

Influence or social control? essay

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What is the perfect way to infiltrate most of the population and control the mass opinion of what is normal; down to how we should behave and how we live? The media is everywhere from television, internet, magazines to radio. Every billboard on the side of the road is pushing someone's idea of what is suppose to be popular. Television is one of America's favorite family past times making it that much easier to pollute our families' minds. The images seen on TV have become part of people's daily lives as seen through many examples such as, The Simpson's, Bridal Plasty, The Real Housewives, and Jersey Shore. Most families watch an average of at least 6 hours per day. Unfortunately, believe it or not, television is influencing viewer's beliefs about what is normal and telling us our places within the family.

Even promoting premarital sex and distorting self image. When did TV go from entertainment to being a form of social control, influencing the majority of our decisions? Twenty years ago, television was viewed as a source of information and now it has virtually destroyed traditional family values. There used to be structure within families, where the men would come home from work, the mother had the table set and ready for diner while the children quietly did their homework. Marge Simpson was the quintessential example of what the perfect house wife should be. The Simpson's offers a critique of domestic gender roles but it ultimately embraces female domesticity to the very definition of " a family" (Neahaus 762). Now that television is airing all these new shows, the roles of the family have changed and traditions have been dropped. Women have become more bold and hold jobs in the workplace as well as dominance in bed.

Family structure is becoming obsolete. Families split up and are living in different households. Now days, emerging adults aren't even getting married before starting a family.

Many people prefer to just live together rather than shell out the money for matrimony. Then people see all these celebrities getting married and it makes them think that one must sell their soul practically to get the wedding of their dreams. The Media is constantly ushing us to spend more money and raising the standard of everything. It was normal to try to lose weight before getting married, but with all the perfect bride shows, loosing weight isn't good enough anymore. These reality shows are even going as far as to make plastic surgery seem like an everyday occurrence before getting married. Forget working out, just get liposuction.

How can any woman feel beautiful about herself when the media says their not pretty enough to even get married? Self Image is another side effect that has become every young girls nightmare. It's one thing to be self conscious about the way one looks, but to carve themselves up in the plastic surgeon's office just to be pleasing to society is another. Images about self and others was formed while watching TV and is " called up during processes of identity formation and self-evaluation" (Alexandrin 150). This social comparison makes girls feel inadequate.

Why should reality shows have such an influence on what is considered sexy? Mainstream entertainment also portrays that women not only need to look good, but also need to have permissive sexual attitudes. Sexual socialization is pushed on these young girls by the media while distorting

perceptions of peer norms and expectations about sex. Mothers used to cover their children's eyes when scenes on television got too steamy. Entertainment has changed a lot in the last 30 years. Now young adolescent girls are at the midnight showing of Twilight, thinking nothing of the passionate kissing while their parents gasp at what they thought was a PG thirteenth movie.

What is to be expected when there is sex on every TV show, commercials advertising lingerie, condoms and pregnancy tests. Shows such as, Jersey shore make sex and parties look like normal pastime activities that all young adults should be doing. Its no wonder so many of these young adults are engaging in premarital sex.

From television viewing, our attitude towards sex has changed over the years. It has moved from modest to open. A shocking 64% of TV shows contain sexual content. Whether it be images depicting sexual acts or talked about in conversation. More than half of college students are not only having sex, but they are having "casual sex"- that is, sex outside of an established relationship. Despite the risks that come with these encounters, which generally there is little or no familiarity with the partner's history, less than half of young adults who engage in sexual activity are using protection (Eyal 161). There are studies that examine the media's influence on sexual behavior.

They have found that young adolescents exposed to more than 15 hours of sexual content that centered on pre, extra and non marital sex judged these situations to not be morally wrong. Whereas dramas depicting intercourse

between married couples and shows that portrayed safe sex impacted many college students' attitudes towards condom use. Though it is more common that many programs that are seen show sex in a positive light with no clear consequences whatsoever (Eyal 162).

All this publicity on sex has had a major impact on our emerging adults and they will lose all sense of morality unless something is done to stop this powerful influence coming from the mass media. Cutting down TV time and resorting back to quiet family dinners where everyone sits down at the table to talk about their day would be a massive improvement. And maybe instead of plopping down on the couch for some entertainment, a physical activity, like biking could be done instead. Not only will that cut down on spending meaningless hours doing nothing but absorbing other peoples opinions, but it would lead to healthier more productive lives in the long run.

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