Television said to affect child viewers By John J. Jesse III

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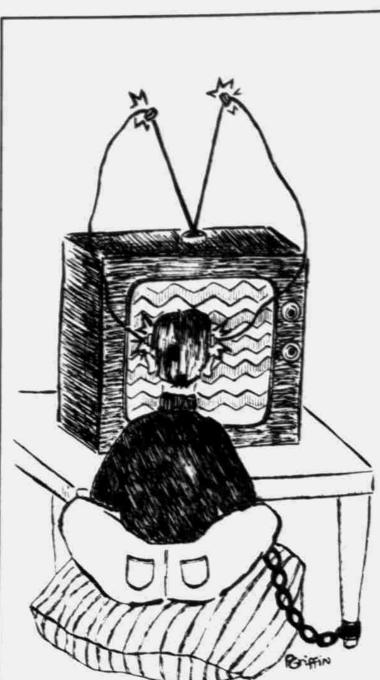


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Last year, a school-age child spent an average of 23

hours a week watching television, and studies have shown that this can seriously affect the child in several areas, according to John P. Murray in a speech given for the St. Joseph's Home and School Association Tuesday night.

Murray is a child psychologist at Boys Town in Omaha, and an expert on television and child development. He served three years as a research coordinator for the U.S. Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on TV and Social Behavior at the National Mental Health Institute.

"People have been concerned with the effects of TV for some time now," Murray said. "Major questions exist as to the impact of violence, sex and advertising on viewers, especially children. There is also the overriding problem of the amount of time spent watching TV."

Murray said although there is no definitive study on the effects of television violence, most studies show it to have some detrimental effects.

More violence in 80's

It has also been shown that children are more exposed to violence, he said. During 1980, five acts of violence occurred per hour on prime-time, while 20 acts per hour could be seen during children's viewing time. About 98 percent of Saturday morning programming was found to contain at least some violence, Murray said, which tends to adversely affect children who are heavy television view-

In a typical study three groups of pre-schoolers were selected and observed over a two-week period. Then the first group was shown a strict diet of super-hero cartoons. The second group watched social programs, such as "Mr. Rodgers," while the third set observed neutral shows, such as travel shows.

"Researchers noted a marked increase in the aggression levels of the first group. They were more apt to hit playmates and be unruly in the classroom. In contrast, the second group was, on the whole, more willing to share and to cooperate, and the third group's behavior showed little change."

Learn violence tolerance

"Besides increasing aggression levels, TV can also cause other problems for young viewers," Murray said. "One problem is a greater willingness to tolerate violence. Children become desensitized after steady doses of violence

A third effect of television violence is that it has the tendency to change a child's perception of the world, a change which could remain with him for the rest of his life, he said. He becomes more fearful of the world, and tends to overestimate his chances for being involved in a

In a recent survey, persons who were heavy television watchers placed their chances of being a victim of crime at one in 10, Murray said. "According to the FBI Crime Statistics Bureau, the actual likelihood of a person becoming a victim is one in 100."

Television advertising also can affect children, he said. A major problem is that, because of their make-up, ads create narrow stereotypes for children to observe. The traditional, male-domination theme permeates the advertising industry and can cause confusion in children as to the roles of men and women in society.

Murray went on to say that in 1980, the average child saw 20,000 ads, many pushing toys or high-sugar, nonnutritious foods.

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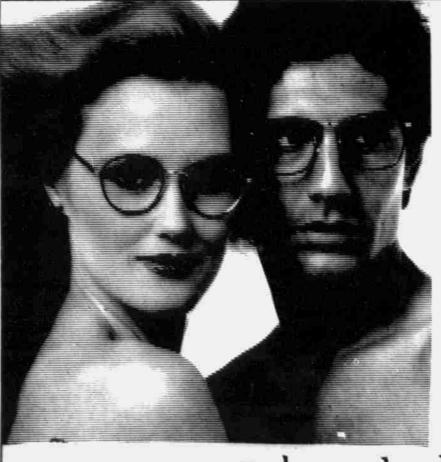
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