Towards
Precautionary
Risk Management
of
TV Violence
in New Zealand

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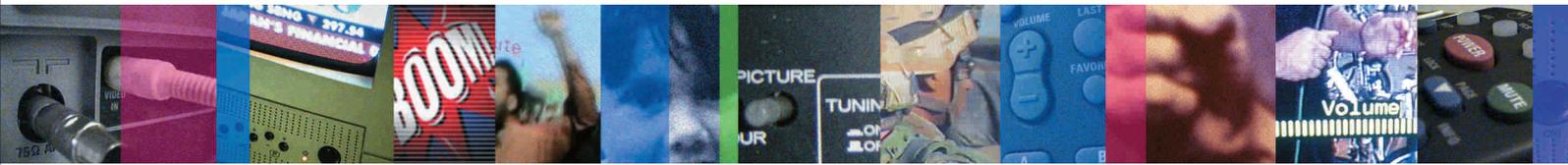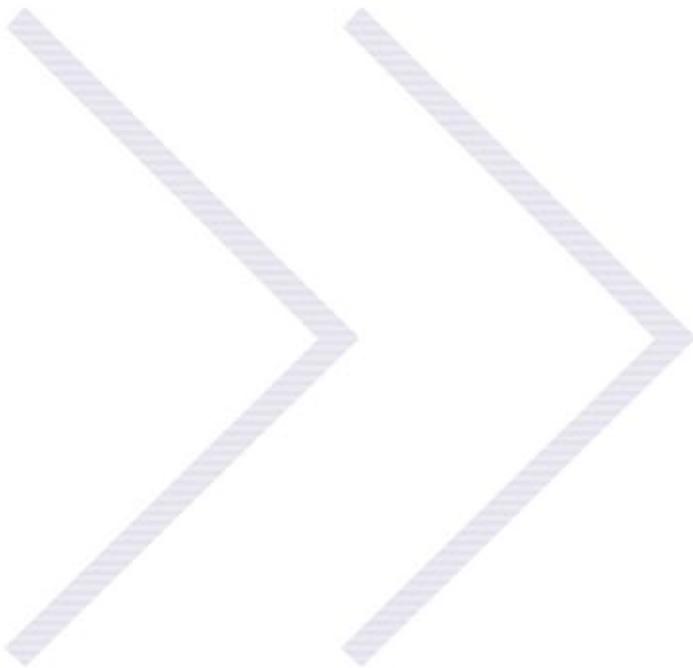
Towards
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THE REPORT TO THE MINISTER OF
BROADCASTING OF THE WORKING
GROUP: TV VIOLENCE PROJECT

APRIL 2004

Television Violence Project Working Group
c/- Ministry for Culture and Heritage
PO Box 5364, Wellington
Chair: Dr Rajen Prasad

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1 April 2004

Hon Steve Maharey
Minister of Broadcasting
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Minister

I am very pleased to present you with "Towards Precautionary Risk Management of TV Violence in New Zealand" – the Report of the Working Group on Television Violence. I am also forwarding you a copy of the report "Television Violence in New Zealand: A Study of Programming and Policy in International Context". This publication by the Centre for Communication Research at Auckland University of Technology reports on the findings on the research commissioned by the Working Group as required by our terms of reference.

The task you gave us was challenging and thought provoking and we have addressed it to the best of our abilities. The Working Group was made up of members with strong views who were determined to be guided primarily by the quality of the evidence and persuasive argumentation. They were collaborative and collegial and worked very productively together. We believe we have developed an approach to addressing television violence that will be effective in the rapidly evolving world of broadcasting and communications. We have designed an institutional structure that will enable an ongoing and dynamic consideration of the multiple issues associated with television violence by the key stakeholders, including the community, in the future.

On behalf of the Television Violence Project Working Group I thank you for this opportunity. We look forward to hearing your response to our recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rajen Prasad
Chair
Television Violence Project Working Group

Members of the Working Group

Dr Rajen Prasad (Chair), Dr Max Abbott, Dr Trisha Dunleavy, Robert Boyd-Bell,
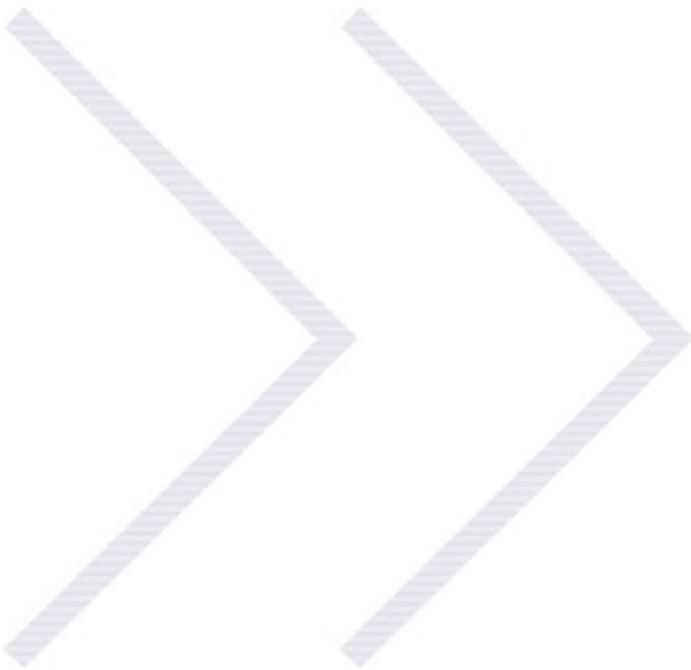Hone Edwards, Ian Fraser, Rick Friesen, Jane Parker, John Terris, Jane Wrightson

Contents

1. Our Task and How We Went About It

From its very beginnings, the TV image has been regarded as more powerful than the printed page.[1] The effect of moving light seems to have the same visual stimulation as the fire in the cave, providing a more direct form of access to information than the abstract process of interpreting alphabetic symbols on a page.

The media critic Marshall McLuhan, who coined the term the "global village" to describe TV's impact in bringing the far reaches of the world into people's living rooms, also believed that the "light through" effect of the TV screen was part of its seeming hypnotic appeal to viewers. As light shines through a stained glass window, the same phenomenon occurs with a TV screen or computer monitor. McLuhan believed that this "light through" effect meant that we respond to TV in different and more powerful ways than we do to print media.[2]

[1] Throughout this report we have mostly used TV in preference to the more formal term television.
    The term TV encompasses TV broadcasting through various devices.
[2] Paul Levinson (1999) *digital mcluhan: a guide to the information millennium*, Routledge (London and New York) p9.

BACKGROUND TO THE TV VIOLENCE PROJECT

For the past 50 years an enormous international research effort has gone into researching what effects (if any) TV has on people. One of the major research concerns has been to investigate the relationship between levels of TV violence and various effects on social behaviour, including levels of violence in the community. New Zealand is no exception to these concerns.

In December 2002, the Minister of Broadcasting (Hon. Steve Maharey) appointed a working group to review the amount of violence on TV in New Zealand, to determine whether this has affected New Zealand society and, if it has, to make any recommendations that it thought were necessary to address these effects. The study resulted from an agreement between the Labour government and the Green Party to investigate the levels of TV violence in New Zealand, with funding put aside for it in the 2002 Budget. Following the 2002 General Election and the formation of the new Labour-Progressive Coalition Government, the government decided to continue the study. As the Minister said when confirming the TV Violence Project: "Many New Zealanders are concerned about the level and nature of violence on television. Parents, in particular, worry about the consequences for their children of viewing violent programming".[3] The full terms of reference are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

The Working Group for the TV Violence project has drawn its members from a diverse range of people with an interest in New Zealand TV. Our membership includes academics with a particular expertise in broadcasting, mental health or social policy; representatives from the publicly funded broadcaster Television New Zealand and the privately owned channel TV3; the Broadcasting Standards Authority; Maori television; SPADA (Screen Production and Development Association, representing programme makers) and TV advocacy groups. A full list of members is provided as Appendix 2.

THE WORKING GROUP'S TASK

Our terms of reference gave us four main tasks:

• to commission a comprehensive literature review of existing research on the effects of TV violence and to evaluate it in relation to New Zealand, including the effectiveness of methods to measure the incidence of TV violence

• to undertake a limited sampling analysis of TV content that was comparable to surveys in other countries and previous New Zealand surveys

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[3] Hon. Steve Maharey (2002) "Television violence project confirmed", Media Statement: 9/12/02.

- to evaluate the regulatory tools for controlling the level and nature of violence in New Zealand

- to use the results of the above investigations as the basis for any recommendations on TV violence in our final report to the Minister of Broadcasting.

We called for tenders to carry out the research phase of the project in late 2002. Five tenders were received, and in February 2003 we commissioned the Centre for Communication Research at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) to carry out the research project. The Centre for Communication research team was able to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to the Working Group's research brief. The research team is listed in Appendix 2. There were obvious strengths and synergies in having the same research team carry out both the literature review and the quantitative content analysis of violence on New Zealand TV.

Relationship between AUT Report and Overview Report

The AUT Report provided the starting point for the Working Group's deliberations on the issue of TV violence and this Overview Report draws heavily on the AUT base research. The discussion and findings of the AUT researchers have been integrated with the Working Group's deliberations and the knowledge and expertise of its members. Although the findings of the AUT report underlie the Working Group's overall approach and many of its specific recommendations, the Working Group has not accepted uncritically everything in the AUT report. Consequently, our approach to some issues may vary from that proposed by the AUT researchers. For ease of reading, page references to the AUT report are given only where that report is quoted or referred to directly.

Throughout the Working Group process, a series of milestones were part of the research team's contract and so we have been informed of the team's progress in completing the various research stages and their initial findings. This allowed us to begin to formulate an approach to the issue of TV violence as the final research report was completed. AUT's full report, *Television Violence in New Zealand: A study of Programming and Policy in International Context*, is separately available on-line *www.tv-violence.org.nz* or may be obtained through the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Box 5364, Wellington (price $28).

WHAT ARE OUR FINDINGS?

Research indicates that TV influences attitudes, beliefs and behaviour in a variety of ways. A recent major research review listed 19 possible effects and that list was not definitive.[4] There are alternative theoretical explanations of how TV exerts its influence and little agreement on its importance relative to other factors.

It is evident from the large body of international research that aggressive behaviour is multiply determined. From the AUT literature review we conclude that TV violence is one of the mix of factors that contributes to violence in society. The relationship between viewing TV violence per se and aggression, while significant, is relatively modest in strength. With respect to violent behaviour and offending during mid to late adolescence – according to the US Surgeon General's 2001 report on youth violence – early exposure to TV violence (between the age of 6-11 years) is assessed to be as powerful a risk factor as having a hyperactivity diagnosis, receiving harsh, lax or inconsistent discipline, or poor school performance. While exposure to TV violence during adolescent and adult years may also contribute to violent behaviour, this has been less thoroughly investigated and some studies have failed to demonstrate a relationship. Middle childhood (6-11 years) is implicated as a time when people are particularly susceptible to influence from TV violence.

In the preceding paragraph we note that the strength of the relationship between TV violence and violent behaviour is relatively modest. The finding of a "modest" relationship is not unusual. Most aspects of human behaviour, as well as social and public-health problems, are influenced by multiple factors. Each of these factors, considered alone, typically has a weak to moderate effect. In the case of television violence, lack of a perfect relationship with violent behaviour means that not everyone who is exposed to television violence becomes aggressive and that many people who become aggressive do so for other reasons.

Although a large number of studies have demonstrated that watching violent programmes temporarily increases violent thoughts and behaviours in some viewers, it takes some years of viewing a heavy diet of violent programmes to increase the risk of habitual aggression. The great majority of serious violent offenders have experienced multiple risk factors.

In addition to considering relationships between TV violence and aggression, other effects examined by researchers include "desensitisation" and the "mean world syndrome".

4   B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) *Television Violence in New Zealand: A study of Programming and Policy in International Context* p1.

Desensitisation refers to the tendency for children who watch large amounts of violence to be less aroused when watching violent scenes. There are indications that this can extend to violence in other situations and include reduced empathy for victims of actual violence. The mean world syndrome refers to the finding that heavy viewers of violence, both children and adults, are more likely than other viewers to have an exaggerated fear of violence and mistrust of people. These influences and perhaps the wider, overall view of social life portrayed by TV may be more important than its contribution to violence and violent offending. This remains conjecture, however, until examined more thoroughly.

Reference has been made to "TV violence" and "violent behaviour" in a unitary way. Both include a variety of phenomena. Television violence, for example, includes low-level and humorous forms of violence that may not affect the vast majority of viewers. It also includes forms that have been consistently associated with aggression and other adverse outcomes. Included here are situations where identification with perpetrators is encouraged and violence is portrayed realistically, presented as justified, and rewarded. Similarly, aggression and violent behaviour range from minor acts in playground contexts to serious violent offending.

The AUT content analysis used similar methodology to that of previous surveys conducted during the past 20 years, facilitating comparison over time. The average incidence of violence across all channels today is considerably higher than it was in the last (1995) survey. It is also higher than in all but one survey undertaken during the 1980s. It is, however, similar to the incidence rates of two surveys conducted following the introduction of commercial TV in the early 1990s. Important changes have occurred to the channel environment since 1995. Two factors contributing to the higher rates in AUT's survey are, firstly, the inclusion of pay TV channels in 2003 and not in 1995; and, secondly, the expansion in the number of TV channels (both free-to-air and pay) since 1997. The present rate is also similar to rates recorded relatively recently in the US and somewhat higher than recent UK rates. Historically, levels of violence on US commercial TV have been higher than those recorded in other countries.

Apart from having concern about the overall high incidence of violent content on New Zealand TV, there are some aspects of the incidence of violence on New Zealand TV that were of particular concern to us. One such issue is the apparent high incidence of violence in promotions for upcoming programmes on some channels. While much of the violent content in promotions and programmes may be relatively innocuous, we are concerned that many incidents of serious violence are still screened each week. We also note the

emerging role of women as both perpetrators and victims of violence and that children may be more likely to feature as victims of violence in the AUT study than in comparative US studies from the mid to late 1990s.

While it is not possible to say definitively – as is the case in many research areas – that there is a direct link between levels of TV violence and anti-social or violent behaviour in society, the fundamental issue remains the consequences of not acting on the extensive research data compiled over the past 50 years.

It has become clear to us that the "regulatory" system in New Zealand for dealing with TV violence needs to adopt a stronger focus on risk assessment and precautionary risk management. By this we mean more attention needs to be paid to those groups who might be vulnerable to the influence of TV violence and the other risk factors involved in anti-social or violent behaviour, as well as developing strategies that enable all viewers to manage the amount of TV violence to which they are exposed. It also means looking at ways to reduce any role that viewing TV violence might play in promoting anti-social and violent behaviour.

We are aware that the community does not have an organised advocacy role in New Zealand television. Links with viewers and the community need to be strengthened so that the industry is better informed about the community's concerns regarding TV violence. Moving to a precautionary risk management approach becomes more urgent as technological developments will continue to increase the numbers of channels available to viewers and also increase the platforms that TV will be delivered on – for example, the internet, the direct satellite reception of foreign signals and cell phones.

What we are proposing is similar to the public-health approach adopted by the government for a variety of health and social problems, including family and other forms of interpersonal violence. It involves two broad strategies: reducing exposure to major external risk factors (through programme advisories, watershed signalling, programme classifications and filtering technology); and equipping viewers, particularly those in high-risk categories, with the critical viewing skills to be more resistant to the effects of exposure to TV violence.

Although there is virtually no relevant New Zealand research on the influence of TV violence on violence in individuals and wider society, findings from the large international

literature and AUT content analysis give us reason for concern. We conclude that the current level of TV violence in New Zealand may pose a risk for some individuals and vulnerable groups including children and young people, especially those who are also exposed to other major risk factors for violence. We consider it likely that there are a variety of additional adverse consequences, although these appear to be less well understood and are beyond the main scope of our terms of reference.

Despite the lack of directly relevant New Zealand research and a full scientific understanding of the complex linkages between screen violence and anti-social behaviour, we have sought to find workable ways to help reduce the risk factors identified. We have sought to do so while allowing TV the freedom to fulfil its legitimate role as a source of entertainment, information, education, controversy, social criticism, public service, and business enterprise.

The proposals later in the report (see Chapter 6 "What is The Precautionary Risk Management Model?") have been guided by the conclusions from the literature review, the content analysis and the open and wide-ranging discussions of the Working Group members who brought considerable expertise and varied perspectives to our task. We have chosen to adopt a "collaborative" approach that will retain sufficient flexibility to be adaptable over time and which can be monitored and assessed to judge whether it is proving effective.
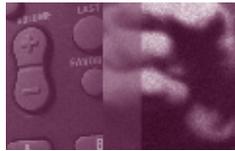
We call this approach "The Precautionary Risk Management Model". It creates a process of engagement between viewers, interest groups and broadcasters with the aim of developing workable solutions for dealing with TV violence. Our proposals will give viewers more voice and choice about programming that contains violence, provide for education strategies to make viewers better informed, fund more specific research and information on which to base public policy, create linkages for more integrated approaches to the issue of TV violence and violence generally, and maintain a robust and accessible complaints system.

The following chapters in this report to the Minister of Broadcasting explain what the research tells us about the issue of TV violence, describe what the levels of TV violence on New Zealand TV currently are, set out the approach we have taken to this evidence, and give the reasons behind our unanimous proposals and recommendations.
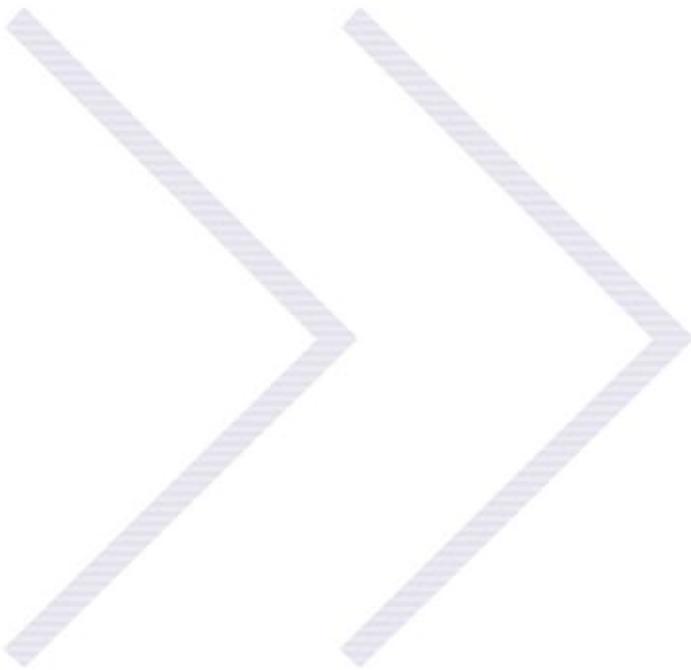
2. The Research Literature: Key Themes From Studies

The relationship between TV and violence is one of the most extensively researched topics in the social sciences. At the close of the 20th century there were an estimated 4,000 studies covering most countries where TV is an important medium. A wide variety of research approaches have been adopted by various studies and virtually every discipline in the social sciences has been utilised at some time or other.

While some moderate relationships between viewing TV violence and aggressive behaviour have been established, aggressive behaviour is a multi-causal phenomenon in which the effects of exposure to TV violence are one of many possible strands. The best way forward is to concentrate on evaluating the potential risk factors associated with TV violence and to develop appropriate means of risk assessment and precautionary risk management that also respects the right of the individual to receive a broad range of TV content.

THE LITERATURE: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

We asked the AUT team to range widely over the vast realm of research on TV violence in an attempt "to identify and assess what methodologies have been used to analyse television violence, and to establish how robust the findings from different approaches were".[5] The two main approaches to researching TV violence have been the "behaviourist" and "active-audience" approaches. More recently, a synthesis of these two approaches called "reception analysis" has emerged. There can be and often is a great deal of overlap among the approaches.

"Behaviourist" Studies

The behaviourist approach uses well-validated quantitative and experimental methods in social science to try to identify causal relationships of some kind between viewing TV violence and violent behaviour in groups of individuals. Exposure to TV violence is seen as leading to increased aggression or violent behaviour[6] and the causal link is held to be direct and one-way in that it is the medium that does things to people.

By this account, the direct and pervasive effect of TV causes viewers to react or behave in certain ways that override individual and social differences. In some cases, the effect of TV violence may cause individuals to act against their best interests through anti-social or violent behaviour. Although the viewing audience is largely regarded as a passive receiver of the TV message, some recent examples of this approach take the form of more complex models that include theories of at-risk audiences and cognitive activity by viewers (who may use TV violence to learn "scripts" for their lives that focus on aggression as an acceptable form of social problem solving).

This is the dominant method for investigating the role of TV violence – particularly so in the United States, which has the most extensively funded research effort into the effects of TV violence anywhere in the world. Within this overall approach, a myriad of different techniques are deployed.

Some of the more prominent ones are briefly described below.

Quantitative content analysis – in which acts of violence in TV programmes are counted and then associated questions are asked about the context of these acts. This context can include the nature of the perpetrators and victims, who initiates the violence, how realistic

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5   B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p101.
6   Some theorists argue that exposure to TV violence leads to decreased aggression and violence because it acts as a form of "catharsis" or safety valve. This is a controversial claim and it has been difficult to devise studies to test its validity.

and graphic is the violence, the means of violence, the type of programme, the role of humour in violence, how violence is used to resolve conflict and so on.

This type of study – both internationally and in New Zealand – has been heavily influenced by the pioneering work of George Gerbner in the US between 1967 and 1989. Gerbner used various contextual features to develop a theory called "cultivation theory" that emphasised the role TV plays in cultivating a view of the world that may be more dangerous and cruel than the real world. For those viewers who watched a lot of TV, or who felt more victimised generally in their daily life, this was held to result in a "mean world syndrome" that made them more fearful and negative about the world than people who watched little TV.

While there appears to be some relationship between TV watching and the development of a "mean world syndrome", it is regarded by most researchers as being relatively weak statistically and as not giving enough weight to other factors in people's personal environments or the complexity of their interactions with TV and other media. Complex definitions of what constitutes violence are now used in count-analysis studies, and sophisticated analyses can be done to reveal patterns of violence in programming by particular broadcasters.
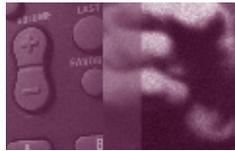
Laboratory experiments – in which participants' reactions and responses to TV violence are measured against control groups (or other contexts) that have not been exposed to the same stimulus.

Field experiments or observational studies – in which participants' reactions and responses to TV violence in "normal" settings, such as home or school, are measured against control groups (or other contexts) that have not been exposed to the same stimulus.

Cross-sectional studies – in which associations between current aggressive behaviour and exposure to TV violence in an earlier period of the participants' lives are investigated. These studies show co-occurrence associations rather than cause-and-effect relationships.

Longitudinal studies – in which children's TV and media consumption is compared with the same children's attitudes to aggressive behaviour at one or more points later in life (after attempting to adjust for other well-known predictors of aggression). These take the form of field or observational studies but they do use some of the techniques of laboratory experiments.

These various research methods have their respective merits and shortcomings and these issues have been discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of the AUT Report. (Readers who want more information on these complex methodological matters should refer to those chapters.)

A recent overview study published in the prestigious journal *Science* by Anderson and Bushman summarised the strength of the correlations in 284 studies between exposure to TV violence and individuals behaving more violently because of this exposure. Anderson and Bushman argue that the correlations between exposure to TV violence and aggressive behaviour are stronger, for instance, than the association between exposure to lead and IQ scores in children, or self-examination and the extent of breast cancer. The range of correlations for exposure to TV violence and resulting aggressive behaviour, however, are somewhat lower than those between smoking and lung cancer.

The US Surgeon General's 2001 report on youth violence gives another benchmark for assessing the risk factors associated with aggression (at least in children and young people). For children aged 6-11 years of age, exposure to TV violence at 0.13 is a small-effect risk factor comparable to hyperactivity, discipline problems, anti-social behaviour, or poor performance in school. Rather surprisingly, exposure to TV violence is assessed as *much more* powerful a risk factor for this age group than factors such as broken homes, abusive parents, neglect, and anti-social peers. On the other hand, exposure to TV violence is *much less* important as a risk factor than aggression (for boys only), anti-social parents, poverty and low family socio-economic status, being male, substance use, and general offences.

The Surgeon General's report did not identify viewing violent TV content between the ages of 12 to 14 years as a significant risk factor for violent behaviour later in adolescence. This suggests that exposure to TV violence is a more important risk factor at the stage before children begin to form their own moral framework. Children who are at risk of being heavily influenced by TV violence might not be able to progress to the next stage in their development from following a set of rigid rules to a more flexible application of those rules to the wider world. This may result in an inability to adapt, frustration and aggression.

From a public-policy perspective, the US Surgeon General's report indicates that children and young people should not be treated as one group. The influences and risk factors appear to be different for the two groups and care has to be taken in policy responses to ensure that their different needs are not conflated.

That exposure to TV violence is one of many factors that may be present before individuals behave in severely aggressive or violent ways is illustrated in this recent statement by Huesmann, a leading behaviourist-effects researcher:

> Most researchers of aggression agree that severe aggression and violent behaviour seldom occur unless there is a convergence of multiple predisposing and precipitating factors such as neurophysiological abnormalities, poor child rearing, socio-economic deprivation, poor peer relations, attitudes and beliefs supporting aggression, drug and alcohol abuse, frustration and provocation and other factors.[7]

"Active-audience" Approaches

Some researchers have criticised the behaviourist-effects model for largely leaving the viewer out of the effects equation. The active-audience approach rests on the proposition that individuals actively filter, react to and interpret the images they see on TV. Rather than receiving a message, the viewer makes the message. This approach challenges the idea of TV viewers as "passive sponges" who just absorb TV messages without any active filtering of what they see. Proponents of the active-audience approach argue that viewers are active makers of meaning from TV "texts" (that is, programmes). Viewers' subjective interpretation of programmes is determined by a range of factors – life experiences, ideology, their social and economic situation – and not just by the programme itself.
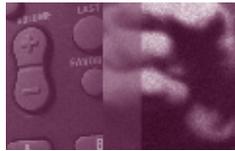
Active-audience approaches became more prevalent in the 1980s as many countries moved to systems with vastly increased channel choice. Individual preferences and choices are much more available in multi-channel environments following the advent of broadband, cable and satellite TV technology.

Initially, active-audience research was based on the quantitative and empirical investigation of individual preferences and choices. Like the behaviourist approach it sought to establish causal relationships between content and behaviour – but in reverse. It claimed that media and TV content followed viewer taste rather than shaping it.

Other active-audience research is non-quantitative and interpretive in approach. It relies on open-ended interviews or focus-group discussions rather than questionnaires with pre-determined multiple-choice answers. These types of active-audience researchers believe that the filtering and interpretive process by viewers is so individual – depending as it does on people's cognitive powers, personality and emotional state – that it is impossible

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[7] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p45.

to make law-like generalisations about the role TV violence plays in anti-social or violent behaviour.

A number of methodological criticisms have been levelled at studies that concentrate on the role of "active" audiences in constructing meaning from what they view. Much of the data collected is through focus groups and tends to stress individual differences even where these are part of a group process – which raises questions about how typical this detailed data is, even if it is linked to other more objective measures.

These studies may also give too much weight to viewers' ability to form independent judgements about what they watch. Participants are asked to act as media critics on aspects of content – some people may be better or worse at this. In many cases, their responses may be conditioned and influenced by the very media they are commenting on. Active-audience approaches may, therefore, overvalue the degree of freedom of choice viewers have in constructing meaning from their TV and media experiences.

Reception-analysis Studies

A number of studies – particularly from the 1990s – have attempted to deal with the over-valuing of viewers' freedom of choice by giving more emphasis to the social context of individuals. This is a way of taking account of the relative roles of the individual, the media and the individual's social setting in creating interpretations and attitudes.

This approach is called reception analysis and it brings interpretative approaches to quantitative assessments of content. There is a strong emphasis on the context that surrounds acts of violence screened on TV – and it takes account of issues such as whether the violence is portrayed as fictional or factual, the genre, whether there are humorous or fantasy elements, the credibility of the violence and the weapons used, whether the violence is justified, how graphically the violence is portrayed, the degree of empathy for the victim or perpetrator, and so on.

Reception-analysis studies suggest that viewing TV violence is a complex subjective experience that depends on the dramatic context in which the violence is placed and the perceptions, understandings and values that respondents bring to the viewing context. This finding also seems to hold for children, according to a 1997 UK study by the researcher David Buckingham.[8] The distinction between fact and fiction seems to be central in determining the perceptions that respondents bring to interpreting or

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8   B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p66.

evaluating a screened act of violence. Respondents also make individual interpretative judgements about content (including violent content) in terms of its realism and perceived gratuitousness.

The AUT team partially adopted reception-analysis methodology in its Content Analysis Study for the Working Group (see Chapter 4 of this report), where it combined the well-established survey and statistical methods of TV count surveys with some more subjective and contextual coding criteria. In a full reception-analysis approach the role of count analysis shifts from mere quantitative enumeration of incidents of violence to one of establishing a baseline of meaning against which to explore the range of interpretative responses that different audience segments bring to TV content.

Reception analysis promises to provide a more effective grasp of the influences and counter-influences at play in the production and reception of TV – and will be valuable, therefore, in the exploration of factors that strengthen or weaken the impact of TV violence.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The AUT literature review has reported on most of the major studies of the last 50 years, including a number of major overview studies that reviewed the field. What is clear from the literature review is that this is not a simple issue. The effect or influence of TV on violent or anti-social behaviour is extremely complex and does not lend itself to a single answer or solution.

We know that violent portrayals are part of the everyday "currency" of TV and of story telling since time immemorial, that some individuals use these portrayals as models or scripts for their own lives, and that in some circumstances the effects of this will be negative. What cannot be shown definitively is that television violence on its own is the cause of anti-social or violent behaviour. TV violence is one potentially important element in a web of factors and influences associated with such behaviour and for some individuals it may promote or increase the power of these other factors.

The research literature does not provide clear and unambiguous policy directions – if anything it does the opposite. As Michael Rutter, a prominent researcher and academic in developmental psychopathology, has commented:
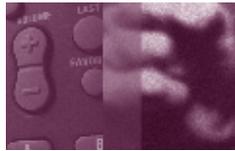
> Politicians and the general public may reasonably expect that empirical research into the causes, correlates, and consequences of antisocial behaviour, and into its prevention and treatment, ought to give rise to clear-cut implications for policy … we have no right to complain that policymakers fail to pay adequate attention to research findings if such findings have only weak implications for policy.[9]

There are three main lessons that we have taken from the literature review.

The first lesson is that concerns about TV violence should shift from a preoccupation with proving or disproving some form of causal link between TV violence and violent behaviour towards a process of risk evaluation and assessment. This involves a multi-level understanding of the complex factors that together have some influence on violent behaviour. These factors include: childhood experience of family violence, exposure to TV violence, traditional male sex roles, public attitudes towards violence, lack of empathy towards others, poor anger management, inability to tolerate frustration, and rewards for aggressive behaviour. Other social and economic influences such as poverty, unemployment, racism, and educational failure also have an effect.

We consider the research has established that TV violence is one of the multiple mix of factors that underlie violent behaviour. Because violence is a multi-causal phenomenon, regulatory approaches should focus on minimising the opportunities for violent TV content to interact with other risk factors for violence and so make violent behaviour more likely.

This suggests the simplistic view that TV violence alone causes violent behaviour should be replaced by a more finely tuned assessment of the risk factors associated with particular programmes. What needs to be taken into account in assessing the risk potential of programmes are contextual factors such as the type of programme or genre, whether the violence is intended to be light-hearted or humorous, the graphicness of the violence, and whether the violence is gratuitous. Other factors such as the typical audience for the type of programme, time of screening, warning advisories and so on should also be part of the assessment process.

The second lesson is that the concept of risk is also something viewers and caregivers have the capacity to interpret or reinterpret in ways that go beyond the TV content itself. That is, content analysis needs measures for how various social groups form their world-view and the preconceptions, information and values they bring to TV viewing. It also

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[9]   B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p102.

needs to be able to measure or assess how specific violent portrayals reinforce or alter the perceptions and attitudes of viewers and what personal level of risk viewers are willing to countenance in what they watch.

The third lesson is that the concept of risk at an individual or group level must be related to a wider framework of the role TV plays in developing public attitudes towards the "responsible" society and the values most of us collectively hold about how to respect and treat other people in public and private life.

Further Issues from the Literature Review

The literature review also points to aspects of TV and violence that deserve further investigation, and in the section on The Precautionary Risk Management Model in Chapter 6 we set out some areas where we think additional research and possible areas of policy development will be worthwhile.

One of these issues is the possible effects of cartoons on younger viewers. This is an under-researched area, but some researchers believe more work is needed on how children might perceive or interpret the often humorous or trivial violence associated with animations. A Japanese content-analysis study has highlighted that Japanese cartoons (which are now widely available and popular in New Zealand) take a different approach to violence than imported (US) cartoons. In Japanese cartoons the number of good assaulters almost equalled the bad assaulters and good characters were as likely to be wounded or killed as bad characters. The Japanese interpretation of violence appears to emphasise suffering and sympathy for the main characters rather than violence as an end in itself.

Given the prevalence of these cartoons on offer to New Zealand children, there is a case for investigating whether children here view them in the same way as Japanese children and what effects (if any) this might have. Because of the current multi-channel environment, New Zealand children have access to higher levels of cartoon programming than in the 1980s – when the two-channel environment offered less choice in programming and so children were likely to be exposed to higher levels of other genres such as drama, crafts, puppets, natural history and science.[10]

The role that parents and other adults can play in monitoring what is seen on the screen is important in managing what is screened in the home. There is an opportunity for parents and other adults to work with children and young people in assisting them to become

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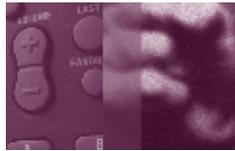
[10] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p52.

critically aware and media-literate viewers. For example, some studies show that where children are encouraged to take an active involvement with the viewpoint of victims of televised violence, the children's attitudes towards the character and the violence also changed – that is, they regarded the violence towards the victim as less justified.

Parents could easily use this type of approach when watching programmes with their children. We recognise, however, that in the increasing number of multi-TV households parents and children are often not watching the same programmes together.
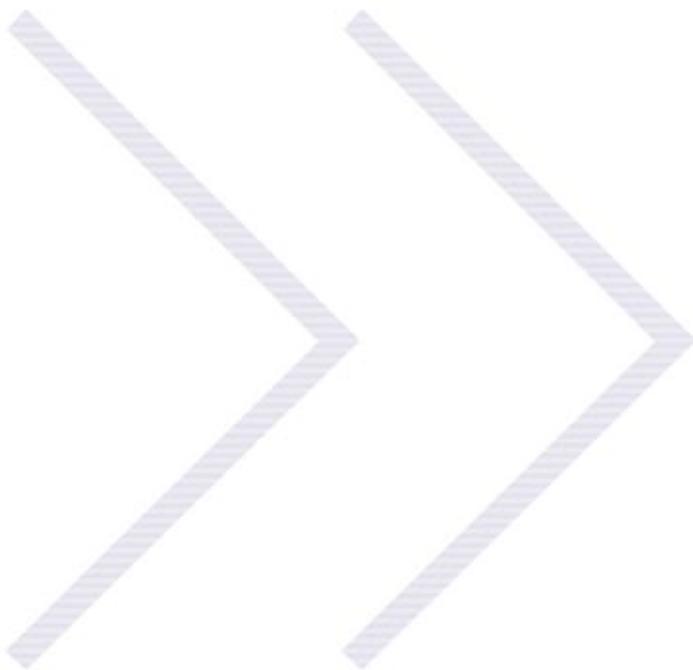
3. Previous Studies Measuring TV Violence in New Zealand

A number of surveys on the incidence of TV violence were conducted in New Zealand between 1975 and 1995. The incidence of violence on TV fluctuated over the period with the highest rate being recorded in 1991 and the lowest in 1995.

A feature throughout the 20-year period is the high number of incidents coded as violent in children's viewing hours compared with that for adults, principally because of the high number of cartoons in children's programming.

It should be noted that during the 1990s some New Zealand researchers raised questions about whether quantitative count surveys needed to be supplemented by more qualitative research to give a fuller picture of the issues surrounding exposure to TV violence.

THE BEGINNINGS

The first quantitative count study of TV violence in NZ took place in 1975. The Ginpil Study coded 99 programmes for one week in December 1975 on TV1 and the recently launched South Pacific Television (TV2). News, weather, documentaries, sport and advertisements were excluded. Apart from these exclusions, the 99 coded programmes represented all programmes starting between 4.00 pm and 10.00 pm on weekdays, and between 12.00 noon and 10.00 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Four classes of acts were counted as violent:

- assault was defined as "the use of physical force or weapons which appears to attempt to, or succeed in, restraining or causing disability, injury, or hurt to a human being or human-like being"

- threats or menacing gestures

- indirect violence injures without direct use of physical force or the 'common' weapons

- risky actions "include those acts which although not falling within the assault, threat, or indirect definition of violence, are still apt to lead to injury to self or others if repeated".[11]

The basic coding frequency unit was the violent "episode", which consisted of one act or multiple-related acts (such as a fight). When compared with other international studies from the period, the average number of violent episodes per hour was 7.3, roughly comparable to a US level of 8 and double the UK level of 4.

An interesting finding was that the earlier a programme was broadcast, the more violent episodes it contained. As the AUT study points out: "this presumably reflects the timing of cartoons being screened, but also means that violence was concentrated rather than avoided in children's viewing time, a finding which has tended to be repeated in successive NZ studies".[12]

MEDIA WATCH SURVEYS 1982-1995

During the 1980s and '90s the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation, under the Media Watch banner, carried out a series of surveys on TV violence. These surveys largely adopted Gerbner's methodology for content-analysis surveys. The first 1982 survey of TV1 and TV2 found a lower rate of violent episodes than in 1975, but the head researcher

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[11] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p75.
[12] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p76.

believed this was fortuitous rather than a result of changing policy. The 1982 Media Watch survey sample had half the number of cartoons recorded in the Ginpil survey. This survey also noted the concentration of violent episodes in trailers promoting forthcoming programmes.

Media Watch surveys were carried out in 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1995. In all of these surveys a full week of TV drama was monitored.

The 1992 Media Watch Survey monitored a week of TV drama on TV1, TV2 and TV3 in November that year. The definition of violence used was similar to that in other Media Watch surveys and was defined as:

> The use of physical force or the threat of such use on a person or persons. Verbal abuse or cruelty, destruction to property or animals (unless human-like as in cartoons) was not rated.[13]

The survey coded 1,774 episodes of violence, averaging 8.1 per hour of TV drama. TV3 showed 9.4 episodes per hour, TV2 8.4 and TV1 6.0. Half the serious violence on screen (causing death or serious injury) occurred in films.

There were more violent episodes in children's than adult viewing times. Cartoons were the main source of violent episodes, contributing nearly half of all the violent episodes in this survey. Eighteen of the 20 cartoons were American (one British and one Australian). In the programming surveyed, American-originated drama showed 10.2 violent episodes per hour, and British drama only 2.6.

The 1992 survey was the first of the Media Watch surveys to fully analyse promotional trailers. As had been noted in earlier surveys, trailers were found to be a particular focus for violent episodes, containing three times more violent episodes (23.9) than overall dramatic programming (8.1) per hour. There were significant differences in the rate of violent episodes in promotional trailers between TV1 (8.3), TV2 (33.1) and TV3 (24.0).

Reviewing the Media Watch surveys from 1982 to 1992 reveals that cartoons, in most years surveyed, were by a considerable margin the most violent genre – outscoring police dramas and films. The violence levels in cartoons were roughly the same in 1992 as they had been in 1982, although the levels had fluctuated during this period.

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13 *Ibid* p81.

The 1995 Media Watch survey was the most sophisticated so far and it received funding from the Broadcasting Standards Authority. The survey covered all drama in a week in April 1995, but excluded programmes beginning between 1.00 and 6.30 am. (All the earlier surveys had been conducted in the month of November.)

The 1995 methodology was the same as that for all the previous Media Watch surveys, although 1995 was the first survey to be recorded then rated, rather than being rated live off-air.

The survey found a halving in the levels of violence compared with Media Watch surveys in 1990 and 1992. The overall rate was the lowest since the 1982 Media Watch survey. All the channels dropped significantly, with TV3 having the most dramatic fall (from 10.2 in 1990 to 3.3 in 1995). Most genres had reduced violence levels in 1995, with cartoons down to a rate of 11.6 (from a 1992 level of 21.7, and a high in 1984 of 37.2). A significant reduction in violent content, across most genres, had occurred once before, in 1989.

American-originated programming (4.3 episodes per hour) continued to have a level well above programmes from the UK (2.5) and Australia (1.6), although the absolute level had fallen considerably. The rate of violence in children's viewing time (4.7) remained much higher than in adult time (3.1). Violence in promotions had also declined since 1992, although not to the same degree as in drama programming.

Geoff Bridgman was the researcher for both the 1992 and 1995 Media Watch studies. His view was that the lower rates of screened violence reflected "the weight of evidence against television violence, public pressure for less violence on television, and more respect for the evidence from people within television".[14] He also noted the increase in video and pay TV usage, which had yet to be researched in terms of its content and effects.

It has been argued that the earlier (1989) reduction in violent programming also resulted from public pressure that included a national campaign to reduce TV violence and dialogue with TV executives. Both the Royal Commission on Broadcasting and Related Telecommunications in New Zealand (1986) and the Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into Violence (1987) also had called for reductions in screened violence.[15]

These episodes suggest that active dialogue between the community and broadcasters can be a force for change in the right circumstances.

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[14] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p83.
[15] MW Abbott (1992) "Television violence: a proactive prevention campaign" in G. Albee, L. Bond, & T. Monsey (eds.) Improving Children's Lives: Global Perspectives (London) Sage Publications pp263-278.

THE MASSEY 1991 STUDY

In 1991 Massey University's Educational Research and Development Centre conducted a study commissioned by the Broadcasting Standards Authority. They recorded a full week of TV content (11–17 February) screened on the then three channels, TV1, TV2 and the newly broadcasting TV3.

The research team developed their own definitions and coding instrument. Their definition of violence was adapted from UK research:

> Any *violent image* or action of physical force or *threat thereof*, with or without a weapon, against oneself or another person, animal or inanimate object, whether carried through or merely attempted, and whether the action caused injury or not.[16]

The researchers' decision to include the categories of "violent image" and "threats" made for an intentionally broad definition of TV violence, which influenced the amount of violence recorded in the survey. The researchers, however, counted scenes (which could include several incidents) rather than incidents, and so this may have reduced their count in relation to other New Zealand surveys which used an incident-based counting method. The week in February coincided with the First Gulf War, two one-day cricket matches, and the launch of new programmes.

When the researchers re-calculated their data – excluding the additional categories of "images" and "threats", as well as so-called "peaceful genres" – this gave an overall count of 10.32 events per hour. The channels ranked as follows: TV2 (12.2) TV3 (11.3), and TV1 (5.0). Much of the violence was screened before the child-viewing watershed in time slots rated as G or PGR. This was mainly because of cartoon violence, although the Gulf War coverage was also a factor.

Violence was again concentrated in the cartoons, but coders rated cartoon violence low on the subjective scale as "almost totally unrealistic/fantasy". By contrast, news and documentary rated high on the subjective scale, as they were regarded as mainly "realistic".

So that they could compare their research with the Media Watch surveys, which surveyed only drama, the Massey researchers recomputed their data excluding the non-drama programming. When the study was first published a methodological error resulted in a

[16] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p85.

relatively low figure of 6.3 acts or images of violence per hour for drama. When this error was rectified, the Massey count for drama was 10.3 episodes per hour rather than the 6.3 originally reported. This was the highest rate found so far in a New Zealand survey, although it was not significantly higher than the Media Watch Surveys of 1990 and 1992 (both 8.1 episodes of violence per hour) and that in 1984 (9.5 incidents).

Overview

Analysing the Media Watch and Massey survey data from 1982 to 1995 there remains some uncertainty regarding the degree to which there has been stability or periodic fluctuations in the amount of violence screened. But, taken in conjunction with other sources of information, it appears likely that there were increases from 1982 to 1984, followed by a series of falls (the most significant being in 1989), then further increases in 1990 and 1992 and another significant fall in 1995. The Massey survey in 1991 revealed rates that were in a similar range to the 1990 and 1992 Media Watch surveys. The two periods when reductions were recorded were preceded by public and political concern about TV violence and various forms of engagement between major stakeholder groups. The post-1989 increases recorded in the period 1990 to 1992 followed legislative change and the introduction of private television. This overall pattern can be seen in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Comparison of TV violence in NZ2003 data with previous content analyses
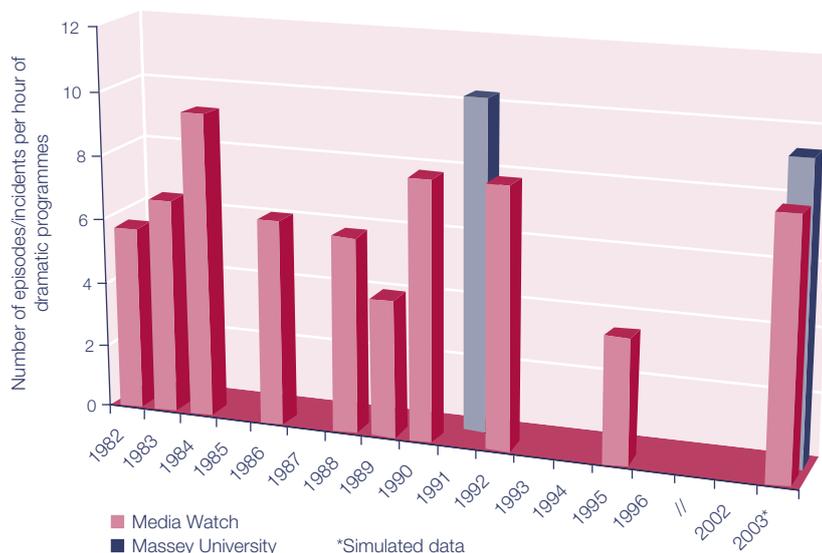
*This figure contains simulated data derived from the AUT content-analysis survey (referred to as NZ2003) carried out for the Working Group in 2003. The simulation puts the various surveys on a similar basis for comparative purposes. More detail about the simulation process is contained in Chapter 4: "Current Levels of TV Violence in New Zealand".

The reliance on violence-count surveys, however, began to be increasingly questioned. The Massey research team, amongst other researchers, expressed strong doubts about the value of the violence count as a research method – they recommended that more research was needed on audience perceptions and attitudes; and that genre was important, as was the related issue of fantasy and the level of realism of programmes. They were also concerned about the screening in children's viewing time of promotions for programmes that were to be broadcast after the 8.30pm "watershed".

Studies by Helena Barwick and Kay Weaver in the 1990s had also suggested that research on TV violence in New Zealand needed to adopt more qualitative approaches. Weaver, in particular, claimed that the behaviourist approach dominated New Zealand research. She believed research was needed on whether New Zealand audiences took the same meanings from the violence in overseas programmes screened here that viewers in the country of origin did.[17] As well, multi-dimensional studies were required to investigate "the social, cultural, ideological and economic meanings and uses of violent representations, and what are the various types of 'effects' these might have upon different viewers".[18] In Weaver's view, such studies posed considerable research difficulties but they would also provide much better evidence and information on which to base public policy.
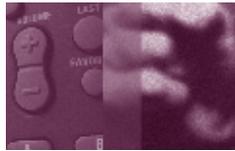
[17] CK Weaver (2001) "The Television and Violence Debate in New Zealand: Some problems of Context" in John Farnsworth and Ian Hutchison (eds) *New Zealand Television: A Reader* Dunmore Press (Palmerston North) p329.
[18] *Ibid*, p323.

4. Current Levels of TV Violence in New Zealand

As part of the research brief, the AUT team conducted a content-analysis survey to update the incidence of TV violence and to compare this with previous New Zealand research as well as comparable international studies. This chapter describes AUT's approach to the design of the survey, the results, and their general policy implications.

Of particular interest is the increase in the use of violence in promotions and advertising since 1995 – a more pronounced rise than that found in programmes. Most of the high incident counts of violence in promotions are clustered in a few pay TV channels, with the majority of the other channels showing more modest incident counts. Although the incidence of violence in programmes has also risen since 1995, today's levels are similar to those New Zealand experienced in the early 1990s. Current rates of violence on New Zealand TV are comparable to rates in the US where the bulk of this country's drama programmes come from, although US rates are high internationally. New Zealand's rates for incidents of TV violence are somewhat higher than those in the UK – another important source of drama programmes – but not markedly so from the most recent UK surveys.

Much of the violence screened is trivial and sometimes humorous - but many serious incidents are screened each week. Channels vary considerably in their rates of violence because of the particular type of programmes they broadcast and the specific audience they are aiming to attract.

Children's TV includes the most incidents of violence in its programming because of animated cartoons – a finding that is consistent with previous New Zealand and international surveys. Because of the heavy diet of cartoons in children's viewing, there is not much difference in the incidence of violence shown before and after the 8.30pm "watershed". This is consistent with the pattern from other surveys.

THE AUT 2003 TV VIOLENCE CONTENT-ANALYSIS SURVEY

The AUT research team's view was that focusing on count surveys gave a partial and narrow view of the phenomenon of TV violence – and that this type of survey needed to be supplemented by other types of research. Some of the key issues in the design of the AUT survey for the Working Group are set out below. The AUT Report in Chapter 9 has a full discussion of various methodological issues connected with the design of the survey and readers should consult that chapter for detailed information.

Defining TV Violence

A number of definitions of TV violence have been used in New Zealand and international surveys. Commonly used elements include:

- the act, attempt, or physical threat of physical force that does or could physically harm an animate being (human or non-human) – whether actual or potential, intentional or accidental, natural or supernatural

- credible verbal threats

- images where only the act or consequence of violence are shown, but where a credible link between the two can be made

- verbal descriptions of violent acts

- acts against inanimate objects

- psychological harm (which can result from verbal abuse and implicit threats).

While not usually part of the initial definition of violence, some studies in their analysis consider whether the act is unfair to the victim before classifying it as violent.

For the content analysis, AUT adopted the following definition:

> A violent act is an act of force that physically harms a human or other animate being. The act may be carried out or just be a credible threat of physical harm. It may or may not result in visible harm. It may be intentional or accidental. It may be an act of nature or of an animate being. It may involve natural or supernatural beings or force. It may be a credible verbal threat of violence, or verbal behaviour which increases the probability of physical violence. It may be a verbal description of an act of violence which is not itself shown. The violent act itself may be shown, or only the consequences of the act.[19]

[19] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p114.

The AUT definition omits two features from the above list of commonly used definitions: acts against inanimate objects and psychological harm. The intention was to have as inclusive a measure as possible of the incidence and significance of TV violence, while leaving open the possibilities for further analysis of "global" concepts such as fairness and justification for violence at the final report stage.

Coding Levels and Selection of Coders

It was originally proposed to do three levels of coding, which correspond to the incident, the scene, and the programme.

Level one: codes for frequency of incidents of televised violence that are manifest or latent, objective or subjective, or combinations thereof. The coding level here focuses on the interactions between perpetrators and the targets of violence at the level of the *incident*. This level of counting replicates the majority of previous count-analysis surveys in New Zealand.

Level two: codes for reality and professional production values. The coding level here focuses on the *scene*, to measure the intensity or attractiveness of violence portrayals. Because of time constraints for conducting the survey, it was decided to omit the scene level and to transfer measures for this to level three.

Level three: codes for cultural significance, values, beliefs and attitudes – that is, what violent acts say to the individual about their place in the community and the wider society. The coding level here focuses on the *programme* as a totality and is more concerned with consequences than the first two levels.

These coding levels are broadly consistent with previous studies in New Zealand and overseas. There are variations between surveys, with the national television violence survey (NTVS) in the US having measures at all three levels. The UK Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) surveys have a measure only at the scene level. Both the NTVS and BSC surveys are compared with the 2003 AUT survey. Most surveys have a measure at the incident or scene level and another at the programme level.

New Zealand research suggests that age, gender and culture are significant indicators of attitudes and perceptions of violence on TV, and so AUT recruited coders to reflect those socio-cultural dimensions. The survey began with 24 coders composed of:

- six Pacific peoples (Samoan, Tongan and Cook Island)

- six Maori

- six Pakeha/European

- six Asian (all Chinese, five from China and one from Indonesia).

Twelve of the coders were to be male and twelve female; eight of the coders were to be under 25 years of age, eight aged 25 to 44 years; and eight 45 years and older. Each coder was to code about 24 hours of TV. Three coders withdrew during the survey period, leaving 21 coders.

Coders received full training in their coding tasks, with two experienced coders assessing their initial training work.

The TV Sample

AUT originally planned to tape a "constructed" week of viewing over a 7-week period. A constructed or composite week from within a longer time period makes the sampling more representative and avoids the distortions created by international events or seasonal programming. As it turned out, the imminent invasion of Iraq (which would have produced a disproportionate number of incidents of violence in news and current affairs programmes) and the tight timelines for this project forced the researchers to sample one full week before the invasion began.

It was decided to focus on viewing times of 6am to 9am and 3pm to 11pm Monday to Thursday, with Friday going through to midnight; from 6am to 12pm on Saturday; and from 6am to 11pm on Sunday. The later finishing times on Friday and Saturday acknowledge that children stay up later on those two evenings. The sample covers the period from Friday 14 March to Thursday 20 March, the day that the "pre-emptive" strike on Baghdad began.

Time and budgetary constraints meant that not all channels available in New Zealand could be surveyed. Eight channels were chosen and programmes were recorded from the following *free-to-air* channels: TV1, TV2, TV3, TV4[20], Prime; and these *pay-TV* channels: Sky 1, Nickelodeon, Sky Movies. This covers the five national free-to-air channels, and the most accessible pay TV channels suitable for this research. The pay-TV channels selected

[20] Now primarily a music television channel called C4.

are available both on UHF and digital platforms making them more accessible.

A total of 91 hours were recorded on each of the eight channels, giving a total of 728 hours. Excluded from this sample were religious programmes, game shows, infomercials/ home shopping, instructional programmes (including home/garden improvement, cooking and travel programmes) and non-contact sports. When some programmes were repeat-screened within the sample, they were not coded twice. Excluded programmes were still included as part of the violence count in that they showed as nil violent scenes.

Advertisements were included as part of the sample. Incidents counted ranged from the graphic incidents portrayed in ACC and Land Transport Safety Authority advertisements to the ASB "Goldstein" advertisements with their more light-hearted incidents of accidental pratfalls.

A total of 669 hours were coded and assessed, following the omission of 4 hours because of errors and 55 hours of infomercials. A total of 1012 programmes were assessed and 800 coded and analysed.
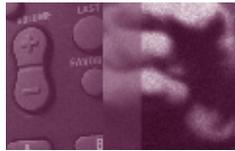
Comparability with Other Surveys

AUT has been able to compare its data analysis with other quantitative surveys of TV violence – three of these are international surveys and two are from New Zealand. This involved creating a simulation of the AUT data that matched as closely as possible the methods of the other studies. The main differences are in the range of programmes sampled, the definition of violence used, and the choice of coding levels for measuring violence.

The first comparative study is the US national television violence survey series (NTVS), which took place from 1994 to 1997. This study included all channels (including free-to-air, cable and pay TV). Its coding did not include accidents (unless they occurred during an intentional act of violence), promotions or advertisements. The study also did not assess or incorporate into its analysis news programmes (as distinct from news magazine programmes), sport, talk, religion, infomercials, and instructional or game-show programmes.

The British Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) survey series from 1997 to 2001 covers all programmes and includes accidents. The surveys do not include promotions

or advertising in their analysis and only cover viewing from 5.30pm to 12.00am. Their analysis of free-to-air channels is more comprehensive than that for pay channels and the AUT comparative simulation with these surveys includes only free-to-air channels. They also count scenes and not incidents, which may deflate their episode scores compared with other methods of counting. AUT could not easily adjust its data to create a scene analysis, but has been able to reconfigure it to replicate the other features of the BSC surveys.

The final international survey series is that by the Centre for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA) in the US for the years 1999 and 2002. These surveys again focus on drama, but cover both free-to-air and pay TV over a 24-hour period. Again, promotions and advertisements are excluded, but the method has very similar criteria to the AUT survey, although the CPMA surveys exclude violence towards animals.

The New Zealand surveys were the ones done by the Massey University researchers in 1991 and the Media Watch series. Massey's study covered 24 hours of free-to-air channels and used a similar methodology to the BSC studies. In creating the comparative simulation, AUT excluded promotions and advertising and restricted the data set to free-to-air channels.

The New Zealand Media Watch studies used the Gerbner method of sampling, which only surveyed drama. Again, promotions and advertisements are excluded and images of violence, violence towards animals, non-verbal threats and actions inciting violence are not counted.

AUT CONTENT-ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Not all channels in New Zealand have been surveyed. This means that rather than a narrow focus on the results for individual channels the AUT content-analysis survey is more useful at a broader level: in showing the differences between free-to-air and pay TV channels, or how promotional and programming decisions play out as part of channel differentiation, or revealing comparative trends in programming for certain issues.

Some of the measures used are more subjective than others – that is, they rely to varying degrees on the interpretation of incidents by the survey's coders. The discussions later in this chapter on the seriousness of violent incidents, graphic violence, the incidence of serious or graphic violence in children's viewing, and the nature of perpetrators and victims tend to be more subjective than the counts of the incidence of TV violence. More

research is needed on all the issues identified here, but the survey provides a detailed "snapshot" of recorded levels of violence on the main TV channels for one week in 2003.

The survey recorded 8,217 incidents involving violence, including repeat screenings of programmes. Within programmes, the overall level of violent incidents was 8.02 incidents per hour of TV. Promotions added 3.84 violent incidents per hour and advertisements another 0.92.

Programmes contribute 65 per cent of the incidents coded as violent, with promotions contributing 25 per cent of incidents and advertisements 6 per cent. These incidents, however, are not evenly distributed across all the channels in the survey. For programmes, Sky Movies and Nickelodeon (because of their specialised type of programming) have higher violence counts. In the case of promotions, the inclusion of Sky 1 and Nickelodeon skews the overall level as both channels have high counts of violent incidents in promotions (see Table 4.2).

Violence on Different Channels - Programming

As can be seen in table 4.1, there is wide variance across channels in the number of coded violent incidents per hour – ranging from 2.5 incidents per hour on TV1 to 11.9 on Sky Movies and 13.4 on Nickelodeon. The other five channels fall into a group that ranges from 6.2 incidents an hour for Prime to 8.3 for TV2. TV1's programming has 44 per cent of programmes with a violent incident, whereas this reaches 90 per cent on Sky Movies.
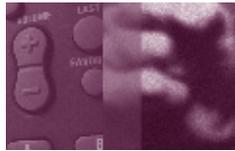
Table 4.1: Violent incidents on the 8 sampled channels (programme material only, excluding advertisements and promotions)

Channels	Incidents	Incidents /Hour	% of Programmes with violence
TV1	219	2.5	44%
TV2	757	8.3	48%
TV3	609	6.8	53%
TV4	280	7.6	67%
Prime	566	6.2	50%
Sky1	632	7	51%
Sky Movies	1085	11.9	90%
Nickelodeon*	1215	13.4	77%
Total	**5363**	**8.02**	**58%**

* Nickelodeon is principally an animation channel targeted at younger viewers

These differences reflect the type of programmes shown and the specialist nature of some channels. Movie channels, for instance, have higher violence counts because of the nature of their programming. Nickelodeon specialises in animations for children, and these types of cartoons are known from other surveys to have high violence counts (see the previous chapter). As has been noted, the violence count in cartoons may range from harmless pratfalls to interpersonal aggression. The Nickelodeon channel does not play some of the cartoons with more "action" that are available, for instance, on the Cartoon Network, which was not included in the AUT 2003 survey.

Given the mix of channels in New Zealand, differences between channels in the levels of violence shown is not unexpected. Channels that concentrate on drama will have higher rates than channels that focus on documentaries, sport or light entertainment. Among the free-to-air channels, those with comprehensive news and news magazine programmes (TV1, TV3 and Prime) are generally likely to have lower violence counts. Channels with few or no cartoon programmes, such as TV1 and Prime, will also have lower rates of coded violent incidents.

The pattern in New Zealand is broadly similar to that in the US in that TVI and the US Public Broadcasting Service have the lowest rates of coded violent incidents; TV2, TV3, TV4 and Prime have similar rates to the main TV networks in the US; with Sky1 and Sky Movies being somewhere between basic and premium cable in the US.

Violence on Different Channels – Promotions and Advertising

One of the most striking features of the AUT content-analysis survey is the growth in the use of violence for promoting upcoming programmes. The Media Watch surveys of drama programmes reported 0.8 incidents per hour in 1992 and 0.6 incidents per hour in 1995. The AUT figures for all programmes (not just drama programming) show 3.84 incidents an hour. Overall, it appears that there has been a three-fold increase in the level of violence in promotions between 1995 and now. The level of violent incidents in promotions, however, falls considerably to 1.5 incidents an hour for those channels (TV1, TV2 and TV3) monitored in previous Media Watch surveys – although this rate of 1.5 incidents per hour is still above the levels recorded in the 1995 Media Watch survey. Figures for all eight channels surveyed can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Violent incidents in promotions, advertisements and programmes on 8 channels, (derived from the coded 800 programmes and 530 hours).

Channels	Incidents/hour in:				% of total violence	% of programmes with violence in the promotions and ads.
	Promotions	Advertisements	Programmes	Total		
TV1	1.07	0.7	3.25	5.01	35%	49%
TV2	1.72	0.99	9.99	12.7	21%	39%
TV3	1.84	1.56	7.93	11.32	30%	44%
TV4	3.38	1.77	7.76	12.91	40%	95%
Prime	2.61	0.46	8.39	11.45	27%	58%
Sky 1	8.02	0.72	9.59	18.33	48%	89%
Sky Movies	1.77	0.22	12.28	14.27	14%	47%
Nickelodeon	10.69	1.29	14.81	26.78	45%	90%
Total	**3.84**	**0.92**	**9.39**	**14.16**	**34%**	**61%**

Sky 1 has just over half the 61 police/action/science-fiction/horror programmes in the survey and violent incidents in promotions and advertising are associated with virtually every programme – most of these incidents are contained in promotions. In fact, coded incidents of violence in promotions and advertising contribute nearly half the violent incidents in Sky 1's total programming.

Nickelodeon has the highest rates of coded violence in its promotions – many of these are quick-fire montages from cartoon series where characters have pratfall-type accidents, or are "zapped" in some way. Often the promotions advertise the Nickelodeon channel, where the channel's character "morphs" into a splat on the screen and forms the channel's character logo. For Nickelodeon and Sky 1, their high violence counts are as much to do with promoting the channel as they are to do with the screening of violence in the programmes themselves.

In the case of advertising, the use of violence covers a wide range of purposes and approaches. For instance, the advertisements might be for an R18 cinema release, or a cartoon programme, or a consumer product such as a soft drink. Some of the violent incidents might be part of a public health campaign, such as the campaign against drinking and driving. Domestic violence advertisements show the threatening context and the results of domestic violence. Some advertisements draw attention to products through incidents coded as violent – advertising for energy drinks is one example of this.

Many acts coded as violent in advertisements are trivial or humorous: a character faints in the ASB advertisements, a man is sprayed with a hose in a Raro advertisement, and a woman falls off her chair trying to read the *New Zealand Herald*. While coded as a violent incident, many of these examples might not necessarily be regarded as violent by the majority of viewers.

Violence on Different Channels – Children's Viewing Times

Under the Broadcasting Standards Authority programme codes, children's viewing times run from 6.00am to 8.30pm in the weekends and between 6.00am and 9.00am and then from 3.00pm to 8.30pm during the week. These hours change for school holidays to include the 9am to 3pm period.

The AUT survey does not show major differences in the level of incidents of violence between children's and adult viewing times. This reflects the high level of cartoon animations during children's viewing – particularly for channels such as TV2, TV3 and Nickelodeon that target children all or part of the time. As a consequence, these channels show programmes with more incidents of coded violence during children's viewing times than they do in adult viewing times. Channels with a strong emphasis on young adult audiences (for instance, Sky 1 and TV4) appear to run programmes that contain more violent incidents *after* the 8.30pm watershed.

Other count-analysis quantitative surveys have shown a similar pattern: there is not usually a great deal of variation in the incidence of violence between children's and adult viewing, although the type of depiction can vary markedly. The nine Media Watch surveys in New Zealand did not show major variations in the time slots. This is also the case in the UK, where the proportion of violent incidents in children's and adult's viewing is now identical.

The Impact of Different Genre on Violence Levels

One of the key factors in the levels of violence in children's viewing and programming is genre: fictional programmes include 82 per cent of the coded incidents of violence in programmes. Children's programmes make up nearly half of this incidence, and the other main contributors are action/crime/science-fiction/horror series and movies. Simulating the AUT data – using the process described earlier in this chapter in the section "Comparability with other surveys" – against the NTVS and BSC surveys in the US and UK respectively gives similar results.

As we have discussed above, animations have very high violence counts and are directed mainly at children. In fact, the NTVS rate of violence for children's programmes at 13.4 incidents per hour is considerably higher than the equivalent AUT figure of 10.9. This may be the result of full cartoon channels being included in the NTVS surveys. Nickelodeon does not show cartoons such as *Pokemon* and *Dragon Ball Z*, known for their high violence count, and adds non-animated drama and non-fiction shows to its programming.

When compared with the Massey and Media Watch surveys the same pattern of high rates for animations followed by crime/action/science-fiction/horror programmes can be seen. The AUT survey more closely resembles the surveys in the period 1990-92 than it does the 1995 and earlier 1989 Media Watch surveys. The most recent (1995) Media Watch survey has lower rates of violence for all the above genres.

The Impact of the Origin of Programmes on Violence Levels

Nearly two-thirds of New Zealand's TV content comes from the United States, with New Zealand material making the second-highest contribution.
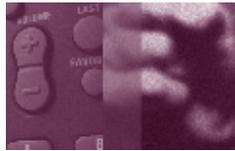
Compared with the Media Watch surveys from 1990 to 1995, the origin of New Zealand TV's *fictional* programming has changed slightly. The small reduction in the US proportion to 60 per cent is countered by a four-fold increase in programmes from "other" countries, notably Canada and Japan. The Japanese contribution is entirely animations, whereas the Canadians provide animations, movies and productions in the crime/action/science-fiction/horror genres.

US fictional programmes have more than twice the incidents of violence than programmes from the UK, New Zealand and Australia. Japan's contribution to the amount of fictional programming is as large as New Zealand's or Australia's, but its violence rate is more than double because of its high animations content. The Japanese animations' programmes at 12.4 incidents of violence per hour are more violent than fictional programmes from the US at 10.2 incidents per hour.

Weaver's point in the "Overview" of the previous chapter (page 23) needs to be borne in mind here: whether New Zealand viewers interpret the violence they see on TV or take the same meanings from it as viewers in the country of origin might. There is also some evidence that the coders in the AUT survey interpreted some of the violence incidents they

coded in many genres (reality-based, music, movies and other drama) as having more unrealistic consequences than did the US coders for the NTVS study.

Genre also needs to be considered. At first sight, an increase in local programming might help reduce the level of TV violence because New Zealand programmes have a low violence count. Local programming, however, has a higher proportion of non-fiction (often lifestyle programmes) rather than drama – and drama programmes have the higher violence counts. Local drama may also have relatively high violence counts if it spanned all the various drama genres, including crime/action/science-fiction/horror and so on.

International Comparisons of TV Violence

Table 4.3 below compares the levels of violence in the AUT survey with simulations of the three main international surveys of television violence. The simulations try and match as closely as possible the methods used in the various studies. Most of the variances are in the range of channels and programmes sampled, definitions of violence, and the coding levels used. The AUT data set is called NZ2003 in the comparisons in this chapter.

Table 4.3: Comparison of NZ2003 data with three simulations of international surveys of television violence

Survey	Incidents	Incidents/hour	Comparison data*	% of programmes with violence	Comparison data*	% of incidents in NZ2003 (excluding promotions and advertising)
NTVS (US)	3901	7.14	6.82	57%	58-61%	73%
BSC (UK)	1024	5.18	4.1 - 5.2	56%	51%	19%
CMPA (US)	4286	10.53	12	73%	na	80%
NZ2003	5363	8.02	na	58%	na	100%

* The range of values is for more than one survey in the series.

Once the AUT (NZ2003) data were reconfigured to eliminate areas not covered by the national television violence survey (NTVS) analysis a rate of violent incidents of 7.14 an hour was obtained, which was close to the NTVS value for 1996-97 of 6.82 incidents an hour. In the AUT simulated analysis of the NTVS data, 57 per cent of programmes contained violence, very close to the 58 per cent - 61 per cent range of the NTVS study.

The British Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) simulation resulted in a measure of 5.18 incidents per hour of violence. This level is in line with recent BSC data for the period 1997 to 2000, which range from 4.1 to 5.2 (for its most recent survey).

The simulation using the Centre for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA) method resulted in 10.53 incidents of violence an hour. The CMPA reported 12 episodes of violence per hour in 1999 and again in 2002, with even higher levels being reported in earlier studies. Again, the New Zealand rates are comparable or in some cases lower.

The more recent the international survey, the more closely the AUT simulation aligns with that data. For instance, the AUT rates are very similar to the most recent NTVS survey (1996/97) and the most recent BSC survey (2001). They are somewhat lower than the 1999 and 2002 CMPA surveys, which also have the closest data match in the simulations at 80 per cent.
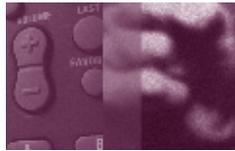
Comparison with Previous New Zealand Studies

Table 4.4 below compares simulations of the AUT survey data with data from the New Zealand surveys described in Chapter 3: "Previous Studies Measuring TV Violence in New Zealand".

The simulation of the AUT (NZ2003) data with the 1991 Massey survey gives a figure of 6.11 incidents per hour, which is considerably lower than the figure of 8.96 that Massey obtained. Simulating the Media Watch/Gerbner method gives a result of 7.98. This is somewhat higher than the 5 to 7 range typical of Gerbner studies in the US, and is at the high end of the 3.9 (1995) to 8.1 (1990, 1992) range obtained from Media Watch Studies in New Zealand.

Table 4.4: Comparison of NZ2003 data with two simulations of previous New Zealand surveys of television violence

Survey	Programmes assessed	Hours of TV assessed	Incidents	Incidents/hour	Comparison data*	Programmes with violence	% of programmes with violence	Comparison data*	% of incidents in NZ2003 (excluding promotions and advertising)
Massey	627	396	2420	6.11	8.96	313	50%		45%
Media Watch	364	198	1580	7.98	3.9 - 8.1	218	60%	52 - 64%	30%
NZ2003	1012	669	5363	8.02		591	58%		100%

* The range of values is for more than one survey in the series.

The Massey survey result was strongly affected by recording its sample at the peak of news coverage for the first Gulf War. The effect of the war coverage on the Massey Survey can be seen when the surveys are compared for drama programmes only. The AUT rate for drama on *free-to-air* channels of 9.26 incidents of violence per hour is now much closer to the Massey rate of 10.3 incidents per hour (see table 4.5 below). The AUT simulation is over twice the rate of the 1995 Media Watch survey.

Table 4.5: Comparison of NZ2003 simulations with 1990-1992 drama data from Media Watch (1990-1995) and Massey (1991) surveys

Date	Survey	Incidents/hour
1990	Media Watch	8.1
1991	Massey drama	10.3
1992	Media Watch	8.1
1995	Media Watch	3.9
2003	NZ 2003 using Media Watch simulation	7.98
2003	NZ 2003 using Massey drama simulation	9.26

AUT SUPPLEMENTARY-ANALYSIS FINDINGS

To supplement the count-analysis, the AUT survey also explored a number of other dimensions that provided more detail about the seriousness of violence (both in adult and children's viewing) and the nature of the perpetrators and victims of violence. Count-analysis studies are often criticised for providing statistics on acts of violence that are largely trivial, so the AUT survey included some measures of the extent of suffering (deaths and injury) and the graphicness of violence. These types of measure rely more on the interpretative judgements of the AUT coders about what they saw, and so are somewhat more "subjective" than the count-analysis findings that have been discussed so far in this section.
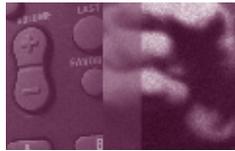
Seriousness of Violent Incidents

Incidents were classified into assaults, accidents and threats. Most incidents involve assaults, which are inherently more violent than the other two categories. TV2, Prime and Nickelodeon have higher accident rates and so lower assault rates. For TV2 and Nickelodeon this is because they screen cartoons with accident-prone characters. Prime's extreme sports programme the *Mad, Mad World of Sport* produced 120 incidents. Other than that it is a relatively low-violence channel. Channels with a greater emphasis on movies and crime/action/science-fiction/horror programmes have higher proportions of assaults – which is the case for Sky 1, Sky Movies and TV4.

When accidents are removed from the analysis, Sky Movies becomes the channel with the most violent incidents (which is likely given its concentration on movies and the nature of

this genre). Nickelodeon, even without accidents being included in the analysis, still has a high incidence of violence. Nickelodeon's rate nearly doubles to 15.5 incidents an hour when promotions and advertisements (not involving accidents) are included. Sky 1's and TV4's rates of violence also rise considerably on this basis.

Some differences in genre need to be borne in mind here. Movies as a genre are characterised by a high incidence of violence that is also high impact – over half the coded incidents in movies end in death or injury. Animations, however, are an example of high incidence but low impact – for instance, only 46 of the 628 deaths recorded in the week of the survey occurred in animations.

When the data are analysed for incidents of violence that cause death or injury, the highest rate is found in programmes at 47 per cent. Only a very small percentage of incidents resulting in death or injury occur in children's programmes. The 58 deaths in children's programmes almost all involve animated, supernatural or animal characters. Movies and crime/action/science-fiction/horror programmes account for 75 per cent of all deaths in programmes and involve many scenes of death and injury to human characters.

Sexual assault was separately coded for and occurred 37 times in programmes – a rate of 0.5 per cent. Nearly half of these incidents were in promotions and advertisements, and in one-quarter of the incidents there was "extreme" depicted harm.

The death and injury levels in the AUT survey are similar to those for the Massey and Media Watch surveys. The data for all these surveys show that high-violence-count children's programmes contain little serious violence and that this has been a consistent pattern in New Zealand surveys.

When the AUT survey was simulated with the NTVS data to measure subjective assessments of pain and harm, both surveys showed that 80 per cent of depictions involved no pain and 70 per cent no harm. The tendency, however, is for the coders to perceive less depicted harm in the AUT survey than in the NTVS data.

The AUT survey also showed much lower rates than the NTVS data for extreme pain, which was 4 per cent for AUT versus 6-9 per cent for NTVS. A similar pattern was seen for extreme harm at 12 per cent for AUT and 18 per cent for NTVS. In both surveys, around half of this extreme harm was lethal.

Most of the more extreme pain ratings in the AUT survey were from movies and crime/action/science-fiction/horror programmes, although TV2's *Pokemon*, TV3's *Defensor* (in Maori) and *Yu-Gi-Oh* did have several extreme incidents. Extreme harm was more widely spread across programming – including news programmes.

Measures of how "realistic" incidents of violence appeared to the coders show differences between the AUT and NTVS surveys – the AUT coders regarded the consequences in many genres as being more unrealistic than the American coders in the NTVS survey. This reinforces Weaver's point that it is not known whether viewers in New Zealand take the same meanings from screen violence that viewers in a programme's country of origin might.

For promotions, one-quarter of coded accidents or assaults in promotions result in death or injury. Ten per cent of promotions with violent incidents feature a death. Only a tiny proportion of these are in children's programmes, most of which involve the "death" of an animated creature or insect. There appear to be few seriously violent promotions during animations or children's drama.
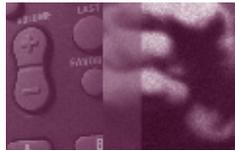
Almost half the deaths in promotions come from Sky 1 promotions for action/crime/science-fiction/horror series – often occurring within these series but promoted across comedy and other Sky 1 programmes as well. Showing promotions for violent programmes within comedy viewing clearly differentiates Sky 1 from the other channels surveyed.

Advertisements have a much lower profile than promotions for incidents of violence that result in death or injury – but at one per cent of the total incidents of serious violence coded, advertising has "surfaced" for the first time in a content-analysis survey.

Graphic Violence

The AUT Research Team developed a 12-point list of features for measuring graphic violence:

- presence of blood (more than a scratch)
- close-up shot of an injury
- close-up shots of action

- slow-motion filming of violence

- drawn-out fight scenes

- drawn-out aftermath of violence

- replays of violent scenes

- clear injury sounds

- powerful pain expressed

- threatening or aggressive music accompanying, preceding or following the violence

- a threatening visual environment

- a narrative of violence.

In about half of the programmes coded, there was at least one graphic-violence feature – with 62 programmes (6 per cent) containing at least 10 examples of graphic violence. The single most graphically violent programme in the AUT survey was an edition of *Cine News*, a light-entertainment programme about movies that includes movie "clips", with more than two examples of every graphic feature except replays.

After *Cine News*, the next 10 most graphic programmes were crime/action/science-fiction/ horror series or movies. These genres make up three-quarters of this high graphic violence group and included three episodes of *CSI, Logan's War, Walker Texas Ranger, The Breed,* and the feature films *Hollow Man, True Lives,* and *Copy Cat.* Two examples of extreme sports were also in this graphic violence group – *Rollerjam* and *Smackdown.* Coders were asked to focus only on the illegal violence in the extreme-sports programmes, so features like "drawn-out fight" would apply to fighting outside the ring but not inside it. Two documentaries featured, *Medical Horrors* and the *Life of Mammals,* with threatening music, replays, slow-motion, drawn-out fights (and a narrative of violence being part of the latter programme). Lastly, one episode of *America's Most Wanted,* a reality based programme, was included in the graphic-violence group because of coded bloody scenes, close-ups of injuries and action, replays, and expression of powerful pain.

Compared with the NTVS survey, the AUT found a higher use of close-ups in violent scenes – 10 per cent compared with 5 per cent – and about the same emphasis on significant amounts of blood (10-11 per cent).

The Incidence of Serious or Graphic Violence in Children's Viewing

The nature of the incidents of violence shown in children's viewing has been an area of ongoing public concern and some detailed analysis on this issue was carried out as part of the AUT survey. The general picture is that even though the incidents per hour of all types of violence (serious or trivial) is slightly higher in children's viewing than in adult viewing times, the survey evidence suggests that programmes in children's viewing contain considerably fewer deaths and events of graphic violence than is the case for adult time slots. Nickelodeon, for instance, has the lowest rate of violent death in its programmes of any channel. The incidence of depicted pain and harm and realistic violence are also somewhat lower in children's viewing.

There is a major difference, however, between free-to-air and pay-TV channels in the relative incidence of graphic violence and depicted pain shown during children's viewing hours. There are virtually no incidents of this type of coded violence on the free-to-air channels, whereas 24 per cent of programmes on Sky Movies and 10 per cent of Nickelodeon's programmes feature an incident of high-graphic content in children's viewing. For depicted pain in children's viewing the rates are higher again: 71 per cent of Sky Movies' programmes and around 40 per cent of those on Nickelodeon and Sky 1 will have an example of moderate to extreme pain. This is more than double the levels shown on the free-to-air channels.
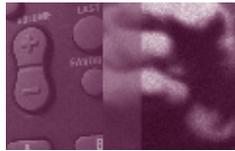
The Nature of Perpetrators and Victims

Males were much more likely to be perpetrators of violence than female – 62 per cent versus 18 per cent. When simulated against the NTVS data, the simulation showed a rate of 16 per cent for female perpetrators of violence in the AUT survey against only 10 per cent in the NTVS surveys. This could reflect a societal change since the mid 1990s when the NTVS surveys were carried out – it now appears more acceptable to show women as perpetrators of violence.

White males were the main perpetrators of violence in the AUT study – nearly 9 times that of the next nearest group, black perpetrators. Asian, other cultures and Hispanic people ranged between 2.3 per cent and 3.2 per cent of perpetrators. Maori and Pacific peoples perpetrators were 0.5 per cent each. For around 30 per cent of perpetrators of violence, the AUT coders could not determine a cultural identity.

TV often makes violent characters attractive, and the AUT survey came out with much the same figure of around 37 per cent for attractive perpetrators when compared against the NTVS simulated data – although the AUT coders found victims slightly more attractive. The AUT survey found perpetrators of violence equally divided between good or bad.

An issue raised by the NTVS researchers in the US was that depictions of violence using everyday or conventional weapons such as guns or knives could act as priming situations for imitative behaviour. The simulation against the NTVS data shows that the AUT survey rate at 18 per cent is half that of the NTVS data, although the ability to imitate more real "naturalistic" violence involving the use of the body or everyday items – even if its consequences are generally mild – remains an issue of some concern in the New Zealand context.

Death associated with perpetrators of violence rises considerably when the motive is one of protection: "Justified violence is associated with protection as [a] motivating issue, either of self, friends, family or property when under threat, or in an official capacity as a protector of the community or the country. Although only 18 per cent of violence is associated with a protection motivation, death is a much more likely outcome when this is the issue, rather than naked self interest."[21]

On the other hand, there is a relatively low chance of TV perpetrators being "punished" soon after their violent acts and, according to the AUT coders, more than half escape punishment altogether. Serious violence, however, makes punishment more likely and incidents of graphic violence increase the likelihood of more timely punishment. Compared with the NTVS data, the AUT survey suggests that fewer "bad" perpetrators of violence are punished – 29 per cent for AUT versus 37-45 per cent for NTVS. On the other hand, the AUT coders noted considerably more anti-violence messages: the AUT survey at 11 per cent versus 3-4 per cent for the NTVS data. The AUT coders found half these anti-violence messages stated that violence was morally or socially wrong.

Depictions of victims showed similar patterns to perpetrators. The gender ratio was the same for victims as it was for perpetrators and the chance of death as a victim was the same for both sexes. Again, women in the AUT survey were twice as likely at 21 per cent to be victims when simulated against the NTVS data.

The pattern of perpetrator and victim is much the same across cultures, but minority cultures are much more represented in the death rates of victims. For instance, between

[21] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p157.

a quarter and a third of Asian, Hispanic and other cultures will be dead after a violent incident compared with one-tenth of white victims. In the NTVS surveys, there was a consistent decline of 2-3 per cent a year in the depictions of "white" characters over the three years of these surveys – possibly reflecting a slow shift in the cultural mix of characters. Maori and Pacific peoples cultures are even less present as victims than they were as perpetrators.

In terms of age, the AUT survey showed that mature adults and the elderly are over-represented as victims (particularly where death is the outcome). When compared with the NTVS data, the AUT survey showed fewer adults as victims and more than double the proportion of children – 10 per cent for AUT versus 3 to 5 per cent for the NTVS survey.

As with perpetrators, the vast majority of victims are human or animations – but animations rarely kill or are killed (only three per cent of animated violent perpetrators kill and only three per cent of animated victims are killed).

The AUT survey coded most victims as not deserving the violence they received – particularly if it involved long-term pain or harm.

Overview

Although the various simulation methods access only part of the original data – as little as 19 per cent for the BSC simulation to as much as 80 per cent for CMPA – the comparisons are still heading in the same direction. The consistency in the simulated comparisons across the various surveys suggests that the different methodologies are simply different ways of viewing much the same programming.

From an international perspective, the overall rates of violence on TV in New Zealand track those found in the US and the UK (the sources of around 75 per cent of the free-to-air programmes seen here). Rates of violence on TV here are similar to or slightly less than the US – but somewhat higher than the range of surveys in the UK.

The BSC surveys have shown an increase in the levels of violence on UK television since the late 1980s. The AUT simulation was highly consistent with the BSC 2001 survey, which had the highest rate of violent scenes per hour so far of the BSC surveys. This comparison is with UK free-to-air channels: pay TV in the UK has higher rates of violence.

The AUT data are also closely aligned to the Massey Survey in 1991 and the two Media Watch surveys in the period 1990-1992. These comparisons tell us that in 2003 New Zealand is experiencing similar levels of violence on *free-to-air* TV as it did in the early 90s, but considerably higher levels compared with some earlier Media Watch Surveys in the 1980s and the 1995 survey.

White males commit much more of the serious violence on TV than any other ethnic or cultural group, although victims from minority cultural identities suffer more serious consequences from violence. Compared with the NTVS surveys, the AUT data suggest that women are more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of TV violence – and children also appear to feature more highly as victims of violence but they remain in the minority.

Much of the violence on New Zealand TV is not serious and some of it is trivial and funny, even when graphic. The overall message from the survey data on pain and harm is that "the bulk of violent incidents involve no pain or harm and that much of the violence is seen as unrealistic in its consequence. This is particularly true for children's programmes, and is highly consistent with results from other surveys."[22] Violence involving children or animations is unlikely to result in serious pain or harm. Violence in animations, for instance, rarely results in death. One issue this analysis raises is whether young viewers understand the consequences of violent actions in what they view, since actual harm is not shown in many cartoons or other children's programmes.

Moderate to extreme pain occurs relatively rarely across all perpetrator types. A small proportion of this violence is serious, however, and this can amount to many incidents a week – although some of this is concentrated in particular types of genre programmes and on particular channels. According to the AUT survey, 6 per cent of programmes feature at least 10 incidents of graphic violence – and three-quarters of this high graphic violence group are action/crime/science-fiction/horror series or movies. Other programmes in this group are spread across reality TV, extreme sports, documentaries, and one light entertainment "news" programme.

The nature of the relationship, if any, between "trivial" violence and real-life behaviour is an issue that deserves further investigation, as is the use of violence in promotions and advertising. Violence count rates in promotions have increased markedly since 1995. The incidence of coded violence in promotions, however, is variable across channels, with Sky Movies (partly because it shows promotions at the beginning and end of movies rather

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[22] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p147.

than during them) and the three longest-established free-to-air channels (TV1, TV2 and TV3) having the lowest rates of violent incidents in promotions.

The UCLA study of TV programming in the US between 1994-1997 is the only recent major study to consider promotions and in its view:

> In our examination of the issue of television violence, we found promotions to raise very serious concerns. They contain some of the most compressed and intense scenes of violence on television. Because they are short, promotions usually cannot provide much context for the violent acts. Promos may also be one of the easier issues in the world of television violence for the networks to correct.[23]

This is an issue that broadcasters need to look at more carefully and our proposals in Chapter 6 "What is The Precautionary Risk Management Model?" will provide mechanisms for doing this.

Other issues emerge from the depictions of violence on TV – particularly in the pervasive view of social life they portray. There are concerns about the attractiveness of perpetrators, the absence of appropriate or timely punishment in many cases, the use of available weapons, the extent of serious harm or lethal violence, and the relationship of justified and unjustified violence. The data simulations with NTVS show a mixed pattern on these issues – with higher values on some scores for the AUT survey and vice versa. According to the AUT survey, for serious/graphic types of violence or death "bad" perpetrators are more likely to be punished (and in a timely fashion). The AUT coders also found a considerably higher level of anti-violence messages than their NTVS counterparts.
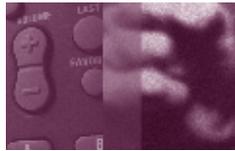
The current New Zealand TV environment is vastly different from that of 1995 and the early 1990s. The introduction of pay TV has changed the competitive landscape with many more channels jostling for market share. In these circumstances, it would be surprising if incidents of violence on TV had not increased since 1995. The issues are whether the increase that has occurred is excessive and in what *particular* ways is it cause for concern. These themes are examined in the next two chapters as we develop our response to what the research literature tells us about the possible effects of TV violence and what we know from the AUT content analysis about the incidence of violence on New Zealand TV.

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[23] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p141.

5. Developing an Effective Collaborative Approach

We conclude from the research literature that viewing TV violence is a risk factor for aggression and some other forms of anti-social behaviour. Why this occurs and the precise extent TV is responsible relative to other factors remain unclear.

The AUT content analysis tells us that rates of TV violence have increased since 1995 to levels last seen in the early 1990s (in part because of the expansion of pay TV); that violence in promotions and advertising has also increased; that serious incidents of violence are in the minority but still amount to many incidents a week; and that the cultural, gender and age mix of perpetrators and victims are changing on TV.

This chapter begins to develop the policy implications of what we have found so far in our investigation into TV violence. It looks at a number of regulatory approaches internationally, as well as at the current regulatory system in New Zealand. One of the key points is that technological change and convergence require us to look beyond today in devising approaches for controlling TV violence.

MOVING THE DEBATE FORWARD TO A PRECAUTIONARY RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

There is enough evidence from the various studies over the past 50 years to indicate that TV violence can have adverse effects on behaviour, and that it is part of a complex multi-causal phenomenon that is only partially understood. Increased desensitisation to forms of TV violence by some research participants appears to be the initial and perhaps most commonly experienced effect of continued exposure to TV violence.

The main lesson we have drawn is that the focus of concern about TV violence should move away from attempting to determine a precise set of links or relationships and move towards a process of risk assessment and precautionary risk management. Risk assessment needs to take account of the identifiable risk factors for aggression or anti-social behaviour resulting from exposure to TV violence, the groups who are considered at risk from this exposure, and the protection factors possible or available. A risk-management strategy can then be devised to help deal with the main concerns about exposure to TV violence within a broad public-health approach. Continued advocacy for a reduction in the current levels of violence on TV would be part of that strategy.

What matters here are the consequences of standing aside and not acting on the issue of TV violence. The AUT literature review tells us that three main types of risk can be identified: the risk to some individuals (through a combination of factors), the risk to particular demographic groups, and the risk to the "responsible" society.

Exposure to TV violence, especially prolonged exposure during middle childhood, is one of a number of factors that contribute to violent and anti-social behaviour. Some of the more important of these other factors are: poverty, deprivation, a history of family violence and abuse, involvement in a gang sub-culture, and emotional and cognitive impairment. One estimate has it that TV violence would make about a 10 per cent contribution to anti-social behaviour within this matrix of influences.[24]

The AUT literature review also reveals that younger children might be particularly vulnerable to the influence of TV violence. The reason why younger children are particularly vulnerable may be because of their stage of cognitive development and susceptibility to the influence of mass-media figures as well as parents, older siblings, and peers in forming their worldviews. It is sometimes easy to overstate the vulnerability of children and young people, but most do have considerable exposure to the medium at the

[24] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p105.

stage of life when they are forming their core values, gaining knowledge about human relations, and developing behavioural attitudes towards others and the world. A recent research study by the Australian Broadcasting Authority suggests that children *themselves* see the ages of 12-13 as the most important age cut-off point for viewing more adult material. This contrasts with the current age restriction of 15 in Australia.[25]

Ellen Wartella a co-principal researcher for the major US national television violence study (NTVS) has observed that research needs to be done on how:

> … child audiences perceive, appropriate, and negotiate media messages through the variety of social groups to which they belong, such as the family or ethnic identity groups
> … [We need] to paint a picture of a more "able" child viewer, more competent in coping with violent, sexual, or commercial content than ["effects"] researchers have described.[26]

Other demographic groups may be at some risk from depictions of TV violence because they are sometimes represented in the media as stereotypes. A number of programmes project women, elderly people and non-whites as victims. This raises the issue of the extent to which portrayals of TV violence reinforce or challenge viewers' perceptions of social relationships in the actual world – particularly those that involve relationships of power or control.

There is some evidence that televised violence – through the development of fear, desensitisation, and a perception of the world as "mean" – affects how people perceive the wider world and their role within it. If so, there is the risk that TV violence may jeopardise the achievement of a "responsible" society in New Zealand.

DECIDING ON A REGULATORY APPROACH

Regulatory structures internationally reveal a wide range of mechanisms and philosophies. Of particular relevance to our thinking were the regulatory systems in four countries – the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia. These countries share a relatively similar heritage and approach to regulation, freedom-of-speech issues, and the structure of their respective political and economic systems. As well, these are the countries from which most of New Zealand's TV drama originates.

[25] Australian Broadcasting Authority (2000) Conclusion: Children and Media Harm, at http://www.aba.gov.au/tv/research/projects/children.htm page 2 of 6, accessed 22/08/2003.
[26] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p53.

The United States

In the US, regulation places a great deal of emphasis on viewers and parents being responsible for controlling access to TV programming. The government sees little or no role for itself in content regulation. This light-handed approach to the regulation of TV content appears to stem from the liberties afforded broadcasters by the freedom-of-speech clauses in the American Constitution.

A six-level classification system is a feature of the US system, and the (viewer control) V-chip – which uses an encoded system to block transmissions of programmes based on these classifications – must be present in every new TV manufactured or sold in the US. There are also extensive on-line media-literacy and education resources available to viewers and parents.

The regulatory system relies on well-informed proactive viewers and parents who have access to the internet and the leisure to use it. Questions legitimately arise about how children whose parents or caregivers are unable or unwilling to make use of this complex system are to be adequately protected from over-exposure to TV violence. Concern about TV violence remains high in the US and there appears to be a largely adversarial relationship between broadcasters and the viewing public on this issue.

The US system is characterised by a number of advocacy and lobby groups, including the National Institute on Media and the Family, Mediascope, the Parents Television Council, the Center for Media Literacy, and the Lion & Lamb Project (a lobbying group opposed to the marketing of violence to children).

Canada

Canada has many similar features to the US but has a more collaborative approach towards dealing with the issue of TV Violence. The V-chip was invented in Canada, but has yet to become a mandatory requirement for new TV sets in Canada.

Following considerable research into TV violence and public discussion, an organisation called the Action Group on Violence on Television (AGVOT) was formed in 1992 as part of a co-operative initiative on TV violence. This is an industry grouping that includes broadcasters, advertisers and consumer groups. It drafted and continues to administer Canada's voluntary six-level programme classification system.

The Canadian system has a number of regulatory and self-regulatory bodies. The Canadian Radio-Television and Communications Commission (CRTC) is the government regulator. It can receive complaints from the public and either refers the complaint to the broadcaster or to one of the broadcasting system's self-regulatory bodies.

Private broadcasters belong to a self-regulating council, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC). The CBSC has national and regional panels with members representing broadcasters, academic researchers, and community and public-interest groups. The CBSC deals with complaints if a viewer is not satisfied with how the broadcaster has dealt with the initial complaint. It administers codes of practice, including the voluntary code on violence. There is also a standards council for cable TV, which receives complaints but has no code on violence.

Dialogue between the viewing public and broadcasters is a keystone of the Canadian system. A number of media education and advocacy groups play an influential role in the Canadian system, ranging from the Media Awareness Network (housing one of the world's most comprehensive media-education and internet-literacy collections) and the Alliance for Children and Television, to Concerned Children's Advertisers (a group of broadcasters and corporations committed to responsible advertising to children).
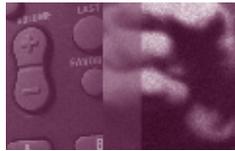
Canada imports many of its TV programmes, and so the CRTC regards international co-operation and consultation as an important part of the mix for controlling violence on TV.

The United Kingdom

The UK has a stronger emphasis on central government regulation than either the US or Canada, but it is also moving towards a self-regulatory system. From late 2003 an organisation called the Office of Communications (Ofcom) will be responsible for regulating TV, radio and telecommunications. A sub-committee of the main board will be responsible for content matters. A three-tiered system of regulation is planned with all broadcasters needing to meet tier one, which will include the protection of minors (those under 18) and the regulation of so-called "negative content".

In terms of the portrayal of violence, the new system aims to protect those under the age of 18 and to maintain generally accepted standards so that members of the public are protected from offensive and harmful material.

The creation of Ofcom highlights the regulatory influence of technological convergence and the increased perception that TV regulation is inextricably linked with that of other telecommunications media such as telephony, the internet and radio.

Ofcom sees itself as promoting "effective self-regulation and co-regulation": among its statutory responsibilities are promoting media literacy (including classification systems and filtering technology) and carrying out research into media literacy and programme standards. It can also establish consumer panels but not for content matters.

Perhaps because the UK has had a system of standards since the earliest days of broadcasting, it does not have a large number of advocacy groups. Mediawatch-UK is the main lobby group in the UK.

Australia

Australia's TV landscape is as varied as its geographical landscape, with broadcasters ranging across state-owned, public, commercial, community and subscription/cable. All broadcasters have been encouraged to produce their own codes of practice – including codes on violence as well as programme advisories covering violent content.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) is the government regulator and registers the codes of practice for the various TV broadcasting sectors. It can also hear viewers' complaints about violent programme content that may break the provisions of the various codes. Complaints must be in writing and the complaint must have been referred initially to the broadcaster.

Classification systems for programmes vary from code to code. Commercial free-to-air TV, for instance, has a seven-level classification:

• C (children's)

• P (pre-school children)

• G (general; not necessarily for children but not containing anything unsuitable for children)

• PG (parental guidance recommended)

• M (mature – recommended for viewing by age 15 or older)

- MA (mature audience – suitable for viewing only by age 15 or over; time zone 9pm to 5am)

- AV (adult violent – differentiated from MA by intensity or frequency of violence, or because violence is a central theme; time zone 9.30pm to 5am).

The code of practice for commercial broadcasting also divides the "broadcast" day into classification zones based on the expected audience for the respective times of day. The effect of this is to have various watersheds – 7.30, 8.30 or 9.30pm – depending on the age of the audience and the content of the film or programme.

The ABC, the Special Broadcasting Service and commercial TV broadcasters have their own programme codes and classification systems, as does the subscription/pay-TV sector.

A recent ABA survey in 2002 *(Research into Community attitudes to Violence on Free-to-air Television)*[27] suggested that Australians believe this system is addressing some of their concerns about TV violence. TV violence remains the main concern of viewers, but the percentage of viewers for whom this is the case has fallen from 78 per cent to 64 per cent since the last survey in 1989. Critics of the system – including the national advocacy group Young Media Australia – point out that nearly two-thirds of respondents still make TV violence their number one viewing issue and 73 per cent of respondents would like more controls.
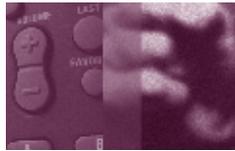
New Zealand

In the areas of foreign ownership of TV channels and programme-content provision, New Zealand is one of the most lightly regulated TV systems in the world. Unlike most countries, there is no overall government regulator of the system. Ownership issues are dealt with through commercial competition law. The state-owned commercial broadcaster TVNZ is now required to meet certain Charter obligations – principally around quality issues and the provision of a diversity of local content in its programming.

Under the Broadcasting Act 1989, there is considerable reliance on self-regulation by broadcasters. The Broadcasting Standards Authority (an independent quasi-judicial body) is responsible for encouraging broadcasters to develop codes of practice, particularly in the areas of protection of children; portrayal of violence; maintaining balance, fairness and accuracy; and anti-discrimination. If broadcasters cannot develop a satisfactory code of

[27] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p212.

practice, then the authority has the power to impose its own code. To date, the Authority has not considered it necessary to impose a code of practice.

There are separate codes of practice for free-to- air broadcasters and subscription/pay-TV broadcasters. The current codes approved by the Authority are:

- radio

- free-to-air TV (all channels)

- pay TV (all channels)

- liquor promotion (under review)

- election advertising.

There is also an advisory opinion on privacy (privacy principles are now included in the individual codes of practice).

As part of its code, there are 10 broad standards that free-to-air broadcasters must comply with (three of these include children's interests, programme classification and violence).

The *violence standard* has nine specific guidelines requiring broadcasters to exercise "care and discretion" in ensuring that violence is not the dominating theme of a programme, that violent sporting incidents are not gratuitously repeated, that prior warnings are given before any programme which depicts rape, and that care is taken in the use of violence in promotional trailers.

The standard on *children's interests* states "during children's normally accepted viewing times [defined as usually up to 8.30] … broadcasters are required, in the preparation and presentation of programmes to consider the interests of child viewers" … and to "exercise discretion to ensure that the content which led to the AO rating is not shown soon after the watershed". Broadcasters also need to ensure there are appropriate programme warnings at weekends and during school and public holidays.

The standard on programme classification makes broadcasters responsible for classifying programmes, displaying this information and broadcasting the classified programme in the correct time band. It also provides specific guidelines on promotional trailers, the use

of warnings and "news flashes". News and current affairs programmes because of their distinct nature are not subject to the classification system. The programme classification standard, however, makes it clear that broadcasters need to be aware that young people may be viewers of these programmes up to the watershed and should include warnings where appropriate.

Free-to-air broadcasters as part of their code of practice have a three-level classification scheme: general (G) parental guidance recommended (PGR) and adults only (AO). Some material, however, may fall outside the AO guidelines: the code specifies that these programmes are given time designations such as "AO 9.30pm or later".

New Zealand broadcasters' in-house programme appraisers are an important part of the current self-regulation system. The Broadcasting Standards Authority has no powers of censorship, and so broadcasters are responsible for ensuring that the programmes they broadcast are suitable for TV, are appropriately classified, and are broadcast in the correct time zone.

TVNZ has a team of four appraisers: three based in Auckland and one in Wellington (to advise Wellington-based programme producers). All programmes except news, current affairs and live broadcasts are appraised. Appraisers assign classifications and, if appropriate, warnings. They are encouraged by TVNZ management to make any warnings as specific as possible.

Cuts to programmes are not unusual. A programme may also be rejected as unsuitable for TV. If a locally produced programme has been classified AO but TVNZ's programmers wish to run it in PGR time, it may be returned to the producer with recommendations from the appraisers for editing. Locally produced programmes are generally edited for classification purposes by the producers and imported programmes by TVNZ.

Two of the private free-to-air channels (TV3 and TV4) have a small team of in-house appraisers who operate in a similar way to TVNZ's appraisers. Locally produced and imported programmes are appraised – editing of locally produced programmes is carried out in consultation with the producer (although final control rests with the broadcaster).

Pay TV has a separate code of practice, which further divides into "standard" and "advanced" codes. "Advanced" programmes can be accessed only through a screening

device or remote, as in pay-per-view programming. Pay TV has a five-level classification scheme with specific classifications at the ages of 16 and 18. This five-level classification applies to both the standard and advanced codes. These codes specify a watershed for programmes classified age 18 and over between 8pm and 6am and between 9am and 3pm on weekdays (except for school holidays).

The standard and advanced codes take a broadly similar approach to violence, although the advanced code may show appropriately classified material that the standard code would not. The advanced code specifies that "themes and scenes dealing with disturbing social and domestic friction, extreme violence, or sequences in which children may be humiliated or badly treated are to be appropriately classified".[28]

The pay-TV codes also provide verbal and visual warnings. The visual warnings are to be displayed onscreen at the start of the programme, before each programme break, and on all promotional material. These warnings are: C (content may offend), L (language may offend), V (contains violence), VL (violence and language may offend), and S (sexual content may offend). Warnings are to be used for news and current affairs programmes and not just fictional programmes.

Sky TV, New Zealand's only significant pay/subscription broadcaster, supplements the classification system with its parental control facility, which operates in a similar way to the V-chip. Using the facility, UHF subscribers can block all programmes classified as suitable for age 18 and over. Digital subscribers have a more sophisticated "parental lock" feature in the remote control's preferences menu. This can be used to set the highest unrestricted classification level subscribers wish to receive – a PIN is needed to receive higher-level programmes.

Individual viewers are the other important element in New Zealand's self-regulatory approach to TV content, whose complaints to broadcasters or the Broadcasting Standards Authority assume an unusual level of importance in this lightly regulated system. Broadcasters are required to advertise the procedure for making complaints at least once each broadcasting day. TVNZ and TV3 and TV4 also publish the procedure on their web sites as does the Broadcasting Standards Authority.

The Authority has a quasi-judicial role in determining complaints about broadcasting standards. It can only accept a formal complaint if the broadcaster does not respond

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[28] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p199.

to the initial complaint or complainants believe that the broadcaster did not deal with their complaint satisfactorily. The Authority can make various orders, including on-air corrections or apologies by the broadcaster, or the suspension of broadcasting or advertising for up to 24 hours. Unlimited costs can be awarded to the complainant or up to $5,000 in the case of the Crown.

On the issue of TV violence, like most other complaints it receives, the Authority has a reactive role only – it cannot become involved until a complaint is made about a particular programme or incident. The Authority hears on average around 200 complaints a year about broadcasting standards, a considerable increase on the 12 published decisions in its first year of operation in 1989/90.

A surprisingly small proportion of complaints relate to TV violence – on average fewer than 5 per cent a year. In the last three years, there have been seven complaints in total about TV violence – three of these were upheld and four declined. Complaints about TV violence were higher in the 6-year period 1995 to 2000: with a total of 50 complaints, 15 of which were upheld and 35 declined. Similarly, there are relatively few complaints about violence in children's programming.
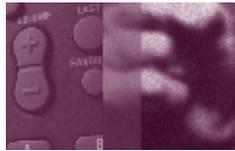
Complaints are not the preserve of one gender, they come from all parts of New Zealand and cover a diverse range of issues. Around 75 per cent of all complaints about breaches of standards to the Authority are not upheld. This – and the low percentage of complaints about TV violence – may indicate that the current broadcasting codes on violence are observed by broadcasters and work comparatively well.

It could also be that the nature of the Authority's complaints system is not fully understood by the public. The Authority's 1999 survey of public attitudes to broadcasting standards showed that some participants were reluctant to use the complaints system or falsely believed that the Authority would not respond to a complaint from a single individual. Viewers may also feel that their concerns would not be taken seriously by broadcasters or the Authority.

An important point here is that the Authority only deals with complaints regarding specific incidents or programme. It cannot respond easily to concern about the high levels of violent content overall, or moderate levels that may have a cumulative affect over many years. Most people are concerned about this rather than specific incidents.

Overview

New Zealand is not notably less regulated in the area of broadcasting standards (including violence) than other similar countries – most of which have adopted an approach based on self-regulatory codes of practice. No obvious gaps in regulatory coverage are apparent on broadcasting standards: New Zealand has extensive codes of practice for free-to-air and subscription TV (which contain specific guidelines about the portrayal of violence in programmes), there are mandatory classification systems for programmes, and there is a formal and independent complaints system. The Authority, however, does not have the power to institute inquiries into issues. Some regulators in other countries have the power to hold their own investigations or inquiries.

What is notably absent in New Zealand is a wide range of informed and organised TV advocacy groups.

Countries vary in the emphasis they place on certain regulatory tools; and we believe that various elements from the US, Canada and Australia could be adapted to the New Zealand broadcasting environment to make it more responsive to public concern about TV violence.

THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE TV ENVIRONMENT

The New Zealand TV environment has changed markedly since the passing of the current Broadcasting Act in 1989 and the 1991 amendment to this Act, which permitted TV channels in New Zealand to be 100 per cent foreign owned. The country has moved from two state-owned channels to a multi-channel commercial industry with a mix of free-to-air and pay/subscription broadcasters – although not all areas can access all channels.

Some of these channels – such as The Cartoon Network – come into New Zealand as a satellite feed from Australia, and so their content is regulated for Australian audiences by the relevant code of practice there but is not directly regulated for New Zealand viewers. The broadcaster in New Zealand, however, is still responsible for making sure these programmes are appropriately classified and meet the appropriate codes of broadcasting practice here.

New Zealand with its 4 million people has as many terrestrial channels as the UK with over 60 million people. Further developments in digital TV will bring about an increase

in the number of channels available to viewers and has important implications for the future structure of New Zealand's TV industry. Furthermore, technological convergence will bring together the TV set, the personal computer and telecommunications in ways that will change how broadcasters deliver programmes and the platforms or pathways they will use.[29]

Viewers may have more control over what they watch, where they watch it, when they watch it, and on what device. Some people will be able to devise a menu of viewing that is predominantly violence-free; others will be able to channel surf and construct a menu that is more violence laden, if that is what they want. In this environment, educating viewers to be more vigilant, discriminating and critical about what they watch will be essential. Equally as important is providing viewers with timely and accessible information about programmes.

REGULATING FOR TODAY WITH AN EYE ON TOMORROW

We can regulate only for what is foreseeable today, but part of the Working Group's challenge is to come up with a robust and enduring framework that has the flexibility to adjust to the changing TV environment of tomorrow.

The dilemma we have faced as a working group is nicely summarised in the comment by Norris and Pauling in their study of the future of digital TV in New Zealand that "many nations are addressing the double-sided coin of risking either too heavy handed and unwieldy regulation or too little regulation and the consequent total dominance of market forces".[30]

The AUT's international regulatory survey in their report concluded that technological convergence meant that the role of regulatory bodies must shift to one of education, information brokerage, the setting of information standards and monitoring compliance with those standards, and empowering viewers to make informed choices about content. We agree that these are important tasks for New Zealand's regulatory system.[31]

We have adopted a "collaborative" approach to regulation that involves mediating with various stakeholders to balance present and future interests. It is more in keeping with New Zealand's pluralistic values and culture than the alternatives of either imposing stricter censorship and moral judgements or imposing no controls whatsoever. The

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[29] P Norris and B Pauling (2001) *New Technologies and the Digital Future* New Zealand On Air (Wellington) pp20, 26, 30.
[30] *Ibid*, p125.
[31] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p223.

collaborative approach is far from being a compromise position – it involves balancing in a fair and open way what are often strongly held and argued positions on the issue of TV violence.

In the next chapter we develop a set of proposals that we believe contains sufficient flexibility to be a workable solution to dealing with TV violence in New Zealand. We call these proposals The Precautionary Risk Management Model because they build on and enhance the current regulatory system, while being carefully tailored to how New Zealanders use TV and the commercial environment of the local TV industry.
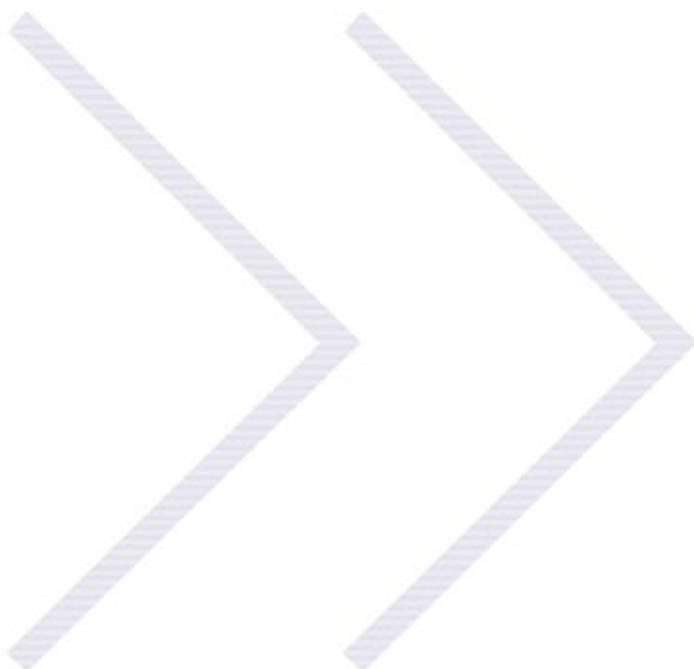
6. What is the Precautionary Risk Management Model?

We believe that a shift is occurring among stakeholders, making it possible to move towards a collaborative and integrative approach for dealing with concerns about TV violence. This shift underpins the various elements of The Precautionary Risk Management Model.
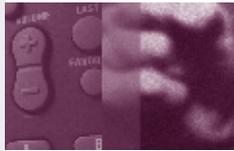
ELEMENTS OF THE PRECAUTIONARY RISK MANAGEMENT MODEL

What we call the "The Precautionary Risk Management Model" has a number of inter-locking elements:

- a "creative" dialogue between viewers, interest groups and broadcasters with the aim of creating a collaborative system of engagement that strikes a balance between the freedoms of broadcasters and viewers and the community's attitudes and expectations about levels of TV violence

- an organisation with the responsibility for implementing strategies and activities that will "drive" the collaborative and integrative system that we envisage – we see a revamped Broadcasting Standards Authority performing this role

- education strategies to create better-informed viewers and communities

- more choice for viewers over what they watch (though better information) and more voice on the issue of TV violence

- better research and information on which to base public policy about community responses to TV

- linkages into other key sectors and players so that a holistic and integrated approach is taken to the issue of TV violence

- an independent, robust and accessible complaints system that protects the rights of viewers to have their concerns taken seriously and to be acted upon if standards are breached.

A COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM OF ENGAGEMENT

TV has a pervasive role in all our lives in the twenty-first century – and its ability to influence many aspects of our lives is not likely to decrease in today's increasingly globalised world.

TV has the potential to contribute positively to the lives and interests of our citizens and to national life, but it also has the potential to be counter productive through its influence on vulnerable individuals or groups (particularly children and young people) of watching TV violence. As a working group, our challenge has been to develop an integrated system – taking the best aspects of our current system and adding others that will strengthen it. We have been guided by the collaborative approach to dealing with TV violence in Canada, which we believe will translate well to the broadcasting regulatory environment in New Zealand.

We have decided to adopt an attitude of collaborative and constructive engagement to the issue of TV violence. Our own processes have shown that people of good will can put aside their different perspectives and needs, to work together in developing an agreed set of proposals. The collaborative environment that has characterised our work we believe can form the philosophical basis of The Precautionary Risk Management Model.

One of the most powerful advantages of the system we are proposing is that it maintains a continuing relationship and dialogue among broadcasters, viewers and the wider community. This means that broadcasters are under steady pressure to take account of the views of the community as these views change over time. Regulation through legislative change exerts pressure on broadcasters at a specific point in time, but then it eases off as the system adjusts. As has been discussed earlier, some researchers believe that the relatively low rates of violence recorded in the 1995 Media Watch content-analysis study reflected public concern about TV violence and the introduction of a Bill (Reduction of Violence on Television) to Parliament in 1994.

Our view is that a more lasting effect can be achieved by a process of collaborative engagement in which broadcasters and the community work together in reducing the risks posed by TV violence to vulnerable groups in New Zealand society. Similar approaches have occurred in the past in New Zealand, notably in 1989 and 1995.

Support for our stance can be found in the recent 3-year long UCLA (University of California: Los Angeles) study into TV violence in the US. The researchers in that study reported that regular meetings with TV network executives to discuss the research findings and look at ways of improving areas of concern over TV violence resulted in positive action by the networks.[32]

AN ORGANISATION TO "DRIVE" THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

We believe the Broadcasting Standards Authority could have its existing mission and range of functions refocused and expanded, so that its quasi-judicial function could be complemented by an equally important educative and co-ordinating role. This will have legislative and funding implications that are discussed later in this chapter.

Our proposed change in focus for the Authority is in keeping with its current functions, which are to:

[32] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p61.

- adjudicate on complaints about alleged breaches of broadcasting standards

- encourage broadcasters to develop codes of practice

- commission and publish research on broadcasting standards.

Under our proposals, the Authority's work will fall into two main streams:

- complaints activities as at present

- facilitation, education and research activities, which will be more extensive and proactive than the Authority's current initiatives in these areas.

Complaints activities will be discharged through a Complaints Division, as a standing committee of the Authority, composed of a Chair (a practising lawyer of at least seven years' standing) and two members. They will continue to be assisted by a full-time complaints staff as at present. The Complaints Division will be encouraged to mediate complaints wherever possible – and the Board of the Authority needs to be given the statutory power to delegate some complaints determinations to staff.

We propose that an Advisory Council be formed that will have the same status and authority as a standing committee of the Broadcasting Standards Authority. One member of the Authority will chair the Advisory Council with one other member also sitting on the Council.

The other eight members of the Council will be three members representing the community, including one member to represent Maori interests (nominated through advocacy groups); two members nominated by broadcasters; one member representing educators; one member representing researchers/academics in the field of TV violence and media studies generally; and one member representing TV producers. It is important that the community is represented on the Advisory Council – particularly those groups or populations the research tells us are most at risk from TV violence. This means that women, Maori, Pacific peoples and other ethnic groups, and young people need to have their voices heard as part of the Advisory Council's processes.

We intend the work of the Advisory Council to produce demonstrable actions in dealing with the issues of TV violence – it is not just meant to be a "talking shop", although this type of continuing dialogue is obviously valuable. Specific measures for monitoring

progress will be part of the Broadcasting Standards Authority's output framework and annual statement of intent. We are convinced that the members of the Advisory Council through working together in a collaborative spirit will be able to make progress on the issue of TV violence.

The Advisory Council will lose its effectiveness if it develops into personalised debate on issues. It is an opportunity for broadcasters to inform the wider community about their systems for assessing TV violence and the measures they take now to comply with the codes of practice and programme classifications.

The role of the Advisory Council is to take the primary responsibility for implementing the precautionary risk management approach we advocate towards the issue of TV violence. More specific functions include:

• developing programme advisories

• recommending research priorities

• revising the current classification schemes for free-to-air and pay TV

• recommending education and public-information initiatives on the issue of TV violence

• consulting with broadcasters as required on issues such as the appraisal, scheduling, promotion, and marketing of programmes.
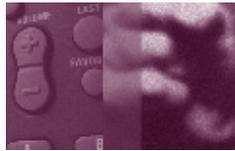
A full-time professional staff will service the Authority's Advisory Council and also carry out the Authority's other facilitative, educative and research activities (including facilitating the conference(s) of advocacy and community groups).

The Governance Board

We propose that members of the Authority's current four-person Board continue to serve in a part-time capacity but that up to two extra part-time members be appointed in recognition of the Authority's additional work load. As the Authority will have a wider mandate than its current quasi-judicial functions, there is no need for the Chair of the Authority to be a practising lawyer of at least seven years' experience. One member, however, will still be required to be a practising lawyer, as he or she will chair the Authority's standing committee for determining complaints.

The Authority's quasi-judicial role in determining complaints means that care will have to be taken to keep its complaints-determination role administratively separate from its wider educative role. In practice, the type of complaints received and their determination will influence the Authority's educative function; and the Authority's education activities may influence the volume and nature of the complaints it receives.

One way of signalling the change in focus for the Authority is to rename it – we suggest the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority as the Authority's new title.

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        │          Authority           │
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│ Complaints Division│        │  Advisory Council  │
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The New Zealand Broadcasting Authority will need to maintain an international focus as part of its activities. Much of New Zealand's drama programming originates overseas and international co-operation is one way of exerting pressure on global programme makers. Overseas initiatives on media education and dealing with TV violence could well be adapted to New Zealand conditions or alliances formed with an established international provider of a suitable initiative. New Zealand is too small and isolated to deal with this issue on its own – and the issue of TV violence is one that extends beyond national borders.

MORE CHOICE AND VOICE FOR VIEWERS AND THE COMMUNITY

Viewers lack ways that they can exercise more *choice* over what they watch (through the provision of meaningful information about programmes) and also a means of giving them more *voice* on the issue of TV violence. Our proposals will offer viewers both choice and voice on the issue of TV violence.

At present, viewers can complain to broadcasters or (if they are not satisfied with the broadcaster's response) to the Broadcasting Standards Authority about programmes they have seen that they believe breach broadcasting standards. They have, however, no direct or structured way of expressing these concerns to broadcasters *before* programmes are

broadcast. Viewers, parents and families have a reactive voice but no proactive voice. We believe that viewers need to be given improved consultative mechanisms about the screening of TV violence.

We propose, as part of our collaborative system, that the Broadcasting Standards Authority be responsible for implementing a continuing process that allows the community, broadcasters, programme makers, and other professionals in the area of media studies and TV violence to discuss the issue of TV violence, to air concerns, and to work together on answers that satisfy ordinary viewers and are acceptable to broadcasters.

To ensure that the collaborative process results in effective and measurable outcomes, we have proposed that the Broadcasting Standards Authority convene an Advisory Council as a standing committee of the Authority.

We have also proposed that there be three community representatives on this Advisory Council, to be nominated by advocacy groups. There also needs to be a national conference or separate North Island and South Island conferences to allow community and advocacy groups to meet to discuss issues, ideas and common approaches to the issue of TV violence. Broadcasters could assist in making the public aware of the conference(s) and how people can take part in them by providing on-screen advertising during prime-time viewing.

Consideration should be given to "seeding" advocacy/consumer groups financially for a time-limited period of, say, five years. Advocacy groups on TV issues are not well developed in New Zealand compared with the US, Canada and Australia. If advocacy/consumer groups are to make the informed contribution to the process of engagement that we envisage, then they will need to be given financial assistance to develop the necessary infrastructure, networks and research and information base so that they are on a more level footing with the resources available to broadcasters.

Enhancing Parental and Caregiver Choice

Technology is offering increasingly the means to control an individual's TV viewing. The (viewer control) V-chip has a great deal of potential for empowering families to control their viewing and particularly that of children and young people. The V-chip does this automatically once it is activated in the TV set. Broadcasters embed an electronic code into a programme before it is broadcast that corresponds to the classification rating for that type

of programme (for instance, G, PGR or AO). This coding is then triggered by the V-chip when the TV set receives the programme. The viewer selects a classification level for the V-chip, say PGR, and all programmes at that level and below can be viewed. Programmes classified above that level are automatically blocked. The V-chip can be reset or deactivated entirely for adult viewing. Security and control of the V-chip is maintained through a PIN-type code.

This is not a perfect solution. Some users in the US have reported difficulties with programming the V-chip, and news programmes, advertising and promotional trailers are not blocked because of freedom-of-speech issues. Control of the V-chip is only as good as the control over the PIN number – and so obvious number combinations could be "cracked" by older children.

The chip is no substitute for parents and older family members taking an active involvement in children's TV viewing and discussing with them the images seen on TV. This is particularly so for news programmes that may have scenes of realistic violence or deal with controversial or disturbing social issues. The children in the Australian Broadcasting Authority study found they were more disturbed by events that really happened than by fictional depictions of similar material.[33] Studies in the AUT literature review also showed that the effects of TV violence might be reduced for children if parents are sitting with the child and providing comments and guidance on what they're watching. Parental advice and involvement in programme selection also plays a role, possibly by reducing the amount of time children spend in "total immersion" in front of the TV.

Although the V-chip was invented in Canada, it is not a mandatory requirement for all newly manufactured TV sets in that country. It is mandatory in the US. We believe that that the government should investigate the practicality of making the V-chip a compulsory requirement for all new TV sets sold here. A public education campaign would also be required so that parents were aware of the V-chip, its benefits, and how to programme and use it. Again, broadcasters could play their part in providing on-screen information about the V-chip.

EDUCATING THE AUDIENCE TO BECOME ACTIVE VIEWERS

Greater resources are needed to create more active viewers who are better informed about TV as a medium – including children, young people, parents and caregivers, adult viewers, and the community generally. This will require action on a number of fronts.

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33 Australian Broadcasting Authority (2000) Conclusion: Children and Media Harm, at http://www.aba.gov.au/tv/ research/projects/children.htm page 1 of 6, accessed 22/08/2003.

Our proposed organisation (the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority) will take the lead in publishing written material and information on its website on the role and effects of TV and visual media. It will make this information widely available to other agencies, interest groups and community organisations with an interest in this area. Most parents think they should have the prime responsibility for what their children watch on TV, although 56 per cent of them in a 1999 Broadcasting Standards Authority survey were concerned about violence on TV.[34]

Coping with TV violence is one of a number of complex social issues that parents and families deal with on a daily basis. They are entitled to be provided with sufficient information, from a variety of sources, so that they can act responsibly in relation to their children's viewing. It is a mark of the "responsible" society that consumers of all kinds are given sufficient accessible, accurate and meaningful information to enable them to make increasingly complex decisions. The issue of TV violence is no different in this regard from food labelling or information about a proposed medical treatment. Educating children and young people so that they better understand the effects of electronic media is likely to be a more successful long-term strategy than attempting to fully regulate to protect the interests of children.
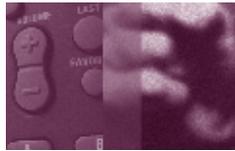
Media studies are a compulsory part of the school curriculum from primary school onwards. The English, Social Studies, and the Health and Physical Well-being curricula all emphasise analysis and discrimination in the formation of viewpoints and values for making informed judgments. The English curriculum emphasises visual language – including the study of TV – which has the same status in the English curriculum as oral and written language.

Despite these developments, we are uncertain whether sufficient teaching resources are available to make these courses as useful to young viewers as they could be. Many teachers in the area of media studies are unlikely to have specialist skills in the subject, as they will have completed their degrees before media studies became a full major in university qualifications. Media studies programmes are a recent addition to many New Zealand universities – for example, 1995 at the University of Auckland and not until 2001 at Victoria University of Wellington.

Also important is the delay in recognising media studies as an academic option for 7th form students – this will now be available as part of the NZCEA Level 3 in 2004. The relative importance of media studies in the overall school curriculum is a further issue that

[34] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p228.

requires investigation. There is the risk that subjects such as media studies can be crowded out by an emphasis on what are judged to be more essential core subjects.

One of the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority's tasks will be to investigate whether the teaching of media studies is adequate in our schools and, if it is not, to suggest improvements. The intention is to enable students to develop the critical-thinking skills to analyse and better understand the effects of TV and other electronic media.

There may be opportunities here for broadcasters, other electronic media providers, advocacy and community groups, and the Ministry of Education to supply up-to-date teaching resources and work units for teachers and students at all school levels. For instance, the debate surrounding the effects of technological convergence has emerged in the last few years.

Information About Programmes and Watershed Transitions

More creative use of on-screen advisory information about programmes will help inform viewers about upcoming programmes. We believe that programme advisories should be more detailed about programme content and possibly make better use of graphics. The Special Broadcasting Service in Australia uses a detailed system of programme warnings – including "graphic surgical procedures" and "cruelty to animals". These more specific warnings about the type of violence to be viewed could be investigated here. One area that could be explored is making the programme warnings for cartoons more explicit about the suitable age range for the programme, and the level and type of violent incidents.

The researchers for the UCLA study believed that programme advisories should be used more often and more consistently and perhaps could be broadcast ahead of time as a warning about forthcoming programmes. Research needs to be undertaken into the practicality of providing information on programme advisories in other languages – particularly the major languages of immigrants for whom English is not their first language (or devising a system of visual representation).

Better signalling of the 8.30 pm "watershed" for free-to-air broadcasters needs to occur, both at the time of the watershed and in the hour afterwards. Consideration could be given to introducing an icon that is regularly displayed between 8.30pm and 9.30pm, to signal that programming has switched to include adults only (AO) programmes. This is similar to the practice in Canada where extensive warning of the watershed occurs in

the period from 9.00pm to 10pm. Time slots are important and so broadcasters need to exercise care and responsibility at times when children are watching.

After careful consideration, we have decided not to propose shifting the current free-to-air 8.30 pm watershed to 9.00pm. TV is an important part of New Zealanders' social and cultural life, and a later watershed would make it difficult to screen longer-running programmes and feature films without them ending too late in the evening. We believe that our overall mix of measures – such as greater use of advisory information, a more fine-grained classification system and looking at reducing the amount of violence in promotions – can reduce the amount of TV violence screened in the period leading up to and following the 8.30pm watershed. In our view this will achieve the same effect as a later watershed.

We believe, however, that the current pay/subscription TV watershed of 8pm for programmes classified for age 18 and over should be pushed back to 8.30pm. Having the same watershed for both free-to-air and pay TV will clarify for viewers what time the watershed is for all viewing and not just some of it. Consistency is an important element in making classification systems and advisories informative and user friendly for families and viewers.
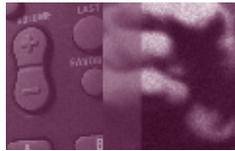
There are currently different classification systems for free-to-air TV and subscription ("pay") TV. This is overly complex and acts as an informational barrier. More standardised classifications between the two main streams of TV broadcasting will help all viewers – particularly children and young people – to understand more easily the nature of the programme they intend to view. This will improve the effectiveness of the classification system as a filtering tool.

We suggest that free-to-air broadcasters should look at developing a more fine-grained classification system than the current three levels – particularly for children and younger viewers up to the age of 16. The Australian system, for instance has seven levels: two children's classifications (children and pre-school children), a general classification, parental guidance, two mature ratings, and an adult violent classification. Australians appear to have a high awareness of this relatively complex classification system and its associated programme warnings.[35] Alternatively, the current pay-TV classification system in New Zealand could be considered as a working model for a new free-to-air system of classifications.

[35] B King and G Bridgman et al (2003) p212.

A multi-level free-to-air classification system will give parents and viewers better information about the types of programmes available. It will also make the V-chip a more effective tool, as the chip can be programmed to block a narrower range of programmes. Pay TV could also investigate whether their classification system could be improved by creating specific children's classifications.

The various participants in the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority's collaborative process on TV violence may decide that the public interest is best served by enhancing the current standards on TV violence rather than investigating a specific code of practice on violence or, more narrowly, a code of practice on violence for children's or general programming.

BETTER RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

For our proposals to be effective, a research programme needs to be funded that monitors regularly the levels of TV violence being broadcast and which also investigates more specific areas of research. We note that until the research carried out by the Working Group, no national survey of the levels of TV violence had been conducted since 1995. That is almost ten years ago and during this time considerable change has occurred in the TV environment. Many more channels are on offer in a highly competitive and commercial environment, including a number of channels that are received as direct broadcasts by satellite from foreign sources.

We suggest that regular monitoring research be carried out by the proposed New Zealand Broadcasting Authority to assess whether our "collaborative" approach to dealing with TV violence is effective. And if not, where changes will need to be made to make it more effective. As part of this monitoring, closely focused content-analysis surveys should be conducted at least every two years, supplemented by a more major survey every five years.

As well, innovative research methods will be required to investigate, for example, some of these more specific areas of research:

- the effectiveness of classification systems as a guide to viewers (including younger viewers)

- the expansion of private and pay TV and the implications of this for the levels of violent incidents in programming before the 8.30 watershed

- children's attitudes towards TV violence in their normal programming

- the effect on children of the high levels of fantasy violence they view in cartoons – particularly the influence of Japanese cartoons (which are extremely popular with New Zealand children) as they reflect a markedly different cultural setting

- the effect on children of the screening during children's TV viewing hours of promotions (classified as general) for programmes to be screened after the 8.30pm watershed

- the increasing supply of direct satellite broadcast channels and programmes into New Zealand – and what are the effects and implications of these foreign-schedule feeds for New Zealand viewers, regulators and broadcasters

- whether New Zealanders' perceptions of TV violence differ between locally made drama programmes and imported ones – particularly programmes from the US with their different cultural context

- whether there are significant cultural variations among New Zealand's major cultural groups in their reactions to the portrayal of different types of violence

- the effect of promotions on viewers, given that promotions provide little or no context for the scenes of violence portrayed in them.

- the effects of the convergence of various media on levels of TV violence.

LINKAGES TO OTHER SECTORS

Television is not divorced from wider society: the flows of influence between TV and society run both ways. One of New Zealand's public-health goals is the reduction of family violence. Research and public policy in this area will be relevant in framing the research programme for identifying more precisely the effects that TV violence has on the wider society. Conversely, research and policy development in the field of TV violence may have implications for the areas of public health, social development, protecting the child, and race and gender relations.

As a working group, we have taken an inclusive and holistic approach to the issue of TV violence. We believe that our proposals fit well with the current policy emphasis on whole-of-government and multi-agency approaches to complex social problems.

A ROBUST AND ACCESSIBLE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

The current Broadcasting Standards Authority considers each complaint on a case-by-case basis and sensitivity to viewer concerns is generally shown even where a complaint is not upheld.

Our proposals will give the Authority an expanded and more effective educative, monitoring and consensus-building role. We believe that this could build public confidence in the Authority and make its complaints process better understood by viewers.

We also believe that our proposed New Zealand Broadcasting Authority, together with broadcasters, should work towards a more informal and responsive complaints system that draws on elements of the Canadian approach. In Canada complainants can make a simple written "ruling request" to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council if the complainant believes the broadcaster did not deal with their complaint satisfactorily. The complaints procedure can also be directly accessed through the Council's website.

These or similar measures would enhance the accessibility of the complaints system in New Zealand.

One action that we believe could assist in making the Broadcasting Standards Authority's complaints system more visible is for broadcasters to give a more explicit or visually interesting account of how the complaints system works in their mandatory on-air announcements.

We also believe that the Authority could add additional credibility, visibility and transparency to its determinations by hearing in public some of its more major complaints on TV violence.

LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

While the government could possibly implement many of our proposals immediately without the need for specific legislative change, we believe that it is preferable to formalise the existing Broadcasting Standards Authority's extended responsibilities (and rename it) by passing specific legislation.

This will make a clean break with the past and ensure that the new organisation's board structure, statutory responsibilities, range of tasks, staffing, and funding are properly considered. Just as importantly, because of the public role we see the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority performing, these matters will be debated in Parliament as part of the legislative process. We believe this public scrutiny will give the new organisation enhanced public confidence and credibility.

The mandatory requirement for the V-chip to be a part of all newly manufactured TV sets to be sold in New Zealand will require legislative change and may have some implications for New Zealand's international trade and treaty agreements.

FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

We have taken the view that TV violence is best dealt with through a precautionary risk-management approach similar to the strategies adopted in public health. This implies that the government should fund the increased budget that the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority will require to carry out its additional functions. In effect, this is a new area of work that the government now requires.

The Broadcasting Standards Authority is already partly funded by a levy on broadcasters, so this funding model is not foreign to the industry. There could well be industry resistance, however, to increasing the levy to fund the Authority's expanded educative and consultative role. Broadcasters can point out that they will be involved in a degree of expense in participating in our proposed Advisory Council, in developing informative and viewer-friendly programme advisories that are broadcast more frequently, in implementing multi-level classification systems, potentially in coding programmes for the V-chip, and that they are more likely to volunteer additional resources towards achieving the collaborative approach if they are not subject to a mandatory levy.
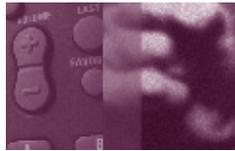
As a working group, our main concern is that the Authority's additional functions are funded at an adequate level to make the collaborative model an effective instrument for change on the issue of TV violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall recommendation

1. That the government, as part of the current review of broadcasting and screen-industry matters, implement the following recommendations to bring about The Precautionary Risk Management Model as a collaborative approach to deal with the incidence of TV violence in New Zealand.

Recommendations on the functions and structure of the Broadcasting Standards Authority

2. That specific legislation be passed to formalise the existing Broadcasting Standards Authority's extended responsibilities; and that to signal clearly the change in focus of the Broadcasting Standards Authority it be renamed the New Zealand Broadcasting Authority.

3. That the existing mission and range of functions of the Broadcasting Standards Authority be refocused and expanded, so that its quasi-judicial function be complemented by an equally important educative and collaborative role on the issue of TV violence.

4. That in recognition of the new Authority's additional work load its Board be increased by up to two further part-time members to make a Board of no more than six part-time members, to be appointed by the Minister of Broadcasting.

5. That as the new Authority will have a wider mandate than its current quasi-judicial functions, the Chair of the Authority no longer necessarily be a practising lawyer of at least seven years' experience; but that at least one member be required to be a practising lawyer, in order to chair the Authority's standing committee for determining complaints.

6. That the Authority's complaints activities be discharged through a Complaints Division, as a standing committee of the Authority, composed of a Chair (a practising lawyer of at least seven years' standing) and two members; and that this complaints committee continue to be assisted by a full-time complaints staff as at present; and that the Authority's complaints-determination role be kept administratively separate from its wider educative role.

7. That the Authority's Board be given the power to delegate those powers it deems necessary so that complaints staff are able to deal with some complaints so that members of the complaints committee have sufficient time to carry out their governance role for the expanded Authority.

8. That the Authority work with broadcasters in developing a more explicit or visually interesting account of how the complaints system works in broadcasters' mandatory on-air announcements.

9. That the Authority be encouraged to bring additional credibility, visibility and transparency to its determinations by exercising its power to hear in public some of its more major determinations.

10. That an independent Advisory Council be formed to have the same status and authority as a standing committee of the Authority; and that this Advisory Council have primary responsibility for advising the Authority on the precautionary risk management approach towards the issue of TV violence, including:

   • programme advisories

   • research priorities

   • current classification schemes for free-to-air and pay TV

   • education and public-information initiatives on the issue of TV violence

   • consultation with broadcasters as required on specific issues.

11. That this Advisory Council be chaired by one member of the Authority, with one other member also sitting on the Advisory Council; and that the other eight members of the Advisory Council be three members representing the community (nominated through the advocacy groups); two members nominated by broadcasters; one member each representing educators; one member representing researchers/academics in the field of TV violence and media studies generally; and one member representing TV producers.

12. That a full-time professional staff service the Authority's Advisory Council and carry out the Authority's other facilitative, educative and research activities.

13. That there be specific measures as part of the Authority's output framework and annual statement of intent for monitoring the Authority's progress in dealing with the issues associated with TV violence.
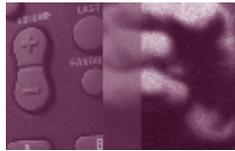
Recommendations on advocacy/community groups

14. That three community representatives, one of whom must represent Maori interests, be nominated through advocacy groups for appointment to the Advisory Council.

15. That there be a national conference (or separate North and South Island conferences) to allow community and advocacy groups to meet to discuss issues, ideas and common approaches to the issue of TV violence and to develop firm recommendations.

16. That the government consider "seeding" advocacy/consumer groups financially for a time-limited period of, say, five years so that advocacy/consumer groups develop the necessary infrastructure, networks and research and information base to make an informed contribution to the process of engagement on TV violence.

Recommendation on the V-chip

17. That the government investigate the potential for the introduction of the V-chip (or similar device if such technology is adopted) as a mandatory requirement for all new TV sets sold in New Zealand; and that a public education campaign be implemented to make parents and viewers aware of the V-chip, its benefits, and how to programme and use it.

Recommendations on education and information strategies

18. That the Authority take the lead in publishing written material and information on its website on the role and effects of TV and visual media; that it make this information widely available to other agencies, interest groups and community organisations with an interest in this area.

19. That the Authority investigate ways of providing parents, caregivers and general viewers with accessible, accurate and meaningful information to enable them to make increasingly complex viewing decisions.

20. That the Authority work with the Ministry of Education to ensure that the teaching and study of issues surrounding TV and media is adequate and well integrated across the curriculum and that students develop critical media skills.

Recommendations on programme advisories and warnings

21. That on-screen advisory information about programmes be used more creatively to help inform viewers about upcoming programmes; and that programme advisories be more detailed about programme content and make better use of graphics.

22. That the detailed system of programme warnings used by the Special Broadcasting Service in Australia be investigated for possible adoption in New Zealand.

23. That programme advisories be used more often and more consistently and be broadcast ahead of time as a warning about forthcoming programmes; and that the feasibility of publishing some programme advisories in other languages be investigated along with the feasibility of using a system of visual representation.

Recommendation on classification of programmes and codes

24. That free-to-air broadcasters introduce a more fine-grained classification system than the current three levels – particularly for children and younger viewers up to the age of 16; and that subscription/pay-TV broadcasters investigate whether their classification system could be improved by creating specific children's classifications. (More standardised classifications between the two main streams of TV broadcasting will help all viewers to understand more easily the nature of the programmes they intend to view.)

Recommendations on the watershed

25. That better signalling of the 8.30 pm "watershed" for free-to-air broadcasters occur, both at the time of the watershed and in the hour afterwards; and that consideration be given to introducing an icon that is regularly displayed to signal that programming has switched to include adults only (AO) programmes.

26. That the current subscription/pay-TV watershed of 8pm for programmes classified for age 18 and over be pushed back to 8.30pm. (Having the same watershed for both free-to-air and pay TV clarifies for viewers that the watershed is for all viewing and not just some of it.)
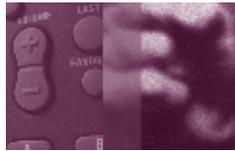
Recommendations on research priorities

27. That regular research be carried out by the Authority to assess whether the "collaborative" approach to dealing with TV violence is effective.

28. That the Authority's research include monitoring of levels of violence on TV by conducting at least every two years limited but closely focused content-analysis surveys, supplemented by a more major survey every five years.

29. That the effects of the use of violence in promotions and the current process of assessment of promotions for screening be the subject of research to be considered by broadcasters; and that broadcasters and the Authority continue to monitor the level and type of violent incidents in promotions.

30. That a rolling programme of innovative research be carried out by the Authority to investigate, for example, some of the following more specific areas of research that appear to be under-researched:

   • the effectiveness of classification systems as a guide to viewers (including younger viewers)

- the expansion of private and pay TV and the implications of this for the levels of violent incidents in programming before the 8.30 watershed

- children's attitudes towards TV violence in their normal programming

- the effect on children of the high levels of fantasy violence they view in cartoons – particularly the influence of Japanese cartoons as they reflect a markedly different cultural setting

- the effect on children of the screening during children's TV viewing hours of promotions classified as general for programmes to be screened after the 8.30pm watershed

- the increasing supply of direct satellite broadcast channels and programmes into New Zealand – and the effects and implications of these foreign-schedule feeds for New Zealand viewers and regulators

- whether New Zealanders' perceptions of TV violence differ between locally made drama programmes and imported ones – particularly programmes from the US with their different cultural context

- whether there are significant cultural variations among New Zealand's major cultural groups in their reactions to the portrayal of different types of violence

- the effects of the convergence of various media on levels of TV violence.

Recommendations on funding

31. That the Authority's functions be funded by government at an adequate level to make The Precautionary Risk Management Model an effective instrument for change.

APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP FOR TV VIOLENCE PROJECT

The task of the Working Group is

- to commission a literature search to establish the latest international research findings on

    1. definitions of television violence;

    2. methods of measuring the incidence of television violence; and

    3. any links that have been identified between television violence and social behaviour;

- to evaluate this research, with reference to the New Zealand situation;

- to determine the effectiveness of methods to measure the incidence of television violence in New Zealand, based on the international models surveyed;

- to conduct a limited sampling exercise to determine how the incidence of violence on New Zealand television compares with other countries and with levels in New Zealand that were measured in the past;

- to determine whether the incidence of violence identified in this exercise represents a problem in the context of New Zealand society;

- to evaluate the tools for controlling the level and nature of violence on television in New Zealand e.g. the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Broadcasting Act 1989, codes of practice, the TVNZ Charter – by comparison with the tools available in comparable countries; and

- to publish a report incorporating recommendations to the Minister of Broadcasting.

APPENDIX 2: MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP AND THE AUT RESEARCH TEAM

Members

Dr Rajen Prasad (Chair)	
Dr Max Abbott	Dean, Faculty of Health, and Professor of Psychology and Public Health, Auckland University of Technology
Dr Trisha Dunleavy	Senior Lecturer: Media Studies, Victoria University
Robert Boyd-Bell	TV executive producer, Screen Production and Development Association (SPADA)
Hone Edwards	Commissioner of Programming, Maori Television Service (now Kaihautu, TVNZ)
Ian Fraser	Chief Executive, TVNZ
Rick Friesen	Managing Director, TV3
Jane Parker	Children's Television Foundation
John Terris	Viewers for Television Excellence
Jane Wrightson	Chief Executive, Broadcasting Standards Authority

Membership changes

As required, Professor Judy McGregor and then Evan Voyce variously represented the Broadcasting Standards Authority on the Working Group before Jane Wrightson's appointment as Chief Executive in August 2003. Ms Wrightson was a member of the group from the beginning, originally representing programme makers through SPADA: she was replaced in this capacity by Robert Boyd-Bell on taking up her Broadcasting Standards Authority role.

Hone Edwards was originally appointed to the Working Group in his capacity as Commissioner of Programming at the Maori Television Service.

AUT research team

Professor Allan Bell (Project Director)	Director, AUT Centre for Communication Research
Associate Professor Barry King	Head of School, AUT School of Communication Studies
Dr Geoff Bridgman	UNITEC School of Community Studies
Andrea King	
Philippa Smith	AUT
Sharon Harvey	AUT, Associate Dean of Arts
Professor Charles Crothers	AUT, School of Social Sciences
Ian Hassall	AUT, Institute of Public Policy