Television And Violence Essay, Research Paper

Television Violence Effects

One of the most compelling problems I have found is that there is too much violence shown in television shows. As a father it is my responsibility to censor and educate my children on the positive and negative aspects of watching certain television shows. I believe the censorship must take place at an early age in life in order to create a firm foundation for them to grow. In my opinion, too much violence on television can influence children to grow up and to commit crimes. This is a subject now in debate between the television industry, the government and the television viewing public. There have been several highly publicized studies published to look at the effects of violence on television. Some are against violence on television and others state no claim that violence and television have a direct relationship.

Have you ever noticed children imitating some of the action they have see on television? Sometimes this may involve just make-believe “galloping” on an imaginary horse, driving an imaginary car, or “shooting” with pointing fingers at invisible pursuers. Often, however, if the violence they have witnessed is very realistic, children may also imitate punching or kicking. Those children who watch many violent action shows may begin to adopt some of the mannerisms and provocative attitudes of superheroes or police detectives and resort increasingly to fighting with their friends to settle the inevitable disagreements that often arise among playmates (Addie Jurs). People must ask themselves several questions about television violence. Does all the violent acts that children view on television cause them to commit crimes later in life? Are the effects of watching TV violence brief or lasting? Is TV as important a factor in fostering societal violence as economic poverty, bad schools and broken homes? Sometimes I sit back and watch they way my children react towards even the most harmless cartoons that display some violence and I become amazed. The way they imitate characters like Mr. Fudd from Bugs Bunny, and Cow and Chicken make me want to turn the television off, but I also have to remind myself that all I really need to do is get them to realize that it is only make believe.

Television can be a powerful influence in developing value systems and behavior in children. K. French wrote in his book, “Screen Violence”, that there is no proof that violence in television promotes or carries over into the future of our children. Many people watch violent TV without becoming ‘criminals’. French compares watching violence in television to fact that not all smokers get lung cancer. He contends that television is based on ratings. The media gives the audience what they want. Violence in television has no direct impact on the how much violence children watch. As a father, I disagree with his assessment that violence in television has not impact on the behavior or value systems of children. Having first hand evidence of trying to raise three children while keeping a well-balanced environment that supports education not only through school but television, I have seen the effects of violence not only on children but also adults.

In order to determine the effects of TV violence, one needs to look at the research that has been done. Though it may be difficult to offer definitive answers, in the last three years alone, there have been some widely publicized studies on the effects of violence on television, each looking at a different aspect. One of the studies was conducted by four universities and financed by the cable industry. It found that of nearly 2,700 shows analyzed in a 20-week survey of 23 channels, 57% were said to contain at least some violence (Zoglin, “Chips” 58). However, the names of the channels were not mentioned and it should be pointed out that many cable systems now have over 100 channels. There are too many channels to choose from. I do believe that we should have a wide variety of television stations to choose from, but I do know that more is not always good. The more opportunities you have for children to be exposed to violence, the higher the tendency for violence to be carried over into adolescence and or adulthood. The FCC should put a stop to the madness that is going on.

Also, extensive research was conducted by Stanford University and the University of Wisconsin that clearly demonstrated that both children and adults exposed to violence in movies and television rarely become less aggressive; rather, the evidence is fairly strong that they show greater tendencies to be aggressive after watching violent shows (Madeline Levine, PH.D.). Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness. Sometimes, watching a single violent program can increase aggressiveness. Children who view very realistic television shows are more likely to imitate what they see. The impact of TV violence may be immediately evident in a child’s behavior or may surface years later, and young people can even be affected when the family atmosphere shows no tendency toward violence. However, this does not mean that violence on television is the only source for aggressive or violent behavior, but it is a significant contributor. Many families have domestic issues that carry over into arguments in front of their children. I am a firm believer that if two people have an issue to discuss that has the potential to blow up into an argument, should wait until the children are either in bed or away from the house to discuss the issue. The vicious cycle of domestic violence must be broken or we risk it being carried from generation to generation.

Another study performed by The American Screen Actors Guild showed that 71% of all roles in films and 65% of all TV roles are male. The Annenberg School of Communication estimates that each night 350 characters appear on prime time TV and that 7 of them are murdered. Medved carried out an analysis of all films released between 1980 and 1992. He found that ‘family’ oriented films earned more than twice as much on average as violent films. Yet violent films comprise over 60% of all films released. Medved states that “You cannot turn it off, the advertising is all about you and in the face of children. It is an ever-present background noise, just like cigarette advertising.”

In conclusion, violence in television can have an astounding affect on our youth. We as parents must educate ourselves and play a pro-active role in the development of our children. Many have worked diligently to prove that violence in television has a direct impact on the way our children turn out when they grow up. On the other hand, other research has been done to prove that there is no proof that violence in television causes children to grow up and become criminals. After me to reading through some of the literature I have been astounded by the amount of violent activities found among young children. These stories have definitely influenced me to pay closer attention to what the children watch on television. I must also find a way to separate the real from the fiction and explain it to my children before they get to a stage in their life in which it will be hard to make them see that too much violence on television can have a profound affect on the rest of their life.

Bibliography

Addie Jurs, TV-becoming Unglued. Robert Erdmann Publishing. San Marcos, CA. 1992.

K. French, Screen Violence, Bloomsbury, 1996, pp20-34.

Zoglin, Richard. “Chips Ahoy”. Time February 19, 1996: 58-61.

Madeline Devine, PH.D., Viewing Violence. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc. Broadway, New York, New York. 1996.

335