The influence of hollywood on society essay

Toward the end of his tenure as President, Bill Clinton said " Our children are being fed a dependable daily dose of violence – and it sells". He was referring to the genre of action movies which are targeted at male teenage adolescents. To place this statement in context, Clinton was speaking one month after the tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado. He further went on to say " We have got to quit fooling around with this. I know this stuff sells, but that doesn't make it right." (Cain, p1, 1999) This assessment did have an immediate impact, as the Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission got together to conduct a thorough study of how " entertainment firms market violence to children" (Cain, p1, 1999). But more importantly, it is an unequivocal acknowledgement of the negative influence of Hollywood on society in general and teenage boys in particular.

Violence and anti-social behavior shown in Hollywood movies had even united the usually bipolar American polity, as both Republicans and Democrats hoped to " hold Hollywood accountable for its gratuitous violence in movies, television shows, video games and recordings". (Cain, p1, 1999) Douglas Lowenstein, former head of the Interactive Digital Software Association put the core issue succinctly, when he said " What kind of values are we promoting when a child can walk into a store and find video games where you win based on how many people you can kill or how many places you can blow up? The nation should not lose sight of the fact that parents, not kids, buy most games. And therefore, keeping games not appropriate for children out of their hands starts and ends at home". (Cain, p1, 1999) Hence, while Hollywood is the instigator of this unsavory tendency among teenage boys, skillful parenting can keep a check on their children.

The concerns raised by the country's leaders are not without merit. For example, several studies have shown a positive correlation between violent programs (including movies, television and digital media) and violent behavior among children. Furthermore, " children under the age of 18 were the victims in nearly 20 percent of the violent crimes committed by criminals now in state prison, and that more than half of the juvenile victims were 12 or younger" (Smith,, 2001, p. 321). Children who come from a dysfunctional family environment or have been abused physically or sexually are particularly prone to be affected. The gravity of the situation can be learnt from the fact that the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has spent close to $300, 000 for further research.

The later part of the 20th century had seen a disturbing development. The greatest threat to the health of American adolescent boys in recent decades is violence induced injuries and death. And popular culture, in the form of action movies and gangster music videos, has largely contributed to this development. During the 1990's, nearly 70% of all teenage deaths are a result of violence – accidents, manslaughter, homicides, etc. In 1994 in particular 357, 000 teenagers were assaulted badly enough so as to require emergency medical treatment. A further 3569 of them eventually succumbed to their injuries. Adding to the alarm, the number of juvenile arrests for violent crimes during the year was recorded at 150, 000 that included 6000 rapes and 85, 300 aggravated assaults. The years following 1994 had seen similar statistics. (Rich, Woods, et. al. 1998, p. 671)

Video games have been shown to have a malefic effect on race relations and male-female relationships. Teenage boys' approaches to conflict resolution

are also vulnerable to the impact of such depictions in music videos. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association, among other medical organizations, have taken this seriously. So much so that health care professionals are informing their patients that media exposure in general and video games in particular are risk factors for general well-being. (Rich, Woods, et. al. 1998, p. 672) If the sheer volume of violence and anti-social messages in these genres of entertainment are not bad enough then manner in which it is portrayed undermines interpersonal relationships and hence regarded as critical factors in children's health and risk behaviors. In trying to address this issue, the counselors, school authorities and the public representatives must also take into account " the potent messages and role models in video games and other mass media." (Rich, Woods, et. al. 1998, p. 671)

Studies indicate that up to 75% of concept music videos, which have a certain theme, contain sexually suggestive material. More than half of them also contain violent acts committed against women. Women were generally portrayed in a derogatory manner. The use of alcohol and tobacco were projected as glamorous and fashionable. All of this is bound to lead teenage boys to dire consequences. (Pediatrics, p. 1219) Hence, keeping the critical nature of the situation with Hollywood, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) had proposed descriptive labeling of movies released and parental advisory labels. The AAP is also apprehensive about the negative behavioral messages that are now commonplace in public television broadcasts. The Federal Communications Act of 1934 states that the radio and television stations are responsible to create broadcast content keeping in mind the

best interests of the public. Unless this clause is taken in spirit and not just in letter the status quo will remain. (Pediatrics, p. 1219)

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