

Media and its effects on society assignment



**ASSIGN
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1 The media is an obvious factor in the increase of violence, risky behavior, and obesity in kids in our society. Television programs and movies are becoming more and more violent, and more abundant to fulfill the demand for an overly desensitized audience. For any type of television show or movie to be considered good and entertaining it must excel in at least 3 categories: blood and guts, curse words, and the most important element of all how believable are the scenarios.

The good guy must prevail, even if it means murdering 25 men in order to rescue the super hot defenseless heiress. It's sad really, for some it is engaging and entertaining as long as the graphics and cinematography are good. Parents wonder why their 13 year old daughter dresses provocatively, and why their 15 year old son has begun smoking cigarettes. The need for linear progression of violence and risky behavior continues to grow. Where will it stop? At this rate it won't it will keep growing, but what's the point when no one can really be shocked or surprised anymore.

The line between reality and virtual reality is blurring for some people, allowing them to become more and more capable of doing the unthinkable. The question is whose responsibility it is to monitor the quality of the programs that are abundantly available in our society. The Constitution is television programmers' main defense when posed this question. According to Professor Doug Linder of the University of Missouri-Kansas City explains in his website the role and value of the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment.

The First Amendment protects freedom of speech or expression with the hopes that exposure to such things will promote tolerance. A tolerant society is a better society (Introduction to the Free Speech Clause). Though yes, the First Amendment serves to protect our individual rights, we as a society have a responsibility to regulate ourselves and what we deem acceptable. There is a misguided assumption that the words tolerance and acceptance are one in the same. Tolerance is something much different; it doesn't mean that people have to accept things as right.

People have every right to disagree or denounce something however they do not have the right to threaten or harm their opposition, unless it's in a movie or a video game. With the increase of the amount of media available to children there is substantial increase in the amount of overweight and obese children in America. The National Institute on Media and the Family reports that nearly 30.3% of children ages 6 to 11 are overweight, and 15.3% are obese. For teenagers ages 12 to 19 the number of teens overweight amounts to nearly 33.4%, and 15. % are considered obese. Even more troubling, the number of cases of children with Type II Diabetes has been continually increasing over the past few decades (Media Use and Obesity Among Children, Par. 2). Furthermore, it was stated that children who watch more than three hours of television per day are 50% more likely to become obese than kids who watch less than two hours, the recommended daily amount (Par. 3). Obesity is not a result of the quality of media kids are exposed to, it's the quantity of hours television is available to children. Dr.

Goutham Rao, clinical director of the Weight Management and Wellness Center at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh estimates the number of hours
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watching television in a child's life will outnumber the amount of hours they spend in school. Even more astonishing is that children are spending more time watching television than any other activity other than sleeping (Rao, 70). Parents are using televisions as babysitters. Dr. Rao also found that 20% of 2 to 7 year olds have televisions in their bedrooms, 46% of 8 to 12 year olds, and the numbers just keep getting worse, 56% of 13 to 17 year olds also have televisions in their bedrooms.

In most of the cases the television programs are completely controlled by their adolescent viewers (71). Not only does excessive television watching have a correlation with physical health it also has adverse emotional and psychological affects on children. " A survey of 2, 000 3rd graders showed that as the number of hours of television viewing increased, so did the rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress (Rao, 79). Some babysitter huh? Television programs create false perceptions of the real world.

Often times children will become fearful of the real world and expect that something bad will happen to them (How TV Affects Your Child, Par. 10). Many parents think that they can explain away the frightening scenes that children watch, but unfortunately " frightening TV scenes have an immediate impact on kids: 62% of parents report that their children have at some point been scared that something they saw in a TV program or movie might happen to them" (Rao, 80). Another very sad problem that too much television is creating is that in most cases children watch television alone.

Teenagers with very few friends often create substitute friendships, also know as " parasocial" friendships (71). Television does not educate children

on how to integrate and contribute to society in healthy ways. Often times children are bombarded with messages like, “ it's cool to smoke, it's cool to drink, have sex with whoever you want as long as they're hot, and it's okay to beat someone up as long as you're the good guy. ” How can we possibly be creating a clear and decisive message about the types of people we want children to grow up to be.

Cigarette commercials have been banned from television, but product placement in movies and television programs have only filled the shoes of their 30 second predecessors. “ Kids who watch 5 or more hours of TV per day are far more likely to begin smoking cigarettes than those who watch less than the recommended 2 hours a day”(How TV Affects Your Child, Par. 20). Too often smoking is portrayed as cool and inconsequential. You never see, a sick old wrinkly woman with a raspy voice as the main love interest in a Hollywood movie, but all too often you will see a sexy femme fatale puffing away in some dark, smokey room. And the man thinks, “ Mmmm, now that's sexy. ” Yeah. That's exactly the message we want to get across to our children. Excessive exposure to television programs of poor quality for children can affect them academically. “ A relationship between television viewing and reading ability has been reported for more than forty years... The more a child watches television, the worse their ability to read gets”(Rao, 78). A study from the University of Seattle found that children who watch television at ages younger than 3 can harm their ability to be adequate at reading comprehension and can damage their short-term memory (Stanton, Par.). They also found that when children ages 6 to 7 were administered tests those who watched more than the recommended 2

hours since they were younger than age 3 had lower scores in reading and short-term memory (Par. 6). One of the most concerning problems too much television has created is the increase in aggressive behavior. It's a rather alarming and sadly justified statement Dr. Rao made when she stated that, "The association between exposure to TV violence and violent or aggressive behavior is nearly as strong as the association between smoking and lung cancer (Rao, 81). I remember the old cartoons where, Wile E.

Coyote made several attempts to blow up or drop an anvil on the Roadrunner, or where Elmer Fudd would continually threaten to, "Shoot that Wabbit," while aimlessly waiving around his gun. It obviously just goes to show that violence in television is not a recent problem. Back in 1972, the Surgeon General warned that "television violence indeed does have an adverse effect on certain members of society" (80). This thought makes me wonder what the surgeon general has to say now, with movies like "Death Race" circulating around society. It's no wonder our society is becoming increasingly desensitized to so many acts of violence.

According to Dr. Rao, television networks defend the amount of television violence by claiming that it only reflects what happens in real life. However, excluding the news, approximately 350 television characters are on prime time television every night, and an average of seven of them are killed each night. "At that rate the entire population of the United States would be killed in 50 days" (Rao, 80). This is one fact that I'm happy that television program defenders are wrong about, and that their programs do not truly reflect every day life in America.

So what can parents do to successfully combat this overwhelming amount of low quality television programs? There are two tips provided by the article “How TV Affects Your Child,” on how parents can work to monitor what their children are watching. One is to pay attention to television parental guidelines. For example, TV- Y means that a particular program is suitable for all ages, or TV-Y7 would indicate that a show is recommended that a child be at least 7 years of age. Another way parents can monitor what their children watch would be to take advantage of using the V-chip.

The V stands for violence, and this technology allows parents to block TV programs and movies that parents do not want their children to see. The V-chip makes it possible for children to only get to watch appropriately rated shows (How TV Affects Your Child, Par. 31-38). There are many suggestions and even arguments that state that television can have good results.

According to a study from the University of Washington children ages 3 to 5 can actually help develop and improve on cognitive abilities by watching television (Stanton, Par. 2).

More importantly kids should become more active in knowing what their kids are watching. The responsibility of making sure that their kids are watching more educational programs is something that parents should not take for granted. They should be wary to make sure that their children are not just watching purely entertaining television programs, and that they are gaining something from what they are watching, and not just rotting their brains. We as a society should become less tolerant of the amount of television people watch, and whether the quality of the program is of any worth.

Parents need to not count on their television sets as free babysitters. People also need to quit staring at television sets in waiting rooms at doctor offices. That is one thing that never ceases to amaze me. It's like televisions follow people everywhere, and we have been conditioned to " watch. " It's amazing that people will relentlessly stare at a television set even if it's on mute and it's on a channel that they really could care less to watch. Our society needs to become more responsible in raising our children to not become slaves to the media, like too many of us have already become.

Works Cited Media Use and Obesity Among Children. November 2006. 3 April 2009. . How TV Affects Your Child. October 2008. 2 April 2009. . Stanton, Carina. " TV Viewing Good and Bad for Kids, Seattle Study Says. " The Seattle Times. 5 July 2005. 3 April 2009. Rao, Goutham. Child Obesity: A Parent's Guide to a Fit, Trim, and Happy Child. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2006. 68-84. Linder, Doug. Exploring Constitutional Conflicts: Introduction to the Free Speech Clause. 2 April 2009. .