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**SOCIETY**


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percent of black and 50 percent of white male 16-to-24-year-olds held jobs. In 1980, the rates were 41 and 62 percent, respectively.

The authors looked for explanations in U.S. Census Bureau data on 261,000 young men. Between 1964 and 1980, black males increased their school enrollment, while white enrollment dropped modestly. About 60 percent of black high school-age men were still in school in 1980, just topping the white enrollment rate. Students are less likely than non-students to hold jobs. By the authors' calculations, the new school enrollment rates account for 39 percent of the increase in the black-white employment differential.

Military enlistment patterns have also changed. Since the early 1970s, black enlistment rates have topped white rates, reversing the historic pattern. Nearly 15 percent of 20-to-23-year-old black men, but just over five percent of their white peers, were in uniform in 1981.

Because military personnel were not until recently counted as part of the U.S. work force, enlistment had no direct impact on employment statistics. But there are two indirect effects: The military gets the "cream" of black youths, leaving a pool of less employable job candidates. And veterans, because they lack civilian work experience, suffer abnormally high unemployment. Higher rates of school enrollment have the same effects, the authors add. By their reckoning, inexperience and "creaming" due to higher black enrollment and enlistment rates together account for another 16 percent of the increased employment gap.

That leaves nearly half of the 18 point increase in the black-white employment "gap" statistically unexplained. *Higher* employment among white youths and the decline of inner-city businesses that employ young blacks are among the probable causes. The authors doubt that racial discrimination has worsened. They think that their data reveal an employment disparity that was there all along, concealed only because the young blacks of the early 1960s were getting an unwanted "head start" in the work force over their white peers.

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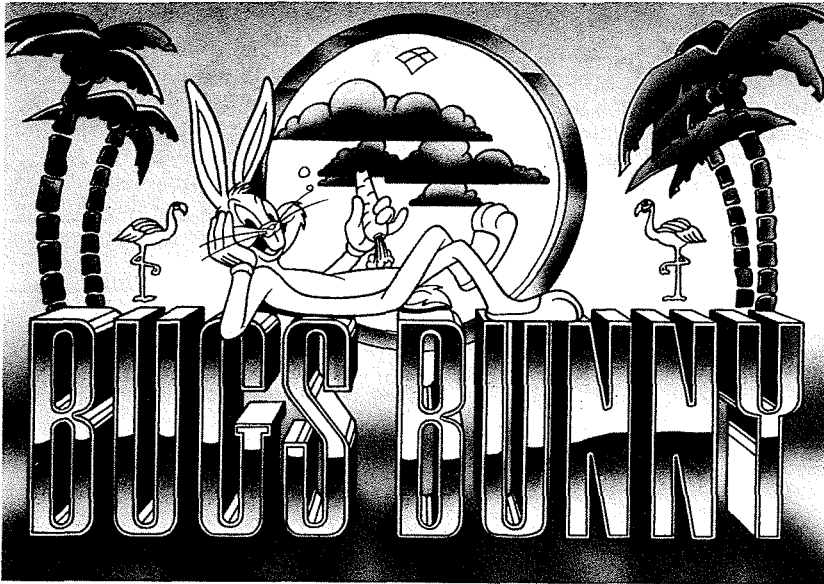
### *TV for Wimps?*

"Where the Do-Gooders Went Wrong" by Walter Karp, in *Channels of Communications* (Mar.-Apr. 1984), Box 2001, Mahopac, N.Y. 10541.

To hear the critics of children's television tell it, Saturday mornings are as awash in animated violence and mayhem as ever. If only it were so, laments Karp, a *Channels* contributing editor.

He says that the networks have succumbed to pressure from groups like Action for Children's Television to "reform" kids' shows. *The*

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*Bugs Bunny, in disfavor among TV "reformers," still appears on network TV shows. But less popular characters have been exiled to local stations.*

*Smurfs*, *Rubik's Cube*, and other new animated series are produced according to "pro-social" guidelines: The heroes are self-effacing, group-minded, and equable to a fault. Characters who might encourage self-assertion or "aggression" in youngsters—e.g., Bugs Bunny and Roadrunner—are frowned upon. One TV network went so far as to cut out a scene showing a cat-like character hiding in a dish of spaghetti "on the grounds that some child might dunk his cat into pasta as well."

The "pro-social" outlook has become "a despotic little orthodoxy," Karp asserts, even though there is no proof that children imitate television characters, whether good or bad.

What is worse, he writes, "reformed" television fails to do what *is* possible. Old-fashioned cartoons, like fairy tales, helped youngsters come to grips with their worst fears, assuring them "that monsters can be slain, injustice remedied, and all obstacles overcome on the hard road to adulthood." As psychologist Bruno Bettelheim wrote in his noted 1976 book on fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment*, "only exaggerated hopes and fantasies of future achievement" can counteract children's immense anxieties and spur them on.

Today's bland fare trivializes children's concerns. Enemies are not conquered, but brushed aside—dragons and evil wizards turn out to be powerless and not worth taking seriously. In the interests of peaceable conduct, a Smurf is likely to spare the life of a vanquished sorcerer. Yet,

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one must remember, the Grimm brothers' Gretel did not hesitate to shove *her* enemy, the witch, into an oven.

On Saturday-morning TV, Karp adds, "The lone individual is weak and helpless; the group is strong and kind." The individual's rescue by the group is often a prominent theme. Says Karp: "In real life, no gang can help a child master the deep anxieties that beset him." What he needs is reassurance that he can make it on his own.

Karp sees "reformed" children's TV as more than a bit sinister. "It is systematic training for personal weakness and social subservience," he charges, that might eventually sap our children of the inner resolve they need "to stand up and fight for their rights."

### *What Is Wrong With Objectivity*

"Objectivity Precludes Responsibility"  
by Theodore L. Glasser, in *The Quill* (Feb.  
1984), Society of Professional Journalists,  
Suite 801 W., 840 North Lakeshore Dr.,  
Chicago, Ill. 60611.

"I don't think it is any of our business what the moral, political, social, or economic effect of our reporting is," Walter Cronkite once declared. The journalist's chief concern ought to be "objectivity," he said. Glasser, who teaches journalism at the University of Minnesota, disagrees.

Objectivity did not become a canon of journalism until the mid-19th century, when newspapering became a big business. Publishers encouraged objectivity, Glasser argues, because "it was efficient for newspapers not to offend readers and advertisers with partisan prose" and because reporters could work more efficiently if they stuck to the facts. As a result, Glasser contends, journalists have come to serve merely as conduits for others' views: "Sources put forth the ideas while other sources challenge those ideas."

What is wrong with that? To begin with, Glasser says, "Objectivity requires only that reporters be accountable for how they report, not what they report." Thus, in 1977, a federal appeals court found the *New York Times* innocent of wrongdoing even though it had published, without trying to determine whether the accusation was true, an environmental group's false charge that five scientists were "paid liars" for the pesticide industry. The court declared that the press could not be asked to suppress newsworthy statements "merely because it has serious doubts regarding their truth."

Objective reporting is also biased in favor of the status quo, Glasser asserts. The reporter-as-conduit naturally relies heavily on demonstrably newsworthy "official sources, official records, official channels." And the standard of disinterestedness strips reporters "of their creativity and imagination," he argues, and makes them "a relatively passive link between sources and audiences."

To make the press truly responsible, says Glasser, newsmen would have to be held accountable for their work. But that is not going to happen until journalists acknowledge that "news is created, not reported," and that they themselves are its creators.