob Blancato of the National Italian American Foundation. I know he'll make it a success.

We are all blessed by being part of a nation that has drawn great strength from our diversity; not a melting pot...but undiluted zest to be extracted and experienced by each of us with each other. The Italian contribution to this exchange has been enormous and spectacular, touching every facet of our lives. In the arts, in the sciences, in sports, and in our most patriotic and humanistic endeavors.

And what I have shared each time I have visited with Italian Americans... from south Philadelphia to the North End of Boston has stayed with me. It is strong feelings of family and community.

These are communities filled with the daughters and sons of great men and women who nourished their children's dreams with their own. And in these places there are always organizations like yours, dedicated to the transmission of our values and customs and habits of the heart from one generation to the next. It is the American way.

As we all work to pass on to our children a more prosperous and dynamic life than we inherited from our parents, we work even harder to pass on the stability and security of our traditions. This is what keeps a dynamic society that is enduring great change from pulling itself apart.

But there is a growing sense in our country that the vital center of our civilization is being eroded, frayed, by forces as simple and troubling as the loss of civility, or tormenting as the barbarous upsurge of violence that is occurring in our city streets, and now, even in our rural areas.

I don't know where it started, but I know this problem is malignant, and it will kill us unless we do something.

Perhaps it started thirty years ago when we ignored Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who warned us of that the health of our society was jeopardized every time a single parent gave birth to a broken home.

Perhaps it started when "right thinking people" denied the ability of popular films and television to contribute to unacceptable behavior by our children. Perhaps it started when we were lulled into inaction by the naive belief that drug abuse happened to some other people's children but not our own.

I don't know where it started, but that no longer matters to the 376 people who lost their lives in street violence this year in the District of Columbia.

It no longer matters to the children who saw the movie "The Program," and imitated actions of fictional characters who lay themselves down in the middle of a busy, darkened highway, only to find that reality can bring with it tragic results.

It no longer matters to the people who are lost in the abyss of heroin or crack cocaine, to their children who are born with birth defects whose tremors will make your eyes well, or to their friends with whom they have shared needles and have now become infected with the virus that causes AIDS.

The explosion of crime and violence is changing the way our people live. It is making too many of our fellow Americans hesitant, often paralyzed, with fear at a time when we need our people to be bold. And children are dying, often at the hands of other children with guns.

It has prompted the corner grocer to shut down because he feels threatened. It has made the shopper afraid to enter a parking garage at night. It has made children think twice about going to school because classmates have been shot there. It has made parents order their children inside in broad daylight because of gunfire.

Nothing we aspire to in our country can finally be achieved unless we do something about the children who are no longer capable of distinguishing right from wrong...about the people who are strangely unaffected by the violence they do to others...about the easy availability of guns...or about the mindless temptation of drugs.

That means insuring that our people feel safe where they live, where they play, work and go to school so we can all strive to achieve our full potential.

In some cases, it means organizing our outrage as citizens and as consumers and demanding change in a chorus more powerful than any law. In other cases, it means adopting the toughest, most comprehensive legal remedies permissible in a free society to push back against the criminal element. But in all cases, it means freeing ourselves from our posturing and our political slogans and working on these problems with unity and purpose.

I believe our society would be more civil, and our children would be more safe, if the movie and television industries raised their sights a little higher than their profit margins and began producing films and television programs with less violence and less sex, and more regard for the signals that parents want their children to receive.

But I also believe our parents must renew their obligations to their children. They must spend less time watching television and more time doing their home work. We must chaperon them in their choices of movies. We have to exert more energy as parents, because the schools, the government and the police aren't responsible for our children; we are.

We must also ask the Congress to lay aside politics and pass our comprehensive anti-crime legislation. Our bill is based on a simple philosophy and carries an even simpler message: More cops, less guns.

We ask Congress to honor the struggle of James and Sarah Brady by passing a 5-day waiting period for background checks before a person can purchase a handgun.

We want to pass the Brady bill.

We want to take assault weapons off the streets... and we want to take all guns out of the hands of teenagers. We want more police officers on the streets.

And, very importantly, we want to put more power in the hands of communities to protect themselves in partnership with the police.

We are also re-charting the way we are fighting the use of illegal drugs... increasing our focus on the hard-core user... who makes up the worst part of the drug problem and who fuels crime and violence and drives up our health care costs.

Every year about 200-thousand convicted criminals enter jail or prison with drug problems. Right now, they're not required to receive drug treatment.

We will demand they be treated for their addictions, so when they're released, they won't be as likely to fall back into the same pattern of drug abuse and crime.

With our program we'll reach out to the youths who can be saved from living a life of crime and being a burden to our society... the ones who took a wrong turn in life. They'll be put in boot camps, where they'll learn skills and the kind of responsibility that can turn a life around.

Every time we feel the need to view strangers with suspicion... or the need to bar our homes and cars against intrusion... or we worry about the well-being of the child we sent off to grade school... we lose a little part of what America should mean.

Some of these problems were decades in the making, and we know we won't solve them overnight. But within the adversity, I do see hope.

I believe the American people have decided, simply and finally, that they do not choose to live in fear any longer, and they are prepared to support men and women of both political parties who are prepared to reach beyond the slogans and the easy answers to support what works, to experiment with new ideas, and to take these problems on.

I sense more maturity among people of both parties and all philosophies in dealing with the problems of the American family. Wherever I go in America, when I say "we are going to end welfare as we know it," everyone says back "it's time."

While some people in some regions shunned any elected official who proposed curtailing access to guns, now, even in the West and in places where the NRA is strong, good people are rising in indignation and saying "enough is enough."

Something important is happening. To preserve our security -- to preserve our traditions, and our families, and our neighborhoods, and our homes -- people are finding the courage to change. People are recognizing how tightly linked the ideas of change and security have become in this world. And that understanding spells the birth of progress for us all.

###

COMMUNICATIONS

TV Violence: Hill May Not Wait For More Industry Action

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., a longtime defender of free speech rights, flipped on his television in a hotel room in La Salle County after a long day on the campaign trail in 1984 and knew he had seen enough: a person being murdered with a chain saw.

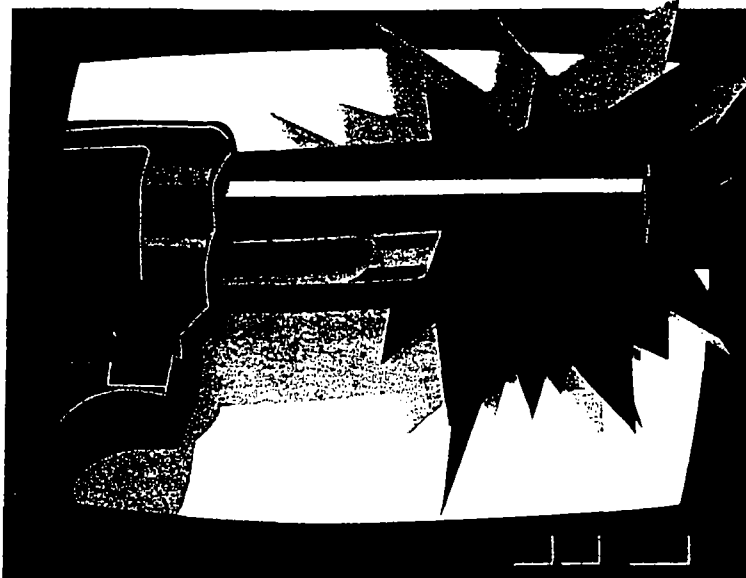
It was a scene so grisly and devoid of entertainment value that it drove the former newspaperman, upon his election, to take a lead role in reining in television violence, even at the risk of being a liberal accused of advocating censorship.

In 1990, President George Bush signed into law a provision Simon authored that gave the major broadcast networks three years to take voluntary steps to curb depictions of blood and gore on American television screens. In June, Hollywood responded to that effort by promising to tone down TV violence and air new advisories about programs unsuitable for children.

But judging by the fall lineup of legislation introduced that would further curb violence on TV, Congress is not about to let the industry off that easily.

Lawmakers eager to cast votes against violence will have plenty of opportunities to do so this fall, ranging from one bill giving the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the power to define "violence" to another requiring television sets to include a computer chip that would allow viewers to block objectionable TV shows.

The bottom line for TV executives: Unless they take further voluntary steps, beyond their new parental warnings, lawmakers will be all the more eager to step in — a possibility that



MARILYN GATES-DAVIS

Studies show a link between TV violence and street violence. Congress, which may not be satisfied with recent industry measures, has struggled to address the problem without trampling First Amendment rights.

"We are opposed to any commission made of mortals who are going to tell creative people what is right or wrong."

of America

worries Simon and others who are wary of trampling First Amendment rights.

"The answer really rests with the industry," said Simon. Hollywood, he said, "has to make a greater show of seriousness than has been shown up to this point."

Simon does not want legislation and has hinted that he would oppose bills that go too far. Instead, he wants the industry to take voluntary steps, including setting up a citizens' group to monitor the level of violence on television. He also calls for self-restraint by writers and producers, more leadership on the issue from executives and the elimination of violence-laden promotions for television shows.

Many broadcasters and cable pro-

grammers seem amenable to the watchdog group idea, but Hollywood writers and producers are incensed: They fear a revival of the climate of censorship that enveloped the industry from 1922 to 1945 when the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, run by entertainment lawyer and former Postmaster General Will H. Hays, required a "purity seal" on all productions.

For an industry accustomed to fending off attacks from the political right over depictions of explicit sex on television, it is all the more shocking to Hollywood that liberals such as Simon would

be asking them to relinquish control over their product.

"We are opposed to any commission made of mortals who are going to tell creative people what is right or wrong," said Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America. He denounced what he called "this gradual, slow, remorseless intrusion by the government into the content of television."

But many outside Congress fear political momentum could force the issue to its extreme and lead to legislation so broad as to restrict TV content.

Because there is simply no political constituency in Congress for violence on television, lawmakers are left with little reason to vote against any bill that purports to curb it. Martin D. Franks, Washington vice president for CBS Inc., said he harbors an "apocalyptic" fear that lawmakers will roll the array of bills pending in Congress on the issue into one big measure to restrain TV.

"Other than Paul Simon, I cannot find a single member who has even suggested he might oppose [television violence] legislation," Franks said. "At

By Mike Mills

Congress and TV: A Chronology

1950s — Rise in youth crime and juvenile delinquency prompts congressional hearings on television violence.

- **June 1952:** First congressional hearings on violence in radio and television and its impact on children and youth are held by House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Subcommittee.
- **1954:** Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn., chairs hearings of Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency on role of TV shows in youth crime. Networks say no link.

1960s — Urban violence prompts more congressional hearings and government funding of research on TV violence.

- **1961:** Kennedy administration Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton N. Minow tells National Association of Broadcasters that American TV is a "vast wasteland."
- **1967:** University of Pennsylvania begins monitoring television programming.
- **1969:** Formation of Boston-based Foundation to Improve Television.
- **Sept. 23, 1969:** Report of National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence cites TV violence as contributor to society's violence problem.

1970s — Surgeon general's study prompts more congressional hearings; academic studies proliferate; court cases examine liability of TV in cases of real violence.

- **1972:** Surgeon general's report on violence cites evidence of link between screen violence and aggressive behavior.
- **1975:** National PTA adopts resolution demanding that networks and local TV stations reduce the amount of violence in programs and commercials (reaffirmed in 1989).
- **1976:** American Medical Association's House of Delegates calls TV violence an "environmental hazard."
- **1979:** In *Zamora v. CBS et al.*, parents of a Florida 15-year-old convicted of murdering a neighbor sue all three networks, unsuccessfully, for negligence in failing to prevent him from being incited to imitate TV.

1980s — Reagan-era deregulation gives media free rein; cable TV, VCRs and rise of independent networks diminish power of networks to control violence on TV.

- **1980:** Founding of National Coalition on Television Violence.
- **1982:** National Institute of Mental Health study says there is a clear consensus on link between TV violence and aggression.
- **September 1984:** Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence says evidence is overwhelming that TV violence contributes to real violence.
- **1984:** American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Children and Television cautions physicians and parents that TV may promote aggression.
- **1985:** American Psychological Association Commission on Youth and Violence notes research showing link between TV violence and real violence.

1990s — Networks issue a joint statement of policies on TV violence, made possible by an antitrust exemption passed by Congress. Anti-violence advocates step up pressure.

- **1990:** Simon-Glickman Television Violence Act gives three major networks an antitrust exemption so they can formulate joint policy on violence.
- **1991:** Minow declares: "In 1961, I worried that my children would not benefit much from television, but in 1991 I worry that my children will actually be harmed by it."
- **1992:** American Psychological Association study shows research on link to real violence is ignored and calls for federal policy to protect society.
- **Dec. 11, 1992:** Days before House hearings, the three major networks release joint policy on violence and agree to hold an industrywide conference.
- **June 30, 1993:** The four major TV networks announce their agreement to air parental advisories when shows the networks deem violent are aired. Fifteen major cable networks announce July 29 that they will join in the policy.

SOURCE: CQ Researcher, "TV Violence," by Charles S. Clark, March 26, 1993

the moment I assume everything could be law by Columbus Day."

Forty Years of Debate

The average American child watches 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school, according to a much-cited study by the American Psychological Association.

Since the advent of television in

the late 1940s, as many as 3,000 studies have examined links between TV violence and real violence. (Box, this page)

One of the most controversial, a 1972 report by the U.S. surgeon general, concluded that there is a causal relationship between TV violence and acts of violence, but only in children presupposed to be aggressive. Since then, other studies have found

broader links between TV and actual violence.

For the last 40 years, the issue has waxed and waned in the public consciousness, with Congress threatening to legislate tough content controls and the broadcast industry promising self-restraint. The proliferation of TV competitors, from cable television to satellite channels to rental videos, has only boosted pressure on Congress to act.

Attention is only magnified by a congressional deadline set in the 1990 provision by Simon. The provision, which was attached to a federal judge-ships bill (PL 101-650), gave the broadcast networks a three-year anti-trust waiver allowing them to get together and agree on voluntary steps to reduce violence on television. That waiver expires Dec. 1. (1990 *Almanac*, p. 374)

In response, the four major networks — NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox — on June 30 announced their agreement to air parental advisories when shows the networks deem violent are aired. The 15 major cable networks announced July 29 they would join in the policy.

It was the most television has ever bowed to congressional pressure in 40 years of debate on the issue. But critics immediately dismissed the advisories as merely a token gesture. For one thing, the programmers themselves will be responsible for deciding which shows merit warning labels. And children's programs or morning talk shows such as "Oprah" or "Geraldo" would not be affected, only shows airing during nightly prime-time schedules.

The 'V-Chip'

Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, called the parental advisories "a good first step."

He then introduced a second step: a bill (HR 2888) that would require every new television set sold in the United States to be equipped with a computer chip that would allow viewers to disable their TVs from receiving programs that are given a "V" rating by broadcasters or cable programmers to warn parents of the show's violent content.

The bill straddles the edge of congressional control over program content. It does not require that broadcasters or cable operators send the electronic signal needed to allow televisions to automatically block V-rated programs.

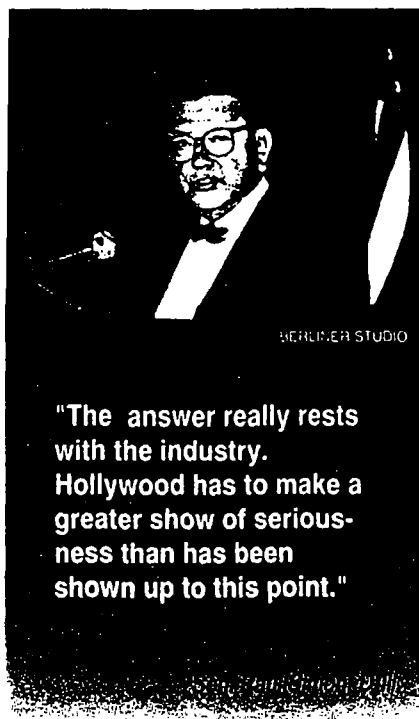
But should broadcasters refuse to do so, the Markey bill stipulates, the device still would give consumers the option of blocking out channels and time slots of any programs they deem too violent.

Markey's bill has won endorsements by such luminaries as former Kennedy administration FCC Chairman Newton N. Minow and cable in-

dustry titan Ted Turner.

"Unless you keep the gun pointed to their heads, all you'll get is mumbly, mealy-mouthed B.S.," Turner testified at a Markey hearing this summer. Television industry officials, he added, "just hope the subject will go away."

Critics of the Markey plan range from broadcast and movie-industry executives who fear a loss of advertising revenues to TV violence opponents who say many families either cannot afford new televisions or lack the skills to program their sets to block certain programs. Even Peggy Charren, the children's television ad-



vocate who along with Markey prompted Congress to enact new program standards for children's television, said she opposes any congressional action on the violence issue, preferring instead that parents simply shut televisions off.

George Gerbner, dean emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, who since 1967 has conducted the longest continuing surveys of television violence, called the V-chip "a terrible idea" because it does not reduce the amount of violent programs.

"To say we should trust the industry to flag programs they think are too violent is kind of silly. It's like the fox guarding the chicken coop," Gerbner said.

Rather, he said, violence can be reduced only by applying government, marketplace and interest-group pressures on the industry to offer more diverse types of programming rather than appealing to the basest mass-market interests.

Markey's proposal, while perhaps the most visible, is by no means without competition.

Time-Slot Restrictions

On Aug. 5, the day Markey introduced his bill, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., offered a bill (S 1383) that would direct the FCC to limit violent programs to certain time slots when children will be least likely to be watching, much as the agency now limits "indecent" broadcasts. Several courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, have upheld the FCC's right to restrict what it deems indecent.

Hollings calls his bill "the least restrictive means by which we can limit children's exposure to violent programming."

Other bills include efforts by:

- Sen. Byron L. Dorgan, D-N.D., and Rep. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., that would require the FCC to file quarterly "violence report cards" to provide the public with information about the frequency of violence by each television program and its sponsors (S 973, HR 2159).

- Rep. John Bryant, D-Texas, (HR 2837) that would require the FCC to establish standards of acceptable levels of violence on television and radio shows, including cartoons.

Television industry executives say the Bryant effort treads the closest toward government control of television content.

- Joseph P. Kennedy II, D-Mass., (HR 2756) that would require the FCC to set up a toll-free number for the public to call with complaints, comments, and suggestions regarding television violence. The FCC would be required to publish summaries of the comments quarterly and to forward them to the cable or broadcast station that aired the violent program.

The comments and complaints would be weighed when broadcasters' licenses are up for renewal.

- Rep. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., (HR 2609) that would set up a presidential commission to report within one year on ways to curb TV violence. The group would include the U.S. surgeon general, attorney general, repre-

sentatives from the entertainment industry, crime and education experts and parents.

Hollywood Is Adamant

Rather than face the wrath of restrictive legislation, Gerbner predicts that the television industry — broadcasters, cable executives, producers and writers — will soon take further voluntary steps toward curbing TV violence.

"The leaders of the industry are going to do what they can to avoid any kind of legislation," Gerbner said. "It seems to me that as long as they move forward and provide some evidence of progress, there's only a very slight chance of any other legislation going through."

But Valenti is adamant that no such further "progress" is warranted. He continues to dismiss decades of studies pointing to what most academics involved with the issue now take as a given: that TV violence does have an impact on the aggressive behavior of those who view it.

Valenti maintains that there is little gratuitous violence on nighttime television, save for perhaps the occasional movie of the week. Network officials agree, and are promoting their new fall schedules as containing few, if any, examples of the kinds of violence critics rail against.

Faulting 'Porous' Research

"The research as we have examined it is very porous, very loosely fibered and does not withstand scrutiny," Valenti said. "It's a terrible dilemma. I want to respond to what Congress is saying, but where, first of all, is this violence taking place? And what is the definition of 'violence'?"

Simon and other critics of TV violence liken Valenti's dismissal of the correlation between television violence and street crime to the tobacco industry's practice of disputing research linking smoking with cancer.

Simon has been talking with Valenti and others in the industry, but the senator is not optimistic about being able to fend off restrictive legislation by crafting new voluntary steps to curb violent programming.

"All or none of these [bills] might pass," Simon said at a rare meeting of industry representatives and TV violence critics Aug. 2. "I can tell you that none of the sponsors of these initiatives is losing votes back home with these ideas."

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Bill Outlines Strategy for Gore's Government Efficiency Plan

White House proposal to 'reinvent' bureaucracy would be guided through maze of committees

Vice President Al Gore will unveil his critique of the federal bureaucracy Sept. 7, but neither chamber of Congress is ready to "reinvent government."

Roughly half of Gore's suggestions for cutting red tape, improving service and lowering costs require some congressional action, a draft of Gore's final report indicates. The rest can be accomplished by the executive branch, a process President Clinton has promised to start the day Gore's report is released.

Because the proposals cross virtually every congressional committee's turf, enacting them could be a procedural nightmare. To simplify the task, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee has proposed using a new commission and special procedural rules to bring Gore's recommendations to the House and Senate in a single package.

The committee's proposal, which is expected to be placed on the Senate calendar soon, has bipartisan support and the administration's belated blessings. Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell, though, said in an interview Sept. 1 that he has not decided whether to support such an approach.

House leadership aides from both parties say there has been little discussion of how to handle Gore's report. The House Government Operations Committee, which claims at least a share of the jurisdiction over government streamlining, has no bill in the works akin to its Senate counterpart's proposal.

There is some sentiment in the House for letting the Senate take the first step. There is skepticism, too, about the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's ability to push its proposed commission through the Senate.



Al Gore

The main hurdle may be lawmakers who have made careers out of defending some of the programs that Gore wants to reinvent. Weeks before Gore's report was to be released, lawmakers launched a number of preemptive strikes against moves that Gore's staff was considering.

For example, when Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., learned that a Gore aide had recommended deregulating the maritime industry, he quickly introduced a bill to hold off such a move until another special commission studied the industry.

Other lawmakers inserted provisions in various appropriations bills to prevent the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms from being consolidated with the FBI and to bar the Agriculture Department from closing Forest Service field offices — two proposals considered by Gore.

Another potential hurdle is the difference between the Democrats' vision of reinventing government and the Republicans'. As Gore states in his report, the Democrats' goal is to make government do what it does better. Republicans, on the other hand, are mainly interested in making government do fewer things.

Said Rep. Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., "Nobody yields power gracefully, and the Democrats have all the power. So based on that, one must look with a magnifying glass at every word that they propose as reform."

The draft circulated in the last week of August included more than 110 separate proposals that touched every federal agency. The final report drops some of those proposals, yet it is expected to recommend enough substantial changes to cut spending by tens of billions of dollars over five years — much of it by thinning the ranks of management in the federal government.

By Jon Healey

AUG 9

Broadcasting & Cable

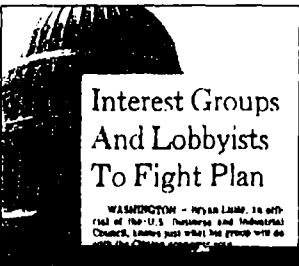
The Newswweekly of Television and Radio

TELEVISION



'American Journal'
names team of
reporters 34

WASHINGTON



Interest Groups
And Lobbyists
To Fight Plan

WASHINGTON - NINA LAM, is at-
tention of the U.S. Commerce and Industrial
Council, looking just what his group will do
with the Chinese economy.

Local media
prominent in
budget battle 43

ADVERTISING



Custom ads at
generic prices 48

**SIMON
TO TV:
CUT THE
VIOLENCE
...OR ELSE**



Vol. 123 No. 32
62nd Year 1993 \$2.95
A Cahners Publication



Programming

Simon delivers violence ultimatum

Gives industry 60 days to form council to monitor progress and to report to viewers

By Joe Flint

It looked like the ending of an old spaghetti western. The loner rides into town and tells the bad guys to clean up their act, or else.

But this was no Hollywood-written ending. The bow tie-clad loner was Senator Paul Simon (D-III.). His message to a roomful of Hollywood programming executives: Reduce the violence or Washington will do it for you.

"No one suggests that there should be no violence on TV. There should be less and it should not be glamorized," the Senator told about 500 industry leaders.

Simon said he is not claiming that all crime is caused by violence on the screen, but that it is a factor. "Twenty-five minutes of attractive violence sells violence," he said.

Speaking last week at an industry-wide summit on TV violence sponsored by the National Council for Families & Television, Simon spelled out a seven-point plan to reduce TV violence that includes the formation of an advisory committee to monitor television violence levels. Simon warned that he would like to see at least serious steps taken within 60 days to form such a committee.

"Either you will initiate the effort for such a monitoring office, or those outside the industry will do it," Simon also suggested that his approach is a more moderate one than those that others on the Hill have proposed (see box, page 24).

"I started in this effort as a somewhat lonely voice in Congress, but now I find many of my colleagues want to go much further than is healthy for a free society.... The surest solution is governmental intervention, but it is also the most dangerous."

The committee, Simon said, "would report to the American people



Among the programming notables on hand for the industry violence summit: (l-r) producer Leonard Hill; Jack Valentl, MPAA; Warren Littlefield, NBC; George Vradenburg, Fox.

annually on specifics." Those specifics, he added, would indicate "whether glamorized violence is increasing or decreasing on each of the broadcast and cable networks, whether there is an attempt to avoid the time periods when children are more likely to observe."

To head the committee, Simon recommended "someone like Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor or [former FCC chairman and describer of TV as a vast wasteland] Newton Minow." The advisory group, Simon said, would not "pre-censor" product but would comment on the situation. (In an interview with BROADCASTING & CABLE that begins on page 25, Simon added that the committee could include almost anyone, so long as it was not "a puppet kind of group that puts an imprimatur on everything they do").

Committee reviews mixed

Mel Harris, president, Sony Pictures Entertainment Television Group, took issue with such a committee.

"Lots of countries have cultural ministers; we have never chosen to do that. Such a committee does not fit into the legislative and regulatory history of this country. Parents, not mass media, are social engineers," Harris said.

Warner Bros. Television President Leslie Moonves said that the committee idea is "worth looking at," although he is not sure whether he supports the idea and he would consider different heads than Simon.

Simon's speech was the highlight of the one-day conference, which was long on talk but short on goals and conclusions.

But some saw progress in the event

ALEX BERLINER

Proposals in the works

Simon said he was "impressed" by the networks' willingness to "take a hard look at themselves" and that his method of "serious" discussion would be "the real test" for the industry. He emphasized that he was not "a censor" and that he was "not a politician." Simon also said that he was "not a censor" and that he was "not a politician."

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groups and Congress over how to keep the peace.

While the networks said that they would do their part and the cable programmers kept emphasizing that they already do theirs, it was the production community that seemed most shaken and confused by Simon's speech and Washington's tone in general.

Producer Leonard Hill said that Congress has "cowed the networks to a point where it would be counter-productive to even pitch some products."

CBS Entertainment President Jeff Sagansky denied that the door is closed on certain projects. But producer Dick Wolfe countered that any show with a violence warning will be "redlined by a group of advertisers." Other network and programing executives conceded that ultimately it will be the willingness of advertisers to run spots on labeled shows that will decide if and how TV programing content will change.

"I would use the word cautious, not chill," said Warner Bros.' Moonves.

Moonves said Warner Bros. has "removed certain projects" because of violence, but he emphasized that that is "self-regulation." Said Moonves: "The networks did not come to us. We are trying to be more responsible."

Veteran TV producer Stephen J. Cannell said that it is up to the networks to take charge on the issue because he does not want to be "his own critic" nor does he have time, he says, to play guessing games about what is acceptable to the networks and to Washington.

"I don't know any sort of writer who can write effectively with these sorts of parameters," Cannell said. As an example of the networks' making the final cuts, Cannell cited his action show *The Hat Squad*, a police drama that he wanted to run at 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. but which CBS ran at 8 p.m., where it failed.

Christine Hikawa, vice president, broadcast standards, Capital Cities /ABC, agrees that certain time periods should be a safe harbor for programing that contains some violence.

"We know that there will be some kids watching at 10 p.m., but please, we should be allowed to program for adults."

While many industry executives criticize Capitol Hill for singling them out in the battle against violence, none

itself.

"I have never before seen a gathering of top guys at all the networks and every major production company together in one room discussing one issue. It is an important issue we must confront," Moonves said.

Americans for Responsible Television director Terry Rakolta, however, called the event a washout. "I was naive in having high hopes of working together. What I saw was a dog and pony show.... They have trivialized the subject," she said.

Rakolta added that in hindsight holding the event in Hollywood should have tipped her that the industry would not take anything seriously. She criticized not only the choice of ABC News correspondent Jeff Greenfield as moderator but also the general

structure of the event.

Greenfield, she said, played hardball with researchers who believe that television violence causes real violence, while he pitched softballs to his TV colleagues.

But the tone of the day was perhaps best summed up by Greenfield, who said that the summit could represent a "historic moment, or a smoke-screen."

Greenfield also suggested a reason that Washington is focusing on TV violence: "TV violence has no constituency. If you are looking for a target that has no other side, you have found it."

But Congress has a target. And last week that target—the networks and the production community—battled with each other, researchers, citizen

say they would not work to reduce violence and to comply with the labeling, a stance that brought jeers from Action for Children's Television founder Peggy Charren.

"Congress is moving in on the broadcast industry. Doesn't that scare the wits out of you?" says Charren, who believes that to concede on the violence issue could mean that sex and other areas would be next for regulation.

If advisories mean advertiser pull-out, Charren says, she would be tempted not to air the advisories. "There are all kinds of reasons for the industry to shape up, but not because of Congress."

The advisories were mostly ridiculed by a panel of academics who did not think that they went far enough, especially since cartoons will not carry advisories.

Cartoons feature violence in "incessant repetition," said Leonard Eron, a research scientist at the University of Michigan.

ABC's Hikawa took issue with those who equate cartoon violence with movie violence. "When I hear that, their credibility goes right out the window," she said.

By day's end, the subject had been beaten to death without any conclusions being reached. Although, as Rakolta pointed out, the networks offered no counterattack to the study's tying of TV violence to real violence, by the end of the day some in the Hollywood community were tired of being judged.

But Simon is not the only one eyeing the anti-violence effort.

The real threat could be from Representative Ed Markey (D-Mass.), who is pushing for TV manufacturers to place a V chip into television sets that would allow set users to block all shows rated violent.

In a letter to conference participants, Markey said: "TV has made it possible for the average American child to witness 8,000 murders by the end of elementary school without ever leaving the living room. It's time for the industry to give parents the technology they need to reduce drastically the violent images now saturating their own homes."

With the exception of cable giant and potential studio owner Ted Turner, no one in Hollywood has come out in favor of the chip. Simon is also against it. ■



Senator Simon's message

In this exclusive interview with BROADCASTING & CABLE Executive Editor Harry Jessell, Senator Paul Simon says that his seven-point violence reduction plan (see page 26) is a recipe for avoiding tougher scrutiny at the hands of some of his colleagues.

At the violence conference, Jeff Greenfield said the meeting was either a "historic moment or a smoke-screen." Which was it?

It was not a smokescreen. It is probably an exaggeration at this point to say that it was a historic moment. It was, for the first time, a point where the industry, with good representation from on top as well as from the bottom, came together to take a look at what is a problem in our society and what some still do not acknowledge is a problem in our society.

You urged the formation of an advisory committee to oversee the industry effort to decrease violence on TV. Who would constitute such a committee?

Ideally, I would like the industry itself to determine that. They can name you, consumers, others. But it can't just be a puppet kind of group that puts an imprimatur on everything they do; it has to serve a genuine function. Some people had the idea that this was going to be some kind of Will Hays office

that would pre-censor things. That's not the idea at all. The idea is to monitor what is happening and to report once a year to the American public.

Can this be a committee of industry executives only?

That would be a mistake. I think they recognize that.

Although some consider the monitoring committee a moderate approach; others feel it will have a "chilling effect." However you cut it, it is an intrusion on free expression. How do you justify that?

People who are very active in the field of civil liberties say this is in no way an encroachment on the First Amendment. And I believe that. I am an ACLU member myself. Self-restraint is essential for freedom to thrive. So how do we face the problem without having the heavy hand of government involved? We have to recognize that there is a relationship between violence in our society and violence on TV. And there are a great many people in the industry unwilling to face up to

that, just as there are a great many people in the tobacco industry who are unwilling to face up to the fact that cigarettes really do harm. The evidence is just overwhelming in both cases.

Is there any programming that is out of bounds for oversight by your monitoring committee? News? Reality TV?

The news clearly should be exempt. There is too much violence in a lot of the news, particularly in New York City. But news violence doesn't glamorize violence. What you get from Bosnia, you don't think: "I want to go out and do that." But entertainment violence frequently glamorizes violence.

What about those reality shows?

I think there is a problem there, and exactly how you handle it I don't know.

The broadcast and cable networks have agreed to label violence-filled programming. And the big three broadcast networks have adopted standards aimed at mitigating violence. Why isn't that enough?

We've seen some progress and I welcome that. And I have to say broadcast networks have been better than cable networks in responding up to this point. But you still have the ability to flip that [on-off] switch; it's not like going to the movies. We still have problems.

Definitions are important here. How would you define inappropriate violence?

I'm not the person to define it, but there are people who can. The British do it. Other countries do it. That's not really the problem. The problem is, is there a will to define it?

What do you mean when you talk of "glamorizing" violence? Didn't all those John Wayne movies glamorize violence?

When the hero and heroine can go through episode after episode, kill x number of people, be in x number of car crashes and not get hurt or injured, when you don't see the grieving relatives of the people who are killed, there is a translation that that is the way to solve problems.

You said that cable has been slower to respond than broadcasters to demands to clean up the violence.

Cable has a greater problem, but the greater viewing is still with broadcast-

The seven-point plan

- Form industry advisory committee on TV violence.
- Exercise self-restraint when it comes to violence.
- Involve all types of TV broadcasters, cable, independents, syndicators and networks. It becomes obvious that one branch of your industry loves money more than responsibility, that will not go unnoticed.
- William J. Simmons said:
- Glamorized violence should be avoided; harsh realities of violence should be replaced with nonviolent problem-solving; should be encouraged.
- Violence should be eliminated or reduced, and certainly avoided when children are most likely to be watching.
- The medium must be used to help educate the nation about the harmful effects of television violence.
- Recognize more clearly the international dimensions of your product.

ers. Broadcasters moved further on this, but I don't want to say everything is fine on the broadcast side.

Doesn't cable deserve an exemption from oversight because you do have to sign up for it—that is, you have to invite it into your home.

I don't see that as a justification.

Aren't you punishing broadcasters for the sins of the cable networks? It's the latter, you know, that show the unedited R-rated films.

The answer is that there is plenty of improvement possible in both areas. No question about it. It's just what's on that television set in their living rooms that concerns people.

Your TV violence law exempted TV companies from antitrust liability to discuss ways of stemming violence. When that exemption expires, will additional legislation be needed to extend the exemption?

Will they be able, on Jan. 1, to have a meeting of cable and broadcast executives on this question. I don't have an answer to that question right now. The difficulty with the legislative route is that it becomes an easy tool for others to stick on amendments that are a real opportunity for mischief.

In your speech Monday, you warned of proposals from other lawmakers to stem TV violence that are "not healthy for a free society." What exactly were you referring to?

I don't think I have to spell it out. But there are people who think we should go much further, even further than any of the bills introduced so far.

Does the so-called V chip bill introduced by House Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Edward Markey [D-Mass.] go too far?

At this point, I'm not saying this is going too far or that is going too far. I have made it clear that I prefer that the federal government not get involved.

Can you envision the FCC eventually having to step in to relegate violent programming to times when children aren't in the audience, as it now does with indecent programming?

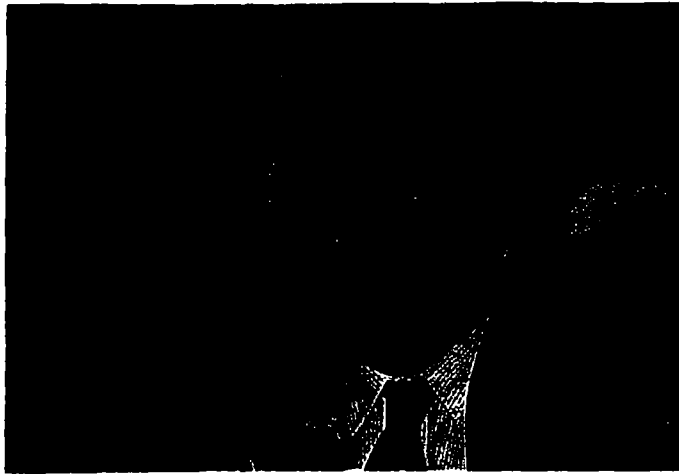
I'm not saying eventually some kind of FCC action isn't going to be part of the picture. What I do say is I prefer to see the industry do this on its own.

Would you actively oppose some of these other measures?

If I didn't believe something was sound I would oppose it. But we are not at the point where we are considering anything right now. We are at the point where the question is: Will the industry look at this themselves and exercise some self-restraint? One of my colleagues in the Senate who favors stronger action said to me: "If they can make one more dollar killing one more person, the industry isn't going to respond. You have to have federal government action." I don't believe that. I have met with all major people in broadcasting and cable and many in film. These are responsible citizens who want to do the right thing.

Do you fear you have ignited something here that you may not be able to control, that some other lawmakers may run with the issues and do something really harsh?

I don't think I have ignited it. I've been the deliverer of the message. If I hadn't come along, someone else might have come along with a much different approach. ■



Representative Dingell originally proposed the idea of user fees two years ago but a bill with his backing died in the Senate because of opposition from Senator Hollings.

cutting the federal deficit by nearly \$500 billion over five years, is a provision authorizing the auctioning of 200 mhz of government spectrum to commercial non-broadcast users. The government estimates the auction will raise \$7 billion.

The fees cover all FCC-regulated industries. Broadcast fees, based on the type of station and market size, range from \$200 a year for AM daytimers to \$18,000 a year for VHF stations in the top 10 markets.

"It's a bum deal," says Clear Channel Communications' Lowry Mays, who will have to pay fees on eight TV stations and 31 radio stations. "We pay user fees in terms of public services," he says. "Once you start taxing radio and television, you can bet [the taxes] will go nowhere but up."

"It would have been impossible to stop," says National Association of Broadcasters President Eddie Fritts. Broadcasters were alone in opposing the fees, he says.

Cable was no happier. "It's another regulatory cost," says Robert Sachs, senior vice president, Continental Cablevision. And like the \$800 million cable now pays in local franchise fees, he says, consumers will end up paying for it.

"And just because it's 37 cents today doesn't mean it will be 37 cents a year from now," Sachs adds.

The fees are traced to John Dingell (D-Mich.). The powerful chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee said last month that the FCC should become self-funding and might attach a user fee to the budget package. A Dingell-backed user-fee bill passed the House two years ago, but died in the Senate because of opposition from Commerce Committee Chairman Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.).

According to Hill sources, Hollings had to go along with the fees last week. Dingell had enlisted the support of other key Senate conferees, including Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and John Breaux (D-La.). He was also aided by a letter of support from Leon Panetta, director of the Office of Management and Budget, to House and Senate conferees. Panetta called the fees "good policy and...fiscally prudent in a time of severe constraints."

Still, Hollings would not sign off on the fees until he had an opportunity to adjust the fee schedule to lighten the load on small broadcast stations.

The FCC currently collects fees on most applications. TV stations, for instance, pay with their license renewal applications. The revenue varies from year to year, but is projected to be \$45 million this year.

Taken together, the application fees and the user fees should come close to covering the FCC annual budget, \$130 million for upcoming fiscal 1994.

Like a new anti-violence bills on the table

Senator Bill Clinton (D-Conn.) gave the industry 60 days to pass a bill that would require the FCC to regulate violence on TV. The bill, which would require the FCC to regulate violence on TV, is now on the table.

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THE NEW REGULATOR

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Borrowing from FCC regulation of indecent programming, Senator Ernest Hollings has proposed a bill that would require the FCC to regulate violence on TV. The bill, which would require the FCC to regulate violence on TV, is now on the table.



OPINION USA

Violence on TV

Some networks have stepped forward with initial actions like parental warnings, but if the industry doesn't soon clean up its act even more, Congress will take over, senator warns

Senate hearings this week will deliver a message to the industry: Time for talk is over; it's time for solutions.

The best solution to scaling back TV violence is self-regulation. But the time for self-regulation is now. A Senate hearing convened for Wednesday by Commerce Committee Chairman Ernest Hollings once again will deliver the message that we don't want more talk, we want more solutions.



By Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill.

Some industry leaders, particularly the networks, have stepped forward with initial steps, like parental-warning messages and joint broadcast network standards on violence, and the fall broadcast schedule is less violent. Movies already paid for have been canceled because they are too violent.

Unfortunately, their voices

are often drowned out by others in the business who seem intent on calling what they believe is Congress' bluff, gambling that public fervor for action will soon fade. That's a dangerous game for the public, for the industry and for the First Amendment.

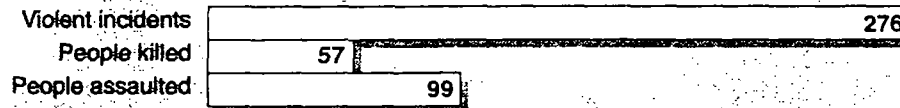
So far, no one in Congress has proposed formal, general censorship, which I would strongly oppose, but many bills short of that now are being floated.

With stacks of reports all pointing to the dangers of glorified violence on TV, can anyone any longer deny the need for real solutions? Many in the television and film industry still do, just as there are many tobacco processors who deny that cigarettes do harm.

Television is a powerful sales medium, and too often it sells violence. It feeds a growing appetite for violence both as an answer to problems and as entertainment.

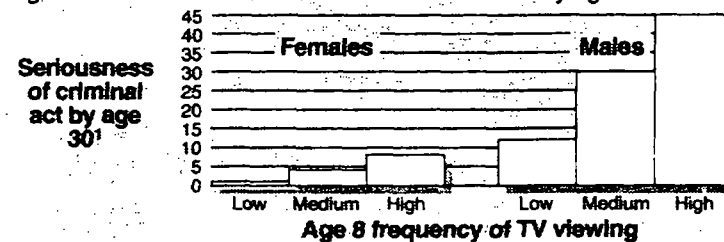
A week's worth of violence

USA TODAY looked at TV content of prime-time network programming between April 24-30. Out of the 94 prime-time programs there were:



TV viewing and crime

A study spanning 22 years found that the frequency of TV viewing at age 8 to be a factor in seriousness of criminal acts by age 30:



1 — System used by New York that assigns a number rating to crimes.

Source: USA TODAY; Leonard D. Eron, Ph.D., now of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

This is no longer theory. The evidence now is just as convincing as the evidence on cigarettes. The National Institute of Mental Health has twice warned about the harmful effects, and so have a surgeon general and many other authorities in report after report.

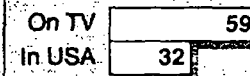
No major public health prob-

lem has been so studiously ignored by the TV industry as this one. Parents deserve to know that it is not just their instinct, but also solid research, that says entertainment violence is harmful.

Television violence is only one factor among many that contribute to violence in our so-

TV vs. real life

How violent crime rate of television compares with real crime (victims per 1,000 population):



By Elys A. McLean, USA TODAY

ciety, and we are doing an inadequate job in dealing with most of them, including gun violence, which I have made a high priority.

But that does not excuse the TV industry from taking solid steps to reduce entertainment violence. When some in the TV business make this argument,

they sound too much like the National Rifle Association leaders who blame everyone else for the causes of gun violence.

Now a second question: Is a free society like ours powerless to defend itself against too much violence on TV? Of course not, though some of these same industry voices say the First Amendment is an absolute bar to any meaningful solutions.

The fact is that there are sensible answers that stay clear of the First Amendment.

I have proposed an industry-appointed Advisory Office on Television Violence to track progress in further reducing glamorized violence on entertainment programs and to publicly report the results annually at the end of each TV season.

The office would not preview or censor programs, and it requires no federal involvement.

An annual survey would give families a basis for responding in their viewing selections and in contacts with stations, cable operators, advertisers and others. It would give policymakers the knowledge of whether vol-

untary self-restraint is solving this problem.

In the past year, the broadcast networks have shown the most effort and cable the least. My hope is that there will be enough responsible people in the industry who will face the facts so that the federal government will not have to act.

The law I sponsored to foster self-regulation expires on Dec. 1. I have made clear to the industry that I will wait until Jan. 1 for progress in creating an advisory reporting office.

If nothing happens by then, I will offer appropriate federal legislation, though my preference is for the industry to act, not for Congress to have to act.

Television can appeal to the best or worst in us. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, we can hope that this industry will use its powerful medium to "appeal to the better angels of our nature."

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., was author of the Television Violence Act, a three-year anti-trust exemption, expiring Dec. 1, which was designed to promote self-regulation by the industry.

Fanning the fire over 'Beavis'

By Donna Gable
USA TODAY

Beavis and Butt-head — MTV's notorious animated fire-starters — are on the front burner with critics.

An Ohio mother says the cartoon incited her 5-year-old son to start a fire which killed his 2-year-old sister. And Austin, Texas, investigators say three fires started by kids may have some connection to the show.

MTV claimed no responsibility for the Ohio tragedy but says it's removing fire references from episodes of the weekday show, which features the antics of two misfit teens.

Dr. George Gerbner, University of Pennsylvania, who has studied the effects of violence since 1967, says "Violence appears in 9 out of 10 cartoons at a rate of 25 times per hour." But "to pin it on one cartoon is scapegoating."

The cartoon is expected to be discussed Wednesday when Attorney General Janet Reno, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) and studio execs testify at a Senate hearing on TV violence.

Simon says *Beavis* is another example of kids being influenced by what they see: "TV is a powerful sales medium, and too often what it sells is violence."

TV Violence, After the Showdown

While Lawmakers Hold
Their Fire, the Networks
Are Laying Low

By Ellen Edwards
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two months ago at an industry-wide conference in Los Angeles on television violence, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) issued an ultimatum. He gave those powerful network executives and television producers 60 days to get their house in order . . . or else.

"If we don't see in the next 60 days that we are moving in a positive direction, then I and some of my colleagues will be pushing hard" for legislation, he said.

That was Aug. 2. The 60 days are just about over and very little has happened on either side.

It does not appear that Simon—or the television industry—has really been counting those days. In an interview this week Simon said, "I made clear I didn't expect any final answers. But I'm not going to wait indefinitely, and if by the first of the year we don't see something solid then I don't think I can continue to ask my colleagues to hold back on legislation. And I think we have to craft something that is sensitive to the First Amendment. . . . I would prefer no legislation."

An agreement by the networks to label violent programs with parental advisories preceded the ultimatum. The fall schedules were pretty much locked in place, albeit with less violent programming than in the past—a response in part to the outcry over the un-

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The TV Violence Debate

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usually violent May sweeps programming. Simon's call in August for the creation of an independent monitoring group that would issue an annual report card has generally been ignored.

Television industry people know that this time the issue isn't going away. Still, they are worried that Washington is in the driver's seat.

"There is a feeling in the entertainment divisions that we caved too quickly in accepting responsibility," said one executive.

"I don't want to go through another industry conference," said another in frustration. And on the question of a monitoring committee, "People just bridle about that," he said. "Some people think the FCC would be better than a bunch of social scientists."

Simon says it's his understanding that conversations have been going on at the top levels of the broadcast and cable networks, but industry sources say that any such discussions have been informal. The only organized conversations have been arranged by Jack Valenti, head of the Motion Picture Association of America. Valenti held one meeting this month in Los Angeles with representatives of the networks and the guilds—"all the creative people," he said, who are in turn having meetings within each organization. "They are discussing ways they can show conflict—good versus evil—and reduce whatever gratuitous violence there is."

Simon, the primary congressional advocate on the issue, has not introduced any legislation yet, but at least eight bills have been introduced by others, and more hearings are scheduled. Congress generally feels it has dealt itself a no-lose hand.

CBS President Howard Stringer said this week that the issue's impact on the network has been great, prompting discussions on the nature of violence and acknowledging the need to reduce it, which he says CBS has done.

Still, he is angry that broadcast television has become the target, when he believes cable, syndicated shows and movies have much greater sins to answer for. "There was great disgust that the movie industry was given a pass," he said. "Violence in big features is what drives the entertainment industry. . . . There are all sorts of scenes we wouldn't put on television. But we took the accusations seriously and responded seriously, and people are generally not interested in what we are doing. . . ."

"I don't think anyone is interested in knowing we're doing our jobs."

In a speech last week to the International Radio and Television Society in Manhattan, Stringer once again lashed out at the angry mood in Congress: "The argument that guns don't kill people, but television does, finds favor with liberals and conservatives alike. After all, television executives are perfect adversaries. Unlike drug runners and killers, we'll show up at a hearing in D.C. Unlike the issues of poverty and poor education, attacking television violence on the networks requires no Washington tax increases."

He singled out Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) who has introduced the "V-chip" bill, which would mandate technology allowing individual television owners to block out violent programs, as particularly unfriendly: "Needless to say, the networks bear the brunt of his beligerence," he told the group.

Christine Hikawa, vice president of broadcast standards and practices at ABC, said that the changes there "have not been major changes but changes that impact what you see on TV. . . . We look more carefully at scripts."

On a monitoring system, she said, "We have very serious First Amendment questions." Rather, she suggested that there might be some sort of "self-assessment program," either with all the networks together or ABC alone if no agreement can be reached. "We want to do what is responsible vis-a-vis what is on the air. . . . You don't get any points for that," she said. "You get points for holding seminars and conferences."

NBC executives were unavailable to speak on the record but issued a list of concerns reflecting the network's commitment to dealing with TV violence. A Fox spokesman said no one was available to speak to the subject yesterday.

While the networks are showing less violent programming, at least for now, the counterprogramming of "action-adventure"—the euphemism for more violent—programs is still happily in business on cable and in syndicated shows.

Asked whether he is convinced that things are moving in the right direction, Simon said, "I am not. I'm convinced that temporarily they're moving in the right direction, but in

terms of the monitoring group I am not convinced they are moving in the right direction." The ultimate effect of a monitoring group, Simon said, would be to create pressure from the public and the advertisers that would keep violent programming off the air.

Valenti says he is opposed to such a group. "Mere mortals cannot regulate creativity," he said. "I think the creative community is aware of the outcry of the public. A great majority of those people who make television have had their consciousness raised."

In addition to Markey's bill, others pending include a measure from Sens. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.) and Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) that would ask the FCC to limit violent programming to hours when children are less likely to be watching television; Rep. John Bryant's (D-Tex.) bill to require the FCC to establish regulations to reduce TV violence, and Sen. Byron L. Dorgan's (D-N.D.) Television Violence Report Card Act, which would require the FCC to review and report on the subject. Observers say the Hollings-Inouye and Markey bills have the most momentum.

Hearings are scheduled for Oct. 20 on both the Hollings-Inouye and Dorgan measures, and Attorney General Janet Reno and a variety of network executives are likely to testify.

Simon said most of the bills under consideration have "as a major flaw that they do not deal with the cable question. And cable, I have to say up to this point, has been less responsive than the broadcast side of television."

Congress currently has far less ability to control cable because there are no licenses for the FCC to withhold.

The one thing the networks agreed to last summer—the parental guidance advisory—has been used occasionally by each network.

"We have learned," said CBS's Stringer of excessively violent programming, "that (a) it is not good ethically and (b) it is not good business either, and we won't do it."

CALENDAR

TV Industry Does Little on Violence

■ **Legislation:** Despite a Congressional warning about mandatory restrictions, officials have failed to act on the issue.

By GREG BRAXTON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) says the television industry largely has failed to act on his warning of last August to move decisively within 60 days to curb on-screen violence or risk mandatory restrictions imposed by Congress.

"The industry has not acted quickly and decisively, as I had urged them to," Simon said in an interview Wednesday, as this weekend's deadline for action approached. "I'm disappointed but not startled."

Simon made the warnings Aug. 2 during a Beverly Hills conference on violence attended by network executives, program producers, writers and anti-violence advocates. He has long contended that violence on TV is directly linked to the rise of violence in society.

Despite the industry's failure to respond significantly, Simon said that he was encouraged by discussions that he has scheduled within the next few weeks with several key television executives, and that he would stick to his original plan to hold off on taking further government action against the industry until next year.

"There can't be endless talk about this," Simon said. "If by the first of the year we don't have some concrete public action taken, then we have to look at alternatives with the federal government that are sensitive to the First Amendment but that apply some pressure to avoid gratuitous violence."

He added that other legislators are eager to push for laws regulating television violence: "Every day I run into senators who say, 'I want to do something.' I think they will hold off for a while if I ask them to, but I can't guarantee it."

Simon is the author of the 1990 Television Violence Act, which relaxed antitrust regulations to give the networks, cable channels and syndicators the legal footing to develop industry regulations on televised mayhem. The legislation expires at the end of December.

A pivotal step being required by Simon is for the industry to form a citizens advisory

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committee that would make annual public reports on the amount of violence on each broadcast and cable station. The committee would play an advisory role to programmers if asked, he said.

"That committee really is the key," Simon said. "Without it, there is unlikely to be a dip in television violence. Next year or the year after, we'll be back in the same soup."

But he acknowledged that network officials have not been enthusiastic about forming such a committee since he proposed it in August.

"Initially the industry rejected the idea," he said. "Now it seems to be picking up a little support. How much support I can't tell you."

ABC spokeswoman Julie Hoover said: "We're willing to talk about self-assessment, and we're open for discussion. But we're not looking for bureaucratic overlay or a systematic review by an outside organization. We are responsible for our programming."

Spokesmen for Fox, CBS and NBC either declined or could not be reached for comment.

The networks say they already have cut back on violence this season and, in response to congressional pressure, have adopted a policy of alerting viewers to programs containing strong depictions of violence.