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# Do comic book and television portrayals of crime and violence cause juvenile delinquency?: a survey of pro and con arguments and studies of the last ten years, 1949-1959

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

School of Public Relations and Communications

Thesis

DO COMIC BOOK AND TELEVISION PORTRAYALS OF CRIME AND  
VIOLENCE CAUSE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY?: A Survey  
of Pro and Con Arguments and Studies  
of the Last Ten Years, 1949-59.

by

Roland A. Chirico

(B.S., University of Florida, 1957)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Approved

by

First Reader . . . *David M. White* . . . . .

DAVID M. WHITE  
Professor of Journalism

Second Reader . . . *Joseph A. Del Porto* . . . . .

JOSEPH A. DEL PORTO  
Professor of Journalism

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## PREFACE

Statement of the problem and purpose: Do the mass media of communications, particularly comic books and television, cause antisocial behavior? There is little doubt, according to most experts, that the mass media, in one way or another, do influence their audience's behavior. But the exact nature of the media influence is a highly controversial issue, though an adamant few experts contend they have the answer.

Adding fire to the controversy over the possible media-delinquency nexus are two parallel growths which may or may not be related: (1) the growth of the comic book and television industries since the close of World War II, and (2) the surge in the juvenile delinquency and crime rates during the same period.

The public has demonstrated alarm over the latter increase, and critics have charged that the former is the causal factor.

The connection between the mass media and juvenile delinquency has been explained many ways. One well-known psychiatrist says crime, sex and brutality portrayals via television and comic books are the root of most social troubles. A host of other experts assert that such presentations might possibly precipitate antisocial acts, but only provided that certain other maladjustments and tendencies are first present in the individual who is motivated to such behavior. Others concede

that a connection exists between the media and audience behavior, but insist that it has not been scientifically determined to be negative or positive.

A few experts contend that comic books and television drama effect beneficial cathartic reactions in the normal child, and are, therefore, outlets for his normal aggressive tendencies. In every school of thought, however, the experts disagree with each other about the degree of media influence on any kind of audience behavior.

The purpose of this survey is to present and examine all major arguments and investigations that are concerned with this relationship, limited to the scope defined below.

Scope of the Survey: The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and other literary indexes abound with articles on the problem, but it is safe to say that no less than 80 per cent of these articles are popularly-written rehashes of a few expert investigations and researches that first appeared in scholarly and professional journals.

This investigator perused original source materials whenever they were available. These were chiefly sociology, medical, psychology and education journals, books by members of those professions, and the hearings and interim reports of the Special Congressional Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency.

The investigation is chronologically confined to

testimonies appearing between 1949 and 1959, but frequent exceptions are made to this rule to permit inclusion of vital materials.

This investigation is no attempt to prove the contentions that there has actually been a severe increase in juvenile delinquency and crime, or that the mass media are saturated with crime, horror and other negative presentations. A note might be added, however, that statistics and monitor surveys inspected by this writer while researching the problem unanimously affirm both contentions.

Organization: There are obvious intrinsic differences between printed communication and audio-visual communication. The major divisions of this paper are based on this distinction.

But in view of the fact that so few critics have attempted to point out experiential differences between the influences derived from the two basic communication forms, the divisions in the paper (namely Parts II and III) are often indecisive and almost superfluous. Most critics make charges against the mass media as if the media were a single medium. That is, few mention any difference between the communicative nature of comic books and that of television.

Definition of terms: Below are several terms that are used frequently herein. They are given working definitions appropriate to their usage in this context.

"Mass media": When employed by this writer, the term



will particularly refer to comic book and television media, but this emphasis will not necessarily exclude newspapers, magazines, movies and other media which are commonly accessible to young people. When used in quoted context, "mass media" will be intended however the original author designates by definition or context.

"Negative": To avoid redundant descriptions of the particular type of media content with which this paper is concerned, e.g., presentations of violence, murder, crime, torture, sex and salacious conduct, this writer will substitute the term "negative" to signify the above content description. The media presenting such content will be called "negative comic books," "negative television," and for general denotation, "negative media."

"Experts": When exact identifications are not warranted, the term will be used to make general, collective references to sociologists, psychologists, pathologists, psychiatrists, and other professionally-trained persons usually dealing with the behavioral sciences.



PART I.

DELINQUENCY, PUBLIC OPINION AND COMIC BOOKS

## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS JUVENILE DELINQUENCY?

Since this thesis problem is concerned with a form of behavior allegedly induced by the mass media and commonly called "juvenile delinquency," a discussion of the dynamics of that phenomenon seem in order before an investigation of its causes can be undertaken.

"Juvenile delinquency" has a tenuous definition, and at best, depends on the authority who defines it. Used often and loosely, the term has apparently meant many things to many people.

In lieu of an absolute definition, this chapter comprises discussion of juvenile delinquency that is largely based on the authoritative view of Dr. William C. Kvaraceus, who is often cited by other experts in the behavioral science field.

Dr. Kvaraceus is a nationally known author and authority on problems of juvenile delinquency and the education of exceptional children, and a professor of education at Boston University.

His definition of "delinquency" is in coincidence with those by many contemporary experts. He writes:

Delinquency usually takes place in the form of overt and aggressive behavior which forces itself

upon adult awareness. It rarely follows the pattern of inverted conduct, though such types are in equal need of adult help.<sup>1</sup>

Delinquency is not a 24-hour malady, he writes. It does not develop overnight but is rather part of a continuous, unbroken thread of behavior which exists and develops from early post-natal experiences to the child's present unacceptable behavior. Kvaraceus sharply points out that a distinction must always be made, but is often neglected, between precipitating causes of such antisocial behavior, and developmental causes in the genesis of such conduct.<sup>2</sup>

Many, in fact most, experts agree with Dr. Kvaraceus that the continuity of earlier experiences culminating in a condition that enables a slight pressure or an unusual experience to push the child over the behavioral threshold into unacceptable or "delinquent" conduct is often ignored in the light of the "slight pressure" or most recent precipitating cause.

Various researchers have pointed out, as does Dr. Kvaraceus, that behind most aggression there is a basic pattern of severe and prolonged frustration. This is particularly true of aggressive delinquency, and such frustrations often include excessive poverty, rejection or insecurity in basic family relationships, membership in minority or marginal groups, and continuous school failure.<sup>3</sup>

Children, writes Kvaraceus, do not rationalize their behavior and consciously seek out unacceptable solutions as stealing, vandalism or other overt attacks on society. Dr.



Kvaraceus agrees with many experts that the direct questioning of the delinquent child for verbal explanations of such behavior will usually prove to be of little value because of the sub-conscious level of the motivations and the immaturity of the youngster.<sup>2</sup>

"As James S. Plant points out," writes Kvaraceus, many delinquents through their behavior have found a way to come to terms with reality. Plant also believes there is much that is wholesome about a delinquent. In the first place, notes Kvaraceus referring to Plant's work, the malbehaving child is seldom non-conforming and delinquent in every act of his daily life. Ordinarily his delinquency is but a small--though very bothersome--fraction of his daily life.

Most delinquents are more like than different from their non-delinquent classmates.<sup>3</sup> It would be difficult to distinguish them from other children when passed on the street. "That delinquency is a product of interaction appears to be the overwhelming consensus of expert opinion," writes Kvaraceus, and "many studies of the causes of delinquency concentrate in atomistic fashion on factors in the environmental background of the child or on factors in his personality. Delinquency can never be explained solely by itemizing causes in either one or the other category."<sup>4</sup>

Does one act that is at variance with the dominant values held by the community make a delinquent? Dr. Kvaraceus believes that most individuals in a community might be inclined to

dismiss an isolated episode of orchard raiding, for example, as a boyish prank. However the owner of the orchard may legally pursue them through the courts; and he can "make delinquents out of them" on the basis of one episode.

Harrison E. Salisbury points out that a large majority of delinquents who turn up in research studies in the United States, stem from the lower status groups, "but many researchers agree that there is much more upper-class delinquent activity than is realized--or recorded. It is covered up, and statistics are almost impossible to get."<sup>5</sup> There is much theft by middle class children, and much sex deviation, but it is often neatly omitted from the records. "A middle class child has to act much worse than a poor boy before his conduct becomes the subject of a notation on a police blotter," according to Professor Macleure<sup>6</sup> who worked on a recent New York Delinquent Evaluation Survey.

The Chief of Detectives in a large middle western city, with a commendable low juvenile delinquency record, reports privately that he has more trouble and cases in the district of the town's most fashionable citizens than in any other section. "It's so," he said, "but for heaven's sake don't quote me. I have enough trouble from the parents already."<sup>7</sup>

Does this mean that there is today more delinquency than before among children from so-called better homes? Is the middle class component of the delinquent element growing? Harrison Salisbury, author of The Shook-Up Generation, thinks the answer is "yes" to both questions. Salisbury writes that

the first scientific, sociological studies of the problem are just beginning to be reported, and "they show that the supposed immunity of 'better' families to delinquency is a fanciful illusion."<sup>8</sup>

It is generally agreed among sociologists, including Dr. Kvaraceus, that "juvenile delinquent" is a handy label given to juveniles whose antisocial behavior is recorded in police records. The importance of this statement is that statistics on delinquency can vary from area to area, and often focus on particular socio-economic groups suggesting a causal relationship. In many cases, however, the statistics do not actually mirror the "real" delinquency rate--only the "recorded."

There is some reason to believe that upper-class groups tend to be more able to cover up their children's devious actions than are lower-class groups.

Most experts agree that delinquent behavior is not an overnight affliction. Rather, it is the result of a long continuity of experience, and this basic influence on behavior must not be overlooked or confused with the immediate, precipitating stimuli.

Dr. Kvaraceus believes, with many other experts in his field, that verbal explanations, e.g., "I done it because..." are of little value to case workers because a child cannot understand his own behavior much less articulate its causes.

The above expert views on the nature of juvenile delinquency must be constantly in mind as one considers the cases



for and against the media-delinquency nexus in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER II

### WAR ON THE COMIC BOOKS

"Sadistic drivel," was the reference Sterling North made to comic books in an article appearing in Childhood Education



## CHAPTER II

### WAR ON THE COMIC BOOKS

"Sadistic drivel," was the reference Sterling North made to comic books in an article appearing in Childhood Education<sup>1</sup> in October 1940. According to Henry E. Schultz in the Journal of Educational Sociology, North's article embodied the first major criticism of the comic book industry to have made any significant impression on public opinion. But that diatribe did not mark the beginning of the comic book popularity or the birth of the industry.<sup>2</sup>

The New Fun comic book, 64 pages in four colors, published in 1935, was the first comic book to use the familiar format. In 1938, Action Comics, and in 1939, the Superman Quarterly, both featuring the omnipotent "Superman," were the next pioneers of what was to become a multi-million dollar industry.<sup>3</sup>

By 1940 there were 150 comic book titles on the stands, and they were grossing \$20 million. Ten years later in 1950, there were 300 titles grossing \$41 million; 1953, 650 titles grossing \$60 million. And by the spring of 1954, more than 30 million crime and horror-filled comic books were being printed and distributed each month.<sup>4</sup>

During the war years following Sterling North's attack on comic books, mothers and most other Americans were chiefly

concerned with war efforts, and occasional warnings about comic book evils went relatively unnoticed.<sup>5</sup>

The major concern over comic books, however, can be directly traced to the activities of Dr. Fredric Wertham, a New York psychiatrist, who has carried on a highly publicized crusade dedicated to ridding the nation of the "comic book menace" since the end of World War II.<sup>6</sup>

Writing vigorously and emotionally in widely read and respected journals, magazines and newspapers, Dr. Wertham, almost single-handed, succeeded in frightening parents, teachers and public officials into the belief that comics must go. He supplemented his articles with addresses to groups and organizations, radio and television appearances, and newspaper interviews. In 1953 he published a popularly written book, entitled The Seduction of the Innocent, a compilation and elaboration of his arguments, examples and evidence.

The prominent fact that the consensus of psychiatric opinion on the possible effects of comics is at variance with Dr. Wertham, has never retarded his strident call for action.

Women's clubs, churches and civic organizations took up his cause, and finally the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, membership of six million, made the war on comic books a cornerstone of its national program. Reports of citizens' drives to rid the newsstands of comic books have been many and from every corner of the nation. Most reports read similarly. A typical action was reported in Arlington, Mass., when a committee of

parents toured comic book stands, checked the shelves and threatened proprietors with a loss of community business unless objectionable books were removed. Store owners, eager to retain the customers' good will, cut negative comics from their orders.<sup>7</sup> In Canton, Ohio, a "Citizens' Book Swap" was organized, and a group of women collected 30,000 comic books in one day by exchanging "good" books for comic books.<sup>8</sup> In Santa Barbara, California, after citizens brought pressures to bear on distributors, more than 60 comic book titles were dropped from the "available" list. The local PTA, in conjunction with the public library, established a book-lending service in the city's grammar schools.<sup>9</sup>

The National Civic Liberties Union reported many of these episodes in its regular NCLU Bulletin, and has often charged the National Office for Decent Literature with supporting many of the "unconstitutional" censorship activities.<sup>10</sup>

As a guide for judging the comic books, many of the citizens' committees, as well as religious groups of many faiths, have long been subscribers to the evaluation list regularly published and distributed by the NODL, official watch-dog of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup>

Controversy over NODL activities usually boils around the use of its lists by the censoring civic groups and police censors. In Allentown, Pa., and in Detroit, Mich., for example, the list was used for newsstand clean-up campaigns and subsequent pre-censorship of magazines and books headed for the



<sup>12</sup>  
stands.

The NODL claims that it does not officially support such use of its lists, but it does not make violent protests either. The NODL has carried on a relentless decency campaign, rating paperbacks and other literature accessible to young people, since its inception in 1938. More than 20,000 copies of each edition of the NODL list are mailed from the Chicago office <sup>13</sup> every month as a public service.

By 1948 legislatures in 45 states were contemplating the enactment of comic book bans. Action had already been taken in dozens of towns and municipalities. Comic books were banned in some communities, specific titles banned in others, and a climax in the movement included public comic-book burnings in several <sup>14</sup> communities.

On October 16, 1954, the Comic Magazine Association of America was formed with former New York City magistrate Charles F. Murphy as Code Administrator. With a \$100,000 annual budget for two years, Murphy and his assistants began working on a comic book code which would allay public pressures before the publishers were driven out of business by the anti-comic <sup>15</sup> crusades.

All acceptable publications would bear a seal of approval from the CMAA, but conformity to the CMAA Code as well as membership was strictly a voluntary gesture on the part of the publishers. It was hoped by Judge Murphy that only comic books bearing the seal would be bought by the public. With only this

limited means of enforcement at his disposal, Murphy admitted that the real solution to the problem lay in the vigilance of parents and citizen's groups.<sup>16</sup>

During the early 1950s, various houses of the more sensational press, alert to the nuances of public interest, began to feature, as front-page news and the subject of editorial comment, not only the prolific activities of Dr. Wertham, but the activities of the organizations in the comic-book battle.

A Gallup Poll in 1954 showed that "an overwhelming majority" of the nation's parents, seven out of ten, blamed television and comic-book presentations of crime, sex, horror and violence, for the upsurge in juvenile delinquency. Dr. Gallup, analyzing the results of his survey, concluded that older people were much more prone to brand both comic books and other media as the cause of delinquency than were younger people.<sup>17</sup>

In 1955 Governor Averell Harriman of New York signed into law a bill making it a crime to sell "obscene" and "objectionable" comics to minors, or to use the words, "crime," "horror," "sex" or "terror" in comic book titles. Earlier, a similar New York censorship law had been declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court.

Protests of the comic book publishers were joined by book and newspaper publishers who said the wording of the law was subject to loose interpretation. They also opposed, even more strongly, the part of the law that made the sale of paperbacks to minors a crime if the cover picture "depicted illicit sex"

or "exploits lust."<sup>18</sup>

Editor Harold C. Gardiner of America pointed out two "disturbing" factors which were evident at the conference that launched the CMAA: (1) three publishers: Classics Illustrated, Dell and William Gaines, representing 25 per cent of the whole industry, had not joined, and (2) the publishers persistently tried to minimize the effects of their wares on readers and the amount of such material they had individually disseminated.<sup>19</sup> "It was always the other fellow," reported the editor.

By 1956 the comic-book publishers were lamenting a 50 per cent drop in sales since 1954 when they grossed \$100,000,000. In that year the CMAA included 23 out of 24 publishers, 4 engraving companies, 5 printing houses and 7 of the largest distributors. Dell Comics, still an outsider, held its own in sales, but they did not deal in crime and horror magazines and maintained a strict code of its own.<sup>20</sup>

The apparent victory for the citizens fighting the negative comics resulted because the industry had done little to censor itself until it was faced with annihilation.<sup>21</sup>

According to an article in Reader's Digest, former Judge Murphy, heading the CMAA program, had screened more than 400 comic books, discarded 551 stories, made major revisions in 4,000 others, and changed 17,653 pictures, in addition to pulling out 19 advertisements and revising 44 others. Approximately 35 covers dealing with necrophilia, vampires, werewolves, walking dead, grave-robbing and cannibalism were no longer on the newsstands



by 1956.<sup>22</sup>

In 1958, despite the continued, unrelenting campaign against comic books, the CMAA won the Grand Award in a competition among national trade associations sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives, for "its self-regulation program designed to promote good taste in comics."<sup>23</sup>

Also in 1958, the Churchmen's Commission for Decent Publications met with representatives from Evangelical churches in Florida, Georgia and Rhode Island, in Washington, D.C. They proposed (1) to coordinate efforts to eliminate the sale and distribution of "indecent" and "obscene" literature, (2) to publicize the need for federal, state and local laws to curb the spread of such literature, (3) to encourage high standards of publication and stimulate the production of "Christian literature" discussing the problem of sex morality, and (4) to issue evaluations lists of evaluated publications. That was the first national Protestant body ever organized for such a purpose, but it was not endorsed by the National Council of Churches.<sup>24</sup>

In September 1959, a committee of 104 ministers, priests and rabbis reported to Mayor Robert F. Wagner of New York City on "The Influences Affecting the Moral and Spiritual Climate of New York City." While the committee did not make a sweeping condemnation of the mass media, the clergymen urged congregations of the three major faiths to "write in" and protest against the destructive influences of the mass media. The committee



concluded, as a result of its studies since the committee was formed in July 1958, that crime in the community is a result largely of the irresponsible representations of the mass media in highlighting the immoral, brutal, sadistic and materialistic actions of society.<sup>25</sup>

In the New York Times on November 8, 1959, Representative Kathryn E. Granahan of Pennsylvania said the House Post Office Subcommittee which she heads, would investigate the self-policing programs in the movie and publishing industries in 1960. In the hearings, she added, special attention would be given to the elimination of objectionable advertising material in newspapers and magazines as well as the over-emphasis on sex and obscenity.<sup>26</sup>

Albeit Dr. Fredric Wertham did not fire the first round of vitriol at the comic book industry, it cannot be denied that he was and remains the spearhead of the attack. With sensational articles, zealous talks, a popularly-written book and other communication vehicles bearing his authoritative title, Dr. Wertham has been accepted as a dynamic "expert" and champion of morality by the by a large public. When his war-cries were found to be strong and persuasive platforms in such pressure groups as the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, popular topics for Sunday sermons, and a "cause" with which many minor civic groups could identify themselves, the snowball of public opinion began to roll fast and hard, and it is still rolling.

Federal legislators organized committee investigations

but found the charges against comic books could not be corroborated by scientific evidence or the majority of expert opinion. They discounted the possibility of censorship as being more of a threat than a benefit to society. But municipal governments went ahead to enact censorship laws, and some states followed suit.

The CMAA was organized in response to public pressures, but it was only half-heartedly supported by the industry. The success of this self-policing act has been a controversial issue, but comics sales declined sharply.

The question of moral criteria became a problem, and the warring groups debated this issue. The NODL, veteran decent-literature organization of the Roman Catholic Church, became a pace-setter in furnishing the criteria for religious and civic groups alike. Its evaluation lists have been adopted as the standard by many anti-comic groups. The ACLU protested the NODL involvement to no avail.

By 1956 the comic book industry had lost some 50 per cent of its gross sales (compared to 1953), and public opinion against the industry relentlessly grew. Today, the comic book industry is in a precarious state, and other mass media are being scrutinized by religious, civic and government bodies. There is a jaundiced eye for the alleged media-delinquency relationship, and a large public "knows" that the relationship exists largely as the result of Dr. Wertham's crusade.

### CHAPTER III

#### RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

The purpose of this chapter on religious organizations in the war over negative media is not so much to point out the actions they are taking to clean up newsstands and television programming, but rather to emphasize their conclusions about the media and crime relationship which are the premise for such actions.

The National Office for Decent Literature of the Roman Catholic Church is easily the most organized and powerful of the religious pressure groups concerned with the mass media of communications.

As mentioned earlier, many decent literature committees, both civic and religious of all faiths, subscribe to the evaluation list that is regularly published and distributed by the NODL.

The NODL was established in 1938 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States. Its defined purpose, as enunciated by the Episcopal Committee is as follows:

...to set in motion the moral forces of the entire country against the lascivious type of literature which threatens moral, social and national life.<sup>1</sup>

Officially, the Bishops did not organize the NODL as an exclusively Catholic office. Rather, as stated above, they



appealed to "all moral forces" to combat negative mass media which is commonly made available to youth. The NODL, then, is a service organization, dedicated to coordinating activities and supplying information to all interested parties, regardless of race, religion, color or creed.<sup>2</sup>

Catholic censorship is basically concerned with "obscenity," and degrees of same, but Canon Law does not define this word. Many ecclesiastical scholars have defined and redefined the word through the years. The Church does not officially assert that "obscenity causes juvenile delinquency" per se, but in its concern to protect the faith and morality, actions are often taken on the tacit premise that the causal relationship does exist. According to the Catholic clergymen, "obscenity" is a "degrading element" and the latter is anything with the "intrinsic tendency or bent of the work to arouse sexual passion," or "the motions of the genital apparatus which are preparatory for the complete act of sexual union." For a work to be officially tagged and banned as obscenity:

Such a tendency must be the intrinsic nature of the work, not an accidental circumstance . . . further, the sexual arousal need not actually follow the contemplation of the object that is obscene. . . . the deliberate arousal of sexual thoughts that are of their nature destined to be preparatory to sexual stimulation and the complete act, is itself a serious sin.<sup>3</sup>

A work, then, is intrinsically obscene even if its influence is similar to pressing the button of a small electric switch which will, in turn, start the most powerful, and in this

case, sinful machinery. This alludes to the "precipitation" influence which will be mentioned by many experts in the following chapters with regard to the relation between media, children and antisocial behavior.

Also, it should be mentioned here, that the Catholic magazine, America, has for many years championed cleaning up the mass media, though this campaign has not been sensationalized or persued in any way resembling Dr. Wertham's blatant policies.

Whereas Dr. Wertham zealously ascribes almost every social evil to negative mass media presentations (see Chapter IV) and claims to have proven his charges by scientific methods in the face of many rebuttals by his colleagues, the Catholic view as presented by America merely assumes the causal relationship on religious precepts rather than claiming scientific confirmation has been ascertained.

The American Jewish Committee and the Protestant Motion Picture Council of the United Church Women were among the members of the Film Estimate Board of the National Organizations which presented a collective opinion in a joint letter to the Kefauver Subcommittee. The opinion (see Chapter VIII) minimized the influence of any one major factor, including the mass media, as the cause of delinquency and crime.

Appearing in Editor and Publisher magazine, September 26 issue, is a summary of a report on "The Influences Affecting the Moral and Spiritual Climate of New York City" to Mayor Robert F. Wagner.

The clergy men urge members of all faiths to protest against the "destructive influences of the mass media."

Although the nature of the committee's studies are not disclosed, the report asserts that a "major finding of the studies conducted since the committee was formed in July 1958" reveals that crime in the community is largely the result of the "irresponsible representations of the mass media which highlight the immoral, brutal, sadistic and materialistic actions of society."<sup>4</sup>

In the interim report to Mayor Wagner, the committee wrote of the mass media:

There, is perhaps, no more universal and significant influence [mass media] on the values, aspirations and concepts of reality held by the members of modern society, particularly its young people. . . . It is difficult, therefore, to over-estimate the potentialities for good of these media when used creatively and responsibly--or their destructive impact when misused.<sup>5</sup>

The committee commended newspapers for their exposure of immoral practices within the community, for denouncing obscenity and indecency, for editorializing against bad influences on the moral environment affecting youth and for publishing selections from the scriptures on special occasions.

But the committee also charged that "all too often" a segment of the press negates its positive contributions by headlining and highlighting the very stories that carry a destructive influence especially "to our young." Charges included: pandering of lurid advertisements, recommendation of movies



and books that are "at very least questionable."<sup>6</sup>

It charged that advertising agencies have "sensationalized sex" to adorn products that have not the remotest connection with it. "They compete in the presentation of the lurid and lewd."

Although the public is "in debt" to television for bringing a wide range of knowledge and diversion into the home, the committee continued, "television cannot forsake its obligations of morals and of good taste," adding that:

Long exposure to materialistic concepts, sadistic and brutal violence, with its emphasis upon physical attributes with suggestive dialogue and sequences, cannot but have a harmful influence upon viewers.<sup>7</sup>

A volley at magazine publishers and distributors who "exercise a most harmful influence upon our society," accused them of being "content to stand on the line of legal defensibility as the justification for their publications."

The religious leaders advanced a two-fold plan of action: (1) promoting more vigorously the presentation of positive moral values in the community, and (2) a self-policing of the media.

Specifically, they urged newspapers (1) to place stories in their "proper perspective" with a self-imposed discipline governing story content and pictorial accompaniment, (2) to avoid publishing the sexually immoral as a means for increasing circulation, (3) to present more articles of positive value,<sup>8</sup> and (4) to completely reject lurid advertising.



Advertising agencies, the clergymen urge, should avoid false appeal to the possession of purely material things as indications of successful living, and should suppress entirely the lurid and the lewd.

Television and radio were similarly urged to "protect the vulnerable, whether youth or adult." Publishers and distributors of magazines were encouraged to recognize pornographic and salacious literature "for what it is--a social evil which is destructive of the values that are necessary for a wholesome and responsible social structure."

The committee concluded by urging that law enforcement officials receive greater support in upholding legislation relating to the distribution of such material. "Churches and synagogues will take the lead in alerting the public to the dangers of such media materials."<sup>9</sup>

In summary, few religious groups have supported a minimal charge against the media, several others have organized and disbanded in as many years, but the NODL has long maintained a strict code of censorship for Catholics. In its relentless drive to rid the newsstands of "lascivious" publications, NODL has ventured outside the Catholic domain to render "public services" to society at large by distributing its evaluation lists.

The recently organized multi-religion committee in New York City might possibly be the first strong protest against the mass media advanced by a religious body other than the Catholics,

but the results of its efforts have yet to be realized.

None of the protesting religious bodies mentioned any evidences which affirm their conclusions that the negative media are "a social evil which is destructive of the values that are necessary for a wholesome and responsible social structure."

PART II

COMIC BOOKS



## CHAPTER IV

### CHIEF WARRIOR: DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM

Almost any discussion of the comic book problem inevitably invokes the vehement phrases of Dr. Fredric Wertham, introduced earlier as the loudest voice in the comic-book commotion. His position, which embodies the majority of anti-comic arguments, is most completely contained in his 347-page book, Seduction of the Innocent, which appeared in 1954. The arguments, examples and proofs which Dr. Wertham has presented through the years since the post-World War II period to the present in dozens of major articles, interviews and addresses, are thoroughly discussed and illustrated in his book.

Dr. Wertham's views have been contested or accepted in varying degrees by many experts, but Dr. Wertham's major premise is in direct opposition to every other expert opinion reviewed by this investigator.

He firmly believes that negative comic books (and other negative media) are most debauching to the well-adjusted, normal child. Wertham insists that maladjusted personalities can only be slightly influenced by the media. He states that maladjusted children are too preoccupied with their own fantasies to pay<sup>1</sup> much attention to the comics.

"The general lesson we have deduced from our large case material," writes Dr. Wertham, "is that the bad effects of crime comic books exist potentially for all children and may be exerted along these lines:

- (1) The comic-book format is an invitation to illiteracy.
- (2) Crime comic books create an atmosphere of cruelty and deceit.
- (3) They create a readiness for temptation.
- (4) They suggest criminal or sexually abnormal ideas.
- (5) They furnish the rationalizations which may be ethically even more harmful than the impulses.
- (6) They stimulate unwholesome fantasies.
- (7) They suggest the forms a delinquent impulse may take and supply the details of technique.
- (8) They tip the scales toward delinquency."<sup>2</sup>

He supports the above charges on "clinical investigations we conducted during the winter of 1945-46."<sup>3</sup> Following a brief discussion of association, thematic apperception, mosaic, intelligence, Rorshach and Duesse tests, Dr. Wertham postulates that when pronounced hostile and threatening images are found in the Rorshach test, they "usually stem from":

1. a special atmosphere of hostility in the early environment, parents' fights and family discords, or gang-dominated schools and neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup>
2. outside influences such as comic books.

He adds that such images rarely occur to "really psychotic or psychopathic children" and children may see many forms, continues Wertham, that adults do not see. Investigated, they often turn out to be forms related to what they have seen in comic books, especially weird and horror comics. Such images,

Wertham concludes, are often misinterpreted by psychologists, as meaning complex-determined anxieties and phobias whereas they are merely reminiscences from comic-book illustrations.<sup>5</sup>

Sixteen-year-olds were the eldest subjects of Dr. Wertham's investigation. They comprised subjects from psychiatric wards as well as normal, delinquent, bright and retarded school children.<sup>6</sup>

"A child's mind is a snake-pit of brooding preoccupations with morbidity, mutilation, blood and violence," writes Wertham, and the specific effects of comic books are as follows:

1. moral disarmament that blunts the ethical senses, finer feelings of mercy and sympathy, and obliterates respect for womanhood. The world of comic books is a world of animal strength and theivery, torturers, with all emphasis on getting the better of someone else--passionately or shrewdly.
2. Comics break down respect for the law in general. Superman, for example, is the law himself. The comics undermine the respect for the common rules of conduct.
3. Comics accent racial prejudice. There are two major comic-book types: (1) the tall, blond hero, and (2) the dark and lowly being who is only a notch higher than comic book monsters.
4. Comics cause physical disorders. They precipitate nightmares, sleeplessness and general nervous conditions.<sup>7</sup>

A typical criminal episode caused by comic books, according to Wertham, was a murder that occurred in August, 1954. Four youths, ages 15-18, terrorized Brooklyn, New York, parks. They horsewhipped teenage girls found with lovers, burned the feet of napping derelicts with cigarettes, poured gasoline over



a sleeping man before setting him ablaze, and murdered one man by shoving him into the East River after arousing him from a park-bench nap.<sup>8\*</sup>

When the four were apprehended by the police, Jack Koslow, 18, the leader of the gang, disclosed the gang's pattern of sadism in detail. The disclosure admittedly matched the crimes in a comic book entitled Nights of Horror, a complete file of which was found in Koslow's room.<sup>\*\*</sup>

Comic books adapted from classical literature are reportedly used in 25,000 schools in the United States. If this is true then I have never heard a more serious indictment of American education; for they emasculate the classics, condense them leaving out everything that makes the books great . . . . they do not reveal to children the world of good literature, they conceal it.<sup>10</sup>

"The studies of my group have shown us conclusively that children who read good books in their comic-book deformation do not proceed to read them in the original," asserts Wertham, "and librarians all over the country have borne that out."<sup>11</sup>

Reading troubles in children are on the increase, Wertham reports, and an important cause of this increase is the comic book.<sup>12</sup> The important area where comics do the greatest harm

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\*This episode is one of dozens iterated by Dr. Wertham in Seduction. It is also one of the favorite illustrations of authors and speakers who affirm the direct linkage between comic books and crime.

\*\*An article in Look magazine at the time of the indictment, described Koslow as a "gifted" boy, in the words of a school physician. At an early age Koslow had read and understood the writings of Nietzsche, Spinoza and other abstruse philosophers. According to the doctors,<sup>9</sup> Koslow did have trouble distinguishing daydreams from reality.

to reading ability is: instead of fluent left to right eye movements, comic books, with their balloons, force the eyes to read irregular bits of printing here and there.<sup>13</sup>

Comic-book advertisements are as much a threat to the minds and bodies of children as the negative stories, according to Wertham. They stimulate the young to buy articles that might be detrimental to the safety and welfare of the children and community, as well as to moral stability.

Citing and reproducing many advertisements verbatim, Dr. Wertham discusses the degrading implications and suggestiveness as well as the potential danger in the blatant ads offering hunting crossbows, throwing daggers, guns, slingshots, sex handbooks, breast hormones, etc.<sup>14</sup>

"Comics stimulate children sexually; that is an elementary fact of my research."<sup>15</sup> The psychiatrist reports that since he began his crusade against comics, he has heard from a number of adults who claimed that their childhood emotional masturbation problem was started or aggravated by comics. According to Dr. Wertham, "This has been borne out by our studies of children."<sup>16</sup>

"Comics stimulate homosexual tendencies," he charges.<sup>17</sup> Inquiring about "Batman and Robin" comics from overt homosexuals being treated at the Quaker Emergency Service Readjustment Center, to ascertain what they thought of the influence of these comics stories, Wertham reports that "one intelligent, educated young homosexual was typical with his reply: 'I don't think that they would do any harm sexually, but they probably would

ruin their [children] morals'." Many homosexuals told Wertham that the relationship of Batman and Robin in comic-book adventures represents the ideal man with man relationship. Lesbian counterparts, Wertham writes, are found in stories of "Wonder-<sup>18</sup>woman" and "The Black Cat."

"Several young men who gloated over sadistic comics stories as adolescents, have told me that during sexual relations they have to rely on the fantasy that the girl is bound and tied<sup>19</sup> down in one way or another," reports Wertham.

Dr. Wertham writes that certain literature is called "high-heel" literature, and has to do with the erotic character that high heels have for certain men. Psychiatrists know that there are men who collect shoes with high heels as a kind of fetish for erotic pleasure, and that other men have such fantasies as having women with very high-heeled shoes step on them. In the ordinary comic book for children, writes Wertham, exaggerated high heels are commonly introduced and appeal to these fetishistic tendencies. Several boys reported they collect these comics illustrations and use them for sexual fantasies with or<sup>20</sup> without masturbation.

"Comic books create sex fears of all kinds. In girls the identification of sex with violence and torture may cause fear<sup>21</sup> of sex, fear of men, and actual frigidity," continues Wertham.

Some of the most ordinary comic books have illustrations revealing crude sexual details, "if you look at them in a certain way." The shoulder of a man with a red scarf shows a



girl's nude body, for example. This is so clear that it can induce the immature reader to look for such things and stir him up sexually.<sup>22</sup>

A typical graphic illustration in Seduction shows a scene where two men are being dragged, face down over a gravel road, their feet bound and tied to the rear bumper of a moving automobile. Balloons disclose the conversation in the car between the driver and his cohort which ends with: " . . . But you gotta admit, there's nothing like 'em [the gravel road] for erasing faces!"

Another scene in the same series of illustrations bound in the centerfold of Wertham's book shows a baseball game in which the ball is a man's head with one eye dangling from its socket, the bat is a severed leg, the catcher wears a dismembered human torso as a chest protector, etc.<sup>23</sup>

Referring to the lot of "love comics," Dr. Wertham charges that these do harm in the sphere of taste, aesthetics, ethics and human relations. He says the plots are stereotyped, banal and cheap, and adds that whereas in crime comics the situation is boy meets girl--boy beats girl; in love comics it is boy meets girl--boy cheats girl or visa-versa. In crime comics, Wertham writes, the normal sexual life is repressed, whereas violence is shown in full detail. In love comics, it is just the reverse: "Homicide is usually prevented in love comics, at the last moment while fornication is completed." Childhood prostitution, writes Wertham, "is always due to neglect by the

family and by social agencies. It is on the increase at present, and comic books do their share in laying the psychological<sup>24</sup> groundwork."

Wertham denies that comic books are the "folklore of today," a statement some experts have tendered. "This is ridiculous," writes Wertham. He explains that the term, "folklore" was introduced more than one hundred years ago by the British scientist, W. G. Thoms, as being "the oral creations of broad masses of people." Many great writers have drawn on folklore as a fountain of wisdom and literature, affirms Wertham, but "it does not require much thought to realize that comic books are just the opposite." They are not poetic, not literary, have no relationship to any art and have as little to do with the American people as "alcohol, heroin or marihuana,<sup>25</sup> although many people take them."

The claim that the theme of comic books is "good conquering evil--law triumphing over crime, is not true." Comic books direct children's interest not toward the right, but toward the wrong. In many stories the criminal wins to the very end. There are whole comic books in which every story ends with evil triumphant. In others there are stories which depict twelve pages comprising dozens of pictures showing the criminal in the act, with one final picture on the last page revealing his downfall.<sup>26</sup> In many instances the child reading the story is inclined to believe that the criminal would have succeeded had he not made the one small error which resulted in his capture.

"Marya Mannes wrote: 'In twenty million comic books sold it would be hard to find a single instance where a character conquered evil only because he was kind, honest, generous or intelligent.'<sup>27</sup>"

In summation, Dr. Wertham strongly believes that almost every form of maladjustment, scholastic ineptness, and anti-social behavior, from homosexuality to retarded reading ability and stunted aesthetic values, are direct manifestations of the comic book influence. He does not confine his charges to negative comics, but rather cites the entire comic variety as a subversive entity.

He is the only expert to assert that normal, well-adjusted children are more readily debauched by comics, than are already maladjusted children. He supports his charges by citing investigations he made immediately after the close of World War II, but never attempts to introduce these studies in any scholarly or academically-prepared form.

It is surprising that Dr. Wertham never actually continues on his own path of logic to draw and present the following conclusion, which is easily inferred from his charges: Juvenile delinquency would be non-existent if society were rid of comic books.



## CHAPTER V

### IN CHORUS BUT NOT UNISON WITH WERTHAM

Dr. Wertham does not stand alone in condemning comic books, but he is apparently in a class by himself. Few experts, who concur that comics are a social menace, state their cases with the fiery conviction, constricted focus and boldness that is typical of Dr. Wertham.

Of those who tend to concur with Dr. Wertham, many discuss the more subtle influences of comics, i.e., their relationship to fairy tales. Others attack the usually-immune comic strips. Some say comic books parallel the sensational press, radio and television news coverages as a threat to the younger generation. Others show amnesty to the media as a whole, rationalizing that the media are only reflections, not creators, of the times.

J. Chazal, researcher and author of an article in En France, is one of few who fully concur with Dr. Wertham. Although he does not disclose scientific data to verify his charges, Chazal claims his studies revealed a definite causal relationship between juvenile delinquency and the comics. This, he writes, results from the reader's identification with the violent fantasies.

Chazal adds that children who read comic books are poor in studies and school attendance, come from sordid family

backgrounds, and use comic books as an escape from severe emotional frustration.<sup>1</sup>

Paul C. Pollack uses metaphors and biblical quotations to convey his unequivocal viewpoint:

When you have a stick of dynamite and do not want it to explode, you would not add glycerine and gunpowder and then play with matches. That is what exaggerating storybooks and amplifying comics are to a growing child.<sup>2</sup>

In support of his argument, Pollack quotes from the Bible:

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on those things. (Philippians 4:8)<sup>3</sup>

David Bogen, supervisor of the Los Angeles Juvenile Hall, reports a study he made of children who were awaiting judicial action. Bogen had 235 of his juvenile charges fill out questionnaires. The questions asked for personal data, and also information concerning comic books, i.e., Do you read comic books? How many? Which ones? Which are best? etc.

The investigator selected 235 non-delinquents from some 1600 interviewed, to match the first group in age, sex, school level, socio-economic class and in Los Angeles residence.

Both groups named the comic book, Crime Does Not Pay, in their list of favorites, but Bogen noted a "sharp" difference between the groups' preference in all other choices except in popular cartoon-type, animal comic books.

In the period of a week, according to the children's

answers, delinquents read nearly twice (15) as many comic books as the non-delinquents (8). Also, Bogen found that delinquents read 331 blood and thunder comic books to the non-delinquents' 153 (compiled as a group). He found seven delinquent children who read no comic books--eleven non-delinquents.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Fredric Thrasher, who has written fiery rebuttals of Dr. Wertham's studies, conclusions and approach to the problem (see Chapter III) concluded that comics do influence gangs and their activities, and adds that not only did many of the gangs investigated (in his study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago) obtain their names from the comics, but "suggestions for vandalism and other destructive activities were directly traceable to this source."<sup>5</sup>

Robert Aldrich, producer-director, writing in a recent issue of America, admits that "violence is an integral part of all great literature," and to prove the point one has only to read the Bible, much of Shakespeare and Goethe. The question is, according to Aldrich: "So why shouldn't the comics and Mickey Spillane employ it?": His answer is as follows:

Violence is always presented as a moral consequence in literature--never as something that just happens. There is always a commentary on the human proneness to sin. Violence in literature is not inevitably connected with sex.

If man is only a two-legged animal . . . violence in literature is only a depiction of desires and lusts of beasts. If man is more, violence must be repressed or channelled into a well-ordered form of expression.<sup>6</sup>

An editorial in America, asserting that newspapers are



tantamount to comic books as a social evil, reads as follows:

Sensational headlines do positive harm to the young. Newspaper notoriety is a young thug's road to fame. . . . it swells the ego, flatters the colossal vanity of many a pint-size criminal who lives in a bizarre world of his own.<sup>7</sup>

Under the guise of supplying what the readers demand, writes Lawrence G. Brown in Social Pathology, crime is not merely made prominent, but is supplied to the reader in colorful exposition, and frequently with on-the-scene lurid photographs. Even if a juvenile is on his way to the comic section in a newspaper, he cannot help noticing the front-page crime stories.<sup>8</sup>

Marshal Clinard writes that many newspapers represent a continual glorification of and preoccupation with crime. "It is likely that newspapers are important in making us a crime-centered culture" by (1) making crime seem more frequent than it really is, (2) giving crime a treatment that implies adventure and excitement, and in many cases indirectly glorifying the criminal parties involved.

Pictures and stories of juvenile delinquents apprehended in crimes, continues Clinard, give publicity and status. Newspapers also furnish a knowledge, "even more so than comic books," of the proper techniques for committing crime. Like other negative media, he concludes, the newspapers furnish rationalizations for deviant conduct learned in the gang or by other personal associations.<sup>9</sup>

In complete agreement with Clinard is Dr. Marcel Frym, director of criminological research at Hacker Clinic, Beverly

Hills, California.

Dr. Frym adds that albeit mass media are a negative influence, they only reflect, not create, the national trend. The nation as a whole is moving toward more and more violence and this accent is expressed in many ways: atomic power for destruction, over-powerful automobiles, international crises, tensions over racial prejudice and other characteristics of modern society. He believes the media only reinforce this situation, and "cheap tabloids, salacious magazines and brutal comic books . . . are the only reading matter most of them [younger generation] know."

He notes that some New York newspapers publish daily play-by-play reports on street warfare--some radio stations do the same. These reports, Dr. Frym believes, are avidly absorbed by street youngsters and publicity becomes part of the gang's "rep."

He also cites television for emphasizing and "actually glorifying violence as indicative of masculinity," much as comic books and comic strips do. "They feature force and  
10  
ridicule higher values."

In The Lonely Crowd, David Reisman is concerned with the child's identification of the "good guys" and the "bad guys" in mass media presentations. He writes that children know who the "good guy" is, not by moral principle, but by who won the  
11  
struggle. On this point, Reisman is in agreement with many other experts including Dr. Wertham, and he adds that:

It is seldom a problem to anticipate the "good guys" in comics. They are always square-jawed, clear-eyed, tall men; "bad guys" are of no recognizable ethnic groups but rather of a generally messy southern European frame--oafish and unshaven or cadaverous and oversmooth. In movies this identification is not so easy. The very apes that are good guys in most comics may turn out to be the villains after all.<sup>12</sup>

Making the distinction between the comic tales and fairy tales, Reisman points out that in the former, the protagonist is apt to be invulnerable or nearly so and equipped with supernatural powers, two guns, and a tall, terrific physique. In the fairy tales, the protagonist is frequently an underdog figure younger child, ugly duckling and a generally common-type figure.<sup>13</sup> In the comics the hero gains magical assistance chiefly through the hero's own daring, curiosity, and luck, as in the case of "Jack and the Beanstalk." He concludes:

While vaguely similar types and themes may be found in both types of literature, say in the stories of Robin Hood and Sir Galahad, the comics show a quantitative increase in the role of the more or less invulnerable authority-hero.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Harris Peck, Bureau of Mental Health Service of the Children's Court, New York City, making a similar analogy, believes that, "you can not help but distinguish some humaneness about fairy tales, but comics seem to enlarge on the most perverse aspects of human consciousness." He was commenting particularly on Hans Christian Anderson's and Grimms' fairy tales, and the stories of Edgar Allen Poe.<sup>15</sup>

Firing on comic strips, Stephen Ryan writes in America that, although it is a widely accepted belief that comic strips



in American dailies are free from the objectionable features of comic books, this is not so. He believes, however, that daily comics are for the most part

void of the blatant vulgarity, uncontrolled horror, sex, sin and sadism of comic books. Still it must be insisted that the creators of many of our most popular news strips are guilty of a subtle and dangerous form of thought control.<sup>16</sup>

Ryan cites several of the nation's most popular comic strips to clarify his accusation. "Orphan Annie," he claims, emphasizes survival of the fittest. "Daddy Barker is a financial genius who made money by using more ruthless methods than anyone else--proving that physical strength, violence and contempt for the weak pays off."<sup>17</sup>

"Lil' Abner," write Ryan, "which possesses a sharp edge of satire," is dulled by "indiscriminate fun-making at the expense of too many national institutions." "Blondie" tends to perpetuate widely circulated stereotypes of American husbands and wives. He adds that "Dagwood is good, etc., but also grossly incompetent, blundering, dimwitted, etc." Sufficiently prolonged emphasis on a theme of male incompetence "cannot but have an effect on children."<sup>18</sup>

Ryan cites the "Steve Canyon" strip, which he admits does much good, but also perpetuates an unfortunate stereotype; e.g., "American school teachers are dowdy, frustrated, unsympathetic, spinterish, etc."<sup>19</sup>

The gamut of arguments against the comic book and other

printed media, with reference to "insidious influences" has been covered in the two foregone<sup>ing</sup> chapters. One might be impressed that with the myriad of articles on the subject, there are so few negative views. The truth of the matter is that the vast majority of article writers do little more than rephrase and parrot Dr. Wertham's lines. Any endeavor to include even a reasonable percentage of such articles on delinquency and the media, would be a non-constructive, endless and redundant undertaking.

Most critics of the comic books agree with Dr. Wertham that there is a definite distinction between fairy tales and comic tales, and many have made identical comments on the distinctions. But this agreement does not disclose any media-crime relation.

Newspapers are criticized for sensational headlines, lurid pictures and technique-revealing crime descriptions. It has been said many times that such literature is as harmful as comic books, and often, more so since news prominence can be a vital inspiration to criminal and gang morale and a contribution to crime "reps."

Even comic strips are frowned upon by some critics as a genesis of distorted social values and a "subtle and dangerous form of thought control." But such contentions, even if true, do not affirm any causal relationship between media and crime.

Another prevalent view of the negative media is to

identify and evaluate them as mirrors of the sick society that nourishes them. In this perspective the media are in the position of a product rather than a cause of social troubles.



## CHAPTER VI

### TODAY'S CHILDREN ARE NOT COMICS-MADE

Many experts directly or indirectly attack Dr. Wertham's theses in part or in toto, but Dr. Fredric M. Thrasher, in a Journal of Educational Sociology article in 1949, aims his shot straight and forcefully at Dr. Wertham. Dr. Thrasher, a professor of education at New York University; former secretary, Society for Preventing Crime; member, Attorney General's Conference on Juvenile Delinquency; board of directors member, National Board of Review, and author of The Gang and many articles, identifies the alarmed parents of today as the same type who were excited by the dime novel, movies and radio violence of yesterday. He writes:

Reduced to the simplest terms, the charges are that since movies and comics are enjoyed by a very large number of children; since a large number of these entertainments diet on crime, violence, etc., children who see them are necessarily stimulated to the performance of delinquent acts by imitation. . . . alarm over the evil effects of comic books rests on nothing more substantial than the opinions and conjectures of a number of psychiatrists, lawyers and judges.<sup>1</sup>

In repudiating Dr. Wertham's views, Dr. Thrasher writes:

We may criticize Wertham's conclusions on many grounds, but the major weakness is that they are not supported by research data. . . . Wertham's approach to his problem is forensic rather than scientific. . . . His case rests on a few extreme

examples, and Wertham makes no attempt to prove they are typical.<sup>2</sup>

Studies by Drs. Nissim Levy, Lewis Lipsitt and Judy F. Rosenblith, psychologists at Brown University, attest that juvenile delinquents who explain their crimes are caused by comic books or movies, are merely trying to transfer the blame. The investigators believe the media may teach the techniques of crime, but like Dr. Kvaraceus, they assert that the cause of anti-social behavior can be traced back to personal backgrounds. They conclude that there is no justification for censorship of the media as a means to curb crime.<sup>3</sup>

In another investigation several groups of average city boys were studied, and the results appear in Nation's Schools magazine. It was found that youngsters who read comic books most avidly and with the greatest interest were apparently no more maladjusted in terms of delinquency or other misbehavior than the group which read few if any comic books. Those who illustrated the most astute critical understanding of what they read in comic books were found to be the best adjusted children.<sup>4</sup> A follow-up study some 18 months later yielded similar findings.

According to Dr. Kvaraceus, the aggressive, violent and antisocial actions portrayed in negative comic books provide an easy method of mental catharsis. He believes they can forget the frustrations, insecurities and trials of daily living, as do adults responding to the mass media. He adds that the modern child's need for adventure, for new and different

experiences, is seldom satisfied in the modern, urban and protected society. "Such was not the case for the child in a pioneer family."<sup>5</sup>

Norbert Muhlen, in a Commentary article, agrees with the "catharsis" response to comic books.<sup>6</sup> So do Josette Frank,<sup>7</sup> and Herbert Bloch.<sup>8</sup>

These and other experts believe that the child who is "knocked over" by a 10¢ comic book probably could have been off set by a bad report card, slur words thrown by a companion, or a teacher's back-handed slap. With most delinquent cases, the experts seem to agree that the time was ripe, and background and personal factors were such as to render the child vulnerable to any pressure or suggestion.

Kvaraceus says no research has yet proven that comic books do have a pronounced effect on the incidence of delinquent acts.

Since nine out of ten growing children read comic books, we would be a nation of depraved adults if comic-book reading resulted in the destruction of morals and personality.<sup>9</sup>

Herbert Bloch, in agreement, adds that comics might possibly stimulate and satisfy a curiosity that might not ever have been aroused, "just as adults are stimulated by witnessing the exotic tribal rites of primitive peoples." In the case of the disturbed or delinquency-prone child, Bloch agrees with Kvaraceus that the delinquent action might be motivated by the access to criminal techniques provided by mass media presenta-



tions. He concludes that "even children who are not disturbed or delinquency-prone," may, in a critical stage of their lives, be susceptible to negative media, and implement this technical knowledge of crime.<sup>10</sup>

"Comics cannot be tagged as the primary cause of juvenile delinquency," states Dr. Harris Peck, identified in an earlier chapter as the director of the Bureau of Mental Health Service of the New York City Children's Court, "though they may aid and abet such actions." Dr. Peck bases his opinion on his experience with 15,000 cases that have come before him in the Children's Court in eight years. He admits, however, that he made no systematic study of the problem.<sup>11</sup>

"Today's wayward children are no more comics-made than they are movie-made, or radio-made, or yellow press-made," writes Dr. Lawrence A. Averill, State Teachers College in Worchester, Massachusetts. He claims the mass media reflect the same fears and insecurities which beset modern man, and that children immerse themselves in the lurid adventures of comic books to escape from the terrors of modern life which adults, themselves, have failed to cope with.<sup>12</sup>

Norbert Muhlen, writing in Commentary, after reviewing studies of the problem, is "skeptical" of generalized psycho-analytic arguments brought against comic books, but is equally suspicious of the minimal effects some protagonists staunchly affirm. He writes that various forms of literature have long

afforded a vicarious solution to the problems of life, but comics cannot be confused with fairy tales for, unlike, fairy tales, comics present their story in a very familiar, realistic world. Even the titles of many such books try to convey this impression, viz., True Comics, Real Life Adventures, True Crime Stories, etc. Fairy tales, he adds, are more or less, always "Once upon a time . . . " But since nine out of ten children read comic books, and considerably less than one out of a thousand are delinquents, the negative influence on behavior is doubtful.<sup>13</sup> Muhlen strongly agrees with Kvaraceus here.

Judge Louis Goldstein testified before the Congressional Subcommittee that during his entire career as prosecuting attorney of Kings County, and later as judge of the County Court, he "never came across a single case" where the cause of antisocial behavior could be traced to comic books.<sup>14</sup>

Concurring with this observation, Josette Frank adds that any evidence to the contrary is discounted by many criminologists and psychologists who point out that children in trouble can hardly be expected to understand their own behavior, much less explain it with, "I done it because I read it in the comic books."<sup>15</sup>

University of Chicago Professor of Educational Psychology, Dr. Mandel Sherman, agrees almost verbatim with the above views, and not only does he discount any media influence on behavior, but he writes that he can find "not even an emotional disturbance in children."<sup>16</sup>

Peter Trapp, who joins Kvaraceus, Peck, Bloch, Muhlen, Sherman and other experts in their views on the problem, adds that by putting the full blame on the mass media for delinquency and crime increases society might be furnishing rationalizations for deviant conduct learned in the gang, home life or from other associations.<sup>17</sup>

J. Edgar Hoover, testifying before the Subcommittee, said, "It is doubtful that juvenile delinquency would decrease if comic books were not available to children."

In summary, it is apparent that Dr. Wertham's case stands almost isolated in opposition to many other recognized experts, who assert that no evidence supports a causal relationship between media and crime. A few believe comic books may provide a beneficial catharsis for children as does drama for the adult, and most believe that violence and antisocial behavior can be motivated by comics, but only in a situation where such acts might have been motivated by any other negative stimulus affecting a "ripe," delinquency-prone child.

Note that whereas Dr. Wertham insists that the normal child is most susceptible to media influence, all other experts radically disagree.



## CHAPTER VII

### READING AND COMIC BOOKS

Voicing the opinion of many experts, Dr. Kvaraceus writes that readership statistics, which are "the best research available to us," indicate:

that it is the exceptional child who does not read the comics . . . that comic reading is a frequent adult habit, and that women do much less reading of this type of 'literature.'

It may well be that pulp and slick romance magazines replace comic books for many of the female ex-comic readers.<sup>1</sup>

Kvaraceus points out that some investigators say that reading comics is tied in with general reading interests. Children who read the most comics appear to read the most books, and the converse.

Some 75 per cent of the men and women who answered a Gallup poll regarding comic books said they considered the comics "good, clean fun," and in an investigation to ascertain the age and sex of regular comic readers, it was learned that 95 per cent of the boys and 91 per cent of the girls between the ages of 6 and 11 regularly read from 12 to 13 comics monthly. In the 12 to 17 year span, 87 per cent boys and 81 per cent girls are regular readers; 18 to 30 year span, 41 per cent men and 21 per cent women have been found to be regular readers; and in the group above 30 years of age, 16 per cent men and

12 per cent women were found to be reading regularly about 6<sup>2</sup> comics a month.

Parents and other adults in the community present an imitative reading habit pattern that teaches this type of leisure-time pursuit to the younger generation, writes Kvaraceus. He adds that children are probably very interested in comic books because the books are inexpensive; there are always a lot of them around; the format is such that they can be folded into the pockets for carrying; and they can be discarded without any great loss. Comic books portray the strange, the bizarre and the unusual in a stereotyped and familiar fashion, and they<sup>3</sup> appeal to the child's sense of hero worship.

In an earlier chapter it was reported that Dr. Wertham strongly believes that "reading difficulties are on the increase and an important cause of this increase is the comic book." As a result of his examinations of 1,000 children of all types, Wertham reported that delinquents are almost five years retarded in reading ability. He concluded, "Children who don't read well<sup>4</sup> tend to be delinquents."

Dr. Thrasher, with other experts, writes that such statements are unsupported, and if they are true, they do not prove<sup>5</sup> that comic books are the cause.

Dr. W. W. Jones, professor of education and director of curriculum study at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, writes:

Analysis shows that a child reading a comic book is practicing the very same activities used in good reading instruction. Also, he learns new word symbols via pictures of things or action in the context of the story.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Robert L. Thorndike, department of educational psychology, Teachers College at Colorado University, made an analysis of comic book vocabularies. He found that the average comic book contains approximately 10,000 words, and among them, many words that are not found in fourth or fifth grade readers. He concluded that any reader, from reading one comic book each month, will cover some 120,000 words per year, twice the wordage of an average fourth or fifth grade reader. Also, he added, pictures make the reading attractive and aid the reader.<sup>7</sup>

Another educator, commenting on comics reading as a motivation to improve reading, related a problem he was having with one student. The Elementary School Journal article explained that Jimmy was having trouble distinguishing "is" from "in." The teacher asked Jimmy how he ever expected to read the comics if he couldn't read the simple words. Jimmy, eagerly asked, "Are these words in the funnies!" The teacher reported that Jimmy learned his basic vocabulary with great enthusiasm after that.<sup>8</sup>

Florence Heisler conducted a study: "A Comparison between Those Elementary School Children Who Attend Moving Pictures, Read Comic Books and Listen to Serial Programs to an Excess, with Those Who Indulge in These Activities Seldom or Not at All." She concluded: "We surmise that comic books, radio,



movies, television as combined factors do not affect school work significantly." Her study compared the achievements of both groups in areas of reading, language, literature, social studies and sciences and their results on social-adjustment and self-adjustment as measured by the California Test of Personality.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Kvaraceus agrees that "whatever the vices may be in excessive reading of comic books, nevertheless, they do provide a substantial amount of reading experience from the point of view of vocabulary development and reading skill. This assumes that the child does not skip the reading material and depend entirely upon the graphic element for the narrative phase of the comic book story." Also he agrees that studies of IQs of frequent vs. non-readers have generally failed to show any significant difference.<sup>10</sup>

There is apparently some agreement among the experts that juvenile delinquents tend to have reading difficulties and are generally retarded in this and other academic disciplines.

Helen J. Greenblatt noted that a number of studies indicate a "startling frequency of reading retardation among delinquents."<sup>11</sup> Isaac O. Gimprich, principal of Public School 27, New York City, concurred with the above observation as the result of his own experience. He tried to find out if juvenile delinquents might be rehabilitated by giving them special teaching assistance. His first discovery was that in every instance, the delinquent children were at least two years

retarded in reading ability. Test after test administered by Mr. Gimprich showed a correlation between low reading ability and antisocial behavior.<sup>12</sup>

His conclusion was similar to that of other experts regarding this particular problem. Non-reading is an early symptom of an antagonistic and aggressive reaction by children against authority or against discipline and the accepted way of doing things. Once reading handicaps emerge, he writes, the child falls further in the spiraling process set up when the inability to read well aggravates the child's stubbornness to learn. Finally, the mental block cripples the child as a participant in normal outlets enjoyed by his peers. School becomes a torment, a source of wounds to his pride and ego. He does not respect himself--causes trouble to gain attention, even if it is negative attention.<sup>13</sup>

Another study which was presented to the Congressional Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency and based on New York Court records, revealed that 75 per cent of the children brought into the court for other than school difficulties were at least two years retarded in reading ability. Some 50 per cent of this group were retarded at least five years. A fair number of the delinquents were almost illiterate and were barely able to understand the reading material in comic books.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Wertham seems to stand alone among the experts with his charge that comic books cause reading retardation. Most of

the educators cited in this chapter found in their studies that comic-book reading does not harm reading ability, and in some cases it even aids reading.

Studies have shown that children who indulge in such reading as well as other mass media patronization are not necessarily lower in academic standings. There is assent among the experts that children who read the most comic books tend to read the most books, and those who read no comic books tend to read few other books. There is also agreement, as the result of investigations, that delinquents are generally retarded in reading ability. But, contrary to Dr. Wertham's explanation for this retardation, there is no proof to show that comic books, or other mass media, have caused this condition.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THIRTY-FOUR ANSWERS TO THE CAUSAL- RELATIONSHIP QUESTION

The most formidable collection of expert opinions, unsolicited by a prejudiced party or prepared for "popular appeal," but in response to the crucial question, are letters from 34 psychiatrists, members of the Medical Correctional Association, and the Academy of Forensic Sciences. The letters average 800 words each and were written in response to a request from the Kefauver Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency for:

a statement of their opinions based on their work with delinquency as to the degree of influence that crime, violence, sadism and illicit sex in mass media have on the behavior patterns of American youth.<sup>1</sup>

Postmarked between May and June, 1955, the letters are<sup>2</sup> appended an interim report of the subcommittee. This writer has taken the liberty of abstracting, with careful scrutiny, the portion of each letter which is most indicative of the expert's reply to the question.

The abstractions also include portions of the letters which state the qualifications of the expert, supporting evidences, and any distinctions made by the expert between media.

Because these letters embody such a wealth of expert opinion, and are in many cases more valuable than articles

which have abounded in periodicals during the past decade, this writer has chosen to include the letters as a chapter in the text as opposed to an appendix.

1. M. R. King, Superintendent, California Medical Facility,  
Department of Corrections, Vacaville, California:

I think that practically all religious, social and psychiatric workers concede that the behavior patterns of American young people are largely conditioned and determined by radio and television programs, moving pictures, literature, and the examples set for them by their elders. I have not studied any statistical data or participated in any particular research in regard to this problem.

2. Harry R. Lipton, M.D., Atlanta, Georgia:

I am of the opinion that many of our television programs are a contributing factor to our increase in juvenile delinquency in this country. I have not been working with children for the past several years.

3. George M. Lott, M.D., University Psychiatrist, Professor in Graduate School, State College, Pennsylvania:

In 25 years of practice, which included 10 years majoring in juvenile and adult court work, I have never been able to pin down a definite major fundamental causal influence between crime, violence, etc., as depicted in movies, cartoon, books, or television, and the offensive behavior encountered in delinquency. This is not to say there is no such connection but to point up the fact that we may be being misled and distracted from more important causal or preventive factors.

. . . It would be unfortunate if the committee were led astray by mistaking the smoke for the fire in the searches for influential causes for delinquency. For your convenience . . . investigation by Drs. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck of Harvard University.

4. Edward Podolsky, M.D., Brooklyn, New York:

It has been my experience that presenting crime, . . . in an attractive and adventurous form in the

mass media of the movies, television, radio, fiction and the comics has a very definite and decided effect in quite a few cases of initiating and sustaining a social and criminal activity in juvenile and adolescents. . . . Some degree of control should be exercised over these media. . . . This will not solve the entire problem but it will go a long way.

5. Dwight M. Palmers, M.D., Columbus, Ohio:

This is a matter on which I have no facts but do have an opinion. I feel rather strongly that there is an unfavorable relationship between certain types of comic books, radio programs and television programs on the one hand, and juvenile delinquency and crime on the other. It is my opinion that nothing can ever come out of the human mind that has not first been built into it. . . . a person is part of all he has met.

6. Gilbert J. Rich. M.D., Director, Roanoke Guidance Center,  
Roanoke, Virginia:

There is no one cause for present-day delinquency. My opinion, based on many years of experience, is that the harm done by various mass media is greatly overrated. The remarkable thing is not the number of children who are led into delinquency by these things, but rather the great majority who are not.

7. Nathan K. Rickles, M.D., Beverly Hills, California:

It is my impression based on many years' experience clinically as well as being the father of three children, that the overemphasis on crime. . . as presented in the various mass media cannot help but contribute to an unavoidable reaction on the part of the listening audience, and many times might be a definite spur or excuse for some form of anti-social behavior.

8. D. E. Alcorn, M.D., Victoria, British Columbia:

I was myself quite convinced that there was a close connection between crime comics and delinquency. It occurred to me that it would be useful if I could show a definite connection. I had already discovered that juvenile delinquents were not the only ones who



read crime comics. In fact most of the healthy boys seem to. I have found no clear-cut evidence of any positive association between any particular type of literature or movies and delinquency. In contrast to this, there is a high correlation with broken homes, rejection by parents, etc.

9. Edmund Bergler, M.D., New York, New York:

I believe that criminosis--of which juvenile delinquency is a part--results from neurotic elaboration of uncounscious conflicts stemming from earliest childhood. It follows that all later influences, such as motion pictures, television shows, reading matter, can only act as catalysts, bringing to the fore what has already been formed. One cannot fully absolve the mass media of responsibility.

10. Otto Billig, M.D., Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Nashville, Tennessee:

My clinical experience has led me to believe that television programs, movies, comics, etc., have a very limited influence on the child or juvenile. The well-adjusted personality can resist them without difficulties. But only the emotionally disturbed and insecure individuals appear susceptible to outside forces.

11. A. W. Byrnes, M.D., Chief, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Veteran's Administration, Danville, Illinois:

The portrayal of these criminalistic activities in books, periodicals, and radio or television, is distinctly harmful. Some of these people normally would not be law violators.

12. Frank Coburn, M.D., Psychopathic Hospital, Department of Psychiatry, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa:

The primary and most important factor in the production of juvenile delinquency in my opinion is a disturbed family relationship in the home of the child who is considered delinquent. The sadistic crimes and brutal homosides portrayed on the screens early expose a child to a tremendous exaggeration of

the seamy sides of life before he is emotionally mature enough to handle it.

It would appear likely that certain criminal and delinquent solutions for the child's problem are suggested by television and movies, and I think it is fair to say that a certain number of children use these solutions who might not otherwise choose them had they not been exposed to this example. More important than its role in the causation of juvenile delinquency, I believe that the screen and the television provide directions for the delinquent behavior to take.

13. Nathan Blackman, M.D., St. Louis, Missouri:

I doubt if a healthy, emotionally accepted youngster would be affected by them, although the very fact that the adult can indulge and expose him to such trash . . . is part of the hollowness which does upset values and present dilemmas to the growing child.

14. Louis H. Cohen, M.D., New Haven, Connecticut:

There is never a single cause for a social problem, but rather there are many causes. At best, one particular factor might be found to be one of these causes, but how much weight it deserves is almost impossible to measure. Hence, I must say that movies and television, in my opinion, indicate ways to certain predisposed or suggestible youngsters in which antisocial behavior can be carried out.

Though these bad programs are always rather silly and in bad taste, the degree to which they are actually influential in determining juvenile crime is so vague and probably statistically impossible to evaluate that it would be quite foolish to ascribe to such programs the weight of a causal factor sufficient to justify any thundering campaign against them on this basis.

"Headline in today's New York Herald Tribune--United States Sabers Fight MIG's, Pilots' Families Proud." This propaganda seems to me more insidious than violence in comics, etc. If men glorify with pride the ugly necessity to fight in war, which is a denial of the efficacy of man's reason, how can we expect reason and sound moral judgment from the children who are bred by and trained by such animal-like adults.

15. H. H. Garner, M.D., Chicago, Illinois:

It is my impression that the real problem is with the parents of the children and not with any such media as television. The aggressive sadistic, and delinquent tendencies are developed before mass media are significant in the life of the individual. The possibilities of such media for a positive contribution to the problems of delinquency are not being realized

16. Sara G. Geiger, M.D., Director, Milwaukee County Guidance Clinic, Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

Crime, violence, sadism and illicit sex in mass media have deep meaning for and unfavorable influence on a small proportion of our youth. This portrayal of unacceptable behavior serves as a pattern for some disturbed personalities and lowers the standards of others whose disturbance is not so great that it brings them into contact with law enforcement agencies.

17. Ralph G. Gladen, M.D., Modesto, California:

Our normal kids do not enjoy such programs for very long periods of time and only ones who do enjoy them are the ones who would be inclined to make use of anything learned on the program to avenge themselves on a society which they hate. Therefore, mass media offer a threat to society.

18. William Corwin, M.D., Miami, Florida:

Two groups [are affected by the mass media] one including the so-called juvenile delinquent whose behavior is directly affected by the actions suggested to him. No doubt some of these children are already disturbed, but some are living in circumstances which make them susceptible to additional pressure in the form of unhealthy excitement and the glorification of antisocial behavior and individuals. Another group includes those who become frightened by the overt aggressive and threatening forces depicted, and a specific neurotic reaction may develop, rather than a delinquent type of behavior. In both instances sick children are the result.



19. J. C. Ferris, Senior Surgeon (retired) USPHS, Chief Medical Officer, Federal Correctional Institution, Texarkana, Texas:

The use of television, movies and certain literature for portraying crime, violence, sadism, etc., certainly are mediums of expression that cannot but have a regressing and ill effect on the immature and formative minds of youthful individuals. The mass media have most certainly served in a considerable number of cases as a catalyst that activates subsequent antisocial activities.

20. Douglas Goldman, M.D., Cincinnati, Ohio:

Of primary importance in the development of juvenile delinquency and crime is the social pathology represented by adverse conditions of social and economic nature in the environment of children. Exposure to environmental stress and suggestion, as might be expected to promote interest in various aspects of crime and violence, including programs of this nature on radio and television and comic book sequences, would be likely to have more than an accidental influence in the development of crime and delinquency, providing the first condition mentioned is present. In the absence of that condition it is very unlikely that environmental suggestion would have more than an accidental influence in the development of crime and delinquency.

21. Joseph Hughes, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Women's Medical College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

It is my clinical experience that delinquency and behavioral disorders can and may be precipitated by radio and television programs on crime and violence. The juvenile mind is not protected by judgment and reason and lacks the capacity of experience. Children are particularly vulnerable in imitating acts of violence.

22. H. M. Janney, Medical Director, Bureau of Prisons, Washington, D.C.:

I am certain that many of our programs constitute a grave hazard to the proper development of our young citizenry. The daily flow of this undesirable matter is bound to have its deleterious effect.

23. Gordon R. Kamman, M.D., St. Paul, Minnesota:

While I have no statistical information concerning this question, I am definitely of the opinion that much of our juvenile delinquency is directly traceable to movies, comic strips, and other mass media. Any dramatization or glamorization of a criminal cannot help but have an adverse influence upon the morality of the young and unsophisticated.

24. Samuel R. Kesselman, M.D., Neuropsychiatrist, Newark, New Jersey:

The acting out of hostility on the part of our youth, based upon literature and television programs they have viewed, occurs only in youths that are so disposed, based upon faulty parent-child relationship, and represents just a part of the total problem which is multidisciplinary in its structure. It is my feeling that this literature and these programs serve a positive purpose in permitting the child or youth to live through, emotionally, in a vicarious manner, his aggressive needs. If the disturbed child or youth who acts out his hostility in a violent manner were not exposed to these media, some other environmental influence would tend to provoke this hostility.

25. Warren S. Wille, M.D., Director, Psychiatric Clinic, State Prison of Southern Michigan, Jackson, Michigan:

Comic books and television programs do not create our culture as much as they reflect it. As long as there exists in this country a strong force of organized crime, gambling and political corruption, these subjects are bound to be played up a great deal in both comic books and television. We cannot expect our children to grow up to be better citizens than their parents.

26. Leon A. Witkin, Senior Surgeon (retired) USPHS, Chief Medical Officer, U.S. Penitentiary Hospital, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania:

Since I have had little formal psychiatric training I can offer only a personal opinion. These mass media must in some way leave their mark. It is interesting that penitentiary inmates almost unanimously believe that lurid books, comics, movies, and television, are major causes of crime, but it is my feeling that this attitude is merely a mechanism for justifying their own criminal behavior. It seems to me too facile and ingenuous a conception that human behavior is so easily influenced and I believe that we must probe much more deeply to find the motors for delinquency.

27. Maier I. Tuchler, M.D., San Francisco, California:

One cannot say that there is a direct causal relationship between the increase in delinquency in all its forms and the prevalence of programs in the movies and in television dealing with vice and crime.

Research suggested: (1) The normal and the pathological behavior in children must be distinguished upon a dynamic basis; (2) In order to accomplish the above, a working knowledge of normal growth of a child and of his personality development is needed; (3) Pathological behavior must be defined. This definition involves a clarification of the deviant trends of the personality in their growth and development, and a cross-section appraisal of the functioning of the personality at the time of examination; (4) The nature of the pathological maladjustment must then be reviewed in the context of the environment and the social and the cultural situation and the interaction with the environment must be evaluated with the relationship to the previously mentioned categories of data.

In other words, a knowledge of the internal structure of the child's personality is needed, and a knowledge of the development of the personality of the child or adolescent



and the organization of this personality in longitudinal section is required. Personality cannot be disassociated from environment, and vice versa.

28. Thomas H. Smith, Medical Director, USPHS, Chief Medical Officer, U.S. Penitentiary, Terre Haute, Indiana:

It would be difficult to present clinical evidence that is specific; however, those who have a part in the present system of correction and rehabilitation have opinions that become crystalized over a period of observation and experience.

In this area, the programs available for viewing by children during the day and early evening I do not feel could be considered as detrimental to the children. Those shown later in many instances would be unsuitable for children.

Most of the movies frequently shown in public theatres probably will have no deleterious effect upon the normal individual. This would not hold true for a sociopathic or emotionally unstable type of individual. Literature on news stands might be particularly stimulating to a sociopathic individual and it would seem in some cases to be sufficiently stimulating to their ego to incite a desire or stimulus to commit a crime.

29. Sam I. Stein, M.D., Director, Psychiatric Department, Chicago, Illinois:

After nearly 15 years of full-time service at the Cook County Juvenile Court wherein I have personally examined by scientific-psychiatric method, approximately 12,000 delinquent children, I am convinced that the main cause of juvenile delinquency is a relative degree of emotional immaturity or neuroticism which will be found in the individual offender.

Removal of these hyperstimulatory, morbid themes (violent, asocial, amoral, and unethical themes which are found in some books, magazines, comics, movies, radio and television presentations) from the experience of the child will not cure or resolve the basic cause of delinquency but it should reduce the delinquent type of

tendency from developing into some serious delinquent acts.

30. Irving J. Sands, M.D., Brooklyn, N.Y.:

I believe that there is a definite relationship between these presentations and the increasing extent of juvenile delinquency. Often these presentations lead to a good deal of mental conflict in these children. They have learned, or are supposed to have learned, at home and at school that virtue eventually prevails. Yet, when they follow some of the programs that make virtue out of crime, they become confused and may eventually develop feelings of guilt that may become the nucleus for subsequent neurotic and even psychotic behavior.

31. Russell O. Settle, M.D., Medical Director, PHS, Leavenworth, Kansas:

I wish I had more to offer, that I could document the effect of these factors in terms of specific case histories gleaned from my 25 years of experience as a prison medical officer. Actually, of course, such is impossible, for I can recall but a few cases in which they appeared to play anything more than a minor role. Nevertheless, I feel, as you no doubt do, that there is much that is potentially deleterious in the present day movie, television and comic book fare. Young children who are thus emotionally starved may be ripe subjects for the subtle suggestiveness of the crime movie. In the absence of adequate parental figures and stable home life they may readily come to identify with the heroic criminal figure depicted in the media, if the exposure is at the right time and of sufficient duration.

The effect of bad movies and television programs can only be looked upon as one of the minor of these (poverty, physical handicap, mental illness, alcoholism, international tensions, and many other great social problems which all play a part as causative factors.)

32. Philip Q. Roche, M.D., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

The claim of a 1 to 1 correlation between mass media and juvenile delinquency does not appeal to me. The controlling motivation for most crime and delinquency is seldom, if ever, to be found in such superficial coincidences; furthermore, the assumption does not account for the larger number of children and youth repeatedly exposed to the same media who are not delinquents.

The danger lies in the ready acceptance of this "comic book delinquency" explanation and in the action upon it. This acceptance permits us to seize upon a scapegoat object and in so doing we will more than likely compound the delinquency.

The condemnation of the comic book, television mass media can be better sustained on other grounds--impact on the child-rearing process.

33. Hector J. Ritey, M.D., New York, New York:

In my opinion, the deep causes for the appalling increase in the number of cases of juvenile delinquency are tied to a complicated interaction of social, historical and psychological factors. Mass Media are a ring in a vicious circle. In turn, they become a link in the perpetuation of such morbid interest by keeping its manifestations alive.

The adverse effect on the youngster's mind is threefold: (1) he identifies with the criminal, (2) exaltation of expediency as the avenue to success, (3) the most insidious danger--the adolescent eventually releases inhibitions in many areas other than those shown in the programs or described in the books--such problems may have led to some minor neurotic symptoms in adulthood, but not to criminal behavior, unless the action of the mass media could release the inhibition, providing alibi through example.

Three areas of behavior are mainly affected by the illconceived action of such mass media:

(1) Sexual crimes. The adolescent who is exposed to television and to cheap literature is at an age level in which his natural development is characterized by a struggle around two main points: (a) his acceptance of adulthood, which entails also sexual responsibility, (b) his



boastfulness and exhibitionism around his newly acquired sexual powers. But the sexually irresponsible hero of the morbid stories, always emerging victorious in his masculine sense of omnipotence, and disregarding, or not even prospecting, the responsibilities connected with sexual achievements, can appeal also to youngsters who otherwise might have never misbehaved, and who would only have indulged in unconsequential daydreams to bolster their sense of omnipotence through sexual fantasies.

(2) Crimes against property. In the cheap mass media, crimes against property are exalted by stressing the point of the intellectual organization of the criminal act. The crime, and the scheme to hide it, becomes the focalizing point of attention and sympathy. Thus, the criminal is a hero, his easygoing personality appeals more than the compulsive guardian of the law.

(3) Murder is generally a secondary consequence of the above-mentioned crimes. Murder indicates a reversion to that period of very early infancy in which the child has not yet even acquired the notion of his own autonomous individuality, so that the existence, not to mention the value, of a human life is an abstraction too remote to be understood. The youngster whose inhibitions have already been released in other areas is only one step removed from releasing the inhibition toward murder, thus duplicating the deeds of the hero of his favorite programs or comic books.

34. Memorandum from Dr. S. W. Ginsburg, President of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, released January 10, 1950, then sent to Arthur J. Freund, Esq., former chairman of the section on criminal law of the American Bar Association.

In 1955, Dr. Philip Q. Roche, M.D., writing to the Subcommittee, commented on the memorandum: "To my knowledge since 1950 there have appeared no conclusive studies of this subject at significant variance with our views." The memorandum representing the viewpoint of the joint committee

comprising 50 experts in child psychiatry, clinical psychology, and preventive psychiatry, read as follows:

The joint committee discussion of the question was a singular opportunity to secure the participation of over 50 psychiatrists, and to obtain from such sampling the prevailing opinion pertinent to your question which was paraphrased as follows: "Does the vivid, living portrayal of crime by the media (radio, movies, comics, television) have an impact on the mind of a child, juvenile or adolescent, in such manner as to effect delinquent behavior?"

Findings: Unanimous opinion: (1) There exists no data of sufficient scope, either on the basis of clinical first hand experience or on theoretical grounds, to enable qualified investigators to draw valid conclusions, either that these media are harmful or beneficial. (2) In the absence of such valid conclusions, any regulation or suppression now of such media by legislative enactment should be regarded as unwise.

Random Commentary: Emotionally healthy children can readily assimilate mass media portrayals of crime and render them innocuous. Not uncommonly without peril the child can produce fantasy situations himself that outdo the commercial product. There appears to be an agreement among observers of children that only the child already emotionally disturbed, may utilize the mass media in a nonadaptive manner. An excessive pre-occupation with the content of crime and violence and a symptomatic reactive response to such content are tokens of such preexisting internal disturbance in the child. Such disturbance as may be manifest in delinquent behavior by the causal nexus between the stimulus of the movie or comic book and the delinquent act is more apparent than real.

The analysis on the following page was prepared with the assistance of two additional readers, both graduate students at Boston University.

Each reader, including this writer, studied the abstractions in private and made careful opinion-classifications. At a

final session the readers compared their groupings and found they could agree on very few.

The five categories that appear in the analysis were formulated by the three readers, but the task of ultimately consigning abstractions to each was done almost arbitrarily by this writer when it was apparent that a unanimous agreement was impossible.

For the benefit of the reader, the letters fitted into each category are cited by number. In several cases a single letter is listed in more than one category owing to the diverse implications of the statement.



Interpreted opinion	Subtotal	Total no. opinions
I. Mass media are fundamental and grave hazards to youthful minds, and a basic cause of delinquency. . . . . 5 (4,11,16,22,23)		
II. Mass media are contributing factors to juvenile delinquency, but other maladjustments must first be present in the individual child . . . . . 18		
a. Media are powerful contributors. . . . . 8 (5,17,18,19,20,21,30,33)		
b. Media have some precipi- tating effects. . . . . 5 (2,7,12,26,28)		
c. Media have little precipi- tating effect . . . . . 5 (9,10,24,29,31)		
III. There exists some connection between the media and its audiences, but this connection is not scientifically determined to be either positive or negative. . . . . 6* (1,9,14,24,34)		
IV. Insignificant connection between the media and audience. . . . . 4 (1,3,15,32)		
V. Exaggerated blame is being placed on the media influence. This blame is a red herring, distracting us from more rational investigations to search out the real cause of delinquency. . . . . 8 (3,6,8,14,25,26,27,31,32)		

\*Letter No. 34, placed in this category, carried the collective opinion of 50 experts, Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry.

It is evident from the above testimonies that there is considerable disagreement among the experts as they render their opinions concerning the influence of the mass media on juvenile behavior.

Only one expert supported his contention with corroborating research, which even then, was not conducted by him. Many admitted that they have not been professionally concerned with the problem and were offering personal opinions based on little more than casual observations and inferences.

Only a small minority submitted opinions which could be interpreted to mean that negative media are the prime causal factor in the increased juvenile delinquency rate, but none of these opinions were statistically or scientifically affirmed.

A substantial number believed the media are precipitating causes of delinquent behavior, but not primary causes. Among this group there were sharp differences of opinion concerning the degree of the influence.

The majority of experts, including the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (representing 50 experts), believe there is a connection between the media and audience behavior, but they concur that the nature of the linkage, positive or negative, has not yet been conclusively and scientifically determined.

Several experts stated or implied that there is far too much emphasis being given to the debauching influences of the

media, and that such gratuitous attention might be a distracting element in the carrying out of more, badly needed research to determine the basic causes of delinquent behavior.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE KEFAUVER SUBCOMMITTEE AND COMIC BOOKS: CONCLUSIONS

The Congressional Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency conducted its investigation of comic books and their alleged influence on children's behavior between 1953 and 1955.

Chaired by Senator Robert C. Hendrickson and later by Senator Estes Kefauver, the subcommittee heard testimony from 65 public officials, 8 child-guidance experts and 10 publishers. The 34 letters from experts in the behavioral field (Chapter VIII) were part of the subcommittee's investigation.

Most of the arguments presented to the subcommittee have been presented heretofore in this paper, but it is important to note which arguments are heavily valued and which are discounted in the subcommittee's conclusions prepared by Senator Kefauver.

The senator writes that there are many who accept the idea of the cause and effect relationship between comic-book reading and antisocial behavior. "Many judges point to crime and horror comic books, and cite cases of children who have explained their delinquent acts by claiming they adopted the ideas from comic books," writes the chairman, but:

this kind of evidence is largely discounted by the behavioral scientists who point out that children can hardly be expected to understand their own behavior, much less explain it.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of expert opinions, Kefauver continues, seem inclined to the view that it is unlikely that the reading of crime and horror comics would lead to delinquency in a well-adjusted and normal, law-abiding child. A different view is held by Dr. Fredric Wertham. Dr. Wertham maintains that it is primarily the "normal" child upon whom the comics have their greatest detrimental effects, writes the senator, and Wertham concludes that it is this type of individual who is tempted and seduced into imitating the crimes portrayed in the stories.

Surveying the work that has been done on the subject, continues Kefauver, it appears to be the consensus of the experts that comic-book reading is not the cause of emotional maladjustment in children, but comic-book reading can be a symptom of such a maladjustment. The emotionally-disturbed child, because of abnormal needs, writes Kefauver, may show a greater tendency to read books of the negative kind than will a normal child. This theory appears as valid to the subcommittee as the thinking that "alcoholism is a symptom of an emotional disturbance rather than its cause."<sup>2</sup>

It is felt that Dr. Wertham's thesis about the comic book effect on the normal child is not adequately supported by fact, not bolstered with scientific, statistical detail, and in direct conflict with the overwhelming majority of experts.<sup>3</sup>

The senator concurred with Dr. Wertham that comic books

(1) encourage subversion of moral values, (2) belittle the law, and (3) stimulate the desire to commit the "perfect" crime.

Kefauver reports that it has also been suggested that the child with difficulties may find in comic books, representations of the kinds of problems which he is dealing, and that comic books, will, therefore, have a value for him which they do not have for a child who is relatively free of these troubles. Further, states Kefauver, it is often concurred by the experts that the kinds of comic books a child chooses often provides the child psychiatrist with some clues to the kinds of problems faced by the child.<sup>4</sup>

There exists, he continues, a minority opinion that suggests a possible cathartic effect can be achieved by reading about or looking at a violent action; that is, a period of calm, or relaxation results. The possibility was suggested that this effect may become desirable for certain individuals and may develop into a mechanism by which they can relieve everyday tensions which cannot otherwise be coped with satisfactorily. However, adds the senator, even among authorities in the field of child development who agree about cathartic effect, some believe that the same kind of effect might be achieved more safely through other means for the vicarious expression of aggression.<sup>5</sup>

There is substantial, though not unanimous, agreement among the experts, continues Kefauver, that there may be detrimental and delinquency-producing effects upon both the



emotionally disturbed child and the emotionally-normal delinquent and that children of either type may gain suggestion, support and sanction from reading negative comics.

There is not sufficient evidence, writes Kefauver, based on careful and extended research, to warrant enactments of censorship or such prohibitive measures at this time (1955). But, he adds, the best interests of our young citizens would not be served by postponing all precautionary measures until the exact kind and degree of influence exerted by comic books is fully determined.

There is definite agreement, the senator writes, that the individual's concepts of right and wrong and his relations to society's standards are largely developed during childhood. Therefore, the committee believes that those responsible for the operation of every form of mass media, especially those that cater to children, have a responsibility to gear their products to these special considerations.

Considerable concern has been expressed regarding the type of advertising carried in comic books, Senator Kefauver continues. The responses by children to such ads sometimes results in the development of mailing lists that are later rented to other concerns for the direct mail solicitation of such children for the purchase of salicious materials.

Among the more objectionable advertisements that came to the attention of the subcommittee, writes Kefauver, was a full-page advertisement, labeled "Sportsman's Paradise," which

showed a variety of weapons that may be purchased by mail order. Several might be a threat to the safety of children, notes the senator. Although one line of the coupon reads, "Note: Not sold to minors," Kefauver writes, "it is needless to say that no real proof of age was required."<sup>9</sup>

The illustrations in the advertisement introduced at the hearings by Dr. Wertham, showed at least ten dangerous articles that would appeal to a minor. "Descriptions leave little to the imaginations," reports the senator. Among the articles were: "Oriental battle knife--designed for long-distance throwing. It is made to split a board at 30 feet," and is "balanced to stick . . .," "Commando knife--real Commando weapon. An all-metal, "needle-pointed, razor-sharp 12-inch knife that may save your life," etc.<sup>10</sup>

Kefauver reports that numerous "pseudo-medical advertisements" were studied at the hearings. They are aimed at the teen-ager's desire to glorify his personal appearance or to improve his/her physique through any measures; i.e., a tablet to put on weight, skin cleanser or treatment for pimples, bust hormones, an electrically operated spot-reducer, etc.

Another aspect of the contribution of comic books to juvenile delinquency, in the opinion of a number of experts, writes Kefauver, was the indication that the more serious forms of delinquency incorporate knowledge of specific techniques which many comic books provide. This was considered to be another valid criticism of comic books.<sup>11</sup>

The Senate Subcommittee headed by Senator Kefauver denied the validity of Dr. Wertham's conclusions concerning the media-crime causal relationship, but it agreed with Wertham that the nature of comic book contents leave much room for improvement.

The committee's conclusions strongly concurred with the preponderance of expert opinions, most of which have been presented in earlier chapters of this paper.

Point-by-point, the subcommittee concluded:

(1) Little is known of the precise effects of the mass media of youth and conjectures cannot be accepted as scientific fact.

(2) Much condemnation of the media influence is based on little more than conjecture and personal opinion.

(3) The public should have more and better information concerning the effects of the mass media on youth.

(4) It would be a dangerous solution to attempt to impose legal censorship; but with the tools of community action and an informed atmosphere of public opinion, citizens' groups might beneficially control the quality of mass media content.

(5) It is likely, but not proven, that a demoralization of youth generally results from continued exposure to untrammelled sex, crime and violence in the recreational media.



EFFICIENCY BRAND

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PART III

AUDIO-VISUAL MASS MEDIA

## CHAPTER X

### TELEVISION AND YOUTH: NEGATIVE VIEWS

Few critics of negative media have attempted to define any experiential differences between the audio-visual and the printed media stimuli. Many of the statements presented in the previous chapters on comic books referred to television, and the converse reference is true of the following chapters on television.

Dr. Wertham is one of the very few experts who mention any difference existing between the media. He said he found "marked differences," and the final chapters in his book, The Seduction of the Innocent, are devoted to disclosing the distinctions. However, he aims the identical charges at television that he voices against comics.

Dr. Wertham explains that his studies of the effects of television, "grew out of my comic-book studies when more and more children told me that they were not reading so many comics because they were looking at television."<sup>1</sup>

Wertham said he used the same individual and group methods of investigation for his work with both media audiences.

Dr. Wertham defines the "marked differences" as follows:

In our studies we found that passivity is the greatest in reading comic books, perhaps a

little less with television, if only because often other people are present in the audience. In both, the entertainment flows over the child. Passivity is least in going to the movies, where others are always present. The media have their maximum appeal at different ages. Movies seem to have the greatest appeal from eleven to twenty-one; television, from four to twelve. Comic books have the greatest hold on many children.<sup>2</sup>

Commenting on the media differences, the subcommittee concluded that negative television programs are "potentially more dangerous" to children and young people than other media because movie attendance requires money and the physical effort of leaving home. Therefore, an average child's exposure to films shown in a theatre tends to be limited to a few hours per week. The subcommittee reasoned that comic books demand strong imaginary projections, also, they must be sought out and purchased. But television, available at the flick of a knob, combining visual and audible aspects with virtually unlimited accessibility, has the greatest impact.<sup>3</sup>

Herman G. Stark, director of the California Youth Authority, testified that it had been his corps' observation in talking with many boys who came before the board, that the modus operandi used in crimes of violence and crimes against persons are frequently adopted from crime television shows. Police officials of Boston, Massachusetts; New Haven, Connecticut; and other major cities reported similar experiences to the subcommittee.<sup>4</sup>

In Parent's Magazine, Dr. Ralph Banay, director of a Brooklyn clinic affiliated with the District Attorney's office



is quoted: "If the proverb is true that prison is a college for crime, I believe that for many disturbed adolescents, television is a prep school for delinquency."<sup>5</sup>

But when Dr. Banay presented this opinion to the subcommittee, chairman Kefauver asked the psychiatrist to name some of the best known child psychologists who had made clinical studies of the problem. Dr. Banay replied, "I cannot name any. My acquaintance is among criminal psychiatrists, not child psychiatrists." Dr. Banay also admitted that as chairman of the psychiatric section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences,<sup>6</sup> "I do not remember having made any formal conclusion."

The American Bar Association established a special committee to study the effects of the mass media entertainment upon law enforcement and the administration of justice. Two years of research by chairman Arthur J. Freund disclosed that:

The vivid living portrayal of crime in the media has a profound impact on the mind of the juvenile adolescent and the impressionable, and grave harm has already resulted thereby to uncounted and perhaps uncountable members of our society.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Freund evidently did not recognize as valid expert opinion, the collective statement sent him by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry which is the presented in Chapter VIII (last letter).

Dr. Mary Preston conducted a study, entitled "Children's Reactions to Movie Horrors and Radio Crime," the results of which appear in the Journal of Pediatrics.

She writes that the reaction of 120 boys and 80 girls,

ages 6-16, was made manifest in general health, sleeping and eating habits, fears and nervousness. A total of 116 of the 153 children habitually exposed negative dramas (76 per cent) evidenced increased nervousness as compared to 19 of 47 (40 per cent) children who were not continually exposed.

Dr. Preston writes that terrifying crime scenes frequently produce adverse effects on the organs of the body. These are reflected in diminished food intake and consequent inability to gain weight, troublesome dreams, restless sleep and scholastic difficulties.<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. Clara Logan, president of the National Association for Better Radio and Television, testified before the subcommittee affirming the deleterious influences of the negative media. The NABRT distributes a pamphlet, entitled Children and Television--Some Opinions, comprising statements by 19 experts who unanimously charge that the media are the major cause of<sup>9</sup> of juvenile delinquency today.

Since the testimonies contained in the pamphlet are solicited by a campaigning group, and are so similar in viewpoint, abstractions are not included here but may be found in Appendix I.

Questionnaires were sent to 312 pediatricians, sociologists, neuropsychiatrists and psychologists by the 10th District of California Parent and Teachers Association. The questions only concerned radio crime programs because the survey was

made before the popular advent of television. To the question, "Do you believe radio crime programs have a detrimental effect upon children?" 90 per cent of the respondents said "yes." To the question, "Do you feel that the American Children as a group need an emotional escape?" 63 per cent said "yes." To the second part of the latter question, "If so, do you think it can be safely provided by thrilling radio programs?" 83 per cent said "no."<sup>10</sup>

"Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children" is the title of a study made by University of Chicago sociologists Lucille Peterson and L. L. Thurston. Some 4,000 children were asked to fill out questionnaires designed to test their attitudes toward Germans, crime, prohibition, Chinese, Negroes, capital punishment and punishment of criminals. After completing the questionnaire the children were exposed to 13 selected movies which the investigators believed would influence and change the children's attitudes if movies are capable of such influences.<sup>11</sup>

Following the exposure, another attitudinal test was administered and the investigators reported the results as follows:

In broad terms it can be said that with only one exception there was a very material shift in attitude, in the direction in which it was expected. The changes could still be detected 18 months later.

The study was not a study of behavior as such . . . there was no means of determining as to whether these individuals would handle themselves individually somewhat differently in relation to



a person of a particular nationality.<sup>12</sup>

The investigators added that since social attitudes are at least one factor in determining behavior, it would seem that the study afforded rather clear evidence of the fact that behavior could be effect through exposure to the media--but this is not proven.<sup>13</sup>

Gotthilf Flik asked 179 juvenile delinquents between the ages of 14 and 21 about the influence of movies upon their behavior. His questionnaire included 17 questions. He concluded that it is impossible to decide which influences are most significant, the positive or negative.<sup>14</sup>

In the American Journal of Psychiatry Sophie Schroeder Sloman reported an investigation she made in which children were observed during a six-week period subsequent to a highly publicized crime against a child. She found four cases where there was a demonstrable anxiety, and reported that the insecure and disturbed children tended to identify themselves with the victims of the crime.<sup>15</sup>

A 1952 study of 2,000 six-year-olds revealed that more than half of them dreamed about television programs they watched. Some 33.3 percent, according to investigator Hall Evry in Film World, were considered restless by their teachers, and 59.3 percent of the children with television in their homes were regularly frightened by some of the programs they viewed.<sup>16</sup>

A research project conducted under a grant to Boston

University's Graduate School in 1950, probed 1,076 citizens in 254 television-in-home families with children in grade school, to determine the effects of the program on the viewers.

The study, entitled "Home Television and Behavior: Some Tentative Conclusions," was conducted in two locales, one town five miles and another 25 miles from Boston. The conclusions were briefly as follows:

(1) Home viewing has broadly similar effects on people who differ in occupational class, residential location and with varying television-viewing experiences during the first two years that a television set is in the home.

(2) The effect of home television on overt behavior is greater for adults than for children.

(3) The effect on overt behavior is greater on residents of outlying suburbs than for residents of suburbs near the metropolitan center.<sup>17</sup>

Many spokesmen of the television industry have come, unequivocally, to the defense of the medium in articles, publicity and at the subcommittee's investigation.

James L. Caddigan, director of programming and production, DuMont Television Network, testified before the subcommittee that the broadcaster's responsibility toward children cannot be discharged by the scheduling of a special group of children's programs. Every moment of every program, he testified, "must be tailored to the highest standards of respect for the family and the home."<sup>18</sup>

Senator Kefauver commented that as a result of television monitoring by the subcommittee and various research groups, "the chasm between what television people feel is good programming and what is actually telecast is, indeed, a wide one." <sup>19</sup>

Mrs. Grace M. Johnson, director of continuity acceptance, American Broadcasting Company Television Network, testified that "if it could be proven that certain televised programs were harmful to children, they would be eliminated." Referring to the early movies she attended as a child, Mrs. Johnson said:

They included stereotypes of racial and religious groups, and the standard cliff-hanging scenes to be continued the next time. We attended these makebelieve shows, excited and exhilarated to fever pitch and then we went home to a cold glass of milk or hot cup of cocoa, depending on the season.

Were we to examine these pictures today and compare them with the present well-planned and executed television programs, we would find that the present fare is far superior to the past.<sup>20</sup>

With regard to Mrs. Johnson's first statement, Senator Kefauver said, "The Subcommittee believes that the proof that the programs are not harmful should be obtained before the programs are shown, not afterward. Food must be tested before <sup>21</sup> it is put on the market for public consumption."

According to a Cosmopolitan report:

Alarmed parent and teacher groups have seen harmful effects of television programming, both at home and in the classroom; prominent doctors and psychiatrists see the overemphasis on crime dramas as a growing and dangerously underestimated menace to child health; police departments of major cities report that the arrests of adult and youthful offenders who admitted that they picked up inspiration and criminal techniques from crime programs.<sup>22</sup>



Author of the Cosmopolitan report, Evan M. Wylie, concluded that crime television programs undermine the respect for the law to such an extent that "a recent [1953] 19 per cent increase in juvenile delinquency might be justly attributed to television.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Joost A. M. Meerloo in 1953 was consulted in three adolescent cases of increasing mental apathy. The three persons neglected school work and home duties and "increasingly showed a picture of the schizophrenic episode, gradually becoming more negativistic." After conducting his depth examination of three individuals, Dr. Meerloo writes that his findings were: (1) television fascination is "a real-addiction-influence and can require therapeutic interference"; (2) it continually provides satisfaction for aggressive frustrations, with subsequent guilt feelings since the child unconsciously tends to identify with the criminal, despite all the heroic avengers; (3) it arouses "precociously sexual and emotional turmoil"; (4) television is a stealer of time; (5) preoccupation with television prevents inner creativity; e.g., children and adults alike merely sit and watch the "pseudo-world of the screen instead of confronting their own difficulties. Since parents are also addicted to the medium, they have little time for the children, and the children surrender all the more willingly to the screen.<sup>24</sup> Dr. Meerloo concludes his article in the Journal of Mental and Nervous Diseases with the following:

We must keep in mind that every step in personal growth needs isolation, needs inner conversation and deliberation, and a reviewing with the self . . . the need to study the pathogenic influence of this new acquisition (television) is emphasized.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Charles Winch, in a recent America article, reports that: "Now, for the first time in history, respected intellectuals don't blush at the thought or suggestion of mass media censorship for children's programs."<sup>26</sup>

Concerning experiential differences between media perceptions, Dr. Wertham states that passivity is at its greatest in children when they are reading comic books, and passivity is categorically less with television and movies, because of the presence of others in the audience. He does not mention how this variance in passivity might effect differences in subsequent behavior. Wertham also believes that comic books have the greatest hold on many children, and that television appeals to a younger set than do movies (in theatres).

The subcommittee believed television to be the most influential because of its free, ever-accessible nature, and because comic books require a strong imaginary projection on the part of the reader.

The NABRT testimonies, as could be expected, unanimously declare that television is a deleterious influence, but no corroborating data appears in the pamphlet.

Several experts, presenting the results of studies, attest that the audio-visual media have a pronounced effect on

the general health of children, i.e., sleeping, eating, nervousness, etc., but there is no evidence to show that such influences have an effect on overt behavior. The University of Chicago investigators made a specific point of explaining this lack of evidence. One study disclosed that television has a greater effect on the overt behavior of adults than on that of children. Another investigator concluded that whether the influence is positive or negative was not determined by his study.

Most of the respondents who participated in a survey of expert opinions, believe television has a negative influence on children. They also agree that children need a method for providing vicarious experiences, but that such a cathartic process cannot be safely rendered through the television medium.



## CHAPTER XI

### TELEVISION: A MINOR AND UNDETERMINED INFLUENCE

Dr. Kvaraceus believes that much of what has been said concerning comic books can be applied to the other media. He writes that viewing at an excessive pace frequently characterizes a delinquent child, but "it is doubtful that movies or television in themselves, have any direct influence on delinquent behavior." In the case of the movie, the total setting of the movie situation may provide the background for delinquent behavior. For example, writes Kvaraceus, a child may steal to go to the movies; he may play truant and prefer the comfort of the theatre to the hard classroom seats. While sitting in the darkened theatre, he can brush against a bad companion; or leaving the last show late at night he may get into difficulties with the police en route home. Kvaraceus writes:

The few children who are sometimes reported in serious difficulty because "they saw how it was done in the movies," were ripe to suggestions made through any medium, or person, or situation. Like comic books, movies are a precipitating rather than a basic cause.<sup>1</sup>

Making reference to television, Dr. Kvaraceus writes that, "it presents a new and not fully understood phenomenon in terms of its real and ultimate effects," but he doubts that such effects on delinquency trends will be much different than<sup>2</sup> the effects experienced with movies, radio and the comics.

Like other experts commenting on screen and comic book entertainments, Dr. Kvaraceus warns that adults should strive to keep children away from an extreme diet of mayhem and mystery, and encourage watching the more desirable programs.<sup>3</sup>

"The Experts Speak Up" was the title of a major article appearing in the December, 1954, issue of Parents' Magazine. Author-researcher Dr. Robert M. Goldenson, assistant professor of psychology at Hunter College, queried 18 prominent authorities in the fields of health, education, psychology, law-enforcement, and sociology, for their views on eleven questions<sup>4</sup> pertaining to juvenile delinquency.

The respondents were: Laurette Bender, Chief, Children's Division of Bellevue Hospital, New York City; Clark W. Blackburn, General Director, Family Service Association of America, Gunnar Dyswad, Director, Child Study Association of America, George Edwards, Judge of Probate, Juvenile Division, Detroit, Michigan; Nelson Foote, Professor of Sociology, University of Chicago; Lawrence and Mary Frank, authors of How to Help Your Child at School; Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, Harvard University sociologists; Frances L. Ilg, Gesell Institute, New Haven, Connecticut; J. Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Alice V. Kellner, Professor of Education, New York University; Paul Popenoe, Director, American Institute of Family Relations, Los Angeles, California; William C. Menninger, The Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas; Herman Scheibler,

Superintendent of Schools, Indianapolis, Indiana; Benjamin Spock, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinics, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; George Stevenson, Medical Director, National Association for Mental Health; and Luther Woodward, New York State Department of Mental Hygiene.

Only two of the eleven questions posed by Dr. Goldenson are germane to this paper: (1) "Are television programs responsible for juvenile delinquency," and (2) "Are television programs responsible for emotional upsets or disturbances in children--if so, what types?"

The overwhelming majority, according to Dr. Goldenson, answered "no" to the first question. Abstractions from their replies follow:

No, the argument is the same as for comics, movies, and radio--there is no evidence to prove that delinquent acts have been due to any of these alone. . . . Delinquency is due to deep-seated conflicts, discrepancies and deficiencies in the personality. . . . Children are far too complex to react directly and only to some immediate stimulus as a television program. . . . Because of the complex interplay of numerous forces--largely those of parent-child emotional interrelations--I cannot say that the programs are responsible for juvenile delinquency. . . . No, although an occasional program may be provocative to an already disturbed, antisocially motivated youngster.<sup>5</sup>

One of the respondents who gave a somewhat affirmative answer, qualified his opinions with ". . . I have no first-hand information, but I cannot see how continual presentation of patterns of crime and violence to impressionable youngsters can fail to have a harmful influence."<sup>6</sup>



To the second question regarding a causal relationship between television programs and emotional upsets, most of the respondents felt that some programs do provoke mild upsets, and occasionally deeper disturbances are brought to the surface in sensitive children, but their basic causes lie elsewhere. One children's psychiatrist wrote:

In general, no, but if a child has good and sufficient reasons for being emotionally upset, television programs may precipitate an immediate reaction--increase anxiety or lead to some open expression (not necessarily bad).

A mental hygiene expert testified in a similar tone that:

Television is not primarily responsible. An already anxious or fearful child may not be able to take some television portrayals, and exposure may heighten his anxiety.<sup>7</sup>

An educator said:

For the very young, yes, I feel they do create emotional upsets. Loud noises, gun battles, strange photography all create an emotional disturbance.<sup>8</sup>

Another expert said, " . . . Other children, however, have seen the same programs without apparent disturbance. . . . Perhaps, the positive approach to the question would be better, e.g., do programs of these types build emotional stability and social adjustment?"<sup>9</sup>

Testifying before the subcommittee, Dr. Eleanor Maccoby of Harvard University, felt there is some truth to both points of view, e.g., that acts of violence children see on television and in the comics simply provide a harmless outlet for the aggressive impulses all children have; and that the constant

diet of violent episodes must leave a lasting mark on the child, sometimes providing the stimulus for outright acts of delinquency.

"We are, however, just beginning to find out what some of the conditions are that govern the influence of the mass media,"

<sup>10</sup>  
Dr. Maccoby added.

Marshal B. Clinard agrees with Dr. Maccoby and adds that while there are cases in which the influences may be important, "on the whole, their direct influence on delinquent behavior is almost nil or serves only to aggravate already existent attitudes and personality traits."

Clinard is one of many experts who refers to the Blumer and Houser studies undertaken in 1929-1933, and he asserts that they are "still our chief source of information." He adds:

Perhaps, the most significant finding they made was that motion pictures were one of the factors that was important in only about one out of ten delinquent males and one out of four girls.

The Journal of the American Medical Association has on several occasions devoted considerable space to the problem. Its viewpoint has remained constant, and the following quotation discloses the AMA viewpoint:

There is always the danger that the public, goaded by one-sided enthusiasts, will seek an easy but superficial and hence fruitless answer to the problem in the banning of certain types of television programs or "comic books."

Harmful as these may be, they are far more likely to produce in the average child nightmares and heightened anxiety than they are to lead to crime, and the problems of where to draw the line in censorship are almost insurmountable.<sup>12</sup>

In a joint letter to the Kefauver Committee, the Film Estimate Board of National Organizations presented its collective opinion which was endorsed by the following organizations: American Association of University Women, American Jewish Committee, American Library Association, Children's Film Library, Daughters of the American Revolution, General Federation of Women's Clubs, National Federation of Music Clubs, Girl Scouts of America, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, Protestant Motion Picture Council of the United Church Women, National Council of Women of the U.S.A., and the Schools Motion Picture Committee.

Their statement was as follows: (an abstraction)

Regarding the possible influence of any one medium or another on present or potential juvenile delinquency, we are in accord with the findings of Secretary Hobby's Special Conference on Juvenile Delinquency, June, 1954, which stressed the home and the child's individual environment as the real roots of such delinquency.

We also believe that in the maladjusted child, any item of his or her experience, whether real or vicarious, may suggest antisocial or illegal actions.<sup>13</sup>

Judge Nochem S. Winnet, author of "A Judge Looks at Comics, Movies and Radio," appearing in Parents' Magazine, writes that there are two salient points constantly being overlooked by critics who would submit the mass media to censorship:<sup>14</sup>

(1) Censorship would be worse for the children, providing the possibility of over-protection. "We cannot and should not shield them from the evils in our society--they will find them



out soon enough anyway. They [evils] are part of out pattern of life."

(2) "Blaming the media trinity--radio, movies and comics--is using a scapegoat." Normal children are not adversely effected by the media, the judge writes, and even the cultural influences of the media are but a small part of those that play on children. "We should do more things together, as a family. Go to the movies; listen to the radio; read comics and go to church--together."

Judge Winnet admits that, undoubtedly the mass media influence the lives of young and old. He believes that movies set styles, fashions and tastes, but:

there is no real evidence that a significant part of juvenile delinquency results from them. There is no reason to believe our children are most influenced to do evil by the modern thriller than the children of a generation ago were influenced by dime novels or western pictures.<sup>15</sup>

The National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters comes to the defense of the industry with a pamphlet, Facts about Television, published in 1954. It is loaded with testimonials, mostly by police officials who see television as  
16  
an insignificant negative influence on criminals in custody.

According to the NARTB pamphlet, "The Youth Bureau of the Detroit Police Department approaches juvenile delinquency with an understanding attitude":

During the Bureau's probe into the possible causes of delinquency, it found television is not a cause or a stimulus. Television has been found to be a useful measure in control.<sup>17</sup>

Several supporting episodes are cited in the pamphlet. A typical episode is a case when a 16-year-old hold-up man robbed a doctor in his car. At first the boy said he got the idea from a detective show on television, related Inspector Ralph Baker, chief of the youth bureau, " . . . on further questioning, however, the boy admitted that he probably would have committed the crime anyway. According to the inspector, "From all the juvenile offenders whom we have talked to, there has only been an occasional mention of a television influence." 18

Two other boys were questioned at the bureau. One had stolen a watch; the other committed a sexual offense. Both had television receivers in their homes. "Neither felt that television had anything to do with the situations," reported the inspector. 19

Lieutenant Francis Davey, also of the youth bureau and quoted in the NARTB pamphlet, believes television has effected a decrease in delinquency by "keeping kids closer to home and off the streets at night." This, he reasons, is in spite of the fact that the frequency of juvenile offenses has been climbing in Detroit for several years.

Lt. Davey reconciles this with the following statement:

There has been a tremendous increase in juvenile population which has not been matched by a corresponding increase in social and corrective facilities for them. Naturally, there has been an increase in juvenile delinquency, but it has not been as large an increase as would have been experienced had not television provided a new reason for children sticking close to home. 20

Patrolman Allen Hartz of Detroit's 15th precinct "finds only a rare mention of television in all the arrests he makes," according to NARTB.

"Television is a very minor factor in juvenile delinquency, if a factor at all," according to Harlan Ringelberg, assistant chief probation officer of the Wayne County Juvenile Court. "As a matter of fact, parents of children on probation are encouraged to devote attention to certain television programs." 21

Paul Molloy, writing National Parent-Teacher, agrees that in "scores of local and national investigations," no conclusive evidence has been found to support the charge that televised mediocrities are responsible for the "sorry conduct of the misguided minority of our children." 22

He adds that most delinquents are already emotionally disturbed before they switch on a television set, and antisocial acts may be triggered by television. But, as stated by Kvaraceus and other experts, Molloy insists that "any other media or conversation could have been the triggering stimulus." 23

In conclusion Molloy writes that it is fallacious to draw general conclusions about the effects of television from isolated criminal acts and admissions, and that a more intelligent view is to consider television as a possible escape for children with mental afflictions--but "certainly not the cause of such afflictions." 24

Richard McCann, in his book, Delinquency: Sickness or



Sin, affirms the consensus of expert opinion. He writes that the mistake of blaming the mass media for emotional upsets, personal difficulties, crime and delinquency is drawing a red herring across the path to finding the real causes. Television and comic books are easily used as scapegoats, but "these afford a false complacency and block efforts to find deeper-lying, less sensational, less identifiable causes of delinquency."<sup>25</sup>

He adds that the mass media, despite their shortcomings, have many positive points in their favor, culturally, educationally, and artistically, especially in the case of television, and they must be absolved of much of the responsibility ascribed<sup>26</sup> them for delinquency.

In summation, it is the unanimous opinion of experts cited in this chapter, that most of what can be said about comic books holds true for the audio-visual media. As in the comic book situation, most of the experts hold that television and similar media can act as a precipitating cause of antisocial behavior, but they also agree that to indict the media as the basic causing factor is to dangerously use a scapegoat for simplifying a complex problem. It is often agreed that television can cause a cathartic reaction, but safer stimuli are preferable for this beneficial action.

The fact that accurate, scientific research is lacking, is the statement iterated more often than any other in the testimonies.

## CHAPTER XII

### CHILDREN'S READING HABITS IN THE TELEVISION AGE

Dr. Wertham advances as a "proven fact, borne out by librarians all over the country," (Chapter IV) that children are no longer reading good books. This, he writes, is the result of comic-book travesties of great literature, and television addiction. This writer has found few experts in the publishing, education and library fields who agree with Dr. Wertham's "maxim."

Charles Spiegler, in a 1959 article, "Johnny and the Big Eye," appearing in the New York public school educators' magazine, High Points, has a lot to say for the benefits of television.

He quotes one chemistry student who said: "I was lectured about it for hours, read and reread about it for months--but I didn't understand about it until Disney illustrated the atom with ping pong balls."

Spiegler notes that a teen-age book club reported that the book, The Day Lincoln was Shot, was creeping along at about 1,000 sales per week. Television dramatized it. The following week there were 25,000 orders for the book.<sup>2</sup>

He reports that parents and children after watching a

televised version of Huckleberry Finn, sent off 6,000 written requests for a booklist offered on the program, and that "country over, librarians, publishers, booksellers and teachers hail the new medium of television."<sup>3</sup>

According to critic John Crosby, "Television creates more curiosity than it can satisfy." The summer of 1955 was called by some librarians, the "Davy Crockett Heat Wave," television brought thousands of children into libraries for the first time in their lives. The rush on all such books, popularized by television, is so great that, "When television announces a classic, we hurry to stock up on it fast," said Margaret Scoggin, director, New York Public Library's High School Divisions. Within 24 hours after Mary Martin sang "I'm Flying" in Peter Pan on television, "thousands of children flew to libraries and bookstores for copies of the play." So with Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island and every other book dramatized on television, explained the librarian.

Sales of the Random House edition of Robin Hood went from the 1,972 copies in the first months of 1954, to 8,587 in 1956--"a spurt," was the term a publisher used, "that can only be accounted for by the television production."<sup>4</sup>

Appearing in the October 1959 issue of Harper's Magazine, is another confirmation of a surge in children's reading activities:

. . . and contrary to all predictions, the dreary fantasy of television seems to have driven many



small children back to books instead of away from them forever.<sup>5</sup>

The author of the above statement, a publisher, said the juvenile book business is thriving. In 1958, he writes, 32.8 million juvenile books costing more than a dollar were sold, as compared with 16.8 million in 1952. He added that Dutton's The World of Pooh sold some 200,000 copies in 1958, and "although they may not advertise the fact, several of the most distinguished New York publishers depend heavily on juveniles for their profits."<sup>6</sup> The Harper's article concludes with the humorous note:

It is even conceivable--or so the publishers pray--that the children will survive both puberty and their high-school education and go on reading when they grow up.<sup>7</sup>

Alberta Meyer in Childhood Education agrees almost verbatim with the above testimonies, and adds that many educational publications are more and more citing and previewing worthwhile shows on television. And wise teachers are incorporating<sup>8</sup> such shows as supplementary assignments. She adds:

It is high time we stopped deploring the bad effects of television, and as parents or teachers, set ourselves to the task of building discrimination through wise selection of good programs. We shouldn't expect every program to be good--no medium maintains a high rating at all times and this includes books, magazines, etc.<sup>9</sup>

A 1950 survey revealed that the grades of regular television viewers dropped 15 per cent. Another 96-week study by a different investigator who observed high school sophomores revealed a general grade drop of 5 per cent, but also a

definite rise in certain previously weak subjects.<sup>10</sup>

A 1950 survey made by Ira Cain, television editor with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram revealed that 60 per cent of the high school juniors and seniors who had television sets in their homes made higher grades than they had in the previous year.<sup>11</sup>

Results of studies of grades in relation to viewing time are in similar contradiction. Similar to the findings of studies of comic book readers, "good students tend to remain good students, and poor students tend to remain poor," attest Paul Witty and Paul Gustafson in Elementary English.<sup>12</sup> Excessive viewing, however, seems to be associated with lower academic attainment, they continue, e.g., it was found that children who viewed television an average of 21 hours per week were more often in the upper quarter of their classes than those who viewed an average of 26 or more hours.

They agree that on the whole, children are reading more now than before the advent of television, though "younger children cannot remember a time without television." But among those that do: 56 per cent are reading more, 39 per cent are reading less, 5 per cent the same, according to a study by Witty and Gustafson. Parents, observing their children, reported similarly; 42 per cent thought their children were reading more, 38 per cent less, and 20 per cent the same.

The pair conclude that parents are the major influence in this area. They can set a good influential example by

reading themselves, and can make a definite effort to plan,  
together with the children, a balanced entertainment schedule. <sup>11</sup>

In another article in National PTA, Paul Witty writes that there are also conflicting reports concerning television's influence on outdoor activities, hobbies and other creative pursuits. "Whereas earlier studies reported definite drops in all other pursuits as television became a mass medium," Witty writes, "current reports (1957) conflict." <sup>12</sup>

Margaret Mead commented that one of the most serious problems today is the fact that teachers who never heard of radio until they were grown up, must cope with and teach children who have never known a world without radio and television. <sup>13</sup>

The media of radio, television and films, she added, have great power in today's world. The influence is not always wisely exercised, but is, nevertheless, powerful.

There was a time when reading newspapers and keeping up with the latest books was a mark of the educated citizen. Today, they must know mass media stars or be counted as mass media illiterates.

But the great mass media presentations have definitely precipitated an interest in reading. <sup>14</sup>

It is evident that publishers, librarians and educators sharply disagree with Dr. Wertham concerning the effect of television on reading. They attest that there has been a definite increase in children's purchasing and reading good books, and the influx of library requisitions for good books, has been steadily increasing.

As was the case regarding comic books and schoolwork,



television does not appear to have had any effect on children's academic pursuits. Studies of this phenomenon have very inconsistently shown trends of higher and lower school grades. Parents and teachers agree that children are reading more now than before the advent of the new medium, and once again, the tenet holds true, that children who are good students tend to remain good students, and the opposite.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PAYNE STUDIES

The Payne Studies are mentioned by many present-day experts and cited as being the most conclusive researches to date, though they were pioneer studies in the field and conducted between 1929 and 1933, before the advent of television and comic books.

Actually, the Payne Studies comprise 12 studies by several scholars which were made at the request of the Motion Picture Research Council, and supported by the Payne Fund. The studies made by Herbert Blumer and Philip M. Hauser: "Movies and Conduct," and "Movies, Delinquency and Crime," are the most often cited. The other studies are: "Getting Ideas from the Movies," "The Content of Motion Pictures," "The Emotional Responses of Children to the Motion Picture Situation," "Motion Pictures and Standards of Morality," "Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children," "The Relationship of Motion Pictures to the Character and Attitudes of Children," "Movies and Children's Sleep," "Boy, Movies and the City Streets," and "How to Appreciate Motion Pictures."

This chapter will investigate only those findings that are pertinent to the problem and often referred to by today's experts.

Employing various techniques, notably the questionnaire method coupled with interpretations of personal histories, Blumer and Hauser tried to ascertain the degree of influence that movies had on several hundred inmates at juvenile reform schools, and groups of non-delinquents.

Ten per cent of the 358 male delinquents interviewed believed their criminal careers were directly traceable to movies they attended, although the boys did not think the particular plots of the movies attended had made a noteworthy impression.

Of the 252 delinquent girls between the ages of 14 and 18 who were questioned, 25 per cent said their sexual relations with men were the direct result of being aroused by passionate movie scenes. Some 41 per cent, according to the investigators, admitted that they went to wild parties and "hot spots" because that "is what is done in the movies"; 38 per cent claimed they began to stay away from school because they wanted the gay life depicted in the movies; 33 per cent said they were encouraged to run away from home; 23 per cent ascribed their sexual delinquency, for which they were serving time in de-<sup>1</sup>tention, to motion picture influences.

Three other investigators, in conducting Payne Fund Studies studied the intensity of emotional reaction to the movies through the use of newly-developed hyponograph and psychogalvanometer devices. They found the reaction of adolescents



to be twice the intensity of adult responses; children, ages 6-7, reacted with thrice the adult intensity.

Adolescents, they found, were most affected by erotic or suggestive scenes, during which their pulse and heart action sometimes as much as doubled. Nervous and emotionally unstable children were more responsive than others. Approximately 93 per cent of 458 high school students admitted that they were sometimes frightened by movie sequences.<sup>2</sup>

Blumer and Hauser, who are often quoted to the contrary by modern writers and experts, concluded that delinquent behavior could not be ascribed solely to motion pictures. This concurred with findings of other scholars participating in the four-year research program. Blumer and Hauser did say, however, that the medium definitely had its effects:

[Movie] ideas and impulses are checked and are held within the mind for a given time--to mere incipient activity. In most cases these reaction pass away without leaving a trace. In many instances . . . they leave imprints so powerful that a number of criminal and delinquent persons attribute their wrong-doing and downfall measurable to the potency of film suggestion.<sup>3</sup>

The investigators also believed that motion pictures can have an opposite effect, e.g., they "can and do have the effect of deterring young people from crime, misconduct and delinquency." Such influence is brief, they added, owing "perhaps, to the limited number of pictures capable of producing these effects."<sup>4</sup>

They also found it appropriate to add that they found,

"no single instance where an individual was completely deterred from a delinquent or criminal career through the influence of motion pictures."<sup>5</sup>

Before the official results of the Payne Fund studies were made known to the public, a popularly written book was released summarizing the findings. The book, Our Movie-Made Children, authored by Henry Forman, was received with great alarm by parents and educators since it emphasized the dire effects of certain movies on the behavior of young children and adolescents.<sup>6</sup>

Negley K. Teeters reports that it "aroused much criticism of the movie industry and for a time it looked as though censorship might result."<sup>7</sup>

A few years later, Professor Mortimer Adler, in his book, Art and Prudence, severely criticized the methods, techniques<sup>8</sup> and some of the conclusions comprising the Payne studies.

The Payne Studies, especially those by Blumer and Hauser, are probably the most often cited investigations made to date. They have been cited to affirm both sides of the causal controversy, and the wealth of quotations, dialogues and episodes found in the reports of the studies amiably lend themselves to support whatever conclusions the present-day writer wants them to--taken out of context.

Blumer and Hauser concluded that crimes could not be traced to the influence of movies, despite the contentions of

many subjects to the contrary. They concluded that movies are as capable of imparting beneficial influences as they are of imparting malignant influences, but conclusive evidence in either case could not be ascertained. Blumer and Hauser did find, however, that movies affected women much more than men, especially in the realm of sexual promiscuity.

Other Payne scholars learned that movies do effect marked physical and emotional reactions, i.e., sleeplessness, increased heart-beat, and nervousness, but like other similar studies conducted recently, no conclusions could be drawn regarding the medium's influence on voluntary, overt behavior.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE KEFAUVER SUBCOMMITTEE AND TELEVISION: CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions reached by the subcommittee after completing their study of the effects of negative television were, in the words of chairman Kefauver, "based on scattered evidence and best opinion." In the Interim Report which he prepared on behalf of the subcommittee, Senator Kefauver wrote:

There is no irrefutable body of research data, garnered through carefully designed and exhaustive research projects, from which definitive cause and effect relationships can be identified. Until such research is undertaken, action in this field must, of necessity, be predicated upon opinion.<sup>1</sup>

The senator commended a few isolated scholars for their efforts in carrying out investigations, among them, Eleanor Maccoby of Harvard University, the Rileys at Rutgers, Carl Hovland at Yale and Brodbeck at Boston University, but he added that "this underlines the fact that the uncoordinated work of various scholars in the field is inadequate."<sup>2</sup>

Senator Kefauver related, "As was expected several spokesmen for the television industry testified to the effect that there is nothing wrong with television programs and all children could view them without harmful effects." Merle S. Jones, Vice President in charge of the Columbia Broadcasting

System-owned stations and general services, cited Drs. Sheldon and Eleanor Gueck's study, "Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency" as revealing a major finding: that the basic causes of delinquent behavior appear to be in faulty child-parent relationships during the first six or eight years of the child's life.<sup>3</sup>

In that particular study, however, the Gluecks were not concerned with the effects of mass media on juvenile delinquency, and when the scholars testified before the subcommittee in December 1954, Senator Thomas C. Hennings, Jr., questioned them as to their opinion on the subject. They replied, "not in the kind of detail that one would like to," and also:

. . . We may say that a consistent hammering away influence of an exciting or a salacious kind, day in and day out, day in and day out, must have an erosive effect on the mind of the youth . . .<sup>4</sup>

Following a brief summary of the testimonies heard, and in view of the 34 letters from experts on the subject (Chapter VIII), Senator Kefauver listed the findings of the subcommittee as follows:

(1) Certain children exhibit a need to watch programs with an underlying theme of crime and violence.

(2) If a percentage of these children view crime and violence in order to vicariously reduce aggressive impulses by watching and identifying with television heroes, it can be assumed that after the show is over, the child is still in the real-life situation that is producing his frustrations and

leading to aggressive impulses.

(3) Thus, while the vicarious reduction of aggression sometimes can be temporarily accomplished by television viewing, the basic cause of the frustration still remains and the child may focus more and more on this type of program.

(4) By identifying with the television heroes, the child develops a frame of reference for reacting to frustration, e.g., aggression. It is conceivable, Senator Kefauver continues, that when a child experiences aggression in fantasy via watching television, he is learning to be aggressive in fantasy but not in reality. The carryover from fantasy to reality is something which occurs more easily in some children than in others.

(5) When real-life controls are absent, as is the case with many of the type of children under consideration, the long-range effect theoretically could be that that child, after a period of time, could reach the point where he may focus his aggression on the actual person or persons causing his frustrations, and the probability that he will react toward these real-life objects as his television heroes did is increased. In other words, concluded the Senator, instead of trying to solve the problem, he may knock it out of the way like the television superman, who, because he has continually provided this frame of reference, may offer the only course of action the child is aware of.<sup>5</sup>



## CHAPTER XV

### THE CALL FOR MORE RESEARCH

"Very frequently the amount and heat of the discussion are inversely related to the amount of research underlying the problem."<sup>1</sup>

The above statement by Dr. Kvaraceus capsulizes, in this writer's opinion, the majority of expert views on the subject of research, excepting Dr. Wertham and a very few others.

Of the 34 letters presented earlier, from experts to the subcommittee, only one cited specific research in support of his testimony, and several cited the dearth of research data. The one research paper cited was written by the Gluecks of Harvard University who admitted that no conclusions could be drawn from available data.

The lack of research in the delinquency-media nexus is repeatedly mentioned throughout the subcommittee's investigation, and in articles and statements advanced by experts. The only experts who do not mention a need for projected research are those who favor drastic censorship of the media, based on their adamant views and corroborated by little else.

Senator Kefauver, in his Interim Report for the subcommittee, writes that "the need for careful, large-scale

research studies was repeatedly made apparent." Samples of crime and horror comics were sent to Dr. Carl H. Rush, executive assistant, American Psychological Association, and to Dr. R. H. Felix, so that they could study them and give their professional opinions as to the possible effects this type of reading material might have on children. Both men commented on the paucity of researches in this area.<sup>2</sup>

Senator Kefauver, reviewing Dr. Rush's reply and enclosed studies, writes:

It is evident from his brief summary of some studies in this topic area that research data has been concerned with segmental aspects of the problem.

Juvenile delinquency is a developmental problem, and for that reason research should be conducted on a longitudinal basis in which the subjects of the investigation are examined periodically over a span of several years.

Research of this type is beyond the means of individual investigators. The financial support of a foundation or institution is required if the scope of the study is to be adequate.<sup>3</sup>

Such "longitudinal" research has been suggested and outlined many times by experts in the fields of behavioral and social science. To name three such persons: Paul Lazarsfeld, in Communications Research,<sup>4</sup> Dr. Maier I. Tuchler, whose letter to the subcommittee appears in Chapter VIII, and Dr. Max Kaplan, in an interview at Boston University's Arts Center of which he is director.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Kvaraceus believes that the lack of research data in the field of prevention and control of juvenile delinquency is the major stumbling block to effective treatment, and:

While many persons, lay and professional, hold firmly to certain opinions and practices, these, more often than not, are unsupported by anything more than personal experience or tradition.<sup>6</sup>

An editorial in the Journal of the American Medical Association explains:

In terms of creating visual, acoustic and psychological impressions on children, television and movies are equal. All have the same ingredients.

Unfortunately, astonishingly little research has been done on the medical and psychological impact of television on children.<sup>7</sup>

Negley Teeters agrees that it is easy for "superficially informed citizens to blame the movies and the juvenile radio scripts for much of the behavior they deplore in children":

No one can deny that the movie and the radio have great influence on both children and adults. But it is imperative that mere opinion or common-sense appraisal be taken for only what they are worth rather than scientific fact.<sup>8</sup>

Marshal Clinard, also concurring about the dearth of adequate data, advances a different approach to the research. He believes that the primary concern of such research is the question of the extent of contact of non-delinquents with each of these influences:

Certainly only limited investigations have been made of the millions of non-delinquent individuals who avidly attend crime movies, listen nightly to several radio broadcasts dealing with criminal cases, and read one or two comic books a week.

Children from the upper socio-economic groups probably have the most of these contacts but also the least delinquency.<sup>9</sup>

Unanimously, those experts who refuse to issue bold,



decisive charges against the media as a cause of antisocial behavior, point out the dire need for more, coordinated and long-term "longitudinal" research.

Perhaps, the importance of the above chapter is minimized because the need for more research has been a recurring theme of experts throughout this thesis. Most of the experts discount the popular polemics against the media as consisting of little more than isolated examples, conjectures and personal opinions.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS

## CONCLUSIONS

Within the scope defined at the outset of this investigation, we have examined all salient pro and con arguments with respective corroborating data, bearing on the alleged causal relationship between negative mass media presentations and juvenile delinquency. The investigation has drawn attention to a more fundamental relationship of which the problem is only a segment: the effect of the mass media of communication on the general, overt and voluntary behavior of the public.

There are no tenets to be established on the basis of the materials presented herein, and this is directly the result of the simple fact that no two experts fully agree on any aspect of the media-behavior nexus, except to concur that such a connection has not been scientifically defined.

There is little scientifically-valid proof that the media can and do motivate antisocial behavior, but conversely, there is little proof that it cannot.

The experts have formulated their opinions, inconsistent and diverse as they may be, from many sources of reference, but it is apparent that the snowball of public opinion has been molded by one person whose arguments satisfy one public need.

The person is Dr. Fredric Wertham, psychiatrist.



Campaigning with a prolific and zealous barrage of vitriol, he has been most successful in capturing public support using a host of conjectures disguised as facts to support an abolitionist movement against comic books and negative presentations of other media. Dr. Wertham can justly be used in this paper and any other argument over media influences, as the symbol of antagonism. Although he is alone in his extremist position, he has many constituents who support similar but modified views.

The urgent public need that is verbally satisfied by Dr. Wertham's stand is the irrational but prevalent desire for a single, well-defined scapegoat to impute for an undesirable, rabid social condition--a rising juvenile delinquency and crime rate.

Dr. Wertham offers the public a panacea. The public has accepted his solution, though the psychiatrist is an isolated extremist whose views are corroborated by few facts and even fewer experts. It is evidently very difficult for a restless, uninformed and anxious public to accept the array of inconclusive opinions, untested hypotheses and uncoordinated studies advanced by the lot of behavioral scientists, when Dr. Wertham advances a solution based on the abolition of undesirable crime, sex, violence and sadism that is, undeniably, rampant in the media. Certainly, Dr. Wertham is chief adjudicator of a kind of modern witch trial.

Religious groups such as the NODL and a recent committee of New York clergymen do not base their campaigns on the words of Dr. Wertham, but neither have they awaited proof of media guilt. Such groups have acted on religious precepts of immorality and its causes, and these precepts are suppositions that almost universally damn the negative media. The religious organizations have been far more concerned with ridding the newsstands and screens of negative materials than with urging, sponsoring or conducting behavioral research to ascertain the scientific causes of immorality.

Dr. Wertham attacks comic books and other media as the genesis of almost every form of social maladjustment from homosexuality to scholastic ineptness. He insists that his investigations have proven the charges, but he does not offer a scintilla of scientific data that is acceptable to his expert colleagues or an intelligent public.

Dr. Wertham is the only expert to charge that media influences are more detrimental to the "normal" child's personality and behavioral patterns than to the maladjusted. All other experts cited in this paper violently disagree with this thesis, and the Congressional Subcommittee voted with the preponderance of expert opinion.

Unfortunately, just as Dr. Wertham is unable to furnish credible data to affirm his case, opposing experts are unable to ascertain confuting data. On one measurable charge, however,

Dr. Wertham is thoroughly confuted by factual evidence. It is one of the few aspects of the problem that is of a nature that can be gauged by a yardstick.

Wertham adamantly insists that reading difficulties are on the increase; children are not reading as much or as many good books as they have in the past (before comic books and television became popular). He asserts that librarians and educators across the country have affirmed these facts.

To the contrary, qualified experts in the reading field, armed with statistics, sales slips, studies and book titles, seem to agree that children are reading more and better books than ever before. Publishers have reported a tremendous surge in the sale of children's books during the last six or seven years. Librarians report that they cannot keep up with children's orders for good books that have been dramatized via the media.

Several experts have made studies disclosing that comic-book reading can aid children with reading problems. Others report that the physical process of reading comic books is the same as that employed in any other kind of reading, and furthermore, a child's interest in reading the comics often induces him to practice this important process.

Studies have variously inconsistently shown that school grades have risen or dropped since the advent of television and its popular introduction to the home. The only tentative



conclusion to be drawn from such studies is that good students tend to remain good students and poor students tend to remain poor students.

Other studies have revealed that those children who read many comic books are frequently those who read many books, and again, the converse is true.

Dr. Wertham depends heavily on testimonies by delinquents who confess that their antisocial acts are inspired by comic books and television dramas. Several judges and police officials have advanced similar testimonies to substantiate the case against the media.

But psychologists and other behavioral scientists generally agree that antisocial behavior is not an overnight affliction or the result of any simple, single stimulus. They explain that antisocial behavior is the culmination of complex of behavior and experience that can often be traced back to an individual's post-natal stage.

A logical argument, often upheld and presented by experts, is that since the overwhelming majority of modern youth read comic books and habitually view television violence, there would be considerably more crime and delinquency if the media were a primary causal factor. "We would be a nation of criminals," asserted one expert.

If it is true that comic books and television motivate crime, it seems to follow that children with the greatest

access to such media would be more delinquency-prone. But that is not the case. The current surge in delinquency and crime rates began, according to the statistics, at the close of World War II. Television, a chief sponsor of negative portrayals, was not introduced to the average American home until the early 1950s. Yet, the highest crime rates are recorded among the lower socio-economic groups, although there is reason to believe that the upper socio-economic classes have a higher delinquency rate than is reported.

It is generally agreed by the experts that negative media can and probably do precipitate antisocial behavior in cases when an individual is delinquency-prone or otherwise unstable and maladjusted, but this is not a unanimous opinion. Even if the precipitating effect is true, all of the experts who support this view concur that the media are only superficial precipitating stimuli and must not be confused with the basic, deeper problems that paved the way for such a precipitation.

Many experts are not at all certain about the nature of even the most remote media-behavior nexus. Most are reasonably sure that some connection exists, but they insist that it hasn't been proven to be negative or positive.

Apparently, movies, television and comic books, along with other media, can and do create perceptible physical disorders, e.g., sleeplessness, nervousness, increased pulse rate, etc., and this fact is borne out by several recent studies in

addition to the pioneer Payne studies. But in every instance the investigators have been careful to qualify their findings and admit they can find no correlation, or means to ascertain the correlation, between such influences and voluntary, overt behavior.

A common statement is that objectionable comic books and television presentations can have no greater influence on children's minds than sensationalized headlines and suggestive pictures in tabloid newspapers, pulp and slick magazines, or the society in which all thrive. These critics generally conclude that the media are the mirror of a sick society rather than the creator.

It is interesting to note that on either side of the controversy, no critics have voiced any major distinction between the semantic impact of printed communications as contrasted to audio-visual communications. A few have timidly speculated that the influences of each medium may differ because of the varying accessibility, and size of audiences that simultaneously patronize any given medium.

The dire need for research is, perhaps, the most stressed fact evinced by this investigation. Several experts, in presenting their opinions and citing the dearth of data, outlined the nature of such research. They generally agreed that the framework must include long-term observations of the developmental process in many individuals throughout various crucial



stages of maturation, noting stimuli, influences and their manifestation in behavioral patterns.

One cannot help but be amazed at the voluminous amount of printed and oral comment that has been devoted to condemning comic books, tabloids, television and other media, based on a paucity of valid evidence to support the charges.

The realization that so many authoritative-sounding and zealously-presented arguments are merely conjecture and personal opinions, is in itself, a major disclosure made by this investigation.

APPENDIX I

TESTIMONIES APPEARING IN THE NABRT PAMPHLET

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### TESTIMONIES APPEARING IN THE NABRT PAMPHLET

Miss Gertrude Blackstock, California State Department of Mental Hygiene:

The clinical psychologists of the department report that the exposure of children to violence on the television screen has shown up with increasing regularity in test material of children of borderline mentality, unstable personalities and adolescent prepsychotics.

Dr. N. J. Vincent, sociologist:

A crime drama may have a moral as a direct suggestion, but indirectly it might suggest that the criminal was caught because of his one stupid blunder.

Dr. Martin Grotjahn, psychiatrist:

I consider the excessive listening and viewing of television as harmful in any case, whether it is primarily concerned with the description of crime, or otherwise. This conclusion is based on my experience and on the complaints of psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and worried parents.

Dr. Edward Podolsky, psychiatrist:

Addiction to crime programs has a definite effect on the emotional life of the child often resulting in callousness.

Dr. Cyril B. Courville, psychiatrist:

It is my opinion that the constant visualization of episodes of crime by children has a pernicious effect on them, particularly those with unstable nervous systems, or those whose background



training does not permit them to discriminate between the false and the true, and particularly those, who because of some inherent psychogenic factor are especially susceptible thereto.

Dr. Lucille Emerick, psychologist:

New York City today is clamoring for more policemen, more narcotics men [etc.] Meanwhile nothing is done to correct the underlying causes of this alarming situation. On the contrary, we countenance the spending of millions of dollars annually to instruct our youth in the arts of crime, to install in their minds the fallacy that all law-enforcement officers are stupid or corrupt . . .

Walter Lippmann in "The Rise of Teenage Crime," appearing in the Los Angeles Times:

There can be no real doubt, it seems to me, that the movies and television and the comic books are purveying violence and lust to a vicious and intolerable degree. There can be no real doubt that public exhibitions of sadism tend to excite sadistic desires and to teach the audience how to gratify sadistic desires. Nor can there be any real doubt that there is a close connection between the suddenness of the increase in sadistic crimes and the new vogue of sadism among the mass media of entertainment.

Dr. A. Janov, psychiatrist:

In my practice with children, it is certainly evident that crime programs are a contributing factor to childhood neurosis. They tend to inculcate in the children a glorification of violence and a callousness toward human life. At best they can do children no benefit.

Dr. George N. Thompson, psychiatrist:

The effects of television on children are roughly those of television on adults. The detriment is not so much due to the mediocrity offered . . . rather the main corrosive factor is the encroachment upon more worthwhile activities, both recreational and educational.

Gilbert Seldes:

The whole broadcasting industry thinks it is all right, and the whole world is all right, if no positive proof of harm can be shown, as if merely not committing a crime is the justification of the whole business.

John Crosby: television-radio critic:

The fact is that our children are being treated to a sickening amount of violence in the comic books and on television, and it is no wonder that they go out and emulate what they see on their television screens and in the comic books.

Arthur R. Timme, psychiatrist:

My experience as a child psychiatrist over a period of years, leads me to the conclusion that television crime programs have a very deleterious effect on the minds of growing children. The philosopher, John Locke, said, "There is nothing in the mind but what is first in the senses." The truth of this dictum has been manifested almost daily in my work. These remarks apply to radio-television crime programs and to so-called comic strips with equal validity.

Charlotte Buhler, psychologist:

This dramatic form cannot help but have its repercussions, particularly with those children who are already hostile to society and can be so easily led into delinquent roles. These children identify themselves with the criminal, and generally miss the point of these programs. For children who are not insecure, disturbed and hostile, such programs are a waste of time.

Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, emeritus consultant in medicine, Mayo Clinic, New York:

I have just read a remarkable book sent me by my friend, Dr. Fredric Wertham, one of America's most thoughtful psychiatrists. . . . I read of children who hanged a playmate. Why shouldn't they have done this: They keep seeing this sort of thing every day in pictures . . .

Walter P. Armstrong, Jr., chairman of the criminal law section, American Bar Association:

The writers of crime "thrillers" must take much of the blame for teen-age vice. It appears these instances grew out of television and radio thrillers and gangster-story comic books.

Dr. Isadore Ziferstein, psychiatrist:

The prolonger viewing of television produces detrimental effects by creating an addiction, encouraging passivity, stultifying creativity, and instilling unrealistic and unhealthy values.

Dr. A. B. Gottlober, psychologist:

Crime programs form a basis for phobias and anxieties. In some it stimulates a desire to emulate the behavior of criminals observed.

Dr. M. J. Freeman, psychologist:

Television programs, whether of criminal or non-criminal content, which stimulate fearful reactions in children are definitely harmful to the formative personality structure. In view of the fact that television appears as a daily activity, it can and does exert a very great influence in the establishment of emotional maladjustment.

Bennett L. Williams, former newspaper police reporter:

The crime programs on radio-television, and the so-called comic strips in our newspapers are creating crime and criminals every day. The police are doing a good job, and then some; but such programs are promoting crime faster than we can increase our police force.

Edwin E. McNeil, M.D., psychiatrist:

It is my opinion and experience that television can have a tremendous impact on the personality developments and behavior of children.



FOOTNOTES

## FOOTNOTES

### Part I

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

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<sup>3</sup>Robert C. Hendrickson, Youth in Danger, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 196.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

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<sup>10</sup>American Civil Liberties Union, Statement on Censorship Activity by Private Organizations and the NODL.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>14</sup>Schultz, p. 219.

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<sup>17</sup>U.S. Congress, Interim Report of the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency to the Committee on the Judiciary; Television and Juvenile Delinquency, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955.

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<sup>23</sup>"Of Censorship and Decency," Christian Century, LXXV, No. 5 (January 29, 1958), p. 125.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>"Pulpit Report Traces Crime to Mass Media," Editor and Publisher, XCII, No. 39 (September 26, 1959), p. 92.

<sup>26</sup>New York Times, November 9, 1959, p. 34.



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<sup>1</sup>Fitzgerald, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Harold C. Gardiner, Catholic Viewpoint on Censorship, (New York: Hanover House, 1958), p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>"Pulpit Report," p. 92.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

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- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 175.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 177.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 192-93.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 191-92.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 181.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 185.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 213.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 188.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 232.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 233.
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<sup>15</sup>Hendrickson, p. 208.

<sup>16</sup>Stephen P. Ryan, "Orphan Annie Must Go," America, XCVI, No. 10 (December 8, 1956), p. 293.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter VI

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## Chapter VIII

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-124.

## Chapter IX

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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<sup>4</sup>U.S. Congress, p. 17.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

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<sup>4</sup>Robert M. Goldenson, "Television and Children--Expert Speak Up," Parent's Magazine, XXIX, No. 12 (December, 1954), pp. 36-37.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

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EFFICIENCY BRAND  
HAG CONTENT



## ABSTRACT

Statement of the problem: Do vivid portrayals of crime, violence, sadism and other salacious conduct via television and comic books cause antisocial behavior? There has been an upward surge in delinquency and crime rates since the close of the Second World War, and this has been paralleled by a great growth in the television and comic book industries. Many expert and lay critics have viewed the parallelism with suspicion, charging that a causal-relationship exists. These charges have caught the public ear, and in many areas censorship measures have been taken.

Purpose of this investigation: The purpose of this investigation is to air all pro and con arguments advanced by psychologists, sociologists, psychiatrists, educators, etc., and to present all available evidence used in supporting their cases. This is an attempt to shed some light on such questions as: Are the experts' opinions based on scientific data? Is there incontrovertible data that affirms or denies the alleged media-delinquency connection? What is known about the influence of the mass media on the public?

Scope and method of research: The investigation is chronologically limited to testimonies and data evinced between 1949 and 1959, but exceptions have been made to include vital

materials advanced prior to that period.

The Psychological Abstracts, various periodical indexes and authoritative bibliographies were extremely useful in preparing the framework for a systematic perusal of pertinent materials. The principal sources of data were sociology, psychology, psychiatry, medical and education journals, books by authorities in those professions, and the hearings and interim reports of the Special U.S. Congressional Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency (1953-55).

Conclusions: Of paramount importance is the conclusion that there is an extreme paucity of substantial, scientifically-ascertained data pertaining to the behavioral problem. The above statement is the only point in the controversy about which the majority of behavioral experts agree.

The vehement arguments brought against the media, charging that they are definitely causing delinquent and criminal behavior, are for the most part conjectures based on little more than personal opinion.

So scant is concrete data on the media-behavior nexus that a number of experts refuse to speculate whether the media influence is negative or positive. They say either speculation would be arbitrary.

Many experts, however, seem to agree that a steady diet of salacious media presentations is not healthy and probably does precipitate antisocial behavior, but only when maladjustments are already present in the individual's personality.

Recommendations: The next step in solving the basic problem must necessarily be taken by behavioral scientists. Peripheral researches and investigations conducted by persons outside the professional field abound in periodicals and editorial sections, but they cannot resolve the moot charge without additional basic research data.