



BY RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

As violence continues to dominate the mass media, both in news coverage and in fictional presentations via film and television, psychologists and religious leaders are warning of its dangers and seeking to counteract its harmful effects.

There have been several recent incidents of youths engaging in violent acts that were patterned on similar actions shown in televised movies. And recent studies indicate that television violence not only spurs such actions on the part of young viewers, but also numbs them to such behavior on the part of other persons.

Violence-heavy films have won increasing popularity. The Godfather is the top grossing film of all time, having made more than \$85 million. It and its sequel, Godfather Part II, won Academy Awards as the best pictures for 1972 and 1974. Death Wish won good audiences in theaters, but was criticized as an encouragement to vigilante action. "Blaxploitation" films have been censured for portraying black "anti-heroes" as perpetrators of crime and violence.

Sociologists are still pondering the question of whether media violence is a cause or a reflection of violence in society — or both. In its report for 1972, the film and broadcasting division of the U.S. Catholic Conference commented that violence in entertainment is "a social phenomenon which is merely reflective of the times."

But it added that although the violence of the times "is fitting material for the movies," the real issue is "how the movies used violence — the social fantasy and romanticizing of blood-letting and mayhem have recently been perfected with a new realism in films, to no legitimate purpose whatsoever."

Violence on television has also been connected with increased attitudes of fear on the part of adult viewers. A recent study by the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania found that persons who watch television regularly tend to over-estimate dramatically the danger of violence in everyday life.

Whereas a significant proportion of the student violence that plagued the United States in the 1960s involved colleges and universities, high schools seem to have become battle grounds in the 1970s (as they were also in the 1950s).

Results of an 18-month study released by the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency of the Senate Judiciary Committee found that destruction of school property in 757 school districts cost \$500 million a year — the amount spent on textbooks. It also found that more than 100 murders were committed in the schools each year and at least 70,000 assaults on teachers.

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, and Dr. Owen Kiernan, executive secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, contend that the "students' rights" movement has been a factor in the rise of school violence.

But James Harris, president of the National Education Association, feels that the student violence is a symptom of violence in society generally. He told the Senate subcommittee that students "see that violence is a fundamental way of life in our society."

In photo above, a member of the Katox Wunchacus gang displays a chuka stick — a weapon made of iron pipes or wood and a chain — to others in his gang at their New York clubhouse. While many of the youth gangs call themselves social clubs, they do say they will protect themselves. The youth gang, which plagued the nation's cities in the 1950s, is staging a comeback. And with it, police have found themselves again confronted with the violence of gang fights. Also, high schools seem to have become the battle grounds in the 1970s. A recent study found that more than 100 murders and at least 70,000 assaults on teachers were committed in the schools each year.

In what may be considered an attempt to fight fire with fire, religious agencies have begun using mass communications as a vehicle for promoting non-violent techniques of problem solving.

Religion in American Life (RIAL), an interreligious organization that sponsors public service messages on the meaning of faith in society, chose as the slogan for its 1973 campaign, "Violence divides. God unites."

Its print and broadcast advertisements showed how violence disrupts and destroys human unity. Readers and listeners were invited to write for a discussion guide offering Scripture references and other material on violence and how to prevent it.

United Methodist Communications has been working with counterpart agencies in other denominations to produce television spot announcements designed to provide models for "prosocial" behavior among young viewers.

The first such 30-second spot, entitled "The Swing," was produced in cooperation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and released last year. It begins with two children fighting over a swing in a playground, and ends with the children deciding to take turns swinging each other.

Can Christians ever condone violence? The World Council of Churches, which has frequently been accused of doing just that, has been examining the theological aspects of violence for several years.

A 1973 study paper produced by the WCC's Church and Society Working Committee cited three possible options for Christians who want to resist unjust and oppressive political and economic power — non-violence, use of violence in extreme situations, judged by the criteria of a "just war," and struggle by those caught in violence to reduce the sum total of violence and reach for just and peaceful relations with others.

The study, entitled "Violence, Non-violence and the Struggle for Social Justice," declared that Christians are never justified in some forms of violence, such as torture and the deliberate killing of non-combatants in war.

Pope Paul has frequently held up the Christian ideals of love and cooperation as the only solution to such conflicts as those in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. In 1972, he acknowledged that some people consider this "a naive and dangerous dream," but went on to say, "We are not day dreamers, but idealists and prophets and we don't tire of hoping and striving for peace and love."

OHD Has New Training Aide

By BONITA BALDWIN

"Individual Christians should feel free to take the initiative, to do things on their own, to be self-directed, to change structures. Being active and aggressive should be second nature."

parish is the natural place for democracy to happen.

Jim has also spent two years working with migrants through the Michigan Council of Churches. He resides at Rand St. with his wife Elizabeth and son Joseph.

The speaker, Jim Hanink, voiced his ideal at the Office of Human Development last week. The young philosophy Ph.D., who comes to Rochester from Michigan State University, replaces Dr. Joseph Torma as human development education coordinator. (Dr. Torma is now field education coordinator at St. Bernard's Seminary.)

CDA Installs New Officers

Brockport — The new officers for Court Nativity of Our Lady, Catholic Daughters of America, were installed at a special Mass on June 12 at Nativity B.V.M. Church.

Father John Philipps assisted Mrs. Monica Rapp, district deputy, in the installation of the officers.

The following officers will serve for the next two years: Catherine Ricotta, regent; Jane Hasbrouck, first vice-regent; Patricia Coffe, second vice-regent; Ann Dries, financial secretary; Faith Collins, treasurer; Phyllis DeHey, recording secretary; Ruth Quinn, monitor; Mary Ann Atwell, lecturer; Peg Goode, organist; Katherine Pancoast, Joan McGuinn, and Mary Ann O'Brien, trustees.

Dr. Hanink will be responsible for "reviewing, implementing, and supervising programs used to train human development committees throughout the diocese." He explained that he developed an appreciation for individual and democratic action through his involvement with the Catholic Worker movement. He said that he sees parishes as a key spot for social mission. "The

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