

The affects of the media on society

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The term media can be defined as a wide variety of things. For the purpose of this paper, it will be defined as the American Heritage Dictionary defines it; as "...an agency, by which something is accomplished, conveyed, or transferred" (2000). The media's role in society is an extremely prevalent topic especially in today's day and age. The media has continuously been used as a scapegoat for the lack of other excuses for abnormal behaviors in America's teenagers.

This was obvious with the April 1999 shooting at Columbine High School near Denver, CO. The media is the easiest and most common thing to blame for teen's behavior. Their video games, their music, everything that they listen to or watch on their own time is to blame for their behaviors, rather than poor parenting, lack of support at school or lack of noticing on anybody's behalf that something was wrong with these two boys.

Columbine is the number one instance that pops into our minds from recent memory when we contemplate the notion of media affecting our society and our societal behaviors. It was taken to the point that Marilyn Manson was being interrogated in regards to how he felt about the massacre. Parents, teachers and community members alike all believed that his music had a major influence on Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the two gunmen, and their actions that day in April. To this day, it is still a widely debated subject as to what caused these two teenagers to kill twelve of their classmates and one of their teachers before killing themselves.

As far as teen behavior in general goes, it is common that society blames the media for the actions of the youth even when they as a society are the ones

that create the media and the guidelines for it to be presented to the youths. Video games are the main thing that society is blaming, but television shows such as "Jackass" and "Viva La Bam" are holding their own in the lineup of things to blame. Teenagers are in a moldable, mutable state in the first place without being influenced by images of idiocy and lack of respect for everything. Thus, the reason behind why parents are putting their foot down in regards to video games such as "Vice City" and the recent "Super Columbine Massacre RPG!"

The creators of the video game "Super Columbine Massacre RPG!" are not just sitting back listening to the criticism of their game. They have something to say about the reason it exists in the first place. They say "...This game is intended to deepen the understanding of the shooting and its possible causes. What the player takes out of it is ultimately dependant upon what the player puts into it" (Ledonne, 2005). It is easy to blame video games for abnormal behaviors, but in reality, people are just indirectly blaming themselves. Society demands a certain type of media, and so, that is what they get. They get a game full of violence, killing, stealing cars, etc. All because that is what society is begging the video game industry to produce whether they know it or not.

This is not to say that there are teenagers out there that are indeed being influenced by this craze that has swept the nation in recent times. According to an article on the SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) website, in Sarasota, Florida apparently "...Influenced by the movie Jackass, three trespassing teens leap[t] from atop a condominium building aiming for the pool. Two ma[d]e it. One hit[] the side, fracturing both legs and an arm and

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cracking his pelvis....” (Wallace, 2003). Although it is easy to claim that the media, such as video games and television, has a minor affect on teens in today’s society this is not always true. There are always going to be those few kids that think it would be fun to do what they see on TV or on their videogames.

Overall, when all media, including video games are taken to account, it is fairly clear that although we cannot completely blame the media for the actions of teenagers in America, we can blame it for a lot of what they do. A teenager’s main goal in life is to be cool. Simple, clear cut. They just want to be part of the cool crowd. So what do they do? They look to things that the cool crowd watches, wears and how they act. They then try to mimic these things in a futile attempt to become cool. Sometimes, teens get out of hand, and things such as the kids in Sarasota, FL happen. It is only then that we realize how much of an influence the media does indeed have on us, and not just us but our posterity as well.

Citations

(2000). Medium. Retrieved February 12, 2007, from The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition Web site: <http://www.bartleby.com/61/51/M0195100.html>

Ledonne, Danny (2005). Super columbine massacre RPG!. Retrieved February 12, 2007, from Super Columbine Massacre RPG! Web site: <http://www.columbinegame.com/>

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