



Better Radio and Television

SUMMER 1976
VOL. 16 NO. 3

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BETTER BROADCASTING

HORROR SHOWS LOSE SUPPORT

Leading Advertisers in Exodus from Movies in Many Markets

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Prospects for Fall	2,3,4,10
AMA on Violence	8
Cop Shows Build Fears . . .	5
Violence Affects Adults . .	9

**THE SEASON
AHEAD**

**See Pages
2 and 3**

One of the most dramatic coups in the history of television advertising took place during June when ten national and regional advertisers, acting unilaterally in response to a campaign originated by the National Association for Better Broadcasting, announced the immediate withdrawal of their ads from horror or "chiller" type movies aired during daytime hours by many stations throughout the United States. Hardest hit in the initial action was station KCOP-TV, the Chris Craft Los Angeles outlet using Channel 13. Ten firms have already made their exodus from KCOP's degenerate Saturday and Sunday afternoon terror movies.

Woolco, Collins Foods International (Sizzler restaurants), Earl Scheib, and People Weekly magazine.

The withdrawal of advertising support is the direct result of letters sent to the presidents of 13 companies that had ads appearing on the Saturday and Sunday afternoon KCOP horror shows in the early months of 1976. Three have not as yet responded directly to NABB - C & R Clothiers, Der Weinerschnitzel restaurants, or Miller's Outpost (clothing). However, spot announcements for these firms have not been aired on the station's afternoon horror shows for at least three weeks preceding July 11.

These companies are: Albertson's markets, Gillette, Jack in the Box restaurants, Kinney Shoes, J. C. Penney, Procter & Gamble, and Woolworth/

In fact, as this is written in mid-July, NABB has yet to receive a single complaint or protest from any advertiser concerning the association's campaign. The advertiser response has been overwhelming in its support of the NABB position.

NABB Wins and Loses at FCC; Landmark KTTV Pact Accepted

In two rulings announced in Washington, D. C., on June 23, the Federal Communications Commission granted a license renewal to Metromedia's KTTV, Los Angeles, and rejected the NABB November 1974 petition to deny the license renewal application of Chris Craft's KCOP-TV, also located in Los Angeles.

The KTTV action leaves in effect the amended agreement between KTTV and four citizen organizations: National Association for Better Broadcasting, Action for Children's Television, Mexican-American Political Association, and San Fernando Valley Fair Housing Council. All four groups, conditional on FCC acceptance of the settlement agreement as a part of KTTV's license application, had previously withdrawn their petition to deny.

This decision on the KTTV-NABB landmark agreement finally ends the litigation with a recognition on the part of the FCC that neither Metromedia nor the petitioners were attempting to usurp licensee responsibility for children's programming. In effect, it vindicates similar agreements, including lists of programs that will not be aired, and the airing of warnings, so long as there is no infringement of licensee responsibility.

Contrary to earlier reports in the press, the FCC did not "void" the agreement. In compliance with a super-sensitive interpretation by the Commission of a few words in the original agreement, KTTV, in accord with and its partners, made two or three clarifying "language" changes in an

In the June 17 NABB press release Frank Orme, the organization's executive vice president, pointed out that "the remarkable thing is that each of the advertisers who have responded has acted individually and unanimously, without even knowing which or how many firms received letters from NABB. It is already apparent that our campaign will have an effect on the economic value of the thousand or more sordid degenerate horror movies in TV circulation.

"Advertisers are responsive and responsible. Most of them, either personally or through their products, do not want to be associated with the menace to children, youth, and adults posed by the terrifying and often pornographic programming that is the specific target of our attack."

The NABB campaign to eliminate horror programs from TV's "children's
(Continued on Page 6)

(Continued on Page 11)

This article is an abridged version reprinted from the April 1976 issue of **PSYCHOLOGY TODAY**. It is copyright by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, and reproduced here with permission of the publisher.

THE SCARY WORLD OF TV'S HEAVY VIEWER

by George Gerbner
and Larry Gross

MANY CRITICS WORRY about violence on television; most out of fear that it stimulates viewers to violent or aggressive acts. Our research, however, indicates that the consequences of experiencing TV's symbolic world of violence may be much more far-reaching.

We feel that television dramatically demonstrates the power of authority in our society, and the risks involved in breaking society's rules. Violence-filled programs show who gets away with what, and against whom. It teaches the role of victim, and the acceptance of violence as a social reality we must learn to live with—or flee from.

We have found that people who watch a lot of TV see the real world as more dangerous and frightening than those who watch very little. Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens, and more fearful of the real world.

Since most TV "action-adventure" dramas occur in urban settings, the fear they inspire may contribute to the current flight of the middle class from our cities. The fear may also bring increasing demands for police protection, and election of law-and-order politicians.

Those who doubt TV's influence might consider the impact of the automobile on American society. When the automobile burst upon the dusty highways about the turn of the century, most Americans saw it as a horseless carriage, not as a prime mover of a new way of life. Similarly, those of us who grew up before television tend to think of it as just another medium in a series

of 20th-century mass-communications systems, such as movies and radio. But television is not just another medium.

TV: the Universal Curriculum. If you were born before 1950, television came into

Never have so many of us shared the same cultural messages and images, and the assumptions that go with them.

your life after your formative years. Even if you are now a TV addict, it will be difficult for you to comprehend the transformations it has wrought. For example, imagine spending six hours a day at the local movie house when you were 12 years old. No parent would have permitted it. Yet, in our sample of children, nearly half the 12-year-olds watch an average of six or more hours of television per day. For many of them the habit continues into adulthood. On the basis of our surveys, we estimate that about one third of all American adults watch an average of four or more hours of television per day.

Television is different from all other media. From cradle to grave it penetrates nearly every home in the land. Unlike newspapers and magazines, television does not require literacy. Unlike the movies, it runs continuously, and once purchased, costs almost nothing. Unlike radio, it can show as well as tell. Unlike the theater or movies, it

Americans who watch prime-time television more than four hours a day think the world is more dangerous than those who watch two hours or less. A top television research team reports that by mobilizing fear, the medium has replaced the Church as the toughest means of social control.

does not require leaving your home. With virtually unlimited access, television both precedes literacy and, increasingly, preempts it.

Never before have such large and varied publics—from the nursery to the nursing home, from ghetto tenement to penthouse—shared so much of the same cultural system of messages and images, and the assumptions embedded in them. Television offers a universal curriculum that everyone can learn.

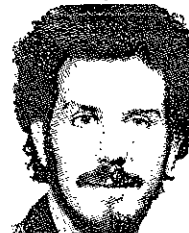
Imagine a hermit who lives in a cave linked to the outside world by a television set that functioned only during

(Continued on Page Twelve)

George Gerbner is Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. He has served on the



Eisenhower Commission on Violence, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, and has testified at several Congressional hearings concerning the content and effect of American television. He earned a B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley, and a Ph.D from the University of Southern California.



Larry Gross received his B.A. in psychology from Brandeis University and his Ph.D. in social psychology from Columbia University. He is now an associate professor at the Annenberg School of Communications. This article is based on research that he and Gerbner are conducting under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

SCARY WORLD OF VIEWERS . . . (Continued from Page Five)

prime time. His knowledge of the world would be built exclusively out of the images and facts he could glean from the fictional events, persons, objects and places that appear on TV. His expectations and judgments about the ways of the world would follow the conventions of TV programs, with their predictable plots and outcomes. His view of human nature would be shaped by the shallow psychology of TV characters.

TV Hermits. While none of us is solely dependent upon television for our view of the world, neither have many of us had the opportunity to observe the reality of police stations, courtrooms, corporate board rooms, or hospital operating rooms. Although critics complain about the stereotyped characters and plots of TV dramas, many viewers look on them as representative of the real world. Anyone who questions that assertion should read the 250,000 letters, most containing requests for medical advice, sent by viewers to "Marcus Welby, M.D." during the first five years of his practice on TV.

If adults can be so accepting of the reality of television, imagine its effect on children. By the time the average American child reaches public school, he has already spent several years in an electronic nursery school. At the age of 10 the average youngster spends more hours a week in front of the TV screen than in the classroom. Given continuous exposure to the world of TV, it's not surprising that the children we tested seemed to be more strongly influenced by TV than were the adults.

Unlike the real world, where personalities are complex, motives unclear, and outcomes ambiguous, television presents a world of clarity and simplicity. In show after show, rewards and punishments follow quickly and logically. Crises are resolved, problems are solved, and justice, or at least authority, always triumphs. The central characters in these dramas are clearly defined: dedicated or corrupt, selfless or

ambitious, efficient or ineffectual. To insure the widest acceptability, [or greatest potential profitability] the plot

Television is a world of clarity and simplicity. Rewards and punishments follow quickly and logically, and authority always triumphs.

lines follow the most commonly accepted notions of morality and justice, whether or not those notions bear much resemblance to reality.

Diet of Violence. Anyone who watches evening network TV receives a heavy diet of violence. More than half of all characters on prime-time TV are involved in some violence, about one tenth in killing. To control this mayhem, the forces of law and order dominate prime time. Among those TV males with identifiable occupations, about 20 percent are engaged in law enforcement. In the real world, the proportion runs less than one percent. Heavy viewers of television were 18 percent more likely than light viewers to overestimate the number of males employed in law enforcement, regardless of age, sex, education, or reading habits.

Violence on television leads viewers to perceive the real world as more dangerous than it really is, which must also influence the way people behave. When asked, "Can most people be trusted?" the heavy viewers were 35 percent more likely to check "Can't be too careful."

When we asked viewers to estimate their own chances of being involved in some type of violence during any given week, they provided further evidence that television can induce fear. The heavy viewers were 33 percent more likely than light viewers to pick such fearful estimates as 50-50 or one in 10,

instead of a more plausible one in 100.

While television may not directly cause the results that have turned up in our studies, it certainly can confirm or encourage certain views of the world. The effect of TV should be measured not just in terms of immediate change in behavior, but also by the extent to which it cultivates certain views of life. The very repetitive and predictable nature of most TV drama programs helps to reinforce these notions.

Victims, like criminals, must learn their proper roles, and televised violence may perform the teaching function all too well [see "A Nation of Willing Victims," *pt*, April 1975]. Instead of worrying only about whether television violence causes individual displays of aggression in the real world, we should also be concerned about the way such symbolic violence influences our assumptions about social reality. Acceptance of violence and passivity in the face of injustice may be consequences of far greater social concern than occasional displays of individual aggression.

Throughout history, once a ruling class has established its rule, the primary function of its cultural media has been the legitimization and maintenance of its authority. Folk tales and other traditional dramatic stories have always reinforced established authority, teaching that when society's rules are broken retribution is visited upon the violators. The importance of the existing social order is always explicit in such stories.

We have found that violence on prime-time network TV cultivates exaggerated assumptions about the threat of danger in the real world. Fear is a universal emotion, and easy to exploit. The exaggerated sense of risk and insecurity may lead to increasing demands for protection, and to increasing pressure for the use of force by established authority. Instead of threatening the social order, television may have become our chief instrument of social control. ▣

TO SUBSCRIBE TO

Better Radio and Television

One year: \$4.00 Three years: \$10.00

Send your order to:

NABB
P. O. Box 43640
Los Angeles, Calif. 90043

Memberships in NABB are \$10 per year. These dues include the quarterly subscription.