

PRESS & TELEVISION

dominated by "people," not abstract structures or unseen social forces.

These shared mental habits are linked to the conventions of journalistic writing, constraints of time and space, and an intellectual approach that cuts up reality into bits called "news items" but refuses to fit the pieces into a conceptual framework. "Making connections between events is disallowed by the journalistic format," says Phillips. "Possible links between items, say, one story concerning a 'racial disturbance' and another on high unemployment among black youth, are not suggested." Stories that deal with abstract concepts or developing situations are considered boring. The result is a media mosaic that does not add up to a coherent overview.

Television on the Psychiatric Ward

"Television in the Hospital: Programming Patients' Delusions" by Harriet Wadeson, A.T.R., and William T. Carpenter, Jr., M.D., in *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* (July 1976), 49 Sheridan Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12210.

A study of drawings and other art work by acute schizophrenic patients reveals a marked impact of television on delusion-formation, according to Dr. Carpenter, of New York's Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Wadeson, an art therapist. Their observations were based on clinical and research experience with 55 schizophrenics hospitalized at a National Institute of Mental Health research unit. Provided with drawing materials and encouraged to express themselves, 16 of the 55 (29 per cent) spontaneously depicted delusions associated with programs seen on television. In some instances, these patients' delusions were influenced by other electronic media as well, such as radio and recordings.

One patient watched a program involving a theft and became convinced that a hospital aide, a female patient, and he himself had committed a crime. Another patient was affected by sensational news events to the point of being certain she was one of whatever victimized mass she had just seen. Most of the patients drew pictures revealing that they believed the television programs were transmitted to send them particular messages. In one patient, however, the paranoia had become so pervasive that she believed she was on camera while undressing and that TV commercials displayed prizes for a numbers racket run by the hospital staff.

The authors advocate further investigation of this phenomenon, especially since so many patients chose to weave televised material into their art when it was neither alluded to nor requested. "It is unwarranted to assert that viewing television has a causative relationship to psychosis generally, or to delusion-formation specifically," they say, "but there is a reason to question the wisdom of confined patients spending many hours watching television."