

One-Parent TV Shows Termed Good Influence

Catholic Press Features

New York — A clinical psychologist has come to the defense of "one-parent" TV shows, which have been criticized frequently for presenting a distorted picture of U.S. family life.

The psychologist, Dr. George Weinberg, said in an article written for TV Guide that shows such as Family Affair, The Courtship of Eddie's Father, Julia, The Doris Day Show, The Lucy Show and the Governor and J. J.—in all of which there is a missing spouse—"have become TV's golden chance to educate us where we all agree we need education most—in our parent-child relationships."

Dr. Weinberg insists that "the current spate of TV shows featuring widows or widowers is having a good influence on children.

"Some of the power of these (one-parent) shows lies in their ability to convey an adult-child love relationship better than the ordinary format could," Dr. Weinberg wrote.

He was referring to the great amount of communication and affection displayed between parent and child on the one-spouse shows. Dr. Weinberg said that such parent-child relationships—even though the children might appear to be unrealistically reasonable and obedient—are "providing important models for us as parents and as children."

"If these programs seem unrealistic because they show us an abundance of well-intentioned and ethical people, this can hardly be called a fault," Dr. Weinberg observed. "They stand in contrast to shows that thrive on depicting neurosis and violence."

The psychologist said it is not important whether we agree with what a TV parent says to his child during one of these programs. Rather:

"The main message is that the father did reply and took his son seriously. If the chief fault of these shows is that they exaggerate the attentiveness of parents and the judgment of children, perhaps this is not harmful.

"On the other hand, they may incline people in directions that will allow them to find more intimacy and pleasure."

Dr. Weinberg listed the common objections to the one-parent TV shows, notably the unreal plot situations, the unrealistic affluence of the parent ("nurse Julia enjoys a spacious walkup apartment with an enviable kitchen") and the fact that "on many of the shows the children's insights are apt to be unexpectedly philosophical."

He added that a personal canvass of family-life experts resulted in a favorable reaction to the one-parent TV shows because they "are doing a very worthwhile job" despite plot limitations.

"Granted, the composure of the characters portrayed is



"The Governor and J.J." features Dan Dailey as a widowed governor and Julie Sommars as his daughter. In the middle is press secretary James Callahan.

sometimes almost too good to be true," Dr. Weinberg noted. "But a good model is worth seeing even if it is unusual."

Dr. Weinberg suggests that the reason these TV shows are so consistently popular is because "the honest ethic of the characters on these shows, their devotion to value, their ability

to express affection and love for one another are reassuring to us.

"There is seldom a half-hour show in which kindness is not the chief motive of one of the characters. Admit it or not, it is important to us to see people, even on the screen, who meet our childhood hopes."

COURIER / Entertainment

As I See It

Absorbing Look At Drug Issue

By Pat Costa



The power of television for good, that is when it informs and enlightens, has probably never really been appreciated.

In a recent "White Paper" on drug addiction, NBC scored another impressive point in television's continuing program to take an unshielded look at the nation's ills. (A few weeks back the same network produced a magnificent albeit devastating, look at the plight of the country's migrant laborers.)

"Trip to Nowhere" did not do as much as we might have hoped it would do. What single television program, or magazine piece could?

But it provided this viewer with at least one answer that random reading on the subject had not.

The widespread use of drugs by children from "good homes" heretofore has always been explained away with the implication that drugs have become such an integral part of the youth-oriented social scene no child can stand the pressure of not conforming.

In a touching scene in the NBC documentary put together by Lucy Jarvis and narrated by Edwin Newman, we saw a psychiatrist come to the heart of the problem with a 17-year-old addict.

An only child from an extremely comfortable home where the father was an engineer and the mother a nurse, the youth had been involved at 12 with glue sniffing, at 15 with heroin and arrested at 17 for selling drugs.

"Did your father ever tell you he loves you," quizzed the psychiatrist over and over again. Denial coupled with the information that he did not need the words or physical contact with his father to know he was loved was the forthcoming response.

Yet when the psychiatrist good, naturedly challenged the

youth to give him the arm-around-the-shoulder hug that he had never exchanged with his father it was done with a clumsiness that revealed the lack of experience.

The implication: It takes more than a "good home" to keep a youth from drugs. It requires parents whose love is not only understanding but overt.

A second case history dealt with a girl in Phoenix, Ariz., who had died from an overdose of drugs. The program then spotlighted the work of the community there in dealing with users, estimated by some to include half of all the children in elementary and high schools.

On the whole an absorbing hour, but one that should be followed with more programs on the causes and the solutions to the drug problem.



MD CAMPAIGN

Scotty Swift, national poster child of Muscular Dystrophy Associations of America, and Jerry Lewis are caught at a tender moment during rehearsals for the comedian's Labor Day Telethon. In this area Lewis' annual 24 hour star-filled extravaganza for the benefit of MDA will be seen live over WHEC-TV, Channel 10 at 10 p.m. Sunday evening, Sept. 6. Local cut-ins featuring area personalities will take place throughout Telethon, which continues until 6:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 7.

Riding a Big Yellow Taxi

BY THE MISSION SINGERS

Joni Mitchell is the composer of Big Yellow Taxi and, as you might expect, she did the first recording of the song. At the end of her recording, Joni tries a low-register voice, almost like Louie Armstrong. When she doesn't exactly make it, she breaks into a laugh and that's how the song ends.

Her laugh put a seal on the words. It's the laugh of a child who knows a secret and can't stop giggling because these silly grown-ups who are so big and so smart, can't figure out what it is.

Ecology, environment, population. These four syllable words are becoming more dirty than most four-letter words. The sad fact is that abuses in ecology, environment and population are much more dangerous and destructive than are abuses of language.

But isn't it true, as some people are saying, that songs like Big Yellow Taxi and other criticisms of environmental abuse are nothing more than prophets of doom?

In a sense, it is true. The world today is more efficient and complex than ever before. Our genius and technologies have combined to bring us benefits undreamed of in past ages.

But it's also true that we've reached a point of no return.

A recent issue of Time magazine had a full-page ad about ecology. The headline was: "A check list from Genesis 1, 28." Beneath it, on separate lines, were these phrases: "Be fruitful, and multiply / and replenish the earth / and subdue it / and have dominion over the fish of the sea / and over the fowl of the air / and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Before each phrase there was a check mark, except before the second: "replenish the earth." The rest of the page was blank, except that near the bottom was a picture of a shrunken earth, like a balloon that had lost its air.

The point of the ad is that we've done most things as well as we could, but not everything. And even more, the point of the ad is that we've spent so much time and effort on the other activities—multiplying, subduing, dominating—that now we can't replenish. If we want to save the earth, we have to change our priorities.

After all, do we need all those big yellow taxis polluting the air in our cities? Do we need so many spotless apples, or would we suffer that much if we stopped using D.D.T. and had to lose a few apples to



JONI MITCHELL

THE MUSIC BAG

'BIG YELLOW TAXI'

They paved Paradise and put up a parking lot, With a pink hotel, a boutique and a swinging hot spot. Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

They paved Paradise and put up a parking lot.

They took all the trees and put them in a tree museum, And they charged all the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em.

Hey farmer, farmer, put away that DDT now. Give me spots on my apples, but leave the birds and the bees.

Late last night I heard the screen door slam And a big yellow taxi took away my old man.

(Published by Siquomb Publishing Co.)

worms. (In England, people will pay more for worm-eaten apples than for clean ones, because they know that the clean ones were sprayed with D.D.T., which can poison.)

Do we need so much fossil fuels, like gasoline today that we'll probably use up the earth's fuel supply in 200 years if we continue at our current rate? Do we need so many

roads that some day we might really have to pay a buck and a half to see what a tree looks like?

Big Yellow Taxi is a spoof, a tease. But the problem is deadly. If we want to surmount and survive the problem, we're going to have to give up a lot of luxuries that comfort us now.

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