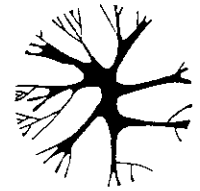


COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS



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Video: A Media Revolution?

Revolutions connected with technical inventions have been proclaimed, rightly and wrongly, so often in the recent past that it would seem appropriate to look for another expression just to avoid the danger of trivialization. But all the evidence says that this time we are in the presence of a real revolution and that we should call it by its name.

As a true revolution, the emergence of video has been like an explosion, full of energy and even passion, provoking divisions, inflicting wounds, destroying, upsetting and, also, raising hopes and promising new riches in the so-called "television wasteland". It will take some time before promises and hopes can be measured against reality. Meanwhile the video revolution has taken the world by storm, caught the popular imagination with incredible speed and set itself up as the universal entertainer of the future. It is not just the rich and it is not just the metropolises. If anything, video cassette recorders (VCRs) have conquered small towns and semi-urban areas even more easily.

Video-related problems are affecting international relations (for example, the so-called "battle of Poitiers", in 1982, when France tried to stop the invasion of Japanese made VCRs and a diplomatic row erupted), family life, leisure time, education, industrial relations, the law and the arts. One of the many names that video has been given is "guerilla television". There is a certain amount of aggressiveness (social, commercial, artistic) in this young child of television which is growing up very rapidly and is fighting to find its place in our midst. As a video artist put it, "Television has been attacking us all our lives; now we can hit back".

The sound and fury accompanying the irruption of video attracts, on the one hand, the curiosity of researchers. But on the other it does not facilitate an overall view of the phenomenon. The presence of video is so elusive, so constantly changing, that even quantitative data are difficult to gather. Under these circumstances any probe into its future can only be undertaken with the strong conviction that it is basically unpredictable. The present issue of TRENDS is an attempt to explore a part of that unknown future.

REVIEW ARTICLE

I: The History of the Video Cassette Recorder

While developing audio tape recorders in the late 1940s the Sony corporation also showed interest in the possibility of recording moving images on magnetic tape. Sony eventually began to research the idea seriously in 1953, and from the beginning had in view the provision of a recording system that could be sold to the home consumer. The first company to develop and market video recording equipment, however, was the US Ampex Corporation in 1956.

Though the high cost and complexity of the Ampex machine restricted its use to professional broadcasters. Broadcasters used videotape to record "live" television programmes for later distribution. Videotape reproduced both sound and pictures with

greater fidelity than film, and video recording was only two-thirds as expensive as filming.

Ten years later (1967) the size and the cost of video tape recorders (VTRs) were reduced with the introduction of the helical equipment which uses only one or two recording heads. Within this system there were several incompatible tape formats: 1-inch, ½ inch, ¾ inch and, later on, ¼ inch sizes. Two years later Sony and Akai began to sell black and white reel-to-reel recorders for domestic use; Sony used ½ inch tape and Akai ¼ inch. At the same time Sony began to develop a cassette format: the ¾ inch U-matic, which first went on sale in 1972.

The relatively low cost, easy operation, compactness, colour and good picture quality made U-matic popular among business and government organizations. When other manufacturers produced their own 3/4 inch video cassette recorders they kept the same specifications, making the U-matic a compatible machine (i.e. tapes recorded on one machine could be played back on any other within the same standard TV system).

In 1975 a far lighter, less expensive and even more compact video recorder using 1/2-inch cassette appeared. Soon there were several types of light VCRs in the market (the Philips SVR, the Toshiba LVR etc.) but after a period of fierce competition only three remained: the Betamax of Sony, the VHS (Video Home System) of Japan Victor Company (JVC) and, limited to Europe, the V.2000 of Philips. Recently Philips bowed to Japanese dominance in this field by discontinuing its V.2000 VCR. Unlike U-matic machines the three types of 1/2-inch VCRs are not compatible: cassettes recorded on the machine of one system cannot be played back on another system's recorder.

Although VCRs were initially made to record and play back

television programmes, the manufacturers were soon convinced that there was a market for portable video cameras as well. In the beginning a colour camera could be bought and plugged directly into a video recorder, though this equipment was rather heavy to carry about. Over the past few years the weight of portable video recorders has come down from 10kgs to little more than 2kgs. In 1986 the cost of a typical set of equipment has fallen to 39% of its 1979 value. In 1982 many manufacturers agreed on a format of 8mm, though JVC has its own system. Most observers think the 8mm format will be the VCR of the future for non-professional uses.

The light weight and compactness of the VCR has been duplicated in camera technology. The introduction of cameras with in-built video recorders (camcorders) has been a mortal blow for the Super 8mm camera and has contributed to the decline of the 16mm film industry. The capability of instant replay of the VCR coupled with the ease of editing and low-cost videotape has given video a considerable advantage over film, both for home entertainment and professional uses.

II: The Diffusion of Home Video Across the World

Douglas A. Boyd and Joseph Straubhaar. "Developmental Impact of the Home Video Cassette Recorder on Third World Countries". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 29, No.1 (Winter) 1985, p.5-21.

The spread of video depends upon a host of factors which vary considerably from country to country. In a recent article Douglas Boyd and Joseph Straubhaar suggest that price, government restrictions, income distribution, and broadcast television content are key variables in explaining the global diffusion of video.

Video in Rich and Poor Countries

According to Boyd and Straubhaar price and government restrictions are closely linked. The price of VCRs has dropped dramatically over the last few years and this has stimulated sales. In many countries, however, governments have kept the price of VCRs artificially high by imposing tariff barriers. Brazil has gone even further and requires VCRs to be manufactured locally. Price and income are obviously closely related. Levels of disposable income and general wealth are key factors in determining the extent of VCR ownership.

The relationship between high levels of disposable income and VCR penetration is most marked in the Middle East. The oil-based economies of the Gulf States (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates) and Saudi Arabia have given the inhabitants a very high standard of living. The 1983 annual per capita income in Kuwait, for example, was \$17,880, and Kuwait has the highest density of home videos in the world: over 85% of all households possess a machine.

In poorer countries VCRs are regarded as status symbols and luxury items for the rich. Momar Kebe Ndiaye estimated that in 1983 there were only 778,000 VCRs in the whole of Africa. The median price of a VCR was 29 times the minimum salary in 29 African countries, and even in absolute terms the cost of a VCR was much higher than in the USA, France or Japan. Consequently VCRs in Africa are the almost exclusive privilege of socio-economic elites, who use their VCRs mainly to show foreign-made videocassettes, mostly from the USA. In Ndiaye's opinion this privileged use, coupled with the lack of use of the VCR for social or communal purposes, simply reinforces the potential for cultural alienation and conflict.¹

Even though the VCR is a luxury item in poorer countries it is found in peasant homes in Egypt and in the homes of the less wealthy across Asia. A major factor in the spread of VCRs across the Middle East, and from the region to other countries, has been the large expatriate working force. The VCR was brought into Egypt largely

by some of the tens of thousands of labourers, skilled workers, teachers and doctors who work in the Gulf. Until about 1980 the most popular gift a returning worker could bring home was a colour television set; since then it has been the VCR. In a similar fashion workers from Asian countries like India, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia and South Korea have been able to take back to their countries VCRs purchased at low prices.

Broadcasting Scarcity and Broadcasting Control

Probably the most important variable in explaining the spread of the VCR is the variety of content available on broadcast television. In Italy, for example, the VCR is in only 2% of television homes, compared to 25% in Germany and 12% in France. One reason for this low penetration is the abundance of over-the-air television programming. Similarly the VCR is found in only 23% of US television homes, a figure low in comparison with Japan (43%) or Britain (40%). By contrast, in Saudi Arabia, the limited programming available on government television, allied to a complete ban on public cinemas, postively encouraged the purchase of VCRs.

In a recent study Georgette Wang shows that the VCR has been used in Taiwan largely to circumvent government restrictions on viewing. Taiwan has enjoyed considerable economic growth and in 1984 the government was able to claim that by 1989 every family would have a home computer and a VCR. By 1984 14.4% of households had a VCR. Video provides an opportunity of seeing material which is banned from government television, notably Japanese television programmes. These programmes are, of course, imported illegally. American and Hong Kong tapes are also popular.²

Video and Politics: Alternative Viewing

Pirating and smuggling material which is subject to official censorship is well established in many countries. The Saudi Arabian government, for example, was unable to prevent the widespread showing of the controversial British documentary *Death of a Princess*, which the Saudi government complained was anti-Saudi. The programme was simply recorded off-air in London and flown the next morning to Saudi Arabia; within twenty-four hours it was being watched in Saudi homes.

In Latin America the use of video for social development has become important: particularly in countries where political repression has excluded opposition groups from access to the mass media. This is the context in which the term "guerilla television" was coined. Video as alternative communication is found in Brazil, Chile, Peru and Venezuela. Video can provide one way in which groups who feel that their point-of-view is not being given a fair hearing by the mass media to attempt to influence the public. During the recent coal-miners' strike in Britain, for example, the coal-miners' union made and distributed videos setting out their case. The demand for VCRs is so widespread and so universal that even in the Soviet Union the government has been forced to rethink its

initial heavy-handed effort to prevent the introduction and discourage the use of video players. By the end of 1985 the Soviet Union had started mass producing video players, made available a limited but growing selection of ideologically safe films, and opened video stores that rent movies overnight. The government announced in October 1985 that it planned to produce 60,000 video players a year by 1990 and 120,000 by the year 2000.³

1. Momar Kebe Ndiaye. *Le Marche de la Vidéo et ses implications en Afrique*. Paris: Université de Droit, d'Economie et des Sciences Sociales, 1983.

2. Georgette Wang. "Video Boom in Taiwan: Blessings or Problems?"; Unpublished MSS, 1985.

3. Philip Taubman. *International Herald Tribune*, Dec. 14-15, 1985.

III: Films, Television and VCR Use

The many ways in which video is used across the globe can be reduced to three categories: 1) time-shifted viewing of broadcast programmes; 2) watching of non-broadcast, professionally pre-recorded materials; and 3) home-made, non-professional cassettes.

With the increased availability of pre-recorded materials, the use of VCRs to watch pre-recorded films seems to have overtaken the time-shifting function. The effects of this trend in certain parts of the Third World are vividly described by Boyd and Straubhaar: the Philippine government in 1981 estimated a loss of \$2.1 million in cinema taxes in Manila because of a 30% drop in attendance; the Indian film industry has asked the government to stop public showings of films via VCR; and Kuwaiti VCR owners were able to watch pirated versions of *Rocky III* even before official copies had reached their own film critics!

In Britain a major reason for widespread diffusion of VCRs is the desire of the British Asian community to see films and TV programmes from their countries of origin. Studies in London, Leicester and Bradford have found a surprising number of cassette retailers dealing in Indian and Pakistani films. In the London Borough of Wandsworth, for instance, one retail outlet for Asian films had a list of 30,000 titles, and a membership of 5,000.

The local production of cassettes is still on a very small scale compared to the efforts devoted to pirating popular videos. Nevertheless there are indications that local production is developing in some areas. In Nigeria, for example, Boyd and Straubhaar note the emergence of a form of decentralized television programming. Local artists are now able to package indigenous material for their home video market.

The VCR, Time Shifting and the Transience of Television

Mark R. Levy and Edward L. Fink. "Home Video Recorders and the Transience of TV Broadcasts", *Journal of Communication* Vol.34, No.2 (Spring) 1984, p.56-71.

The possibility of watching a programme at a later time than broadcast (time-shifting) gives users control over the programme schedule, and allows them to watch a programme while recording a second one. This feature is one of the most attractive to potential purchasers of VCRs, at least in some countries in Europe (Italy, Spain, Great Britain) and Japan. In Great Britain, for example, where freedom of expression and a wide availability of information and entertainment channels might make us think that VCRs are redundant, video has the highest home penetration in Europe: 40-44% according to some estimates and 38% according to others. In either case, this is a penetration of homes higher than in France (12-14%) or Germany (25-27.7%).

Most research on the use of the VCR for time-shifting of programmes has been conducted under the auspices of broadcasting organizations anxious to know how VCR use is affecting audience viewing figures. The research by Levy and Fink, however, begins

to ask questions about the possible ways VCR use is changing the very nature of the viewing experience.

The Transience of TV Broadcasts

From the beginning television messages have been characterized by a high degree of transience. Once broadcast, the television images disappeared and it was impossible for the majority of viewers to watch them again. This fleeting and ephemeral quality of the television image has been adduced as an explanation for the difficulties experienced by viewers in fully comprehending messages that are intellectually or artistically demanding. For the originator of broadcast messages this lack of permanence of the television image was a constant temptation to emphasize the current, the superficial and the sensational.

The transitory character of television broadcasts, also, may help explain the disdain for television expressed by cultural critics accustomed to an analysis, aesthetic or literary, based on a repeated study of permanently available artistic works. In the future, however, it is possible that the VCR will help modify the fleeting quality of conventional television. The home video may offer an alternative to reading in certain cases; "how-to-do-it" books and magazines, for example, will be at a certain disadvantage with "how-to-do-it" video cassettes.

Against this background, Mark R. Levy and Edward L. Fink, have studied the changes in viewing induced by the VCR. The goal of their study was two-fold: 1) to construct a framework for understanding the transience of the television message and 2) to develop a mathematical model which could measure the capability of the VCR to alter the transient character of television broadcasts. The mathematical formula focuses on the time elapsed ("Speed") between VCR recording and play-back.

The authors identify four factors which affect the decision to record a television programme for future viewing. These are: seriality of content, frequency of programme transmission, availability of other broadcasts and competition from other sources for the viewer's time and attention, the Levy-Fink model focuses, firstly, on overall replay behaviour, and secondly on the relationship between play-back and the frequency of programme transmission. The other three factors (seriality, availability and non-television competition) are not taken into account because the relevant data were not available.

On applying the model to a sample of 249 US households the authors found that only about 58% of all recorded programmes are replayed within one week of their recording. The study suggests that if daily and weekly programmes are not played back during the first week after recording, it is unlikely that they will ever be replayed. The results of their study (published in 1984 but conducted in 1981) show that although VCRs have the capability of reducing the transience of television, this capability is at present greatly limited by the way in which most viewers use their VCRs.

IV: The Cultural Impact of the VCR

How Families Use Video

J.C. Baboulin, J.P. Gaudin, and P. Mallein. *Le Magnéscope Au Quotidien: Un demi-pouce de liberté*. Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1983.

J.C. Baboulin et al. claim that the VCR is not a new medium but merely a new instrument which some people have greeted, mistakenly, as a force about to revolutionize social life, and others have treated as a mere appendix of television. Under the influence of a "technological humanism" à la McLuhan, many see the innovations brought about by the VCR as one more step in the march towards "more freedom, more leisure, more culture, more knowledge and more understanding" among people. Leaving aside the macro-social approach (the technological humanism) the Baboulin team engage in a micro-social analysis to discover the nature of the relationship between the new technology (the VCR) and its users. The approach is clearly manifested in the title of the book: *The VCR in Daily Life*, and his conclusion is hinted at in the subtitle: *Half An Inch Of Freedom*.

Video: A Secondary Medium

Baboulin and his team wanted to place their "qualitative" research "neither too close nor too separate" from the real lives of the VCR users. The problem which concerned them was how to explain the spectacular growth of the VCR market and the central role that the VCR plays in the lives of people. Their analysis and explanations are based upon data originally collected by a 1981 study on VCR users and uses.

The Baboulin study finds that VCR is not a new medium, but a secondary object, which introduces new uses of the pre-existing media like cinema and television. The secondary nature of VCR is revealed in two characteristics. In the first place, VCR has become a familiar, almost trivial piece of furniture (at the level of the car, washing machine and telephone) which does not trigger a revolutionary change in social life or in the existing patterns of cultural consumption. The VCR affects the existing uses of other media by bringing new dimensions, the most conspicuous of which is the mastery over the pattern of cultural consumption.

VCR Household Penetration Across the World, 1985

Source: International Federation of Phonogram and Videogram Producers. (London: IFPI Video Statistics, 1984-1985)

Note: These statistics do not take into account VCR smuggling. Like all statistics on video they should be treated only as a rough guide.

COUNTRY	HOUSEHOLDS (% and number)	COUNTRY	HOUSEHOLDS (% and number)
Argentina	1.7% 115,000	Kuwait	77.5% 425,000
Australia*	45.0% 2,250,000	Lebanon	43.0% 365,000+
Kenya	N/A 20,000	Netherlands	25.0% 1,300,000
Bahrain	70.0% 68,000	Nigeria	N/A 1,500,000
Belgium	13.0% 400,000	Peru	21.5% 200,000
Brazil	5.1% 850,000	Philippines	35.5% 445,000
Canada	26.0% 2,600,000	Saudi Arabia	28.5% 900,000
Chile	3.3% 85,000	Singapore	60.0% 500,000
Egypt	0.2% 290,000	South Africa	18.0% 345,000
France	14.0% 2,800,000	Spain	15.0% 1,550,000
Germany (FR)	27.7% 6,600,000	Sweden	24.0% 830,000
Hong Kong	40.0% 500,000	Taiwan	30.2% 1,125,000
India	26.4% 795,000	Thailand	44.0% 320,000
Indonesia	36.0% 525,000	UK	44.0% 8,600,000
Iran	16.4% 380,000	USA	28.0% 26,000,000
Iraq	19.9% 150,000	Venezuela	37.5% 600,000
Italy	4.0% 660,000	Zimbabwe	N/A 6,000
Japan	52.0% 18,700,000		

*Up to June 30th 1985

The Changing Family and Video

The second characteristic of VCR appears in the transformation of works in the school and the family. The spread of television has coincided with a social transformation in the role of the family. Members of the family emphasize their own personal fulfillment even at the cost of family cohesion and togetherness. Women attracted by careers leave the home for long hours of outside work, and children give priority to peer-oriented activities if they find them more gratifying than family-centred interaction. All this, says Baboulin, is carried out without regrets or feelings of guilt. The VCR has now come to reinforce this "selfishness without regrets".

In this social and cultural environment the VCR comes to give further impetus to a new mode of human relations in the home: "to live separately together". Parallel to this "rational hedonism" prevailing in contemporary society, the VCR revives the ritual of "going to the movies on Sunday", with a new twist: to go out is to make a trip to the rental store in order to choose a cassette and to see it in a group: family and/or friends.

The VCR And The Leisure Society

Roman Gubern. "La Antropotronica: Nuevos Modelos Tecnoculturales de la Sociedad Mass-mediatica", in Rauli Rispa (ed.) *Nuevas Tecnologías en la Vida Cultural Española*. Madrid: FUNDESCO, 1985.

Like Baboulin et al. Roman Gubern is interested in the way the VCR is affecting the way people behave. He begins his analysis with a consideration of the "homo electronicus" (electronic man) which has become "homo otiosus" (leisure man). Contemporary people have found in the VCR a suitable instrument for their increasing leisure time. As opposed to television, the VCR means decentralization of sources, diversification of content, possibility of feedback, and mastery over the programmes.

Gubern finds in the use of the VCR five possible advantages: 1) in a society which tends to be fragmented VCRs could foster family cohesion; 2) information and entertainment can be gained in the comfort of the home; 3) VCRs save the users from having to brave the noises and insecurity of life in the city (e.g when going out to the cinema); 4) they save time and money; 5) VCRs increase the amount of information available to users and increase their degree of participation in their viewing.

The VCR and Private Leisure

With two exceptions (the cinema and the poster) all the technologies of mass communication have been oriented to private, home consumption: newspapers, gramophone, radio and television. So it is with the VCR. The diffusion of the VCR has aggravated the sedentary nature of the contemporary person.

Gubern points out that the private leisure which is emphasized by VCRs undermines the social value of public activities. In this age of self-service the private character of VCRs reinforces the tendency to substitute genuine human contacts by the professional smile of PR men and stewardesses. The diffusion of VCRs also has a second negative effect: the widening of the gap between cultures, between rich and poor people. This consequence, negative as it may be, is not really new but a common trait of the mass media. Some groups of people can afford to, and actually do, buy more books, magazines and records than others. By the same token the cultural benefits of the new technologies will be unequally shared.

V: Young People, VCRs, and "Video Nasties"

How Swedish Adolescents Use Video

Keith Roe "The Influence of Video Technology in Adolescence", *Media Panel Report No 27*. Lund: University of Lund, Dept. of Sociology, June 1983.

Ever since the VCR began to be widely available in developed countries public concern has been expressed about the possible negative effects of video viewing on young people. In Sweden, for example, in 1981 and 1982 much concern was expressed that young people were watching violent, horrific and pornographic videos. In an attempt to discover "what young people do with the videograms" as opposed to "what videograms do with the young people" research was undertaken by Keith Roe as part of the Media Panel research programme conducted at the Department of Sociology, University of Lund, and the Department for Information and Techniques at the University College of Växjö, Sweden.

The data for Roe's study were taken from the panel consisting of children aged between 11 and 15, attending a school in Växjö, a town of 65,000 inhabitants. The study has a longitudinal design over a time span of four years, three research waves with two-year intervals. The survey ended in 1982 with an in-depth group interview of 50 selected students.

Viewing Patterns and Group Identity

The results showed overwhelmingly that young people watch video cassettes with peers, and largely in the absence of parents and siblings. While television viewing tends to be a family-based activity, video has clearly a group-oriented character. Among 15-year-old viewers of video only 2% state that they view it with their parents as opposed to 77% who do it with friends. Roe found that the low television users were also low video watchers.

Two different patterns emerge among the high viewers of video. One is adopted by those children who look for violence and porno-

graphy in video and the other by those who select TV programmes to be recorded and watched at a more convenient time.

The research also relates the use of video to the leisure activities of adolescents because these play an important part in the quest for autonomy and self-identity in the time when family (and school) authority is questioned and the influence of peers increases. In the interviews with the youth of Växjö, Roe found that the use of video was in fact an active selection in terms of individual and group identity: a deliberate signal of distance, of disapprobation of a culture dominated by adults who have labelled them "failures".

Video and the School

Regarding school achievement, Roe found a clear tendency for low achievers to use video more than high achievers. Violence, war films and horror films were all clearly associated with low achievement while there is an identifiable relationship between high school marks and the viewing of recorded television programmes.

Rather than putting the blame on video, Roe calls attention to the fact that low achievers had low grades before video arrived. The school had labelled the children as "successful" or "failures" prior to any effect from the VCR. Those classified as "failures" are precisely the ones who are prone to adopt values and modes of behaviour in conflict with the school ethos and the society it represents. In this way, Roe says, the school promotes the adoption of deviant values and behaviour which teachers themselves are the first to complain about. There is no evidence, he claims, that video causes greater truancy or that it is responsible for a decrease of the time devoted to homework.

Censorship, Video Violence and Young People

Geoffrey Barlow and Alison Hill (eds.) *Video Violence and Children*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985.

Martin Barker (ed.) *Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media*. London: Pluto Press, 1984.

The public concern over young people and video manifested in Sweden in 1981 emerged with particular force in Britain in 1984. In February 1984 the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament raised the alarm over pornographic and extremely violent videocassettes colloquially known in the British press as "video nasties". The Committee argued that the problem was so serious that legislation should be devised in European Community states to restrict the availability of such cassettes even if such legislation should be denounced as censorship.

The books edited by Barlow and Hill, and Barker represent the two sides of the censorship debate. *Video Violence and Children* reports research which offers support for censorship, while *Video Nasties* argues that concern about violent video is simply another instance of a public "moral panic" in which video is blamed for all manner of social evils.

In July 1984 Britain passed the Video Recordings Act which required that all videos should be classified by the British Board of Film Censors. The criteria for classification were to be stricter than those required for films shown in cinemas because videos were available for home viewing.

The Act represented a triumph for a group of churchmen and parliamentarians known as the Parliamentary Group Video Enquiry who had lobbied hard for such an Act in 1983. Their efforts were

supported by a research programme which was published in three stages. An interim report was made available to a Parliamentary committee in November 1983, the second report was published in March 1984 and the third report was issued after the Bill was passed. The book edited by Barlow and Hill brings all this research together.

Children's Viewing and Video Violence

The centrepiece of the video research was a national viewer's survey which set out to discover children's viewing patterns and parental attitudes. Data were drawn from a sample of more than 4,500 children aged between 7 and 16 years; the sample was claimed to be representative in terms of geographical region, social geography and social class. Children were given questionnaires in school and asked to score on a three-point scale any of some 113 "video nasties" which they might have seen. Some 2,557 parents completed questionnaires on their attitudes towards children's actual or potential viewing of "video nasties". Another survey was conducted among parents and children in underprivileged families, and, in addition, smaller scale surveys were carried out among psychiatrists, pediatricians and educationalists.

The final report claims that 45% of school children have been exposed to video cassettes intended for adult viewing. It also argues that the violence depicted in video films is different from that which

is found in some fairy tales, folk tales and children's stories. Video films are divorced from any concept of morality or desire to communicate cultural values.

The Case Against Video Censorship

The inquiry reported in *Video Violence and Children* has been vigorously attacked as inspired by a political and moral ideology rather than a desire to establish the truth about children's viewing of video. The assumptions, research methodology, and conclusions of the inquiry are severely criticized by the contributors to the book edited by Martin Barker.

The evidence produced by the inquiry, according to Dr Clifford Hill, strongly suggests that children are adversely affected by their exposure to video violence. The short-term effects can be mitigated in normal healthy children with concerned parents, but where such parental support is lacking the long-term effects may be greater and more damaging. Hill maintains that there is conclusive evidence of a causal link between violent behaviour and viewing of violent videos. This evidence then "establishes a clear case for careful censorship and stringent controls" on video cassettes.

The authors of *Video Nasties*, on the other hand, find the violence research to be characterized by a "politically motivated rhetoric" which "systematically distorts the meaning and nature of the videos themselves". They assert that the main survey was undertaken "to produce factual evidence" in support of preconceived attitudes, and they make a number of criticisms of the design, administration and interpretation of the survey. Their major arguments are that the causal link between violent behaviour and video viewing remains unproven; that the evidence for children's viewing habits is methodologically flawed; and that, in any case, tighter censorship is a greater danger than a few "video nasties" in a free society.

Rock Music And The Music Video

John D. Wells, "Music Video and the Capacity to Experience Life". *Popular Music and Society*, Vol IX, No.4, p.1-6, 1984.

Adult concern with the content of young people's video viewing is not limited to the "video nasties". Now that rock music has been

wedded to video the same anxieties that were once expressed about the music alone have resurfaced. In the USA music video has been stimulated by the presence of the 24-hour cable channel MTV, and in Europe the satellite delivered Music Box channel offers 18 hours a day of music videos. To date most research on music video has concentrated on analysing its content, usually from a highly critical standpoint.

In a recent article, for example, John Wells claims that music video (MV) "has lifted rock to new dimensions of mass culture" where fantasy and reality coexist in a flow of images devoid of meaningful context or socio-political statements. What prevails are not dissenting views or politically relevant statements but the hodge-podge of sexual fantasies, brutal stabbings, truncated detective stories and random acts of violence. The images of cars, detectives, heavily cosmeticized women, leather and seedy hotel rooms projected at high speeds seem geared to divert the attention of the viewers from concentrating on any particular point, and to fill them with unspoken desires. "They play to and with our isolation, frustration and loneliness".

MV: Trivializing Human Experience?

In Wells' view "the sensations dramatized by MV invariably fade away quickly because MTV videos abolish meaningful context; violence occurs but only the random, meaningless violence of car chase scenes". In other videos the images have nothing whatsoever to do with the song. The spurious use of imagery removes the freedom of the listener to create or edit his experience. The music video provides a visualized imagination for the song. But because this visualization is not the product of the viewer's imagination, the impact tends to dissipate quickly. The quick array of objects does not demand, or even allow, a close scrutiny of them.

The majority of music videos available at present do not pretend to be art or expressions of high culture but rather products for the "average" viewer. Wells expresses his concern that the repetition of short, highly concentrated music video will trivialize human experience. Music video "could indeed lessen one's capacity to experience life in its fullest terms" because the incessant repetition of music video has reduced them to a cliché.

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Video: How Decisive a Revolution? Questions for Research

The VCR boom seems to have caught researchers, as well as governments and broadcasters, off guard. Most of the research literature is descriptive rather than analytical, and most writers freely acknowledge the difficulty in obtaining statistical data of any reliability. In this situation, therefore, it is encouraging that Unesco and the Broadcasting Research Unit of London have got together to produce the first global study of the video trade, though, as they freely admit, it is almost impossible to obtain reliable information on a trade so afflicted, at least in certain regions, by piracy and smuggling.

Despite this basic problem there still remains plenty of scope for researchers to extend our understanding of the place of video in the media marketplace and in the life of media users.

Video in the Media Marketplace

Our survey of the issues surrounding VCRs leaves us with the distinct feeling that the industry is vibrating with vitality and dynamism; the literature is replete with words like "incredible", "explosive" and "revolutionary". In spite of this enthusiasm, there are some nagging questions hanging over the future of this prodigious child which researchers might usefully consider.

Will VCR survive, or will it die before reaching maturity? Here and there one can read of commercial anxieties that the market is becoming saturated. Is the novelty of VCR wearing off? Will the

videodisc finally threaten the preeminence of the VCR? What is likely to happen when the technology for erasing videodiscs and using them for recording, as is now done with cassettes, becomes available?

A second cluster of problems concerns the place of VCRs in relation to the other media. Are VCRs truly the salvation of the film industry? How will the VCR fare in the face of the expected continuing proliferation of cable and satellite channels? Can we expect video rental parlours and video clubs to continue to flourish? What long-term effects will music videos have on the recorded music industry?

Video and Its Users

Most importantly, research needs to take a careful look at what people do with VCRs, rather than speculate on what the VCR might be doing to people, young or old. The identification of direct effects is an almost impossible undertaking, as the accumulation of sterile research on the effects of television amply demonstrates.

Some research, notably in France and Sweden, is already investigating VCR use in families and among young people, and this research could be extended, especially in Third World countries. As Boyd and Straubhaar have pointed out, the success of the VCR in developing countries challenges development communication strategies and assumptions which treat the media audience as passive recipients of mass media messages. Understanding how people use

the VCR could suggest new approaches to development communication, as could study of VCR use for alternative communication among marginalised or disaffected social groups.

On a more domestic level some questions which might be pursued are: Will consumers build up personal video collections in the same way as they have collected music records and are now collecting compact discs? Will there be a shift from using the VCR solely as an entertainment medium to educational and information uses if

and when interactive VCRs and videodiscs become more widely available? The content analysis research that has begun on the music video could usefully be extended to other video genres, including so-called "video nasties". How distinctive and long-lasting should one consider to be the effects of the VCR on family life and interaction identified by researchers like Baboulin? In short, research could help us to clarify and comprehend the extent to which the video cassette recorder has truly initiated a media revolution.

José M. De Vera, SJ
Jim McDonnell
Issue Editors

Current Research on Video

WORLD

The Unesco/Broadcasting Research Unit Inter-Institutional Research Project on Flow of Video Hardware and Software.

In 1985 Unesco and the Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) of London (an independent research organization funded by the BBC, IBA, British Film Institute and the Markle Foundation) undertook an inter-institutional research project to provide some reliable and up-to-date data on the flow of video hardware and software across the world.

The project covered a selected number of countries in eight regions. For each region information was collected on the production, distribution, and consumption of video software and hardware. In November 1985 there was a meeting of regional coordinators and the submission of interim reports. Unesco and BRU hope to publish these reports as a book edited by Manuel Alvarado of the BRU at the end of 1986.

The research coordinator is **Manuel Alvarado**, (Broadcasting Research Unit, British Film Institute, 127 Charing Cross Rd., London WC2H 0EA) and the Unesco representative is **Morton Giersing** (Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris). Researchers are listed under regions:

Africa: Gabon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal, Zaire: **Momar Kebe Ndiaye** (Gibraltar 1, Villa 49, Dakar, Senegal); Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe: **Pauline Dodgson** (Broadcasting Unit, Audio-Visual Services, Ministry of Education, Box MP 140, Mt Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe).

Arab States: Egypt, Jordan, Gulf States: **Prof. Douglas Boyd** (Dept of Communication, Univ. of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19716, USA) and Iraq: **Dr Nawaf Adwan** (Centre Arabe de Recherche sur la Radio-Télévision, BP 27007, Kuarti, 14 Ramadan, Baghdad).

Australia, New Zealand: **Albert Moran** (School of Humanities, Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland 4111) and **Richard Badham** (Univ. of Wollongong, PO Box 1144, Wollongong, NSW 2500).

Caribbean: Jamaica: **Lorna Gordon-Gofton** (2A Springway, Oakwood, PO Box 546, Kingston 10); Belize: **Trevor Petch** (44 Langham Street, London W1, UK).

Eastern Europe: Bulgaria: **Eliezer Alfani** (Union of Bulgarian Journalists, Graf Ignatiev 4, 1000 Sofia); Hungary: **Csaba Pogany** (Centre for Mass Communication Research, Akademia UTCA 17, Budapest); Poland: **Jerzy Pomorski** (ul Gontyna 12 m 1, 30-202 Krakow); Yugoslavia: **Firdus Dzinic** (Centar Za Politikoloska Istrazivanja i Javno Manenje Instituta, Drustvenih Nanka, Narodnog Fronta 45, Postanski Fah 927, 11001 Berograd).

Latin America: Brazil: **Luiz Fernando Santoro** (Rua Arruda Alvim 70, Apto. 501, 03410 Sao Paulo); Chile: **Yessica Ulloa** (Santa Beatriz 160, Providencia, Santiago); Colombia: **Claudia Ballona** (Avenida Benarvides 955-13A, Lima 18, Peru); Peru: **Rafael Roncagliolo** (Instituto Para America Latina, Ap Postal 270031, Lima 27); Venezuela: **Carlos Colina** (Ininco, Av. El Bosque, Caracas).

SE Asia: China: **Jin Lu Fu** (School of Communications, DS-40 Univ. of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195, USA); Hong Kong: **Chris Pomery** (23/FL, Washington Plaza, 230 Wanchai Rd, Wanchai); India: **Dr Binod Agrawal** (Development and Educational Communication Unit, Space Applications Centre, ISRO, Ahmedabad 380053); Japan: **Shoso Usami** (Radio and TV Culture Research Inst., 2-1-1 Atago-Cho, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 105); Malaysia: **Bruesh Bhatia** (Asia-Pacific Inst. for Broadcasting Development, PO Box 1137, Pantai, Kuala Lumpur).

USA, Canada: **Dr Paul Cahill** (Dept. of Mass Communications, St Cloud State University, St Cloud, MN 56301, USA).

Western Europe: Britain: **Manuel Alvarado**; Italy: **Paul Thibault** (Via Tagliamento 8, 40139 Bologna); Spain: **Miquel de Moragas** (Facultad de Ciencias de la Informacion, Univ. Autonoma de Barcelona, Campus de las Terra, Bellaterra); Sweden: **Olof Hultén** (Sveriges Radio, 105-10 Stockholm).

BRAZIL

Regina Festa (Rua de Consolacao 3075, Apto 906, 01416 Sao Paulo) and **Luiz Fernando Santoro** (Rua Arruda Alvim 70, Apto 501, 03410 Sao Paulo) are editing *Video Popular en América Latina: Usos y Perspectivos*, which will survey experiences with popular video in 9 countries.

FINLAND

Juha Samola (Videocommission, Kirkkokatan 3, SF-00170 Helsinki) presented a report on "Home Use of Home Video in Finland" at the 1985 Nordic Mass Communication Research Conference.

GREAT BRITAIN

Dr Barrie Gunter (Research Dept, Independent Broadcasting Authority, 70 Brompton Rd, London SW3 1EY) and **Dr Mark Levy** (College of Journalism, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 USA) have surveyed in depth VCR behaviour in about 500 households in 4 commercial TV regions.

SWEDEN

Drs Keith Roe and **Ulla Johnsson-Smaragdi** (Dept of Sociology, University of Lund, Box 114, 221 00 Lund) recently published *Teenagers in the New Media World: Video Recorders, Video Games and Home Computers* the first in a series of reports on the same general topic.

TAIWAN

Georgette Wang (Graduate School of Journalism, National Chengchi University, Taipei) has recently written "Video Boom in Taiwan: Blessings or Problems?".

UNITED STATES

Dr Lynn Schaefer Gross (Communications Dept, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634) studies the impact of music videos on society and art, the effects of new tv technologies, and media use by professional women.

Laurel Hellerstein (Dept of Communication Studies, Univ. of Massachusetts, Machmer Hall, Amherst, MA 01003) has written on music video and is currently part of a team researching the use of VCRs, video games, computers and cable tv by some 1,000 families.

Drs Rebecca B. Rubin and **Alan M. Rubin** (School of Speech Communication, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242) have written "Media Use and Meaning: A Music Video Exploration" (*Journalism Quarterly* forthcoming). Alan Rubin is investigating audience involvement and VCRs.

Dr Barry L. Sherman (School of Journalism, Univ. of Georgia, Atlanta, GA 30602) has completed 2 studies of MTV: a content analysis of music video programmes and a preliminary cultivation analysis of Atlanta area teenagers.

Additional Bibliography on Video

The Global Spread of Video

"Home Video: An InterMedia Survey". *InterMedia*, Vol. 11, No. 4/5 (July/September) 1983, p. 16-75. Seven major articles on the VCR, plus national penetration statistics for 63 countries, and brief reports on video in 37 countries.

"The Video Revolution". *Media Development*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, 1985, p. 1-26. Ten articles on video in the developing world. There are two articles on India, and one each on Asia, Arab countries, China, community video in Latin America and video use by Aborigines in Australia. Three other articles discuss the impact of video on culture, society and development.

Lent, John A. "A Revolt Against A Revolution: The Fight Against Illegal Video". *Media Asia*, Vol. 11, No.1, 1984, p.25-30. Discusses the impact of VCRs and video games in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Also indicates how governments have attempted to control this new technology.

Ogan, Christine L. "Media Diversity and Communications Policy: Impact of VCRs and Satellite TV". *Telecommunications Policy*, Vol. 9, No.1, (March) 1985, p.63-73. Discusses the impact of VCRs and direct satellite broadcasting on national communication policies. Argues for public policies on these media.

Home Video: Cultural, Social and Economic Aspects

Bartels, Klaus. "Die elektronische Pest: Kultur, Ansteckungsangst und Video". *Rundfunk und Fernsehen*, Vol. 32, No.4, 1984, p.491-506. Places current anxieties about undesirable videos in historical context, pointing out that the same anxieties have been raised in the past about the printed media.

Bücken, Rainer. "Video: Die Systemvielfalt bleibt auch längerfristig erhalten". *Media Perspektiven*, No.5, 1985, p.317-331. An overview of the video market and video industry in West Germany.

Levy, Jonathan D. and Peter K. Pitsch, "Statistical Evidence of Substitutability Among Video Delivery Systems", in Eli M. Noam (ed.) *Video Media Competition*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.56-92. Analysis of statistical data suggest that in the US the VCR and pay cable are substitutes while the VCR and broadcast television are complements.

Levy, Mark R. and Edward L. Fink, "Home Video Recorders and the Transience of TV Broadcasts". *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 34, No.2 (Spring) 1984, p.56-71. Develops a mathematical model to estimate the impact of the VCR on the transience of television broadcasts. Applying the model to a sample of 249 VCR households, the authors discovered that only 58% of recorded programmes were replayed within a week of being recorded.

Lyman, Peter. *Canada's Video revolution: Pay-TV, Home Video and Beyond*. (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983). Chapter 7 examines the impact of VCRs and video discs on the Canadian media industry and proposes specific policies to foster Canadian programming.

Marshall, Stuart. "Video: From Art to Independence". *Screen*, Vol. 26, No.2 (March/April) 1985, p.66-72. A history of British artistic and social action uses of video. Marshall argues that these uses are increasingly converging.

Neumann-Bechstein, Wolfgang. "Fernsehen und Video: Überholte Konkurrenz oder unterschätzter Konflikt?". *Rundfunk und Fernsehen*, Vol. 33, No.3/4, 1985, p.456-468. Argues that the new competition between video (a "stored" medium "which is not tied to a particular time") and television (a "time-specific programme" medium) will have far-reaching effects, especially on public television.

Waterman, David. "Pre-recorded Home Video and the Distribution of Theatrical Feature Films", in Eli M. Noam (ed.) *Video Media Competition*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.221-243. Argues that prerecorded home video offers distributors more efficient "unbundled" methods of pricing programmes to consumers. A major impact on broadcasting is likely to be increased competition and inflation in the programme supply market.

Music Video

Denisoff, R. Serge. "Music Videos and the Rock Press". *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. X, No.1, 1985, p.59-62. US rock music press coverage of music video has been antagonistic and inadequate.

Kaplan, E. Ann. "A Post-Modern Play of the Signifier?: Advertising, Pastiche and Schizophrenia in Music Television", in Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson (eds.) *Television in Transition: Papers from the First International Television Studies Conference*. (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), p.146-163. Critical analysis of the content of the music videos shown on the US MTV channel. Argues that there is a tension between the anti-establishment values expressed in some popular music and the way MTV co-opts rock music into the dominant culture.

Laing, Dave. "Music Video: Industrial Product, Cultural Form". *Screen*, Vol. 26, No.2 (March/April) 1985, p.78-83. Places the development of the music video in the context of the audio-visual industry as a whole and reflects upon it as a new 'cultural form'.

Lynch, Joan D. "Music Videos: From Performance to Dada-Surrealism". *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 18, No.1 (Summer) 1984, p.53-57. Identifies three basic structures in music videos: narrative, experimental film, and performance. Most common are those centred on performances. Discusses and evaluates the artistic content of some videos.

Mercer, Kobena. "Monster Metaphors: Notes on Michael Jackson's 'Thriller'". *Screen*, Vol. 27, No.1 (January/February) 1986, p.26-43. Detailed analysis of the best selling music video 'Thriller'.

Business and Organizational Uses

Canape, Charlene. *How to Capitalize on the Video Revolution: A Guide to New Business Enterprises*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984). Suggestions for those interested in setting up new businesses which exploit the potential of video.

Degen, Clara. (ed.) *Understanding and Using Video: A Guide for the Organizational Communicator*. (New York: Longman, 1985). A handbook for organization communicators interested in using video.

Dranov, Paula, Louise Moore and Adrienne Hickey, *Video in the 80s: Emerging Uses for Television in Business, Education, Medicine and Government*. (White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1980). The book discusses the results of a 1979 survey of 1087 video users (industrial firms, government agencies, educational institutions, medical institutions, and religious and non-profit organizations) in the USA.

Palme, Klaus. *Video Planen: Videoeinsatz in Industrie und Wirtschaft*. (Munich: Oldenburg, 1983). Offers guidance to those intending to introduce video into their organizations.

Wiegand, Ingrid. *Professional Video Production*. (White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1985). A manual on how to produce a video programme.

Copyright Issues

Lin, Carolyn. "Copyright Issues for Home Videotaping". *Telecommunications Policy*, Vol. 9, No.4 (December) 1985, p.334-350. Argues that despite the US Supreme Court decision on home taping the copyright issues still remain unresolved. Suggests that Congress could resolve the conflict between the rights of the author and the public right to know by formulating a "fair use" or "exemption" policy.

Selsky, Eileen L. "Home Video Recording: The Supreme Court Decides". *Journal of Media Law and Practice*, Vol. 5, No.3 (November) 1983, p.251-258. Discusses the implications of the US Supreme Court ruling that home taping of television broadcasts did not infringe copyright.

Video in Education

Elliott, Geoff. *Video Production in Education and Training*. (London: Croom Helm, 1984). How to produce videos for educational uses.

Maurice, M. (et al.) *La Vidéo: Pour Quoi Faire?: Vidéo, animation et communication dans un stage, une école*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982). Describes projects in which groups of children and adults used video for analysis and learning. Discusses how using video helps to increase the sense of power over the medium, demythologizes television and heightens group awareness.

Moss, Robin. *Video: The Educational Challenge*. (London: Croom Helm, 1983). Suggests ways in which video could be used in education, including video in distance education and "open learning".

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