

Violence in schools causes deviant behavior essay



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Violence among our youth has spread widely throughout the nation. This can be linked to several problems in our society, but mainly one. The constant barrage of television and media violence causes deviant behavior in children. When children are young they are very impressionable by the things around them. Often kids are influenced by what they see. If kids are watching shows or being introduced to violent acts they too will tend to act out this violence (Huesmann and Eron, 1986). The results of studies on the effects of televised violence are consistent. By watching aggression, children learn how to be aggressive in new ways and they also draw conclusions about whether being aggressive to others will bring them rewards (Huesmann and Eron, 1986). Children begin to notice and react to television and media influence very early. By the age of three, children will willingly watch a show designed for them 95% of the time and will imitate someone on television as readily as they will imitate a live person. The average time children spend watching television rises from about two and a half hours per day at age twelve. During adolescence, average viewing time drops off to two to three hours a day. Children from the ages 6-11 spend more time watching television than they do in the classroom (Centerwall, 1992). The level of violence that they see on prime time television is about five violent acts per hour and the level of violence on Saturday that includes cartoons morning programming is about 20 to 25 violent acts per hour (Centerwall, 1992). At this rate, the average American child will see 8, 000 murders before they finish elementary school! Those children who see TV characters getting what they want by hitting are more likely to strike out themselves in imitation. Even if the TV character has a so-called good reason for acting violently (as when a police officer is shown shooting down a criminal to protect others), this does

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not make young children less likely to imitate the aggressive act than when there is no good reason for the violence (Huesmann and Eron, 1986).

In a behavioral study carried out in the U. S, children were found to have become significantly more aggressive two years after television was introduced to their town for the first time (Kimball and Zabrack, 1986).

Children who prefer violent television shows when they are young have been found to be more aggressive later on, and this may be associated with trouble with the law in adulthood (Huesmann, 1986). Strong identification with a violent TV character and believing that the TV situation is realistic are both associated with greater aggressiveness (Huesmann and Eron, 1986). In general, boys are more affected by violent shows than girls are. Besides making children more likely to act aggressively, violence on television may have other harmful effects. First, it may lead children to accept more aggressive behavior in others. Second, it may make children more fearful as they come to believe that violence is as common in the real world as it is on television (Huesmann, 1986). On June 10, 1992, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published a definitive study on the effect of television violence. In nations, regions, or cities where television appears there is an immediate explosion of violence on the playground, and within fifteen years there is a doubling of the murder rate. Why fifteen years? That is how long it takes for a brutalized toddler to reach the "prime crime" years. That is how long it takes before you begin to reap what you sow when you traumatize and desensitize children. (Howe, 60). JAMA concluded, "the introduction of television in the 1950s caused a subsequent doubling of the homicide rate, i. e., long-term childhood exposure to television is a causal

factor behind approximately one-half of the homicides committed in the United States, or approximately 10, 000 homicides annually." The study went on to state, " if, hypothetically, television technology had never been developed, there would today be 10, 000 fewer homicides each year in the United States, 70, 000 fewer rapes, and 700, 000 fewer injurious assaults" (Howe, 1983). Today the data linking violence in the media to violence in society is superior to that linking cancer and tobacco. The American Psychological Association (APA), the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Surgeon General, and the Attorney General have all concluded there is a problem with media and T. V. violence. Violence has become more and more prevalent in todays society. We see it in the streets, back alleys, schools, and even at home. Homes, in particular, are a major source of violence. A television set has become common to the living room of most family homes. This outlet for violence often goes unnoticed. Children who view television are often pulled into the realistic, yet a devastating world of violence. Much research has gone into showing why children are so mesmerized by this big glowing box and the action that takes place within it. Research shows that it is definitely a major source of violent behavior in children (Howe 55). The research proves time and time again that aggression and television viewing do go hand in hand. The truth about television violence and children has been shown. Some are trying to fight this problem. There are numerous advocate groups lobbying for television and media sensor ship. The National Cable Association is one- industry groups studying the trends violent of shows on television (Howe 56). Others are ignoring it and hoping it will go away. As there are numerous groups fighting for media sensor ship, there are also numerous groups

fighting against it. The Holly Wood film association is a group that believes that the first amendment of the constitution is being infringed upon and believe there should not be any censor-ship in television (Howe 66). Still others dont even seem to care. However, the facts are undeniable. Television violence causes children to be violent and the effects can be life-long. A study conducted by Dr. Leonard Eron if the University of Illinois found that children who watched a average of three hours of violent shows daily were more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for criminal acts as adults(Centerwall, 1992). Even if opponents argued that television is not the sole reason for children and violence, it can the breaking point for a child acting out. The effects have been seen in a number of cases. In New York, a sixteen-year-old boy broke into a cellar. When the police caught him and asked him why he was wearing gloves he replied that he had learned to do so to not leave fingerprints and that he discovered this on television (Howe, 1983). In Alabama, a nine-year-old boy received a bad report card from his teacher. He suggested sending the teacher poisoned candy as revenge as he had seen on television the night before (Howe, 1983). In California, a seven-year-old boy sprinkled ground-up glass into the lamb stew the family was to eat for dinner. When asked why he did it he replied that he wanted to see if the results would be the same in real life as they were on television (Howe, 1983). As recently as November of 1995, New York City officials believed that the burning of a tollbooth clerk was a result of copycat violence, resulting from a similar scene in the movie Money Train (Howe, 1983). In 1994, Nathan Martinez shot and killed his stepmother and half sister after watching the movie Natural Born Killers at least six times. “ Later, Martinez, who had shaved his head and wore granny sun glasses like Natural Born

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Killer's main character Mickey Knox, reportedly told a friend, "It's nothing like the movies" (Howe, 1983). In a 1993 film, *The Program*, there was a scene showing college football players lying in the center of a highway in an attempt to show their courage and dedication to their sport. This movie was later blamed for inspiring real-life imitators; (one of whom died) (Howe, 1983). In numerous experiments based at pre-schools, researchers have observed children playing before and after seeing violent movies and television shows. "Following the violent program the children's play is invariably more aggressive. They are much more likely to hit, punch, kick, and grab to get their way. In other words, violent entertainment teaches children how to use aggression for personal gain" (Dorr 75). All of these examples are startling examples of how television can affect the child. It must be pointed out that all of these situations were directly linked to children acting out what they seen watching television.

Not only does television violence affect the child's youth, but it can also affect his or her adulthood. Some psychologists and psychiatrists feel that continued exposure to such violence might unnaturally speed up the impact of the adult world on the child. This can force the child into a kind of premature maturity. As the child matures into an adult, he can become bewildered; have a greater distrust towards others, a superficial approach to adult problems, and even an unwillingness to become an adult (Carter 14). Television violence can destroy a young child's mind. The effects of this violence can be long lasting. For some, television at its worst, is an assault on a child's mind, an insidious influence that upsets moral balance and makes a child prone to aggressive behavior as it warps his or her perception

of the real world (Carter 16). Others see television as an unhealthy intrusion into a child's learning process, substituting easy pictures for the discipline of reading and concentrating and transforming the young viewer into a hypnotized non-thinker (Carter 48). As you can see, television violence can disrupt a child's learning and thinking ability that will cause life-long problems. If a child cannot do well in school, his or her whole future is at stake. Television violence is attractive to children and this attraction causes them to introduce acts of violence that they learned from television into their everyday lives. Since media violence is much more vicious than that which children normally experience, real-life aggression appears bland by comparison (Dorr 127). The violence on television is able to be more exciting and more thrilling than the violence that is normally viewed on the streets. Instead of just seeing a police officer handing a ticket to a speeding violator, he can beat the offender to death on television. However, children don't always realize this is not the way situations are handled in real life. They come to expect it, and when they don't see it the world becomes bland and in need of violence. The children then can create the violence that their mind craves. The television violence can cause actual violence in a number of ways. As explained above, after viewing television violence the world becomes bland in comparison. The child needs to create violence to keep himself satisfied (Dorr 127). Also the children find the violent characters on television fun to imitate. Children do imitate the behavior of models such as those portrayed in television and movies. They do so because the ideas that are shown to them on television are more attractive to the viewer than those the viewer can think up himself (Howe 98). This has been widely seen lately with the advent of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. Young children cannot

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seem to get enough of these fictional characters and will portray them often (Howe 98). Television violence causes violence in children is apparent in big cities. Aggressive behavior is more acceptable in the city, where a child's popularity rating with classmates is not hampered by his or her aggression (Huesmann 166). In the bigger cities, crime and violence is inevitable, expected and, therefore, is left unchecked and out of line (Huesmann 167).

The problem we face is not one for the U. S, but can be seen in all parts of the world. This result was obtained in a survey of London schoolchildren in 1975. Greensberg found a significant relationship between violence viewing and aggression (Dorr 160). In Israel 74 children from farms were tested as well as 112 schoolchildren from the city of Tel Aviv. The researchers found that the city children watched far more television than their farmland counterparts. However, both groups of children were just as likely to choose a violent program to watch when watching television. The city children had a greater tendency to regard violent television programs as accurate reflections of real life than the farm children. Likewise, the city boys identified most with characters from violent programs than did those living on the farms (Huesmann 166). The government also did research in this area. They conducted an experiment where children were left alone in a room with a monitor playing a videotape of other children at play. Soon, things got out of hand and progressive mayhem began to take place. Children who had just seen commercial violence accepted much higher levels of aggression than other children. The results were published in a report. A Surgeon General's report found some preliminary indications of a casual relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior in

children (Howe 50). In other research among American children it was discovered that aggression, academic problems, unpopularity with peers and violence feed off each other. This promotes violent behavior in the children (Huesmann 166). The child watches violence that causes aggression. The combination of aggression and continued television viewing lead to poor academic standings as well as unpopularity (Howe51). These can cause more aggression and a vicious cycle begins to spin. Television is not always a negative influence. There is strong evidence that children's shows that were developed to teach academic and social skills can help children to learn effectively. In fact, research suggests that the positive effects of educational children's shows probably outweigh the negative effects of exposure to TV violence (Hearold, 1986). If violence on television helps to make children more aggressive, it is still only a small part of the overall problem. Other factors in a child's life may be far more influential than TV. For example, pre-schoolers who were given guns and other "violent" toys to play with were found to commit more aggressive acts than pre-schoolers who had merely watched a television program with violent content (Hearold, 1986). Another major factor that determines how aggressive a child will be is how his or her parents behave. If parents ignore or approve of their child's aggressive behavior, or if they lose control too easily themselves, a TV control plan will not help. Similarly, if parents themselves exhibit violent behavior, they serve as role models for their children. On the other hand, parents who show their children how to solve problems nonviolently and who consistently notice and praise their children for finding peaceful solutions to conflicts will have children who are less aggressive (Singer and Singer, 1986). Children are highly influenced by their parents' viewing habits as they establish their own

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viewing patterns. One highly influential action parents can take, then, is to examine and regulate their own viewing behavior. Because toddlers imitate what they see and hear on TV, it might also be wise for parents to prevent their children from being exposed to content that portrays actions, (violent or otherwise) that might lead toddlers to harm themselves or others (Singer and Singer, 1986). The most important aspect of violence in television is preventing it. There are many ways in which it can be prevented, but these preventive measures are rarely carried out. These solutions are easy to implement, but are often overlooked because of commercial purposes. One such solution is to create conflict without killing. Michael Landon, who starred in and directed *Little House on the Prairie*, managed to do so in his programs. His goal was to put moral lessons in his show in an attempt to teach while entertaining (Cheyney 51). On the program *Hill Street Blues* the conflicts are usually personal and political matters among the characters. Although some violence does occur, the theme is not the action, but rather its consequences (Cheyney 49). Perhaps the most important way to prevent children from watching television violence is to stop it where it starts. The parents should step in and turn the set off when a violent program comes on. The parents are the child's role models from which he learns. If he can learn at an early age that violence on television is bad, then he can turn the set off for himself when he is older. The amount of time children watch TV, regardless of content, should be moderated, because it keeps children from other, more beneficial activities such as reading and playing with friends. If parents have serious difficulties setting limits, or deep concerns about how their child is reacting to television, they should contact a child and adolescent psychiatrist for help defining the problem. Education should start

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at home. The constant barrage of television and media violence causes deviant behavior in children. This is a problem that has been researched by some of the most prominent institutions and people in the country. The research comes up the same every time. We have seen the numerous groups such as The National Cable association attempt to use the first amendment of the Constitution as a legitimate reason to poison the airways. There is no mention in any of their studies on how the violent problems have affected our children. This problem will, no doubt, never go away and continue to get worse as the years go by. However, there are measures that can be taken to prevent children from ever being exposed to such potentially harmful violence (Cheyney 51). Without some or all of these control measures being utilized, we cannot prevent the increase in violence linked to the media and television. REFERENCES Centerwall, B (1992). Television and Violence: The scale of the problem and where to go from here. Journal of the American Medical Association. 267: 3059-3061 Huesmann, L. R. 1986. Psychological process promoting the relation between exposure to medial violence and aggressive behaviour by the viewer. Journal of social issues 42, 125-139.

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