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NEWS

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*****TV violence doesn't necessarily
inspire imitation.

The theory that violence on television always inspires imitation by the viewer is absolutely untenable, says one of the experts who will appear on The University of Texas Health Science Center campus in April in symposia entitled "Violence in America."

"The monkey see--monkey do" philosophy which is so often the basis for movie censorship is, in reality, "an un-Christian view of man, although unfortunately, many well-meaning Christians seem to embrace it," says Dr. G. Williams Jones, professor of film at Southern Methodist University.

Jones' address: "Electronic Scapegoating: Simple Answers to Complex Questions" will be at 1:40 p.m. April 12 in Gooch Auditorium on the health science center campus at Hines and Inwood.

One of the problems in many lab studies of the effects of violence among children who are exposed through video and film, says Jones, is that we tend to confuse play behavior with 'real life' behavior. Actually, play behavior may be a valuable outlet.

Americans have some ambiguous feelings about screen violence. While many scream for censorship for films such as some of Sam Peckinpah's violent Westerns, they may cheer on the vigilante violence in others, such as some of the Charles Bronson films, and Shane, which will be shown Sunday, April 27. Jones says a tape will be played of George Stevens discussing his film in which he says "at that moment when this dark villain reduces this diabolical creature to mud, I wanted to show the horror of that."

The series on violence, being held on the UTHSCD campus April 12 and 13, 26 and 27, will bring together psychological insights with insights from the fine arts and humanities. A fifth symposium will be held May 4 on the South Campus of The Tarrant County Junior College System.

Sponsoring groups are the Department of Psychiatry, UTHSCD, the Elmwood Foundation for the Arts and Humanities and psychiatric services at John Peter Smith Hospital, the latter two in Fort Worth. Joining in sponsorship for the May 4 session will be the Tarrant County school and the Federal Correctional Institution in that city.

Funding for the symposia, which are open to both professionals and the general public, comes from the Texas Commission for the Humanities, the Carl J. Aldenhoven Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Jones, who is also founder of the U.S.A. Film Festival, will be bringing Japanese film maker Masahiro Shinoda to speak and to show parts of some of his films which deal with historical violence in his country. Shinoda will be showing three of his films at S.M.U. April 11-13.

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Dr. Seymour Feshbach, chairman of the Department of Psychology at UCLA is also on the program at Jones' suggestion. Feshbach is known for his research in observing the behavior of young people deprived of video violence versus a control group which got their preferred programming full of "cops and robbers" and "shoot-'em-up" Westerns. The study revealed that the violence-deprived group later exhibited more change in their behavior: their "acting-out" behavior was actually somewhat more overt than that of the other group. These findings have added credence to that "cathartic" view of permissiveness of TV and film violence.

"Actually," says the film expert, "film can satisfy as well as titillate and arouse."

Some of the serious films about violence that Jones points to as outstanding include Peckinpah's Straw Dogs, which is about violation of domain and which has, if Feshbach is right, a great cathartic effect; The Onion Field, a true-to-life movie about violence as a part of American life today which an outstanding performance by James Woods; and Shane.

Jones, the author of The Relationship of Screen-Mediated Violence to Anti-Social Behavior, says he also believes many liberal Americans are also guilty of depriving their children of the richness of our cultural heritage and causing a paucity of imagination by cutting them off from the violence in fairy tales, such as those of the Grimm brothers.

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