Television Violence 3 Essay, Research Paper

Television Violence

Society was changed forever through the invention of the television. We now have access to information across the globe and entertainment around the clock. At what point has the industry crossed the line in television entertainment? Mentally or physically we all at some point or another want to be like the television personalities we see on a daily basis. No one is more influenced than the impressionable youths who are raised by the television rather than their parents. After all, television is America s baby-sitter.

The entertainment media plays an extremely powerful role in the formation of values and morals of today s youths. Television violence affects youngsters of all ages from all walks of life. Today s children and teens are subject to vast amounts of violence on TV. They are being fed a steady flow of death, murder, blood, and other grotesque acts. These disruptive viewings can eventually take a toll on a person and the way they view life some day. For instance TV cartoons feature-dehumanized characters, such as transformers and the ninja turtles, which are engaged in destructive acts of violence and mutilation. MTV s Beavis and Butt-head encourage fire, smoking, foul language, drinking and condone stealing. Is this what we want our society especially our younger generation to be subjected to?

Children watch and are enthralled with action and killing. Later they graduate to other TV programs that depict actual live human beings killing or degrading others. Inevitably some youngsters will actually try to imitate the brutality in real life. For example, youngsters do indeed try to mimic and imitate cartoon characters such as Beavis and Butt-head . One day, a five year old boy watched his favorite cartoon, Beavis and Butt-head and saw the characters pull one of there famous arson stunts. The result? He set his house on fire and his younger sister was killed. Three teenagers in Minnesota, imitating a scene from Walt Disney s The Program laid down on the centerline of a two-lane highway and was eventually squashed to death. The entertainment media does not think about the consequences of what they portray to young people until death occurs. It is not until then that the entertainment media realizes that what they put into these shows actually affects the lives of children.

However it is important to realize that not necessarily all children and teenagers view these shows and try to imitate the violence and gore. The healthy American family is not going to go out and purchase Uzi s just because Arnold Schwarzeneggar looks so cool wielding one. But the psychological effects between reality and television are more intertwine than one might think. In this society massed produced and mass consumed movies, books and TV programs are a considerable part of our real lives. Television contributes greatly to making us behave and act the way we do.

An hour of talk show shock and humiliation may attract television viewers, but it often leaves guests feeling mad, angry and humiliated. The most noteworthy example of this is the Jenny Jones talk-show murder of March 1995. A taping of the Jenny Jones show featured secret crushes. To guest Jonathan Schmitz s surprise, was male Scott Amedure. Schmitz expecting a female admirer was shaken. Claiming that the embarrassment from the shoe had eaten away at him Schmitz drove to Amedure s home and killed him with two shotgun blasts to the chest.

However questionable the methods, these talk shows are a dominant force on daytime TV. More than 20 different show battle for ratings. Controversial and confrontational topics often yield the highest ratings. With topics ranging from teenage pregnancy and spousal abuse to women who let their men have sex with other women and confronting the person who dumped you Its not hard to see all that all the entertainment media is after is the highest ratings. Two facts remain about talk shows through all of this those are confrontation makes for high rating and presumably good TV, but as in the Jenny Jones murder can sometimes have horrifying consequences.

Children follow what they see done and everyone knows that example is a powerful teacher. If a child sees something and it is portrayed in a good light than if the child respects that person than he or she is likely to emulate him. This can be a good thing if children were not constantly fed violent act after violent act.

When the entertainment industry shows violence more than likely it was intended for a mature audience or they do not feel it will impact a child in a serious manner. Therefore, the broadcast companies continue to air these things. All of TV need not be censored however adult shoes should not be shown during the prime hours that children watch TV. The educational shows meant for youngsters are also not good. Most are in the morning or at hours most kids are not awake, like at seven o clock in the morning. Others are on later, but at times where children especially the target group are in school. Most after school programs are not educational. The only exception is Saturday. One day out of the week the broadcasters will attempt to show educational programs when children will watch them.

Lets take little Jimmy Smith for example. Jimmy is twelve years old. Jimmy comes from a good home with two loving parents. He has friends, a dog, and a little brother. Jimmy has just moved into a new town and a new house. His parents want a good home for their family and decide to both get jobs to bring in some extra cash for the new house. His parents agree that Jimmy is old enough to take care of his little brother until his mother gets home around six. They figure that they have television to keep them occupied.

Jimmy gets home from school around three followed by his little brother Chris. They both sit down and watch television until their mother gets home. Jimmy flips through the channels. He feels far too old for Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers and he just grew out of the Power Rangers stage. He decides he is old enough to watch and adult show. As he is surfing he come across a popular gang movie called the Warriors. He sees these gangs have power over the community and is almost above the law. He witnesses the glamorous killings of rival gang members. He decides that he wants to be in a gang. Halfway through the movie he goes to his fathers study and grabs his father s gun that he knows his dad hides under the desk. He tells Chris to respect his authority and invites him for a taste of what will happen if he doesn t. Pointing the gun at Chris it accidentally goes off.

The question of what can and should be done can be crucial to solve the dilemma of TV violence and its impact on society. Removing all violence and gore from all TV would make no more than a small dent in the massive problem of crime. Much more fundamental changes in society are needed. America is a democracy. We have a right as citizens for reasonable legislation, compatible with the first amendment to turn back the tide of violence. The main objections raised to any legislation of TV violence are that it violates the first amendment. The first amendment argument is simply a smokescreen used by the entertainment industry, which blocks any appropriate governmental actions. I feel that to relieve society of this influence action toward censoring should be taken.