

## *TV Violence Profile No. 8: The Highlights*

by George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eleey, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorielli

*Summary of annual report shows sharp upturn and confirms associations with viewer conceptions of a "mean world."*

Television violence increased sharply in all dramatic categories including "family viewing" and children's programs on all three networks. The increase resulted in the highest Violence Index on record. The only score that comes close to the current record of 204 was the score of 199 in 1967, the year of turmoil that led to the establishment of the Eisenhower Violence Commission and our TV Violence Index.

Other components of the TV Violence Profile confirmed previous findings of the unequal structure of power and risk in the world of television drama, and showed children's particular vulnerability to the effects of television. Heavy viewers revealed a significantly higher sense of personal risk, of law-enforcement, and of mistrust and suspicion than did light viewers in the same demographic groups, exposed to the same real risks of life. The results also showed that TV's independent contributions to the cultivation of these conceptions of a "mean world" and other aspects of social reality are not significantly altered by sex, age, education, income, newspaper reading, and church attendance.

The authors are members of the communications research team at the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, in charge of the Cultural Indicators project studying trends in network television dramatic content and viewer conceptions of social reality. A special analysis of television and race was conducted by Josephine Holz, a doctoral candidate at the same institution. The study is conducted under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. A previous article describing the theoretical and methodological bases of that study, and reporting the findings of Violence Profile No. 7, appeared in the Spring 1976 issue of the *Journal* (1). This article presents the findings of monitoring and viewer studies conducted in the fall and winter of 1976-77 and brings the Violence Profile up to date. It is based on a larger report including methodological details and 71 tables (2). Copies are available for \$12.50 each (checks to be made payable to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania).

The Violence Profile is a cluster of indices sensitive to different aspects of the nature and effects as well as the amount of violence on television. The Violence Index, one component of the Profile, is a composite of measures of the prevalence, rate, and characterizations involved in violent action.

The latest Violence Index was based on the analysis of a fall 1976 sample of prime time, late evening, and weekend daytime network television dramatic programming. The analysis focused on clear-cut and unambiguous physical expressions of overt violence in any context. (Available evidence suggests that violence in a humorous or fantasy context may be at least as effective a demonstration of some of its lessons as "realistic" or "serious" violence. The social consequences of these "lessons" are not given or implicit in the Index but may be inferred from other components of the Profile.)

Figure 1 shows that the percentage of characters involved in violence and killing (CS) rose to the second highest, and the indicator of violent action in programs (PS) to the highest point on record. Three-fourths (74.9 percent) of all characters were involved in some violence compared to 65 percent in 1975. Nine out of every ten programs sampled (89.1 percent) contained some violence, compared to 78.4 percent in 1975. The saturation of programs with violence, indicated by the rate of violent episodes, rose to record heights of 6.2 per play and 9.5 per hour, compared to 5.6 and 8.1, respectively in 1975. Only killing

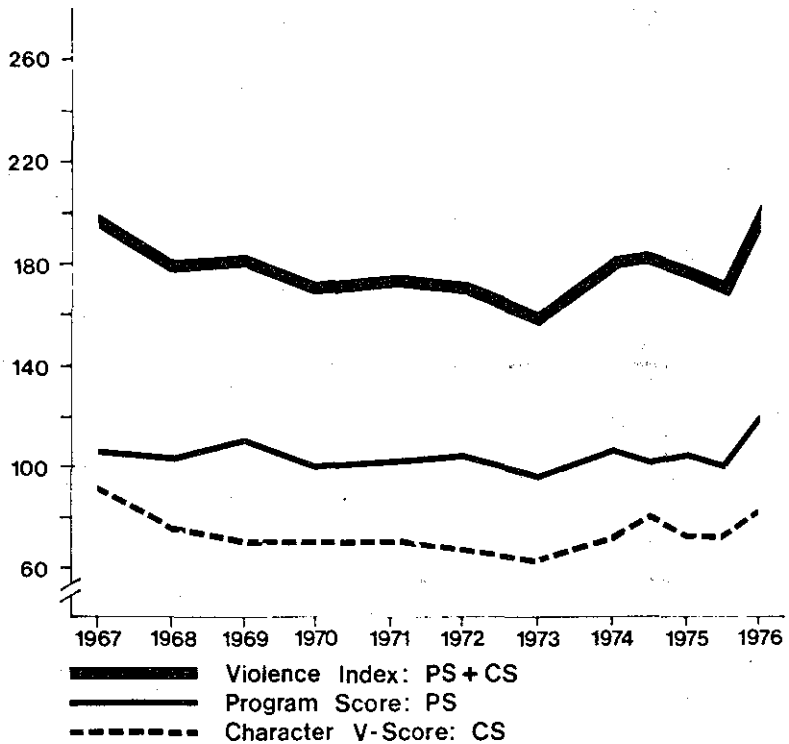


Figure 1: Violence Index 1967-1976

Table 1: Violence Index by networks and different hours of programming for 1975 and 1976

	ABC		CBS		NBC	
	1975	1976	1975	1976	1975	1976
Overall index	187	207	155	181	201	224
"Family viewing" time (8-9 p.m. EST)	121	197	60	101	126	139
Late evening (9-11 p.m. EST)	232	196	176	175	224	282
Weekend (children's) hours (Sat. and Sun. daytime)	201	237	218	239	252	264

declined slightly. The cumulative effect of the increases resulted in the unprecedented jump in the composite Violence Index.

The increase in violence cuts across program categories and times. The context of dramatic programming did not change significantly, eliminating the possibility that the upsurge of violence was due to a sudden jump in the number of action programs, or late evening, cartoon, new, or "serious" programs in the sample.

All three networks increased in their overall mix of violence but stayed in the same violence rank order as in 1975 with NBC the highest, ABC second, and

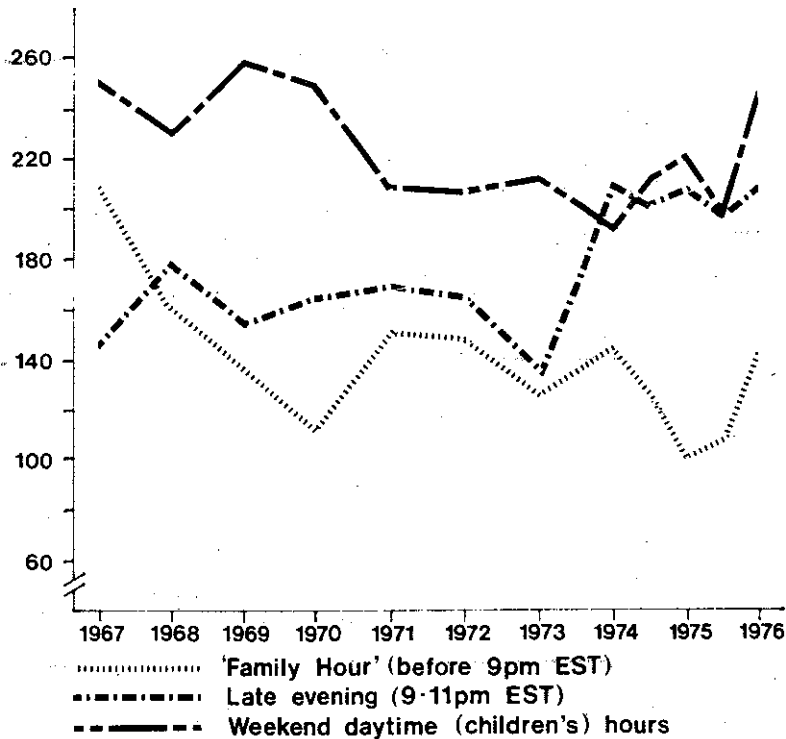


Figure 2: Violence Index for different hours of dramatic programming

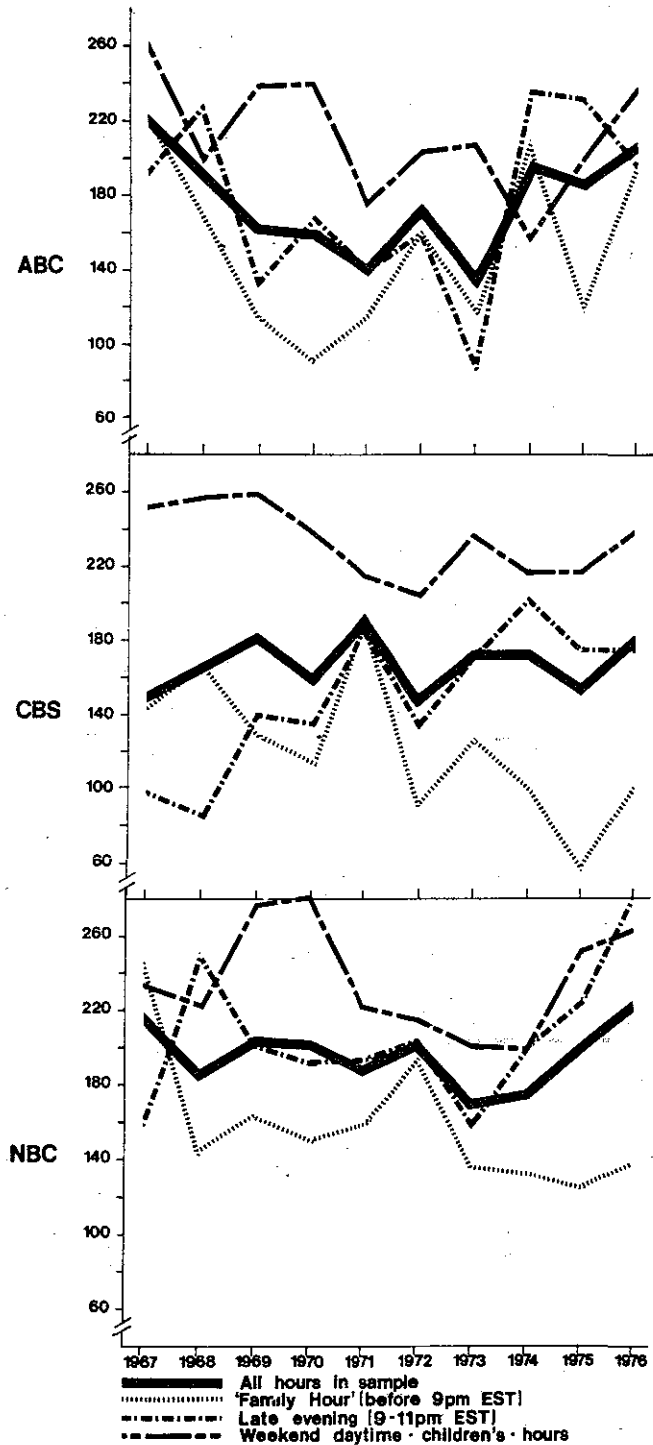


Figure 3: Violence Index for different hours of programming by networks

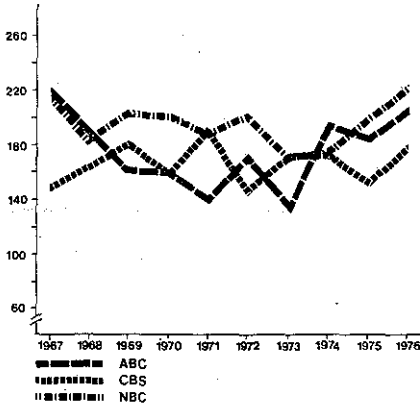


Figure 4: Violence Index for each network, all programs in sample

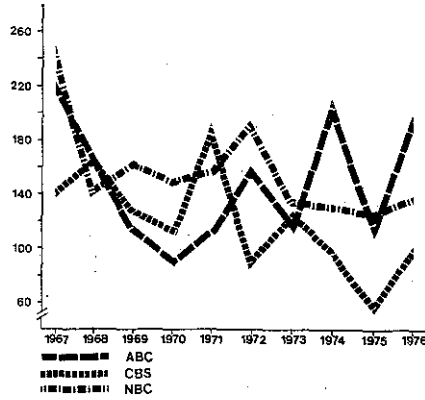


Figure 5: Violence Index for each network, "Family Hour" only

CBS third. A network-by-network comparison showing the rounded Violence Index scores for 1975 and 1976 appears in Table 1.

The 10-year trends are shown in Figures 2 through 7. Figure 2 gives the Violence Index for different hours of programming for all networks. Figure 3 presents the Violence Index for different hours of programming by each network. Figures 4 through 7 provide direct network comparisons separately for the overall Index, "family viewing time," late evening, and weekend (children's) programs.

As in 1975, NBC is the "leader" in overall violence and in both children's hours and late evening violence. ABC is in the middle in overall violence, due to a decline in late evening violence (in which it had been the highest before), and despite increases in "family viewing" and children's hours. CBS, leader in the "family viewing" concept, lifted its two-season lid on "family viewing time" violence, but still held the lowest "family viewing time," late evening, and overall violence scores. The Violence Index ranks CBS least and NBC most

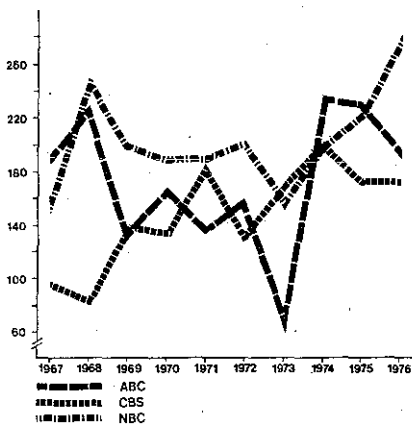


Figure 6: Violence Index for each network, late evening only

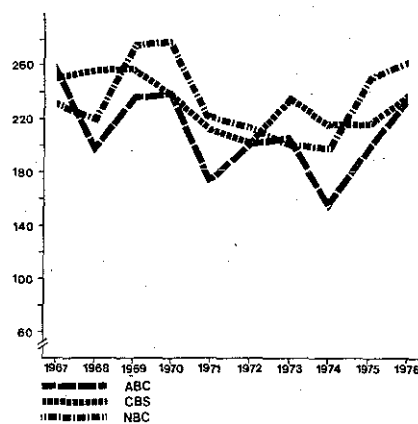


Figure 7: Violence Index for each network, weekend daytime (children's) programs only

violent overall, CBS least and ABC most violent in "family viewing time," CBS least and NBC most violent in late evening, and ABC least and NBC most violent in weekend (children's) program time.

Other components of the Violence Profile deal with the structure of power demonstrated in TV violence and with conceptions of social reality that television viewing cultivates in the minds of viewers. The most elementary—and telling—social structure involved in a violence scenario is that of violent and victims. The ratios of those who inflict and those who suffer violence provide a calculus of life's chances for different groups of people in the world of television drama. These Risk Ratios are obtained by dividing the more numerous of these two roles by the less numerous within each group. A plus sign indicates that there are more violent or killers than victims or killed and a minus sign indicates that there are more victims or killed than violent or killers.

The overall Violence-Victim Ratio since 1969 (when this measure was developed) is  $-1.21$ , meaning that for every violent there were 1.21 victims. However, while the overall victimization ratio for men is  $-1.20$ , for women it is higher:  $-1.32$ . Even more striking are the differential risks of fatal victimiza-

**Table 2: Data sources for questions included in index reflecting "television answers" relating to violence and law enforcement**

Question ( <u>"TV Answer"</u> Underlined)	Data Source	
	"Real world"	"World of television"
1. During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some kind of violence? <u>About one in ten?</u> <u>About 1 in 100?</u>	.41 violent crimes per 100 people (1973 Police data)	64.4% of characters are involved in violence (Cultural Indicators data, 1976-76)
2. What percent of all males who have jobs work in law enforcement and crime detection? <u>One percent?</u> <u>Five percent?</u>	1% (1970 U.S. Census)	12% of all TV-male characters (Cultural Indicators data, 1969-76)
3. What percent of all crimes are violent crimes like murders, rape, robbery and aggravated assault? <u>Fifteen percent?</u> <u>Twenty-five percent?</u>	10% (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1974)	77% of all TV major characters who commit crimes (as criminals) also commit violence (Cultural Indicators data, 1969-76)
4. Does most fatal violence occur between <u>strangers</u> or between relatives or acquaintances?	16% of homicides occur between strangers, 64% occur between family members or friends (National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, 1969)	58% of homicides are committed by strangers (Cultural Indicators data, 1967-76)

tion. There were nearly two male killers for every male killed (Killer-Killed Ratio of +1.96). However, for every female killer, one woman was killed (K-K Ratio of 1.00).

Particularly high risks of victimization (relative to the ability to inflict violence) are borne by children (-1.73), old women (-3.00), unmarried women (-1.50), lower class women (-2.25), nonwhites (-1.40) and particularly non-white women (-2.50). "Good" characters were more likely to be victimized (-1.28) than "bad" characters (-1.02), although the latter were more often fatal victims. "Good" women were even more likely victims (-1.47) than "good" men (-1.24). But "bad" women had the most favorable (and only positive) Violent-Victim Ratio of all groups (+1.16). Committing violence seems more likely to mark a female than a male character "bad" in the world of television.

Exceptionally high relative risks of *fatal* victimization are borne by the old and the poor, particularly among women. (Detailed findings can be found in Tables 44 through 64, with a summary in Table 65 of the full report (2).)

Although the pattern of relative victimization has been fairly stable from year to year, the overall Violent-Victim Ratio declined from -1.25 in 1975 to -1.06 in 1976, suggesting a possible decrease in relative overall victimization.

**Table 3: Partial correlations between amount of television viewing and scores on index reflecting "television answers" to questions about violence and law enforcement**

ADULT SAMPLES				
Control	Quota sample (N = 573)		National Probability sample (N = 1627)	
	Partial correlation coefficient and p		Partial correlation coefficient and p	
Zero order (no controls):	.16	(.001)	.07	(.003)
Sex:	.17	(.001)	.07	(.003)
Age:	.17	(.001)	.08	(.001)
Years of education:	.12	(.003)	.05	(.015)
Newspaper reading:	.18	(.001)	.09	(.001)
TV news programs:	.13	(.001)		
All controls:	.08	(.036)	.06	(.001)
CHILDREN'S SAMPLES				
Control	New Jersey (N = 466)		New York (N = 133)	
	Partial correlation coefficient and p		Partial correlation coefficient and p	
Zero order (no controls):	.16	(.001)	.21	(.021)
Sex:	.15	(.001)	.23	(.029)
Grade/Age:	.16	(.001)	.20	(.047)
Newspapers:	.16	(.001)	.18	(.070)
Father's education:	.15	(.001)		
SES:			.17	(.076)
IQ:	.13	(.001)		
All controls:	.12	(.004)	.18	(.079)

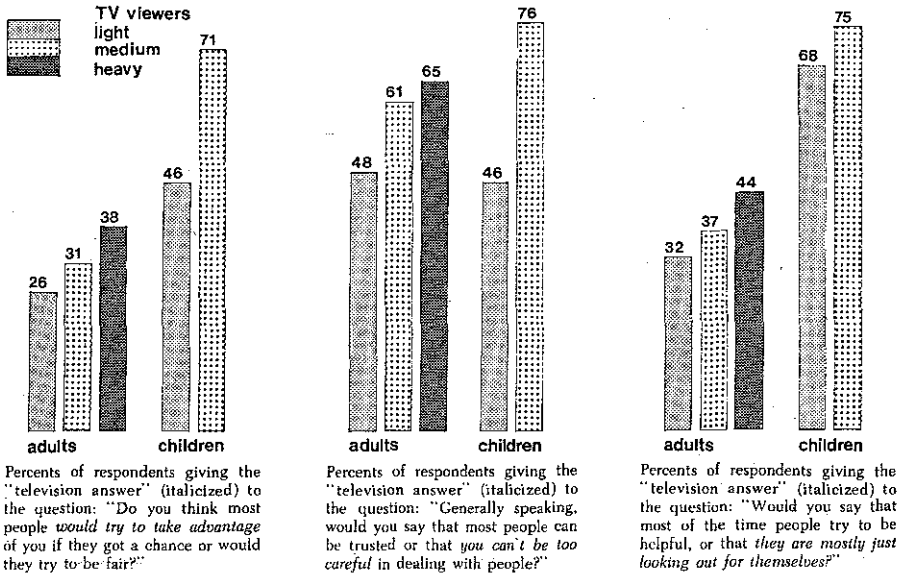


Figure 8: Percents of adults and children giving "television answers" to three "mean world" questions

However, the relative power positions of different sex, age, and social groups did not change.

Indicators of conceptions of social reality that television cultivates in the minds of viewers comprise the final components of the Violence Profile. They highlight the effects of heavy television viewing for different groups and in relation to various socioeconomic, educational, cultural, and media consumption characteristics and activities. Nine data bases have yielded the results reported here. Five are adult and four are children's samples.

To summarize larger patterns of responses, we have combined the answers to sets of related questions. Table 2 lists one group of questions combined into a Cultivation Index relating to some assumptions about the facts of violence and law enforcement. The table shows the relationship between each component question, its source in the message analysis data, and the corresponding "real world" figure.

Such an Index can be used to compute relationships between the answers given by our respondents and their levels of television viewing, controlling for a variety of important demographic and individual characteristics. In Table 3 we show the zero-order and partial correlations of the violence and law enforcement Index with amount of television viewing for two adult and two children's samples.

The analysis shows a significant tendency for heavy viewers to overestimate the prevalence of violence, compared to that exhibited by light viewers. The analysis also demonstrates that television effects cannot be accounted for in



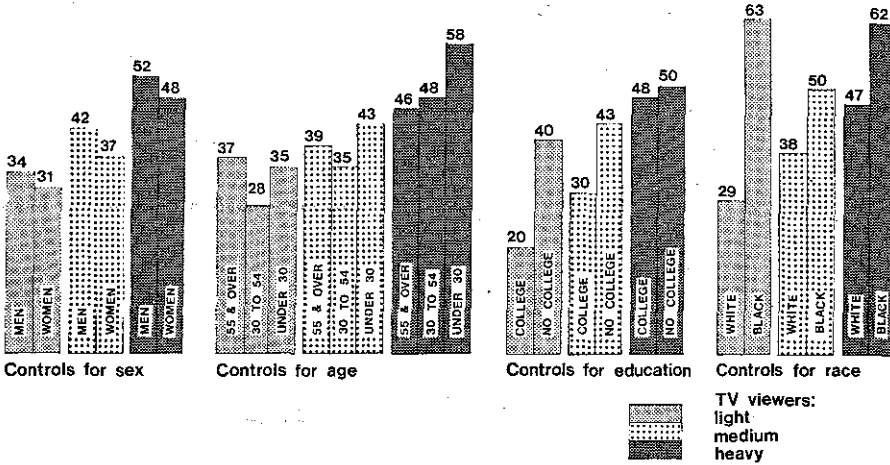


Figure 9: "Mean world" index (percents of respondents scoring high on three "mean world" questions) controlled for sex, age, education and race

terms of the major demographic variables of age, sex, education or even, in the case of our New Jersey children's sample, I.Q. Controlling for these variables, we still find a positive and significant relationship between our Index and amounts of television viewing. In each sample, television viewing is significantly associated with giving "television answers" to our questions, and the partial correlations show that the relationships remain positive and, in 19 out of 22 cases, significant when controls are added, singly or together. The effects are consistent and robust across a range of undoubtedly powerful control comparisons.

We have also analyzed responses to three questions used on the NORC 1975 General Social Survey and added to one of our children's surveys. The heavy viewers, both child and adult, were consistently more likely to choose an answer which reflected a sense of mistrust and suspicion. Figure 8 shows the pattern of answers to this set of what we have called "mean world" questions. The percentages of "television answers" given by the light, medium, and heavy viewers (in the case of children, viewing levels did not permit us to identify heavy viewers in our usual terms) clearly indicate the patterns of association between viewing and conceptions of social reality.

We have combined these questions into a "mean world" index shown in Figure 9. We see that the greater likelihood of giving television answers among heavy viewers retains (or increases) its strength with controls for sex, age, and education. (Controls for income, newspaper reading, and church attendance show the same results. All data and statistical tests of association strength can be found in the full report (2).)

Blacks, as a whole, do not show this association, although those blacks in the sample who are college educated or whose income is over \$8,000 do show the cultivation pattern found among white respondents. In general, the level of mistrust evidenced by black heavy and light viewers is higher than that for

whites, although the relatively small number of blacks in a representative, proportional national sample precludes a definitive analysis at this stage.

In the children's sample, the patterns of significant association are maintained with sex, age, parent's socioeconomic status, and newspaper reading controlled (not shown on Figure 9).

**REFERENCES**

1. Gerbner, George and Larry Gross. "Living with Television: The Violence Profile." *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1976.
2. Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eleey, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorielli. "Violence Profile No. 8: Trends in Network Television Drama and Viewer Conceptions of Social Reality." The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 19104 (\$12.50).

