From The President's Desk

Florence W. Kaslow, Ph.D.

This year has flown by - for me and the Division. The recent APA convention marked a high point for many of us and seems to have been a real turning point onto a fast-forward trajectory.

First the not so good news. We were sorry that we did not have enough registrants to run the two pre-conference workshops. Unfortunately, this seemed to hold true for other Divisions also, particularly if they were not able to award CE credits. Hopefully, we'll have "better luck next year".

On the positive side, great interest was generated from our two superb invitational panels on Children's Television and on tradebooks by Ellen McGrath and interactive video by Sheila Kessler. Sheila's presentation took us into the amazing terrain offered some exciting Division crystal-ball gazing into the future of psychologists in the media; specifically with the emphasis on newsprint by Lilli Friedland, radio by Irene Ed Donnerstein report on some of the latest research findings on the impact of violence on various kinds of television programs on children, and to have Dorothy Singer address us on its. Hopefully, we'll have "better luck next year".

On the positive side, great interest was generated from our two superb invitational panels on Children's Television and on tradebooks by Ellen McGrath and interactive video by Sheila Kessler. Sheila's presentation took us into the amazing terrain of "virtual reality" and held us all fascinated. Have you encountered your virtual reality yet? We were pleased to have Ed Donnerstein report on some of the latest research findings on the impact of violence on various kinds of television programs on children, and to have Dorothy Singer address us on its. Hopefully, we'll have "better luck next year".

From the Editor

Lilli Friedland, Ph.D.

WHAT IS INTERACTIVE MEDIA?

There is no commonly-held definition of the terminology interactive media. More than mere passive viewing of television or listening to stereo, interactive media implies a more active participation on the part of the individual. In my explorations into the world of interactive media I have discovered two basic types: 1) the individual interacting/manipulating the machine television, computer, telephone, etc., and 2) the individual using these machines to interact with other people.

The most commonly described and simplest examples of interactive media is the Nintendo game or Home Shopping Network where the individual manipulates the machine for pleasure in the first example, or for service in the second. This use of the information superhighway can expedite and simplify routine tasks such as accessing books from the library, shopping, etc. A recent Wall Street Journal editorial suggested that schools themselves are obsolete and children should learn at home at their own speed via computers. Instead of going to the library to borrow a book, an individual can find needed materials from libraries all over the world via the computer by using Internet within his/her own home. The newest additions to the field of adult materials/images are the virtual lovers who never have a headache, are always available, and who do whatever the individual wants. Perhaps because more sensory modalities are used (eyes, ears, and touch), or more likely because an active movement is required, the effects become more actively versus passively experienced by the individual. It becomes more difficult for the individual to distinguish between his/her actual experience versus his/her virtual experience. What is real and what isn't is no longer clear. As psychologists we can easily perceive the educational and technical benefits of this world of hypertechnology, but we are also uniquely capable of assessing the potentially dehumanizing effects as well as the inadvertent fostering of reduced human interaction or "cocooning" as a result of the individual working in isolation and taking care of more of his/her needs and wants.

The second type of interactive media is one in which individuals use the machine to communicate with one another across miles, across cultures. The machine becomes the vehicle to foster interaction among people. Creative brainstorming can occur over long distances, cultural events take place simultaneously and in response to one another across continents. We can anticipate conducting therapy via

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helping adults and children become informed and selective viewers who can also influence network programming. These two serious, highly substantive and research-based programs were complemented by Rich Tannenbaum’s showing of a video tape of his syndicated program for children from Dr. T. Productions. Ted Blau served as discussant and made some trenchant observations and comments. The “How To” workshops we co-sponsored with APA’s Public Information Committee (PIC) were also well done and well received. Our thanks to our Program Committee, ably chaired by Bob Simmerman, with Chris Hatcher as co-chair, and its members Marilyn Potash and Richard Tannenbaum, for a fine and diverse program. There are too many segments to mention all, so what I’ve done is highlight some of those I attended. We also appreciated all of the cooperation with of PIC chair Irene Deitch, former chair Renae Norton, and PIC Staff - particularly Doug Fizel and Pam Armstrong. This replay of media psychology at the Toronto convention would be incomplete and lack dazzle if I omitted our bountiful “Birthday Bash” Social Hour. We celebrated our eighth birthday with an eight-year old style party, planned and executed by former president Kate Wachs, and her entertainment committee. Lots of games, balloons, rhymes and prizes added to the festivities. And the cake, made of fresh fruits, was healthy, lovely to behold and delicious.

Among the main actions taken at the Board meeting, which was quite well attended, was that the minor revisions and stylistic rewrite of the By-Laws were ratified, pending passage by members of the three new purposes of the Division, since these constitute a major substantive change. (See column on By-Laws). The second significant action concerns a Division Journal. For a number of years the Division has contemplated launching a Journal, but timing was never quite right. This year we were able to pull some loose ends together and I had an opportunity to negotiate with a major book and journal publisher, with whom I have worked before so we have a prior solid relationship, to consider seriously undertaking the publication of a Journal of Psychology, Communications and the Media (real title not yet selected). Senior Editor attended the Board meeting, discussed what would be entailed and we decided to move full speed ahead. As of now, we have formed an A-Board/Editor Search Committee and are gearing up so that the first issue be published in 1995. As soon as I finish writing this column, I’ll pull together the “mission statement” and send it off to the publisher so they—s—together a contract. So, start thinking about writing an article and be when the call for papers is issued.

By the time you receive this issue of the Amplifier, my presidency will be drawing to a close. It has been a challenging and, I think, fruitful year in which the Division has grown in numbers, in scope of activities, in cohesiveness, and in vision. In addition to those mentioned above, I want like to thank our secretary, Fred Koenig, and our treasurer, Alan Entin, always being available for serving as sounding boards, morale boosters, cooperative colleagues. We’ve appreciated the efforts of all of our chairpersons and are just delighted at the high level of energy and interaction that permeated our Board meetings. Thank you for electing me and giving me the opportunity to serve as Division President. I know that our President-Elect Ellen McGrath, and her successor, Lilli Friedland, will continue to make Division #46 a highly visible, very audible and extremely viable Division.

Written in sunny Florida, Labor Day, 1993

A BOOK REVIEW
The Analyst as a Human Being in Disguise

By Martin S. Potash, Ed.D.

My initial reaction to the title of a new book, How to Make Your Analyst Love You: A Guide to Becoming a More Appealing Neurotic (Citadel Press, 1993, $7.95) by Theodore Saretsky, Ph.D., was: who the hell cares? Only a therapist, humble creatures all, would seriously think that his patients really spend all their time dreaming about him, plotting for his love and affection, not to mention spending hard-earned cash on a book to learn how better to please him.

The fact is, this is just about the funniest thing I’ve read in years. Ostensibly directions for the patient who wants to be his therapist’s favorite 50-minute session, this book really skewers many of our most tightly held pretensions as psychologists. Part of his definition of a psychologist for the laymen: “He is usually a Ph.D. who has, for years, looked forward to being able to call up restaurants and make reservations by saying, “This is Dr....” He always uses his title, but still feels kind of funny about it.”

This book, a successor to Dr. Saretsky’s Sex as a Sublimation for Tennis, includes much information that is valuable to both patient and therapist. For the patient, there is the ever helpful “How to interpret your analyst’s interior designs” and questions the patient should never ask:

1. Can I call you at home?
2. Where are you going on vacation?
3. Where did you get your training?

For beginning therapists, or those who are feeling isolated by too much private practice and not enough else, he provides valuable data on “where your analyst’s referrals come from.” (Media psychologists will do well to remember those useful “personal appearances on the Howard Stern Show and articles...in Playboy, People Magazine, etc. — they make up a full 14 percent.”)

This book keeps disappearing from my office, a sure sign that I need to work on impulse control with my patients, or that my colleagues are enjoying a guffaw or two between sessions. In the spirit of the season, buy a copy, give a copy, and give your unconscious a break.

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videophones (there already exist phone “therapy” services), getting continued education seminars featuring eminent speakers and personally asking them questions from our own homes, researchers collaborating simultaneously on all aspects of international studies, etc. The time has come for psychologists to become involved with these new future technologies. The potential uses and abuses of these modalities in education, training, and applied uses are staggering. I urge psychologists to be involved in the development, application and research of the effect of interactive media.
By-Laws Changes

This year, we have had a By-Laws Committee go over and tune up the By-Laws. The Committee was chaired by Florence Kaslow, and the other members were Steve Brody and Fred Koenig. The minor modifications were discussed and passed at the Board of Directors meeting at APA in August. However, there are three major substantive changes, and these need to be approved by the membership. They are in Article I, Section 1.02, items 5, 6, and 7.

Please complete and return the mini-ballot below. Thank you.

Article I, Section 1.02, amended to include the items that follow:

5. To assist in mass media efforts designed to programmaticallly and systematically effect behavior change for those individuals seeking to improve their quality of life physically, emotionally and environmentally.

6. To engage in training activities to prepare psychologists to participate in media activities effectively and ethically by presenting lectures and workshops at APA meetings, at state and other psychological association meetings, and serving in a consultative capacity, as invited, to various Divisions.

7. To assist psychologists in disseminating information about their activities to the public and to other health care professionals, companies, and institutions.

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MEDIA PSYCHOLOGIST ALERT!

National Health Care

Elaine Rodino, Ph.D.

The Practice Directorate responded to my recent request to help Division 46 members help psychology in this hour of national need. Below is a list provided by The Practice Directorate of important points regarding National Health Care.

The members of Division 46 have the unique position of media presence that impinges upon the grass roots of our country from coast to coast. We, as media psychologists, have on-going access to the ears, hearts, and opinions of voters (constituents) across the country, who can press their political leaders to vote for issues important to them.

As of the moment, mental health is included in the Clinton Health Plan, but we all know that this can disappear in the entirety as the congressional bargaining and cuts begin.

My suggestion is that you cut out the items below and keep them at hand. Whenever you have any possible access to the public, try to work in at least one point into your interview. These attempts can be subtle or hard hitting, depending on the forum and audience involved.

Mental health inclusion in National Health Care will benefit psychologists in every interest area of the field, not only private practitioners, and it will bring the highest level of professional and scientific psychology to the public.

The Need: At any time, an estimated 15%-18% of Americans suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder. About 14 million of those afflicted are children.

The Problem: By placing arbitrary limits on outpatient care (30 annual visits with a 50% copayment), President Clinton's proposed mental health benefit wastes scarce dollars by encouraging inpatient care. 12% of patients treated as inpatients consume approximately 80% of all mental health dollars. The benefit forces those who need intensive outpatient care into expensive inpatient care or drug therapy.

The Solution: The mental health system should shift its emphasis from expensive inpatient care to cost-effective outpatient treatment. At least 40% of patients treated in expensive inpatient settings could be treated as effectively in outpatient settings at a fraction of the cost.

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Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Editor Wanted...

For new Journal of Psychology, Communication and Media
• To become Editor in 1994 for 4-year term
• Work with publications Advisory Committee in readying the First Annual Yearbook
• Must have editorial board experience, have been published in refereed journals, enjoy editing, and have time and energy to undertake this venture.

Applicants will be sent job description.

Send curriculum vitae, in triplicate, to:
Florence Kaslow, Ph.D., By-Laws Committee
2601 No. Flagler Drive, Suite 103, West Palm Beach, FL 33407
Enclose self-addressed post card for verification that materials have arrived.

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Call for Nominations

Please send your nominations for the following offices to:
Lilli Friedland, Ph.D., Chairperson, Nominations
2080 Century Park East, Suite 1403, Los Angeles, CA 90067
Nominations should be typed or handwritten legibly. You must sign the nominations submitted. Mark your envelope "BALLOT" on the outside.
Nominations will be accepted for:
President, Secretary
Representative for Council Rep, and Members at Large (3)
Some Notes on the Industry-Wide Conference on Television Violence

Ed Donnerstein
Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara

On August 2, 1993, the Industry-Wide Leadership Conference on Violence in Television Programming took place. To many, it was an unprecedented session, with over 400 in attendance from all areas of the entertainment industry gathered to discuss the issue of TV violence. The one-day conference, keynoted by Senator Paul Simon, was broadcast live on CNN (and shown in its entirety on C-Span where copies are available) and received significant network and newspaper coverage. The conference brought together all segments of the broadcasting, cable, production and distribution communities in order to heighten awareness of the impact of violence on viewers and society at large. The issues ranged from academic research and media literacy, to special issues regarding children, as well as the role of government.

The conference contained four plenary sessions. The first, "What the Experts Say," was moderated by Jeff Greenfield of ABC News and was a discussion by academic researchers on the effects of media violence. Participants were Len Eron of the U. of Michigan, Professor George Gerbner of the U. of Pennsylvania, Suzanne Stutman of The Institute for Mental Health Initiative, and myself. Issues which should be of major concern to both APA and members of Division 46 were addressed. These included: (1) how we define violence in the mass media; (2) what type of violent portrayals should we be most concerned about in terms of their affects upon both children and adults; (3) what is the role of cartoon and fantasy violence in the socialization of children; (4) how might we present violence in the mass media in a manner which reduces its negative impact; and (5) how can the research community work more effectively with the media industry on the violence issue.

The second session, also moderated by Jeff Greenfield, was "The Children are Watching" and brought together members of the entertainment industry to discuss children's programming. The panel consisted of Stephen Cannell, CEO of The Cannell Studios; Andy Heyward, chairperson of DIC Enterprises; Christine Hikawa, vice-president, Broadcast Standards at ABC; Geraldine Laybourne, president, Nickelodeon; John Miller, executive vice-president, NBC; Karen Hill-Scott, child psychologist and script advisor for NBC; and Arnold Shapiro, president Arnold Shapiro Productions. While there was no question that this panel had some disagreements with the research on the effects of media violence on aggressive behavior (particularly on how violence is defined and the effects of cartoons), there was, however, a concern for how violence impacts on children and ways in which the entertainment industry could produce programming of a more prosocial nature.

Senator Simon followed these two morning panels with a lunch-time keynote address. Simon took a strong position on the effects of media violence, including possible solutions to its problem. According to Simon, "This is no longer theory. The evidence that television violence does harm is now just as overwhelming as the evidence that cigarettes do harm." He made seven suggestions to members of the entertainment industry on what he believed needs to be done regarding the media violence issue.

First, there should be recognition by the creative community that self-restraint is essential for a democracy to function. According to Simon, "The best way to protect your industry from the dangerous and heavy hand of government is to exercise self-restraint. The gauge of whether we are a civilized society is not to what extremes we can indulge ourselves."

Second, the entire industry needs to be involved, including cable, film, and independents.

Third, there needs to be a continuity of effort and concern in this area. In this regard, Simon called for an on-going monitoring of TV violence, as well as a possible Advisory Office on Television Violence, so there will be a continuing effort among the industry to deal effectively with the violence issue. As Simon notes, "if within the industry you do not exercise self-restraint, neither will many of those who are concerned. Extremes in behavior invite extremes in response."

Fourth, he suggested that glamorized violence should be avoided, and that the realities of violence need to be presented. Furthermore, it is important for the industry to begin to consider non-violent solutions to conflict in their dramatic presentations.

The concern over violent promotions was Simon's fifth issue. He suggested that such promotions be reduced and that during times when children are in the audience, they be eliminated.

Sixth was the suggestion that the television medium should be used to educate the public about the harmful effects of violence, particularly media violence.

Lastly, Simon wanted to remind the audience of the international impact of The American media. As he noted when discussing concerns which other countries had with violence in the American media, "The revulsion in many nations to parts of the American culture is not a reaction to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra ... nor is it in response to our finer movies or television shows. We should ask ourselves what messages we wish to send to other nations." In total, Senator Simon's message was clear ... there is too much violence on television; something needs to be done.

The final session of the day was a Socratic dialog moderated by Arthur Miller, professor of law at Harvard, a panel of individuals representing the entertainment industry, citizen groups, and the legal community discussed the political, legal, economic, and entertainment function of media violence. Panel members included Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television; Winston Cox, CEO of Showtime; Mel Harris, president of Sony Pictures TV Group; Gerald Isenberg, CEO of Heisrt Entertainment; Phil Jones, president of Meredith Corporation Broadcast Group; Jennifer Lawson of PBS; Terry Taktata of Americans for Responsible Television; Jeff Sagansky, president of CBS Entertainment; Scott Sassa, president of Turner Entertainment; Nadine Strossen, president of the ACLU; and Dick Wolf, president of Wolf Films.

As many individuals have noted, this conference allowed an opportunity to discuss the far-reaching implications of...
TV Violence: A View From Washington

Brian L. Wilcox
Public Policy Office, American Psychological Ass'n

The issue of violence and television has received a great deal of attention lately. In this article I will provide some of the background underlying this increased attention, summarize the options being considered by policy makers, and give my best guess as to what is likely to happen over the next several months.

BACKGROUND

In 1990 Congress passed legislation authored by Sen. Simon and Rep. Glickman which granted an antitrust exemption to the members of the broadcast and cable industry for the specific and limited purpose of allowing them to work jointly to address the problem of television violence. Passage of this legislation was difficult; it was pocket vetoed once by President Reagan and was held up for over a year by conservatives who wanted to include sex and drug use among the topics covered by the exemption.

In the first two years following enactment, the response of the broadcast and cable industry was minimal. Finally, in December 1992, the four networks announced a new joint code on TV violence. The code received an unenthusiastic response from policy makers and professional and advocacy groups due to its vagueness. Led again by Sen. Simon, Congress again held a series of hearings on TV violence in an attempt to turn up the heat before the antitrust exemption expires on December 31, 1993.

In response to the increased pressure from policy makers and the public, the four networks and the cable industry adopted a policy of airing parental advisories before programs containing "excessive violence." Critics argue that while this action represents a step in the right direction, it falls short of meaningful action because parents are often unable or unwilling to monitor and control the viewing of children. Critics also are skeptical of a system where the broadcasters have complete control over whether a program is considered to contain "excessive violence." Consequently, Members of Congress have introduced several bills addressing the issue in various ways.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

In the past 2 months, the following bills have been introduced. No legislative action has occurred on any of them.

S. 1383, Children's Protection from Violent Programming Act (Sen. Hollings, Sen. Inouye): Would require the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to establish rules prohibiting the distribution of violent programming during hours when children are likely to comprise a "substantial portion of the viewing audience." Would allow the FCC to exempt news programs, documentaries, educational programs, and sporting events, along with pay-per-view and premium cable channels. Broadcast licensees who repeatedly violate the law could have their license repealed by the FCC.

S. 943, Children's Television Protection Act (Sen. Durenberger): Would require both audio and visual warnings on programs that are violent or have unsafe gun practices. Violators would be subject to civil fines. Cartoons are included; news programs, documentaries, educational programs, and sports events are exempt.


H.R. 2888, Television Violence Reduction Through Parental Empowerment Act (Rep. Markey): Require that all TV sets sold in the U.S. be equipped with technology to (1) enable viewers to block certain shows, channels and time slots, and (2) enable viewers to block shows with a common rating (such as "V" for violent). Broadcasters would also be called upon to implement an industry-wide parental advisory system for programs containing excessive violence and electronically transmit a code for such shows.

H.R. 2560, Presidential Commission on TV Violence and Children Act (Rep. Schumer): Would establish a Presidential Commission to examine the issue of TV violence through hearings with the Surgeon General, the Attorney General, families, experts, and TV industry members. The Commission would report its findings and recommendations to the President and Congress.

H.R. 27, Parents Television Empowerment Act (Rep. Kennedy): Would require the FCC to establish a toll-free hotline to collect comments and complaints from the public concerning TV programs which contain violence. The FCC would issue a quarterly report summarizing the comments and complaints and listing the 50 most troublesome shows, their sponsors, production company, etc.

H.R. 2837, Television and Radio Program Violence Reduction Act (Rep. Bryant): Would require the FCC to establish standards on television and radio broadcasts of violence. News programs, documentaries, educational programs and sporting events would be exempt. Violators would be subject to civil fines and license revocation. The FCC would be required to consider a licensee's compliance before removing a license.

S. Res. 122/H.Res. 202, Sense of the Congress Resolution on TV Violence (Sen. Kassebaum, Rep. Slattery): Calls for broadcasters and cable operators to take vigorous programs off the air as well as to classify programs based on the amount of violence they contain. Also calls for on-screen program advisories.

PROBABLE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

In the near term it is likely that various Congressional Committees will hold additional hearings on TV violence. In the first eight months of the 103rd Congress, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution held three hearings and the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance held four hearings. It is likely that additional hearings will be held by the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and the House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee.

It also appears unlikely that any of the bills described above are likely to be acted upon soon. Much of this action is...
occurring in an effort to pressure the industry into some stronger form of self-regulation. Additionally, each of the bills has strong opposition, often on the grounds that any congressional action would limit speech and thus represents a violation of the First Amendment. The “First Amendment” argument is questionable: the Courts have placed limits on various types of speech, including indecent speech, on the ground that certain speech that can be demonstrated to have harmful consequences (yelling ‘fire’ in a crowded theater) should not be protected. TV violence can arguably be said to meet this criterion. On the other hand, members of Congress are extremely reluctant to put themselves in a position where they might be accused of censorship and violating First Amendment protections.

Sen. Simon has taken two actions likely to spur further activity. In his keynote address to the television industry at the beginning of August, he issued a challenge that they take additional and significant steps to respond to the problem within the next sixty days or face legislative action. He also asked the Department of Justice to issue a ruling allowing the broadcast and cable industries to search for joint solutions without fear of antitrust litigation. He suggests that he is likely to receive this ruling soon.

APA’S ROLE

Throughout the deliberations on this issue, APA has played a central role. APA’s Public Policy Office organized a coalition of scientific, professional, and advocacy organizations in support of Sen. Simon’s original antitrust exemption legislation. Four psychologists — Eli Rubinstein, Aletha Huston, Rowell Huesmann, and Brian Wilcox — testified before Congress on behalf of APA during the consideration of that legislation.

APA has also attempted to work with the television industry. Public Policy Office staff have met with representatives of all of the networks to offer assistance to network efforts to address the problem. APA representatives attended the August industry-wide “summit meeting” in an attempt to foster additional communication with industry leaders.

APA has also communicated with the Federal Communications Commission on this issue. Most recently, three APA members met with FCC chairman-designate Reed Hundt to discuss research related to media violence prior to his confirmation hearing. Interestingly, the first issue raised by the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee during the confirmation hearing was media violence.

APA is currently considering a revision of its media violence policy resolution, first developed in 1985. APA’s Commission on Violence and Youth has proposed a broader policy statement which takes into consideration the changing nature of the telecommunications industry, and APA’s Council of Representatives may address this issue at their February meeting.

In summary, APA has played a more active role in the policy debates on media violence than any other organization, and will continue to lead efforts to assure responsible actions on the part of the industry and sensible policy on the part of legislators and regulators.

Curbing Media Violence
Lessons from Other Countries
By Joel Federman, Director of Research at Mediascope

In the last year, there has been a dramatic upsurge in public concern about the social impact of media violence. Opinion surveys show 82 percent of the American public consider movies too violent, 72 percent feel that entertainment television has too much violence, and 57 percent think television news gives too much attention to stories about violent crime. Out of this concern, numerous citizens organizations and coalitions devoted to the issue have been formed, and both houses of Congress have held hearings on television violence.

During the same period, there has been a similar surge in interest in media violence around the world. Other countries have taken the issue much more seriously than we have. They have established policies and practices that clearly work. Consequently, they do a much better job of protecting their children from the negative effects of media violence.

During the last twelve months:

- The Prime Minister of Canada called for a government-led boycott of advertising for violent programming in Canada in response to a 1.5 million signature petition.
- The murder of a two-year old boy by two ten-year olds spurred widespread public debate in Great Britain over the social influences—including mass media—prompting such an act.
- Spanish television broadcasters agreed to exclude violent and erotic content from children’s time slots.
- Sega, the distributor of the video game “Night Trap,” withheld its Australian release because of “community concerns” following protests against the game’s high level of violence.
- German broadcast networks, competing for viewers, recently initiated advertising campaigns claiming that rival channels portray more violence.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS

Ongoing concern in other countries about the effects of media violence has led to public and private action to reduce its negative effects. As we continue to address this topic here in the United States, it might be helpful to examine other societies’ practices.

Some countries protect children from exposure to excessive media violence by emphasizing violence in their film or television rating systems. A Mediascope study comparing the rating systems of thirty-six countries and provinces found that others are much more stringent with depictions of violence than the U.S. movie rating system, which is voluntarily administered by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).

Critics of the MPAA rating system, such as the American Psychological Association, have charged that “any depiction of sexuality will automatically render a film an R rating, (while) a film can contain violence and still be given a G, PG, or PG-13 rating.” In Australia, by contrast, portrayals of violence in film and videos are “given the closest attention” by the Film Censorship Board before being classified, and “ex-
cessively violent material" in films or videotapes is banned altogether. Swedish censors recently cut four minutes of violent scenes out of the Arnold Schwarzenegger film, Last Action Hero, so that it could be approved for children 11 years old and over (without such cuts, the film received a PG-13 rating from the MPAA). Likewise, the British Board of Film Classification has required that many violent scenes be cut from the American versions of such popular films as Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, Lethal Weapon 3, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, to avoid restrictive classifications.

The ratings systems in several other countries also take into account the kinds of violent material that might frighten or influence children of younger ages. Denmark, Germany, Norway, Spain and Sweden all have ratings classifications that either warn parents or restrict theater access to children under the ages of five to seven. While many psychologists recognize significant developmental differences in three- to seven year-old children versus eight to thirteen-year-olds, the MPM rating system does not have a classification for any age below thirteen (the PG-13 rating).

Another method sometimes used in other countries to limit the effects of media violence on children is to provide more advance information to consumers about the content of movies and television shows. The four major American television networks, as well as many cable programmers, have now agreed to provide warning labels prior to excessively violent shows, a step France and Belgium had made earlier. Australia and New Zealand have taken television labeling one step further by providing viewers with a complete rating system for television, similar to the ones used around the world for films. These systems classify television programming according to their levels of violence, sexuality, profanity and adult themes. In turn, programs with more restrictive classifications are only allowed to be shown when children are less likely to see them.

Many countries simply ban films and television shows with excessive violence, and/or make their distribution a criminal offense. According to Swedish law, for instance, the distribution of films or television shows which depict "sexual violence or coercion," or "graphic violence toward people or animals in a detailed or drawn manner," is subject to fines and/or up to two years imprisonment. This is a more extreme approach to screen violence than many in the United States, including this writer, would consider palatable, but it is effective in accomplishing its aim.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

Most of the attention to media violence in this country has focused on television, leaving the film industry, with its often more violent material, off the political hook. In addition, some of the U.S. discussion has also been unbalanced in that television is blamed as a primary cause of violence in society, ignoring the more significant roles played by the lack of economic and social opportunity, and the availability of guns. Many European countries, by contrast, have adopted more comprehensive social democratic policies and strict gun control legislation that have also been effective in curbing social violence.

Despite the importance of other causes of societal vio-

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Media Psychology in Psychology’s II Century Filmmaking

Robert David Simmermon
Invited Address Presented to Division 46 Media Psychology at the Annual Convention in Toronto

FILM AND PSYCHOLOGY: THE NEXT CENTURY

Imagine: a glorious ritual of darkness and suspense, people of the village flood into the meeting hall carrying grain to sustain them through the ceremony. They anticipate the moment of reverence with whispers and predictions. The music begins, slowly at first then builds to a rhythmic pinnacle. Magically, enchanted images appear by the flickering light cast into the night. All are still as figures materializes before them. Ancient tales of heroes and heroines ensue. Images speak to the people as spirits have done for centuries.

Through this ritual, cultural norms are established, language developed, idol worship and emulation abound. Are these simply primitive mystic rites? Perhaps, but as we speak, the same scenario unfolds seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year in every city in the world. What once took place around the fire now occurs in theaters. The people are the same, the location slightly altered. Human beings have changed little in the past eight hundred thousand years. And contrary to the obvious, I see very little change for the future. Although our world has changed dramatically faster than we can comprehend, the basic structure of human dynamics persist. We are and always have been, story tellers. The principal question for the future is, WHO will tell WHICH stories to WHAT audience. Herein lies the challenge for psychologists!

As chairman of the film committee for APA and occasional filmmaker, I have had the opportunity to screen literally hundreds of films over the past few years ranging from one minute shorts to two hour documentaries to Academy Award winning feature films. In each case the filmmakers had a story to tell. And in each instance the story was about people and what they loved, hated, feared, worshiped or wanted to change. These are the stories of peoples lives, lives not bound by snap shots but moving pictures.

As I allow myself to ponder the engagement and inevitable marriage of psychology and film, I see endless creative possibilities for their off-spring. These enigmatic children of the next century will surely participate in defining our mission for the future. In anticipating these changes I have selected the basic structure of human dynamics persist. We are and always have been, story tellers. The principal question for the future is, WHO will tell WHICH stories to WHAT audience. Herein lies the challenge for psychologists!

First, we as psychologists must shift from the position of observer and critic and take our place in the forefront of the examination and observation of human behavior on a massive scale. We can no longer settle for individual, one-on-one influence, one hour each week in psychotherapy when we can reach millions of people around the clock. There is no reason why psychologists can not write, produce, and direct films that can positively impact our society. These projects may take the form of documentaries or feature films. We can enter-tain, inform and impact audiences with stories about integration and integrity as easily as stories about mayhem and chaos. Certainly, potential exist for less Rambo and more Ordinary PEOPLE.

Second, we must redefine our limits as explorers of human mystery. Imagine mounting a camera literally inside the brain or other parts of the body so that we may observe changes as they occur. We have already been able to observe the beginning of human life from conception to birth. Perhaps you have seen a film called the “Miracle of Birth”. What about an observation of the entire life cycle? The potentialities for filming inner space are as great as for those of outer space. Right now the potential for probing the micro structures of human anatomy exist. Maybe the “Fantastic Voyage” is no longer that fantastic.

Finally, we must think in term of interaction. Imagine giving large groups of people the potential to be able to change the course or outcome of events they are witnessing on the screen. Imagine the potential for teaching when we can literally interact with the images on the screen. We will be able to experience different outcomes and more fully engage the potential of “what if”. Inevitably our primary notion of reality will be extended beyond imagination. We will be able to experience consequences and learn from calculated mistakes; mistakes we never had to make.

Without question we must insist on the welfare of society being served ethically and morally, but the biggest threat to our progress will be fear and ignorance within our own ranks. If in our analysis and criticism we squeeze the life from the creative process, the marriage between psychology and film will dissolve and so too will our opportunity to expand our potential.

Explorers are as old as the human race and wherever explorers venture, story tellers return. As I said, I think we have changed precious little in the past several hundred millennia but our world explodes with potentiality. My hope is that the human family will forever be able to gather peacefully in the dark and through the flickering lights dream of worlds to come.

Industrywide Conference - continued from page 4

mass media violence. It was seen as an opening dialog to a complex and sometimes divisive issue. Continuing smaller meetings around the topic are being planned, and Division 46’s input via APA into this issue could certainly be beneficial. There were no common solutions reached, but it is certain that the topic of televised violence will be a major congressional and industry concern in the years ahead.
NEW MEMBERS ONLY

by Irene Deitch, Ph.D.

I am pleased to announce a new membership section - For Graduate Students.

Ms. Patricia Cacici is Membership Chair. Ms. Cacici is currently a graduate student in the School Psychology Program at St. John's University in Queens, New York. She holds a B.S. degree in Computer Science and Psychology from St. John's University. Ms. Cacici is the recipient of the Carl Boxhill Award, awarded by the Richmond Psychological Association of New York. The award is given to an outstanding Psychology student who demonstrated high academic achievement and community service. Ms. Cacici interned as a Victims Services counselor. She has media experience and will serve our division well. Send her your bios and any information you wish to report.

Because all good things must come to a close, so it is with my functioning as Membership Chairperson. It was a task that was challenging and hopefully creative. My replacement, Dr. Marion Gindes is set to continue in this capacity. She brings energy, enthusiasm and competence to the demands of membership...

A multi-talented woman, Ms. Gindes has extensive Media Experience. Dr. Marion Gindes is a clinical psychologist who combines consultation with an independent clinical practice. In her work with organizations, she specializes in gender issues, sexual harassment, diversity, and conflict and stress in the work setting. In her clinical practice, she specializes in cases involving divorce and child custody disputes, personal injury, and general psychological assessment. Dr. Gindes received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Columbia University. She has served on the faculties of Brooklyn College, CUNY, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Pennsylvania State University. She has contributed articles to professional journals and co-edited Social Intervention: A Behavioral Science Approach.

After several years in Pennsylvania, Marion, a native New Yorker, is again based in the New York city area. Good Luck Marion!!!

I am pleased to introduce Karen Derby, Ph.D., CAC, who was responsive to my request for biographical information. She submitted hers prior to publication date. Dr. Dabry is a founding member of PSYCHOLOGICA, a private professional organization in central Greenwich Village, New York City. Dr. Darby has worked psycho-therapeutically with addictive and compulsive disorders for more than thirteen years. She has designed and implemented treatment programs for chemical dependence in both the public and private sectors, and specializes in the treatment of character disordered patients. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she has developed a clinical curriculum in substance abuse, is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, and is President-Elect, New York State Psychological Association Division on Addictions (1993). She has appeared in several national television programs.

Welcome to all our new members! Become active, join committees, stay involved in your organization. If you have done some media work, let us know. We are trying to use our network to make referrals for media presentations.


Becoming a Media Maven: or Getting Started in Media

by Irene Deitch, Ph.D.

Let me begin with a definition of "maven" which, according to the best reference, my grandmother, "is someone who is knowledgeable, an expert or a "wannabe" in a particular area." Therefore, a "Media Maven" might be:

someone, (a psychologist), who fantasizes hosting a national television program. someone, (a psychologist), who is always available as "guest expert" on radio or television. someone, (a psychologist), who wants his/her recent publication to make the best seller list. someone, (a psychologist), who regularly give print interviews but wishes the profound quotes weren't in some obscure press.

If you find any of these possibilities relevant to you, you have the makings of a Media Maven. Read on!

After surviving graduate studies, clinical training, dissertation research and licensure exams you may still harbor "unexplored talent"! With persistence and motivation, plus assistance from Division 46 and the Public Information Committee, you will have access to "Media Mavenhood.

Examine, wherein lie your media roots? For those psychologists who have opted for quadrangles and ivy, be assured that teaching offers terrific rehearsal opportunities. After all, you are "on" for every class lecture. You're employed to engage, inspire, entertain, and impart wisdom to diverse students. To do so, requires the skill of performers of "Oscar" caliber. The academic as "actor" utilizes eye contact, voice control, appropriate gesturing, and superb diction to sustain an alert and responsive audience. The reviews are immediate. If successful, you become the "campus star". That celebrity is the impetus to "take your act on the road". You are a natural for Media Psychology!! Your media orientation is also rooted in your expertise. You slavishly researched and produced the highest quality of material. You have earned out a turf! You are a specialist in that domain. Translate that sophisticated knowledge to the best reference. My grandmother, "is someone who is knowledgeable, an expert or a "wannabe" in a particular area." Therefore, a "Media Maven" might be:

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Electronic Cafe International: Interactive Media Fostering Interaction Among Peoples

(Edited note: The best example of using new technologies to facilitate communication between people that I am aware of is ECI)

The Electronic Cafe International (ECI) is a Fifties coffee shop in Santa Monica (there is also one in New York) that has more than fifty affiliates worldwide. ECI was founded in the mid-'70s by Sherrie Rabinowitz and Kit Galloway. It is a multimedia teleconferencing facility whose goal is to promote the use of new technologies in fostering collaborative telecommunications arts between people in different countries, cultures and language groups. Multimedia exchanges between creative people around the world take place using combinations of video, audio, fax, E-mail, and computer graphic communications technologies. Examples of the uniquely human, global-scale work that is done via ECI are links with inside Biosphere, interactive dance, telepoetics and performances art pieces, international jam sessions and "global round tables." Everyone is working on the same idea, creation or image at the same time. The new technologies allow a visual dialogue among participants. The result is what co-founder Kit Galloway calls 'virtual space' where people and places are brought as close together as possible into one reality, a community no longer defined by geography.

Members in the News

Florence Kaslow, Ph.D. and Division President, has a weekly program on the Voice of America (VOA). The program began in August 1993, and is broadcast over the VOA network to 49 countries. Voice of America began in 1942 and is under the auspices of the U.S. Information Agency.

The program is variously called Psychology Corner, Family Psychology Corner, Parents' Survival Kit, and other names selected by different countries. The program is being heard throughout Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Russia, China, Burma and Iran. The focus is on parent/child relationships and family interactions.

Florence Kaslow has also been selected to deliver a keynote address at the Milton H. Erickson Foundation Conference entitled Brief Therapy: Essence and Evolution. December, in Orlando, Florida.

Larry Balter appeared on Good Morning America on July 6, 1993 to discuss his latest book Not In Front Of The Children... How To Talk To Your Children About Tough Family Matters. (Viking 1993.)

Larry also appeared as Oprah Winfrey's sole guest on October 12, 1993. The top of the day was "Are We Screwing Up Our Kids?" A good time was had by all.

Larry appeared on the Les Brown show on September 14, 1993 to discuss the problems and solutions associated with Parenting A Special Needs Child.

Larry was invited to entertain and inform his NYU faculty colleagues at their penultimate school-wide faculty meeting this past spring with "Pandering To The Masses: Confessions of a Popularizer." Larry assures us that the reputation of Future of Psychology and TV - continued from page 7 from eighth graders to senior citizens, in an effort to determine audience reactions to local TV news. Our results indicate that some 40% of grade-schoolers, 50% of college seniors, and 65% of senior citizens report that there's too much violence on TV news. Of equal importance, however, are the sex differences we've observed, a point I'll return to later, but one which I think should provide impetus to further psychological research.

However, in this same July 1993 Investors Business Daily article, there was a response to The Times Mirror news/violence survey from Marilyn Droz, a spokeswoman for The National Coalition on Television Violence. In spite of the fact that Ms. Droz' organization campaigns against TV violence, she argued that Rodney King aside, television news really doesn't show all that much violence. It does, she added, show the aftermath of violence, but that she felt isn't the same thing.

First, Ms. Droz may be inaccurate in her assessment of the frequency of violence shown on TV newscasts. Published research has shown that about 20% of TV news stories in the "violent" category show actual videos of physical or verbal abuse. Second, maybe the aftermath of violence, in terms of audience effects, isn't the same as effects based upon ongoing violence. However, that really is a question that should be investigated.

What if Ms. Droz is correct? What if exposure to TV news neither precipitates violent behavior nor desensitizes individuals to violence? Might there still be other behavioral effects of concern? What if the result of constant exposure to negative TV news results in a subset of the population who is more afraid of coming in contact with the outside world or perhaps is made to worry needlessly about events that most people will never encounter in a lifetime.

As media psychologists, we need to determine whether we may be raising a generation of children whose perceptions of the world are slanted, because they are so influenced by television news. Perhaps, as a brief exercise, you might want to recall the most recent local TV newscast you've watched. Are all of the fires, murders, car accidents and rapes part of your daily world? What if you were a child whose family regularly watches the news? Would it affect your perception of the world? What if a six year old, for example, watches the news and then wants to stay home rather than chance a car crash, fire, crazed postal employee, or a shooting at McDonald's?

Perhaps, more importantly, how do you explain to a young child that, unlike prime-time television, these news events are real. They don't happen very often — until the next newscast — with the next set of examples. In other words, from the child's perspective, if these news events really don't happen very frequently, as mommy and daddy claim, how come the TV people keep showing them to me? Who's telling the truth? One might possibly argue that just a very small number of children will be adversely affected. Maybe so, but isn't it just a small number of people who act aggressively after watching violent movies and prime-time TV? We seem to have made quite a fuss about the latter.

See Future of Psychology and TV - continued on page 12
Future of Psychology and TV - continued from page 11

I understand that news has to be exciting, and that there are first amendment rights to consider, but possibly media psychologists can offer to work with television stations to more closely assess news impact.

What can we say now about impact? First, negative news clearly has appeal to certain members of the audience or it wouldn’t prevail. Behnke and Miller (1992) reported that negative stories of accidents, violence, and dramatic action ... received the highest interest ratings. (p. 659)

In our research, in Pittsburgh, the first population we studied was college seniors. We were initially surprised to find that so many college seniors (45%) admitted to frequently turning on local news for the purpose of seeing stories containing violence, disaster, or tragedy. Our later research, however, demonstrated an even higher percentage of violent news seekers (48%) at the grade-school level. Only senior citizens reported lower levels (24%). But out of these studies also came some interesting sex differences that may shed light on the different ways in which males and females perceive and are affected by negative news.

For example, females at both the grade-school and senior citizen level were significantly more likely than males to report that TV news is too violent. At all age groups that we surveyed, females were significantly more likely than males to report that TV news makes them worry and to report that they turn off stories that talk about violence or that show pictures of violence. On the other hand, at all age groups, men were significantly more likely to report that news is as violent as it is because “that’s what people want.” In addition, college males were significantly more likely than females to say they watch TV news for the purpose of seeing violence, disaster, and tragedy.

These data may help to explain why females tend to do more poorly on tests of comprehension given after viewing an extremely violent news video. A series of studies done in England by Barrie Gunter, as well as one done here in Pittsburgh, have shown that scores on multiple choice tests are significantly lower for females than males after viewing upsetting/violent news video. Such sex differences do not appear when the medium is print, nor do they appear for television news stories rated “positive” or “neutral” in content. If males and females process negative television news differently, and react differently to it emotionally, then we have a clearer understanding of why their comprehension of such news differs significantly.

Not all studies of extremely violent news video examine sex differences. One recent study, however, is open to an additional criticism. Mundorf, Drew, Zillman, and Weaver (1990) conducted a study that has added significance for psychologists because of the nature of the upsetting video used. It consisted of showing subjects the suicide of Pennsylvania State Auditor General R. Bud Dwyer, who in 1986 appeared at a press conference, produced a gun, and then shot himself in the mouth. I am very familiar with the video, since in 1986, I was working as a health reporter for the NBC affiliate in Pittsburgh, a station which turned out to be one of only a handful across the country to air the suicide video in its entirety. While the nature of the Mundorf, et al. study was to demonstrate that comprehension of news stories following the upsetting video would be reduced (it was), I doubt that if media psychologists had designed the aforementioned research that a suicide would have been the stimulus used. No mention was made by the researchers of any sex differences in comprehension.

In a very practical sense, however, sensitivity to sex differences by news organizations is probably a long way off. The news business has long been characterized as male-dominated — run by men, and possibly designed to meet male needs. It is only recently that women have begun to work their way up the broadcast ladder. To this date, there are very few female news directors, and almost no female general managers.

At the very least, media psychologists have an opportunity to study further some of these reactions. Research in the field of television news will go on with or without media psychologists, but I believe we can and should be a part of the process.

Curbing Media Violence - continued from page 7

ience, the negative impact of media violence is a legitimate social issue. The consensus in the scientific, medical and public health communities is that media violence contributes significantly to aggression in society. Public concern about the issue is at an all-time high, and is likely to continue. In addition, the members of Congress involved have shown a genuine and abiding interest in keeping up the pressure until substantive action is taken to alleviate the problem. The policies and practices of other countries may provide the clues leading to our own comprehensive solution to the problem of violence in American society.

Media Maven - continued from page 10

Lions women’s groups. I became the “expert” on death, disabilities, disease, dementia, and divorce. On occasion, I was even introduced as Dr. Death — surely a slip of the tongue, but this predated Dr. Kevorkian. With each program, I relied less on notes, felt more relaxed and added humor and spontaneity to my “expertise and experience”.

When “cheap” radio guests were needed, I was selected as the “hired hand”. As I communicated with an anonymous audience my interviewer sat back and encouraged me to keep talking (he/she may not have done his/her homework). I thought, (remember Chorus Line), that I can do that. The next step was to train in radio production. Hanging around the radio station was inspirational until an emergency arose. A sports announcer was desperately needed... Could I go on. Now, I do sports, but I don’t know sports...all that was required of me was to read scores. So I began...LA Lakers 14...LA Clippers..." The production crew was stunned. The telephone board lit up. My career as a sports announcer ended abruptly. The moral is: 1) add punctuation to copy and 2) psychologists stay with your craft.

Dr. Irene Deitch served as Chair for APA’s Public Information Committee. She was selected to participate in the APA Smithsonian Lecture series. Her presentation “Looking Back To Our Future: Another View of Successful Aging”. Dr. Deitch appeared in Newsway: “Dying to Get on T.V.? Videotaping of Funerals”, and in October Redbook Magazine: "Change Therapies."