

National Cable Television Association

Victoria Clarke  
Vice President  
Public Affairs/Strategic Counsel

1724 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20036-1969  
202 775-3629 Fax: 202 775-3675

April 5, 1996

Carol H. Rasco  
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy  
The White House  
Washington, DC

Dear Ms. Rasco:

Thank you for including me in the recent Leadership Conference on Youth Drug Use and Violence. The gathering was very productive, and I share your optimism that real solutions to these enormous problems can be achieved.

As we discussed briefly at the Conference, the National Cable Television Association has been actively working to lessen the impact of TV violence, and all forms of media, on children. The **Family and Community Critical Viewing Project**, which is sponsored jointly by NCTA, the National Parent Teacher Association and Cable in the Classroom, is designed to give parents better control and to influence television viewing where it matters most -- in the home. This very popular program recognizes the need for parents and teachers to have effective tools and information to not only address concerns about TV programming including TV violence, but also to turn television viewing, and the use of all media, into a positive educational experience for children and families. Local PTA leaders and cable companies nationwide are combining their knowledge and resources to conduct, as a community service, workshops that help families make better choices in the TV programs they watch, and to improve the way they watch those programs. To date, more than 1,200 participants have attending project training across the country; the 1996 training schedule covers 19 states.

I have included more detailed information on how the cable-PTA critical viewing partnership works. I would welcome your comments and questions and hope you will feel free to get in touch with me about this or other subjects of mutual interest and concern.

Sincerely,

  
Torie Clarke

E X E C U T I V E   O F F I C E   O F   T H E   P R E S I D E N T

15-Jul-1996 05:24pm

TO:            BROSTROM\_M  
FROM:          CN=Skila S. Harris/O=OVP  
CC:            CN=Gregory C. Simon/O=OVP  
SUBJECT:      Re: Family & Community Critical Viewing Project

Message Creation Date was at 15-JUL-1996 17:22:00

The PTA will be invited to the July 29th meeting and their representative usually talks about the project. The PTA also has been included in every other media-related meeting that included advocates. Mrs. Clinton's talks about the project in many of her speeches and she used it as an example of positive efforts in her book.

You might find out if they are thinking about changing the workshop when the ratings come out (around the end of the year or earlier). If they are, Carol could attend one of the first workshops where the new system is incorporated.

BROSTROM\_M @ A1  
07/15/96 04:36 PM  
To:          Skila S. Harris/OVP  
CC:  
Subject:      Family & Community Critical Viewing Project

After the Drug Conf this spring, Torie Clarke sent Carol information on the Family and Community Critical Viewing Project (as you probably know, a joint project between NCTA, the Nat'l PTA, and Cable in the Classroom, designed to give parents and teachers tools for addressing concerns about TV programming, but also to turn television viewing into a positive educational experience.)

Carol was interested in following up if there was a venue. Any ideas?

If we planned something (e.g. a visit to a workshop), how would it fit in with other things that are going on (e.g. a second broadcaster's meeting? any media literacy efforts? when are the V-chip ratings expected?...) )

brainstorming...

thanks much

(As of 4/1/96)



**FAMILY & COMMUNITY  
CRITICAL VIEWING PROJECT**

**1996 Schedule**

|             |                         |                                    |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| January 16  | San Juan Capistrano, CA | Cox Workshop (W)                   |
| January 18  | Chicago, IL             | Regional Training (R)              |
| January 27  | Columbia, MD            | Regional Training (R)              |
| February 1  | Akron, OH               | Regional Training (R)              |
| February 6  | Flatwood, WV            | Regional Training (R)              |
| February 12 | Lake Tahoe, NV          | Regional Training (R)              |
| February 23 | Indianapolis, IN        | PTA Board Meeting (R)              |
| March 7     | Pompano Beach, FL       | Continental Workshop (W)           |
| March 9     | Alexandria, VA          | Jones Workshop (W)                 |
| March 21    | Collinsville, IL        | Regional Training (R)              |
| March 22    | Moline, IL              | Regional Training (R)              |
| March 23    | Springfield, IL         | Regional Training (R)              |
| March 23    | Seattle, WA             | Regional Training (R)              |
| March 24    | Burr Ridge, IL          | Regional Training (R)              |
| March 30    | Paducah, KY             | Comcast Workshop (W)               |
| April 10    | Pocatello, ID           | PTA State Convention (R)           |
| April 18    | Long Island, NY         | TCI Workshop (W)                   |
| April 19    | Long Island, NY         | Regional Training (R)              |
| April 24    | Columbus, OH            | Regional Training (R)              |
| April 27    | Richmond, VA            | PTA Board of Managers (R)          |
| April 30    | Los Angeles, CA         | NCTA Convention (W)                |
| May 3       | Ascutney, VT            | PTA State Convention (R)           |
| May 3       | Charlotte, NC           | PTA State Convention (R)           |
| May 7       | Waterbury, CT           | PTA State Convention (R)           |
| May 16      | Buffalo, NY             | Regional Training (R)              |
| May 18      | St. Cloud, MN           | Regional Training (R)              |
| May 22      | Raleigh-Durham, NC      | CTAM Meeting (R)                   |
| June 22     | Washington, DC          | PTA National Convention (T)        |
| July 12     | Austin, TX              | PTA Leadership Mtg (R)             |
| July 25     | Tarpon Springs, FL      | Regional Training (R)              |
| August 10   | Denver, CO              | PTA State Service Team Meeting (R) |
| August 13   | Johnstown, PA           | Regional Training (R)              |

**W = (workshop) "Taking Charge of Your TV – A Critical Viewing Workshop for Parents and Teachers" is a one to two hour session to teach critical viewing skills.**

**T = (presenter training) "How to Give a Critical Viewing Workshop – Training for Presenters" is a three hour or longer session to train PTA & cable partnership teams to become presenters and give workshops to others in their community.**

**R = (regional training) "How to Give a Critical Viewing Workshop – Training for Presenters" is a five to eight hour training for PTA and cable partners on how to give workshops. The content of these sessions is the same as the information covered in the "presenter training," with additional time spent on role playing, practice presentations, and the finer points of facilitating groups.**



## PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

The National Cable Television Association (NCTA) and the cable industry's educational initiative *Cable in the Classroom*, have joined in a partnership with the National Parent Teacher Association to launch a program to help families make better choices in the TV programs they watch and to improve the way they watch those programs.

- The program is called the *Family and Community Critical Viewing Project* and its goal is to partner and train together local cable television operators and local PTA leaders in the skills of critical viewing. In turn, these PTA/cable "teams" will offer local workshops on media literacy and critical viewing skills to parents and teachers in their own communities.
- The National PTA will facilitate opportunities for training of PTA/cable teams by including the training sessions at many state and regional PTA conventions and meetings. Additionally, the cable industry will sponsor workshops and training sessions throughout the country. Working in partnership with the cable industry and its local systems, the National PTA, with its grassroots constituency, gives the critical viewing message the broadest possible reach nationwide.
- In a hands-on, participatory approach the critical viewing workshops teach such techniques as:
  - How to set rules for television viewing and how to stick to those rules.
  - How to recognize the ways in which television can be used to manipulate viewers.
  - How to talk to children about violence on television.
  - How to turn what we see on television into positive and educational family discussions.
- The critical viewing training sessions are being offered to PTA/cable teams as part of an on-going NCTA project, the Cable Industry Public Affairs Training Program, administered by the Cable Telecommunications Association (CATA).
- In 1994, the NCTA and *Cable in the Classroom* launched *Voices Against Violence*, a successful effort to help train educators to teach critical viewing skills to students. The National PTA, among other national education organizations, was a strong supporter of the project and from its success this new partnership was born.
- The PTA is the nation's largest volunteer child advocacy organization, with nearly seven million members, committed to uniting the home, school and community in promoting the education, health and welfare of children and families. The national PTA has addressed the issue of violence on television since the 1970s. PTA leaders have been involved in both community programs and in the legislative arena.
- *Cable in the Classroom* is the cable industry's \$400 million public service initiative to enrich education through the resources of the cable industry. Created in 1989, *Cable in the Classroom* now serves 75,000 schools, reaching over 38 million students with commercial-free educational programming at no cost to the schools.
- The NCTA represents cable systems serving more than 80 percent of the nation's 60 million cable subscribers. NCTA also represents more than 60 cable programmers as well as hardware suppliers and providers of other services to the industry.

# THE PLAIN DEALER

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER 35¢

FINAL

CLEVELAND, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1996

Page B1

## PTA leaders get 'media literacy' training

By ABE ZAIDAN

PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

AKRON — The question on the large flip pad asked: "Is slapstick violence harmful to children, or is there nothing really harmful about slapstick violence?"

Rather than seeking a consensus from the dozens of guests seated in the large room at the Akron West Hilton Inn on Thursday, conference leaders were posing the kinds of challenges that face parents and children whenever somebody turns on a television set.

The daylong "The Family and Community Critical Viewing Project" drew PTA leaders from a dozen Ohio cities. They, in turn, will conduct similar workshops around the state.

Such efforts to help adults understand the effects of what they and their children see on TV spring from something called "media literacy." And the concern over those often-misunderstood or ignored effects has

united the national cable industry and PTA in the project.

"About 60 percent of the information that children receive comes from television," said Susan Fairweather of Warner Cable of Akron, sponsor of the regional workshop here. "Because of that, there is a need to learn critical viewing skills and analytical skills to interpret the message and the point of view that all of our children are receiving. They need to distinguish the real from the unreal."

Fairweather said the workshop was strictly a training session to prepare the PTA leaders to promote media literacy within their own hometowns.

SEE WORKSHOP/6-B

"We're not teaching a point of view or telling parents what to watch," she said. "We're not an advocate, pro or con, of any kind of programming."

She and Liz Laszlo, of the National Cable Television Association, stressed the importance of having parents take a stronger interest in what their children are viewing.

Since the project was started in 1994, Laszlo said, more than 1,000 PTA leaders have been trained to conduct media literacy workshops.

Ohio PTA President Pat Whitten of Solon, who attended Thursday's workshop, said she was concerned that children were seeing so much violence on TV that "they are becoming desensitized to violence."

"There are a lot of parents who feel uncomfortable about what their children are viewing, and yet they don't communicate their concern to children because they don't know how to."

The workshops will help parents deliver that message to their children, she said.

"We're trying to make parents understand that they can control the TV sets in their homes," Whitten said. "There are on and off buttons."

# NORTH LAKE TAHOE BONANZA

Serving the communities of: Incline Village • Crystal Bay • Brockway • Kings Beach • Tahoe Vista  
P.O. Drawer 7820 - Incline Village, Nevada 89452

2-14-96

## Seminar examines television violence

By Tim Willis  
*Bonanza Staff Writer*

Keeping children away from television violence isn't as easy as simply forbidding children to watch all R-rated movies.

For example, parents may not allow their children watch violent programs at night, but that doesn't meet they won't see a commercial promoting those same programs during family viewing hours, complete with scenes parents find objectionable.

Violent fare, in one shape or another, is found across the television spectrum, experts pointed out during a cable industry conference Monday at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe.

"Violence can take many forms," said Thomas C. Leonhardt, a training adviser with the cable television industry's Public Affairs Training Program.

About 20 people, mostly cable operators from Nevada, attended the media violence seminar, sponsored by the National Cable Television Association, Cable in the Classroom and the National Parent Teacher Association. It's part of a nationwide effort to teach critical viewing

skills to local cable operators, who are then asked to help spread the word in their own communities.

Violence is an easy way to solve the dramatic conflicts presented in television shows and doesn't require good actors, Leonhardt said. The use of violence is a particularly effective selling point for television producers with an eye on the export market, he added.

Children's programming often promotes violence as an acceptable form of behavior, he said, and there is more mayhem on daytime cartoons than on evening programming.

Situation comedies and other humorous programs may not be as innocuous as they seem either, experts warn. Characters get hurt, but never permanently, in the slapstick of the Three Stooges and other programs, leaving a false impression that violence is harmless, participants in the training session noted.

Participants in Monday's workshop watched clips from a variety of television programming, including comedy shows in which participants are injured for laughs. Examples ranged from the Simpsons to Seinfeld to America's Funniest



Bonanza Photo/Bill Huse

See TV violence, page 12A

According to the cable television industry, the family television set is on for an average of 60 hours a week in American homes.

2-14-96

Serving the communities of: Incline Village • Crystal Bay • Brockway • Kings Beach • Tahoe Vista  
P.O. Drawer 7820 - Incline Village, Nevada 89452

## Using the 'boob tube' to educate children

By Tim Willis  
*Bonanza Staff Writer*

U.S. children aged 6 to 17 rank watching television as their top after-school activity and nearly half have a TV set in their room, according to statistics provided by the cable television industry.

The problem, experts warn, is that many of

these youngsters are watching inappropriate programs that stifle their creativity and warp their sense of values.

They add that it doesn't have to be that way.

The Family and Community Critical Viewing Project, a partnership of the National Parent Teachers Association, Cable in the Classroom and the National Cable Television Association, notes that parents can actually use the "boob tube" to

enhance learning.

"What we are trying to do is help people make better choices about what programs they watch and how they watch them," said Elizabeth A. Laszlo, director of public affairs for the National Cable Television Association. "It is just helping people become better and wiser consumers of

See Smart viewing, page 12A

PAGE 12A - NORTH LAKE TAHOE BONANZA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1996

### Smart viewing

Continued from page 1

TV."

The Critical Viewing Project recommends the following for impressionable preschool and elementary school viewers:

- Ask questions about the programs. Even if you only see a few minutes of the program, show an interest about what they think of it.

- Play real or make believe. Are the characters real? How were special effects performed?

- Let programs lead to other activities, such as drawing pictures of

whales seen in a documentary.

- Videotape your own television show.

- During program breaks, ask children what they think will happen next.

As youngsters move on to middle school and high school, the group suggests looking for connections to books. If a youngster's favorite film is based on a novel, have him or her read it. Or have them visit a library to learn more about a topic raised on a favorite program.

The Critical Viewing Project also suggests the following:

- Keep an atlas near the TV and locate various places mentioned in

TV programs.

- Discuss points of view offered in movies and news reports and how it might have been different if another person told the story.

Experts warn it is critical for parents to get involved with family television viewing. Yet many parents are not monitoring or regulating what their youngsters watch. Some 25 percent of parents claim no restrictions on TV viewing at home, according to the group.

"We want to give parents ideas to make television intentional," said Thomas Leonhardt, a consultant for the cable industry's Public Affairs Training Program.

## TV violence

Continued from page 1

Home Videos. The shows offered what Leonhardt called "funny violence."

Even turning off the TV won't solve the whole problem. Some of the most violent programming is found not on television but on computer video games, Leonhardt said.

Exposure to such things desensitizes children, Leonhardt said, so parents need to find a way to re-sensitize them. While pointing out the mayhem found in the modern media, he and other consultants

stressed it is the parents' job to determine what is or is not appropriate for their families.

"What we want parents to do is think about where they are going to draw the line in the sand," Leonhardt said. "Think about what is an acceptable level of violence you will allow."

Aside from television violence, participants were warned about the commercial nature of programs. After viewing clips of such commercials, participants noted that to sell products to youngsters, advertisers use older children as role models. They even exploit sex appeal, albeit not so blatantly as in advertising

directed at adults. The project advises parents to talk about such advertising with their young ones. Ask them why they think the commercials were aired during cartoons and why their favorite sports hero is trying to sell them certain products, experts suggest.

The bottom line, trainers and participants said, is that parents should talk with their children about the programs they watch—even while they are watching them. Participants also argued that parents should not be afraid to offer children their opinions of certain programs and to maintain control over their youngsters' TV viewing.

## Parents, TV It's up to you

Workshop says challenge  
is to teach critical viewing

By SHEILA TOOMEY  
Daily News reporter

Seems like it should be as easy as pushing a button or pulling a plug, but American parents apparently have trouble controlling what their children watch television.

So much so that the National PTA and the cable industry have paired up to run workshops around the country called "Taking Charge of Your TV."

According to one study on the subject, 5 percent of parents say they would restrict their children from watching a program the parent found offensive.

"I hear parents say they don't feel

Please see Page E-3, TV.

## TV: Responsibility belongs to parents

Continued from Page E-1

empowered to turn it off," said Betsy Turner-Bogren of Ester, president of the Fairbanks Council of PTAs.

"I frankly don't get it."

Turner-Bogren was one of about 35 parents and cable employees from around the state who showed up for an all-day workshop Friday at the Regal Alaskan Hotel in Spenard.

Television in the Turner-Bogren home gets turned off at 6:30 p.m., after the local news, and doesn't get turned on again until after her children are in bed. "Over my husband's protests," she said. "It's purely vegetative."

Alma Greinier, an accountant and parent from Petersburg, also doesn't have a problem with her kids picking up bad values or learning violence from television. You can't get television in Petersburg without cable, and Greinier doesn't subscribe. The family has a TV set to view occasional VCR movies, she said, but that's it.

Still, there are good things on television, and most parents don't want to toss the tube out the window.

Besides, there's all kinds of new communications out there, said trainer Joni Herman, a clinical social worker from the Family & Community Critical Viewing Project in Washington, D.C. "You can't turn it all off."

The workshop goal was to teach parents how to train their children to think critically about what they see, Herman said. Some tips offered by the trainers and parents in the group include:

- Don't turn the television on just to see what's on. Pick what you or the kids are going to watch, ahead of time, turn it on at that time and turn it off when the show is over.

- "The mode should be off," Turner-Bogren said.

- Watch television with the children. Talk back to it. Point out absurdities, express opinions about story lines and characters, explain over and over that even so-called "reality-based" shows like "911" or "Cops" are not reality.

- "My favorite part is where the lady with the gun has a microphone on," said trainer Margie Elsberg after showing a

segment of an allegedly real-life police drama. "How thoughtful of her."

Point out production techniques. Real life doesn't come with dramatic lighting or background music, or zoom-lens. Life has a lot of dead air. Don't assume kids have figured this out for themselves.

- It may seem like "a blinding glimpse of the obvious," Elsberg said, but make sure your children understand that every minute of every television program has an underlying economic purpose, which is to make money by selling something. Watch a commercial and ask the kids to point out what sales devices were used. Glamorous people with big smiles that apparently come from eating a particular food, drinking beer or wearing a particular brand of jeans.

These days, many programs aimed at small children are all commercial, designed from beginning to end specifically to sell the toys featured. Even little kids can be taught to spot deceptions like showing toys move or fly when they really move or fly; showing small toys in extreme close-up so they look bigger; using flashy colors, perfectly beautiful child models, peppy music and loud voices.

- Have your kids make a list of commercials used in a specific commercial. Have them actually write a commercial.

- Don't assume you know how your children interpret what they see on television. Everybody sees things differently.

- Encourage them to talk to you about a program. Remind them that someone made up everything on television: if every fact, then which facts to show, which camera angles to shoot, how long to let someone talk. It's all made up.

- And don't count on simple abstinence in the formative years to improve either judgment or taste.

Kate Young of Juneau grew up without television and did not have one in her home until her daughter was 11 years old. Her daughter "felt deprived," Young said. "She really laid a guilt trip."

"Now she likes all that horrible stuff like 'Melrose Place.'"

The participants in Friday's workshop are supposed to go back home and the workshop to others.



Volume 46 — No. 46

HARRISBURG, PA. JULY 23, 1995

Price \$1.50 Suggested noncommercial store  
purchase of 100 copies \$150.00

## TELEVISION VIOLENCE

# Parents get help making viewing choices

By Kenn Marshall  
Patriot-News

When a hand grenade explodes before Wile E. Coyote can lob it at the Road Runner, it's funny. But it's also violent.

When Sylvester Stallone as Rambo causes a helicopter to crash into an enormous fireball, anyone really think about what the pilot felt as he was plunging to his death?

Of course, most older viewers no one really died in the movie scene. It wasn't real.

But what about the kids? What do they think?

Parents say they are concerned about the amount of violence their children see on television, but few do anything about it, according to a recent survey of moms and dads. Only a small percentage ever take even the simplest step: turn it off.

The cable television industry and the National Parent Teacher Association have joined forces to help parents make choices about what programs their kids should be allowed to watch and how they should watch them.

"I think a lot of parents are uncomfortable with what they see on television but don't know what to do about it," said cable industry representative Jim McCaffery yesterday at a seminar attended by local cable television officials and members of the Pennsylvania PTA's board of directors.

The nearly two dozen partici-

pants were being trained to conduct workshops on television viewing, designed to help both parents and children become more critical television viewers.

Children of different ages view graphic scenes of violence differently, McCaffery said. Young children may be frightened while older kids actually may be excited by a 30-second commercial for the same late-night TV show that likely will include some violent scenes.

The joint effort between the cable industry and PTA "Isn't about telling people what to watch and what not to watch," said workshop trainer Francine Lanar. "It's about getting families to discuss what they're going to watch, and what they are watching, so they can draw their own lines and make their own rules."

Children should be frequently reminded that much of what they see on television is not real, Lanar said.

The only way for parents to really understand how their children feel about a particular scene on TV is to ask them about it, said Lanar. Discuss with them the way conflicts are resolved. Ask them how the victim of violence really would feel. Ask them how they would feel if someone they knew were treated that way.

And, of course, don't forget how to use the on/off switch.

There is little doubt that at least some violence on television — whatever its impact — will

## Family viewing tips

Parents can do a lot to reduce the amount of violence their children are exposed to on television. Besides turning off inappropriate shows, parents can:

- Keep reminding children that most television shows aren't real.
- Relate situations on television to real experiences. Television characters routinely find simple solutions to problems, but such is rarely the case in real life.
- Question what you see and hear, and discuss it with your child.
- Ask your child if violence is ever funny, as in cartoons. Remind them that if a person gets hit on the head with a piano or falls off a cliff, he or she will be seriously hurt, or even killed. Ask your child why violence is funny in cartoons, but not in real life.
- Pay attention to what your young child sees you or another adult watching.
- Plan your television viewing. Have children ask permission to watch a specific show rather than just to "channel surf."
- If you aren't sure whether a television show would be appropriate for your child, tape it and watch it by yourself, then decide.

continue.

"We've known for a long time that parents have been complaining about violence on television," said state PTA President Jeanne Stefanac. "I don't know if that will ever go away. I also don't know where else you can learn so much, in so little time, at such a low cost. So it has value too."

Participants in yesterday's workshop were taught to run the

same type of training session for local PTAs and other organizations interested in the subject, said Stefanac. She said she hopes representatives from all 589 local units in the state will take advantage of the program, now in its second year.

Cable in the Classroom, and other independent organization involved with cable television, also is involved in the "Taking Charge of Your TV" program.

# Savannah Morning News

## Sunday SAVANNAH EVENING PRESS

### Workshop focuses on TV violence

#### Group gives critical viewing tips for parents, children

By Marcus Holland  
Savannah News-Press

A nationwide effort is building to take control of TV violence where it matters most — in the home.

The issue was showcased in a workshop at the 81st annual convention of the Georgia Congress of Parents and Teachers Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Savannah.

The National Cable Television Association, the National PTA and Cable in the Classroom have joined forces to teach critical viewing skills to parents, teachers and children.

"Instead of bashing each other — the PTAs and television industry — we've decided to work together," said Janice West of Stone Mountain, the outgoing president of the state PTA. "It's a good partnership. We want to get parents more involved on what their children are watching and to give them alternatives to TV."

The presentation started with violent scenes from popular TV shows — people being shot by automatic weapons and cars blowing up, mixed with foul language.

That portion of the morning workshop, "Taking Charge of Your TV," taught critical viewing skills for parents, who can use them to decide what is appropriate for family viewing.

The cable industry is committed to providing families with choices about what they watch on TV, National Cable Television Association president Decker Anstrom said.

"This partnership with the PTA will help families look at TV as carefully as they look at food labels — and that will mean healthier, smarter kids," Anstrom said prior to the convention here.

The national program actually kicked off in Dallas, Texas, in October 1994. It is being taught through a

### VIEWING TIPS

Points to remember when watching television:

- TV programs and their messages are created to achieve specific results.

- Each person interprets programs and messages differently. Parents need to recognize that children receive and interpret messages differently at different ages. Parents are responsible for guiding and directing the meanings their children make from interpreting TV's messages. Talk openly with them and what they've just viewed.

- Television violence takes many forms, realistic and unrealistic, justified and unjustified, humorous, irrelevant, evil, thrilling, sexy.

- All TV programs have an underlying economic purpose.

- Make TV viewing a conscious, planned-for activity. Chil-

dren should ask permission to watch TV, reinforcing the idea that they watch specific shows. Establish family guidelines for selecting programs and choose programs together. Set limits on how much TV your family watches.

- Make TV viewing a way to stimulate discussion. Let your children hear your values in a non-threatening way.

- Use TV to teach. When a topic on TV sparks your child's interest, get to the library or museum and explore the subject further.

Source: "Taking Charge of Your TV: A guide to Critical Viewing for Parents and Children" from material by Renee Hobbs, associate professor at Babson College and Director of the Institute on Media Education at Harvard University; and Elizabeth Thoman, founder and Executive Director of the Center for Media Literacy in Los Angeles, Calif.

series of training sessions and workshops across the nation.

The three-day convention that began Friday will end today.

One hundred people packed the room for the workshop on TV violence workshop, said West, adding that they had expected 25 people. Those attending were trained "and will be able to outreach to thousands" when they go home, West said.

"Parents are in the best position to help children make solid decisions on what to view: to know that everything on TV is not real," said Eileen Faucette, the parent of a 14-year-old Richmond County middle school student.

"I'm excited about the partner-

ship," she said, and found the workshop helpful.

TV violence distresses Faucette.

"Actually, we tend to watch very little TV," she said. "We read a lot and play games. But I do let Tina watch TV shows from a list that I've made. I have the ultimate veto power."

Faucette also enjoyed advocacy training that was part of two morning workshops.

"Parents must learn to be more effective ... be an advocate on things that affect their children," she said. "They should be involved in decision-making and promote the needs of their children."

Larry Peterson, president of Cablevision of Savannah, praised the national program.

"It will help curb violence and teach parents how to select what their children should watch," he said. "The way TV commercials are presented to children will also be affected."

MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE  
9/27/95

# Workshop urges viewing TV with a critical eye

By Noel Holston  
Staff Writer

The teaser ad for the CBS-TV movie "Terror in the Night" showed a couple's idyllic camping trip wrecked by the sudden appearance of an armed creep who takes them hostage. It takes only a minute for staccato editing, nerve-rattling music and overheated narration to plant a mini-nightmare of sadism, rape and murder in viewers' heads.

When the promo ended, this question was put to about 60 Twin Cities teachers, PTA members and cable-TV employees attending a critical-viewing workshop Tuesday called "Taking Charge of Your TV":

What would *you* do if that promo came on while you were watching TV with your children?

Responses varied.

- Click off the set. Immediately.
- Steal a glance at your kids and see how they're reacting. If they don't appear upset, let it go.
- If your child is scared, let him or her know it's all right. Let the child know that you were scared, too, and that the behavior depicted isn't to be taken lightly. Be a role model.

Workshop continued on page 4B

# Workshop / Aim is to foster discussion about TV

Continued from page 1B

■ Call the station or cable company and complain. Take action. Again, be a role model.

There are no right or wrong answers, workshop presenter Joni Herman assured the group. The goal is to get parents and children talking — and thinking.

"Taking Charge of Your TV" is a joint project of the national PTA, the National Cable Television Association and Cable in the Classroom, which put on Tuesday's workshop at Minneapolis' Sheraton Metrodome Hotel with the assistance of local cable organizations.

The purpose of the workshop was training. Those who took part agreed to conduct similar workshops in their schools and communities, using the same workbooks and videotapes employed Tuesday.

After a morning of discussion, participants broke into smaller groups to practice being workshop presenters. They will have guideline books when they lead sessions, but they were encouraged to be flexible, to listen and to improvise.

## Ideas to foster critical viewing

Count the number of times the camera angle changes in a video, or listen to when a laugh track is added to a sitcom. These are revealing ways to take the mystery out of TV.

Question what you see and hear on TV while watching with your children. Express opinions about story lines and characters. Challenge or support the ideas presented.

Sensitize your children to TV violence by asking how the victim might feel. If your child is old enough, talk about real-life encounters with violence that you or other members of your family have experienced.

When your children see their favorite sports hero telling them to try a product, ask them if they think the star really uses the product, or just got paid to say those things.

If you have access to a video camera, encourage children to make their own TV shows.

Source: "Taking Charge of Your TV: A Guide to Critical Viewing for Parents and Children"

"Whatever you bring to it is all right as long as you have the skills to get people talking and interacting," said Bobbi Kamil, executive director of Cable in the Classroom, a cable-supported organization that works to increase awareness of educational programs and to provide teachers with curriculum-related materials.

Why would the cable industry support a workshop that could lead to reduced viewing?

Kamil said she doesn't believe that people are likely to watch any less television, but that they may choose different programs.

The critical-viewing workshop

makes four major points:

■ All TV programs are created or constructed to achieve specific results. For example, participants were shown clips of "reality" shows, such as "Cops" or "Rescue 911," and asked to analyze how the viewer's responses are manipulated by editing, lighting, music and other aspects.

■ Each viewer interprets programs differently. Participants were asked to role-play after the "Terror in the Night" clip and imagine how viewers of different ages, from preschoolers to parents, would react to the violence.

■ Video violence takes many forms. After being shown a montage of violent sight gags from the film "Home Alone," participants were asked to debate the harm or lack thereof of slapstick mayhem.

■ All TV programs have an underlying economic purpose. Participants discussed a reel of kid-targeted commercials that did everything from exaggerate the size of toys to imply that a certain brand of gum or cereal would cure loneliness.

TO

17038451409

P.03

EXCERPT FROM "IT TAKES A VILLAGE"  
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

275

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

playing outside, so they regulated our viewing hours strictly. Bill and I restricted both the amount and the kind of television Chelsea watched as a child, and even now we check up from time to time on her TV and movie watching. Parents are beginning to come up with other ways of defending themselves and their children from the excessive influence of television. They may eventually get some help from technology, such as the V-chip included in proposed telecommunications legislation. The V-chip is a computer chip with which parents could block television programs designated as containing material unsuitable for children. Making the technology available is only half the battle; putting it to good use will require a strong, clear rating system like the one we now have for movies.

In the meantime, parents are on their own in making sure children are not watching inappropriate shows or too much television, period. They can continue to trade their own "ratings" informally. They can encourage the newspapers and magazines that are beginning to gear reviews of movies and music toward parents to cover television in this way as well. They can also teach their children *how* to watch television, the same way they teach them to cross the street carefully.

\* A publication entitled "Taking Charge of Your TV: A Guide to Critical Viewing for Parents and Children" is available from the Family and Community Critical Viewing Project, an initiative sponsored by the National PTA and the cable industry to teach television viewing skills to parents, teachers, and children. It suggests ways parents can talk to kids about what they are watching, which not only makes television a less passive pastime.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

279

but transforms it into a learning tool. We can ask children why characters act as they do and help them to distinguish between responsible and irresponsible acts. We can get them to talk about how the families on television are different from theirs and from other families they know. We can relate television to real-life situations. When Roseanne and Dan fret over bills because Dan's business is going under, for example, we can explain to our children that sometimes parents need to figure out ways to make sure they can meet all their responsibilities.

Used wisely, television can help children to distinguish between fantasy and reality—precisely because the fantasy it projects feels so real to them. Identify aspects peculiar to "TV land" that may seem obvious to an adult but aren't necessarily clear to a child. For instance, when watching a thirty-minute drama or sitcom, point out that it's not realistic to solve a problem in the span of a half hour. Explain that this is how writers and directors adapt to scheduling needs and discuss how the situation might have played out in real life.

There is another option parents might consider: Just turn the televisions, video games, and VCRs off—for an evening, a week, a regular day each week. When I made this suggestion in an interview with *Woman's Day*, readers responded enthusiastically. Some parents, fed up with not only depictions of violence but the excessive influence of television in general, wrote to say they had already tried out the idea.

Imagine what might happen if we all turned off our televisions for an entire week. The quiet—and the other activities we could take up—might be habit-forming.

Here and there, parents are banding together and dis-

## Parents try to loosen TV's tentacles

BY NIGEL HATTON

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

**FARMVILLE** — Jacqueline McDonnough of Richmond says she's having a tough time controlling the effect television has on her two sons.

Steven, 12, just got his own television. His favorite program is "that horrible show 'Beavis and Butthead.'" she says. Rhetoric from the program has trickled into the vocabulary of 4-year-old Gabriel.

"The younger one goes around calling people 'Butthead,'" she said.

Yesterday, McDonnough, vice president of the Chandler Middle School Parent-Teacher Association, attended a workshop designed to combat violence and commercialism in cable television programming.

Three organizations — the National Cable Television Association, Cable in the Classroom

and the National Parent Teacher Association — sponsored the workshop that trained participants how to lead similar sessions in their own communities. The partnership has held workshops across the nation, said Megan Hookey, associate director of Cable in the Classroom.

Hookey said Cable in the Classroom, a public interest group for the industry, "promotes the good stuff" in cable programming.

Nearly 50 PTA members, teachers and cable representatives from across the state gathered at Longwood College to learn the art of critical viewing.

Barbara Totherow, a teacher in Hudson, N.H., and Tom Leonhart of the cable industry led a session that was filled with personal and passionate testimony on the need for more parent involvement in their children's television viewing habits.

"You feel like a boob out there when you're trying to fight," the violence in television,

McDonnough said.

"We have a whole generation of parents out there who haven't grown up themselves," added another workshop participant.

Totherow and Leonhart outlined "four key points to taking charge of your television."

- Be aware that television programs and their messages are created to achieve specific results. They should point out to their children the use of special effects, tell them that television is pretend, and prompt discussions on the shows' point of view.

- Realize that people interpret programs and messages differently. Use television as a learning tool and relate it to real-life situations. Point out the error of sitcoms solving a complex problem in 30 minutes or less.

- Know that television violence appears in a number of forms. Cartoons, a film rated PG and a television movie advertisement were all

shown as examples of programs containing violence. Totherow advised parents to ask children how the victim of a violent act might feel, and explain that the result of violence in a cartoon differs from that in real life.

- Inform children that all television programs have an underlying economic purpose.

McDonnough came away from the workshop with a bundle of solutions for her family. "We'll schedule our television watching every Sunday. I'll sit with them and watch the programs and do some of the questions," she said.

After the three-hour session, participants continued to fervently cite problems and offer solutions. PTA members and cable representatives exchanged names and numbers, and vowed to hold workshops in their respective communities.

"We have to make sure we use and are using television rather than feeling used by it," Hookey said.

JUN 21 1995

# Turning the Tables on TV Violence

## 'Media Literacy' Earns Praise, Critics on Helping Children Cope With What They See

By Paul Farhi

Washington Post Staff Writer

The buzz in the hotel ballroom dies down as the TV monitors light up. Soon the screens begin to flicker with a quick succession of images: a young woman being kidnapped, a sexual assault, a brutal fight between two men. When it's over, the audience stirs uncomfortably.

The video, from a CBS movie called "Terror in the Night," might well qualify as Exhibit A in the latest debate over violent entertainment sparked by Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole recently. But the crowd of teachers, parents and federal officials assembled in the Washington hotel last month didn't come to try to ban sex and violence from TV. For two hours, they discussed ways parents can help their children to analyze, interpret—and cope with—what comes from their TV sets.

The conference, entitled "Taking Charge of Our TV," was one small part of a movement known as "media literacy." Just as consumer education seeks to teach people to be discerning in what they buy, media literacy claims to equip viewers with the skills to make informed decisions about what they and their children watch on TV.

Some critics, however, question the effectiveness and objectivity of recent media-literacy programs, and point out that the televi-

### TIPS FOR TV VIEWING

Here are some suggestions "media literacy" proponents offer for making television-watching a more family-centered form of entertainment.

**1. Decide how much TV your family will watch.** Set weekly limits and stick to them.

**2. Plan your TV viewing.** Encourage the attitude that the television should be used to watch specific shows and not just to "see what's on." Use the weekly TV book to select shows to be watched.

**3. Set guidelines for selecting programs.** Choose programs with themes and ideas that are in tune with the values important to your family and that will enhance your children's education.

**4. Make TV watching an interactive family event.** Watch TV programs together and let characters and story lines stimulate conversation about topics that are often difficult to discuss: death, divorce, sex, family relationships.

**5. Use TV as a starting point.** Find books and magazines that relate to interesting programs you've watched, or plan a family outing to a place you've seen on TV (especially historic or nature trips).



SOURCE: Center for Media Literacy

sion industry itself has underwritten several of them. They see them in part as an effort by the TV industry to blunt pressure from Congress and activist groups to tone down programming.

"Media literacy efforts funded by industry put all of the onus of responsibility back on

the viewer," said Kathryn Montgomery, co-director of the Washington-based Center for Media Education, which advocates improved children's TV programming. "The message is, 'we in the media are not the problem, you the viewer are the problem. If you just

See MEDIA, F2, Col. 1

THE WASHINGTON POST

change the way you look at television, things will be okay.

Media literacy specialists generally respond that more extreme reactions to TV—advertiser boycotts and turn-off-the-TV campaigns—tend to be ineffective and are hard to sustain.

A more lasting answer, they contend, is to outsmart your TV. By understanding the political, social and economic dynamics that drive the media and Hollywood, experts in the field say, young people will be better able to resist the worst influences of movies and TV.

"At bottom, this is about watching television more sensibly," said Elizabeth Thoman, executive director of the Center for Media Literacy in Los Angeles. "But it's also about changing the impact of what is seen."

Media literacy programs explore things as diverse as the impact of camera angles and the use of laugh tracks in manipulating emotions. Some of the programs highlight some researchers' findings that video violence dis-

Programs and workshops on media literacy have recently been sponsored by the United Methodist Church, the Junior League, the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy and the National PTA, which is hosting 24 "Taking Charge of Your TV" conferences around the United States this year in alliance with two cable-TV organizations.

Participants in the PTA's conference in Washington were encouraged by two presenters to discuss with their children the nature of "real" and "make believe" TV, and were given workbooks in which to log their TV-viewing habits and reactions.

Several people said afterward they found the discussion helpful; one parent, Barbara Spangler of Arlington, was sufficiently enthused that she has begun organizing a similar event for parents at her children's school this fall.

"I'd like to think that TV could clean up its own act and present better viewing, but I'm not waiting around for that to happen anytime soon," said Spangler, the mother of a 10-year-old girl and 12-year-old boy.

But Montgomery of the Center for Media Education said it's no coincidence that TV industry groups are hot on media literacy programs just as Congress is debating ways to limit objectionable material on the airwaves.

The PTA's "Taking Charge of Your TV" workshops are co-sponsored by the National Cable Television Association, the chief lobbyist for the cable industry (an NCTA employee is one of two workshop leaders). Continental Cablevision, one of the nation's largest cable companies, sponsors a media literacy program, as do Time Warner Cable and the Bethesda-based Discovery Channel.

Cable and broadcast TV groups are among those fighting proposals in Congress to require TV manufacturers to add a special microchip that would allow parents to screen out violent programming, and to require broadcasters to rate programs for violence.

The TV industry's political agenda was not lost on some of the people at last month's PTA workshop.

"I disagree with the PTA having a relationship with cable," said Edith Broida, a longtime Washington resident and former federal education official, questioning cable's motives in sponsoring the program.

Outgoing National PTA president Kathryn Whitfill said her organization is "quite comfortable" with the arrangement. "They are least exercising a sense of responsibility," said Whitfill. "... Television isn't going away even if we boycott it for a week or a month or a year. Families might as well learn to deal with it in a realistic way."

## *"Media literacy efforts funded by industry put all of the onus of responsibility back on the viewer."*

— Kathryn Montgomery, co-director,  
Center for Media Education

torts and exaggerates a viewer's perception of real-world violence and risk.

Among the case studies offered at the conference was a fast-moving, 30-second commercial for Mountain Dew soft drink that shows young men enjoying "high risk" activities such as snowboarding, parachuting and waterskiing. By glamorizing this behavior, the commercial may be contributing to an environment that encourages young people to experiment with dangerous products, such as tobacco, alcohol or drugs, said speaker Rehje Hobbs, a past director of the Institute on Media Education at Harvard.

"One thing we hope to do is to get people to recognize [media] formulas as formulas," said Hobbs in an interview. "Once you see the structure of a TV program, once you see the storytelling techniques and patterns, you begin to evaluate it differently, and maybe that lets you to make different choices."

Media literacy got an early boost in 1972 when the surgeon general released a report linking TV viewing and antisocial behavior. Some public school systems adopted media-literacy programs into their middle- and high-school curricula, and Harvard and other universities soon followed with formal courses of their own.

Locally, schools in Montgomery and Prince William counties offer programs that are well known in the field.

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

TUESDAY, JULY 11, 1995

## Countering TV's effects on children

*Workshop aims to teach  
critical viewing skills*

BY JAMIE C. RUFF

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

FARMVILLE — Parents and teachers looking for ways to counter what television violence and commercialism does to children may find some answers at a workshop Friday at Longwood College.

The program is an outgrowth of a partnership among the National Cable Television Association, Cable in the Classroom and the National Parent Teacher Association.

Friday's three-hour program will start at 9 a.m. in Lankford Hall and will be open to the public. PTA officials ask that visitors register with them.

Organizers said participants will develop viewing strategies to use television, rather than be used by it, and to make television more educational. The goal is to train PTA and cable representatives, as a team, in the skills of critical viewing and media literacy. In turn, the cable-PTA teams then hold workshops for families and educators in their communities.

"The PTA has been committed to addressing the problem of violence on television for many years," PTA President Kathryn Whitfill said in a statement. "Today, we continue working nationally to train our membership to control access to TV violence where it matters most — in the home."

NCTA President Decker Anstrom noted in prepared comments. "This partnership with the PTA will help families look at TV as carefully as they look at food labels — and that will mean healthier, smarter kids."

Glenn Hatmaker, a spokesman for the cable association, said such workshops have been held across the country and spring up "wherever there is local interest."

The National PTA has about 7 million members. The NCTA represents cable systems serving more than 80 percent of the nation's 59 million cable subscribers. Cable in the Classroom is the cable industry's \$300 million public service initiative, serving 65,000 schools nationwide and reaching more than 35 million students with in-class, commercial-free programming.

# The State Journal-Register

Springfield, Illinois Thursday, April 27, 1995 City edition

## Parents urged to develop critical TV viewing skills

By JOHN O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

To stop violence, talk back. Talk back to your TV and your kids, cable television consultants told an Illinois PTA state convention workshop Wednesday.

Even true-to-life television programs are "constructions," presenter Anne Cowan said. Parents need to talk to their kids about what's real, what isn't and what their feelings are about what they see.

PTA members and cable TV operators learned how to show parents "critical viewing skills" that will help keep children from repeating the violence they see on the tube.

Silence implies consent in many kids' eyes, said Cowan and consultant Jim McCaffery of the Cable Telecommunications Association in Washington, D.C.

"Talk back to your TV," McCaffery told the group meeting at the Prairie Capital Convention Center. "As odd as that sounds, on some level, when you're talking back, some values are being taught."

It can be as simple as an offhand remark — "That's not real" — in a conversation, depending on the child's age, on camera angles, music and special effects and their impact.

The "Family and Community Critical Viewing Project" is sponsored by the National Cable Television Association and the National PTA.

Perhaps parents most in need of learning skills are less likely to be involved in PTA activities. But that won't stop the message from getting through, PTA spokeswoman Harriet O'Donnell said.

"We don't have to have a parent in front of us at a meeting to have an impact," O'Donnell said. "These are tips and ideas that we can put in newsletters and send home, provocative little tips to help parents."

The American Psychological Association, in an influential 1993 report on children and violence, listed "critical viewing skills" as a crucial factor in halting the impact of TV violence, which doctors and experts have documented for two decades.

Letters to producers and advertisers and other forms of protest help.

"But keep in mind, your kids are still at home watching TV while you do those things," Cowan said. "You need to learn critical viewing skills. If they don't watch it with you, they'll watch it with someone else."

There are four keys to media literacy, according to the presentation:

- TV programs are created for specific results. Parents should discuss with kids what the producers are trying to say and whether that's important. Children should repeatedly be told TV's pretend, not real. With greater accessibility to video cameras, kids can create their own productions to find out how much it takes to make a program.

- People interpret the same show differently. Parents need to challenge unrealistic portrayals and talk to their children about stereotypes and how conflicts are resolved on TV. But TV also can be an important learning tool.

- Violence takes many forms. "The Three Stooges," "Home Alone," the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote, the news, all get violent. Kids must be asked how the victim might feel and

## Student garden to promote peace

By JOHN O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

The Oklahoma City bombing left kids at Springfield's Grant Middle School "somber" and "bewildered," Mary McDonald said.

But it redefined and gave purpose to a well-intentioned idea that needed a little steam:

The collection of plantings planned for the 25th Earth Day became a Peace Garden.

The environmental club, student council and science classes will begin planting Friday and dedicate the garden in May. It will include a rock with an inscription that will be chosen through a contest.

"It's a positive, long-term thing, a kind of witness to peace, an attempt to counter that" violence, said McDonald, a teacher and student council adviser. "We want to get things that are hearty, colorful and can be added to."

Several weeks ago, the environmental club, advised by Judy Prillaman and the student council discovered they both were planning Earth Day commemorations. They combined efforts, and the Oklahoma City bombing gave them new direction.

"They said, 'What can we do? Here's something we can do and we can keep doing it,'" McDonald said, noting that teacher Maureen "Sam" Pletcher is counseling the group on plants that will stand up to the rigors of Monroe Street, where hundreds of seventh- and eighth-graders pass daily.

"When kids work with plants and the earth, there's a rekindling of that spirit of working together," McDonald said. "Kids who have a hard time working together in the classroom have a common purpose outside."

The council and club put up \$500 to \$600 of their money for the garden, to which additions might be made in the future.

how violence might be funny, but that real life doesn't work that way.

■ Never forget that all TV programs have an economic purpose. Ask your kids why they think certain commercials run when they do or whether their sports hero gets paid to say he eats a certain breakfast cereal.

Watch your children as much as the TV,

Cowan advised.

"Observe them, watch their body language and ask questions to find out their reactions to what they're seeing," she said.

To have a critical viewing workshop presented to a group in your area, call the Illinois PTA at (800) 877-9617.

# TV surfing: Experts say parents can control what children watch

By Jesse Fox Mayshark

News-Sentinel staff writer

Vince and Sallie Hickam were staying in an Atlanta motel with their children when they noticed their 6-year-old son watching a cartoon they'd never seen.

"I asked him, 'What are you watching?' and he said, 'Butthead,'" Vince Hickam recalled. "I said, 'Don't talk to me like that.'"

Hickam soon realized his son wasn't mouthing off but was just repeating the name of the show: MTV's "Beavis and Butthead."

From that terrible twosome to "NYPD Blue," from "The Simpsons" to "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers," parents find a lot to worry about on television.

But they can control what their children watch and what impact it has, two media experts Friday.

"Obviously, TV is here to stay, what we're going to try to do is you all become more intentional and intelligent viewers," Joni Herman told parents attending the state Parent-Teacher Association convention at the Knoxville Hilton.

Herman, representing the National Cable Television Association, said parents and children must become "media literate" to make sense of what they see on television.

She cited studies that show 58 percent of parents object to some of what their children see on television, but only 4 percent express disapproval.

"For parents, it's not that they don't want to do something, it's that they don't know what to

do," Herman said.

Herman and Barbara Totherow, who teaches a high school media literacy course in New Hampshire, suggested several ways for parents to monitor and interpret television shows:

- Watch programs with children and ask them to explain what is real and what is not.

- Talk about television production techniques — camera angles, music, editing, dialogue — and how producers use them to make shows exciting or dramatic.

- Set limits on how much television and what kinds of shows children can watch.

- Explain the economics of television to children — why advertisers place commercials on certain shows, and how commercials manipulate viewers to want certain products.

Friday's workshop was part of a national CATA-PTA partnership to teach critical viewing. While television habits vary from family to family, Totherow said the important thing is for parents to consciously decide which programs they want their children to see.

"I really think that a lot of people don't quite realize what's on," she said.

Most of the parents at the workshop said they have television rules of some sort.

The Hickams, from Johnson City, are disturbed by what they see on prime-time television.

"My kids are trying to watch an 8 o'clock show, and whether they're channel surfing or whatever, they can be exposed to something that they should not be," Vince Hickam said.

# PTA officials to look at fighting TV violence

By Troy Moon  
News Journal

Two Pensacola PTA officials will attend a national conference on Friday focusing on television violence and how to combat it.

Patty Hightower, president of the Escambia County PTA and Frances Yeo, Parent Education Chairwoman for the state PTA, will attend the one-day conference in Fort Lauderdale, which is sponsored by the National PTA and the National Cable Television Association.

The conference, "Family and Community Critical Viewing Project," will focus on education and personal responsibility rather than government intervention, censorship and boycotts to combat television violence, Yeo said.

"Those other methods that people have tried haven't been effective," Yeo said. "We want to teach critical viewing skills —

get parents and their children talking about what they're watching. In some cases, we want to give parents the guts to turn off the television."

Yeo and Hightower are also part of a new five-member Florida PTA committee, "Critical Viewing Skills," which oversees efforts to promote media literacy in Florida. The PTA describes "media literacy" as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in the media.

"It's so that you can watch TV with your children and be able to discuss what's real, what's not,"

Yeo said. "Each person interprets media messages differently, and it's important for parents to know how their children interpret those messages."

Yeo and Hightower plan to schedule "Critical Viewing Skills" workshops in Pensacola.

## Cable, PTA join forces to combat TV violence

DALLAS (AP) — Discussing the realities of television violence after a TV program is one way parents can help control its effects on young people.

That is a technique the cable television industry and national Parent and Teacher Association are advocating as part of a nationwide initiative announced Thursday to teach parents, teachers and children how to evaluate and analyze what they see on TV.

"We think TV viewers should look at the television ... as carefully as they look at the labels on the food they eat," said Decker Anstrom, president of the National Cable Television Association. "If they do, we'll have healthier kids in this country."

Described as the first national partnership of its kind, the Family and Community Critical Viewing Project teams the PTA with the NCTA and Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education initiative.

The project is centered around training workshops inspired by Harvard media expert Renee Hobbs and is designed to help families make better programming choices and to improve the way they watch the TV shows

they select, organizers said.

"I think just as you have to teach a child to read a book, you have to teach a child to watch television," said Bobbi Kamil, executive director of Cable in the Classroom. "The tools that we're giving parents help them do that."

The 1½ workshops, which have been field tested in five U.S. cities, offer parents and teachers concrete steps to control the effects of television violence and commercialism on young people and practical ways to use the activities at home or in the classroom, organizers said.

Some of the techniques include taking control of the TV by setting rules on how and when television is watched; re-sensitizing the viewer by discussing the realities of violence seen on TV; and getting at what's behind the message by considering the motives for the programming.

While acknowledging that parents aren't always home to turn off the TV, national PTA president Kathryn Whitfill of Pasadena said the project gives parents the skills to sit down with children and "make decisions about what they're going to have coming into their home."

DETROIT FREE PRESS

how to  
watch

TV  
with  
your  
kids

MAR 22 1995

## Parents get some pointers from PTA, cable industry

By L.A. JOHNSON  
Free Press TV Radio Writer

**D**iane Hartwell went through the roof when she discovered her three young children watching "Total Recall" with their father and 19-year-old stepbrother several years ago.

"It was a very gruesome scene (in the movie). Blood all over," says Hartwell, 36, of Madeline Heights. "Every other word was *you know what*, and... my kids were 4, 6, and 8 at the time. ... I was just horrified."

She ordered the three youngsters out of the room. Raymond Hartwell and his older son had sat down to watch the rental movie, and when the younger kids wandered downstairs to watch, he let them stay.

"We got caught up in the movie. The next thing I know, my wife comes home. There's still a hole in the ceiling," he says, now able to joke a little about the incident. "It was a mistake, and it won't happen again."

It doesn't take an R-rated movie to be inappropriate. Even 30-second commercials for network programs and movies sometimes feature sex or violence designed to entice viewers. Those same commercials, and the programs they promote, can be inappropriate for children or frighten them, according to a new series of workshops sponsored by the National PTA, National Cable

### Television Association and Cable in the Classroom

Diane Hartwell, who attended a recent workshop in Novi, said she and her husband have been more vigilant about what their children watch. The Hartwells judge programs for Kristin, Sean and Brian — now 8, 10 and 12 — based on each child's ability to handle the program. Shows or movies that include vulgar language, sexual situations, terrifying tales and graphic or excessive violence are off-limits.

The IFA and cable industry seminars, *Taking Charge of Your TV: A Critical Viewing Guide for Parents and Children*, are designed to teach parents and cable operators how to screen what children view and how to talk with children about what they see. They also learned how to teach critical viewing skills to children and other adults through local workshops as part of the Family & Community Critical Viewing Project.

Gwendolyn Lewis, a librarian at Mackenzie High School in Detroit who also operates the "Plant A Seed... Read!" program, attended the seminar and says when she talks to parents about encouraging their children to read, she also discusses critical TV viewing. Lewis advocates using good television as a springboard to reading and writing.

"They can look at a TV program, but still go to a library or the science center and obtain follow-up material on a subject," Lewis says. "After watching a program, they can write their own story about the character or read a biography about the character."

Open communication between parents and children is paramount, Lewis says.

Jan and Dave Barta agree, carefully monitoring the television viewing of their three children — Amy, Sarah and Carrie, ages 11, 13, and 15.

"I really don't care for my children to watch real graphic horror or blood-and-guts kind of things," says the 39-year-old Redford Township woman, who also attended the seminar. "I really don't care to have them watch bedroom scenes or sensual scenes."

"Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman" and "Home Improvement" are acceptable, she said. But not "The Simpsons," "Beverly Hills, 90210," or even reruns of "Who's the Boss," about a male housekeeper living with a divorced woman. "That's not a good situation for a man and woman to live together before they are married," says Barta, who is a homemaker. "It's not that I'm trying to raise my kids in a glass bubble, it's just when the opportunity comes along with TV to talk about our values and what we believe in, we do."

Barta started monitoring her children's TV viewing when they were very young. "You can't start when they're 11, 13, and 15," she says. "You also can't sit there and watch it and tell your kids not to watch it."

Amy Barta, 11, likes "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman" and "Home Improvement." "They're funny and they're good and there's not bad things in them really, like a lot of swearing or shooting or killing or anything," Amy says.

Her sister, Sarah, 13, enjoys shows like "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "Full House," and "Family Matters." But Sarah says she would like to watch "The Simpsons" and "Beverly Hills, 90210," but isn't allowed.

Diane Hartwell was pleased to discover that she and her husband already employ many of the techniques suggested in the seminar. "I have turned the channel on them. Usually it's a movie and actually, it's pretty much my 8-year-old," she says.

"My husband and I deal with our kids by saying, 'This is real or this is true. This might happen. This probably wouldn't happen. This is TV. This is entertainment. This is not real,'" says Hartwell, who works as a school photographer.

Diane Hartwell watches, at most, three hours of television a week, including "Lois and Clark" with Kristin, and some of the ABC TGIF shows — "Family Matters," "Boy Meets World," "Step by Step" and "On Our Own." Raymond Hartwell watches sports, public television and the Learning Channel.

Brian enjoys the adventure and action of "seaQuest DSV" and "Earth 2" and the humor of "Hangin' With Mr. Cooper" and "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." Sean likes the humor in "Taz" and "Boy Meets World." Kristin watches "Rugrats," and "Lois & Clark" with her mom.

The children watch, at most, two hours of television a day. They are good students and make time for Little League, Scouts and other activities after school. "Due to the fact that we keep them busily involved in other stuff, they don't have a lot of time to watch TV," says Raymond Hartwell, a reliability engineer for Modern Engineering GM.

Diane Hartwell, agreeing with Barta, believes it's never too early for parents to begin talking to children about smart and critical TV viewing.

"Starting at 3, 4, 5 years of age, that's when you have to start controlling what they watch," she says. "If you don't, it just gets out of control. ... It's like teaching them about proper manners, not smoking and not drinking. To me, it's better to start it early."

**A GUIDE TO MEDIA LITERACY**

## What TV-savvy parents can do to help their kids

**A**s TV gets wilder and wilder, more parents are opting to junk television altogether. Those not ready for this drastic step can find solace in media literacy—the art of deconstructing television. Schools in Canada have taught media literacy for years, explaining to students that programs exist to deliver an audience to advertisers, that sex and violence

(\$8.95); "Taking Charge of Your TV," from the National PTA and the cable-television industry (free copies from 800-743-5355 or <http://www.widmeyer.com/ncta/home.htm> on the Internet); and guides from the Center for Media Literacy (call 800-226-9494 for a free catalog).

**3. Be choosy.** You wouldn't stroll into a library and pick up the first book,

and you shouldn't just turn on the TV and watch whatever's on. Media literacy mavens suggest choosing a week's worth of programs in advance. Sorry, no channel surfing.

**4. Watch with them.** Unless parents are confident that a show is safe for youngsters (rarely the case these days), they should watch with their kids, then talk about controversial content. Sample queries: "Why was that the lead story on the news?" "Could a cop really be back at work a week after be-



**TV talk.** Roseanne can kick off a parent-child chat.

ing shot in the chest?" "When the star of the sitcom decided to have sex with a woman he just met, should she have suggested that he use a condom?"

**5. Just say no.** And also why—which means you first need to watch the series in question. "My daughter, who's 11, wanted to see 'Married ... With Children,'" says Karen Jaffe of Kidsnet, a children's media resource center in Washington, D.C. "I said no. I don't like the way the parents talk to the kids or the kids talk to the parents."

**6. Media literacy isn't a cure-all.** No child can be immunized against all the bad stuff on TV. So parents (and children) need to make their objections known. Letters to the local station, with a copy to the local newspapers and the FCC, can carry weight, especially if you use the words feared by TV executives: "failing to serve the public interest" and "doesn't deserve to have its license renewed."

**1. Rethink your image of TV.** Newton Minow, former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, suggests imagining a stranger in your house blathering on to you and your children about sex and violence all day long. No one dares interrupt or tell the stranger to shut up or get out. That stranger is your TV set.

**2. Keep a diary.** Ask your kids how much TV they think they watch. Then have them write down everything they watch for a week. Parents might do the same. Both generations may be shocked by the results. A reasonable goal for kids: two hours a day. Several primers help with this and other steps: *The Smart Parent's Guide to Kids' TV* by Milton Chen (KQED Books, 1994,

# THE ORANGE COUNTY Register

P.O. Box 11626, 625 N. Grand Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92711

## Plan will help parents raise TV-savvy kids

By THERESA WALKER  
The Orange County Register

**P**TA. NCTA. CIC. TV. Reads like alphabet soup. But it spells out a newly launched plan of attack by parents, educators and the cable industry to counter television violence and commercialism.

The National Parents and Teachers Association, together with the National Cable Television Association and Cable in the Classroom, a public service offering in-class cable programming, will teach adults how to teach kids to watch television with a critical eye.

The effort is called Family and Community Critical Viewing. But it doesn't involve telling families what to watch. Parents, teachers and com-

munity leaders will be invited to participate in 90-minute workshops sponsored by local PTAs and cable companies.

"How do you teach kids to analyze and ask questions and not take everything as fact?" Bobbi Kamil, director of Cable in the Classroom, said at a recent press conference. "All that is part of the conference. Not just turning the television off."

The workshops are based on a model created in association with a Harvard University media expert and will include:

- How to set and stick to rules governing how and when television will be watched at home.

- How to watch programs together and discuss the reality of violence in order to change misleading perceptions.

- How to analyze the motives — political and economic — behind television programming.

Why the need for workshops?

"A lot of parents don't realize there are ways and means for them to do a little talking with their children," said Kathryn

Whitfill, national PTA president. "A lot of parents don't talk to their children."

About 100 workshops are expected to be held around the country through 1995 at the local level and at statewide PTA conferences.

Videotapes of the workshops also will be made available to local cable companies and educational access channels.

Whitfill has no doubt that, given the opportunity, parents will respond and that the effort will be self-perpetuating.

"Parents are just looking for someone to verify how they feel," she said. "It isn't going to be just the people who attend. There will be a ripple effect."

There are two new paperback books aimed at helping parents change their children's television habits:

- "The Smart Parent's Guide to KIDS' TV" (\$8.95, KQED Books, 1994) by Milton Chen, director of San Francisco's KQED-TV public broadcasting station's Center for Education

and Lifelong Learning.

- "Kick the Television Habit" (\$6.95, Penguin Books, 1994) by Steve and Ruth Bennett, best-selling authors who have written a number of parenting activity books.

**Hyperactive talk:** Orange Coast Community College presents a free seminar Thursday evening on how to motivate hyperactive children and improve the parent-child relationship.

The main speaker will be Peter Buntman, a psychotherapist who works with children and is executive director of the Center for Family Life Enrichment.

The 7-8:30 p.m. lecture will explore discipline techniques and communication skills.

Buntman will explain how to get hyperactive children to listen, follow directions and sit still; how to teach them impulse control; and how to teach them to behave in school.

For more information or to register, call the college's Com-

munity Services Office at (714) 432-5880.

■ ■ ■

"We were so young — partying, shaking our thing and 'pushing' it all the time. But when you have a beautiful, precious baby, a new responsibility, you start to see things in a different light."

DEE DEE 'SPINDERELLA' ROPER

member of the female rap group Salt 'N' Pepa, from an article in Essence magazine

---

Family Notebook runs every Sunday in Accent. Items should be submitted two weeks before the event and addressed to Theresa Walker, c/o Accent, The Orange County Register, P.O. Box 11626, Santa Ana, Calif. 92711.

---

## **Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker**

---

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

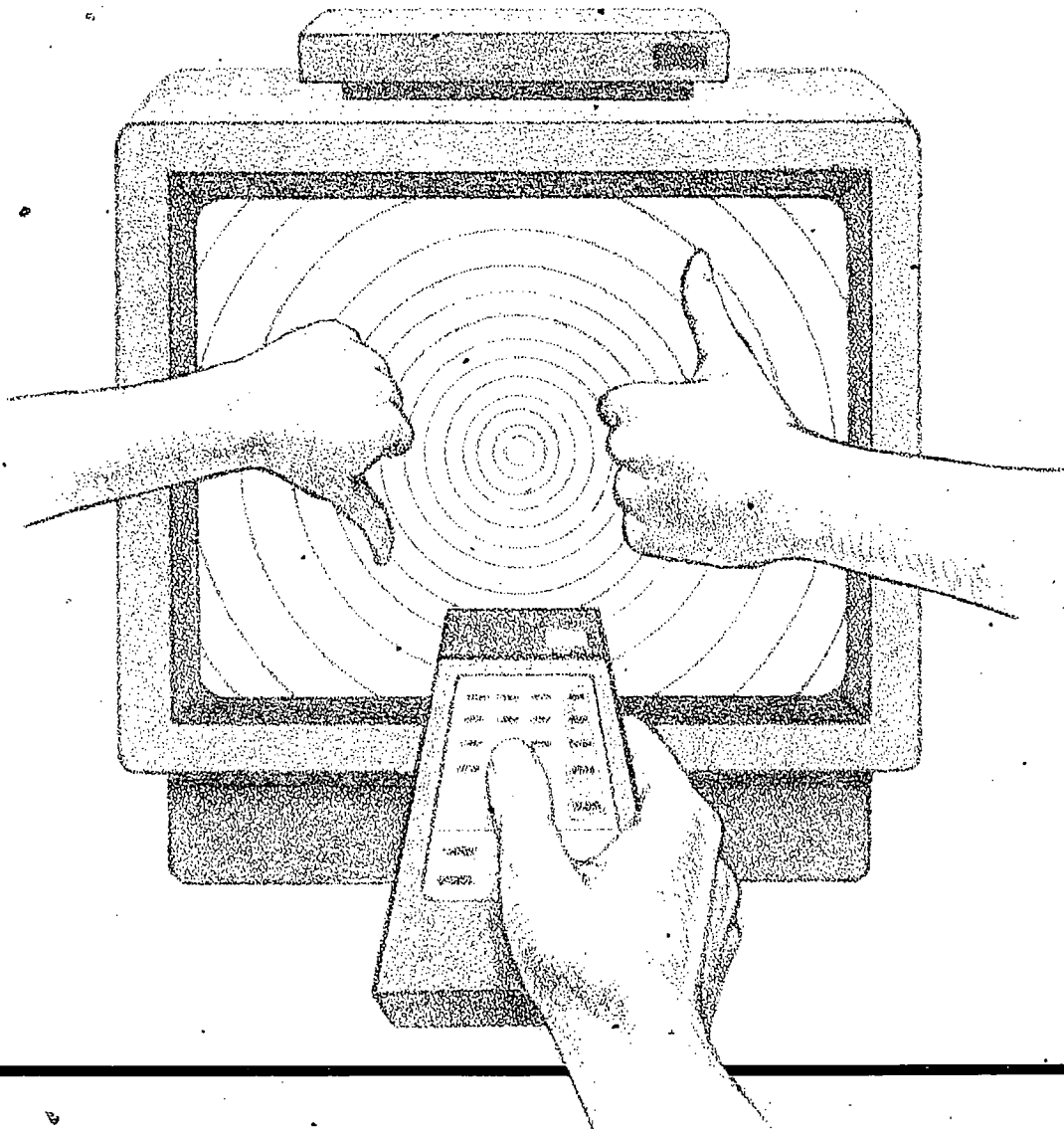
---

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.

---

# Taking Charge Of Your TV

A Guide to Critical Viewing for Parents and Children





MOLLY B. BROSTROM  
SENIOR POLICY ANALYST  
DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

(202) 456-5561  
FAX (202) 456-7028

THE WHITE HOUSE

July 15, 1996

Robert Clampitt  
President  
Children's Express Foundation  
1440 New York Avenue NW  
Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Bob,

Since I was involved in organizing the White House Conference on Youth, Drug Use and Violence, Skila Harris passed on to me your note to her regarding Stacy Mahoney's experience. I have been delinquent in responding and I apologize.

First, I appreciate the response -- it's good to get feedback.

I am sorry that Stacy Mahoney did not find the Conference entirely satisfying, and in particular am sorry that she did not feel that youth were adequately included or consulted. This is an area we really focused on -- ensuring sufficient participation from youth (about one quarter to one third of invitees were youth) and urging each breakout session leader to encourage youth participation in discussion.

I was in the discussion session in which Stacy participated and actually thought the discussion leader, Carol Rasco, did a good job at ensuring that everyone, particularly the youth, had an opportunity to speak. I do recall that the youth were not quite as verbose as some of the adult "experts," however, which may have lead to Stacey's impression of adults not listening to youth. In addition, due to the President's extended stay during the morning plenary, the afternoon breakouts were cut short which also limited the discussions.

Anyway, I just wanted to offer my appreciation for the feedback, my apologies for Stacey's disappointment, and my hope that the experience will not prevent your or her participation in any future activity. Please let me know if there is anything I can do.

Sincerely,

Molly Brostrom



FEB 20 1996

---

AMERICAN CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S TELEVISION  
THE OLLIE AWARDS

February 13, 1996

Ms. Carol Rasco  
Domestic Policy Advisor to the President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Rasco:

I thought the attached report might be useful as you prepare for the President's meeting with telecasters, later this month.

The American Center is the only children's television advocacy organization that works with the TV industry, building the skills, motivation and resources that creative professionals need to make outstanding children's programming. Please feel free to call me if we can be of any help with the meeting, or with any followup activities or services to keep the discussion moving forward.

Sincerely,

David W. Kleeman  
Executive Director



AMERICAN CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S TELEVISION  
THE OLLIE AWARDS

David W. Kleeman  
Executive Director

1400 East Touhy, Des Plaines, Illinois 60018-3305  
(847) 390-6499 FAX (847) 390-9435  
e-mail: cen007@linknet.com



---

AMERICAN CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S TELEVISION  
THE OLLIE AWARDS

---

February 15, 1996

Without doubt, television classification or rating systems are at the forefront of the debate about helping families control the programming that enters their homes. Several recent developments guarantee this, including the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requiring V-chip technology in new TV sets, and the two major studies examining the extent and context of television violence.

The argument for the V-chip is usually made in the negative -- it prevents viewing of certain programs. In the long run, however, there is greater strength in its affirmative potential to help parents locate shows appropriate for their children. We believe that thoughtfully-designed codes can inform parents without infringing on telecasters' rights. Advertisers could benefit, as well, from a system that targets specific audiences more effectively, whether children, families or adults.

Late last year, the American Center for Children's Television and the Annenberg Washington Program sponsored a seminar to discuss the foundations of such a coding system. The enclosed report of that meeting brings new perspective to the V-chip discussion.

The American Center for Children's Television seeks innovative, positive and practical solutions that de-polarize issues. We welcome your comments on this report or questions about the Center, via phone (847-390-6499), fax (847-390-9435) or e-mail ([dkleeman@mcs.net](mailto:dkleeman@mcs.net)).

Sincerely,

James A. Fellows  
President

David W. Kleeman  
Executive Director



---

AMERICAN CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S TELEVISION  
THE OLLIE AWARDS

---

**V-CHIP RATINGS:  
PROPOSALS FOR INFORMING,  
NOT INFRINGING**

**Presented by the Annenberg Washington Program  
and the American Center for Children's Television**

*Summary by David Kleeman, Executive Director, ACCT*

**Framing the Issue: Beacon or Blocker**

---

Legislators and the entertainment industry, as well as children's advocates, educators and researchers, have long debated the use of regulation or technology to reduce young people's exposure to media violence, or to mitigate its effects.

Most recently, attention has been focused on the "V-chip," a technology designed primarily to restrict children's viewing of violent television programs. A mandate to implant such a chip in every new TV set was signed into law as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

As often happens, however, debate over the V-chip devolved into charges of censorship, countered by accusations of pandering. A middle ground lay unexplored -- to re-define the technology beyond its restrictive applications, applying it more broadly and positively to supporting viewer choice. )

This was the focal point of an October meeting in Washington, involving industry executives, children's advocates and academic researchers. Many others had already debated the merits of the chip itself. Further, even if not ultimately called a "V-chip," parental guidance/lockout technologies are inevitable for the future:

In his November 1995 column for **Wired** magazine, Nicholas Negroponte detailed the rapid convergence of television and computers. New TV sets, he wrote, have growing computing power, and many new computers are equipped to process video. These hybrid televisions will, in the not-so-distant future, feature sophisticated navigation systems to help every viewer -- not just parents or children -- quickly and easily find programs that suit their interests and taste.

Presaging this perceptive forecast, the meeting considered the classification systems, or the "software," for the V-chip. The pending legislation requires television broadcasters to develop a rating system within a year. An ill-considered or one-dimensional coding system could render the V-chip a crude blocker, but a thoughtful approach could yield an informative navigator, while protecting telecasters' First Amendment rights.

A coding system that accounts for context would help parents locate appropriate programs for their children, as well as avoid those they don't want. With violent, sexual or adult-themed material described in context, parents could make informed distinctions among programs that may use similar content with very different intent.

This would also eliminate the stigma that might be imposed by a meter that simply tallies violent incidents. It is easy to imagine compelling programs that would never have been made or aired if the producer, telecaster or advertiser feared being labeled a purveyor of violence.

No single technology has yet been identified as the V-chip. Before beginning to produce the hardware, it is imperative to anticipate flexible, informative and easy-to-use applications.

### **Existing Models**

---

Other information and entertainment media have already implemented systems for giving parents increased information and control:

Two organizations -- the Entertainment Software Review Board and the Recreational Software Advisory Committee -- have established rating systems for packaged computer programs and video games.

A coalition of telecommunications hardware, software and on-line companies and organizations are collaborating on a flexible system for guiding and restricting Internet navigation. The Platform for Internet Content Selection (available in 1996) will furnish a standard technology platform on which interested groups can build their own rating systems; parents can choose one that suits their needs and values.

Software already on the market (e.g., Surfwatch and Cybersitter) performs certain aspects of this function for Internet users.

For the computer and new media industries, providing access controls is more than a goodwill gesture; it is a key marketing strategy, noted Harris Miller, President of the Information Technology Association of America, in his opening comments.

"If people who are already intimidated by technology think that flipping on their computer means that they're going to be seeing sex and violence...which they're trying to get away from in their television, or in their movies, or in their lives, then our ability to market our products and get more people on line, more people accessing the net, and more people using PCs at home would be lessened considerably."

### **Television's Unique Challenges**

---

Television guidance systems entail unique challenges compared to other media:

TV comes into the home constantly, requires no specific purchase decision for each new program, and leaves no trace; as a result it's far more difficult for parents to monitor their children's viewing than their music, videocassette, video game or software purchases. Further, unlike packaged media, there's no box on which to place rating information.

The interactive nature and processing power of computers makes it easier to deliver a multifaceted, user-friendly classification system.

Most television programming is committed to film or video and does not change (akin to motion pictures); however, a V-chip system must be able to accommodate news or special event programming that changes constantly (as does the Internet).

Still, today's children don't segregate media experiences or think about TV, video and computers as separate "industries". They view them as interchangeable sources of information and entertainment. Characters and content frequently and freely cross among these media. The V-chip won't exist in a vacuum, and it is vital for those who will develop hardware and ratings for television to work in concert with guidance and lockout systems for other media.

### **The Charge to the Panel**

---

Each panelist was asked to present a program classification model -- or important considerations in creating such a model -- that would inform families without infringing on telecasters' rights. These guidelines were stipulated as fundamental to any system they proposed:

**Avoid government-authored ratings.** *Classification may be done by committees, independent organizations, private companies or telecasters themselves; however, government intrusion on the substance or application of ratings would be antithetical to the First Amendment.*

**Assure that creative control remains with producers and telecasters.** *While reviewers may provide constructive comment to producers, the classification process should not be used to extract content or artistic changes to a program, in exchange for a more favorable rating.*

**Support families' capacity to locate appropriate programs, as well as to block those they don't want.** *While the argument for the V-chip is usually made in the negative -- it prevents viewing of certain programs -- it can be made equally well in the affirmative -- it helps families locate shows targeted to their children.*

**Identify adult-targeted shows in ways that do not stigmatize their producers, telecasters or advertisers.** *Navigation or blocking technology can foster variety, risk-taking and creativity in television programming, by acknowledging that not all program are meant for all audiences.*

## **The Presentations**

---

**Donald Roberts**, Chair of the Communication Department at Stanford University, helped create the Recreational Software Advisory Council's voluntary and independent labeling system. Like food labels, RSAC seeks to "provide potential consumers with information about what they are going to find in the package...and let them determine whether to use the product."

The Council rejected an age-based scheme, because not all children of a single age are alike, and not all parents agree about what is appropriate for children at a particular age. Instead, RSAC uses a five-level rating system, assigning a score of 0 (appropriate for all audiences) through 5 (extreme content) to each of three dimensions: violence, sex/nudity, and language. The idea is to put control in parents' hands, by describing content and context without saying "here is what's appropriate," Roberts emphasizes.

A product's scores are determined by answering questions composed to reflect current developmental and media research. In coding violence, for example, reviewers consider the type of target (human-like/non-human/object), the target's stance (threatening vs. non-threatening), consequences for both the victim and the aggressor, and the degree of blood and gore.

By necessity, producers evaluate their own games. It can take up to 100 hours to review thoroughly a single product, and over 2000 games are on the market. Roberts is not concerned, however, about allowing the "foxes to guard the hen house": the process is objective and the evaluation template open to the public.

Everyone reviewing a game should independently reach the same assessment; in fact, RSAC reviews many games each year to audit the system. "Cheaters" would be publicly exposed and barred from labeling future products, and few stores will carry un-rated games.

**Barbara Wilson**, Associate Professor of Communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara, is a member of the team assessing television violence for the cable industry. Unlike Roberts, Wilson recommends an age-based informational labeling system. Most parents, she has found, know that some programs are not appropriate for all ages, and feel they are best equipped to judge their own children's maturity. "We will make choices," Wilson cites parents as saying, "but we need meaningful information about the content of programs."

Wilson's age rating would reflect content and contextual factors very similar to those used by Don Roberts in RSAC's labeling. These include whether violence is rewarded or punished; if the consequences are depicted (i.e., violence is not happy or funny, people get hurt, and victims have families); whether the violence seems realistic and replicable, especially by children; and if the violence is repetitive and/or graphic. Wilson also would ask whether the violence is committed by a hero or villain; she noted the dearth of non-violent heroes.

With this information, Wilson would classify programs in accordance with common developmental watersheds, as defined by current research:

A program rated for "All Ages" might contain no violence, although programs that portray violence in a necessary, clear and pro-social context should be eligible for this rating, as well.

A "V-6" rating -- appropriate for children older than six -- could go to programs with cartoon-type violence, usually fantastic and impossible to replicate. The aggression might be committed by heroes or rewarded.

"V-12" might apply to shows with rewarded violence that is shown as heroic and without consequence. This category could include violence perpetrated by children.

"V-17" would reflect adult-oriented content, not intended for children.

Wilson stressed the need to respect creative freedom. Conflict is intrinsic and essential to storytelling, and writers and producers need the freedom to tell compelling stories. Television executives don't want to be stigmatized or lose money under a rating system. Both these concerns, she felt, could be relieved by providing adequate context for ratings.

Wilson advocated that the television industry rate its own programs, again similar to RSAC's method. She, too, proposed that an independent board rate a random sample of programming annually to confirm the ratings, to provide feedback to the industry, and to continue to involve community and education groups in discussions to refine the service.

**Helen Liebowitz** is a National PTA Board member, and team leader for the organization's Critical Viewing/Media Project. The PTA -- representing 6.9 million parents, teachers and advocates -- supports V-chip technology accompanied by easy-to-use, informative applications.

Liebowitz, like Wilson, urged that parents, teachers, and other stakeholders be engaged in developing V-chip codes and monitoring their use. The PTA recommends the formation of a diverse, distinguished national panel of parents, media advocates, TV executives, academics, clergy, policy makers, educators, psychologists and pediatricians. Under the auspices of the Federal Communications Commission, the committee would organize focus groups and town meetings nationwide, to solicit public comment about V-chip ratings systems. Additional comment would be solicited via interactive technology, to include those who can't attend the meetings.

Liebowitz also called for the panel to develop definitions of violence (including specific interpretations of "excessive" and "gratuitous" violence) that consider the context of actions.

**Ken Stein** is Senior Vice President, Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, for Shaw Communications, Canada's second largest cable company, serving 1.5 million subscribers. Shaw is also part-owner of the Canadian kids' channel, YTV.

Shaw Communications has made three specific commitments to benefit children: to produce more high-quality children's programming (the company has endowed a \$27 million production fund); to hold more community and on-air forums about television and society; and to provide customers with direct means to control television programming that comes into their homes.

Thus, Shaw had already concluded that the V-chip, appropriately applied, could be fully in keeping with its commitment to serving its customers through advanced technology. Uninterested in a long public policy debate, the company began its own V-chip tests.

The Canadian V-chip tests used a rating system similar to RSAC's: violence, sex and language were scored on a 1 - 9 scale. Follow-up surveys found that customers were also interested in information along one other dimension -- "theme." Parents were anxious to be informed about shocking or mature topics, especially in the case of daytime talk shows.

Customer response to the trial was extraordinarily positive, with an 80% of customers satisfied. People who used the system found it useful and simple ("if you can count to 9, you can use the ratings," one said). In the coming months, Shaw will move toward full implementation, offering its customers V-chip capability in a set-top box (at a cost of \$30 - \$50).

Next, Shaw must explore how to advance from its test coding system to a platform that can handle multiple ratings services. This is necessary both to account for U.S./Canadian system differences, and to try to coordinate the guidance systems for various home technologies.

Like Harris Miller, Stein made clear that Shaw's decision to test the V-chip was a marketing decision. "This is not the fox taking care of the chicken house; this is the foxes taking care of the foxes," he concluded. If television set-makers offer the technology, and someone else provides a rating system, consumers will seek it out. Broadcasters will be left out unless they anticipate and serve that market.

**Peggy Binzel**, Senior Vice President of Government Relations for News Corporation, Inc. (the parent company of Fox Television) clarified that her company doesn't dispute parents' right to monitor and select the programming their children see. What Fox opposes is government involvement in the classification or blocking of television programs.

Binzel also asserted that while the cost of adding a V-chip to every television set has been promoted as only one dollar, this inexpensive chip does not allow true parental control, as described in the guidelines laid out for this discussion. It can only process simple instructions, and is therefore more of a blocker than a navigator.

To Binzel, descriptive information is far more useful than ratings. The nature of the content in most programming is fairly obvious, and doesn't change much week to week. Most surprises lay in movies on television, but Binzel doubts that an MPAA-style rating system (like that used for films) would work. Not only is it expensive and time consuming to administer, but the mature content of broadcast programming -- including movies -- is already edited to, at most, PG-13.

As an alternative to the V-chip, News Corporation is developing TV Guide On-Screen (TV Guide is also a News Corporation subsidiary). In addition to offering descriptive program information, the service will enable parents to block or to allow certain channels, and to permit or prohibit television use during certain hours. News Corporation is encouraging cable providers to offer the set-top boxes for TV Guide On-Screen at no cost to customers.

Using the descriptive features of TV Guide On-Screen, any independent organization could convey information and opinions about programs to viewers.

Initially, this system will work only with cable and DBS reception; however, broadcasters have established a fund for developing an inexpensive technology, that will work with existing televisions, with navigation and blocking capabilities similar to TV Guide On-Screen.

## Conclusions

---

The V-chip is not a panacea for families struggling with television. It won't, by itself, inspire new, high-quality programming. Determined (and technologically savvy) children will find ways to override the chip, or they'll go to a friend's house that is "chip-free." While some families will hasten to replace existing sets with V-chip-equipped televisions, widespread dispersal into the marketplace will be slow. The families that could benefit most from signal blocking -- those with the least parental supervision (and, in general, the greatest exposure to real-life violence) -- will be least able to purchase new sets.

The V-chip is a first step toward more sophisticated navigation systems, as described by Nicholas Negroponte. Based on the expertise of these panelists, however, it is possible to make the most of the V-chip, by applying thoughtful classification and descriptive systems, built upon the following recommendations:

Parents, teachers and others with a stake in children's growth and learning -- and TV program makers -- must participate in development of classification systems.

Broadcasters are best equipped to review and code their own shows. The sheer volume of programming, and the timeliness of much of it, would make this function impossible for an independent source.

Self-administered ratings can succeed, as long as the review system is transparent to the public and the meaning of the codes is clear. There must be provisions for ongoing review of the standards and practices, and a process for public discussion and challenge of the system.

Sanctions for abuse must be widely known, definitive and fair, but substantial.

Different templates used to inform the public about program content and context (i.e., Don Roberts' content labels vs. Barbara Wilson's age-based ratings) are built upon nearly identical sets of questions. This suggests that broadcasters could assess programs using a standard set of criteria. Independent groups -- education organizations, civil liberties associations, churches, child development institutes -- could then provide families with their own interpretations of these ratings, and recommend thresholds for programming the V-chip. This is similar in concept to the Platform for Internet Content Selection.

The name "V-chip" grew from the initial intent of the device -- to limit children's exposure to televised violence. Catchy and obvious, the name caught on with the press. In the process, however, the term has come to symbolize something that the technology needn't become.

These fresh perspectives on classification reveal that it is entirely possible to design a chip that promotes and facilitates positive viewing choices. To pursue this "V-for-versatile" chip will benefit all involved: children, parents, telecasters, producers and advertisers.

January 12, 1996

### Speaker Address List

**James A. Fellows**  
President  
American Center for Children's Television  
1400 East Touhy  
Suite 260  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018-3305  
708-390-8700 (phone) / 708-390-9435 (fax)

**Harris N. Miller**  
President  
Information Technology Association of  
America  
1616 North Fort Myer Drive  
Suite 1300  
Arlington, VA 22209

**Peggy K. Binzel**  
Senior Vice President  
The News Corporation, Ltd.  
5151 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016

**Donald F. Roberts, Jr.**  
Thomas More Storke Professor and Chair  
Department of Communication  
McClatchy Hall  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California 94305

**David W. Kleeman**  
Executive Director  
American Center for Children's Television  
1400 East Touhy  
Suite 260  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018-3305  
708-390-6499 (phone) / 708-390-9435 (fax)

**Kenneth C.C. Stein**  
Senior Vice President  
Corporate and Regulatory Affairs  
Shaw Communications, Inc.  
300 Consolium Place  
Suite 1300  
Scarborough, Ontario M1H 3G2 CANADA

**Helen K. Liebowitz**  
Board Member  
c/o Health and Welfare Commission  
National PTA  
330 North Wabash Avenue  
Suite 2100  
Chicago, Illinois 60611-3690

**Barbara J. Wilson**  
Associate Professor  
Department of Communication  
University of California  
Santa Barbara, California 93106-4020



February 7, 1994

Violence and the Media  
Subgroup of the Interdepartmental Working Group  
on Violence



Excerpt from the August 22, 1992 issue of "TV Guide" on a panel discussion involving Dick Wolf, producer of such series as "Miami Vice" and "Law & Order."

Wolf: I have an 8-year-old and a 5-year-old child. They've never seen any of the shows I've produced. They shouldn't be watching them. They're not allowed to watch Saturday morning cartoons.

Moderator: Why not?

Wolf: Why not? Because they're extremely violent.

## Violence and the Media Subgroup Members:

### Co-Chairs:

|                  |                                         |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Michele Cavataio | Department of Education                 |
| Allan Rivlin     | Department of Health and Human Services |

### Members:

|                     |                                                            |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bill Barrett        | ACTION                                                     |
| Bert Brandenburg    | Department of Justice                                      |
| Jim Breiling        | The National Institute of Mental Health                    |
| Carter Collins      | Department of Education                                    |
| Robert Denniston    | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  |
| Oliver Elders       | Department of Education                                    |
| Chuck Everett       | ACTION                                                     |
| Mary Ann Fenley     | The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention             |
| Tony Fowler         | Department of Education                                    |
| Karl Kensinger      | The Federal Communications Commission                      |
| Elisa Koff          | Department of Health and Human Services                    |
| Pat Lehrer          | Department of Housing and Urban Development                |
| Oliver Moles        | Department of Education                                    |
| Corinna Nicolaou    | Department of Health and Human Services                    |
| Cynthia Nila        | National Telecommunications and Information Administration |
| Dave Thomas         | Department of Education                                    |
| Stephanie Willerton | Department of Education                                    |

## Violence and the Media

### Executive Summary

#### The Problem and the Opportunity

Americans consume an enormous amount of media. A great deal of it includes violence, and heavy consumption of violent media can have harmful consequences.

According to a 1993 report by the American Psychological Association (APA) on Violence and Youth, 98% of American homes have at least one television. The average child between the ages of 2 and 11 years old watches television 28 hours per week, and the average teenager watches 24 hours per week. The average American child watches 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television before finishing elementary school.

This level of consumption can have dangerous consequences. Over the past two-and-a-half decades, a large body of research has indicated a significant correlation between viewing media violence and aggressive behavior. While, as in all behavioral research, it is difficult to prove cause and effect even where there is a strong correlation, the conclusion of the research community is that there is enough information to warrant concern and action.

Research also demonstrates the positive potential of pro-social<sup>1</sup> media messages to educate children and adults and to alter societal norms and individual behaviors. In the past decade, the media have worked effectively with government agencies to address smoking, drug abuse, drunk driving, teen pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS. A similar effort to address violence, already partially underway, could have a dramatic effect in educating people about the many forms violence takes, and about strategies to reduce the level of violence in American society.

The problem of media violence is not limited to network primetime television. Each of the media industries (newspapers, magazines, books, comic books, live and recorded music, radio, broadcast television, cable television, movies, video cassettes, video games, computer software, and the new technologies envisioned by the National Information Infrastructure) raises a different set of challenges when it comes to descriptions or depictions of violence. Further, government's level of influence over each industry faces different limitations. The federal government's policies must address all of the media industries and be appropriate for each one.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pro-social messages in media are generally described as those messages that encourage rational and responsible participation in society.

In October, the Attorney General testified before the Senate Commerce Committee on the subject of media violence. Identifying media violence as one factor among many causes of violence in America, the Attorney General challenged the media to present a plan to address the problem. She also said the bills then under consideration in Congress did not present First Amendment problems (though she did express some concern about difficulties in defining "violence" in some of the bills.)

In early December, President Clinton spoke to a group of entertainment executives and celebrities in Hollywood and challenged them to be more sensitive to the effects of media violence on young people from troubled homes and depressed economic conditions who are most at risk for crime and violence. The President called upon the media to accept their share of the responsibility for rebuilding the country's future, recognizing that these problems cannot be fixed "by the passage of a law or by an official declaration of the President of the United States." The President's remarks were well received in the entertainment industries and widely reported in the press.

#### **Recommendation 1: A Government/Media Anti-violence Partnership**

The Administration should follow the President's remarks by issuing a more specific challenge to the media industries to join in a partnership to constructively address the national violence crisis. A government/media anti-violence partnership could take many forms depending on the level of government involvement. A balance must be struck between a necessary level of leadership and an excessive level of control. We recommend the government's role should be to:

- set the agenda,
- assemble the participants,
- suggest options for voluntary actions

The government would not predetermine the process the partnership would follow or the outcomes that would be reached.

#### **Set the Agenda**

Simply bringing attention to the role of the media in the nation's violence problem is an important leadership step. The media should not be singled out for blame, but should be challenged to participate in a search for solutions.

It is important to include all of the media industries with emphasis on those that are most important to young people; movies, broadcast television, cable television, music, music videos, radio, video games, and computer entertainment software.

It is also important to address violence in all of its forms. The Administration's message must push beyond the "urban violence" stereotypes and include all of the forms of violence.

The media has a continuing role in addressing the problems of youth violence, domestic abuse, elder abuse, and hate violence.

#### **Assemble the Participants**

A major White House event could be used to kick-off a series of discussions among media executives, the creative community, government representatives, community leaders already active in this area, and others. Alternatively, or in addition, an event could be used as the culmination of such a process where concrete results are presented.

In addition to including representation from all of the media industries, it is important to reach beyond the Washington representatives and top media executives to include creators, producers, directors, writers, performers, programmers, advertisers, and game designers as well. There are a number of non-profit organizations with expertise in fostering pro-social entertainment media which could be called upon to assist in selecting the participants.

#### **Offer Suggestions for Voluntary Actions**

From the government's seat at the table, the government could suggest specific options that media organizations may wish to consider. There are a number of successful approaches that have been introduced by some media organizations which could be adopted more broadly. The federal government's role would be to encourage wide adoption of the industry's best practices.

Examples of actions that could be taken voluntarily by the media industries to give greater information and control to consumers and parents include: product content labeling, viewer warnings, the creation of children's and family viewing hours, active promotion and instruction in the use of existing cable channel blocking technology, and consultations or "violence audits" with independent experts.

The federal government can offer to play a role in helping to develop the consumer demand for television sets that offer parents the ability to screen out violent programming. Parents can have access to effective control technology through voluntary cooperation between television manufacturers and programmers. Leadership by the Executive Branch in this area could lessen the need for the mandates in proposed Congressional legislation.

There are also a number of steps the media industries could take in partnership with the government to creatively address the national violence problem through positive, pro-social, anti-violence messages. While we would not be starting at square-one (there have been many music videos, movies, television shows and public service announcements with anti-violence themes, and many more are in preparation), federal leadership could take these efforts to a higher level.

The government can bring a great deal to the table. Even projects currently in the planning stages could benefit greatly

from government support including, important national spokespersons and hard data from government research. In addition, ~~the federal government could establish a national Violence Information Center with a toll-free number to disseminate information about violence and potential strategies for addressing violence at the family, community, and national levels.~~

**Recommendation 2: Increase Support for Research and Ensure that Research is Effectively Turned into Practice.**

While the correlation between media violence and aggressive behavior is well established, further research is needed to clarify which specific media depictions of violence increase the likelihood of aggressive and violent behaviors, and in which contexts, and for which types of viewers. In addition, little research exists on the effects of violence in newer media forms such as video games and music videos.

Research can also help evaluate programs designed to mitigate the adverse effects of media violence. Research is needed to identify the critical components of effective programs, as well as the training, consultation, and management required for their effective implementation. Evaluative research is also needed to assure that what should work, in fact, does work. The Violence Information Center, proposed above, provides an opportunity for effective research to be translated into practice.

**Recommendation 3: Strengthen Alternatives to Violent Media Consumption Among Young People**

It is worth noting that programs designed to keep young people out of trouble also help reduce the amount of media (including violent media) they consume. Many young people view inordinate amounts of media and those most at risk of violent behavior often view much more than average. Television and video games are often alternatives to other constructive activities for young people. The federal government's support for extracurricular activities for youth can thus be viewed as an anti-violence program and also as one important way to limit the harm of violent media. When, for example, Americorps and VISTA volunteers are used to help provide activities in communities for parents and children, a side benefit is the reduced consumption of violent media. The federal government can also encourage the media to highlight the most successful programs.

Federal support for good children's television programs that foster pro-social behavior can also be viewed as an anti-violence initiative. Research can help guide their production so that these shows are appealing to and effective for high-risk children in diverse cultural and ethnic groups. The federal government can support this effort through greater funding for public broadcasting that fosters pro-social behaviors. Working with

foundations or the media, the government could also sponsor awards to recognize outstanding children's programming.

**Recommendation 4: Promote Media Literacy in Homes and Schools.**

With the proliferation of media in our culture, it is important to provide young people with the skills they need to view the media more critically and in a broader context. Media literacy educational programs help young people understand the media they are consuming. Media literacy programs can help young children learn the difference between fantasy and reality, and can give older children a chance to make their own productions. Media literacy programs can be incorporated into violence prevention programs in the schools as well as other academic subjects. The federal agencies can support media literacy programs in schools with funds from the Crime Bill or the Safe School Act.

An effective media literacy campaign involves reaching teachers as well as professionals responsible for what the media produces. Federal agencies such as DOJ, ED and HHS can continue to provide teacher guides or parent guides to films. Also, the federal agencies can develop or adopt existing guides for critical TV viewing and distribute them widely to the public, especially to parents.

**Recommendation 5: Study Legislative and Regulatory Options**

While challenging the media industries to implement plans to address violence in the media and in society, the Administration must continue to study legislative and regulatory options and review congressional proposals. The options include the legislated creation of violence free family viewing hours, violence content ratings, media violence health warnings, and mandated "V-chip" violence blocking technologies.

Great care must be taken in evaluating each option. In every case, there are industries that would oppose any action, and for several options there is a substantial likelihood of litigation. However, some of the proposals have merit and deserve further review.

## Violence and the Media

### Introduction

Several statements about the role of the media in America's violence problem are relatively non-controversial. First, Americans consume an enormous quantity of media. Our national culture is dominated by a popular culture that is delivered to us electronically. Most adults spend several hours each day watching television, and among most young children, pre-teens, and teens, consumption of cable TV, music videos, portable music, and video games fill nearly every waking hour except those spent in the classroom.

Second, there is little debate that there is a great amount of violence available in the offerings of the media. Based on counts of depictions of violence in the media one can calculate that on average there is an act of violence every seven or eight minutes on prime time network television, and every three minutes on MTV.<sup>1</sup> In some violent movies and video games the rate averages several acts of violence per minute.

Third, in recent congressional testimony, representatives of some major media industries seem to have pulled back from their longstanding denial of the existence of a link between media violence and aggression. This change may represent a shift in public relations tactics, or it may be a surrender in the face of several authoritative reviews of the research.

Despite these major points of agreement, great care must be taken in formulating the federal government's policy in the area of violence in the media. Violence is as complex as any human behavior, and "the media" is as complicated as any other industry. Media violence is a highly visible part of the violence problem in America, but frequent viewing of violent media is just one of many factors that indicate that a person is at a greater risk of committing an act of violence, and most people who view violent movies and television never commit a violent crime.

In October of 1993, the Attorney General testified before the Senate Commerce Committee on the subject of media violence. Identifying media violence as one factor among many causes of violence in America, the Attorney General challenged the media to present a plan to address the problem.

In response to questions from several Senators, the Attorney General testified that she did not believe that the bills then under consideration in Congress presented major First Amendment problems. However, she did express some concern about some of the bills. In particular, she said there may be difficulties in defining "violence" in some of the bills.

In early December, 1993, President Clinton spoke to a group of entertainment executives and celebrities in Hollywood and challenged them to be more sensitive to the effects of media

violence on young people from troubled homes and depressed economic conditions who are most at risk for crime and violence. The President called upon the media to accept their share of the responsibility for rebuilding the country's future, and invited the industry's leaders to join the federal government in a partnership to address problems that cannot be fixed "by the passage of a law or by an official declaration of the President of the United States." The President's remarks were well received in the entertainment industries and widely reported in the press.

### **The Need for Balance**

If our overriding goal is to limit the harm of violence in society, then we have two goals when it comes to the media:

- 1) we seek to reduce any negative influence caused by the violent images presented in the media, and
- 2) we seek to enhance the positive influence the media can exert through constructive efforts to address this national social crisis.

Both goals are important and interrelated. Care should be taken so that our pursuit of one of these goals does not inhibit our success in pursuit of the other. The federal government's policy would be, at best, a partial success if efforts to limit portrayals of violence in the media were so intrusive that they resulted in an end to efforts on the part of the media to address the problem constructively. However, a full-scale anti-violence campaign by the major media will have little effect if it is overwhelmed by continual repetition of messages that present violence as a solution to life's problems, or as a means to financial or sexual reward. Thus, the government's policies must seek progress in reaching both goals.

Criticisms of objectionable programming on television that do not acknowledge the positive role that some in the media have attempted to play will be seen by some in the media industry as a signal that the federal government's approach will be purely adversarial. While this is likely to gain the attention of industry leaders, and some accommodation of the government's goals, it also tends to weaken the position of those in the media who have made efforts to limit portrayals of violence, help raise the issue, educate the public, and change normative behaviors.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this report, "violence" and "the media" are each broadly defined. The definition of violence used in this section does not differ from that used throughout this report. (Violence is physical harm that is inflicted intentionally or recklessly by people on other people.) However, disagreements over definitions of violence frequently cloud discussions of violence in the media. Different definitions are used in research on the link between consumption of media violence and violent behavior. There is also a great deal of controversy

about the definition of violence for the purposes of measuring the amount of violence contained in different television programs. Giving all forms of violence equal weight makes no distinction between a pie in the face and a stab with a knife, but other schemes are inherently subjective and therefore open to dispute.

Frequently, the word "gratuitous" is used to modify violence. Gratuitous violence in the media is generally defined as depictions of violence that are unnecessary to the telling of the story or the development of the characters. In practice however, the term "gratuitous violence" may have limited usefulness, in that film and video producers will argue that depictions of violence are necessary to tell violent stories and develop the violent characters. The standards and practices codes of American television networks already restrict gratuitous violence. The recently adopted Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) code calls for a complete elimination of gratuitous violence. It will be interesting to see if this, in fact, leads to any real change in Canadian programming.

In this section the media can be understood to include all forms of mass communication. This includes newspapers, magazines, books, comic books, live and recorded music, radio, broadcast television, cable television, movies, video cassettes, video games, and computer software.

Usage patterns of media are changing rapidly, and the young and very young consumers of media, who arguably should be the focus of much of our concern, are generally at the cutting edge of change. Thus, our statements and policies about the media must keep up with, or stay ahead of, the wave of technological innovation, consumption trends, and artistic fashion among the young.

The various forms of print media and network broadcast television will continue to play an important role in our national culture, but adults, reflecting the technologies of their childhoods, may tend to overvalue the importance of these sources to the young, while undervaluing the importance of cable TV, music videos, video cassettes, video games, and computer software.

Each new form of media seems to present new forms of violent images, and new challenges to those who would prefer that our children experience less violent stimulation. Unless our policy is well informed of the differing degrees of violence presented by each type of media, we will not be able to communicate clearly to either the providers or the consumers of these images.

This paper will illuminate the problem of violence in the media by looking at the supporting research as well as the gaps in the research. Following that, we briefly describe the regulatory history and pending legislation. The paper concludes with recommendations for action.

### **Research on Violence in the Media**

The causes of violence are complex and multidimensional. While no specific social experience inevitably leads to violence, a number of factors have been identified that indicate a person is at greater risk of engaging in violent behavior. These factors include, but are not limited to, parental dysfunction, domestic and child abuse, educational underachievement, limited employment and educational opportunities, involvement with drugs or alcohol, and frequent exposure to violence in the media. Violence in the media should be viewed in context of the many societal factors that affect aggressive and violent behavior.

### **Levels of Exposure to Media Violence**

According to a 1993 report by the American Psychological Association (APA) on Violence and the Media, 98% of American homes have at least one television, which is watched an average of 28 hours per week by children between two and eleven years old and 24 hours per week by teenagers.<sup>2</sup> One year earlier, an APA report presented the statistic that bears repeating - the average American child watches 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television before finishing elementary school.<sup>3</sup>

Children from low-income families are the heaviest viewers of television, and often the least supervised.<sup>4</sup> According to MEE Productions, a research, consulting and video production firm specializing in communicating with inner-city youth, urban youth spend more time involved in media-related activities than with their parents, in school, and reading combined. MEE Production's research shows that, on average, African-American teenagers consume three to four movies per month, buy two to three rap albums or CDs per month, and their households watch over 70 hours of TV per week. In addition, they found that 94% of the African American teens in their sample have a VCR in their home.<sup>5</sup>

According to the APA,<sup>6</sup> the level of violence on commercial television has remained about the same over the past two decades. In prime time shows, there are currently five to six acts of violence per hour. Saturday morning children's programs contain an average of 20 to 25 acts of violence per hour. Using a different method to estimate the quantity of violence on television, the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV) reports that the three major networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS) have decreased the number of violent acts shown during prime time from 8.6 per hour in 1991 to 7.7 per hour in 1992. Since hitting a peak in 1985, NCTV reports that the networks have continued to decrease slightly the amount of violence shown during prime time.

While the three major networks may be decreasing the frequency of violent acts on their prime time shows, the growing availability of cable television and VCR rental films has increased the availability of violent programming for adults and unsupervised children. According to A.C. Neilson Co., the number of households subscribing to cable has increased from 9.2 million in 1975 to 57.2 million in 1992, and the number of households with

VCRs has increased from 28.8 million (31% of households) in 1986 to 75.1 million (80.9%) in 1993.

While access to non-network television has increased, research on violence in cable television is limited. The few studies that have been done on violence in media other than broadcast television show that some cable programming may depict comparatively large numbers of violent acts. A major study in 1992 by the Center for Media and Public Affairs found more violence on MTV than the major networks combined. In 1992, NCTV calculated 20 acts of violence per hour on MTV. Many video games also include depictions of violent acts. According to a 1989 NCTV study looking at 176 Nintendo games, 80 percent contained what they termed "harmful violence".

The amount of media available will continue to expand as technology increases. Technological advances may make possible the provision of up to 500 channels of programming to the home. In addition, several new technologies may expand the range of choices available to consumers. Direct broadcast satellite service and video dial tone service, provided by telephone companies, may soon be widely available. Many of these new technologies make possible a greater degree of choice by consumers as to the programming they receive, especially where the program is sold on a pay-per-channel or pay-per-view basis.

### **Reaching the Young**

For several reasons, it is appropriate to focus on the violent images consumed by the young. The media can have its most lasting and significant effect on young minds. This translates into a greater potential for harm posed by repeated violent images, as well as a greater opportunity to use the media to help parents and educators teach young people non-violent strategies for resolving conflicts.

Specifically, we should pay particular attention to the media's effect on three groups:

- 1) very young children, ages three to seven, who are especially susceptible to media influence as they form their understanding of normative behavior,
- 2) pre-teenager, ages eight to twelve, who are forming views on adult relationships and sexual norms, and
- 3) youth who are at risk for violent behavior, ages 0 to 18, who have one or more of the important risk factors for violence.

### **The Relationship Between Media Depictions of Violence and Real Life Violence**

The effects of violence in the media can be viewed along a continuum from direct to indirect. Direct effects include copycat violence that results from imitating violent acts that

are viewed in the media. Intermediary effects cover other aggressive behavior resulting from watching violence in the media, and indirect effects include desensitization and the promotion of negative stereotypes. The degree to which children are affected by violence in the media depends largely on their cognitive development and other intervening factors, such as their attachment to their peers and the community and parental involvement in media viewing.

#### Media Violence and Copycat Behavior:

There have been a number of incidents in which people have imitated acts of violence and recklessness that they have seen on television or in films. In two surveys commissioned by ABC of young male felons imprisoned for committing violent crimes, (e.g., homicide, rape and assault,) 22% to 34% reported having consciously imitated crime techniques learned from television programs, usually successfully.<sup>7</sup>

Recently, a number of children and teens have imitated reckless behavior that they saw on the screen.<sup>8</sup> In one of the most recently publicized destructive acts, a five-year-old boy copied MTV's animated "Beavis and Butthead", who used an aerosol can like a torch. The five-year-old burned his house to the ground.

Another series of incidents were inspired by the film The Program. A number of young people have imitated the young men in the movie who test their courage by lying down on a busy highway. Three boys have been killed. Although these last two examples represent a handful of copycat examples among millions of viewers, they are, however, troubling.

It is likely that perpetrators who learn techniques from television have a predisposition to commit violent acts, but often young children innocently repeat what they see without necessarily knowing whether the behavior should be imitated. Federal courts have held that broadcasters and advertisers are not liable under tort law for harm resulting from copycat rapes, suicides, or accidental injuries.

#### Media Violence and Aggressive Behavior:

The effects of media on behavior are widely acknowledged by advertisers, political candidates and others who spend billions of dollars each year to sell their products. Television's influence is evidenced by the number of children who learned to dial 911 from watching the popular television series of the same name, or the many children who learned the alphabet from Sesame Street. Most parents can attest to the pleas of children to buy a special brand of cereal or sneakers after seeing a commercial during the Saturday morning cartoons. Images on the screen are clearly a powerful communicator.

The APA reports that "[t]here is absolutely no doubt that higher levels of viewing violence on television are correlated with increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behavior." At least three major national studies and

countless smaller studies provide a plethora of evidence to substantiate these findings, particularly among youth.<sup>9</sup>

The effects of portrayals of violence in the media on children are of particular interest. As the level of violence in American society has risen in recent decades, the age of perpetrators of violence has steadily declined. Children from every societal group are being convicted of violent crimes. Children are increasingly becoming perpetrators and victims of violent crimes at younger and younger ages. The number of homicides of youth ages 14 to 17 years old doubled in the decade from 1981 to 1991 (from 5.1 deaths per 100,000 to 10.5 deaths per 100,000). The number of homicides of African American males ages 14-17 went from 24.2 per 100,000 to 65.9 per 100,000. At the same time, juveniles were committing murders at a much greater rate. Youth ages 14-17 committed twice as many murders in 1991 as in 1981. African American males were eight times more likely to commit acts of murder than white males ages 14-17.<sup>10</sup>

In 1992, the American Psychological Association published Big World, Small Screen, a report of a committee of psychologists that provides a second substantial update of the literature on television effects. With the benefit of further research on the effects of violence, the APA report observed:

The accumulated research clearly demonstrates a correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior -- that is, heavy viewers behave more aggressively than light viewers. Children and adults who watch a large number of aggressive programs also tend to hold attitudes and values that favor the use of aggression to resolve conflicts. These correlations are solid. They remain even when many other potential influences on viewing and aggression are controlled, including education level, social class, aggressive attitudes, parental behavior, and sex-role identity.

Leonard Eron from the University of Michigan studied crime rates and personal characteristics of 875 boys and girls from age eight to 30 since 1960. He found that those who watched more violent television:

- were convicted of more serious crimes,
- were more aggressive under the influence of alcohol, and
- used violence more often to punish their own children, who in turn showed signs of aggressiveness.

In another study of boys, he found that their preferences for more violent shows at age 10 were predictive of aggressive behavior at age 18.

Other studies provide corroboration, as well as other conclusions about the adverse effects of viewing violence in the media. For example:

- there are few long-term effects on children whose first exposure to violent television is after the age of 12;
- people who continuously view media violence are more likely to resort to violence;

The television industry has also commissioned studies on the effects of violence. CBS sponsored a study by William Benson in 1978 controlling teenage boys for 100 variables. It found that teenage boys who had watched above-average quantities of television violence before adolescence were committing acts of serious violence (e.g. assault, rape, major vandalism) at a rate 49% higher than teenage boys who had watched below-average quantities of television violence.<sup>11</sup>

An often-cited and often-disputed NBC study of 2,400 school children in 1982 found the same correlations between exposure to violent television and aggressive behavior found in other studies. But after analyzing the statistical data further, the study concluded that television violence had no significant effect on the children's behavior.

#### Indirect Effects:

In focusing on the direct effects of media violence on the young, we should be careful not to ignore the important indirect effects of violent media on all viewers. Violent portrayals in the media are also charged<sup>12</sup> with perpetuating racial stereotypes and lowering the expectations of teachers, social service providers and others toward the minority youth in their charge.

Psychological research also documents a "desensitization effect"; viewers of violent images are more willing to accept the violence around them as normal. Studies<sup>13</sup> show that:

- people who continuously view media violence are more likely to become desensitized to violence;
- children who view violence in the media may feel an increased sense of vulnerability and insecurity;
- viewing violence against women increases acceptance of violence against women.

#### **Unanswered Questions**

Over the past two-and-a-half decades, a large body of research findings has indicated a correlation between viewing media violence and aggressive behavior. However, as in all behavioral research it is difficult to prove cause and effect even where there is a strong correlation. In addition, there are significant research questions and gaps that remain to be addressed in order to formulate more specific policies and

practices. The recommendation section addresses this need for a renewed Federal research concern in this area as well as the need for an explicit focus on translating research findings into effective practice.

### **Research on the Use of Educational and Entertainment Media to Promote Pro-social Messages**

The previous section outlines what we know about the impact of media on aggressive behavior. However, the media can also encourage pro-social behavior, and in some instances this positive impact has been demonstrated in psychological research. Pro-social messages in media are generally described as those depicting attitudes or behaviors considered as socially desirable by most members of society, or those attitudes and behaviors that depict a rational and responsible participation in society. The types of media that have particular relevance to pro-social messages are educational media, entertainment media, and news programs.

Educational television has long been the vehicle through which pro-social messages have been delivered to special audiences, including children. Television and other forms of visual media take people to places that they may never see or allow them to witness events far removed geographically or in time. Other programs, particularly those for children, can be designed and developed specifically with the educational and social development needs of the audience in mind. Evaluations of programs such as Sesame Street, Mister Roger's Neighborhood and others in this genre show the effectiveness of using television to educate children and deliver pro-social messages.<sup>14 15</sup>

For example, in 1972, researchers Stein and Friedrich reported on preschoolers' behavior in a nursery school setting before and after watching certain television programs. Those who watched pro-social programming generally showed more increases in self-control than those who watched aggressive or neutral programming.

In a study several years later in 1975, the same researchers investigated the effects of instruction and role-playing after watching episodes of Mister Roger's Neighborhood. They found that the children who watched pro-social programming in relation to those who watched neutral programming could correctly answer questions about pro-social behavior, could spontaneously verbalize pro-social messages, and were more likely to help another child.

One of the problems in evaluating educational television results from a limited audience, which is mainly composed of children from professional and upper managerial class parents.<sup>16</sup> However, because the entertainment media reaches a much broader audience, a number of people in the fields of communication and education are investigating ways to use entertainment media effectively in delivering pro-social messages.

The effectiveness of entertainment media in delivering pro-social messages is more difficult to determine. There have been many more studies on the anti-social effects of entertainment media (as described above). However, one survey conducted by CBS in 1974 (Libert, Sprafkin, Davidson, 1985) showed that 90% of the 700 children who watched specific episodes of Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids were able to verbalize at least one pro-social message. Messages often identified by these children concerned being kind to friends in trouble, being honest, and valuing property.

One report on lessons learned that resulted from a 1989 conference on entertainment-education for social change, sponsored by the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, included a recommendation that entertainment-education be used to increase knowledge of an issue rather than to change overt behavior regarding the issue. This concept can be reinforced by evaluation of several recent efforts to educate the public through entertainment television in other public health campaigns. The use of designated drivers to reduce alcohol-related crashes and subsequent injuries has been promoted heavily in entertainment media by the Harvard Alcohol Project. This campaign has been successful in making Americans aware of the dangers of drinking and driving and represents one method of reducing injuries relating to this behavior.<sup>17</sup> The positive effects of increasing knowledge about HIV infection and AIDS through entertainment television was recently demonstrated when the calls received by the CDC National AIDS Hotline increased 16.8 times (82,378 calls versus the normal 4,911 on a Saturday) after ABC broadcast a two-hour entertainment and AIDS outreach special, In a New Light.

Although there is some controversy over the development of news programs for school use that also advertise products;<sup>18 19</sup> news programs, especially those designed for children, also can be instrumental in developing an awareness of important issues.<sup>20</sup> However, issues of local versus national control and commercial/noncommercial sponsorship need to be addressed.

## **The Federal Government's Role in Addressing Media Violence**

### **Past**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has occasionally addressed the issue of television violence. In a 1976 report, the FCC concluded that "[r]egulatory action to limit violent and sexually-oriented programming which is neither obscene nor indecent is less desirable than effective self-regulation, since government-imposed limitations raise sensitive First Amendment problems."

The networks and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), after prompting from FCC Chairman Wiley, developed guidelines for broadcasting during a so-called "Family Viewing Hour." These

guidelines were incorporated in the NAB Code. The FCC's actions were challenged on First Amendment grounds, and the NAB's and network's actions on antitrust grounds. Under the pressure of this litigation, the NAB suspended the portions of the Code concerning violence. More recently, the NAB, at the urging of Chairman Sikes, adopted a statement of principles concerning television violence and other programming issues.

### **Present**

The U.S. government, unlike some governments, does not directly license programmers, such as the national broadcast networks (ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox), or the national cable networks (e.g. CNN, C-SPAN, TNT, USA), motion picture studios, or the sound recording industry. Instead, the FCC licenses individual radio and television stations to broadcast using the electromagnetic spectrum.<sup>2</sup>

The public may raise objections concerning a station's performance when the station seeks to renew its license. Television licenses expire every five years, and radio licenses every seven years. In the event a station's renewal is challenged, that station's positive efforts to address issues of importance to the needs and interests of its listeners or viewers weigh in favor of renewal.

The law expressly prohibits censorship of licensees by the FCC. However, Congress has authorized the Commission to regulate programming in two areas in which the interests of parents and children are of particular concern. First, the law prohibits the broadcast of "indecent" material. Citing the "pervasiveness" of the broadcast medium, the Supreme Court has upheld this prohibition if it is applied to material broadcast at times when children are likely to be in the audience. Congress has also adopted limits on the amount of commercials aired in connection with children's programming on either broadcast stations or cable television systems, and has directed the FCC to review television station license renewal applications to determine whether the licensee has aired programs addressing the informational and educational needs of children.

While the FCC regulates some aspects of the cable industry, cable systems, unlike broadcast stations, are not licensed by the FCC. Instead, cable systems are franchised by state and local authorities, and these authorities share regulatory authority with the FCC. The courts are only beginning to address the extent of the government's authority to regulate cable programming. Some courts have indicated, however, that cable can be considered less "pervasive" than broadcast television, in that receiving cable requires the affirmative act of subscribing to cable, and because "lock boxes" provide a greater degree of

---

<sup>2</sup>Some of the national broadcast networks and some motion picture studios are FCC licensees, but this is because they own individual radio or television stations.

parental control over what cable programming is available in the home.

### **Pending Regulatory Proposals**

On March 25, 1993, the Foundation to Improve Television petitioned the Commission to develop rules to curb excessive amounts of dramatized TV violence in order to alleviate its harmful effects on children. The proposal included restrictions on such programming between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. The FCC has not yet acted on the petition.

### **Legislation**

Congress has been holding hearings and expressing concern about the effects of television violence since the early 1950s, but has been hesitant to consider further action seriously until relatively recently. The 1990 Television Violence Act gave the networks an anti-trust exemption permitting them to formulate a joint policy on television violence. The three year exemption expired on the first day of December, 1993.

The issue of media violence was the topic of hearings in several committees of both houses of Congress in 1993. Most of the inquiries focused on violence on broadcast and cable television. However, violence in video games was the topic of hearings before Senator Lieberman's Government Operations Committee on December 9, 1993.

In the most recent Congress, several bills addressing television violence have been introduced in both houses. The bills cover a wide variety of approaches to the issue. On the Senate side, Senators Hollings and Inouye presented a bill to designate certain hours as violence free. Senator Durenberger introduced a bill to require warnings before violent shows. Senators Dorgan and Conrad and Representative Durbin have been working on a system to rate the violence content of television programs and Senator Levin introduced a bill to keep track of program sponsors.

**S.1383, the "Children's Protection for Violent Programming Act" (Hollings and Inouye)**, would limit violent video programming to hours when children "are reasonably likely to comprise a substantial part of the audience." Premium and pay-per-view cable broadcasts would be exempt, as would news, documentaries, educational shows and sporting events. The FCC would define "violent video programming" and select the hours when it would be prohibited.

**S.943, the "Children's Television Violence Protection Act" (Durenberger)**, would require broadcasters to air warnings to accompany programs showing violence or "unsafe gun practices." Warnings would not be required between 11:00 pm and 6:00 am, and the FCC could exempt news broadcasts, sporting events, educational programming and documentaries. The bill defines violence as "any action that has as an element the use or threatened use of physical force against

the person of another, or against one's self, with intent to cause bodily harm to such person or one's self."

**S.973 and H.R. 2519, the "Television Violence Report Card Act" (Senate -- Dorgan and Conrad, House -- Durbin),** directs the FCC to evaluate and rate TV programs "with respect to the amount of violence contained in these programs" and publish these ratings.

**S.1556 (Levin)** would require stations to keep copies of commercials for 30 days and provide them to the public upon request. If a complaint were received, the commercial would be kept for a year. A log of complaints would have to be kept and made available to the public on request.

**Note:** Attorney General Reno has testified that S.1383, S.943 and S.973 are all constitutionally sound.

There has also been a great deal of attention to the issue in the House of Representatives. Representatives Schumer and Roukema introduced a bill that would establish a Presidential Commission on TV Violence and Children chaired by the Surgeon General and the Attorney General. This commission would be in the tradition of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Television on Behavior, which was formed in response to congressional requests and issued, in 1972, a major review of the then available research on the effects of television, and the review that the National Institute of Mental Health published in 1982 covering the subsequent decade of research that the Surgeon General's report helped stimulate.

Representative Kennedy has introduced a bill to set up a viewer complaint line at the FCC. Representative Bryant has introduced a bill to require the FCC to set broadcast standards. Congressman Markey and seven other co-sponsors introduced a bill to require television manufacturers to include a feature, nicknamed a "V-Chip" to allow parents to block any selected channel, program, time slot or to block all programs receiving a violence rating.

**H.R. 2609, "The Presidential Commission on TV Violence and Children Act" (Schumer and Roukema),** would establish a Presidential Commission on TV Violence and Children chaired by the Surgeon General and the Attorney General. The Commission's final report would be due one year after its formation.

**H.R. 2756, the "Parents Television Empowerment Act of 1993" (Kennedy),** would require the FCC to establish a toll-free number for collecting public comments, suggestions and complaints concerning programs violent programming. The FCC would publish a quarterly summary of these complaints. In its annual report to Congress, the FCC would have to evaluate whether the broadcasting industry had effectively responded to the complaints.

H.R. 2837, the "Television and Radio Program Violence Reduction Act" (Bryant), would require the FCC to prescribe standards requiring broadcasters to "reduce the broadcasting of all video and audio programming which contains violence." The FCC could exempt news broadcasts, sporting events, educational programming and documentaries. "Violence" would be defined as per S.943.

H.R. 2888, the "Television Violence Reduction Through Parental Empowerment Act" (Markey, Dingell, Fields, Margolies-Mezvinsky, Oxley, Slattery, Hastert, Cooper, Gillmor, Synar, Shepherd, Glickman, Schenk, Towns), would require that domestic and imported television sets be equipped with devices -- nicknamed "V Chips" -- which would permit viewers to block (1) any selected channel, program, time slot or (2) "all programs with a common rating."

#### The Canadian Example:

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) recently released a new code to cover broadcast programming originating in Canada. The code is interesting both for the process that created it and for the content of the guidelines. The process involved a proposal by the broadcasting industry association, agreement from the constituent broadcasters, and formal acceptance by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The process was initiated by the CAB largely, they admit, in fear of legislation. (The effort was spurred on by a 14-year-old citizen whose sister had been murdered. She delivered to Parliament 1.3 million signatures on a petition to reduce violence in the media.)

The CAB worked closely in negotiations with the CRTC throughout the drafting process. By analogy, this would be similar to the (U.S.) National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) working with the FCC to develop a code to cover broadcasts. Among other things, the code completely bans "gratuitous violence," allows adult-oriented depictions of violence only after a "watershed" hour of 9pm, and puts limits on realistic depictions of violence in children's programming.

The code is administered by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, whose members are appointed by the CAB. The CBSC generally seeks to mediate disputes between citizens and stations. The CBSC may reprimand or expel members for violations of the Code, although prior practice indicates that such actions are extremely rare. If a broadcast station is in "good standing" with the CBSC, the CRTC does not separately review the station's programming performance as part of the license renewal process.

The CAB press release calls the provisions "tough," and this is how it has been reported in the American press. However, the code is not a great deal stronger than the codes of conduct already in practice for Canadian Broadcasters (similar to the codes of conduct for the U.S. networks), and some clauses in the

code may sound a bit more restrictive than they will be in practice.

One example of this is the outright ban on "gratuitous violence," which eliminates something that may be unidentifiable. The code provides a definition of gratuitous violence, but examples of Canadian or even American broadcasts that fit this definition may be so infrequent as to make this provision meaningless.

Another example is the restriction on animated children's programming exempting all stylized forms of fantasy violence such as the Road Runner or Tom and Jerry cartoons. The code may restrict some realistic action animation but many forms of animation that are quite violent would be acceptable under the CAB code.

The CAB code also exempts the Prairie Provinces from the watershed hours if the programming originates in another region. This allows broadcasts containing violence to begin at 8pm rather than 9pm in the central time zones.

All in all, the CAB code will cause some changes to Canadian broadcasting, but it also serves as a challenge to the Canadian cable industry, which distributes American broadcast and cable programming.

### **Recommendations**

The government and the major media have played an important role in reducing the glamorization of many anti-social practices. A few decades ago, the stars of movies, television, and music were frequently seen with a cigarette in one hand and a martini in the other. The media, spurred on by federal legislation, played an important role in public education campaigns to address tobacco and alcohol over-consumption. A ban on cigarette advertisements went into effect in 1971, and alcohol advertisements face several restrictions including alcohol industry trade association codes. However, much of the shift in norms was voluntary on the part of the movie and television industries. Government's role was to sound the alarm to the health risks, make speeches requesting greater media responsibility, and offer consultation on means to alter portrayals of risky behavior.

Today, a similar effort offers enormous potential for government and the media to play a cooperative role in changing social norms and behaviors to lessen the harm of violence in America. In the past decade the media have worked effectively with government agencies to address drug abuse, drunk driving, teen pregnancy, and to spread the word about the danger presented by HIV/AIDS. These themes have been presented in public service announcements, woven into story-lines for drama and comedy programs, featured in movies, and presented in news features and news specials.

In recent months, there has been a great deal of action in this area. On an industry by industry basis, or through policy

decision of individual corporations, there have been meaningful actions, and statements of plans for future actions, that address both of our goals in this area; 1) reducing the level of violence in the media and 2) addressing the national violence problem through the media.

For example, to reduce any negative influence caused by the violent images presented in the media, several leading radio stations in major markets have announced that they will no longer play some musical recordings with offensive or violent lyrics. Video game software producers have announced a new violence rating system, and the cable television industry has joined with the television broadcast networks to endorse independent violence monitors who would produce a violence report card for each television and cable station. The cable industry has also endorsed the so-called "V-chip" that would give parents the option to screen out violent programming.

It is important to note that the media have made progress previously on reducing the number of violent acts they depict when the heat is turned up in Washington, only to reverse course when the attention subsides. Promises from the media industries should be considered substantial only to the degree that they are in the form of specific commitments against which success can be measured.

There has also been a great deal of activity in pursuance of the second goal of addressing violence through use of the media. Partly in response to the attention Congress and the Administration have placed on the subject, representatives of media corporations have stated that violence is now a major topic for their social issue messages. There have been, or are plans for, a number of creative campaigns to address the violence problem. These include news specials by national, cable, and local broadcasters, conflict resolution storylines in entertainment programs, and music videos with anti-violence themes.

While each of these efforts should be seen as positive developments, there is little doubt that far more can, and must, be done. Even with this new emphasis, anti-violence messages are overwhelmed by thousands of depictions and descriptions of violence every day. Addressing all of the many forms and causes of violence will require a sustained high level of media attention.

**Recommendation 1: A Government/Media Anti-violence Partnership**  
The Administration should follow the President's December 4th remarks by issuing a more specific challenge to the media industries to join in a partnership to constructively address the national violence crisis. Even as the media industries begin to show signs of a meaningful response to the President's challenge (as well as the discussions between the media industries and

Senator Simon and others on Capitol Hill) there is a need to turn the partnership into a reality.

A major White House event could be used to kick-off a series of discussions among media executives, the creative community, government representatives, community leaders already active in this area, and others. Alternatively, or in addition, an event could be used as the culmination of such a process where concrete results are presented.

A government/media anti-violence partnership could take many forms depending on the level of government involvement. A balance must be struck between a necessary level of leadership and an excessive level of control. We recommend the government's role should be to:

- set the agenda,
- assemble the participants,
- suggest options for voluntary actions

The government would not predetermine the process the partnership would follow or the outcomes that would be reached.

### **Setting the Agenda**

The one course of action that was supported by almost every expert contacted by members of our working group, including representatives of the media industries as well as their harshest critics, was the need to raise the urgency of the media violence issue. Perhaps the critics of the media hope this will be just the first step among many, while members of the media industries hope this will be the only step. Regardless, nearly all agree the issue of violence in the media needs to be raised as part of an overall anti-violence message.

The media should not be singled out for blame, but should be challenged to participate in a search for solutions. In doing so it is important to:

- 1) Find the balance between public values that government should not play too great a role in limiting the choices of Americans when it comes to the media, but that sometimes the media just seems to go too far in depictions of violence that strike most people as an unhealthy contributor to the level of violence in society.
- 2) Address issues raised by all of the media industries, without undue emphasis on network TV. The examples and challenges should include feature films, broadcast TV, cable TV, music, music videos, and video games.
- 3) Address violence in all of its forms. The Administration's message must push beyond the "urban violence" stereotypes and include all of the forms of

violence. The media has a continuing role in addressing the problems of youth violence, domestic abuse, elder abuse, and hate violence.

- 4) Strongly support the First Amendment and the principles of artistic and journalistic freedom, even as the executive branch asserts that there are measures under consideration that are not problematic with respect to the First Amendment.
- 5) Reinforce the federal government's determination to take action in the face of an epidemic of violence, and call upon every sector of society to play its part - including the media.
- 6) Encourage media action by acknowledging positive steps that have already been taken by the media industries to reduce the level of violence in some of their products.
- 7) Be as specific as possible about the types of media depictions of violence that scientific research suggests may be most harmful. The list can include realistic violence that is intended for young audiences, television violence that is intended for adult audiences but is aired or promoted during hours when unsupervised children are likely to be in the audience, close visual association of violence and sex, violence that is rewarded, violence shown without any consequences to the victim, or violence that is practiced by a protagonist or hero.

#### **Assembling the Participants**

One of the most important roles the government can play is to bring all of the participants to the table to have a discussion about the roll the media can play in addressing violence in America. Thus, it is crucial to have the right people at the table. It is important to include all of the media industries with emphasis on those that are most important to young people; movies, broadcast television, cable television, music, music videos, radio, video games, and computer entertainment software.

In addition to including representation from all of the media industries, it is important to reach beyond the Washington representatives and top media executives to include creators, producers, directors, writers, performers, programmers, advertisers, and game designers as well.

There are a number of non-profit organizations with expertise in fostering pro-social entertainment media which could be called upon to assist in selecting the participants. A partial listing of these groups has been attached as an appendix to this report.

### **Offer Suggestions for Voluntary Actions**

From the government's seat at the table, the government could suggest specific options that media organizations may wish to consider. There are a number of successful approaches that have been introduced by some media organizations which could be adopted more broadly. The federal government's role would be to encourage wide adoption of the industry's best practices.

Examples of actions that could be taken voluntarily by the media industries to give greater information and control to consumers and parents include: product content labeling, viewer warnings, the creation of children's and family viewing hours, active promotion and instruction in the use of existing cable channel blocking technology, and consultations or "violence audits" with independent experts.

### **Specific Options:**

- The networks, local broadcasters, and cable channels can define children's and family viewing hours when parents can know children will not see unsuitable violent programming, advertisements, or promotions for upcoming news or entertainment programming.
- The networks, local broadcasters, cable channels, and the producers of children's programming should be asked to take a critical look at appropriate programming for very young children. Young children are frequently being entertained by violent cartoons that were originally intended for a much older audience.
- The motion picture industry could be asked to place far greater emphasis on the violent content of films in their rating system, and to create a system of ratings that acknowledges the important developmental differences between very young children and older pre-teen children.
- Individual video cassette sales and rental retailers could adopt and enforce the Video Software Dealers Association guidelines for using the MPAA film ratings to block sales and rentals of inappropriate material to minors. These guidelines require parental pre-authorization before minors can rent PG-13 and R rated movies.
- The managers of the media industries could elect to consult with independent experts on media violence to identify the most potentially troublesome aspects of their offerings. This is one of the proposals that has been endorsed by the cable and broadcast television networks.
- The cable services and cable channels can be asked to provide parents with options to choose which channels

their families will receive, and to educate them in how to use the technology. Parental choice is not just a technology. It must be marketed as intensively as the pay-per-view option is for it to be a reality. Even with the support of the manufacturing and broadcasting industries, the V-chip could not be in a majority of homes for many years (due to the turnover rate of new television sets). However, existing technology offers much of the same capability if consumers know how to use it.

- The manufacturers of television sets could voluntarily choose to offer parental control features that will give parents the ability to block out programming that is accompanied by a non-visible adult programming signal.
- Television broadcasters and cable channels could voluntarily broadcast an electronic violence parental control signal to trigger a V-chip or lock box. This could be simply done for all PG-13, R, X, and NC-17 rated films and made-for-television programming for which they would voluntarily broadcast a viewer advisory.

The federal government can offer to play a role in helping to develop the consumer demand for television sets that offer parents the ability to screen out violent programming. Parents can have access to effective control technology through voluntary cooperation between television manufacturers and programmers. Leadership by the Executive Branch in this area could lessen the need for the mandates in proposed Congressional legislation.

There are also a number of steps the media industries could take in partnership with the government to creatively address the national violence problem through positive, pro-social, anti-violence messages. While we would not be starting at square-one (there have been many music videos, movies, television shows and public service announcements with anti-violence themes, and many more are in preparation), federal leadership could take these efforts to a higher level.

The media industries have shown some willingness to promote pro-social and anti-violence messages. These include the "winners don't use drugs" messages on arcade video games, anti-violence rap videos, special editions of Nickelodeon's Nick News on violence, the "The More You Know" anti-violence public service announcements on NBC, and feature films and entertainment programs with anti-violence themes. The federal government must acknowledge, support, and encourage these activities. However, it is time to go beyond these isolated efforts toward a coordinated, multi-media anti-violence campaign.

The government can bring a great deal to the table. Even projects currently in the planning stages could benefit greatly from government support including, important national spokespersons and hard data from government research. In addition, the federal government could establish a national Violence Information Center with a toll-free number to disseminate information about violence and potential strategies for addressing violence at the family, community, and national levels.

The federal government should propose an ongoing public/private partnership to develop a national public education campaign on violence prevention. This partnership should include a lead federal agency, other federal agencies working in the area of violence prevention, state and local agencies that deal with violence, voluntary organizations, advocacy groups, and representation from the media industries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has successfully led this type of campaign in a number of areas (e.g., immunization, HIV/AIDS, smoking cessation, and breast and cervical cancer).

Following the example of the national awareness campaign developed by the National Immunization Program at CDC, the violence prevention program could include such elements as demonstrations of coalition building to improve services and raise public awareness in major population areas, and could collaborate with private and public partners in violence prevention, such as medical groups and national local units of voluntary organizations, police groups, and social and mental health agencies.

Another example of a public awareness campaign that is specifically targeted toward crime and violence, and is a public/private partnership is the McGruff ("Take a Bite Out of Crime") campaign. This project is a joint effort by the Justice Department, the Advertising Council, and a number of national public interest groups. This campaign has been very successful in making Americans aware of self-help measures to prevent crime.

Public/private sponsorship of marketing research is important in a public awareness campaign developing the most effective themes for specific audiences, and the coordination of themes and messages that could be delivered across the media spectrum.

Public information campaigns are meant to generate interest in a subject, and it is essential that a mechanism, such as a clearinghouse, be created to respond to the demand. The government could establish a violence information center that would be reachable through a toll-free number. The telephone number would be promoted through the national anti-violence campaign. This clearinghouse would be a central repository and database of statistics and research findings, current anti-violence research and projects underway, materials (including the fugitive literature), experts available as spokespersons on violence-related topics, news and feature-story ideas, and much

other material essential to establishing and ensuring credibility of the issue, perhaps making much of it available through on-line services such as the Internet. Clearinghouse information could be used by community groups that are developing violence prevention programs and could develop and enhance current prevention programs using research findings. Educators could use the findings in the design of effective media literacy or conflict resolution programs. The clearinghouse might be funded jointly by public and private sources.

A central clearinghouse/hotline on violence prevention could serve as a referral source for the other clearinghouses in existence that handle specific types of violence, such as child abuse or violence and drug abuse, while at the same time filling in the gaps for information about many other aspects of violence not covered by an existing clearinghouse.

#### Potential Actions:

- Challenge the television, film, and music industries to find creative ways to educate the public about the patterns of violence in America and alternatives to violence as a means for conflict resolution.
- Propose a government/private partnership to fund and guide applied research to identify the most effective messages for specific audiences to change norms and behaviors away from violent conflict.
- Establish a national Violence Information Center with a toll-free number to disseminate information about violence and potential strategies for addressing violence at the family, community, and national level.

#### Recommendation Two: Increase Federal Support for Research to Fill the Gaps in Our Knowledge and Ensure That Research Is Turned into Effective Practice

The Federal government has had a major role in supporting and in analyzing research on the effects of television violence from the late 60s through the early 80s. Of specific note is the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Violence, which was formed in response to congressional requests. Its report, indicating concern about the effects of television violence and raising a number of questions, stimulated a decade of expanded research which produced some 3000 papers, chapters, books, and other publications. The National Institute of Mental Health, as the lead support agency for the Surgeon General's Committee and for research on media effects, published an analysis of that expansion of research in 1982. While the additional findings allowed a stronger statement about the adverse effects of television violence, many questions remain to be addressed. A renewal of government concern with research in this area is needed. A Violence Information Center could serve

to house and focus new and ongoing research activities, as well as to disseminate their results.

Research is needed to clarify and specify what media depictions of behavior, in what context, and for which categories of viewers increase the likelihood of aggressive and violent behaviors. Research can help identify the factors that can protect against or neutralize the adverse effects of media violence. The results of this research can be used by media developers and storytellers as they craft their products, and by educators as they develop programs for children. Research is needed to specify the critical components of effective programs, and the training, consultation, and management required for their effective implementation. Practical, cost-effective, and ongoing evaluation should be done to assure that what should work does in fact work. In addition, little research exists on the effects of violence in newer media forms such as video games and music videos. These newer media forms should be addressed.

Other communications research should be conducted to strengthen our knowledge of the pro-social impact of media. In addition, marketing research should be conducted to give us information about making pro-social programming more appealing to young people.

As important as research is, such findings will have little societal impact if dissemination is limited to research journals and books, and if the utilization of research findings is only to stimulate more research. A major effort will be required to foster the dissemination and utilization of important research findings in developing preventive policies and programs.

#### Potential Actions:

- Stimulate and support the research required to guide effective policies programs to reduce the effects of media violence. The federal government is not currently sponsoring any major research on this issue. CDC, NIH would be the most likely place to locate a research center on media violence.
- Stimulate and support the research on the effective use of the media to send pro-social messages to those in diverse cultural and ethnic communities who are at a high risk for violence.
- Ensure that research is effectively translated into practice. This could be accomplished through the violence information center described in recommendation four.

### Recommendation three: Strengthen Alternatives to Consumption of Violent Media by the Young

Studies show that one of the most harmful effects of excessive media entertainment on children is its tendency to replace more healthful activities. Therefore, in addition to working to reduce the amount of violence and increase the amount of pro-social programming in the media, it is important to support efforts to provide more alternative activities for children and youth. New Americorps and other Service corps members should be enlisted to act as role models for at-risk youth and encouraged to coordinate and staff existing programs.

Greater support for child-care centers, after-school programs, tutoring and mentoring initiatives, and a variety of recreational activities such as sports and the arts would benefit parents, many of whom lack sufficient time and resources for their families. They should be able to turn to their schools and other community organizations for help in providing their children with enjoyable and educational activities that raise their self-esteem and their sense of having a stake in their communities.

One such program is the "Fun Shop Reading Series," a collaboration between the Lexington, Kentucky Episcopal Learning Center and six VISTA volunteers. Three family reading sites were established in three public housing complexes. Recruiters approached thousands of parents, yielding almost three hundred children. As reported by ACTION: "Now parents and kids have library cards and use the reading rooms when they might otherwise be watching the tube."

Another example of how federal support for a program can make a difference is the inclusion of funding in the Crime Bill for the Olympic Committee to develop after-school sports programs in at-risk areas.

It is also important that there be positive video programming alternatives for children to watch. The pioneering work in this field of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Public Broadcasting Service and the Children's Television Workshop, producers of "Sesame Street," cannot go unremarked. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting continues to fund a wide range of children's programming. A number of advocates have suggested that expanded funding for children's programming, including perhaps a government funded children's cable channel, would be a significant positive step.

Federally supported research on how pro-social messages can be most effectively conveyed, especially to at-risk youth, should be incorporated into government programs. Vulnerable children would thus have a positive alternative to viewing media violence or engaging in other harmful activities.

Many groups<sup>21</sup> have called for at least an hour of educational children's programming daily, and a stricter definition of and

requirements for "educational and informational" programming. Peggy Charren, president of Action for Children's Television, an advocacy group with a long history of working on violence in the media, endorses these recommendations. She goes further, however, calling for a television channel devoted solely to children's programming, more funding for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and reservation of future channel capacity for public uses.<sup>22</sup>

#### Potential Actions:

- Support the recommendations of the Youth Development group and the Schools group to promote extracurricular activities for youth.
- Encourage the media to highlight successful programs. Sports channels could devote programming time to youth athletics, science and nature programs could highlight afterschool projects, clubs, and activities; arts shows could promote creative outlets for all children.
- Support more funding for public broadcasting shows for children that foster pro-social behaviors, with research to guide their production so that these shows are appealing to and effective for high-risk children in diverse cultural and ethnic groups.
- The media or others should promote a council of excellence to reward advertisers who resist sponsoring violence in the media.
- The government could create an award to recognize those who produce good children's programming.

#### Recommendation Four: Promote Media Literacy at Home, in Schools and in Communities

The proliferation of new technologies, as well as the increasing focus of marketers on children, ensures that youth will continue to be bombarded by the media. While schools feel compelled to devote most of their time to analyzing print media such as poetry and novels, most young people will have far more contact with the "visual" media throughout their lives. Media can help teach children literacy skills such as critical thinking, and is also very engaging for young people.

Media literacy is the ability to interpret the symbols and meanings of the thousands of messages we get every day through television, video, radio, newspapers, advertising and video games. It is the ability to choose and select, the ability to challenge and question, the ability to be conscious about what is going on around you.<sup>23</sup>

The U.S. trails other countries such as Australia, Canada, England and France in the development of media education programs in schools. One of the catalysts for media education abroad has been the importation of American films and television programs that are thought to threaten the cultural integrity of the host country.<sup>24</sup> The most developed program is probably in Ontario, which in 1987 adopted mandatory media literacy training in over 5,000 schools for students in grades seven through twelve.

There is little media education in the U.S., and most of it occurs in non-school settings such as youth centers or churches. Media literacy programs typically focus on developing critical thinking and analysis skills, learning creative production techniques, understanding the economic and political structures that influence mass media, and learning to take personal or public action to influence the use or challenge the abuse of media in society.

None of the states have formalized curriculum guidelines for media literacy, and only a few teacher training programs address the issues of how to integrate media education into traditional coursework. While media literacy materials are available for teachers and parents, little of the material addresses violence specifically, and virtually none of the anti-violence material is thoroughly tested.

Schools are not the only place to teach children about the media. Parents have an enormous effect on how children perceive the media. While no parent can be 100% vigilant in monitoring what their children watch on television, children who watch with parents are often more critical viewers of the media, particularly if the parents and children discuss what they are viewing. A few organizations, including the Department of Education's ERIC Clearinghouse, have produced guides to television viewing for parents, but this information is not widely available. Nor are all parents aware of the harmful effects that violence in the media can have on their children.

Another audience ripe for education on the effects of media violence are film school students. Because writers, directors and producers significantly impact a storyline, it is useful for them to have access to the best available research on the effects of violent imagery. Some groups have begun working with the creative community to develop storylines that take into account the research on violence in the media.

#### Potential Action:

- Support research on successful media literacy programs and support dissemination of information.
- Encourage more media literacy programs in schools, in conjunction with other violence prevention programs, such as conflict resolution programs. Money from the

Safe Schools Act and the Crime Bill could be used for relevant programs.

- Encourage the incorporation of media literacy in teacher training programs and encourage in-service teacher institutes to help teachers learn to integrate media issues throughout their courses.
  - Last year, the Harvard Education School sponsored a one-week course for 500 teachers and school administrators on media literacy.
- Educate the future creative community in film schools about the effects of violence in the media on children and provide them with research-based alternative story lines.
- Use Americorps and VISTA volunteers to provide activities in communities for parents and children.
  - HHS has funded a pilot journalism project in two Boys and Girls Clubs that is intended to improve reading, writing and speaking skills as well as media literacy skills. Americorps volunteers could facilitate projects like these.
- Work with media to provide teacher guides or parent guides to films. DOJ and HHS have funded these types of projects in the past.
- Develop or adopt existing guides for critical TV viewing and distribute to the public, especially parents.
  - The Department of Education has a series of books called Helping Your Child Learn that are published on various subjects for parents. A book could be produced entitled Helping Your Child View Media Critically.
  - Condense the lessons of media literacy into a brochure and booklet for parents. Grocery stores, doctors' offices, social service agencies, schools, workplaces, sporting events and PSAs on television are the most likely targets for such a campaign.

#### Recommendation Five: Study Legislative and Regulatory Options

While working with the media industries to implement plans to address violence in the media and in society, the Administration must continue to study regulatory options and review Congressional proposals. There are a large number of potential options that have been discussed or should be considered. While none of the approaches can fully insulate children from exposure

to depictions and descriptions of violence, (enterprising or unsupervised youths would still be able to obtain access to violent content) some measures would likely be effective with all but the most ingenious younger children.

Great care must be taken. Efforts to restrict the supply of media depictions of violence for young people raise concerns about government censorship, and public opinion is not completely formed in this area. For example, a Times Mirror poll<sup>25</sup> found that 80% of the public believes TV violence is harmful, and a 1989 Los Angeles Times poll found that 72% favor the establishment of a television rating system, although in the same poll, a majority of the public opposed a government crackdown on media violence.<sup>26</sup> As noted below, judicial opinion is also still forming on these issues.

One option under consideration in Congress is to limit violent programming during certain times of the day. Senators Hollings and Inouye have offered a bill (S.1383) to do this. This approach, modeled in part on the FCC's enforcement of prohibitions on indecent programming, leaves some important concepts undefined, and charges the FCC with fleshing out the details of implementation.

Another potential method for restricting the supply of violent material involves the use of new or enhanced rating systems. Senators Dorgan and Conrad and Representative Durbin have introduced bills that would direct the FCC to create and publish a system for rating the violence content of television programming. The cable television and broadcast networks have put forward their own plan for independent monitoring.

Another way to give parents more information is to precede violent programming with a warning or parental advisory. In addition to the record, tape, and CD music packagers who choose to put parental advisories on the outside covers, broadcasters and cable channels have begun to do this voluntarily and video game manufacturers have just agreed on a plan.

Technology presents options for greater parental control and individual choice. Television receivers are now available that can display ratings information transmitted with a program. Many cable systems are required to provide subscribers with "lock boxes" that can be programmed to block out particular channels at particular times. Some television sets are also now available with "lock boxes" for broadcast programs. In addition, television rationing devices are currently being marketed for parents who wish to limit the amount of television their children watch in a given time period, such as a day or week. Few households now use these devices.

Representative Markey has introduced a bill signed by 14 Congressional Representatives that would require television manufacturers to put some form of blocking technology in all new medium-sized to large sets. In this area there is a good

opportunity to provide greater choice to consumers without a mandate on any industry.

Great care must be taken in evaluating each of these options. In nearly every case, there are industries that would oppose any action, and for several of these options there is a substantial likelihood of litigation. However, some of the proposals have merit and deserve further review.

## **Some of the Groups Working Promote Social Themes Through the Media**

**Mediascope** Marcy Kelly, President. Studio City, California (818) 508-2080. Founded in 1992, Mediascope is a non-profit organization promoting positive social and public health images in the entertainment media. Marcy Kelly was the Communications Director for the National Institutes on Drug Abuse and was a staff assistant to the Domestic Policy Council in the Carter Administration.

**Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.** Herman Rush, Chairman; Brian Dyak President and CEO. Offices in Reston, Virginia (703) 481-1414 and Burbank, California (818) 841-9933. Established in 1983, the EIC is a non-profit corporation that represents the entertainment industry in social causes and produces resource manuals to help the creative community incorporate pro-social themes in films and television programs.

**The Institute for Mental Health Initiatives:** Rhoda Baruch, President; Suzanne Stutman, Executive Director. Washington, D.C. (202) 364-7111. Established in 1982, the IMHI is a private, non-profit foundation whose goal is to build bridges between mental health professionals and the media to promote mental health and prevent emotional disorders.

**The Center for Health Communications of the Harvard School of Public Health:** Jay Winston, Ph.D, Director. Boston Massachusetts (617) 432-1038. The Harvard Center for Health Communications works with public health experts and Media creatives to find innovative social marketing messages.

**MEE Productions:** Ivan Juzang, President. West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (215) 748-2595. MEE Productions works with urban youth to develop communications strategies to positively influence other urban youth.

**Action for Children's Television:** Peggy Charren, President. Newtonville, Massachusetts (617) 527-7870. Founded in 1968 ACT is a non-profit children's advocacy group working to encourage diversity in children's television and to eliminate commercial abuses targeted to children.

**Future WAVE (Working for Alternatives to Violence in Entertainment:** Arthur Kanegis, President. Offices in Santa Fe, New Mexico (505) 982-8882 and Los Angeles, California (310) 823-0440. Future Wave is a non-profit organization that works with the entertainment industry to research, develop and promote positive alternatives to violence and incorporates those alternatives into popular movies and TV programs.

**The National Foundation to Improve Television:** Gerald W. Blakeley, Jr., Chairman; William S. Abbott, President; Joyce M. Lawrence, Executive Director. Boston Massachusetts (617) 523-6353. The National Foundation to Improve Television is a non-profit foundation developing a national media violence literacy program in coordination with the Boston Public Schools to be replicated in schools nationwide.

## Notes

1. Calculations based on statistics from the National Coalition on Television Violence reported on pages 5 and 6 of this paper.
2. American Psychological Association, "Violence and Youth; Psychology's Response" Public Interest Directorate, Washington DC. 1993 Vol. I p. 32.
3. American Psychological Association, "Big World, Small Screen; The Role of Television in American Society." Washington DC, 1992
4. American Psychological Association, "Violence and Youth; Psychology's Response" Public Interest Directorate, Washington DC. 1993 Vol. I p. 32.
5. The MEE Report: Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation, MEE Productions, Philadelphia, PA, May 1992.
6. American Psychological Association, "Violence and Youth; Psychology's Response" Public Interest Directorate, Washington DC. 1993 Vol. I p. 32.
7. Centerwall, Dr. Brandon S. "Television and Violence; The Scale of the Problem and Where To Go From Here" JAMA, June 10, 1992, Vol. 267, pp. 3059-3063.
8. "Lock Up Your TV Set" by Amitai Etzioni. National Review, Oct. 18, 1993. "Honey, I Warped the Kids" by Carl Cannon. Mother Jones, July/August 1993.
9. American Psychological Association, "Violence and Youth; Psychology's Response" Public Interest Directorate, Washington DC. 1993 Vol. I p. 33.
10. Source: James Alan Fox, National Crime Analysis Program, Northeastern University.
11. Cited in Centerwall, The Public Interest
12. Carton, Dr. Paul, "Mass Media Culture and the Breakdown of Values Among Inner-City Youth," 1991.
13. Rothenberg, MB. "Effect of Television on Children and Youth," 5 AMA 1975 Vol 234 1043-1046.  
  
American Psychological Association, "Violence and Youth; Psychology's Response" Public Interest Directorate, Washington DC. 1993 Vol. I pp 33-35.
14. Comstock G, Paik H. Television and the American child. San Diego: Academic Press: 1991.

15. Huston AC, Donnerstein E, Fairchild H, Feshbach ND, Katz PA et al. Big world, small screen: the role of television in American society. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
16. Liebert RM, Sprafkin JN, Davidson, ES. The early window: effects of television on children and youth (2nd ed.). New York: Pergamon Press, 1985.
17. DeJong W, Wallack L. The role of the designated driver programs in the prevention of alcohol-impaired driving: a critical reassessment. Health Education Quarterly, in press.
18. Murray JP. TV in the classroom: news or Nikes? Extra 1991 (September/October):6.
19. Pool G. What's with Whittle? Wilson Library Bulletin 1992 (June):35-37, 147-48.
20. Burkart A, Rockman S, Ittelson J. Touch the World--Observations on the use of CNN Newsroom in schools. Chico, CA: California State University, 1992.
21. Including the National Association of Child Advocates, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association for Families and Community Education, the National Council of La Raza, the National Education Association, the National PTA and the Georgetown University Law Center
22. "It's 8 P.M. Where Are Your Parents?" The New York Times. Wednesday, July 7, 1993.
23. Elizabeth Thoman. Curriculum/Technology Quarterly, Spring, 1993.
24. Kubey, Dr. Robert, "Obstacles to Media Education in the United States, Rutgers University, New Jersey.
25. Times Mirror, March 23, 1993.
26. Television Sex and Violence, L.A. Times, September 19, 1989.

University of Colorado Foundation  
Center for the Study and Prevention of  
Violence, Campus Box 442, Boulder, CO  
80509-0442

*Two-year grant of \$700,000 toward a center  
for the study and prevention of violence*

The Tides Foundation  
1388 Sutter Street, Tenth Floor, San  
Francisco, CA 94109-5427

*Two-year grant of \$675,000 toward support  
of a center for media information exchange*

Education Development C  
55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160

*Two-year grant of \$340,000 toward a nation-  
al network of violence prevention practitioners*

Since its creation in 1992 under a Corporation grant, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence has become a well-respected resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in understanding and preventing violence, particularly among adolescents. Directed by Delbert S. Elliott, a leading scholar of delinquency and violence, the center is located within the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Its information clearinghouse collects, summarizes, evaluates, and stores data on youth violence and responds to requests for information from a variety of users—the general public, researchers, state and federal government employees, members of the business community, and journalists. Center staff members evaluate violence prevention programs, offer professional consultation on program development, review research proposals, and conduct empirical studies.

With renewed support from the Corporation, the center is publishing and disseminating its research studies as edited volumes and occasional papers. The center has commissioned critical reviews of the literature on violence prevention, from which it plans to issue a series of position papers on the implications for policies and programs. It is also involving graduate research assistants in center projects, thus training a cadre of new scholars in issues of violence prevention.

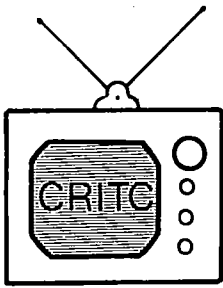
A growing number of researchers, educators, and parents in the United States have come to believe that children who are continually exposed to violent behavior as the preferred means of resolving disputes are likely to accept—even expect—violence in their own lives. Observers suggest that violent content in movies and television programs aids and abets this behavior in real life.

Prior Corporation support enabled Marcy Kelly, former media director of the Center for Population Options, to establish Mediascope, located in Hollywood. Mediascope's aim is to educate and sensitize the film and television industry to the possible effects on children of media depictions of violence and to encourage the creation and adoption of guidelines for a more responsible approach. A project of the Tides Foundation, Mediascope promotes the exchange of information between researchers and industry professionals and conducts seminars and workshops. In addition to giving expert testimony to legislative committees, Mediascope staff members prepare a variety of materials on violence and the media. To date these have included a report on how thirty-six countries rate, censor, and classify films, television, and videos; a film on children's reactions to media violence; and fact sheets.

This grant renewing support is supplemented by funding from the California Wellness Foundation and the Ruth Mott Fund.

In 1992 the Corporation awarded a grant to the Education Development Center to establish a national network of practitioners dedicated to preventing and reducing adolescent violence. The network, which was started and directed by Renée Wilson-Brewer and is now coordinated by Gwendolyn Dikvorh, consists of twenty-one violence prevention and treatment programs across the United States. As the only one of its kind in the nation, the network seeks to improve the development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of workable interventions.

With subsequent funding from the Corporation, the center began providing technical assistance in response to inquiries from the public about program curricula, staff development, fund-raising, and coalition building. In addition to establishing and updating a violence prevention database, the center holds an annual conference aimed at improving the skills of the program directors. A new monthly bulletin, *Connections Alert*, addresses such topics as funding sources, pending legislation, and new curricula and program manuals. Members are aiming to turn the network into a self-sustaining organization through the addition of membership dues, subscriptions, and funds from other foundations. Efforts are also under way to create a national technical assistance center aimed at providing information, making referrals, and producing materials for organizations and individuals working on violence prevention.



## THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children  
Department of Human Development, 4084 Dole Hall  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045 (913) 864-4646

Skila Harris  
Office of the Vice President  
Tipper Gore's Office  
Old Executive Office Building  
Washington, DC 20501

MAR 31 1995

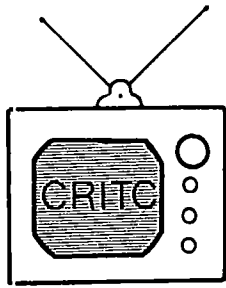
March 30, 1995

Dear Ms. Harris:

Enclosed is a copy of our CRITC fact sheet and the reprint list. John Wright and Aletha Huston requested that it be sent in connection with next Tuesday's meeting.

Sincerely,

Carrie L. Lamble  
CRITC Secretary



## THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children  
Department of Human Development, 4084 Dole Hall  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045 (913) 864-4646

### WHAT IS CRITC?

CRITC is the acronym for the Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children, a unit within the Department of Human Development of the University of Kansas at Lawrence. Founded in 1978 by its Co-Directors, John C. Wright and Aletha C. Huston, CRITC has published more than a hundred scientific and scholarly articles and chapters. Several thousand children and families have participated in its ongoing research studies. More than two and a half million dollars have been awarded to CRITC in grants and contracts with governmental agencies and private foundations.

CRITC is a research center devoted to conducting studies of how children interact with television, the activity that occupies more of their waking hours than any other. Our goals are to add scientific knowledge about children's development, and to find ways to use the medium to teach children and enrich their lives.

### WHAT IS ITS RESEARCH FOCUS ?

#### **Formal features of TV.**

Many investigations have concerned how attributes of television such as animation or sound effects influence children's attention, comprehension, aggression, and positive social behavior.

#### **Home Viewing Patterns of Young Children.**

Two longitudinal studies have been conducted following children from ages 2 to 7. They have demonstrated that what children watch is more important than how much. Educational programs can teach both academic and social skills. We are currently recontacting 15 to 18-year-olds who participated in one of these studies in the 1980's.

#### **Fiction and Reality on Television.**

Between the ages of 6 and 12, children gain an appreciation of what is real and what is fiction; they learn more from "real" programs, but they also absorb a lot of information about life from fiction. We are currently investigating children's reactions to "reality" programs that blend real events with production features usually used with fiction.

#### **Scientific Logic and Reasoning.**

A fourth area is concerned with how the auditory and visual production features of instructional television can best be used to demonstrate the logic of physical laws governing the interaction of two variables to produce an outcome. The goal is to present science and math concepts by using visualization more than words and symbols.

February 1995

## CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCES OF TELEVISION ON CHILDREN

Directors: Professors John C. Wright and Aletha C. Huston

### CRITC PUBLICATIONS AND RECENT PAPERS

Reprints available from: CRITC, Department of Human Development,  
4001 Dole Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2133 USA

### I. REVIEWS AND THEORY

- 2b. Huston-Stein, A. & Wright, J. C. (1979). Children and Television: Effects of the medium, its contents, and its form. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 13, 20-31.
- 20a. Huston-Stein, A. (1978). Televised aggression and prosocial behavior. In H. L. Pick et al., (Eds.), *Psychology: From Research to Practice*. (pp. 75-94). New York: Plenum.
- 21c. Watkins, B. A., Huston-Stein, A., & Wright, J. C. (1981). Effects of planned television programming. In E. L. Palmer & A. Dorr (Eds.), *Children and the faces of television: Teaching, violence, and selling* (pp. 49-69). New York: Academic Press.
- 25a. Huston-Stein, A., & Wright, J. C. (1982). Effects of communications media on children. In C. B. Kopp & J. B. Krakow (Eds.), *The Child: Development in a social context* (pp. 578-629). Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- 27a. Rice, M. L., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1982). The forms of television: Effects on children's attention, comprehension, and social behavior. In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet, & J. B. Lazar (Eds.), *Television and behavior: Vol. 2. Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the 80's*. (pp. 24-38). Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982.
- Reprinted in E. Wartella and C. D. Whitney (Eds.), *Mass communication review yearbook*. Vol. 4. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- 27c. Rice, M. L., & Wartella, E. (1981). Television as a medium of communication: Implications for how to regard the child viewer. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 25, 365-372.
- 27d. Rice, M. L., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1983). The forms of television: Effects on children's attention, comprehension and social behavior. In M. Meyer (Ed.), *Children and the formal features of television: Approaches and findings of experimental and formative research* (pp. 21-55). Munchen: K. G. Saur.

Translated as: Rice, M. L., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1984). Fernsehspezifische Formen und ihr Einfluss auf Aufmerksamkeit, Verständnis und Sozialverhalten der Kinder. In M. Meyer (Ed.), *Wie verstehen Kinder Fernsehprogramme? Forschungsergebnisse zur Wirkung formaler Gestaltungselemente des Fernsehens*. Munchen: K. G. Saur.

- 29c. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1981). Children's understanding of the forms of television. In H. Kelly & H. Gardner (Eds.), *New Directions for Child Development: Viewing Children Through Television*. No. 13. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 33a. Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1983). Children's processing of television: The informative functions of formal features. In J. Bryant & D. R. Anderson (Eds.), *Children's understanding of TV: Research on attention and comprehension* (pp. 37-68). New York: Academic Press.
- 36a. Lovelace, V. O., & Huston, A. C. (1982). Can television teach prosocial behavior? *Prevention in Human Services*, 2, 93-106.
- 45a. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1983). A matter of form: Potentials of television for young viewers. *American Psychologist*, 38, 835-843.
- 49c. Friedrich-Cofer, L., & Huston, A. C. (1986). Television violence and aggression: The debate continues. *Psychological Bulletin*, 100, 364-371.
- 52a. Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1984). The educational impact of television forms and formats. *Educational Media International*, 4, 12-16.
- 59a. Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1989). The forms of television and the child viewer. In G. A. Comstock (Ed.), *Public Communication and Behavior: Vol. 2*, 103-158. New York: Academic Press.
- 62a. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1985). *Developmental changes in children's understanding of television form and content*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Toronto, Canada.
- 63b. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1986). *Potentials of television for children: Forms that stimulate active thinking*. Invited Address, biennial meeting of the Southwestern Society for Research in Human Development, San Antonio.
- 66c. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1984). The potentials of television for young viewers. In J. P. Murray & G. Salomon (Eds.), *The future of children's television: Results of the Markle Foundation/Boys Town Conference*. (pp. 65-80). Boys Town, NE: Boys Town.
- 90a. Wright, J. C. (1987). *American Youth and Their Electronic Parents*. Report of the 1986 Conference, Kansas City, MO: Menorah Medical Center Auxiliary.
- 95a. Kerkman, D., & Wright, J. C. (1988). An Exegesis of Two Theories of Compensation Development: Sequential Decision Theory and Information Integration Theory. *Developmental Review*, 8, 323-360.
- 111a. Huston, A. C. (1991). *Infants, Toddlers, and Television*. Prepared for the International Symposium "Infants in the Age of Television", Hoso Bunka Foundation, Tokyo, Japan.
- 112b. Huston, A. C. & Wright, J. C. (1994). Educating Children with Television: The Forms of the Medium. In D. Zillmann, J. Bryant, & A. C. Huston (Eds.) *Media, children, and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and clinical perspectives*, 73-84. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- 113a. Wright, J. C. (1991). *The Child as a Developing Person*. Invited Address, 27th Annual Postgraduate Symposium on Religion and Medicine, University of Kansas Medical Center, KS.
- 118a. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1993). *Television and School Readiness: A Brief Review of What We Know*. Unpublished Manuscript, CRITC, University of Kansas.
- \* Huston, A. C. et al. (1992). *Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

## II. TV PROGRAM ANALYSES

- 4c. Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., Wartella, E., Rice, M. L., Watkins, B. A., Campbell, T., Potts, R. (1981). Communicating more than content: Formal features of children's television programs. *Journal of Communication*, 31, (3), 32-48.
- 8c. Welch, R., Huston-Stein, A., Wright, J. C., & Plehal, R. (1979). Subtle sex-role cues in children's commercials. *Journal of Communication*, 29, 202-209.
- 72c. Kerkman, D., Kunkel, D., Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., & Pinon, M. F. (1990). Children's Television Programming and the "Free Market Solution". *Journalism Quarterly*, 67 (1), 147-156.
- 83a. Canino, G. J. & Huston, A. C. (1986). A content analysis of prime-time TV and radio news in Puerto Rico. *Journalism Quarterly*, 63, 150-154.
- 86a. Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children (1983). *CRITC Program Categorization System Coding Manual*. Lawrence: University of Kansas.
- 104a. Rolandelli, D. R. (In press). Gender Role Portrayal Analysis of Children's Television Programming in Japan. *Human Relations*.
- 119a. Neapolitan, D. M. (1993). *An analysis of the formal features of "reality-based" television programs*. Unpublished Manuscript, CRITC, University of Kansas.
- 125a. Neapolitan, Denise M., Goser, Lori S., & Huston, A. C. (1994). *An analysis of educational programs on network and cable television*. Unpublished Manuscript, CRITC, University of Kansas.
- 126a. Neapolitan, Denise M., & Huston, A. C. (1994). *Educational content of children's programs on public and commercial television*. Unpublished Manuscript, CRITC, University of Kansas.

## III. TV ATTENTION, COMPREHENSION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR STUDIES

- 3b. Huston-Stein, A., Fox, S., Greer, D., Watkins, B. A., & Whitaker, J. (1981). The effects of action and violence in television programs on the social behavior and imaginative play of preschool children. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 138, 183-191.
- 7b. Greer, D., Potts, R., Wright, J. C., & Huston-Stein, A. (1982). The effects of television commercial form and commercial placement on children's attention and social behavior. *Child Development*, 53, 611-619.

- 11d. Watkins, B., Calvert, S., Huston-Stein, A., & Wright, J. C. (1980). Children's recall of television material: Effects of presentation mode and adult labeling. *Developmental Psychology*, 16, 672-674.
- 12e. Calvert, S. L., Huston, A., Watkins, B. A., & Wright, J. C. (1982). The relation between selective attention to television forms and children's comprehension of content. *Child Development*, 53, 601-610.
- 22e. Potts, R., Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., & Kerkman, D. (1986). The effects of television form and violent content on boys' attention and social behavior. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 41, 1-17.
- 23e. Huston, A. C., Greer, D., Wright, J. C., Welch, R., & Ross, R. (1984). Children's comprehension of televised formal features with masculine and feminine connotations. *Developmental Psychology*, 20, 707-716.
- 31e. Rice, M. L., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1986). Replays as repetitions: Young children's interpretations of television forms. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 7, 61-76.
- 32e. Calvert, S. L., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1987). Effects of television preplay formats on children's attention and story comprehension. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 8, 329-342.
- 34b. Leary, A., Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C. (1983). *The influence of television production features with masculine and feminine connotations on children's comprehension and play behavior*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Detroit.
- 37d. Wright, J. C., Huston, A. C., Ross, R. P., Calvert, S. L., Rolandelli, D., Weeks, L. A., Raeissi, P., & Potts, R. (1984). Pace and continuity of television programs: Effects on children's attention and comprehension. *Developmental Psychology*, 20, 653-666.
- 41b. Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., & Potts, R. (1982). Television forms and children's social behavior. *Fernsehen und Bildung*, 16, 128-138.
- 46c. Campbell, T. A., Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1987). Form cues and content difficulty as determinants of children's cognitive processing of televised educational messages. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 43, 311-327.
- 56d. Rolandelli, D. R., Wright, J. C., Huston, A. C., & Eakins, D. (1991). Children's Auditory and Visual Processing of Narrated and Nonnarrated Television Programming. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 51, 90-122.
- 71b. Alvarez, M., Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., & Kerkman, D. (1988). Gender differences in visual attention to television form and content. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 9, 459-475.
- 94b. Rolandelli, D., Sugihara, K., & Wright, J. C. (1992). Visual Processing of Televised Information by Japanese and American Children. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 23, 5-24.
- 96b. Rolandelli, D. R. (1989). Children and Television: The Visual Superiority Effect Reconsidered. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 33-1, 69-81.

- 100a. Rosenkoetter, L. I., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1990). Television and the Moral Judgment of the Young Child. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 11, 123-137.

#### IV. LANGUAGE AND TELEVISION

- 42a. Rice, M. L. (1983). The role of television in children's language acquisition. *Developmental Review*, 3, 211-224.
- 44a. Rice, M. L. (1984). The words of children's television. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 28(4), 445-461.
- 50b. Lemish, D., & Rice, M. L. (1986). Television as a talking picture book: A prop for language acquisition. *Journal of Child Language*, 13, 251-274.
- 80b. Rice, M. L., Huston, A. C., Truglio, R. T., & Wright, J. C. (1990). Words from Sesame Street Learning vocabulary while viewing. *Developmental Psychology*, 26, 421-428.

#### V. ADVERTISING

- 13e. Ross, R. P., Campbell, T., Huston-Stein, A., & Wright, J. C. (1981). Nutritional misinformation of children: A developmental and experimental analysis of the effects of televised food commercials. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 1, 329-345.
- 18d. Ross, R. P., Campbell, R., Wright, J. C., Huston, A. C., Rice, M. L., & Turk, P. (1984). When celebrities talk, children listen: An experimental analysis of children's responses to TV ads with celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 5, 185-202.

#### VI. HOME VIEWING

- 5c. Wright, J. C., Huston-Stein, A., Potts, R., Thissen, D., Rice M., Watkins, B. A., Calvert, S., Greer, D., & Zapata, L. (1980). *Formal features of children's programs as predictors of viewership by age and sex: A tale of three cities*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Southwestern Society for Research in Human Development, Lawrence, Ks
- 48b. Lemish, D. (1987). Viewers in diapers: The early development of television viewing. In T. R. Lindlof (Ed.). *Natural audiences: Qualitative Research of media uses and effects*. (pp. 33-57). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- 67a. Huston A. C., Wright, J. C., Leary, A., & Eakins, D. (1985). *The relations of cognitive development and viewing history to children's comprehension of television form*. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA.
- 74a. Pinon, M. (1986). *Child care providers' uses and views of television*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Southwestern Society for Research in Human Development, San Antonio, TX.
- 75b. Pinon, M., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1989). Family ecology and child characteristics that predict young children's educational television viewing. *Child Development*, 60, 846-856.

- 82a. Huston, A. C., St. Peters, M., Alvarez, M., & Wright, J. C. (1986). *Cognitive development and home environment as predictors of children's attention to television*. Presented at the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.
- 87c. Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., Rice, M. L., Kerkman, D., & St. Peters, M. (1990). The development of television viewing patterns in early childhood: A longitudinal investigation. *Developmental Psychology*, 26, 409-420.
- 92d. St. Peters, M., Fitch, M., Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., & Eakins, D. J. (1991). Television and Families: What Do Young Children Watch With Their Parents? *Child Development*, 62, 1409-1423.
- 98a. Wright, J. C., St. Peters, M., & Huston, A. C. (1990). Family television use and its relation to children's cognitive skills and social behavior. In J. Bryant (Ed.) *Television and the American Family*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- 101a. Huston, A. C. & Wright, J. C. (1989). Longitudinal study of *Sesame Street* Effects: Part I and II. *Sesame Street Research: A 20th Anniversary Symposium* (pp. 36-42). New York: Children's Television Workshop.
- 102a. St. Peters, M., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1989). *Television and Families: Parental Coviewing and Young Children's Language Development, Social Behavior, and Television Processing*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, MO.
- 109a. Murphy, K. C., Talley, J. A., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1991). *Family Ecology and Young Children's Viewing of Television Designed for Children*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA.
- 122a. Truglio, Rosemarie T., Oppenheimer, Sabrina, Murphy, Kimberlee C., Wright, John C., & Huston, Aletha C. (1990). *Family and Child Characteristics That Predict Children's Viewing of Entertainment Television*. Presented at the Southwestern Society for Research in Human Development, Dallas, TX.
- 123a. Huston, Aletha C., & Wright, J. C. (in press). Television and Socialization of Young Children. In Tannis M. Williams (Ed.). [title not yet determined] CA: Sage.

## VII. COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL SKILLS, AFFECT, AND KNOWLEDGE

- 24d. Raeissi, R. & Wright, J. C. (1983). *Training and generalization of number conservation by television for preschoolers*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Detroit, MI.
- 30a. Dennis, R. W. (1981). *Prompting viewer interaction with televised instruction*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Boston, MA.
- 73c. Truglio, R. T., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1989). *The relation of children's print and television use to early reading skills: a longitudinal study*. Unpublished Manuscript, CRITC, University of Kansas.

- 84a. Calvert, S. L., & Huston, A. C. (1987). Television and children's gender schemata. In L. Liben & M. Signorella (Eds.). *Children's gender schemata: Origins and implications*. In the quarterly series, *New directions in child development*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- 88b. Wright, J. C., Kunkel, D., Pinon, M., & Huston, A. C. (1989). How children reacted to televised coverage of the Space Shuttle disaster. *Journal of Communication*, 39 (2), 27-45.
- 89a. Wroblewski, R., & Huston, A. C. (1987). Televised Occupational Stereotypes and Their Effects on Early Adolescents: Are They Changing? *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 7, 283-297.
- 97a. Kerkman, D. D., & Wright, J. C. (1989). *Children's reasoning about televised and real balance scale tasks: Presentation order and viewing history*. Presented at the biennial meeting for the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, April.
- 107a. Chung, J. K., Pinon, M. F., & Wright, J. C. (1991). *The Efficacy of Televised Production Techniques for Teaching United States Geography*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA.
- 110a. Pinon, M., Chung, J., & Wright, J. C. (1991). *Video Production Techniques Differentially Affect Children's Acquisition of US Geography*. Portions presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Society, Washington, DC.
- 124a. Murphy, Kimberlee C., Huston, Aletha C., & Wright, John C. (1994). *The Roles of Television and Home Environment in Children's Cognitive Performance: Potential Differences Based on Family Income and Home Stimulation*. Presented at the Southwestern Society for Research in Human Development, Austin, TX.

### VIII. POLICY ISSUES

- 77b. Huston, A. C. (1987). Television and human behavior. In F. Farley & C. N. Null (Eds.). *Using Psychological Science: Making the Public Case* (pp. 131-142). Washington D.C. Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences.
- 91b. Huston, A. C., Watkins, B. A., & Kunkel, D. (1989). Public policy and children's television. *American Psychologist*, 44(2), 424-433.
- 103a. Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1991). *Some policy implications of young children's TV viewing in families (with special implications for gifted and disadvantaged children)*. Presented at the biennial meeting for the Society for Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA.
- 106a. St. Peters, M., Oppenheimer, S., Eakins, D. J., Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (1991). *Media Use Among Preschool Children as a Function of Income and Media Options*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA.

### IX. PERCEIVED REALITY

- 61d. Wright, J. C., Huston, A. C., Reitz, A. L., & Piemyat, S., (1994). Young children's perceptions of television reality: determinants and developmental differences. *Developmental Psychology*, 30, 229-239.

- 99a. Wright, J. C., Huston, A. C., Alvarez, M., Truglio, R., Fitch, M., & Piemyat, S. (in press). Perceived Television reality and children's emotional and cognitive responses to its social content. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology.
- 105a. Smith, E. D., & Wright, J. C. (1991). *Television's Occupational Portrayals: Fantasy, Reality, and the Effects on Young Viewers' Career Goals*. Presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA.
- 108b. Wright, J. C., Huston, A. C., Truglio, R., Fitch, M., Smith, E. D., & Piemyat, S. (in press). Occupational Portrayals on Television: Children's Role Schemata, Career Aspirations, and Perceptions of Reality. Child Development.
- 114a. Moghaddam, M. & Wright, J. C. (1991). *Understanding Television: The Effect of Fictional and Factual Portrayals on Children's Cognitive Processing*. Submitted for publication.
- 115a. Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., Svoboda, H. C., Truglio, R., & Fitch, M. (1992). *What Children Understand about News and Fictional Television*. Submitted for publication.
- 116a. Huston, A. C., Wright, J. C., Fitch, M., Wroblewski, R., & Piemyat, S. (1993). *Effects of Documentary and Fictional Television Formats on Children's Acquisition of Schemata for Unfamiliar Occupations*. Presented at the biennial meeting for the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans.
- 117a. Fitch, M., Huston, A. C., & Wright, J. C. (1993). From Television Forms to Genre Schemata: Children's Perceptions of Television Reality. In G. L. Berry & J. K. Asamen (Eds.), Children and Television: Images in a Changing Sociocultural World. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- 120a. Todd, R. Matthew. (1993). *The Effects of Reality-Based Television Aggression on Viewers' Attitudes Toward Aggression and Antisocial Behavior*. Unpublished Manuscript, CRITC, University of Kansas.
- 121a. Soh, Raymond, & Wright, J. C. (1993). *Television Factuality and Consequences to Models: Effects of Violent Content on Children's Self-Reports About Aggression*. Presented at the sixtieth anniversary meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, LA, March.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian L. Dyak, President/CEO  
David Goldsmith, Co-Chairman, Finance  
William N. Utz, Co-Chairman, Policy  
Ralph Andrews, Founding Chairman  
Herrnan Rush, Immediate Past Chairman  
Nancy Dockry, Vice Treasurer  
Alan D. Courtney  
Doug Duitsman  
Michele Lee  
Sheiley List  
Larry Stewart



## BACKGROUND OF ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES COUNCIL, INC.

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Barbara Corday, Co-Chairman, Programs  
Merv Adelson  
John Agolia  
Jack Anderson  
Wallis Annenberg  
Jeffrey Barbakow  
Arthur Barron  
Franc Biondi  
Mel Blumenthal  
Norman Brokaw  
Tim Conway  
Winston H. Cox  
John Daly  
Robert A. Daly  
Nico's David  
Gordon Davidson  
Suzanne dePasse  
Barry Diller  
Lew H. Erlicht  
Charles W. Fries  
Edward O. Fritts  
Michael Fuchs  
David Geffen  
Gary Goddard  
Bud Grant  
J. William Grimes  
Jules Haimovitz  
Andy Heyward  
Donna Hilley  
Robert E. Holmes  
Alan Horn  
Robert Iger  
Gemi Jankowski  
Robert L. Johnson  
Tich. Wilkerson Kassel  
Victor Kaufman  
Alan Ladd, Jr.  
Sherry Lansing  
Stan Lee  
Kim LeMasters  
Michael Levine  
Gary Lieberthal  
Margaret Loesch  
Frank G. Mancuso  
Bethie McCart  
Guy McElwaine  
Gerard McRaney  
Mike Medavoy  
Leslie Moonves  
Jerry Moss  
Norrin Nixon  
I. Martin Pompadur  
Harold Prince  
Burt Reynolds  
Lee Rich  
Jay Rodriguez  
James H. Rosenfield  
Arth Jr N. Ryan  
Jeff Sagansky  
Lucie Salhani  
Scott Sassa  
Terry Semel  
Sid Sheinberg  
John B. Sias  
Herbert Siegel  
Fred Silverman  
Frank Sinatra  
Aaron Spelling  
Robert Stack  
Lea Stalmaster  
Brandon Stoddard  
Don Taffner  
Brandon Tartikoff  
Anthony Thomopoulos  
Lawrence A. Tisch  
Doraid M. Travis  
Renée Valente  
Louis P. Weiss  
James A. Wiatt  
David L. Wolper

### LEGAL COUNSEL

Kay E. Scholer, Fierman,  
Hays and Handler

The Entertainment Industries Council, Inc. (EIC) is a non-profit organization established to interpret and link public health and social issues to the entertainment industries<sup>1</sup> and their audiences at large. EIC has been instrumental in affecting social change through its position within the entertainment community and through its attention to national policy initiatives and implementation of legislative mandates.

With top entertainment industry executives representing major studios, broadcast and cable networks, production and distribution companies, record labels, and talent agencies among its Board of Directors and Trustees, EIC has successfully influenced the industries' representation and involvement in growing areas of social concern. Innovative alliances with groups outside the entertainment industry, complemented by creative forces mobilized within the television, motion picture, radio, home video, and recording industries through its expanding Creative Professional Network of volunteers, enable EIC to reach millions of people, especially the young and their parents, with programs and awareness messages.

The mission of the EIC supports efforts that enhance the quality of life, especially as related to school-age children. Specific program initiatives includes the following areas of concern: safety belt awareness, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, HIV/AIDS prevention, and overall depiction of healthy life styles through entertainment products.

EIC-East

**Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.**

April 20, 1995

*A non-profit organization*

EAST COAST: 1760 Reston Parkway, Suite 415 • Reston, Virginia 22090-3303 • (703) 481-1414 • Fax (703) 481-1418 • E-Mail: eiceast@aol.com  
WEST COAST: 4444 West Riverside Drive, Suite 105 • Burbank, California 91505-4048 • (818) 841-9933 • Fax (818) 841-0748 • E-Mail: eicwest@aol.com

During the past twelve years, EIC has served as a bridge between public interest groups and the entertainment field. Strengthened by its support within the entertainment industries, it is able to draw upon the industries' resources and talent to assist public interest groups in developing campaigns with a superior level of expertise, scope, and effectiveness.

EIC was designed to make maximum use of the entertainment media resources and skills used to win acceptance of commercial entertainment products. These capabilities apply not only to making the product, but also to its further use in other media. EIC also seeks to take advantage of the existing distribution systems within the industry and to exploit all the tie-in possibilities used by the entertainment field to increase a product's public acceptance and consequent commercial value.

Our projects are, therefore, designed to position our industry as a partner in helping to solve social and public health problems. EIC's depiction initiatives, highlighted in the publishing of *Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues*, have been among our most effective programs whereby writers, directors, and producers are provided topical, updated information about key social issues to consider in the process of creating and producing entertainment. Such cooperative campaigns as *Stop The Madness; Facts for Life; Buckle-Up; None for the Road; Get High, Get Stupid, Get AIDS;* and *Smoking in Media: Let's Clear the Air*; all show our industry at its best -- as a positive contributor to social good.

You will frequently find EIC working behind the scenes to inspire and encourage industry-oriented or industry-based public health communications campaigns on important social issue or supporting them through adjunct activities.

EIC has worked closely with government agencies, private industry, and non-profit organizations on the local, state and national levels. Through its sponsorships and promotions it has had extensive support from the private sector, not only in the entertainment field, but in the business world generally. It has brought together local and national interests around common concerns over major public questions.

EIC operates a creative and marketing office in Burbank, California and a public policy and government relations office in the Washington, D.C. metro area in Reston, Virginia. For more information:

EIC-East  
1760 Reston Parkway  
Suite 415  
Reston, VA 22090-3303  
Tel 703/481-1414  
Fax 703/481-1418  
E-Mail: EICEast@aol.com

EIC-West  
4444 W. Riverside Drive  
Suite 105  
Burbank, CA 91505-4048  
Tel 818/841-9933  
Fax 818/841-0748  
E-Mail: EICWest@aol.com

<sup>1</sup> The term "entertainment industries" will be used as a generic term for the businesses, trade associations, organizations, and professional societies who organize and produce entertainment; the entertainment media themselves (radio, movies, TV, records, interactive media, etc.); and their creative, technical, administrative, or management personnel.