MEDIA VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN

**A Five-city Study Conducted by the
Centre for Advocacy and Research**

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Study Team

SECTION 1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS

LITERATURE SURVEY

- There is enough scientific evidence based on research in the West, to indicate a linkage between media violence and impact on children.

- Despite considerable counter research, media violence is a growing public concern _ especially amongst parents. (There are enough examples in media reports to substantiate this statement.)

- Recent tragic events in USA have only further emphasized the nexus between real and reel violence. The news media has recognized this as a major issue to be addressed.

- Since 1998, there is a growing body of data in India which has, to some extent, quantified the concerns and raised qualitative implications.

Why Did We Undertake This Study?

- Since 1998, this data has reached a critical proportion justifying a qualitative study.

- UNESCO Global Study on Media Violence reveals that gratuitous media violence/ horror has left a deep impact on children.

- CFAR/UNESCO Study (The Killing Screen) clearly indicates that media has successfully targeted children. The children in turn boosted ratings and enhanced advertising revenues for the channels.

- UNICEF's study on media and children across 10 cities provided an in depth quantitative break-up on the media habits of children, their routines etc. In addition, it extended the inquiry to parents and teachers who revealed a serious concern about the impact of media violence on children.

- A CFAR study on Children in Difficult Circumstances in Delhi indicated both the quantitative and qualitative media impact on these children who live in an environment of "constant turmoil". They have a close association with real life conflict and violence which they relate to the media.

- We have had our extensive interaction with representatives of the TV industry over a period of some years on the issue of media violence. We were concerned by their unwillingness to look at its societal implications or even accept that any existed. Their sole consideration was the entertainment value of their programmes, leaving the entire responsibility to parents. Therefore, a primary qualitative research study was called for to challenge this mindset.

- Another aim was to provide civil society with relevant evidence to enable it to formulate a response.

Objectives

To do an action research project across five representative cities _ Delhi, Lucknow, Calcutta, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad in order to:

A Understand the *relationship* that disparate groups of young viewers and associated adults have with specific, highly rated popular images, messages, stories that celebrate, signify violence as a vital and intrinsic aspect of human lives.

A Understand what *aspects of the media representation of violence* work with and attract viewers, and how.

A In qualitative terms, define the potential impact of the media violence on different groups of children across age, gender, etc.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design: Evolving the tools of Investigation

Why?
- Absence of comparable qualitative studies
- The quickly changing media environment: content, audience and technology
- Need to specifically define qualitative tools such as FGDs, interviews.
- Need to tailor quantitative survey to support qualitative study.

How?
Unstructured Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):
(a) Random TV clips
(b) Situation Reaction Test

How did these help to formalise the research tools?

_ Demographic sample: Initial investigations clearly revealed that AI-A2/B1-B2 (boys and girls- age group 6-12 years) shared a relatively common media experience, specifically with regard to television _ and both in terms of access and viewing habits.

In preliminary investigations for the study, it was discovered that children, irrespective of age or background, were completely at ease with the electronic media. They had extensive TV viewing habits and played both computer and video games.

TOOLS
Quantitative Survey:

- Main objective is to relate media access, media habits to individual preferences and quantify what active choices were being exercised in regard to content.

- To use market research techniques to differentiate it from the purely numerical data on viewership.

- In the latter, there is no scope for individual ratings.

FGDs:

1. A structured, focussed exercise
2. Group simulations: TV clips
3. Individual simulations: Drawings

Montage of the TV Clips and Three Representative Clips

- TV became the focal point of the investigation because it represented a centrality of experience across age, gender and socio-economic parameters and cities. It is the dominant media in terms of popularity, content and imagery.
- However, usage of other media, such as video games, the computer was also explored both quantitatively and qualitatively
- Montage: Represented the general universe of television on the basis of popularity, genre, channels and a noticeable presence of violence.

Three Representative Clips:
Criterion of inclusion and exclusion:

- Representing different genres: drama, suspense/horror/reality/animation

- These are the most popular genres and the most dominant across channels. Over 50 per cent of prime content is drama followed by news, comedy and suspense.

- Cartoons target children and are very popular with them and include comic violence.

Since the focus of the study is violence the clips contained different types of violence:
1. *Aahat*: suspense/horror
2. *Suraag*: reality/ psychological violence

3. *Arth*: drama/ emotional conflict
4. Animation: comic violence

Aim of these clips:

♦ What are the motives behind the actions in the clip?
♦ How are the situations resolved in each clip?
♦ What are the various levels of violence?
♦ Does it look possible/real?
♦ What are the elements that heighten the children's perception of violence?

Drawings: Why?

• To locate the individual universe within a group context.
• To conduct an internal check on the responses we had received from the TV clips – therefore, moved away from the audio visual media to an entirely different and static medium.
• To compare and contrast a mediated experience with a more immediate, personal experience.

On the basis of these, to assess children's creative reconstructions

Φ To specifically check out their responses to the following:
Φ Forces of potential threat
Φ Authority figures
Φ Day to day situations
Φ Perceptions of space: indoor/outdoor
Φ Familiar scenes
Φ Stimulations: fantasy, media imagery

Individual Interviews:

Conducted with children and adults.

Why?

To understand the child and adult dynamics in relation to media content and effect.
A focus on the gatekeeper's role, concerns and coping responses to children's media involvement.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- We are dealing with highly experienced viewers, be it a child of 6 or a 12-year old, with extensive TV viewing habits. These stretch across the years, as well as time bands, channels, programmes, etc. As we will see, this has deep implications when assessing the impact on the child.

- Video and computer games are popular. In A1-A2 sections, access to computers and usage of the Internet is increasing.

- Thus, the electronic media, collectively _ TV, video or computer _ is now the most important component of a child's activity schedule, outside schoolwork, replacing outdoor activities.

- There is a high degree of different forms of violence in all these media. Most computer and video games are premised on aggression and violence. Towards, the end of 2001, there is a resurgence of horror and suspense TV serials.

- The common hook for the children in all media is suspense and violence built into all types of conflictual situations, based on the supernatural, myth and folklore, the family and the world of crime, fictional or real.

- The children had extremely high recall of incidents of suspense, violence and horror in TV serials, sometimes 3-4 years old.

- In terms of TV suspense and horror, there were two types of contrasting responses: the matter-of-fact, well-informed response, conversant with forensic matters, the world of crime and law enforcement. The other was the phobic response of fear, revulsion and horror _ even a sense that their world has changed. This has often translated into nightmares which the children remember in chilling detail.

- Family dramas are the most popular TV genre amongst children. In terms of drama, there is the sudden discovery that the family is an equally volatile site with the dramatic elements of intrigue, suspense, and "planning''.

- Here the response is also two-fold: at one level, there is the feeling of inclusion and emotional bonding with the family.

- At another level, this involvement is leading to their exploring the family entity in terms of hierarchies, relationships, values and re-examining sources, reasons for conflicts.

- The hook of suspense and violence in family dramas, especially, is sustained by wildly fluctuating story lines with highly emotive elements such as death, separation, estrangement, family pride, undermining family values through betrayals, etc.

- Family conflicts, fictional crimes and depictions of horror are related to real life in a detailed and extensive way. The children draw lateral associations between what they see on television and what they know about the world around them either through the media or personal sources of information.

- This is not a coincidence. The media deliberately duplicates reality. It has used the techniques at its disposal to create and evoke certain associations, reactions.

- All this has translated into a deep, personal and active involvement with the TV serials they watch, in a way that was not true earlier.

- The critical impact of the above factors is two-fold: first, that as far as the child's perception of the world is concerned, there is difficulty in distinguishing between reality and reel lives and the indeterminate world of the supernatural. Each informs and reinforces the other at all levels in an ongoing, cyclical process, to the extent that children are no longer able to distinguish one from the other. Thus, for example, while the family dramas have led to a degree of openness about the family, it has also evoked anxieties in the children about real relationships within families.

- Second, given the levels of violence in all media forms and its equally strong presence in real life, today's child lives in an atmosphere of high emotional conflict and physical violence.

- Associations related to the supernatural, the extra-sensory or extra-terrestrial have become even more firmly embedded in the child's mind _ in their dreams, in their fears, in their understanding of the forces which govern the universe. Once again, the real and the reel cannot be separated. A great deal of this is related to urban nightmares and insecurities.

- Parents and other gatekeepers are concerned about the children's media habits and the ever-increasing access to more media forms. They recognise that TV _ and other media too _ have a serious impact on children. However, they are unable to deal directly with these or exercise significant control over their children's media habits, although there is some basic supervision. Parents are defensive and uneasy about striking the right balance between dealing with the long-term impact of the media and exercising meaningful controls on their children's habits.

SECTION 2 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

2.1 OVERVIEW

There is a widespread belief in many parts of the world that there has been an unprecedented increase in the depiction of violence in the media _ be it print, television, Internet or in video and computer games. Simply recall the overwhelming presence of violence in the media since the tragic events of September 11, when approximately 6,000 people died in USA after terrorist attacks in different parts of the country.

A cursory sampling of media provides further supporting evidence: for example, conflict is the centrifugal force in the most popular TV shows _ family dramas, comedies, reality shows, etc., with a high degree of aggression, often of a very violent nature.

Even a game show such as *Kaun Banega Crorepati* depends heavily on the element of suspense, heightened by its music score. Similarly, movie channels telecast extremely violent films throughout the day. In popular video and computer games, the aim is often to obtain the highest score by surmounting physical impediments and killing as many characters as possible along the way.

The exposure to excessive media violence is considered harmful to children, especially younger children. Concerns regarding the impact of TV violence concentrate on children because it is fairly well established that the period between infancy to 12 years is the most crucial stage in an individual's life cycle in terms of constructing meaning. Some people insist that infancy is the most important, others say the pre-school child should be the focus of attention, while yet others stress the "life time imprint of the experiences of the schoolchild or the pre-adolescent" is the most significant in this regard.[1]

In the public debate on aggression and violence, media influences are often cited as the most powerful **environmental factors** responsible for the apparently increasing levels of aggression and violence, especially among children and adolescents.[2]

There is considerable international data to support this hypothesis, dating back to the 1950s. The main thrust of this research seeks to establish two main points: first, that there exists a direct relationship between media violence and increased levels of aggression.[3]

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[1] Oscar. W. Ritchie and Marvin R. Koller, *Sociology of Childhood*, Appleton Century Crofts, New York

[2] *Psychological Effects of Media Violence* - adopted from Baron and Byrne, 1991, Social Psychology

[3] This has been nicknamed "the aggressor effect" based largely on the work of American psychologist Leonard Eron from the 1960s onwards.

There is evidence which suggests that audiences exposed to violent videotape, reported more aggressive thoughts and stronger feelings of hostility than those exposed to a non-violent film (e.g. Bushmen & Green). With regard to copycat crimes, a highly specific course of action is triggered by the observed media violence. In this instance, if the aggressor is rewarded by success or presented as acceptable then it is more likely to be imitated.

In recent years, television violence has been held directly responsible for student shoot-outs in American schools. A news report in the business daily, *Businessline*, quoted a study which found that a large percentage of parents in USA, blamed media and specifically TV violence for the growing incidence of violence among children.

The second major argument is that constant exposure to media violence, creates and leaves a strong, psychological and subliminal impact on children which affects their perceptions of real life and their reactions to situations. Primarily, this impact manifests itself as a fear psychosis and the view that the world is a very dangerous place.[4]
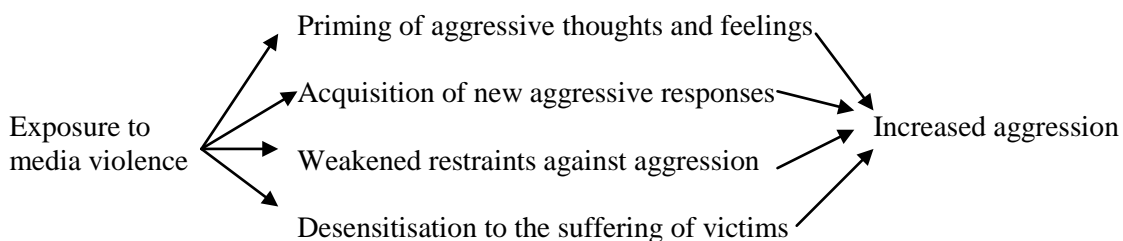
> **LITERATURE SURVEY**
> Research-based scientific evidence in the West to indicate linkage between media violence and impact on children.
>
> Despite considerable counter research, media violence is a growing public concern _ especially amongst parents.
>
> The terrorist attacks in USA, have further emphasised nexus between real and reel violence. News media has recognised this as a major issue to be addressed.

Other possible harmful effects of media violence include: becoming passive to violence, accepting violence as a justified resolution of conflicts and the hero-worship of action heroes. Constant exposure to media violence is also said to weaken the viewer's inhibitions, making violence seem a commonplace and a pervasive feature of social interaction. This habituation can lead an insensitivity towards the victim's sufferings.

The diagram below explains some of the **causal connections**:

Exposure to media violence →
- Priming of aggressive thoughts and feelings
- Acquisition of new aggressive responses
- Weakened restraints against aggression
- Desensitisation to the suffering of victims

→ Increased aggression

These findings have not gone unchallenged. Many impact studies dispute any direct relationship between acts of violence in real life and a child's exposure to media

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[4] This has been called the `victim effect' and was most notably articulated by the American Professor, George Gerbner in the early seventies. According to this theory, people who watch excessive TV and TV violence become more timid and paranoid than those who do not.

violence. As for psychological side effects, they suggest that, if at all, media violence has a cathartic impact on children, helping to release and exhaust their innate aggression. Jib Fowles in *The Case for Television Violence*, (Sage Publications, California, USA, 1999), says, "television violence is good for people".

It provides ritualistic gratification to viewers in three ways: viewers can react violently in a vicarious manner through TV, people can experience excitement within the safety of their homes through TV. Lastly, TV violence produces an optimistic resolution as order and the status quo are restored at the end of an episode/film. Also, more often than not, the moral of the story is that crime does not pay. Rather than creating fear or desensitising viewers, TV violence reassures them.

2.2   Research in India

In India, there is considerable consumer market research on the issue of children and media. But there is little by way of impact studies and even less on the subject of children and media violence. The primary reason for this hiatus, is the novelty of the medium: television was introduced in India in the early 1960s but it had to wait until the mid-eighties to become available throughout the country and then too there was only one channel.

The nineties saw cable and satellite TV spread through urban India like a forest fire. Towards the end of the millennium, the availability of over 80 TV channels with an estimated 60-70 million TV households (20-30 odd million cable TV households), drew attention to the amount of time children spent watching television and what they watched.

The situation in India is unique. We receive over 30 international TV channels and over 50 Indian TV channels in a variety of languages. No other country in the world has such a wide exposure to television. Also, since India has the largest film industry in the world and films form a large part of TV schedules, a child in India has access to more films, national and international than perhaps children in any other country. To this extent, Indian children's experience of television is far wider and deeper in scope than that of children anywhere else in the world.

From the 1980s onwards, research in India has charted the relationship between children and the media. The studies have been primarily quantitative or, in few cases qualitative, comments on children's media habits and preferences. A literature survey suggests that up to 50 per cent of well-known studies are general in nature. The remaining ones concentrate on particular areas concerning children and TV. These include impact of violence, media and children in difficult circumstances, and children's consumer responses. [5]

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[5] There is a broad area of agreement in the overall data and findings of the research on children and the media in India. It indicates a consistent pattern of the child's viewership and responses to television, over a period of time. The research says children's primary TV watching is within the family circle (on account of possessing one TV) but they also watch alone. It also reveals that children in India watch between 2-3 hours of television per day during the week and an average of 4-5 hours on weekends.

Concerns

Concerns about violence on TV and its impact on children have been articulated in several recent studies. These include a *Summary of the UNESCO Global Study on TV Violence and Children*, UNICEF's study on *Influence of Television on Children* and CFAR's *A Conceptual Framework for Developing Media Education Modules for Children in Difficult Circumstances*.

The 1998 UNESCO Global Study that included India, focussed on the specific issue of TV violence and its impact on children. The major finding was that children, especially those in conflictual situations, had been encouraged by media violence to indulge in violent acts to solve their problems.

> UNESCO Global Study reveals that gratuitous media violence/ horror has left a deep impact on children.

> CFAR-UNESCO Study clearly indicates that media has successfully targeted children. The children in turn boosted ratings and enhanced advertising revenues for the channels.

As a follow-up to the Summary, CFAR in 1999 conducted a study for UNESCO, on violence on Indian Television. The project found that there was considerable violence on Indian television and a child's exposure to it was very high.

The findings of this project were subsequently used for an intervention at New Delhi in December 1998. At this meeting grave concern was voiced by participants from different disciplines, about the impact of TV violence on children.

The TV industry expressed its own concern and displayed a willingness to act in the children's best interests. The views were brought together in the publication _ *The Killing Screen: Violence on Television and its Impact on Children* published by UNESCO in 1999.

The unprecedented exposure to various media has occurred at a time when we are experiencing tremendous material and attitudinal changes The nineties have witnessed economic liberalisation, rapid urbanisation, increased commercialisation, and a communications revolution which has driven the media explosion. These developments have generated greater prosperity but also increased disparities and led to intense pressures on modern life.

Their peak TV watching time is 7 p.m. onwards on weekdays and Sunday mornings. The television channels watched most often are DD for the non-cable TV viewing child, Zee, Sony, Star for children with cable/satellite TV in the Hindi belt and language satellite channels such as Sun TV in the South. The children's favourite TV programme genres are cartoons, action, films, fantasy, family/adult dramas, sports.

The media is said to have created and aggravated these problems. High levels of consumerism are blamed on the media. Aggressive behaviour, inexplicable `deviations' increasingly displayed by children are being attributed to the growing impact of the media in India and its disproportionate mind share amongst children.

UNICEF's study *Influence of Television on Children (1999)* found a widespread belief amongst children that the world is an evil place, where good and bad were in a constant, dialectic battle.

> UNICEF's study across 10 cities provided in depth quantitative break-up on the media habits of children and a serious concern about the impact of media violence on children among parents and teachers.

There were also concerns amongst gatekeepers (parents, teachers, social workers) regarding the impact of sex, violence and watching too much TV on children's scholastic performance and socialisation process.

> CFAR study in Delhi indicated quantitative and qualitative media impact on these children who live in an environment of "constant turmoil". They have close associations with real life conflict and violence which they relate to the media.

A CFAR study *A Conceptual Framework for Developing Media Education Modules for Children in Difficult Circumstances* (1999), amongst children in difficult circumstances found the children live in an environment of "constant turmoil". They have close associations with real life conflict and violence which they relate to the media.

All these studies also indicated that children admire aggressive superheroes like Arnold Schwarznegger in the *Terminator* films and TV superhero *Shaktimaan*. The programme named after him, happens to be the favorite TV show amongst children (TRP ratings).

The case of *Shaktimaan*:

In recent years there have been a series of reports from different parts of the country of alleged media influenced acts of violence by children.

In 1998 we had the most famous and controversial case concerning *Shaktimaan*. Newspapers printed stories that children were seriously injuring themselves by imitating dangerous stunts from *Shaktimaan*. Jumping off rooftops, swirling around for a take-off were amongst them. These reports led to a court case against the producer of the serial and its hero, Mukesh Khanna. In view of this, DD temporarily withdrew the serial. The Court appointed a panel of three people of eminence who found that the media reports were unsubstantiated by subsequent investigations. Thereafter, the case was dropped and the show reinstated on DD.

Taking the criticism of his show seriously, Khanna responded by providing cautionary messages on the show and explaining the nature of his stunts. He asked children not to

copy him. This had had a salutary effect. However, parents continue to complain that their children do imitate the super hero. [6]

It is not only television which is reportedly leading to crimes. The recent, tragic terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, can be `played' in Microsoft's The Simulator CD-ROM. Computer and video games are extremely violent. Similar games _ computer and video or Internet _ offer `target, aim, fire' thrills.

In the aftermath of the New York incident, there have been media reports on video games played by children. *Aaj Tak,* for example, reported on a sudden spurt of young children (5-10 years) in video parlours to play games depicting aircraft flying, air bombing and crashing (Sunday /Monday - 16 /17 Sept). Children interviewed said, they enjoyed it, and that it needed skill and concentration. The older ones revealed that when they accomplish their sorties successfully, it gives them a sense of achievement.

Latest figures indicate there are now approximately 2 million PC owners in the country. For obvious economic reasons, this ownership is concentrated in the metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and amongst the more affluent sections of society. But cyber cafes exist all over the country, urban and rural.

Thus, these media are generating their own, discrete problems. Pornography on the web has been a major worldwide issue. In April 2001, a teenage boy in Delhi created a web site

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The need for research

Based on our extensive interaction with TV industry representatives, we were concerned by their unwillingness to look at the societal implications or even accept that any existed.

Their sole consideration was the entertainment value of their programmes, leaving the entire responsibility to parents. Therefore, a primary qualitative research study was called for to challenge this mindset.

Also to provide civil society with relevant evidence to enable it to formulate a response.

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[6] Other incidents of violence have also been blamed on an exposure to TV violence. In 1995, a boy in Kolkata bludgeoned his mother to death and claimed that he had seen the same incident on television. In another instance, an 11- year old boy in Delhi allegedly influenced by a television serial called *Captain House*, committed three murders.

A Thums Up TV commercial in which the model/film star hangs from a rope and swoops down on a passing Thums Up truck was reported to have led to the death of a young boy at Lucknow. This tragedy occurred in an attempt made by the child to faithfully imitate the stunt. He went to the extent of wanting to spring a surprise on his family. He did not disclose his intention to jump from the balcony and when he did, the family was not in a position to save him.

In an article (*Tele-viewing: Injurious to Mental Health, Pinaz Mirchandani 1993, Hindustan Times*) reported how schoolboys carried out a robbery based on the film '*How to be a Millionaire*' which they watched on TV. In another more gruesome incident, two boys said they got the idea to burn two girls alive for rejecting their advances from a similar depiction on television.

In the most recent case to have been reported, earlier this year, a boy in Delhi accidentally committed suicide by hanging himself. It was alleged by some neighbours that since he was so young, his only knowledge of such an act came from television.

which the Cyber Crime Cell of the Police, hastily termed as "pornographic". This allegedly included derogatory references to certain female students in his class and some teachers.

Taken in its totality, we have a situation where the concerns about media violence are real and have increased.

2.3 The presence of Violence on TV

One major factor which has exacerbated these fears and concerns is the quantity and quality of violence often depicted in the media. This ranges from real crimes in the print media and TV news bulletins (across channels), violence in nature (National Geographic, Animal Planet, Discovery channels), animated violence in cartoons, comic violence in sitcoms, crimes in suspense/thriller series and films, supernatural violence in horror shows and psychological and verbal violence in drama serials.

An analysis of one week's prime time schedules (7 p.m. – 11 p.m.) across five top Hindi entertainment TV channels (DD1, DD Metro, Star Plus, Sony and Zee) reveals the following:

- If we collapse the categories of drama and family drama, for **almost 50 per cent of prime time on these five channels is devoted to drama**, 15 per cent to news and current affairs (mostly DD1), 12 per cent to comedy and approximately 10 per cent to suspense/horror/real crimes.

PRIME TIME PROGRAMMES COMBINED ON A WEEK ACROSS FIVE CHANNELS

NATURE OF PROG.	PROGRAMME GENRE	EPISODE
Drama	40	59
Family drama	11	34
Comedy	20	31
Game show	7	9
Suspense	9	16
Kids	2	2
Film based	9	10
Film	8	8
News & current affairs	15	36
Song and dance	6	7
Mythological	5	6
Reality show	3	4

Talk show	3	3
Event	1	1
Cookery	1	1
Advertisement	1	1
Historical	3	3
Documentary	1	1
Information	3	3
Cartoon	1	1
Sports	1	1
Style	1	1
Health and fitness	1	1
Horror	2	2

(Note: The difference in **Programme Genre** and **Episode** occurs because some programmes are telecast 3-5 times per week)

Zee has the highest percentage of episodes of drama and family drama (54%), DD2 comes next (53%), followed by Sony (44%) and Star Plus (22%) and then DD1 (21%).

It's interesting to note that because the periodicity of certain programmes is 3-5 times a week, the prime time belt is limited to a number of programmes. The table gives some indication of this density.

SERIALS	NO. OF DAYS PER WEEK
Babul ki duayein leti ja	5
Chandan ka palna resham ki dori	4
Manzilein apni apni	4
Gharana	4
Swarnbhuj	4
Ek mahal ho sapno ka	4
Kahin diya jale kahin jiya	4
Kkusum	4
Just mohabbat	4
Dushman	4
Kabhi souten kabhi saheli	4
Kyunki saas bhi kabhi bahu thi	4
Kahani ghar ghar ki	4
Tu tu main main	4
Maan	4
Jannat	3
Kaun banega crorepati	4 (including sun.)

I love you	2 (including sun.)
Hum sab ek hain	2 (including sun.)
Pradhan mantri	2 (including sun.)
Apun to bas waise hi	2 (including sun.)
Devrani jethani	2 (including sun.)
Boogie woogie	2 (including sun.)
Shree Ganesh	2 (including sun.)
Director's cut on demand	2 (including sun.)
Chitrahaar	2
India's most wanted	2
Aaj ki baat	6
The news	7
Samachar	7
Parliament news	3
Sansad samachar	3
Malgudi days	2
Suspense this week	2

Note: Including Sunday 0900 to 1300 hours.

In other words, 15 drama serials account for 53 episodes or approximately 22% of the total 241 episodes in an entire week. This simply confirms the dominance of drama as a genre on prime time television.

How much violence is there?
The reason this data assumes added significance is that in our 1998 study of violence on television, 60 episodes of drama serials accounted for two-thirds of the total violence on these five channels in 9 days of monitoring.

In order to see if there has been any change in the ratio of violence over the last three years, we conducted a small sample survey. We monitored 12 hours of prime television across four Hindi entertainment channels: Star Plus (four hours), DD-Metro and Sony (three and a half hours each), Zee (one hour).[7]

The data shows that physical acts of violence are not very high (25 acts). Since the majority of the serials fall into the family drama category this is to be expected. However, verbal violence and visual depictions (thunder/lightning, darkness, etc) is very high (98 instances). Arguments, screaming and shouting, disturbing phone calls top the list in this category. Psychological and mental tension or conflict is also higher

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[7] Nineteen serials were included in the sample, 11 of which were complete family dramas. The selection includes the top-rated on each channel and in the overall TRPs: e.g., *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thhi* and *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki* (Star Plus), *Kabhi Souten Kabhi Saheli*, *Maan* (DD Metro-Gold), *Heena*, *Kkusum* (Sony) and *Mehndi Tere Naam Ki*, *Koshish... Ek Aasha* (Zee).
We know from our own quantitative and qualitative data that children watch all these serials and that these are popular shows with them.

than physical violence: bullying and anxiety are highest here. Again, this is understandable because the family serials specialise in high voltage emotional dramas.[8]

Furthermore, viewership ratings for the top 50 English films in June 2001, revealed that over 90 per cent of the most watched films were action films with very high degrees of violence. Actors like Arnold Schwarznegger, whom the children admire, figure prominently in the list of these films. (Figures from TAM/INTAM)

Thus, we can safely conclude that prime time entertainment has a high incidence of violence, physical, emotional and psychological.

Though other social or economic factors are also held responsible, there is a strong belief that the media is the primary culprit in encouraging disaffection in children and increasing their violent responses. However, these are generalisations, suspicions with little supporting field evidence. To date, no in-depth qualitative study has attempted to understand how children view and understand media violence _ or aggression _ and how they relate to real life.

In this study, we have attempted to fill the vacuum and see how far opinion could be substantiated by primary research. Therefore, we have looked at the issue from the child's point of view.

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[8] Marital discord, love, jealousy, anger are the major reasons for the violence of every kind.

In terms of aggressor and victim, the ratio is very even. 20:16 male-female aggressors, 15:21 male-female victims. The depiction of female aggressors is a trend that cable television has initiated as far back as 1995. However, this kind of representation has grown over the last six years and once we realise that the majority of serials are family dramas revolving around the female members of the family. Thus, conflict and tension between women has become the major source of entertainment.

SECTION 3   INDEPTH FINDINGS - QUALITATIVE

3.1   MEDIA HABIT / USER PROFILE[9]

TV access/habits: Almost all the children had television sets at home and the overwhelming majority had access to cable and satellite channels too. They claim to watch television for any thing between 2-5 hours _ and in quite a number of cases, more. On the basis of this, it does appear that watching TV is the major occupation after sleeping and attending school. This goes beyond previous research data, and indicates an increase in the hours devoted to TV.

Viewing habits: The children watch TV mainly in prime time night slots (8.00 p.m. onwards) and then in the evenings and afternoons. They watch alone as well as with siblings, adults and friends. Their programme choices indicate high night time, family viewing habits. This pattern of viewing was corroborated in the individual interviews. One of the girls interviewed stated that she "watch(es) all serials between 8.30 and 10.30 p.m. with my mother". Children in Lucknow said they never sleep before 11 p.m. _ irrespective of age.

Programmes: Across the cities they enjoy the latest and most popular drama serials (*Kyunki, Kahani, Amaanat, Koshish, Mehndi Tere Naam Ki, Dushman, Kundali*, etc), a select few comedies (*Hum Sab Ek Hain, Gharwali Uparwali*, *Tu Tu Main Main*), quiz shows) *Kaun Banega Crorepati* and *Chappar Phad ke*. Mythologicals, *Shaktimaan*, Discovery Channel (*Medical Detectives*), horror shows such as *Aahat*, *CID*, were also mentioned. It is important, here, to point out that horror and suspense shows are making a strong comeback across channels and this is having an immediate impact on children. In Kolkata, children spoke of *Shhh ... Koi Hai*, though it had only recently gone on the air.

In the case of cartoon and children's programme we got a mixed response, with children from Kolkata and Ahmedabad showing a distinct preference for it, while Hyderabad and to a lesser extent Lucknow were less enthusiastic. In Delhi this genre of programming was completely absent with the sole exception of "*Shaktimaan*".

In terms of genres, drama serials and cartoons, game shows, horror/suspense, comedy are the most prominent ones. In channel preferences, there is little to choose between Star, Zee, Sony, DD2. *Cartoon Network* is very popular. These choices reflect a varied viewing pattern, both in terms of genres and channels watched.

The popularity of serials on DD2 "Golden Hour'', was most apparent in Lucknow, where the children named many DD2 programmes from comedies such as *Mere Samne Wali Khirki Mein* to dramas such as *Kabhi Souten Kabhi Saheli*.

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[9] The following is a presentation of the in depth findings which are common to all five cities. However, whenever there was any major variation or deviation, it has been highlighted at the appropriate place

In Hyderabad what stood was the divided loyalty that the channels were evoking among children. While some strongly opted for the Hindi channels, others named the regional channels. Many children did a mix and match depending on what they were viewing and with whom. Factors like "authentic" "good" looking actors made a difference. "I watch the Telugu version of *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* because the Telugu 'Tulsi' is far better looking than the Hindi one" asserted a respondent.

In Kolkata children's programmes, Hindi cinema, serials and game shows like *Kaun Banega Crorepati* and *Khulja Sim Sim* are fairly popular. Channels like Star, DD Metro and Zee with its special one hour slot for cartoons have more enthusiastic viewership than the regional channels. This is happening in spite of the fact that a bouquet of private Bengali channels have been trying to target this regional audience for the last two years. Perhaps this could be because over the years one has seen a decline in the quality of cinema in Bengal which might have led the audience to look towards the mainstream national media.

Activities:
In two cities the discussions were conducted during a holiday period for the children. Therefore, they had a great deal of time on their hands. However in all the other three cities where schools had re-opened, during school days, time at home was divided between playing, watching TV and studying and tuitions. Indeed, in all centres, tuitions took up a great deal of the children's time outside school. Apart from watching TV, it was the major activity.

Therefore, when we asked them about their favourite activities, an assortment of activities were listed out. However, when these findings from the focus group discussion were cross-checked with the quantitative survey and individual interviews it indicated a variation across the cities.

Though television is the dominant activity, there are variations across the cities when it comes to other activities. In Delhi, computer and video games are a favourite past time. In Lucknow, indoor and outdoor games (cycling, carrom) are both popular. In Ahmedabad, there is high ownership of personal computers and Net-surfing emerged as an important activity. However, girls belonging to the A1-A2 group enjoyed little access to it because the boys tended to monopolise it. In Kolkata, reading was a major occupation amongst all children, while cultural activities such as dancing, music were high on the girls' list.

What's crucial here, is that the computer and video games named by the children, are extremely violent in nature and the object of most is to kill the opponent using many brutal methods. Also, that solitary indoor pursuits have replaced traditional group board and outdoor games.

Gender:
A notable finding is that the conventional gender divide is being blurred to the extent that it is barely discernible. Traditionally, boys prefer to watch sports and action shows

on TV, while girls chose drama serials. However, we found that boys were watching drama serials such as *Kyunki…* and *Kabhi Souten Kabhi Saheli _* and that they were equally involved with these. Girls, on the other hand, are playing video or computer games almost as much as boys. Especially, while discussing media, we clearly found that both boys and girls were equally conversant with TV programmes, video and computer games as the other.

However, boys and girls do respond differently when it comes to their preferences. In the individual interviews we noticed a clear divide: while boys prefer action-oriented cartoons as well as programmes like *WWF and Aahat*, girls talked more about their favourite family drama serials, and some of them very emphatically mention that they do not like horror serials or for that matter entertainment sports like *WWF*.

As regards response to media violence, there appears to be a good deal of difference between the two. Upon closer examination, however, this difference was found to be more apparent than real. We clearly noticed _ during animated discussions in the FGDs _that the reactions to violence on the screen in all its different manifestations were similar. However, there are individual interpretations owing largely to differing experiences of the two. What is important is that they both see violence as very much a part of every day existence.

3.2   MEDIA PROFILE

When looking to construct a media profile, there is a tendency to compile it in quantitative terms: amount of time spent, frequency, preferences, etc. However, this only provides a skeletal impression and can, often, be misleading. In the course of conducting the FGDs and interviews, it became clear that the children's media habits could be understood quantitatively but it was more rewarding to look at it in qualitative terms as well.

From what the children described, it was obvious that whether it was watching television, or playing video or computer games, talking on the telephone etc, these were ***not mutually exclusive activities*** but rather a continuous process which could not be slotted neatly into time frames, schedules or indeed preferences.

The intimate knowledge of television programmes, video and computer games, revealed that the children were engaged in these activities in a general, lateral and amorphous way.

The same applies to time schedules: from the range of TV programmes they talked about, the fact that they watch television alone and together with the family _ and given that television functions in a system of repeats _ it is clear that children watch television throughout the day, at different times on different days.

For example, *Cartoon Network* was watched for nearly two hours in the afternoon _ in the company of siblings or alone, and takes place alongside homework or consumes afternoon `free' time. Similarly, at prime time, ranging from 7.30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

concentrated viewing continues upto 11 p.m.. In the individual interviews, most children admitted that they went to bed between 10 p.m.-11p.m..

However, in response to questions about timings, _ when do you watch TV, or play video games _ the answer was less clear cut because they said they watch TV or play the games, whenever they could find a spare moment.

3.2.1 TV MONTAGE

High Recall

Although the selection of video matter for the montage was deliberate with emphasis placed on conflict/action/violence, the selection was not limited to any specific genre: While choosing the footage for the montage we kept the following factors in mind:

- H Programmes belonging to different genres: family dramas, suspense, horror, Mythologicals, cartoons, films _ *Kaun Banega Crorepati, Kyunki, Amaanat, Shaktimaan, Jai Mata Di, Suraag, Cartoon Network, AXN* English film.

- H Programmes with high viewership such as *Kaun Banega Crorepati, Kyunki,* cartoons

- H Programmes across channels _ *Suraag and Shaktimaan* (DD1), *Kaun Banega Crorepati, Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* (Star Plus), *Cartoon Network, AXN*, *Amaanat* on Zee, *Aahat* on Sony.

- H Scenes with high suspense value: *Suraag, Aahat*, English movie, *Shaktimaan, Jai Mata Di, Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*

When this montage was shown to the children, they displayed remarkable recall and knowledge of the characters, the story lines, the channels, the shows _ even dates and timings.

"What did you see? Cartoon network, Shaktimaan, Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, Amaanat, Kaun Banega Crorepati, English movie on AXN, Programme on Shiv Bhagwan"

"Shaktimaan, Jai Mata Di, Om Namah Shivay, Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, English Film, Basera, Mehndi Tere Naam Ki, Kaun Banega Crorepati"

Similarly, in the individual interviews, when asked to study a collage of pictures largely culled from TV and films, the children immediately reeled off the names of all the TV shows and film actors included in the collage, some as obscure as *CATS* (on Sony), which, they said, they did not watch regularly. Such recognition can come only from *familiarity*.

Thus, if we have to qualitatively categorise the children's viewing pattern, it is most appropriate to classify it as `extensive' and `discursive'. Here is a quote from a girl in Lucknow on her viewing habits:

"In the afternoon, when I get up after a sleep, I watch my favorite programme at 5.30pm *Small Wonder*, Then from 6 p.m., there is *Disney Hour*... Then at 7.30 p.m., I turn on the TV again and watch *Tu Tu Main Main*. Then at 8 o'clock, there are serials like *Gharwali Uparwali* so I watch those. At 8.30 p.m. there is *Kahin Kissi Roz*, a lot of suspense in that but I watch it. Then at 9 o'clock there is *Kaun Banega Crorepati,* then *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki, Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thhi _* and I make a point of watching that."

Can we explain this viewing pattern? First, there is ***a commonality across channels*** which helps make extensive, indiscriminate viewing possible. Many of the popular programmes across the channels are much the same in genre, theme, some even in terms of story line, treatment and choice of male and female actors. As we have indicated, quite a few are dailies with a 3-5 periodicity, which means even if you watch a soap only once a week, you remain in touch.

For instance, at the time of our study prime television is dominated by game shows such as *Kaun Banega Crorepati, Chappar Phad Ke, Khulja Sim Sim*, a belt of comedies such as *Tu Tu Main Main*, *Gharwali Uparwali, Hum Sab Ek Hain. Samne Wali Khirki Mein*, and then drama serials and daily family soaps such as *Kahani Ghar Ghar ki, Kabhi Souten Kabhi Saheli, Maan*, *Chandan Ka Palna Resham Ki Dori*, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, *Kkusum*. In the afternoon, there are repeats of current shows and old favorites such as *Hasratein, Shanti, Saans* and more, daily soaps: *Shagun, Ek Mahal Ho Sapnon Ka*, etc.

Often the programmes are made by the same television software group. In the last year, Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Films has top-rated shows such as *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki, Kyunki Saas Bhi*, *Kalash* on Star Plus, *Kavita, Kundan* on DD Metro, *Kanyadaan* and *Kkusum* on Sony, *Koi Apna* on Zee. All of these are family-oriented dramas with variations on the same theme.

In the current competitive situation, the channels tend to imitate each other or copy the elements of a popular show that has clicked with the audiences. Following the success of *Kaun Banega Crorepati* and *Kyunki Saas Bhi* on Star Plus, Zee and Sony and DD Metro introduced the game shows mentioned above and daily evening soaps: *Chandan Ka Palna* on Zee, *Ghar Ek Mandir, Kkusum* and *Kahin Diya Jale Kahin Jiya* on Sony, *Dushman, Maan*, and *Kabhi Souten Kabhi Saheli* on DD Metro.

Thus, there is a continuity in programming across channels which makes surfing easy and remaining in touch with many, different programmes relatively simple.

3.2.2.1 What Appeals to Children?

Before we enter into details of the individual clips, it would be worthwhile to examine one of our central areas of analysis which emerged from the discussion on the TV montage: what is it that seizes the children's imagination and keeps it spellbound by television?

As we said, the montage exercise revealed a high recall of programmes. We must now add that this recall was not simply current but was based on past programmes and episodes too. Also, that the recollections were specific and detailed.

In the process of sharing with us their reactions to programmes such as the horror show *Aahat*, the children spontaneously articulated what had created and then left its mark upon them.

The instantaneous familiarity children displayed with the TV programmes, also indicated a recognition of certain elements which they read quite easily. These were those elements they found gripping and riveting. From the point of view of our study, this information was invaluable.

> What did you see in *Shaktimaan*?
> I liked *Shaktiman* the most because in *Shaktiman...* the reason I can't say exactly.
> Maa guru' has given him power
> He has power of *'seven kundli'*
> He concentrates and can view from his backside
> He does *'mantras'* and gets power doing om... om...
> He beats the ghost
>
> Whom does he save and whom does he kill?
> He kills the evil and saves the good

3.2.2.2 The Hook

Star Attraction: Some children identified star presence in a programme as the first element they recalled in a show, such as Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini in *Kaun Banega Crorepati* and *Jai Mata Di,* respectively.

Super Heroes: Others talked about *Shaktimaan* and their fascination with the extraordinary superpowers he wields. Much of these magical and supernatural powers are seen as positive stemming from the evolved inner being of *Shaktimaan.* This distinction was made by them when they compared *Shaktimaan* with *Aahat*. Unlike horror serials like *Aahat*, which evoke (especially among the younger children) cold terror and fear, *Shaktimaan* arouses a lot of hope and a sense of being looked after and protected.

> Why do you like *Aahat*, *Anhonee* and *X-Zone*?
> Ghost are there, dead people get alive again, ghost's spirit enters into the body of good people
> There is suspense, like when someone is likely to grab a thief, it's break time, or `to be continued' comes up on the screen, We are totally confused what will happen next.

When we asked children in the individual interviews what they liked about *Shaktimaan* or *Batman*, etc, some of the responses were indicative of the kind of relationship they have with these images: "*In the cartoon Ex-Man they focus on all the powers. In one case there is one type of laser*

eyes, another one has some cards and yet another has power to control the weather".

In the case of "Robot" what makes it interesting is they "*do all the work very well*". Vicky has "power" and *"jadu"* and at the same time "*she is so funny because she lifts Jimmy so easily*". The supernatural, "*jadu*", magical powers, have an extremely potent effect on the children.

Conflict: Most importantly, we found that conflict in its different manifestations _ from the more obvious physical stunts to all kinds of supernatural occurrences, emotional turmoil and melodrama _ is the key `hook' for children.

Common to all these was the irresistible element of suspense and uncertainty or the fact that anything untoward or unexpected can happen in subsequent scenes.

In Lucknow, a child said what she liked most about the TV montage was "the ghost". Another boy said he liked English films because "There is very dangerous fighting in them".

Horror:

However, our most critical finding was "the hook" of the supernatural when combined with horror. Not only did horror serials hold out an equal fascination as *Shaktimaan* for the children, but it left a more indelible impression on them.

> Tell me something which you don't like at all?
> The most I dislike is *Aahat* and Zee horror show
> What scares you*?*
> Ghosts
> In which programme have you seen them?
> *Aahat.*

Children across the centres could reel off the names of all the horror or suspense thrillers on the air such as *Khoj, Sach, Khauf, Farz, Aahat, Suraag, CID* even though these did not figure prominently in their list of favorite programmes. In Lucknow, the children recounted detailed stories about the supernatural ghosts, spirits, souls after watching a clip from the horror serial, *Aahat*. Indeed, this aspect so fascinated them that they hardly bothered with the sequence of events in the clip. Their fascination with the supernatural and the fear it aroused was almost palpable.

> Who dislikes *Aahat, Anhonee*, and *X-Zone* and why?
> Because it appear in our dreams.
> I think it can happen in reality, so I am scared of it.
> Like in *Aahat*, they make strange faces
> Like?
> Deshaped nose, mouth, ear
> Skeleton appears

It also evoked very strong and immediate reactions of fear amongst younger children, in particular. Much of the recall was very unpleasant, bordering on extreme anxiety and even a resolve, never to watch it again.

"Don't like this. Horrible dreams come up."

During the individual interviews, the children were asked in a fill-in-the-blanks exercise, to identify what scared them. The majority of children replied "ghost", or "horror shows".

In the FGDs as well as the interviews, *Aahat* led the children to make unaided association with other serials of the same genre such as *Khauf, X-Zone, Woh* and *Anhonee*. The Joker in *Woh*, a serial which has been off the air for the last three years, has left a strong impression on the children who still recall him, vividly.

"Two girls were playing cards, joker entered in the card. He is a ghost, he used to kill when he is caught."

Aahat and the horror genre were directly linked to the supernatural. Once this association had been made it led to a recall of those elements in the serials which had once scared the children and reflected deep-seated fears which they admitted are still lurking in their minds. We can call this `fascinated horror' _ a state in which the children are scared but compulsively watch the serial.

> In *Aahat* there was a spirit and four boys. There was a round thing with a bird made on it. When he came with a candle in the dark, then a man appeared and overset all the furniture
>
> In one house a joker came. There was a girl and her friend. Her mother and father had gone to America. The Joker killed the boy. Then he took on his look and began to kill the girls.

Bad dreams:

> Do you remember any of your dreams?
> "I was going towards the kitchen; a disembodied hand is in the plate. I was frightened and shouted loudly."
> "Once I dreamt that I am going to urinal and someone is pulling me inside the bathroom"
> "Once in my dreams, I went to the toilet. The toilet was full of skeletons. I shout loudly, like `help me, help me' "

There was also an equally spontaneous movement from the horror serials to scary dreams. Once again, this association was unaided and was substantiated in the individual interviews. The recollections were of old dreams and were recalled in graphic detail.

Family Tensions:
But the fascination is not just with horror and supernatural. It extends to an element of "suspense" in all categories of programmes. We found an immediate recall of tense, emotional moments in family dramas too. Or harsh words: for example, in the *Amaanat* clip, the first thing the children recalled was the Lala Lahauri Ram's heart attack.

Which scene do you recall?
Amaanat, heart attack wala scene.

The discussion which followed dwelt on Lala Lahauri and the kind of social pressures and stresses he experiences trying to bring up and marry seven daughters. In *Kyunki*…the association was with the more emotive aspects, i.e., "Mihir's death" was very much on the children's minds even though neither he nor his name is mentioned in the clip we used.

Since this stimulation often translates itself into a personal view, it is important to understand it in their idiom and thought.

For instance, in one interview when asked what can you tell about *Kyunki Saas Bhi,* pat came the answer "Mihir died". What is it that struck the boy about this incident? The fact that "they told everybody in the house except Tulsi. Tulsi had gone to the *mandir.* They told Tulsi that he is just coming". If the child could in any way contribute to the story this is something he "would like to change". Tell Tulsi about her husband because "she will realise some time or the other" about what has happened to her husband. The suspense on behalf of Tulsi is more than the child could bear.

> **Hook elements** - *Special effects:*
> Which scene do you recall?
> The one in which there's a ray of light emanating from the man's eye
>
> *Verbal:* In the *Kyunki Saas Bhi* clip, the immediate recall was of Tulsi's words: "*How dare you, yeh kya kar rahi ho tum?*"

What do the children like about drama serials? "It has to do with the presence of the family", says a 9 year old girl in another interview. It was clear that the girls as young as 7 and 8 years were totally involved in how different relationships particularly within the family were being depicted. They were identifying with the small screen family and, in situations of conflict and disagreement, were actively opting for specific characters and what they stood for. The situations as shown in the serials, which girls and young women face in their own homes, in marriage with their husbands or with the "other woman" were gripping the girls in a significant way. The serial could be a comedy or a daily soap.

The children are hooked by the tension and drama of personal relationships, even when they find some of it difficult to stomach. "When the serials start depicting fights we don't like it", says one girl. For instance, the daily soap *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki*, according to one interviewee, was no longer watchable because they have "introduced a girl who is hell bent on destroying the family". Again in *"Saans* they showed how Gautam tried to strangle Manisha" because he was under terrible pressure from both the women. "Manisha was blackmailing him by pretending to be blind and Priya's uncle was threatening Gautam on this issue". Notice how these conflictual situations have remained embedded in the children's minds, even though the situation described is old.

It was clear from the discussion on the montage clips and the interviews that suspense in many manifestations was the first `hook' followed by the supernatural. Furthermore, elements which heightened such scenes were top of the mind for them. For example, they identified the increased elements of horror in shows such as *Aahat.*

REEL AND REAL HORROR

It may be interesting to pursue this line of thought further. And relate it to real events. Here is what one boy in an interview had to say: *"Aahat is a very frightening serial. In the beginning of the serial they warn us that it is not real, even tell us not to believe it as real and in fact I am quite convinced that it is not real. But then I am really scared that if it really happens what will we do?"*

> *Aahat:*
> Earlier you didn't experience fear?
> Before there was not so much horror
> Now there is too much horror
> Now they have shown too much that's scary, there's too much horror
> First there were ghosts, now there are spirits. There was one. He drinks blood, his eyes become yellow.
> Serious, serious, scary, scary, it happens

Recently in Delhi, there has been a spate of supernatural `scares'. Delhi was held transfixed by the possibility of a monkey man attacking and killing people. Upon investigation, the police found there was no monkey man and attributed the entire episode to psychotic associations. People knew no such monkey man existed but they persisted in the belief of his possibility. In Lucknow and Kolkata, the children recounted many supernatural phenomenon which they claimed had occurred.

The supernatural in terms of tantric etc, are deeply ingrained in our lives. You have only to see the painted telephone numbers of tantric practitioners along the streets of Delhi to realise the popularity of these `supernatural' phenomenon. Thus, the representation of the supernatural on the screen reinforces what the children believe, hear and perhaps even fear in their own lives.

Lastly, the fact that we found similar responses in both the FGDs and the individual interviews _ independently of each other _ reinforces these findings.

3.2.2.3.1   The Representative Clips:

 In this exercise, four clips from TV shows _ two drama, one suspense/horror, one animated _ were shown to the children. Certain situations had been isolated and deliberately chosen. The aim was to go from the macro picture to the micro response. The montage of TV clips had been designed to initiate a general discussion on television _ though it did throw up specific findings such as what `hooked' children.

The individual clips were used to narrow down the focus and elicit responses to discrete scenarios with varying types and degrees of violence and confrontation. These clips reflected familiar TV situations although we were careful not to use popular serials because we did not want the children's reactions to be coloured or influenced by current associations.

The basic questions we wanted the children to respond to in the clips were:

❖ What are the **motives** behind the actions in the clip?

❖ How are the situations **resolved** in each clip?
❖ What are the various **levels** of **violence?**
❖ Does it look possible/**real?**
❖ What are the **elements** that heighten your perception of violence?

WHAT DID EACH OF THE CLIPS REVEAL?

3.2.2.3.2   The Serial Killer Clip

Key findings:
In terms of suspense and horror, the children were extremely well informed and fully conversant with forensic matters, the world of crime and law enforcement. For the children, media and reality mirrored each other when it came to crime.

The entire discussion on the serial-killer clip shed considerable light on how children reacted and understood the thriller-suspense genre. If we had to paraphrase these, we would say
❖ It revealed a strong bond between media and reality
❖ Reiterated the deep-rooted involvement of children with the horror/suspense genre (emotional and psychological) and their fascination with the supernatural
❖ Revealed how these have a lingering, often disturbing impact on them.

This was a very well crafted clip with a definite beginning, middle and end. It was the clip in which the central theme was an act of violence. The various elements in this clip included:
• A crime and its violent resolution
• The stereotypical setting of a crime: chase, police, victim, the serial-killer
• Use of stereotypical elements to heighten suspense: darkness, deserted locale, ominous music, mist, barbed wires, police sirens, manic laughter, black silhouettes.
• Well-known serial but an unfamiliar scene
• A gender element: one of the police officers is a woman

The killing of the serial killer by a policeman to resolve a ghastly episode is the central theme of the clip. The fact that the killer was at large and committing senseless acts of violence made his being shot dead a morally and legally justified act. The fact that the law enforcement agency acted under grave provocation, was also given due weight: the serial-killer was about to attack the woman police officer when he is shot dead by a policeman _ that too, only after a warning bullet hit him on his leg.

Given the psychotic behaviour of the serial killer, the glee with which he was destroying all evidence of the crime he had committed and the manner in which he behaved when accosted by the police force _ all these factors justified the violent resolution.

The children in the FGDs were presented with an open and shut case of a criminal being killed by the police to prevent him from committing another murder. In such a

clear-cut situation, it was crucial to understand how the children perceived the process of conflict-resolution. Did they agree with the resolution? Could they provide an alternative reading to the clip and its denouement? How did the children interpret the motives of the serial killer and the police? How did they respond to the levels of violence displayed in the clip?

Around this primary discussion, we wished to explore how, if at all, they related the situation in the clip to their own reality. Also, we wished to see how the children responded to stereotypical elements of suspense in fictional depictions: fog, mist, darkness, eerie music, rough terrain etc.

Responses:

While there was some difference in the manner in which the groups understood the situation as depicted in the clip, it should be stressed that they were all disturbed by the same aspects. All of them sensed the gravity of the situation.

The older children, boys and girls, understood the situation far more minutely, reading character, motives, background, sequence of events and the end action. The younger children tended to focus their attention on the acts in the clip. For example, here is how the older children described events in the clip:

"There was a mad killer who murdered anyone, using an iron rod. There was a murder in the same area. A police officer discovered the murder and went and informed his superiors. They talk about the matter, the lady police officer and the other policeman. The police have offered a reward of Rs.50,000 for him. When they get to the scene of the crime, the police surrounded the area, the killer was on the point of killing the lady inspector so that he stood a chance of escaping, he was prepared to kill the police officer..."

Right, Sharandeep tell me one thing which struck you the most?
That in 15 days, he had killed 5 people.

Now listen to the younger children:
"A man was there, he tried to kill a girl. Police reached there and told that man, `you can't run away from here'. That man was supposed to kill the girl. All of a sudden police shoot that man."

In some instances, however, there was some confusion over the identity of the serial killer. In Lucknow, for example, some children believed that there was not one but two killers involved in the clip. Others believed that the serial killer was actually a police officer disguised as a criminal.

Conflict Resolution Justification
For both age groups, the main justification for the police action was the immediate and imminent danger the serial killer posed. Children across centres felt that the killer had

to die. Children in Lucknow and Hyderabad were very clear that killing the serial killer was the only option. They did not even discuss other possibilities

"He was to assassinate the girl".
"He would have murdered the inspector and even other people,"
Shooting him in the back became necessary because "he was stealing up from behind with a plan to kill the woman". When asked about whether they were sure that he would have killed the woman police officer, their answer was a very definite "yes".

However children in Delhi felt the producers had oversimplified the situation. Ideally speaking, the older children said, "they (police officer) should have arrested him, sent him to jail, institutionalise him, try to reform his behaviour" and "if no change is found, first make him understand, beat him with the rod and if this is in vain, kill him". The older girls thought that he was deranged and therefore, *"usko pagal khana mein dal dena chahiye tha" (he should be placed in a mental asylum.)*

However, they did not place much confidence in any of these measures. They were convinced that the killer could not have been reformed with counselling or a stint in jail. "If he is kept in jail he can hit back at the police, he can escape". "In our country he can also bribe".

The fact that the police officer who was threatened by the serial killer was a woman also influenced the children's opinion. In Lucknow, children specifically spoke about how he would have killed the "lady" inspector.

Real Associations: Actual Crimes, Supernatural stories

It became evident from their subsequent remarks that the children's responses went beyond the clip and the story it told. Through the clip, they made two kinds of associations: the first and most obvious was to events in real life either in terms of actual crimes they had read or heard about or personal experiences of crime in their neighbourhood, etc.

Supernatural stories: At another level, the children saw the clip in terms of the supernatural _ both in real life and in the media. The reason for this was that some children felt that the serial killer was not human because he did not die immediately upon being shot:
"Twice he was shot but even then he did not die."

This led them to believe he possessed magical powers
The supernatural in its various manifestations has a very real and deep impact on their lives. For example, they talk about calling up spirits: "when people call up spirits I feel very scared". And they recall seeing similar sequences on TV: *"Aahat* has ghosts."

Children in Lucknow were really eloquent on the supernatural, much more than any other centre. They recounted endless detailed stories about the supernatural, stories told

to them by relatives, friends, friends of friends which occurred in a wide range of places: Lucknow, Kanpur, Indore, Bareilly, Barabanki.

"My grandfather says there is a restless soul here, he told me that the soul wanders about all the time and hits or slaps people. I feel very scared."
"In Bareilly, there is tank with a head in it which spins around. My father says once a head has been severed from the body it cannot move. But I believe this is true."

The presence of the supernatural in these stories is linked to serials such as *Aahat, X-Zone* and the children see a direct relationship between the two.

Actual Crimes: In talking about the serial-killer clip, the children displayed a certain cynicism because across all five cities, they knew of real crimes, committed by a range of people: e.g., local gangs or underworld dons_ "Dawood extorts money from everyone and no one is able to catch him. He and Chota Rajan roam around freely", "They are able to bribe their way out of the jail", "…commit murders of people like Gulshan Kumar".

> "I read in the newspaper that one boy had killed another boy because he had harassed his girl friend. He cut him up and the boy whom he killed used to live in my neighbourhood".
>
> "I had seen in the news that the bandit Phoolan Devi was shot dead."

> "Once a man came to repair a cooler in my neighbourhood. A woman (*bua*) had sent him to kill a boy living with his parents and siblings. The neck was decapitated from the body and she asked him to keep the body in the store".

This reinforced the belief that the serial killer should have been killed because otherwise, criminals, quite literally, get away with murder.

The children were equally well-informed about crimes closer to home and in their neighbourhoods. From Delhi we have the following:

"In one instance I heard that behind the park a dead body had been left with the face completely disfigured with acid".

The older boys recalled the murder of a woman in their neighbourhood:

"She was a bad character, who used to roam around with men, blackmail them with some photographs and one day was gagged to death and locked up in the bathroom."

> "One day, my uncle was coming from somewhere in his Maruti car and he was killed and we never found his body. We were told that the terrorists had killed him and my aunt firmly believed that the body that they had identified was not her husband's. Although the shoes, dress was the same the body was not our uncle's."

When asked why the men were so incensed that they murdered her, they replied: "Possibly the husband was afraid that she will use the photographs to expose their affair to his wife". The children explained how they had learnt about the

crime *"One day when the woman was being stalked by two men, the construction workers that were working with us told us about the woman. Two or three other people also confirmed it"*.

What was their opinion about such killers? Were some professional *"supari"* or serial killers? *"I read in the papers that the men who had killed her had committed three other crimes"*.

In the other cities, there were equally detailed stories of local crimes. There were stories about organ stealing and kidnapping of children:
"My friends mummy told her that in the lane behind her house, four gundas kidnapped a child and cut off his hands, feet and face and took them away.

Thus, the responses to the serial killer clip revealed a deep and detailed acquaintance with actual crimes, with supernatural phenomenon. It also highlighted the fact that media sensationalises both through its lurid depictions and that these have left indelible marks on the children. This is particularly apparent in the manner stories were related or constructed: they were very media savvy.

Motives:
Real associations and media reports of crimes appear to have influenced their thinking on motives, too. Real crimes, as they described, were often senseless in their violence and without apparent motive _ just as the serial killer's seemed in the clip. This knowledge of mindless violence led many of the children to describe the killer as "mad" _ as in the opening description furnished by the older boys: *"ek pagal khooni ttha…"*. In each group, there were children who agreed that he was "mad".

> **Serial-killer's motives**:
> He must have some enmity
> To escape the police
> Out of greed for money
> He may have been drunk
> The man may have known his secrets
> His wife was having an affair
> To take revenge
> Just to terrorise all the people
> Someone had killed his wife after harassing her

According to the older girls, there were a number of other reasons why the serial-killer, was committing these crimes:
"It is possible that he wanted to take revenge or some one had irritated him or called him mad". "Maybe he was wreaking vengeance on a relative. Someone may have borrowed money from him and not returned it".

In a later exercise, when the children were asked to tell us a story on the basis of a drawing, a similar varied response accompanied the drawing we called `kidnap'. The children, especially the older girls, provided a series of possible explanations for the man's action, ranging from the purely circumstantial to the hypothetical.

> **Drawings:**
> The man is a hooligan
> He has some enmity with the adults
> He was going to attack the dog with the knife
> The dog must have bitten him
> He wasn't attacking _the boy- he was explaining to him

The multiplicity of possibilities suggests a fairly extensive knowledge of crimes, their motivations and resolutions which has come

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via the media and their personal environments. This "reality check" appears to have influenced their immediate response to the motives of the serial killer.

Elements and techniques which influence perception:
While the children were watching the montage and individual TV clips, we noticed that whenever there was an "action" clip or one involving suspense, most children sat up and watched with total attention. While watching the other clips they were far more relaxed.

Their deep engagement with the serial-killer clip had much to do with the `hook' element of suspense _ as well as the elements that were employed to dramatise the situation. The children recognised the various elements and responded to them accordingly. For example, eerie music and a desolate locale _ so intrinsic to this genre of programming _ were identified by both older boys and girls as elements directly responsible for the terror they felt. The younger children, in particular, were instinctively frightened by the appearance of the serial killer.

Stereotypical elements in the serial-killer
He was horrid
He was cruel
He had a scar on his face
He was burnt
He was limping

The children realised that the TV producers had specifically created the suspense through various techniques: "they put a dead body there", "they use a lot of make-up", "they wear masks…which makes them look scary and wear long nails."

Termed as "suspense music" and "dark, spooky, ghostly atmosphere", they admitted that: "In programmes such as *Aahat* and *X-Zone*, the background tune makes the programme more terrifying than it actually is". "I feel even more frightened of the music when I am watching alone". The "music is horrid" and "too frightful to listen".

The physical characteristics of the serial killer _ "scarred", "burnt" _ helped establish his 'bad' character too. Appearances play a significant role in determining the children's responses. One of the older boys gave us a rather literal example from the TV serial, *Smriti*:

"In Smriti… her face is burnt, plastic surgery gives a new face, her children cannot recognise her and say you are not our mummy."

In contrast, while some of these elements had a visibly disturbing impact on the children (some put their fingers in their ears, another closed her eyes), other elements such as the setting of the clip_ the mist, old, barbed wires, rugged terrain and an extremely scared watchman _ seemed to go unnoticed. However, we should add that the extent of the impact _ or lack of it _ is difficult to judge merely by this omission.

Media and Reality:
The elements in the clip, the characters and the crime per se were primarily judged on the basis of real possibilities or events. To that extent, reality and the clip mediated and

mirrored each other. That is to say, the constant reference point of their deconstruction and interpretation of the clip was reality and real crimes.

Strangely, while the children agreed that the serial killer had to be killed by the police, the clip did not evoke a simple equation of good and bad, right and wrong in the children. Neither the heroism of the police nor the abnormal behaviour of the criminal, were seen in black and white terms. What they explored were the grey areas. All the children, irrespective of sex and age, went beyond the story line of the clip.

When we explored their understanding of the situation, we found the children had been deeply influenced by the media _ in more ways than one. Media is today full of violence: since September 11, 2001, violence has dominated the media _ and children have followed the `war against terror' in an unprecedented manner.

Also, there is an ever-increasing presence of crime in the media. Every day, there are sensational reports of lurid crimes in newspaper and television reports. The August murder of Phoolan Devi, for example, was minutely and extensively covered by the media for more than a week. Shots of her dead body were repeatedly shown. As we saw earlier the children recall such events quite clearly.

They also associated crime with political figures and crimes in high places: in Hyderabad they spoke of Karunanidhi's arrest, in Lucknow of Veerappan and the massacre of the Nepalese royal family. In Delhi and Ahmedabad they related the crime to the underworld.

There is also the growing diversity in the genre of reality TV available to children. Apart from docu-dramas such as *Haqeeqat*, there is the real crime programme, *India's Most Wanted* and information programmes such as Discovery's *Medical Detectives* which step by step, explains how forensic science is used to track the evidence and solve a particularly gruesome crime.

Long-running serials such as *C.I.D* on Sony, *Suraag* on DD1, provide vivid accounts of how crimes are committed, how criminals subvert the process of the law and how very often there is police collusion with the criminals. Movie channels such as *Star Movies, HBO, AXN, Zee MGM* are dominated by very violent action films. Often, these deal with serial killers, or weird murder cases which have to be solved by the movie's stars.

Sometimes, the story lines and plots of suspense serials and films are almost identical to real life crimes. Indeed, producers we met in Mumbai, admitted that they were inspired by real events in media reports or those around them, for the plots of their serials.

Involvement of children

This overwhelming presence of murders and violence, much of it real, some of it supernatural, in the media, exposes children prematurely to a threatening and macabre environment. We found most children, particularly in the younger age group, very

disturbed by this violence. This is clearly apparent from our individual interviews and comments in the FGD cited in the section above: **The Hook: What appeals to children?**

To date, some children recall the terror they feel when they think of a child friendly supernatural character like the "Joker" playing the role of an evil spirit who kills children in a serial called *Woh*. This serial was on air, four years ago, and the children in our present investigation were then, probably between three and nine years of age. But the serial has left an indelible impression on them, so deep that even now the occasional dream troubles them.

Four years ago, we met the two young producers of the serial. We had voiced our misgivings about a child-friendly symbol like the clown/joker being represented in such a horrific manner. They seemed confused by our objections and argued that a creative process could not be dictated by our concerns. They remembered how, in their own childhood, they enjoyed violent, horror tales. In the serial they were merely trying to be inventive within the parameters of the genre, in order to make their show popular.

This leads us to our next observation. If TV producers use everything at their command to make their serial popular, can children resist the hook that the producers put out to capture their attention _ even when they do not want to watch the serial?

Throughout our investigation, we found that the children are still involved with incidents from these horror/suspense serials, even if they are no longer watching them. As discussed in **The Hook: What Appeals to Children?,** the children identified "suspense" and the supernatural as the major and potent attractions.

3.2.2.3.3   THE MATCH-FIXING CLIP

This clip included the following elements:
- A subject familiar to children: cricket betting and match-fixing
- A real issue: since April 2000 there have been many cricketers accused of and investigated for match-fixing
- An incident with strong psychological overtones
- Considerable aggression in a verbal dual
- Strong *filmi* characterisations

The clip depicted the fate of a man trapped into a fake match-fixing incident by another man and a woman. He loses more than a crore which he had stolen from his company in order to become rich, overnight.

This clip had all the elements of middle class greed, the new mantra of quick-fix money helping you to get rich instantly. Here's a man taking the terrible risk of gambling with office money, falling prey to con artists and then displaying terrible desperation and anger when he loses the gamble. Most importantly, the clip dealt with cricket match-fixing, a very topical and on-going scam which, for the first time, brought a national past time and the extremely popular game of cricket into disrepute. The media had covered this controversy in great depth, emphasising the role of the players as well as the middle men

In this clip, the focus was on the desperation and senseless anger of the main character who looses the money. How is the "anguish and repentance of a loser" perceived under these circumstances? What is the children's view on the criminal nexus vis-s-vis match-fixing? Did the dramatisation of a real issue, evoke stronger feelings than fictional situations?

Real Associations
In all the cities, the children were aware of the match-fixing controversy, they named the cricket players involved _ specifically Hanse Cronje, Mohammed Azharuddin and Ajay Jadeja_ and explained how players are bribed to lose matches. While the boys were more interested in relating this information, the girls went from the clip to the Hindi film, *Mr and Mrs Khiladi*, in which the lead character deliberately loses boxing matches in order to make money because he wants to marry his sweetheart. However, beyond that they did not display a desire to discuss the match-fixing controversy any further.

Children in Lucknow, mostly girls recalled seeing Kapil Dev on an TV interview and on the basis of that believe he is involved in match-fixing. Children in Kolkata were also fully aware of the match-fixing controversies and felt very strongly about the issue and therefore, judged the clip from that perspective.

Motives:
The children felt that the key reason for this unsavoury incident was the terrible greed of the man who went to the extent of ruining the company. Based on this understanding they found that the two people who cheated the man were outright "crooks" who had

no "regrets". However beyond this, they didn't display any interest in these crooks, despite the strong Bollywood flavour in their characterisation and, indeed, in the whole setting which had such strong *filmi* associations.

It was the man's dishonesty which left an impact on them rather than the crooked way in which the con artists had inveigled him into a fake match-fixing event. "If it was his money then it was a different matter" was their central reaction.

It was clear that while the overall response to the clip was the same, boys and girls reacted slightly differently. The girls were far more judgmental "It is his fault.*"* But the boys felt more sympathetic towards him, experienced his share of disappointment and even understood his anxiety about whether the last ball will be a four or a run out, he lost his temper. "There's some suspense when he was hitting a six.*"*

The children found the man's actions unjustifiable: the fact that he lost all the money was only just since he was using his company's money.

Unlike the serial killer, who could be a possible victim of bad circumstances, here no such allowances could be made. The children were very clear that he had invited the trouble upon himself and they clearly felt very agitated by his behaviour as well what they foresaw as the consequences of his actions.

"The entire money was from the Company. It was not a small amount. The fact that all the gambling had been done with the company's money _ how will he return such a large amount?"

It is a matter of concern to see small children analysing such serious matters with almost adult-like reasoning.

"Suspense *bhi tha, wo haar gaya paisa* company *ka paise…*" (there was some suspense - he lost the money, the company's money).

In this clip we see that the `hook' for the children had an element of fear tinged with suspense.

It was the man's desperation and frustration at the end of the incident was the core issue here. The heightened musical effect, the verbal duel between the man and the two crooks, his angry face grabbed the children's attention. Every effort to talk about other aspects of the incident failed to take off. Significantly even a controversial issue like match fixing did not evoke any comment or discussion.

The man's psychological distress was strongly imparted to the children. They participated in his anxiety and the stress of the situation compounded by the fact that the producers used a close-up shot which shows us the man's stunned face filling the entire screen. When asked if they thought the clip included any violence, the older girls replied in the affirmative; "Facial expression se laga "(In his facial expression)

> What was the man's face like?
> "Horrible"

In this clip the high level of distress in the man's face, as depicted by the producers, overrides the reality and their familiarity with the incident. Thus, techniques used by producers do produce a particular and often desired effect. We will see this even more clearly in the step mom clip.

3.2.2.3.4   THE STEP MOM CLIP

Key Findings:

Δ   In terms of drama, there is the sudden discovery that the family is an equally volatile site with the dramatic elements of intrigue, suspense, and "planning". The response is also two-fold: at one level, there is the feeling of inclusion and emotional bonding with the family.

Δ   At another, the children appeared reluctant to explore and deal with the conflicts of a domestic situation

This clip includes the following element:

∞   A conflict in a domestic milieu.

∞   A known stereotype in the step-mother with a non-typical representation

∞   A known stereotype in the Aunt (chachi) in a typical representation of the interfering, conniving elderly relative

∞   The strong presence of children _ an older brother and a sister

∞   A dysfunctional family

∞   Emotional instability: anxiety of children

The clip which we dubbed 'The Stepmom' was taken from the drama serial *Arth* on Zee. It is the story of the remarriage of a man with two children. The children are constantly caught between their own mother and their chachi on the one hand and their father and their stepmother on the other.

The focus of the discussion was to gauge the children's understanding of the stepmother. Is she sincere about what she is saying? Does the step-mom fit into any stereotype they have about such a person? How do they view the chachi? What is the sibling equation like? Within this discussion we wished to encourage the children to discuss how they viewed the children's predicament and whose point of view they adopted.

It's important here to relate the main narrative of the clip. It begins with the children's chachi telling them not to trust the stepmother and reminding them of how their mother left the house in very unhappy circumstances. The step-mother enters the children's bedroom and asks the chachi to leave since she wishes to talk to the children alone. The children are clinging to each other on the bed. The step-mother sits on the other side of the bed.

She tells the children she wants to be like a mother to them. The older child, a boy, says she can never be like their mother and they will never accept her. The step-mother silently rises and then tells the children she will continue to do everything in her power to win them over and that she will love them even more than their mother. The clip ends with a shot of the two children looking slightly bewildered.

Despite the presence of many disturbing elements of a stressful domestic milieu, the serial's director has dramatised a stereotypical situation in a different way. The drama

was not reduced to a one-dimensional situation with the irrational prejudices of the aunt and the traditional wickedness of the stepmother. Instead, the producer has balanced the two sides by depicting the stepmother as the voice of reason, hope and love. She is shown persuading the children that a stepmother can be as caring as a mother.

The children, however, were not willing to be reasoned with. They are seized by an understandable degree of anxiety, exacerbated by the interfering aunt. Some of this panic was a result of the way the aunt described their mother's plight, her being thrown out of the house, her anguish at leaving the children.

RESPONSE

Motives:
Given the many elements in the clip, it was possible to interpret it in several different ways, from different points of view – i.e., the aunt's, the stepmother's and the children's.

How did the children interpret this conflictual situation? At the outset we should say there was very little difference in the reactions of boys and girls and no discernible difference across age groups. However, across the cities, there were differences of opinion on the characters and their motivations, though they tended to agree on the resolution.

In the pilot study conducted in Delhi, despite the very strong presence of children in the narrative and in this case, very young children estranged from their mother, the clip was never viewed from their point of view.

In all the FGDs, the children retold the story from the step mom's point of view

For example, here is how one group discussion on the clip began:
"The step-mother loves the children all the time but the children fail to understand that"

The children went on to juxtapose the positive qualities of the stepmother with the negative qualities of the aunt. The children read the sequence as a conflict between the adults' with opposing attributes.

Step Mom	Aunt
Good	Bad
Honest	Deceitful
Truthful	Dishonest
Straight forward	Misleading

One group demonstrated how the start of the clip proved clearly decisive for them. *Chachi was* giving the children sinister warnings in a hush-hush tone in contrast to the step-mom's direct and firmly articulated promises to the children. While the former was lying, the latter was trying to persuade them.

In the case of another group, the children went to the extent of defending the stepmother, going beyond the clip to find reasons. The natural mother, they said, was less responsible as a parent.

"She could neither take care of them nor make sure that they do not get spoilt. She used to take them to all kind of places, stopped sending them regularly to school and took them here and there".

The most decisive factor in shaping the children's opinions was the strong evidence of stepmother's love for the children. *"She was speaking so emotionally that it was clear she loved the children more than even the real mother did".* Much of this, they felt, was because she "was did not have her own children (so) it was possible to love them".

Thus, the motives of the stepmother are clear and above board. There was not an iota of doubt about this. In contrast the *chachi* is seen to harbour ulterior motives.

"The chachi is deliberately inciting the children against the stepmother".
"She is not doing the right thing by inciting the children against her and criticising her".

What was her motive?
"She wants to separate the children from the step-mom".
"She was jealous of the stepmother".

The children felt the *chachi was* not only misusing her relationship with them but also exploiting the deep anxiety and fear that children have about stepmothers. *"The chachi was inciting them by telling them all step-mothers are like this, they are always bad and the children were believing her".*

Many children in other cities agree with Delhi. However, the responses in Lucknow and Hyderabad were more layered. Children in Lucknow agreed that the chachi was inciting the children to oppose the stepmother but quite a few disagreed with the one-dimensional reading of the clip. They were equally sympathetic to and critical of all the characters. They saw the stepmother as good in her depiction but felt she could be play acting: "the step mother was lying". They thought the chachi could have had good and bad intentions: since she was their aunt and lived so long with the children she only wanted what was best for them. No, said another child, if she was good she would not incite the children "because she would want the children to live in harmony with their mother."

In Hyderabad, the older girls in particular were less sure of the step-mom. They went beyond the story line, exercised their personal judgement about what the situation could mean for children and felt that the step-mom will have to be put to an actual test before trusting her entirely. So, while, they were a little critical of the children's body language and manners they felt that their reservation or suspicion was justified.

Thus there were children in both Lucknow and Hyderabad who held a modified opinion of the children. The children were good, some said _ it was their chachi who incited

them against the stepmother. "She (the step-mom) was new, so how do they know what she is like? So they thought the aunt was telling the truth."

Real Associations
When we probed further, the children claimed that step-mothers in reality, were not as likeable as the one in the clip. Some of the perception was shaped by fiction.

"From the beginning we have been influenced by the way in which the story about the step-mother being bad has been told.. The Cinderella story is all about this".

In Hyderabad, the engagement with the character of the stepmom was influenced more by personal experiences and associations. "If she does not prove good we have prevailed upon our fathers to kick her out" they stated.

What are the elements they associate a stepmother with? Cruelty, lack of love, neglect, discriminating and even a not too-pleasing appearance. Not very different from the other cities.

> **Step Mom stereotype**
> Beats the children, makes them do all the household work, does not let them go to school, or play or go out anywhere.
> Finds it difficult to love another person's child.
> She performs black magic on the step-children.
> She can throw the children out of the house.
> She may deliberately give wrong medicines.
> She will be bad by face as well as by nature.
> Gives all comforts to her own children. Keeps her own children like queens

Elements and techniques which influence perception:
We found that there was a contradiction between the children's notions of the negative attributes of a real step-mother and their perception of the stepmother in the clip as a positive character. We had to determine how they had formed their ideas about "good", "bad", "trustworthy", "crooked" or "honest and frank", "deceptive and conniving".

We found that many distinct elements were shaping their reactions. When asked what made them empathise with fictional stepmother, they said, "she looked very trustworthy and believable".

> **Step Mom in clip**:
> She was loving and caring.
> She was neither scolding them nor rebuking them.
> She was reasoning well.
> She talked politely.
> She behaved well.

Does that mean her appearance or any physical characteristics made a difference?

Yes, said the children, her appearance helped them form their good opinion of her.

"Without too much make up, her appearance tells us very clearly that she is trustworthy".

What if she had a scar or something unusual about her appearance _ would that have made a difference in their

> **Appearances**
> How did she look?
> "She looked proper- *sharif.*"
> How do you know she was good?
> "By her expressions."
> If she were not proper, what kinds of clothes would she have been wearing?
> "Jeans, mini skirt, jig jag dress."

perception. Yes, the children said, then she would have been much less believable, she could have been "scary".

In the same vein we asked: what elements determined their perception of the chachi and the children? In the case of chachi it was "her manner of speaking _ she was secretly and furtively creating a feeling of enmity".

For the younger children, her "frightening" manner of speaking also implied "she was telling lies". In their "experience of real people" they found that "those who tell lies tend to stammer and some even tend to sweat because they are afraid". Here, too, appearances made a difference. "Her facial expression and eyes all showed that she was lying"

Responses to Children:
They were bad.
They were spoilt.
They used bad language.
The children were not correct in their behaviour.
The children were misbehaving.
They were rude and threatening.

The entire understanding of the children was centred on issues of decorum, correct behaviour and being misled by the chachi. Our respondents were extremely critical of the children: "Because of the chachi they were not able to see and agree to what was good for them". "The children looked very proper but spoke badly."

The younger children were even more judgmental and felt that the children should "seek forgiveness" and "listen to the advice of the step mom and then decide whether they should accept it or not."

Some children almost sanctimoniously said that children should be "respectful", "show respect" for their elders. Their attitude to the children seemed to be based on their having flouted social norms of behaviour. Children in Lucknow and Hyderabad in particular wished the children would behave properly.

The importance of elements cannot be overstated in forming the children's opinions. The stepmother was viewed positively because of the tone she adopted, what she said and the way she looked. In a similar way, the brother and sister's bewildered expressions at the very end of the clip, reassured our respondents that the children were probably coming around to the step-mother's way of thinking, that they were re-thinking the entire matter:

"The children are thinking that the step-mother is telling the truth."

3.2.2.3.5   WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS INDICATE?

In the case of the serial killer, the children realised how their emotions and responses were manipulated by production elements in the clip. However, in the step-mom they accepted the presentation, though from city to city, there was some disagreement on the reading of the motives of the different characters. What's interesting is that despite these disagreements, children in all the cities agreed that the children's attitude to the stepmother was not desirable.

Why is that so?

One explanation could be that the children's associations with the situation were so personal, they picked the most non-threatening option. Children are taught that adults are to be respected, parents are to be loved; that children must to listen to their mother. We know the mother is the pivotal figure in a child's life. From this standpoint our respondents had to support the stepmother _ who was the `mother figure' in the clip.
The strongest proof of this point of view, came from Lucknow where again and again, the children said the same thing in different ways:

"Even if she was their step-mother, but she was older and we must always respect our elders."
"They should have talked properly to her."
"A mother is a mother, even if she is a stepmother. "

This raises the issue of whether in some way, consciously or subconsciously, our respondents were unwilling to engage with the clip because the children's insecurities might mirror their own? Could it be that emotionally, the clip was too close for comfort? That the children did not wish to explore a domestic conflict, which pits parents against children? Or were they simply tight-lipped in a group situation? Or did they simply offer "educated" answers which they have been taught and think they should pay lip service to, even if they do not entirely believe in them?

We did not have the scope to probe these questions further. But there is reason to believe that the children were unwilling to engage in domestic situations which may have bearing on their own lives. In a subsequent exercise which involved creating stories around drawings, we found a similar disinclination to enter into a domestic conflict. When they did acknowledge a potential conflict, they resolved it quickly, through the presence of the adult _ the authority figure.

Equally important is the role of the TV producer who created a strong case for a particular reading of the situation by her characterisations and use of elements. The producer's skilful depiction had changed the children's preconceived notions, particularly with regard to the step-mother and produced a fairly uniform, undifferentiated opinion. Quite clearly the producer (Reema Wadhwa) has manipulated the reading of the step-mother by the manner in which she has depicted her _ her clothes, the tone of her voice, what she says, how she behaves. To that extent, production techniques can overcome or change stereotypes, perceptions.

These explanations have important implications. Much of media content is built around conflict and turmoil and producers offer many tantalising options and resolutions. In such a context, the selection that children make when relating to these clips _ be it a case of evasion or of overwhelming involvement _ is a matter of concern. When we know that the producer can manipulate the reading of a situation, the intentions of the producer are of paramount importance.

3.2.2.3.6   THE CARTOON DUCK CLIP

This clip was shown only to the younger children in the 6-9 age group. It replaced the match-fixing clip. The elements included were:
- Well-known genre: cartoon
- Unfamiliar characters: we, deliberately, did not choose *Tom & Jerry*, or a cartoon very popular with the children to avoid educated responses
- Comic violence

The intention was to gauge the children's response to the use of humour to exaggerate levels and forms of violence and explore their attitude to the magical world of cartoons.

As in the case of the serial killer, this clip told a self-contained story which was straightforward. Naughty little pigs kidnap the duck's friends. The duck watches helplessly on. Then a bell rings and he grows into a giant before returning to his original size. This happens repeatedly. As a giant and endowed with extraordinary strength, the duck rescues his friends and punishes the pigs.

Responses:
In comparison to the detailed discussions on the other clips, this clip was dealt with far more swiftly. This may be due to several reasons:

- The high degree of familiarity with the language of cartoons so there was little to unravel
- This was a cartoon and, therefore, not taken seriously by the children
- This was the last clip to be discussed, so the children were a little restless. Indeed, in some cases, there wasn't enough time to discuss this clip

Elements and techniques:
The children enjoyed the clip as they do all cartoons. It was light-hearted fun in which there was "a willing suspension of disbelief". Since this was a cartoon, they understood that anything is possible, can and will happen.

Asked to identify what they liked in the clip, they said: "*duck getting big and small*", when the bell rang, pulling the tails of the pigs "*looked nice*" "*expression, power, presentation*" Action, magical transformations appealed greatly to them.

However, beyond this acceptance of the impossible being possible, the children's interpretation of the sequence was interesting.

The supernatural:
The children were fascinated by the duck's ability to grow big and small. Here they made a linkage between this "power" and the supernatural. Asked whether such a power of transformation was possible in real life, children in Delhi replied:

"Tantrics can do it, it can be done through magic, and they may have mantra which enables them."

When asked if they had seen "tantric' anywhere, they replied *Shaktimaan* and *Junior G.* Both *Shaktimaan* and *Junior G* use magical "powers" to punish bad people.

We have witnessed this presence of "magic", "tantric" and "power" earlier in discussions on **The Hook: What Appeals to Children?** Specifically, in relation to *Shaktimaan* and in the serial killer clip. This what they had said when asked about what they saw in *Shaktimaan*, they replied:
"He shows his power, he saves people, he has magical powers, he saves people's lives".

The association of the cartoon duck's powers with those of *Shaktimaan, Junior G* and tantrics, reveals the young children's belief in the presence of the supernatural. They differentiate between good powers of such cartoon characters/ superheroes and those powers in horror shows such as *Aahat* or a character like the Joker in *Woh*. While they enjoy the duck, admire *Shaktimaan* and *Junior G*, the Joker and *Aaha*t, give them sleepless nights, bad dreams and cause them anxiety.

Cartoons and reality
"Some children believe cartoons exist".

Cartoons are created by adults for children. Animated characters are endowed with human characteristics, emotions and placed in very human situations. Children, therefore, interpret cartoons in human terms. They talk about them as they would of real people _ with human attributes. Though this is self-evident, it tends to be forgotten when we discuss the impact of cartoons on children. There is a tendency to dismiss cartoons. In particular, the question of violence in cartoons is thought irrelevant because it is viewed as "fun" and therefore, not to be taken seriously.

However, in the discussion on the duck clip, we found enough evidence to challenge these assumptions. The entire discussion on what happened in the clip, what were the motives of the various cartoon characters, etc., was in human terms and along the same lines as in the other clips. Even the language is almost identical.

Thus, we find here echoes of reasoning we have earlier encountered in the serial-killer clip. The children recount the story in a very similar straightforward manner linking action to their reading of the personalities: *"...the pigs had kidnapped his three or four friends. The pigs were rude. Duck grows big so they start to run.''*

| **Motives of cartoon characters** |
| There was enmity. |
| There might have been a fight. |
| They wanted to make money by selling the pigs. |
| He was committing theft that's why duck had tied him up |

When we explored the motives of the pigs in kidnapping the duck's friends, the children furnished several motives very similar to those they attributed to the serial-killer clip _ and the real crimes they recounted to us.

Similarly, they felt that the duck did right to punish the pigs: "the pigs required to be beaten as they were thieves." They also argued that punishment was a preventive

measure, otherwise the pigs might repeat the crime. For this, they felt the police were the best authority. "Police *apni* third form (degree) *dikha degi…*". Asked to explain what they meant by "third form", they gave a graphic and comprehensive account which illustrates what they think police do with criminals. These children are in the 6-9 age group.

> **How the police behaves**:
> They hit him, they hang him upside down, they hang him on ice, sometimes they hang him from a rope, from a fan, hit him with a stick, and put chillies in his face, light a fire below and allow the smoke from the burning chillies (to suffocate him).

The "third form" they describe has been culled from films such as *Mela* and *Aashique*. In the latter, film star Bobby Deol, according to the children, is tortured by the police (*see box to the left*).

The children said the duck was correct to beat the pigs because *"one must not steal others goods."* Asked if this happened in real life, one child replied. *"Once my sister's bicycle was stolen. Police arrested the thief…"*

This represents a good example of one of our major findings: children have formed opinions based on the interplay and symbiosis of elements from different media forms (animation, TV serials, films) on the one hand, and reality and personal experience on the other.

It also suggests that cartoons are an integral part of this process. Children relate to them in human terms. Since they are the first media form children are usually exposed to, cartoons might be considered the first step in the learning curve for children. Other than the home, cartoons are the first place they encounter human situations, conflicts, good and evil, etc. To that extent, we suggest that their first responses and value judgements are being formed by cartoons.

3.2.2.3.7   WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS INDICATE?

The fact that they interpret cartoon violence and conflicts in realistic terms means we cannot dismiss cartoons and cartoon violence so lightly. Children are reading meaning into cartoons even as they enjoy them. They understand cartoons only in human terms.

Secondly, is the fascination with the supernatural _ an extension of their interest in programmes like *Shaktimaan* and *Aahat.* They also draw an immediate parallel between magical powers and the presence of the supernatural in real life. This seems to reinforce our earlier finding that the supernatural is integral to the children's responses to media and life.
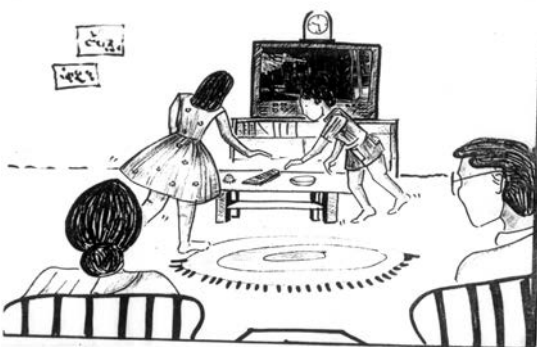
BUS STOP

SNAKE

GIRL IN ROOM

KIDNAP

CLASS ROOM

BOXING MATCH

FAMILY WATCHING TV

48

PLAYGROUND

3.2.2.4.1 DRAWINGS

The primary objective of the drawing exercise was to place before the children ordinary, normal day- to-day situations and see what they made of them.

3.2.2.4.2 CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

The 8 sketches can be categorised in terms of two sets of variables: indoor/outdoor and familiar/non-familiar. Together, these four classifications define the limits of the universe within which the children analysed the sketches.

```
                              INDOOR
                                │
   Family watching TV           │
   Girl in Room                 │     Boxing Match
   Classroom                    │
                                │
                                │
   FAMILIAR ────────────────────┼──────────── NON-FAMILIAR
                                │
                                │
   Playground                   │     Snake
   Bus Stop                     │     Kidnap
                                │
                                │
                                │

                             OUTDOOR
```
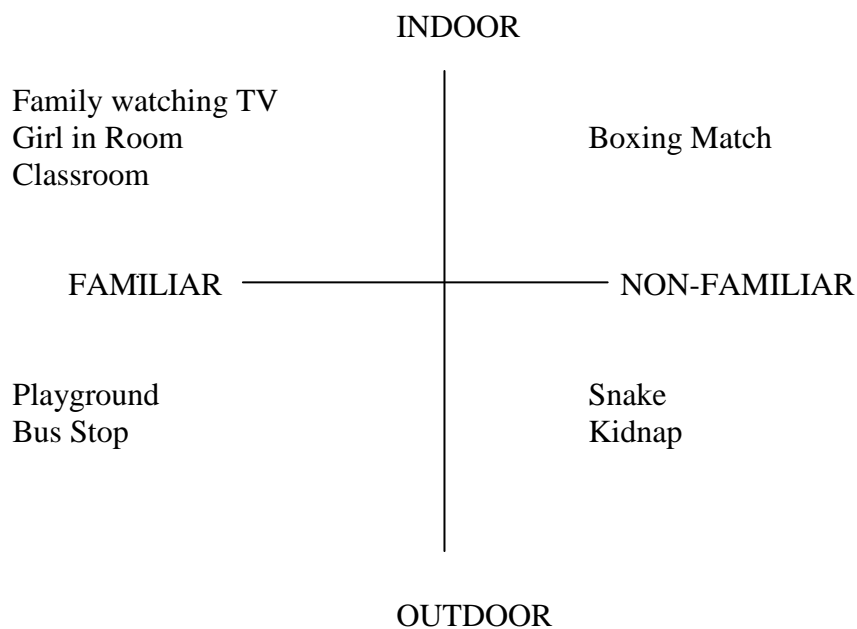
Each child was given a drawing and asked to create a story around it _ not simply describe the situation.

Given that the scenes were taken from every day situations _ some from the children's lives _ their recognition was immediate and personal. They took many of the situations for granted and 'read' them in a straightforward manner. They did not create alternative scenarios, nor did they use their imagination. Thus the stories created around the drawings of the bus stop, classroom, playground, girl in the bedroom and family watching TV formed part of their real experiences.

The exceptions were those drawings outside the children's personal experiences: the boxing ring, the kidnap and the child with the snake which was totally in the realm of fantasy.

There was an uneven engagement with the drawings. The characters the children identified with were those based on real, personal experiences. Where they did not identify with the characters or the situations, they depended upon acquired knowledge from the media, e.g., boxing. They described this drawing on the basis of their familiarity with *WWF* while the `kidnap' drawing was derived from films and newspaper reports of similar crimes.

Where there was no personal reference point at all, they were more cursory in their responses. Thus, the child and the snake drawing did not elicit more than a cursory response in Delhi and Hyderabad.

"Snakes are in the water. A girl is swimming, snake tied her with the tail. She asks for help. Sometimes, snakes are on the tree, sometimes in the ditch, and some times in the water."

Boxing: "Two were fighting, first one punches another. Referee comes and starts counting 1, 2, 3,. He lost the fight. Children start shouting, "Rahul, Rahul." Rahul will get the golden belt. In *WWF*, wrestlers use to get that belt. This belt belongs to Wrestling Foundation."

However, Lucknow was more violent in its reaction to the snake drawing. "The child will be caught and eaten up by the snake". This could be due to the North-Indian tradition of folk tales in which snakes invariably guard some hidden treasure.

In Kolkata the children went into the details of the round and the referee and the rules of the boxing match. *"This is the final round, the referee has counted till seven another three counts and the one wearing #10 shirt will win".*

The determining factor in their reaction to the drawings was their proximity to the experience in reality. However, there were some differences in age and gender readings of the drawings.

Age:
The younger children interpreted the sketches differently from the older children. Mostly, they described the elements of the sketch. They found little conflict or tension in most drawings and their resolutions of the stories were amicable and friendly, often based on the intervention of traditional figures of authority, such as parents, teachers.

Here is how one child told the story of the **classroom scene:**
"There is a maths teacher. Two students came, first one is a boy and the other is a girl. They ask something regarding maths. Teacher solved the problem and they return back to their seats."

 Or the **girl in the bedroom** sketch:
A girl is thinking of her room, how to clean it, where to keep the things properly."

While designing this exercise, we had deliberately introduced different figures of authority/ protection _ parents, teacher, adults, even a dog _ in order to see how the

children related to these symbols. It is interesting that the younger children saw the adults as the final arbiter in conflict resolution.

One possible reason for this is that younger children are still emotionally, psychologically dependent on adults and far more trusting. Another possibility is that in a group situation, the younger children were more reluctant to voice individual opinions or deviate from the perceptions within the group. In contrast, during the individual interviews, the children were less inhibited and openly shared their personal opinions, misgivings, etc.

The older children projected much more conflict into the sketches. They negotiated potential conflict through figures of authority too _ e.g., police, parents, teacher/principal and adult _ but the basic conflict persisted despite the presence or arbitration of the adults.

Indoor: The threat perception was both indoors and outdoors. Thus, alongside the bus stop, the playground or the pavement, the classroom and bedroom, the family watching TV were recognised as sites of possible conflict _ just as they are in real life. However, as we found in the stepmother TV clip, when it comes to a domestic scene, the children were less willing to engage with it.

Thus, in the **family at TV drawing**, both boys and girls saw a battle of wills between the two children and between the children and the parents. From real experiences, we know how the remote control has become as dangerous weapon: parents use it to threaten children with switching it off or changing channels. Children snatch it away from each other and use it to assert their preferences and authority or will. In the individual interviews one parent admits that she can tell her child not to watch television but only up to a certain point: after that, the child "*zid pakar leta hai"* (becomes obdurate).

The older children recognised these possibilities, especially the girls, but they quickly decided on a closure, either saying the older child had her way or that the parents asserted their authority. Children in Hyderabad felt that parents would reprimand the kids and make them go to bed. For the Lucknow kids the fight between the children was central, they agreed that "this happens in every family" and at times, "parental intervention becomes essential". Children in Kolkata seemed to be familiar with a lot of parental intervention in their viewing. *"Often my mother says you watch this but me and my brother want to watch that, we agree but my mother differs"*.

As far as the **classroom scene** was concerned, negative associations with the maths teacher surfaced. Maths plays a very important role in children's real lives. It is the one subject which causes them the most tension and stress during examinations, in class and at home where maths tuitions are so common.

But rather than explore these personal associations with maths, the children said that the teacher had punished the children for their prank. They did, however, make subversive comments, calling the maths teacher "idiot" and the like. Indeed, the boys were quite abusive in their references. The older boys in Ahmedabad thought the

children would get hit on their palms by the teacher using a ruler because they wrote something to the effect, "Maths teacher is a fool''. They did not seem too perturbed by the prospect, implying this was probably a regular feature.

The children in Kolkata did not read any conflict into the situation. *"The children are asking some question and something has been written on the board"*. *"The girl's father is here to take her home"*. The children almost refused to accept that there could be some tension in the classroom or they are being punished for a prank.

> **Younger children:**
> "… She might be painting some where and got the spot. Spot is of red colour but it is not blood."

When the indoor space was combined with solitude, the threat perception seemed to be greater. For the older children, **the girl in the bedroom** suggested some upheaval. They did not discount the possibility of an intruder and the commission of a crime. Contrast this with the younger children who were not disturbed by the messy room at all. Nor did they read any untoward meaning into the elements: e.g., the red stain on a cloth was either paint or ketchup. A messy room and such stains were a normal part of a child's room.

But the older children associated the mess with crime, and the stain with blood. Perhaps, this has to do with such depictions in TV/films of scenes of crimes: a messy room signifies a violated space.

The age factor seems decisive here. The older children may have based their stories on real life experience, their exposure to media (and knowledge of such situations) _ and their greater levels of socialisation and maturity.

> **Older Children***:*
> She thinks thief might have come through the window.
> He may be culprit.
> She thinks he runs away after assassinating some one or culprit may have changed his clothes with bloodstain.

Children in Ahmedabad came across as being very imaginative in constructing the conflict.

"The girl has killed the father of her lover because he was against their relationship...she is now regretting her actions and will most probably surrender herself to the police, if she does not run away, that is".

The other way of looking at it is that they have learnt of similar crimes in the media

Others felt that the girl has killed some "enemy" who was probably known to her but he wanted to harm her and between them they could not settle their differences, therefore she has to resort to murder. "But now there is no way out for her and she will be jailed". Most children in Hyderabad, and Kolkata were not perturbed by the red colour and saw it simply as colour. *"The girl accidentally smudged some colour on her T Shirt while painting"*

Gender:

Outdoor: Amongst the older children, the girls' threat perceptions were higher than the boys in those instances where their personals experiences were the dominant factor. They projected a much higher degree of anxiety, especially in outdoor situations, e.g., **bus stop, playground and kidnap.**

It seemed obvious that they were relating their personal experiences in the case of the first two and projecting their fears in the third. In a sense they were reflecting the traditional socialisation process, even though it may not quite be the case:

Indoor/Safe/Female
Outdoor/Unsafe/Male

The bus stop, playground and the kidnap had very high threat perception for the girls. The girls belonged to middle and lower middle class backgrounds and are, therefore, more exposed to crowded localities, dependent on public transport and subjected to greater restrictions. They have to conform to certain rigid norms of behaviour. In their responses, the girls invested a higher degree of meaning in the drawings because they had higher personal stakes in them.

The girls responded to the `real' situations with raw emotions. All the friendly elements in the drawings were hardly referred to. Their reading is one-dimensional. But within a general agreement, differences appeared.

Kidnap: For instance, once they identified the kidnap scene as a typical crime situation, many and varied opinions were offered about the nature of the crime, the identity of the criminal, etc. Nearly every variable was employed, reminding us of similar readings in the serial-killer clip.

The man is a hooligan
He has some enmity with the adults
He was going to attack the dog with the knife
The dog must have bitten him
He wasn't attacking _the boy- he was explaining to him

In the **girl in the bedroom** scene, many lateral associations were made, some girls going as far as to discuss what ought to be done by the girl if the crime was discovered.

The scene was described in very "filmi' language but there seemed to be latent feelings here, something unspoken, unstated. As we said earlier, for girls, being alone is a scary experience. And their unease with a domestic situation seems quite evident here.

Their raw emotions were clearly in evidence in the **bus stop scene**. Here they described what happens to them very often at a bus stop_ how they have to fight for space, ward off aggression or even sexual harassment of the male.

It is clearly a harrowing experience. However, the Hyderabad kids, found the bus stop to be a completely non-threatening space. *"If they miss the bus then they will wait for the next one or take an auto…"*

In the **playground** drawing, the girls talked of how the boys occupied the play field or how their games invaded their homes in the form of a ball sailing through the window.

> A lot of people are trying to climb onto the bus. A boy and a girl are running. `Let us also get on to the bus'. But the boy does not allow them to get on. He stands and bars their way. The girl says, `put your hand down'. There can be a fight. The one who is not allowing them to climb on? He can push the girl and she can fall.

"It happens in our daily life. At the back of my house, boys used to play. They strike the ball with force. My mummy complains to their parents. Once an uncle slapped one of the boys."

In comparison, the older boys appeared to be more at ease with negotiating these situations, even when they read high levels of violence into them. They did not have multiple opinions on these predicaments either, unlike the girls.

This may be an indication of their internalisation of conflict and its presence in their normal, day to day lives, whether it is on the field of play or at the bus stop.

"Sometimes we face a situation, at play, the older children say, `move yaar, we want to play'. Then they say you can play with us the next time. But when the next time comes, they wander away."

"I am a very dangerous guy – I pick up the bat and hit back."

A similar kind of acceptance was apparent in their muted responses to the bus stop scene. In the classroom scene, the older boys were a little more uncertain of their ground. In this space, they felt challenged by the combined presence of the girls and the authority figure.

Overall, if there is one way to describe the boys overall response it was: boys will be boys.

The only drawing the children treated as a fictional story and constructed an entire story around with a beginning, middle, was the **kidnap scene**. The girls were the most inventive but the older boys and the younger children also responded to the violence in the drawing.

From their earlier descriptions of real crimes in relation to the serial killer clip and the fact that they were exposed to street violence, we expected personal anecdotes. However, they recounted it as a scene from a film, or another piece of fiction.

"There is a man with a knife. He says: Whatever money you have _hand over. The boy starts screaming: "Save me! Save me!" There is a car coming, it will save the boy. His life will be saved."

"Madam, this was a very deserted place. Suddenly, a car comes, a big man there is kidnapping the child, the dog is barking in warning _ the man must be a mafia man – he must have taken money for this."

The kid must have killed this older man's friend and now the man has come to take revenge. He will kill the boy and then run away with his dog. The police will follow him and eventually catch up with him and put him in the jail"

3.2.2.4.3   WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS INDICATE?

The drawings exercise was important in as much as it revealed differences which had not surfaced in the group discussions. Here we found age and gender variations were significant.

The children revealed strong, personal associations with the drawings, especially the girls whose threat perceptions were very high in drawings related to their every day lives, especially in Delhi.

Where there were weak personal associations, the children extrapolated from the media. Thus the boxing ring scene was directly lifted from *WWF*, the girl in the bedroom described as the scene from a film and the kidnap scene as a newspaper reported crime.

As an exercise to gauge their creativity, the drawings did not elicit much. Even the drawing of the snake and the child, which we had thought would evoke fantastic creations (especially in view of their fascination with the supernatural), the children failed to construct anything terribly inventive or original. There were however, some very striking regional differences. The children in Hyderabad, Lucknow and Kolkata came up with more childlike interpretations. The older children in Delhi and Ahmedabad resorted to more violent resolutions compared to older children in other cities.

This variation could be important. In our quantitative survey, children in the cities of Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Kolkata showed more of an inclination towards reading and watching children's TV programmes while in Delhi and Lucknow, the accent was on watching television, and that too adult serials. Could there be a correlation between these preferences and children's stories?

3.2.2.5.1   INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

3.2.2.5.2   Aim

❖ From the group situation of the FGDs we felt it necessary to move away to the individual interview. We wished to ascertain how far individual opinions either reinforced or differed from the views expressed in the FGDs.

❖ To specifically understand the dynamics of the child-adult-parent relationship on the issue of media impact. To assess the extent to which the adult's role as a gatekeeper is influenced by:
    (a) The adults viewing habits and preferences
    (b) Type of relationship they have with the child and the household pattern which prevails. How media is integrated into their lives.

❖ To assess how a child adjusts or adapts her/his viewing preferences, likes and dislikes in order to pacify the adult or to influence them in their favour.

❖ To corroborate at the individual level (child and gatekeeper) whether viewing patterns are as avid and all encompassing as had emerged in a group situation.

3.2.2.5.3   Key findings

Gatekeepers:
The dynamics in the children-adult-parent relationship depends on:

a) The type of relationship they enjoy. This could be with a parent, or a grandparent. Specifically, influenced by gender _ mother, father, grandfather and grandmother
b) Pattern of the household. These range from nuclear to joint with many in-between arrangements where elders residing in the same city or neighbourhood visit their children every weekend or live nearby.

The nature of parenting or gate-keeping thus varies from fairly decisive levels of control to a more general supervision, to specific responses to the needs of each situation.

What is common to all gatekeepers is a general sense of unease about television in relation to children. There is a feeling that children are being exposed to a barrage of images, messages and values.

When we try to unravel this general feeling, we find that the gatekeepers relationship with TV is quite discriminating. Some of the media content they are able to distinguish as very positive, stimulating and "good". For instance the approval of mythological serials and game shows like *Kaun Banega Crorepati* cut across men, women as well as parents and grandparents.

"When I watch Ramayana, I realise that although I know about it, the serial helps me to understand the minute details, which character said what, in what context was it said, what happened in different situations and if you are a practical person a lot of this becomes clear to you. It is not the same when you read about it", said an elderly gatekeeper. Showing a similar degree of enthusiasm to Mythologicals a mother said, *"We all like watching serials like Ramayana, Sri Krishna and Jai Ganesh."*

A similar measure of confidence and approval is also expressed about drama serials which propagate the "elderly" view. Commenting on drama serials, a grandmother said that the family is large and "yet everybody is so accommodating, everybody fulfils their responsibility. Tulsi (in *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi)* and the men have been depicted so well that barring one or two characters who are bad, it is a family that is worth viewing".

Why? According to her, because the "happy family is everyone's primary wish". The relevance of the serial, she feels, stems from the fact that since much of the familial happiness is determined by the "individual's nature and character", they succeed in showing to what extent the differences should be tolerated and when should a "person be told that it is not right".

In the case of the men, what is most useful on TV are sports and news programmes. Television can help "propagate competitive sports and make people realise that this is a very important aspect of life. It can also directly impact children motivating them to understand and participate."

To some gatekeepers the realisation that television has value, means they actively encourage children to watch certain shows. Not only "do I enjoy watching Mythological serials I also enjoy telling the children all the stories that I know around each of the characters", explained a mother. Agreeing with this a grandfather said that on "Sunday when some of the religious programmes come, I make it a point to watch with the children. I feel it is good that they should know something about their religion".

"On *Star TV*, when Amitabh Bachchan (in *Kaun Banega Crorepati)* poses the question, I motivate my son to choose from the options A, B, C and D and then when his answer is wrong we encourage him to learn the right answer", added a father.

However, this view is not shared by the grandmother who feels that "we do not have the same tastes. My tastes are different and the children watch what they like and I watch what I like. I may even decide to watch a programme on the *Discovery Channel*". Here the family structure influences the gatekeeper in many ways.

For instance, in the joint family situation where the family arrangements are partly nuclear and partly joint, it is clear that her role as a gatekeeper assumes many dimensions. To begin with, in a household where children have access to four televisions and personal computers she is not in a position to monitor their media habits or for that matter their television viewing habits.

When asked about what the children in her household watch, she was highly non-committal, not being in a position to name any specific programme. She could only indicate that "like all children they watch English musical videos, enjoy all the dance and song programmes, cricket match and films. The children end up watching the film on any TV set. As soon as they come back from school their first preference is for films. Even on the computer they put in the CD and watch a film".

In contrast, we have a mother who feels that she exercises a fair degree of control by monitoring not only what the children are watching, the time they spend watching it, but also actively relates their TV viewing habits to their other hobbies and pursuits. "They return from school, sleep for a while, do their home work, go out for a while, come back and study and start viewing *Kaun Banega Crorepati*". "They only put on the TV with my permission" she asserts. "When their father is watching they do not even enter the room unless they are specially called in. There is no question of even flitting in and out of the room" she states.

For a father who is out of the house for considerable periods of time, his familiarity with his children's habits at home, is quite poor. He lacks knowledge about the different TV programmes that the children watch so he is not in a position to regulate them. But as far as he is concerned if at any point of the day he has "to open the TV", he says " I will watch any news programme. Move from *Star* to *Aaj Tak* to even *Jain TV*". But when it comes to films or serials, he says, "I join my family for about 15-20 minutes and that too on the insistence of my younger child", but these do not sustain his interest.

3.2.2.5.4   Concerns

So what are their concerns? For the more elderly gatekeepers the key concern was indiscriminate watching by children. "I have found the little one watching for almost two hours and more. This is not good for the child", said grandfather. The grandmother felt that *"after returning from school they watch a film, they get so hooked to it that once the film gets over they watch a serial or any other programme they think is worth watching".*

Mother, on the other hand, was more concerned about television violence. *"Whenever I notice any violence I switch out of the channel",* she said. *"I feel that all this violence will imbue very cruel thoughts in the children".* Why does she feel that way? According to her when she first watched a "killing" scene she remembers that she "was so horrified, she did not want to see it" but now with constantly being exposed to such scenes of death, it has become so "habitual that one begins to feel that this is the way things are".

Similarly, with the constant exposure to TV violence children are "losing all the emotional sensitivity". Like adults they are beginning to feel that violence is natural. "There was a time when death was seen as something awesome but today children are so exposed to death they are quite matter-of- fact about it. Even when it happens in our own family, they don't seem to react". They behave as though it is an extension of what

is happening on television. The greatest concern is that "whatever children see on TV they tend to aspire for. Even the kind of family relationship they depict on TV is not possible for us to emulate".

Interestingly, a father feels most anxious about soft drinks advertisements which depict youth in all kinds of dare-devilry. "They leap and dive into and from a mountain to get a 'Fanta'. Such stunts then becomes popular among the young and they may even risk their life". On another occasion a parent found that his daughter was hankering for a brand of shoes which the ad had claimed had the power to walk up and across a wall. So fascinated she was by this stunt and this "false claim" that according to him if she had been given the shoe she would have "probably tried the stunt and fallen". But his primary concern is there is "too much vulgarity" on the media and this is not befitting a "developing country". Here we should talk about "issues that matter for our development".

3.2.2.5.5 Challenges

What do the gatekeepers perceive as their challenges?

Based on the experience of having to cope with a number of children in a joint family household, it was very clear to the grandmothers that children respond in different ways. The most addicted and fascinated by media is "my one and a half year old grandchild", she stated.

To all of them what seems to make the problem more difficult was their own inability to be consistent about the issue. There are self-doubts here and mutual recrimination too. "Even on holidays they (the parents) are so busy that they ask the little one to see the cartoon" complained a grandfather. She felt it is not possible to curb children watching films because the "adults also watch films and song-dance programmes". As a gatekeeper "much of the time one feels that we can do very little", a grandmother said. "This one and half-year old grandchild of mine will not listen. He knows how to switch on the TV, if we try and change the channel he will start crying, he never removes his eyes even for a moment. What can I do"?

For mothers it was more of a personal dilemma. With the children getting hooked to *Kyunki Saas Bhi* because of her viewing it in the afternoon. She realised that "unless I am willing to control my addiction to this serial I will not be able to stop my children. With the serial now going all over the place the children are being exposed to all kinds of situations which they are hardly able to understand and hence they put all kinds of questions to me particularly about extra-marital relationships. There are times when I am busy in the kitchen and they fill me in about the story".

Even more difficult to deal with is when children insist on watching a programme against the parent's wishes. "They insist on watching *Shaktimaan,"* admitted the mother. "This is where I find that if I exercise very rigid control I will appear unreasonable to them. Moreover, if they hear all the stories about *Shaktimaan* from

other children, they will get the feeling that their mother is against everything and this may also lead to a negative impression".

Another feeling amongst the gatekeepers is that the children have the tendency to imitate and copy what they see. This is, in one sense, "predictable behaviour" for them. "As soon as they watch *WWF* they immediately begin wrestling with each other" says the grandmother and the mother.

A mother responds in a more direct way. "When I saw *WWF* I found one person hitting one person and then a second person coming to the ring and hitting a second person, they were drawing blood and I decided that day that children should not watch *WWF*".

But according to a grandmother it is not the immediate effects that we should be concerned about. Much of the effects, she says, if there is any, will be long-term. Even this long-term effect will surface due to many other factors _ like a disturbed childhood. This is where she feels some of the related concerns also need to be addressed rather than focussing simply on the media.

The overwhelming challenge that all gatekeepers face is the growing burden of studies. Children are under a lot of undue pressure, parents are also finding that providing education has become an expensive proposition and something should be done to make the government accountable for providing more uniform standards and quality of education. For mothers particularly, this is a major worry.

A father on the on the other hand does not feel personally challenged on this issue. "When I come home the children are studying. They do talk about the cartoons they are watching. I listen to them but they do not watch TV when I am home. As far as guiding children are concerned, parents do have a responsibility and if a child behaves spoilt, the parents are to be blamed. The best way to counter TV is to ensure that children go to school regularly".

3.2.2.5.6   School Counsellor

Unlike the family gatekeepers, institutional gatekeepers, such as school counsellors, family therapists and other mental health professions are in the process of discovering that media presents a problem and then dealing with it.

Some micro studies and small interventions at the school level have been initiated by mental health institutions in different parts of the country to build some professional data on issues concerning children and media. However, the school counsellors have not yet really become involved in this matter. This is primarily because they are seen as professionals who are expected to play a conventional role of ensuring that children with distinct problems or `deviations' must be counselled and brought back into the school fold.

The school counsellor, we interviewed, realised that the media is playing a major role in shaping children's attitudes, perhaps going to the extent of reinforcing `deviations'.

But she did not have a well-thought out position on the linkage between media and problems that children faced.

She had instead a set of hypothetical linkages. This included a lack of adult supervision at home, or highly indulgent and protective parents.

Her observations on media concerns were based a little more on her own experiences. The counsellor observed that children have taken to watching a lot of family soaps that are actually very complicated family dramas. She had ambivalent feelings about these serials. At one level they can identify with these situations and the soaps can provide them with answers to similar situations in life. But most often, media does not provide the viewer with positive solutions, it triggers aggression, some kind of outlet is essential. You cannot tell a child, *apna gussa daba kar rakho*…According to a counsellor, media should provide solutions which favour positive rethinking.

She cites as an example, the fact that role models for girls in these serials are most often very submissive. At the end of drama serials, it is always the girl who compromises.

At another level, she felt the media makes the children more aware and stimulates their mind and arouses their imagination Exposure to media encourages them to be more "active", they become more articulate, speak their mind easily.

However, this can be double-edged. A growing child is naturally curious about sexual issues. Most parents do not discuss anything with them in a healthy way. The children turn to the media but here the parents keep saying "don't watch this channel". Therefore, the child will be very confused and keep yearning for that which has been forbidden.

She is also concerned about the impact of game shows on children. In the TV serials, young 20-25 year olds are shown to be very rich and *Kaun Banega Crorepati* and *Chappar Phad Ke* show children a way of making easy money. Naturally, children aspire to that lifestyle. Thus, media is encouraging a consumerist culture in children. They want expensive watches and shoes, a status symbol car, a lot of money in their wallets.

The counselor sees this consumer culture deeply influencing the children's life choices: when asked to imagine where they see themselves 10 years from now, the first thing they want is money followed by fame and only then job satisfaction. In terms of profession, boys in her school prefer to go into family business, hotel industry or computers.

Two kinds of jobs are attracting the girls today, the glamorous ones and those which require a tough assertive woman. The counsellor gave the example of how more girls are going to the Bangalore National Law School than boys.

3.2.2.5.7 What do the gatekeepers tell us?

The family gatekeepers interaction with their children in regard to media, depends on the nature of the household (nuclear/joint family/presence of grandparents). Every member also plays a different type of role: a mother role is seen as supervisory, a father is less involved and a grandparent's lies somewhere in between.

There are also differences in perspective: for example, the grandparents feel the parents are too lax in their supervision. However, beyond their differences, all the family gatekeepers feel their limitations as gatekeepers. For a variety of reasons, they feel they have not been able to play the kind of role they think they should.

To a very large degree, this limitation is related to their own media habits. They realise that their watching TV encourages their children to do the same. They know that their media preferences hugely influence their children's. They also realise that unless they are more discriminating, if they do not learn to control their media habits, they will not be able to intervene with the children. But whether this realisation will lead them to change in actual fact, is a moot point.

They also recognise that they have `spoilt' the child and now children are self-willed and that they cannot be controlled by the gatekeepers.

They feel the need to deal with each child as an individual, that each one has his or her own attitudes to media which have to be dealt with separately. You cannot club all children together.

The gatekeepers are worried about the indiscriminate viewing habits of their children, and their wilfulness in watching what they want. Violence on the media is a major concern primarily because they feel it is desensitising the children. Another major worry is that the impact of media is a long term one and linked to other factors which they cannot control.

However, it needs to be stressed that while they have these worries regarding the influence of media on their children, all the gatekeepers stressed that with regard to their children, scholastic performance was the single most crucial issue in their lives.

SECTION 4   CHILDREN AND OTHER MEDIA HABITS

4.1   INFERENCE DRAWN FROM THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY ACROSS THE FIVE CITIES

Technology Selection

Technology is a very important element in children's lives. However, a fairly healthy combination of old and the new activities persist in all the cities.

Generally speaking, one finds that B&W TV ownership is still reasonably high. The B&W TV owners are least cabled in Delhi. More than one TV in a household is an exception rather than a rule and a cable TV connection is high across the cities. Kolkata it is very highly cabled in spite of being high in B/W TV ownership.

Access to computers is essentially through schools. Kolkata has the highest percentage of those with no access to computers. Home PC owners are the highest in Ahmedabad followed by Hyderabad.

Other Media Habits

Media habits may be influenced by the nature of technology selection. We have seen that Kolkata is low on computer and video games. But indoor games continue to be enjoyed in Kolkata, far more than other cities with the exception of Lucknow. Web surfing is not very popular across cities, and computer use appears to be restricted to playing games.

While reading is a popular activity across cities, we have also found that it is primarily restricted to reading comics and magazines. Hyderabad children read the most. In the category of comics, Tin Tin which requires a more mature reader, is cited the highest in Kolkata. Regional language literature is also read the most in Kolkata. Children are not sharing books as much as they used to, instead buying books is more of a norm. In Kolkata books are being gifted to kids and in the light of their different reading habits, it would not be wrong to conclude that the culture of reading is being promoted by the adults in Kolkata, far more than other cities.

4.1.1   INFERENCE DRAWN FROM THE FGDS AND INTERVIEWS

Other Media Habits:

Reading

Reading primarily consisted of comics, magazines, storybooks and general knowledge books. *Chacha Chowdhary, Champak, Nagraj, Film Gossip Magazines, Panchtantra, Famous Five, History of India* were some of the books that were mentioned. Once again we see that reading is primarily related to comics and magazines.

Video / Computer Games

The most popular games named were *Mario, Captain Planet, Alladin, Prince, Duck Hunt, Car Race, Road Fighter, Contra, Motor Bike, Future Speed, Lion King, Bomber Man, Cricket, Baseball, Basket Ball, Badminton, Soccer.* Video and those who enjoy access to computers do enjoy games on CD-ROMs as well.

Even a cursory analysis of the games that have been mentioned suggests that the children are playing games with a fairly high violence content, most of these games consist of destroying your opponent before he demolishes you. Or else they are playing games like cricket, soccer, badminton on the computer, most often alone, rather than in the field with other children.

> "I play **Duck Hunt**, in that you have to shoot a duck and if you miss the duck then there is a dog which cries"
>
> "I really enjoy the game in which you have to kill your enemies with guns"
>
> "I like **Car Race** because I love pushing the button and the car goes…"
>
> I play **Contra**, in that you have to kill to gain power"

This could be due to various reasons, one, in the present urban scenario there are no open spaces left for children to play. Also, the outdoors is no longer as safe as it used to be and many parents would rather have their kids at home watching TV than letting them out of sight in some obscure playground.

One cannot deny the fact that today children are under a lot of pressure to perform well in school, and most often attend tuition classes right from early childhood.

Computer Activity

Children also played card games like *Solitaire & Hearts*. They use it for Drawing, Typing, Access to Sites like Cartoon Network & Yahoo, Download Games, Online Shopping. Net surfing is quite rare among this age group of children even though a few mentioned using it to access a couple of web sites or to send emails.

SECTION 5   THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

5.1   USEFULNESS AND THE SCOPE OF A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Baseline information on children's relationship with the media was needed for a backdrop against which their associations with specific imagery (around conflict and violence) could be understood and analysed. To this end, there have been several studies and researches around media and children. Among the representative studies are those conducted by UNESCO and by UNICEF-MAG in 1998. These, as others, have clearly established, on the basis of extensive research, some vital aspects of the child-media relationship. Some of the key findings being extensive television viewing by children across strata, a huge diversity across regions, the fact that television viewing as an everyday activity is eating into all other activities, the appeal and popularity of action, horror, mythological genres. Also, it has been successfully argued how 1998 was the watershed year as regards children's relationship with popular media.

It was therefore of interest to us how children's relationship has changed over the last three years. Also, given the aggressive media programming today and the producer's need to adapt to the changing consumer tastes and values, we could not have done without knowing the current preferences and habits of children in order to understand the extent of change. We thus decided in favour of a quantitative survey of overall media habits of children, the express purpose being to look at the currently prevailing trends and patterns therein.

Data, both quantitative and the qualitative, reveal a clear diversity across different cities and regions. This is evident in - availability of various media, usership patterns, and overall media habits. In a major way, the data is indicative of the demographic and socio-economic profile of the cities covered. Thus, Delhi - being a highly heterogeneous city where inmates enjoy not only a high level of anonymity but also at the same time a strong cohesion and bonding within the smaller groups (around ethnicity, region, sect, etc.) to which they belong, - is a site for intense exchange between diverse socio-cultural and other entities. In the case of cities like Kolkata, with a rather steadfast traditions and a population that has remained relatively homogeneous over years, we come across a clearly different set of facts as regards children's preferences, viewing patterns, access, etc.

The quantitative survey focuses on technology selection, viewing pattern, television viewing habits as well as other media habits of children. The survey was intensive, i.e. conducted with a small sample size. Nonetheless, sampling here was to represent the entire universe that we had set out to examine. The key sampling parameters were sex, age, SEC, access to media, media use, and geographical area, of the respondents. We conducted the study among 200 respondents in each city (1000 in all) and maintained parity in all the variables mentioned earlier.

This study is different from a typical quantitative study in that it provides multiple choices and pinpoints viewing preference through a series of open-ended questions.

Specifically, we explored through this exercise:

- Children's viewership pattern and changes based on weekdays and weekends

- Viewership as regards time spent and company

- Media preference: Films, TV, Reading, Video, Computers, etc.

- Content / Programme preference

- Preference across Genres, etc.

- Other activities

In what follows, we have displayed some of the more central aspects of children's media habits through comparative tables.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
TECHNOLOGY SELECTION (%)

Media Access

	TV TYPE		NO. OF TVs			NETWORK		COMPUTER ACCESS		
	B/W	C	1	2	More 2	CABLE	DD	HOME	SCHOOL	NONE
H	15	**85**	88	11	01	**96**	05	12	**74**	14
K	27	73	94	06	00	83	17	00	22	**76**
D	**32**	68	83	11	01	67	**33**	05	65	26
L	19	81	78	**19**	**03**	84	16	07	53	40
A	15	**85**	**96**	04	00	82	18	**17**	54	32
T	22	78	89	10	01	82	18	08	54	38

- 6% in Delhi have no TVs.

H–Hyderabad; K–Kolkata; D–Delhi; L–Lucknow; A–Ahmedabad; T-Total

Findings

A B&W TV ownership is still reasonably high at 22% with Delhi at the highest with 32%.

A More than one TV in a household is an exception rather than a rule with only 10% households across the five cities having 2 TV sets or more. Lucknow has the highest two-TV homes with 19%. This is perhaps explained by the considerable number of joint family households.

A Cable TV connections are very high in four cities with over 80% households in Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Lucknow possessing a cable connection. Delhi is the exception (67%) while Hyderabad is almost totally cabled (96%).

A Access to computers is high, standing at an overall 62 %, with Hyderabad enjoying the highest access. The access is primarily through the schools. Kolkata has the highest percentage of those children with no access to computers (76%).

A Home PC owners are the highest in Ahmedabad (17%) followed by Hyderabad (12%).

OVERALL, THERE IS VERY HIGH ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

SELECTION OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY IS MUCH HIGHER IN AHMEDABAD AND HYDERABAD.

THE OTHER TWO CITIES REGISTER A COMBINATION OF HIGH AND LOW CHOICE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY.

LUCKNOW AND KOLKATA ARE HIGHLY CABLED THOUGH LESS COMPUTER SAVVY.

DELHI REPRESENTS HIGH ACCESS TO COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY, THROUGH THE SCHOOLS, EVEN THOUGH IT IS THE LEAST CABLED CITY AND HAS MOST NUMBER OF BLACK AND WHITE TVs.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
VIEWING (%)

WATCHING TV ALONE

	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	**33**	**30**	**46**	**31**	**37**	**21**
Afternoon	17	17	13	20	21	18
Evening	07	07	08	06	08	04
Night	00	01	00	01	00	00

QUITE A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN PREFER TO WATCH TV ALONE IN THE MORNING**.**

WATCHING TV WITH SIBLING

	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	**28**	**31**	26	25	04	**55**
Afternoon	26	19	**47**	**32**	**13**	23
Evening	14	08	20	27	04	10
Night	02	02	00	03	04	02

KOLKATA VIEWERS DO NOT SEEM TO WATCH MUCH TELEVISION WITH THEIR SIBLINGS**.**

WATCHING TV WITH FRIENDS

	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	02	01	04	02	00	03
Afternoon	**12**	**09**	14	**04**	**03**	**30**
Evening	09	03	**29**	03	01	12
Night	01	00	02	02	00	02

KOLKATA VIEWERS HARDLY WATCH TV WITH FRIENDS. AHMEDABAD AND HYDERABAD VIEWERSHIP IS ALSO FAIRLY LOW.

WATCHING TV WITH PARENTS

	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	11	05	08	07	27	08
Afternoon	30	19	34	23	55	22
Evening	**48**	**35**	45	39	60	**61**
Night	44	17	**58**	**44**	67	31

VIEWERSHIP WITH PARENTS IS FAIRLY HIGH ACROSS CITIES. KOLKATA CHILDREN WATCH A LOT OF TV UNDER PARENTAL SUPERVISION.

WATCHING TV WITH ENTIRE FAMILY

	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	04	08	02	03	05	05
Afternoon	10	27	02	07	08	06
Evening	19	42	04	25	10	14
Night	**54**	**79**	**55**	**47**	**25**	**65**

THE FIGURES CONFIRM THAT WATCHING TELEVISION IS PRIMARILY A FAMILY AFFAIR. WATCHING TV ALONE IS ONLY SIGNIFICANT IN THE MORNINGS, AND AFTERNOONS WHEN THE ADULTS ARE BUSY WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES. BY EVENING CHILDREN AND PARENTS WATCH TV TOGETHER AND THIS CONTINUES INTO THE NIGHT. IN AHMEDABAD, VIEWERSHIP IS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY ACROSS TIME BANDS PERHAPS ALSO BECAUSE MOST OF THE HOME ARE SINGLE TV SET HOMES (96%).

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
ADDICTED* VIEWERS (No.)
(*Children watching more than 10 hours of TV)

WATCHING TV ALONE

	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	**06**	**39**	**05**	02	**05**
Afternoon	00	14	03	01	**05**
Evening	01	05	01	**03**	04
Night	00	00	00	01	00

WATCHING TV ALONE APPEARS TO BE A PREDOMINANTLY MORNING ACTIVITY, AS WE SAW IN THE PREVIOUS CHARTS. BUT INSPITE OF MANY CHILD-ORIENTED SERIALS AND SHOWS INCLUDING MYTHOLOGICALS, THERE IS NO HEAVY WATCHING IN THE MORNINGS.

WATCHING TV WITH SIBLING

	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	**04**	14	00	00	**11**
Afternoon	**04**	**42**	**04**	**04**	08
Evening	01	15	01	01	04
Night	00	00	00	02	01

DELHI HAS THE MOST ADDICTIVE VIEWERS OVERALL AND WITH THE SIBLING ACTIVITY.

WATCHING TV WITH FRIENDS

	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	00	00	00	01	02
Afternoon	**02**	12	00	**02**	**06**
Evening	00	**33**	**01**	00	03
Night	00	04	00	00	01

WATCHING TV WITH PARENTS

	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	01	05	00	00	04
Afternoon	01	16	02	00	04
Evening	**06**	30	**04**	01	**13**
Night	03	**34**	01	**10**	05

EVENING AND NIGHT IS WHEN CHILDREN WATCH TV WITH PARENTS.

WATCHING TV WITH ENTIRE FAMILY

	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Morning	02	02	00	00	04
Afternoon	03	02	00	01	04
Evening	04	01	00	00	05
Night	**09**	**55**	**10**	**07**	**22**

Total Number of Addicted Viewers:
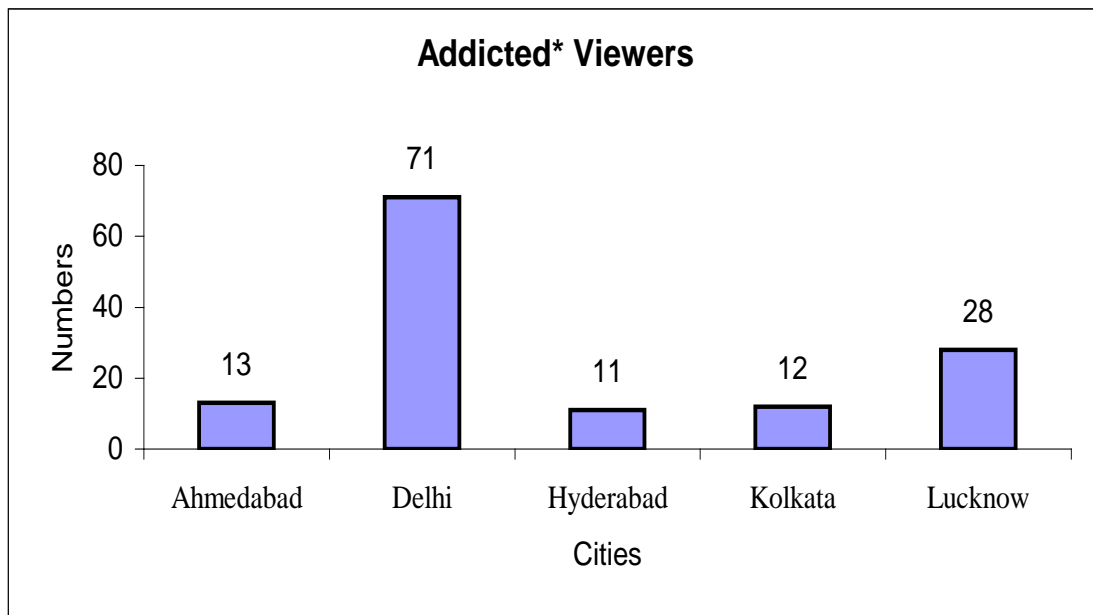
* Children watching more than average 10 hours on weekend

MOST ADDICTED VIEWERS WATCHING OVER 10 HOURS OF TELEVISION ON THE WEEKENDS ARE FROM DELHI. IN SUBSEQUENT DATA, WE WILL FIND THAT DELHI CHILDREN WATCH A GREAT DEAL OF TV INDISCRIMINATELY, AND GENERALLY WATCH MORE TELEVISION. CHILDREN IN AHMEDABAD, KOLKATA AND HYDERABAD ARE LESS ADDICTED.

WHAT IS INTERESTING ABOUT THESE STATISTICS ON ADDICTED VIEWERS IS THAT THEY DIFFER VERY LITTLE FROM THE PATTERN OF VIEWING OF CHILDREN NOT ADDICTED TO TV. IT IS SIMPLY THAT THEY WATCH MORE.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
THE ONE FAVOURITE PROGRAMME (%)

Ahmedabad		Delhi		Hyderabad		Kolkata		Lucknow	
Kyunki Saas Bhi	**34**	**Kyunki Saas Bhi**	**10**	**Kaun Banega Crorepati**	**12**	**Kaun Banega Crorepati**	**13**	**Kyunki Saas Bhi**	**18**
Shaktimaan	08	**Kaun Banega Crorepati**	**10**	Veedhi	08	Shaktimaan	08	Kaun Banega Crorepati	06
Sonpari	04	Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	09	Kyunki Saas Bhi	07	Cartoon	06	Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki	05
Cartoon	04	Shaktimaan	08	National Geographic /Discovery	05	Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	05	Tu Tu Main Main	05
Popeye	04	Tu tu main main	05	Tom & Jerry	05	Batman	04	Shaktimaan	05
Kaun Banega Crorepati	03	Aahat	03	Cartoon	05	Mickey Mouse	04	Cartoon	04
Kahani ghar ghar ki	03			Shantiniwas	05	Disney Hour	04		
Tu Tu Main Main	03			Kaun banega crorepati junior	05	Kyunki Saas Bhi	04		
Kora Kagaz	03			Sonpari	05				

- **About 50% of the mentioned serials fall into the category of adult family drama**
- **In the above table only 6-9 serials have been mentioned because we have not included those serials which have been mentioned by less than 3% of the respondents**
- **On an average about 10 serials represent 55% of the universe, the remaining 45% is represented by 120 different serials which goes to show how diverse and extensive viewing is today**
- **Only one comedy has made it to the list of favourites, that too *Tu Tu Main Main* which focuses on the adult theme depicting the mother-in-law-daughter-in-law relationship**
- **Delhi tops the list of children viewing Family Drama with *Shaktimaan* being the only exception**
- **In the three cities of Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad nearly 50% of the choices are for children's programmes. Cartoons are popular.**
- **Only in Hyderabad, do local Telugu serials like *Veedhi* and *Shantiniwas* make it to the favourite list**

HIGH INCIDENCE OF FAMILY DRAMA AROUND ADULT THEMES BUT KOLKATA AND AHMEDABAD INDICATE A HIGHER PREFERENCE FOR CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES. THE PATTERN OF PREFERENCE MIRRORS THE TAM/INTAM TRP RATINGS AS WELL. THIS INDICATES LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN THEIR VIEWEING HABITS.
STAR PLUS HAS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF SERIALS NAMED BY THE CHILDREN.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
CORRESPONDING FAVOURITE CHANNEL (%)

Ahmedabad		Delhi		Hyderabad		Kolkata		Lucknow	
Star	**52**	Star	**34**	Star	**36**	Star	**26**	Star	**43**
Cartoon	19	DD2	21	Cartoon	17	Cartoon	**26**	Cartoon	16
Sony	08	Sony	10	Sony	06	Sony	12	Sony	12
DD1	08	DD1	09	DD2	05	DD2	09	DD2	11
DD2	04	Cartoon	08			DD1	08	Zee	08

- The favourite channel across cities is Star Plus. Cartoon Network is next except in Delhi.
- DD Metro is preferred in Delhi.
- Sony is fairly popular across cities.
- Zee finds mention only in Lucknow. This mirrors the ground reality: Zee programmes are not high in the TRP ratings and few Zee shows figure in the children's favourite shows.

<p align="center">**ENTIRE UNIVERSE**
THREE PREFERENCES (%)</p>

Ahmedabad

1st		2nd		3rd	
Kyunki saas bhi	**10**	**Kaun banega crorepati**	**08**	**Kaun banega crorepati**	**09**
Kundali	07	Kundali	07	Kyunki saas bhi	08
Kaun banega crorepati	06	Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	07	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	05
Jeeto Chappar phar ke	05	Kyunki saas bhi	05	Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	04
Maan	04	Kahani ghar ghar ki	04	Junior G	03
Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	04	Tu tu main main	04	Kahani ghar ghar ki	03
Tu tu main main	03	Shaktimaan	04	Tu tu main main	03
Boogie Woogie	03	Dushman	03	Aahat	03
Amaanat	03	Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	03	Dushman	03
Disney Hour	03	Hum sab ek hain	03	Shaktimaan	03
Shaktimaan	03	Junior G	03		

Delhi

1st		2nd		3rd	
Kyunki saas bhi	**10**	**Kaun banega crorepati**	**08**	**Kaun banega crorepati**	**09**
Kundali	07	Kundali	07	Kyunki saas bhi	08
Kaun banega crorepati	06	Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	07	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	05
Jeeto Chappar phar ke	05	Kyunki saas bhi	05	Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	04
Maan	04	Kahani ghar ghar ki	04	Junior G	03
Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	04	Tu tu main main	04	Kahani ghar ghar ki	03
Tu tu main main	03	Shaktimaan	04	Tu tu main main	03
Boogie Woogie	03	Dushman	03	Aahat	03
Amaanat	03	Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	03	Dushman	03
Disney Hour	03	Hum sab ek hain	03	Shaktimaan	03
Shaktimaan	03	Junior G	03		

Hyderabad

1st		2nd		3rd	
Kaun banega crorepati	**16**	**Kaun banega crorepati**	**11**	**Kyunki saas bhi**	**16**
Kyunki saas bhi	11	Kyunki saas bhi	09	Kaun banega crorepati	11
Veedhi	04	Kahani ghar ghar ki	08	Tu tu main main	05
Kaun banega crorepati Junior	04	Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	05	Aahat	05
Shaktimaan	03	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	04	Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	03
Sonpari	03	Tu tu main main	04	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	03
Dushman	03	Cartoon	03	Kahani ghar ghar ki	03
Shriman Shrimati	03	Veedhi	03	Veedhi	03
Pavittrabandham	03	Athamma	03	Shantiniwas	03
		Shantiniwas	03		

Kolkata

1st		2nd		3rd	
Shaktimaan	**08**	Shaktimaan	**08**	Kaun Banega Crorepati	**08**
Kaun Banega crorepati	07	Kaun banega crorepati	07	Aahat	06
Junior G	07	Kaun Banega Crorepati Junior	07	Kaun Banega Crorepati Junior	04
Boogie Woogie	05	Kahani ghar ghar ki	03	Vishnu Puran	04
Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	05	Tom & Jerry	03	Bournvita Quiz Contest	04
Aahat	04	Kundali	03	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	03
Tom & Jerry	04	Maan	03	CID	03
Kahani ghar ghar ki	03	Junior G	03	Boogie Woogie	03
Hindi Films	03	Cartoon	03	Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	03
Kaun banega Crorepati Junior	03	Janamabhumi	03	Cartoon	03
Matches	03			Mickey Mouse	03
Popeye	03			Junior G	03
Bounvita Quiz Contest	03				

Lucknow

1st		2nd		3rd	
Kyunki saas bhi	**16**	**Kyunki saas bhi**	**09**	**Kahani ghar ghar ki**	**07**
Kaun banega crorepati	08	Kaun banega crorepati	07	Kyunki saas bhi	06
Kahani ghar ghar ki	07	Kahani ghar ghar ki	07	Tu tu main main	06
Tu tu main main	06	Maan	05	Disney Hour	05
Shaktimaan	06	Kalash	04	Kaun banega crorepati	04
Kundali	03	Shaktimaan	04	Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	04
Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	03	Boogie Woogie	03	Kalash	03
		Family no.1	03	Shaktimaan	03
		Sonpari	03	Sanskruti	03
		Koshish ek aasha	03		
		Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli	03		
		Junior G	03		
		Suraag	03		

- ONCE AGAIN, FAMILY DRAMAS CONSTITUTE THE MAJORITY OF PREFERRED PROGRAMMES. THE THREE PREFERENCES CORRESPOND TO THE EARLIER MAIN PREFERENCES. KOLKATA IS THE ONLY EXCEPTION, JUST AS IT WAS IN THE ONE FAVORITE PROGRAMME. THE OTHER CITIES ARE PRIMAILY WATCHING SIMILAR SHOWS.

- ONLY A FEW REGIONAL SERIALS ARE MENTIONED IN HYDERABAD AND KOLKATA AND NONE IN AHMEDABAD WHICH IS SURPRISING CONSIDERING THESE THREE CITIES HAVE ACCESS TO MANY REGIONAL CHANNELS.

- WHILE ZEE IS LARGELY ABSENT, DD2 SERIALS HAVE MADE STRONG SHOWING. GIVEN THAT THE SERIALS BELONG TO THE `GOLDEN HOURS' BELT INTRODUCED IN SEPTEMBER 2000, LESS THAN ONE YEAR BEFORE THIS SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED, DD2 HAS DONE EXTRAORDINARILY WELL. IT REINFORCES THE POPULARITY OF FAMILY DRAMAS.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
CHOICE BETWEEN SERIALS/FILMS (%)

Serial/ Film	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Aahat	08	04	12	11	07	08
Kaun banega crorepati	**29**	19	**31**	**33**	**40**	24
Kyunki saas bhi	17	20	16	23	10	18
Mohabbatein	23	25	19	20	22	**30**
Raju Chacha	18	**29**	19	13	11	19

- AMITABH BACHCHAN IS THE HOT FAVOURITE WHETHER FROM *KAUN BANEGA CROREPATI* OR *MOHABBATEIN. RAJU CHACHA*, A FILM PRIMARILY FOR CHILDREN, CAPTURED THEIR IMAGINATION AND WAS QUITE POPULAR ACROSS CITIES.

- IF YOU COMPARE THE FIGURES FOR TV SHOWS AND FILMS, IT IS EVIDENT THAT TV HAS BECOME ALMOST AS POPULAR AS FILMS WHICH WAS CERTAINLY NOT SO EARLIER.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
CHOICE BETWEEN FILMS (%)

Film	Overall	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Mission Kashmir	23	**27**	20	21	23	27
Hum dil de chuke sanam	17	20	11	27	13	17
Titanic	**35**	25	**39**	**32**	**48**	**29**
Raju Chacha	23	**27**	29	20	13	27

STRANGELY ENOUGH, *TITANIC* CONTINUES TO BE THE FAVOURITE FILM EVEN AFTER OVER THREE YEARS. A GRAND FILM DEPICTING MASS DESTRUCTION, IT HAS CERTAINLY MANAGED TO INFLUENCE YOUNGSTERS. THE FACT THAT IT HAS BEEN SHOWN REPEATEDLY ON DIFFERENT TV CHANNELS, AT FREQUENT INTERVALS, COULD ALSO BE THE REASON BEHIND ITS POPULARITY. IT HAS ALSO BEEN DUBBED IN HINDI AND, THEREFORE, HAS A WIDER REACH.

ACTION FILMS SEEM MORE POPULAR THAN CHILDREN'S (*RAJU CHACHA*) OR ROMANCE (*HUM DIL DE CHUKE SANAM*). ACTION FILMS AND FAMILY DRAMAS ON TV ARE THE FAVORITES. TODAY, FAMILY DRAMAS ARE BEING SEEN AS ACTION-ORIENTED, FAMILY CONFLICT AND STRATEGISING IS CONSIDERED AS EXCITING.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
PREFERENCE ACROSS GENRE (%)

Genre	Ahmedabad		Delhi		Hyderabad		Kolkata		Lucknow	
Cartoon	**Tom & Jerry**	13	**Mickey Mouse**	19	**Tom & Jerry**	33	**Tom & Jerry**	26	**Disney Hour**	18
	Cartoon Disney Hour	12	Disney Hour	18	Popeye Disney Hour	19	Mickey Mouse	19	Tom and Jerry	16
	Tin Tin	11	Duck Tales	11		13	Popeye	06	Popeye	10
		09								
Mythol ogical	**Sri Ganesh**	23	**Sri Ganesh**	20	**Jai Ganesh**	21	**Jai Ganesh**	21	**Sri Ganesh**	13
	Jai Mata di	16	Jai Mata di	18	Jai Mata di	12	Jai Mata Di	12	Ma Shakti	07
	Jai Hanuman	12	Ma Shakti	13	Jai Hanuman	10	Jai Hanuman	03	Jai Hanuman	06
Horror	**Aahat**	18	**Aahat**	29	**CID**	28	**Aahat**	40	**Aahat**	33
	Suraag	10	Suraag	09	Aahat	27			Suraag	11
	CID	12	CID	07	Kahin kisi roz	10			Shaktimaan	06
Thriller	**CID**	37	**CID**	27	**CID**	49	**CID**	25	**CID**	40
	Suraag	17	Suraag	05	Aahat	19	Suraag	19	Suraag	04
Action	**WWF**	24	**Shaktiman**	22	**WWF**	71	**Shaktiman**	28	**WWF**	24
			Hindi Film	06			Hindi Film	05		
Film Based	**Boogie Woogie**	28	**Comedy**	29	**Songs**	50	**Hindi Film**	04	**Boogie Woogie**	36
	Songs	19	Action	09	Boogie Woogie	15			Songs	05
	Chitrahaar	06							Antakshri	05
Game Show	**Kaun banega crorepati**	58	**Kaun banega crorepati**	35	**Kaun banega crorepati**	70	**Kaun banega crorepati**	47	**Kaun banega crorepati**	35
	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	28	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	20	Kaun banega crorepati Junior	12	Kaun banega crorepati Junior	15	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	20
			Bol Baby bol	06	Jeeto Chappar phar ke	09	Boogie Woogie	07		
			Matches	05						
Family Drama	**Kyunki saas bhi**	27	**Tu tu main main**	14	**Tu tu main main**	21	**Kabhi sauten kabhi saheli**	11	**Kyunki saas bhi**	27
	Family no.1	24	Family no.1	11	Kyunki saas bhi	20	**Kyunki saas bhi**	11	Tu tu main main	10
	Kahani ghar ghar ki	16	Kyunki saas bhi	08	Matra Devta	13	Kahani ghar ghar ki	08	Family no.1	10
			Kundali	07	Family no.1	12	Janamabhumi	08	Kahani ghar ghar ki	09

Category	City 1		City 2		City 3		City 4		City 5	
Comedy	**Tu tu main main** Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	**52** 08	**Tu tu main main** Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	**22** 06	**Tu tu main main** Banjari Bamma Small Wonder Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	**30** 13 11 09	**Tu tu main main** Family#1 Ji Mantriji	**15** 03 03	**Ji Mntriji** Tu tu main main Family#1 Hum Paanch	**21** 19 08 07
Film	**Comedy** Action	**22** 08	**Mohabbatein** Hindi Flms Mission Kashmir Kaho Na Pyar Hain	**20** 06 05 05	**Hindi Films** Telugu Film	**63** 29	**Hindi Films** Kaho na pyar hai Mohabbatein	**15** 13 12	**Comedy** Hindi Film Mohabbatein	**38** 21 08
Informative	**National Geographic/Discovery** Animal Planet	**18** 17	**Aaj Tak** News	**24** 11	**National Geographic/Discovery** Animal Planet	**41** 13	**National Geographic/Discovery** Animal Planet	**38** 12	**Animal Planet** National Geographic/Discovery Kaun Banega Crorepati	**05** 04 03

CARTOON
- Old favourites, *Tom & Jerry* and *Mickey* continue to thrill children even in this age of highly specialised animation.
- Spinach eating *Popeye* is a favourite in Hyderabad.

MYTHOLOGICAL
- Kolkata is low on viewing mythologicals.
- Hyderabad children are more aware of different serials as compared to Kolkata kids.

HORROR SERIAL
- *Aahat* is a popular serial even though it does not feature as prominently amongst the most preferred serials, awareness level is quite high in all the cities.
- There is high recall of horror serials even though they may not be mentioned in the list of favourites.

THRILLER
- *Aahat* makes an appearance again.
- *CID* is also quite popular.

ACTION
- *WWF* continues to be the popular action serial.
- Interestingly children in Kolkata prefer horror and thrillers to action and mythologicals.

FILM BASED
- In Kolkata film based shows draw a blank.
- In other cities there is once again a high recall of film based programmes.

GAME SHOW
- With the overwhelming popularity of *Kaun Banega Crorepati*, game shows appear to be the most popular genre.

FAMILY DRAMA
- Awareness levels of family dramas is high.
- 44 different serials have been mentioned in this category.

COMEDY SHOW
- 27 different serials are mentioned by Hyderabad children alone.
- *Tu Tu Main Main* is a favourite.

FILM
- Kolkata was our last Centre to be researched, *Lagaan* had by then captured people's imagination.

INFORMATIVE PROGRAMMES
- Children across centres enjoy these channels
- Delhi children, being in the capital, seem to be more interested in current affairs than children in other cities.

THE FIGURES REVEAL THAT THE CHILDREN ARE CONVERSANT WITH A LARGE UNIVERSE OF TV PROGRAMMES. IN EVERY GENRE THEY NAME SHOWS, STATE PREFERENCES, SUGGESTING ONCE AGAIN, AN EXTENSIVE VIEWING PATTERN.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
WOULD NOT WATCH (%)

Genre	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Cartoon	13	00	02	11	06
Mythological	08	02	11	62	27
Horror	31	**05**	19	35	32
Thriller	24	03	15	36	38
Action	**41**	03	11	43	**43**
Film based	09	04	07	**74**	21
Game show	06	01	01	06	13
Family drama	09	03	01	38	04
Comedy	03	00	03	47	04
Film	00	**05**	01	13	02
Informative	26	01	**25**	29	38

- A LARGE MAJORITY IN KOLKATA WOULD PREFER NOT TO WATCH MYTHOLOGICALS AND FILM-BASED PROGRAMMES.

- THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO WOULD NOT WATCH GAME SHOWS IS INSIGNIFICANT AS COMPARED TO OTHER GENRES.

- DELHI CHILDREN APPEAR TO BE THE LEAST DISCRIMINATING IN THEIR VIEWING HABITS.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
OTHER PREFERRED ACTIVITIES (%)

Activity	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Read	**56**	**38**	**65**	**46**	23
Computers /Video Games	23	35	28	08	23
Indoor Game	18	22	06	45	**51**
Web Surfing	03	01	01	01	02

WE HAVE SEEN THAT KOLKATA IS NOT VERY COMPUTER SAVVY. INDOOR GAMES CONTINUE TO BE ENJOYED IN KOLKATA, FAR MORE THAN OTHER CITIES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LUCKNOW.

WEB SURFING IS NOT VERY POPULAR ACROSS CITIES. COMPUTER USAGE APPEARS TO BE RESTRICTED TO PLAYING GAMES. WHILE READING IS A POPULAR ACTIVITY ACROSS CITIES, WE HAVE ALSO FOUND THAT IT IS PRIMARILY RESTRICTED TO READING COMICS AND MAGAZINES.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
WHAT ARE CHILDREN READING (%)

	Ahmedabad	**Delhi**	**Hyderabad**	**Kolkata**	**Lucknow**
Comic/ Magazine	76	76	74	28	**81**
Story Books	12	20	17	**43**	18
Regional Literature	08	00	02	**28**	00
GK Books	04	04	**06**	01	01

Comics / Magazines:
Champak, Chacha Choudhary, Nagraj, Nandan, Chandamama, Tin Tin, Panchtantra, Phantom, Twinkle

Story Books:
Detective, English Classic, Nancy Drew, Folk/Fairy Tales, Famous Five

Regional Language Literature:
Sukhtara, Anandamela, Rupkatha, Enadu Jyothi

General Knowledge Books:
GK Books, Science Books, School Books

COMICS ARE READ THE MOST ACROSS CITIES. IN KOLKATA ALONE, CHILDREN READ MORE STORYBOOKS. REGIONAL LANGUAGE LITERATURE IS ALSO READ THE MOST IN KOLKATA.

ENTIRE UNIVERSE
SOURCE OF BOOKS (%)

Activity	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Hyderabad	Kolkata	Lucknow
Library	15	23	19	10	11
Friend	15	18	12	13	18
Bought	**50**	**24**	**35**	**71**	**52**
Gift	05	02	07	16	12

❖ Being gifted a book continues to be a part of the larger tradition in Kolkata and also Lucknow.

❖ Children are also buying a lot more books in Kolkata followed by Lucknow and Ahmedabad.

❖ Reading library books is more popular in Delhi

CHILDREN ARE NOT SHARING BOOKS AS MUCH AS THEY USED TO, INSTEAD BUYING BOOKS IS MORE OF A NORM. IN KOLKATA BOOKS ARE BEING GIFTED TO KIDS. THIS FITS IN WITH THE FACT THAT CHILDREN IN KOLKATA ARE READING MORE BOOKS THAN COMICS AND MAGAZINES. WE CAN CONCLUDE THAT THE CULTURE OF READING IS BEING PROMOTED BY THE ADULTS IN KOLKATA, FAR MORE THAN OTHER CITIES.

## BLACK & WHITE TV VIEWERS PREFERENCES (%)

Favourite Programme

	Delhi	Kolkata	
Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	13	13	Shaktimaan
Shaktimaan	11	11	Songs
Kyunki Saas Bhi	10	09	Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli
Maan	06	07	Mickey Mouse
Kalirein	05	05	Disney Hour
Dushman	05	05	Aahat
Kaun Banega Crorepati	05	05	Junior G
Kundali	03	04	Kaun Banega Crorepati
Mehendi Tere Naam Ki	03	04	Batman
Hum tum ek camere mein band hon	03	04	Kyunki saas bhi
		04	Bournvita Quiz Contest
		04	Popeye
		04	Boogie Woogie

- In Delhi with the exception of *Kyunki Saas Bhi, Kaun Banega Crorepati* and *Mehendi Tere Naam Ki* all the other serials, except for *Shaktimaan* which is on DD1, are from DD Metro.
- Since this is the least cabled group, the choice of serials can be understood because it is terrestrially available.
- In Delhi other than *Shaktimaan* 13%, all the other choices do not represent children's programmes.
- In Kolkata as high as 46% of the programmes listed as favourites belong to the genre, Children's Programmes.
- In Delhi and Kolkata the first three serials account for only about - 34% of the entire universe.
- The next seven serials comprise of a fairly large 30% of the universe in Delhi.
- The next nine serials in Kolkata account for as high as 40% of the remaining universe.
- The remaining 36% in Delhi and 27% in Kolkata is represented by 85 and 82 different serials which indicates how fragmented and diffused viewing is today.

IN KOLKATA CHILDHOOD DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE LOST TO ADULT TELEVISION PROGRAMMING. CHILDREN CONTINUE TO WATCH CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES UNLIKE THE DELHI KIDS WHO WATCH PRIMARILY ADULT PROGRAMMES.

VIEWING TODAY IS EXTREMELY FRAGMENTED AND DIFFUSED AND AS MANY AS 95 DIFFERENT SERIALS ARE MENTIONED AS FAVOURITE, ACROSS CITIES. THE COLOUR TV VIEWING IS EQUALLY FRAGMENTED.

BLACK & WHITE TV VIEWERS
FAVOURITE CHANNELS (%)

Black & White TV viewers Favourite Channels (%)
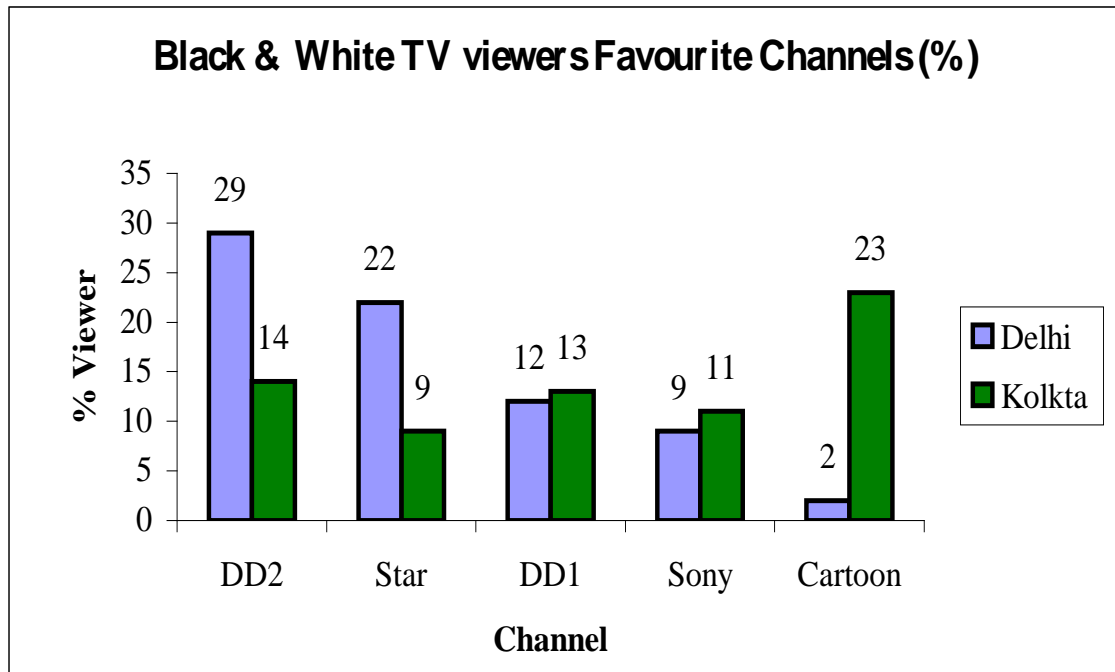
A   DD2 & DD1 appear to be more popular with B/W TV owners in Delhi

A   Delhi is also least cabled therefore the choice of channels can be understood since
these two channels are available terrestrially, without a cable connection

A   Cartoon Network is immensely popular in Kolkata

A   Star is far more popular in Delhi than Kolkata

CHILDREN IN KOLKATA PREFER CARTOONS WHILE THOSE IN DELHI PREFER SERIALS
ON DD2 / STAR, PROBABALY FOR THEIR FAMILY DRAMA CONTENT. THIS FITS IN WITH
THEIR FAVOURITE PROGRAMME CHOICES.

BLACK & WHITE TV VIEWERS
THREE PREFERENCES (%)

Delhi

1st		2nd		3rd	
Kyunki saas bhi	**10**	**Kundali**	**12**	**Junior G**	**08**
Kundali	**10**	Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	09	Kaun Banega Crorepati	07
Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	08	Chonch Lari Le Chonch	09	Kyunki Saas Bhi	07
Maan	08	Kyunki Saas Bhi	06	Jeeto Chappar Phar Ke	05
Kaun Banega Crorepati	06	Dushman	05	Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	05
Shaktimaan	05	Hum Tum Ek Camere Mein Bandh Hon	05	Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki	05
		Maan	05	Zindagi Milke Bitayenge	05
		Shaktimaan	05		

Kolkata

1st		2nd		3rd	
Junior G	**14**	**Shakalaka Boom**	**09**	**Aahat**	**05**
Tom & Jerry	09	**Janamabhumi**	**09**	**Shaktimaan**	**05**
Shaktimaan	07	Shaktimaan	07	**Mickey Mouse**	**05**
Maan	05	Kaun banega crorepati junior	07	Junior G	04
Kaun banega crorepati	04			Cartoon	04
Kundali	04			Kaun banega crorepati	04
				Kundali	04
				Kaun banega crorepati junior	04

- Most of the serials are from Doordarshan and Star
- Choices get more and more fragmented and diffused. The 6 serials mentioned as part of the first choice in both Delhi and Kolkata represent only 6% of the total number of serials mentioned by the children. 95 different serials represent the total category of favourite serials
- Similarly, the second choice is represented by 7% and 4% in Delhi and Kolkata respectively
- Finally, the 3rd choice is represented by 8% and 7% respectively by Delhi and Kolkata
- The preference of Delhi viewers is primarily for serials from the genre, family drama

- The preference of Kolkata viewers consist mainly of serials from the genre, Children's Programmes and Game Shows

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE THREE SERIALS, *SHAKTIMAAN, KAUN BANEGA CROREPATI* AND *KUNDALI,* ALL THE OTHER TOP CHOICES DIFFER ACROSS THE TWO CITIES, VINDICATING OUR CONTENTION THAT IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT VIEWING PATTERN ONE HAS TO BRING INTO FOCUS NOT THE MAJORITY CHOICES BUT THE ENTIRE UNVIVERSE OF PREFERENCES.

BLACK & WHITE TV VIEWERS
PREFERRED SERIALS ACROSS GENRE (%)

Genre	Delhi		Kolkata	
Cartoon	Mickey Mouse	31	Tom & Jerry	30
	Disney Hour	16	Mickey Mouse	29
			Duck Tales	14
Mythological	Jai Mata Di	22	Jai Mata Di	05
	Sri Ganesh	19	Om Namah Shivay	04
	Jai Ganga Maiya	19		
Horror	Aahat	14	Aahat	34
	Suraag	12	Sangdil	05
	Soch	12		
Thriller	CID	17	CID	20
	Suraag	09	Suraag	18
			Khoj	09
Action	Shaktimaan	24	Shaktimaan	43
			Batman	10
Film Based	Action Film	45	Hindi Film	08
	Comedy	10		
Game show	Kaun banega crorepati	31	Kaun banega crorepati	27
	Jeeto Chappar Phar Ke	14	Kaun banega crorepati jr	18
	Bol Baby Bol	12	WWF	11
			Matches	11
Family Drama	Kundali	16	Janamabhumi	14
	Tu Tu Main Main	12	Kabhi Sauten Kabhi Saheli	09
			Kyunki Saas Bhi	09
Comedy	Tu Tu Main Main	16	Tu Tu Main Main	05
	Hum Tum Ek Camere Mein	12	Rango Ras	04
	Bandh Hon		Ji Mantriji	04
Film	Hindi Films	10	Mohabbatein	14
			Kaho Na Pyar Hai	13
Informative	News	17	National Geographic	30
	Aaj Tak	12	/Discovery	

MOST OF THE CHOICES APPEAR TO BE SIMILAR FOR THE TWO CITIES. THIS CLEARLY INDICATES THAT WHEN IT COMES TO THE TOP ONE OR TWO PROGRAMMES FOR THE DIFFERENT GENRES IN EACH CITY, CHILDREN ARE WATCHING MORE OR LESS SIMILAR PROGRAMMES.

SECTION 6   ABOUT THE STUDY: METHODOLOGY

6.1   NEED FOR THE STUDY

This is not a longitudinal study of the kind conducted in the West as detailed above in the **Overview**. Therefore, we have not looked at the issue from a long-term perspective on the impact of media violence on a child's behavioural patterns.

We have sought to see *how media violence is perceived and articulated by the children in relation to their attitudes and perceptions*. Through this process the effort is to arrive at a primary understanding of how media violence and aggression is perceived and then related to the children's lives and environment. The questions we asked ourselves were: if children were watching programmes/serials, films and playing computer or video games with high degrees of aggression and violence, what sense did they make of it? Did they connect it to their lives? In what way did it influence their perception of the world around them?

Our emphasis was not to be on getting the children to articulate what the impact - beneficial or harmful – of media is but to understand it's magnetic, compulsive, addictive effect on them.

As primary research, this is **a benchmark study**, in qualitative terms, to assess the relationship between children and media. It is clearly depicted through various existing studies around children and media that this phenomena goes beyond culture, strata, circumstances, etc. It thus becomes necessary to go beyond identifying the problem or associating the problem with one of the variables such as class, educational level etc. and to address it at the level of media. Therefore a **study across regions /cities, strata, environment**, etc. that *builds on the earlier studies* in order to tell us about what is working with children and figure out *where we need to make the intervention*, is very vital and necessary.

6.2   OBJECTIVES

To do an action research project across five representative cities _ Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad _ in order to:

> ➢ **Research Objectives**

- Examine the *relationship* that disparate groups of young viewers and associated adults have with specific, highly rated popular images, messages, stories that celebrate, signify violence as a vital and intrinsic aspect of human lives.

- Understand what *aspects of the media representation of violence* work with and attract viewers, and how.

- Establish in qualitative terms, the **potential impact** of the media violence on different groups of children across age, gender, etc.

> ➢ **Intervention-centred objectives**

< Conceptually evolve an *intervention* that the above mentioned sections can address *at the level of **media education***.

< Develop an ***advocacy strategy*** that will address the representatives of the media industry, policy makers as well as civil society.

6.3 METHODOLOGY

It was clear from our purpose that the study had to be based on a thoroughly qualitative investigation. In fact, the means of such an investigation often needed to be a free-flowing interaction with children and adults. It was because the **qualitative investigation** in this study had to go beyond merely administering open-ended (yet highly structured) questions, and attempt at identifying all the programmes, episodes, story lines, dialogues, action, background effects, music, etc. where the viewer recalls *association of fear, aggression, competitiveness, anxieties, etc*.

Research Design: Evolving the tools of Investigation

Why?
♦ Absence of comparable qualitative studies
♦ The quickly changing media environment: content, audience and technology
♦ Need to specifically define qualitative tools such as FGDs, interviews.
♦ Need to tailor quantitative survey to support qualitative study.

Nonetheless we did need a current benchmark as regards the overall media habits of children that comprehensively illustrated their preferences, viewing patterns, etc. With this objective, we built into the study **a quantitative survey** on media habits of children. As would be dealt in detail later, this survey was conducted with a sample that was concentrated yet neatly representative of the universe that we set out to examine.

6.3.1 Preliminary Spade Work: Evolution of investigation methods

Work on the research study commenced in January 2001 by when we began **broad-basing the research team.** Consistent and regular representation in the research team was sought from the diverse streams of media research, market research, human psychology, and media monitoring and parenting. Committed unequivocally to the purpose of the study, this team brainstormed on ways of going about conducting the study. In order to devise an investigation process that centred around the child's point of view, it was only appropriate that we involved children from the very beginning of the research process.

Accordingly **informal interactions with groups of children** from three diverse set-ups (professionally, socially, educationally and economically diverse) were conducted. These interactions were held in both natural settings (children's neighbourhood) and formal settings (research team's locale).

These were a series of unstructured focus group discussions (FGDs) with children between the ages of 6-12 from different parts of Delhi and from discrete backgrounds:

Unstructured Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):
(a) Random TV clips (b) Situation Reaction Test

Press Enclave (professionals), Dakshinpuri (upwardly mobile lower middle class) and Rajouri Gardens (entrepreneurs and business households).

The groups were not entirely cohesive in terms of age or gender because the intention was to conduct an on-the-spot, spontaneous meeting without too much artifice and too many conditions.

6.3.2 Aim of preliminary interactions

A)   To **cue into children's current media habits** (tv, video and computer games, readership, films, internet, etc.) - current preferences, time slots for using /accessing media, other usership patterns like company, etc. These were ascertained largely through discussions. The discussions many times were generated by activities which included showing of pre-recorded television images, making them play computer games, letting them draw sketches, etc.

B)   To decipher and understand **the manner in which children tend to relate to different media, outlets, imagery /content**. Establish their access to and usage of other media such as Internet, computer or video games _ and the quality of that interaction.

How did the interactions help to formalise the research tools?
Demographic sample: Investigations revealed that AI-A2/ B1-B2 (boys and girls aged 6-12 yrs) shared a relatively common media experience, specifically with regard to television _ in terms of access and viewing habits. The differences which existed in terms of age, gender and strata were equally important for other reasons.

What do they like, what excites them, do they play alone or with others, what, if any, is the nature of parental supervision, etc. For instance, we found that computer games that thrive on a spirit of die-hard competition that requires a zealous and reckless pursuit to win /succeed are immensely popular and extensively accessed by children in families of professionals.

C)	To use and test the validity /effectiveness of some **techniques of qualitative investigation**. Thus, showing of pre-recorded television images and the situation reaction test (SRT) techniques were used. Images chosen for showing to children were from different genres of popular television, dealt with different themes and varied in language, treatment, elements used, etc. In the SRT, Children were given verbally real-life situations with potentially violent /conflictual elements to respond to and deconstruct.

Besides informing the process of devising the investigation and analyses approach, method and processes, these interactions were also aimed as much at guiding us monitor the media. To share some of the **findings**:

a)	Irrespective of age and background, the children were completely at ease with the audio-visual media, thus showing **an immensely evolved reception** resulting in a **highly selective exchange with media** whereby they could spontaneously and often subconsciously pick up and /or register parts of the content of interest to them and very swiftly escape at what was not. This ranged from TV and video games among children living in resettlement colonies to the more sophisticated computer games popular with middle class children.

In the case of boys, neither age nor background, made any appreciable difference to their programme preferences or choices. Middle class girls were a little more circumspect when listing their favourite programmes or computer games.

b)	It was clear from their knowledge of programmes and their list of preferences that their **viewing habits were diverse and all encompassing**: they were watching TV shows across channels and time bands, irrespective of genre.

Equally revealing was that despite such prolific viewing habits, the children were reticent about naming a programme or a character until they were specifically asked to discuss their viewing preferences. This could very well have been due to the 'outsider effect' of the research team.

Boys mostly preferred action. They named films such as *Godzilla*, *Titanic*, *Terminator* and TV shows such as *WWF*, *Spiderman* and channels like *Cartoon Network*. Girls went for drama with TV serials such as *Small Wonder*, *Tu Tu Main Main*, *Heidi*, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, and *Discovery Kids*. While this may indicate a certain gender trend in preferences, we did find a significant overlap. Also, when other programmes were named, all the children spontaneously discussed them, revealing the width and breadth of their viewing habits and in-depth knowledge of their story lines.

c)	The children revealed **a high recall of horror and action** programmes. Much of this recall related to finer details about a remembered incident, a specific sequence, a character, etc.

They also made **instantaneous associations** with programmes of the same or similar genre, on and off the air. For example, when they recounted how a particular horror serial frightened them, they did this by relating their fears to other horror/ suspense serials.

In the SRT /'what would you do?' exercise we made two observations. First, the children permitted themselves flights of fancy and responded to the group situation by exaggerating their responses. This was especially true of the boys who tended to get carried away. The girls were far more circumspect in their responses. However, after the initial hyperbole, all the children offered practical solutions which conformed to acceptable norms of behaviour.

d) In terms of group dynamics, it was clear that the younger children were very keen to display their interest and participatory skills. This was particularly apparent in the case of video games which they were particularly excited about. "Video games are fun because we can attack, destroy and kill and if necessary even defend; it is within our control".

In the case of computer games, a demonstration by a group of boys, who played their favourite computer games in our presence was very lively, making it easier for us to understand why these games were exciting them and are so addictive.

Even when describing the television programmes they were watching, there was a strong sense of participation. This went beyond mere identification of programmes and plots. They held strong opinions or judgements and analysed the character or situation ruthlessly. This could range from programmes like *Shaktimaan* to *Boogie Woogie* or *Cartoon Network*.

e) There seemed to be little adult supervision. The children spoke of their studies, homework and tuition, which dominated their daily schedules. But they still had a **great deal of time for watching TV on a regular basis**.

6.3.3   Development of a media monitoring guide: Based on the five informal interactions with groups of children and successive brainstorming by the research team, a monitoring guide was developed that clearly laid down parameters along which monitoring had to take place, in particular of the television media as this was the only media accessed overwhelmingly across sections of children.

6.3.4   Development of investigation guides and procedures: All   the   above cumulatively resulted in the devising of a basic investigation procedure and techniques. This comprised in the development of an FGD guideline, an interview guide and formalisation of the SRT technique in the form of images /sketches on paper.

6.4   Why strict market research standards?

While the monitoring and the preliminary unstructured interactions with discrete groups of children continued, it was becoming increasingly clear that especially as far as sampling, or more specifically, the categorisation of respondents was concerned, we needed to adopt the existing parameters and variables that guides contemporary researches, studies, ratings, etc. in and around media. Media world over engages market research to do user profiling, ranking as also area studies and other related benchmarks. The aim most often is to facilitate programming. More so, these research techniques and norms have over time been standardised. This standardisation makes the different perspectives of analysis coherent, and thus also more acceptable.

This study, in essence, was aiming to understand children's relationship with media, and based on this facilitate a set of interventions. In all likelihood, the target groups for these interventions were to be children, adults, gatekeepers and the media itself, aside some constituencies at the policy formulation levels. It became imperative therefore to adopt a language that they, especially so the media, understand easily, i.e. use standards, techniques and tools of sampling, investigation and analysis that are widely accepted, notwithstanding certain inherent weaknesses in these.

6.5   PRE-TEST

The investigation procedure and techniques devised were put to test in a mock /simulation exercise conducted by the research team. Previous interactions with children and broad trends revealed by the monitoring process informed the conduct of this group discussion.

6.5.1   Outcome   Apart from giving valuable information on children's perception of conflict and violence and its linkages with the depiction on media, this **mock exercise** clearly brought out the following.

- Children need to be cued into talking media in as natural and unimposed a manner as possible. This essentially was to ensure an environ conducive to spontaneous responses by children.
- The overall attention span of children in a group interaction like this was considerably limited.
- The need to break the interaction into short sessions each with different focus. Most children, beyond a certain time, appeared to loose interest in going on talking about their relationship with media.

6.5.2   Devising techniques and aids for investigation

Extensive consultations based on how the mock exercise faired yielded that a carefully selected set of television images can be used to specific purposes in the FGDs. The two purposes were, one to bring children naturally to talk about their overall media

relationship and two to delve into their understanding of the imagery dealing with various facets of conflict and violent situations.

Additionally, this technique helped by completely relaxing the children in the groups. Importantly, it afforded to the facilitators and observers a first hand account of the group composition in terms of association with imagery, spontaneous reactions that specific images generate, etc.

Given the two specific purposes of using television images, we began a process of selection of images into two broad groups. One was a short montage built of images from various programmes popular with children while the other consisted of four sequences depicting conflict and or violence with different perspectives and in differing settings.

Based on how children responded to the sketches on paper, most of these sketches were redone to bring about a proportionate depiction of the various elements within each.

Montage Purpose: Build up naturally a subject matter for group discussion; Cue children into talking media; Build a 'relaxed' atmosphere

Clips Purpose: To gather first hand response to different images dealing with conflict and violence with each one highlighting one of the three, namely conflict motive, use of elements to depict conflict /violence, and use of violence for resolution of conflict.

Apart from providing valuable information on children's media preferences which reinforced our preliminary research, the children provided invaluable information about their **perception of conflict and violence** and their linkages with its depiction in the media. Particularly on the relationship between media violence and real life, we realised that an issue of this kind evoked many kinds of thoughts, experiences, comments, and that for purposes of this study it had to be carefully designed to ensure that the response is within a certain paradigm that the study was seeking to explore.

Drawings: When we explored these issues in the mock FGD, in terms of methodology it was clearly revealed that in a group situation the children's approaches to issues and problems were often shaped by each other's views rather than the problem per se and it was difficult to gauge individual responses. This observation led to the decision to devote a part of the FGD to **an individual exercise** which took the form of creating stories out of eight different sketches /drawings that we distributed among the children.

This reality check (we realised) needed to investigate at two levels. Firstly, to relate the **appeal and response** that some types of programs and images evoked to similar personal experiences and association they may have. Secondly, to gauge whether independently of the media and its images, their **reaction to daily travails and challenges** is in any way different, and whether they feel that fact and fiction especially about violence and aggression, are poles apart or a mirror reflection.

Two factors made us conscious of the strong possibility of the latter. Over the last few years, there has been a strong presence of reality TV using the docu-drama format to

telecast serials about the real world of crime and violence (e.g., *Bhanwar*, *Agnipariksha, India's Most Wanted, Haqeeqat*). Secondly, we had the admission by people in the TV industry, that many of the predicaments in their soaps were directly lifted from human interest stories reported in the newspapers or which they had heard about in their neighbourhood.

6.5.3   METHODS

This research study employed the following **tools of investigation**:

1. Quantitative survey in 5 cities for an overall media profile of the children in each city

2. An in depth qualitative investigation. This formed the fundamental and major part of the study.

Qualitative Research

In the qualitative section, besides semi-participant observation, we employed two tools:

(A) Focus group discussions with children (**FGDs**).

(B) Individual **interviews** with children and gatekeepers separately.

Quantitative Survey
Main objective is to relate media access, habits to individual preferences and quantify what active choices were being exercised in regard to content.
To use market research techniques, and yet explore scopes beyond merely numerical data on viewership, in which there is in fact no scope for individual ratings.

6.5.3.1 Focus Group Discussions

A structured, focussed exercise
Group simulations: TV clips
Individual simulations: Drawings

Television is a mass media. To that extent, TV viewing is a shared collective experience _ even when you watch it alone _ because millions of people are watching the same programme at the same time in their own environments. The Focus Group Discussion was chosen as a tool of analysis to understand both the **collective response** and within that framework, **individual differences**.

The FGD was considered ideal for the study because group dynamics facilitate the momentum of in depth investigations.

Each FGD consisted of several distinct **segments**.

(i) **General introduction**: It had several purposes: to allow the children to get to know each other, and for the research team to understand the group composition and dynamics. To break the ice, the general introductory discussion centred on the children's daily routine and gradually zeroed in on their media habits. There was an in depth exploration of the children's personal associations with other media such as film, computer and video games or reading.

(ii) **TV montage**: Children watched a montage of TV clips. The montage was used to trigger off **initial and spontaneous responses** to television. The montage was used as a general, semi-aided tool to understand the children's personal relationship with the media and get an idea of the group characteristics.

> **TV became the focal point** of the investigation because it represented a centrality of experience across age, gender, socio-economic parameters and cities. It is the dominant media in terms of popularity, content and imagery.
>
> **Montage**: Represented the general universe of TV on the basis of popularity, genre, channels and noticeable presence of violence.

(iii) **Clips**: Four different clips were chosen in this section. These clips had been carefully selected for in depth discussions in order to test and explore our hypotheses on the impact of media violence on children with specific attention to the **children's mediation of media violence** and to what extent they had internalised it.

> **Selection of montage clips**
>
> Different genres: drama, suspense, horror, reality, animation
>
> The most popular genres, the most dominant across channels. Over 50 per cent of prime content is drama followed by news, comedy and suspense.
>
> Cartoons target children and are very popular with them and include comic violence.

The important elements in each of these clips were the following:

❖ What are the **motives** behind the actions in the clip?
❖ How are the situations **resolved** in each clip?
❖ What are the various levels of **violence?**
❖ Does it look possible/**real**?
❖ What are the **elements** that heighten the children's perception of violence?

In each of these clips, there are **elements** which are more prominent than the other-viz.

1. Step Mom: **Motive** of anger, resentment and insecurity

2. Monster Duck: Animated, comic violence and **levels of aggression/elements**

3. Serial Killer: **Resolution** of Conflict/ reality/ elements

4. Match Fixing: **Real situation** with a focus on senseless anger and verbal aggression.

(iv)   Drawings

Specific Aim: Eight sketches were specifically designed for study. Both age groups used them. Since the purpose of the study is to explore the media's impact on children's imagination and attitude/perceptions, we used this exercise to try and understand the **interplay of the media and reality**. In the child's perception, what does it take for one to negate or reinforce the other.

The sketches were evenly divided between **indoor and outdoor situations** to see if there was any difference in perceptions between the two spaces in the children's perceptions.
Also, by and large, the sketches depicted normal, every day routine scenes/situations *familiar* to the children e.g., classroom, bus stop, playground and TV at home, girl in bedroom.

In a few sketches, there was **a hint of tension**. This was to provide momentum to the static pictures, to stimulate the children's imagination, to analyse their immediate associations and see how they interpreted the tension: e.g., the girl in the bedroom had red colour on a cloth and the window was wide open. In the classroom scene, there is an incomplete sentence on the black board. In the TV at home scene, there is a gun on the TV screen.

A few drawings went *beyond the familiar*. One sketch had an element of fanstasy/folklore, e.g., the child and the snake, while another depicted the sport of boxing which was *familiar* to children though only through the media. One sketch contained obvious elements of potential violence. This was to provoke a response to a **dangerous situation** with some degree of probability.

6.5.3.2   Individual Interviews

Specific aims: A series of individual interviews with children and gatekeepers was felt necessary. We wished to receive individual responses, unmediated by group dynamics and see how far these differed or reinforced opinions expressed in the FGDs.

We also wanted to specifically understand:

- the dynamics of the **child-adult-parent relationship** on the issue of media impact
- To assess the extent to which the adult's role as a gatekeeper is influenced by:

  ➢ The adults viewing habits and preferences
  ➢ Type of relationship they have with the child within the household routine and how media is integrated into their lives.

- To assess how a child adjusts or adapts her or his media habits, likes and dislikes in order to either pacify the adults or influence them in their favour.

6.5.3.2.1.   The Interview Format

For the above purposes, the interview format was somewhat different from the FGDs.

A.   Interview with Children   For the children, the interview followed this format:
❖ An introductory discussion centred around general **media habits** in children's lives.

❖ Next, the children carried out a fill-in-the blanks exercise to gauge their immediate word and psychological associations. Those associations were later explored in some detail.

❖ Lastly, the children were asked to interpret and deconstruct a collage which had pictures from different media. The idea was assess their familiarity with the pictures in the collage, their associations with any of them, their ability to relate its different elements. Their **negotiating skills in mediating media to reality** via their personal experiences or imagination.

B.   Interview with Gatekeepers   We chose to speak to parents, grandparents, teachers/school counsellors because they represented the most important **adult presence** in the children's lives.

There was a general discussion on the media, with emphasis on their personal and professional opinion of various media and what they thought of the media's influence and role in children's lives. Every effort was made to let the gatekeepers express their views without being prompted. The intent here was to establish and understand their standpoints vis-à-vis the media.

6.5.3.3   Mock Exercises   The investigation procedure and techniques devised were put to test in a mock/ simulation exercise conducted by the research team. Two FGDs and four interviews were thus conducted in Delhi. This helped further refine and hone our investigation approach. This also underlined the need to keep a tab on the fast changing content on the media and user preferences.

7.1   DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN IN THE STUDY

7.1.1   SEC

Traditionally, market research studies employ socio-economic indicators _ such as A1, A2, B1, B2 classifications _ to select and categorise a sample. We chose to follow the same parameters for this impact study primarily because we aimed to establish general trends, rather than individual experiences.

An ethnographic approach would have limited the universe of the study, making it difficult to arrive at overall patterns. Most international research in impact studies aim for homogeneity for this precise reason. As stated earlier, since we also wished to compare or contrast this study with worldwide research, we chose internationally accepted standards.

These were the main reasons for selecting children who belonged to the A1-A2 and B1-B2 SEC. This restricted the sample to children with more or less **similar life experiences**, a certain degree of **homogeneity in socio-economic terms** which translated into comparable media habits and therefore, makes it possible to study impact in a general way.

We chose an average urban, middle class (upper to lower) media experience that included the presence of different media such as computer, video games, Internet and TV.

For better group dynamics we decided to have respondents from a common background in each of the groups. The A1-A2 and B1-B2 classification was thus ideal.

7.1.2   AGE

The 6-12 age group is crucial insofar as all data indicates **high levels of TV consumption** for them. These are the most impressionable and formative years for a child. Hence, any research on media must concentrate of them.

There is also a growing acceptance of the need to modify the conventional definition of adolescence which held that it coincides with the primary teen years. But recent evidence indicates boys and girls experience puberty at younger ages than previous generations and this has profound emotional and psychological consequences. Adolescence can no longer be discretely defined by age, puberty alone but must be viewed in the context of other **socialising factors** such as family, gender, class etc. (WHO, 1977)

In the preliminary meetings with children before the study began, we discovered that children within this age group **watch a great deal of television**, throughout the day.

Television ratings also indicate high viewership for children and their preference for both children's and adult programming. This is confirmed by the fact that advertisers, too, place ads for children's products with adult shows. Furthermore, our quantitative study confirms that **prime time family dramas** and a few comedies are the most popular genres amongst children.

Children in the age group 6-12 were chosen and divided into two groups: 6-9 years, 10-12 years. In terms of group dynamics it was not possible to combine children aged 6 with children aged 12. Also, what may apply to children between 6 and 9 may not necessarily be applicable to the older children. Children below the age of 6 were not included, because their ability to articulate their reactions is limited and their opinions and media habits would be heavily influenced by older siblings or adults in the family.

Children older than 12 years of age were not considered because it was felt that they would have been entering another stage and their readings and perceptions would have been significantly different from the younger children.

The younger children all attended school between Standards 1-6, while the older children were in Standards 5-7. The schools were either government-aided schools or private/public institutions/missionaries, but not A1+ schools which cater to the very rich. To that extent, there was no wide disparity between the children who participated in the discussions. In terms of access to technology (TV, computers or Internet) at home, school or in the neighbourhood not much difference was noted.

7.1.3 Gender

For the younger age group (6-9 years), we had mixed groups as the children were too young to be inhibited by gender awareness. Furthermore, in preliminary meetings with children prior to the pilot study in Delhi, we discovered that mixed groups helped boys and girls to respond with far greater enthusiasm than in a single gender group.

In the case of the older children, the opposite appeared true. We therefore, had discrete boys and girls groups. Also, one of our objectives was to see if there are any gender differences in perception/responses and it is in this older age group, that the sense of masculine and feminine identities, begins to take shape.

7.1.4 The cities

A *regionally representative character* of the sample was the first guiding parameter. UNICEF's study has conclusively demonstrated stark **regional variations** as regards media access, preferences. We wished to see if responses to media were also very different.

The **pilot study** was conducted in Delhi. The primary reason being the convenience of the research team which is based in Delhi. Secondly, Delhi is representative of high media access, a cosmopolitan and a pluralistic middle class, representing diverse communities.

The other cities selected were Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Kolkata and Hyderabad. These represent the geographical classifications of north, south, east and west. In purely **media terms**, we were looking for regional as well as language differences within geographical classifications. While Lucknow represents the heartland of Hindi speaking India, the other three cities have strong regional media presence and access: Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Hyderabad have access to private, regional language channels as well as Hindi and English channels. Ahmedabad and Hyderabad have high and diverse cable TV access, while Kolkata has been cabled by RPG and, therefore, represents a city with a homogeneity in terms of the channels people receive by cable.

In **economic terms**, there were also some variations in the profile of the middle class of these cities. Since our entire sample was middle class based, these differences in the economic status of each city, was an important variable. According to a recent NCAER study, the southern region shows a significantly high increase in the percentage of the Lower Middle and Middle Income households. In contrast the Eastern region shows the least increase in the Upper Middle Income group with the Western region accounting for the highest.

If we look at specific city variations:
Hyderabad: In the decade preceding 1995-96, the population expansion rate (in terms of its population as a share of the country population) is the highest among 12 major cities of India. Aside the four metro cities, its population is the highest of all cities. A rather strange aspect of this city is that in the one-decade period, the **composition of its population in terms of the income groups has remained unchanged**. All other cities show significant changes in the proportion of at least one income group.

Ahmedabad: The percentage of the Lower Middle Income households in the city is the highest of all the cities. It shows a **drastic decline in the percentage of the Lower Income group households**.

Lucknow: The only city that shows a **considerable increase in the proportion of the Lower Income Households**. Most other cities in fact show a decline in the percentage of this income group. The only city other than Mumbai that shows a **decline in the Middle to High Income Group households**.