

Hopps, J.G. (1987, November-December). "Violence: A personal and societal challenge". *Social Work*, 32.

OVERVIEW

The National Association of Social Workers produced an important issue on the topic of violence in our society. It melds important articles and current research on this topic. Editor-in-chief June G. Hopps begins the issue with an excellent overview:

Violence has become one of the most pervasive issues of our time...American ambivalence on violence is historic. Although there is a growing consensus on the hollowness of the mystique, we as a society continue to exalt the macho image of rugged individualism as well as the process of conquest and immediate gratification that it often represents. Force tends not only to prevail but to be glamorized.

The editor notes the massive glorification of violence that children receive from the media. She realizes broadcast and entertainment industries will obviously play down attempts to show that media violence affects children negatively. What happens when children are taught about the sanctity of life only to be shown continuously that "life is cheap and the taking of it has no consequences"? Violence is also seen beyond the media: "For too many children the theater of violence is viewed not only on a screen, but also on the street, in the school, and in the family."

After discussing the complexity of research on this subject, the author turns to "the connection of violence in society and in the family. Devalued men are more likely to be abusive in the home." And women may be forced by unequal work opportunities and pay to stay in violent marriages.

"Violence," the editor notes, "is among other things a sign of critical unrest." Though free countries value individuals over the mass or state, "ours is a society...that has capitulated to the profit motive so as to sacrifice both its workers and their environment to robot-like requirements...Any major step toward prevention of violence requires that we address the nature and design of work in America."

Hopps concludes the article urging two further national priorities against violence. "Liberation through education (75% of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma; many are clever but illiterate) must be made a top priority. And we must give attention to the strengthening of families through efforts like the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act of 1984—never adequately funded."

IMPLICATIONS

1. Those who teach children or work with young people should be concerned with the causes and results of violence in our society.
2. The media transmit violent messages to American society. It is important to ask, "What's wrong with a culture that makes so many people angry enough to kill?", "What gives people the license to hurt?", and "What social changes will reduce violence and how can the helping professions be more effective with victims?"
3. As significant research gives answers to discreet aspects of this complex issues, those who work with young people and families must use new knowledge in professional, helping ways.