

## Violence in Media: You Are What You Watch

The rising tide of crime in North America exists primarily in the minds of the media. Television has created a perception that crime has multiplied, double or triple, in the past quarter-century due to violence. In fact, US Justice Department survey data shows, crime in the US has dropped 24 percent since 1971 and violent crime is down 2 percent.

Crime statistics serve the media well. The single-minded reporting of violent news, the presentation of violent movies and violent reality-based "cop" shows has made violent crime a growth industry for the television, press, and media.

Violence bombards us constantly. Networks shoot in sequence one violent scene after another, delivering untold numbing horror into Canada's living rooms, bedrooms, and nurseries. Taped TV violence, unlike real violence, repeats over and over in an accelerating pattern. The sounds and scenes of violence echo, firing in every direction without concern for targets or casualties. Canadians are developing a vision of themselves as hopeless victims of criminal forces they cannot control and cannot understand.

While TV grows rich on violence, the nation is threatened by loss of self-esteem, fear of crime, and fear of our neighbours. A permanent impression is made on the innocent minds of young children too young to read or speak. TV is destroying society's respect for human life. Daniel Boorstin, librarian of US Congress, said that TV has the power "to conjure up a self-created reality that can mold public values and influence behaviour." The Canadian Government guarantees free speech and free press, but conjuring up anti-social values for our children is hardly what they had intended.

Like it or not, TV has taken over the role of passing down the traditional values to our younger generation. It has replaced the role formerly filled by elders. For a long time, elder members of the community have passed on family stories, history, and cultural myth.

However, children who cannot yet talk can absorb the values transmitted by TV, ie. "violence is an acceptable means, perhaps the preferred means to resolve conflicts and solve problems." TV violence makes a permanent impression on young children.

It has been suggested that parents control the TV that children watch. Hardly. Many parents are working singles or couples who must rely on others for the parenting and raising of their children. Baby sitters use TV as the easiest source of entertainment for the children.

Media defenders claim that watching movies and TV does not affect behaviour. I wonder if they have conveyed that to their advertisers?

