Television Violence Essay, Research Paper

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Television

violence is a negative message of reality to the children who see it. There

is an excessive amount of violence being watched in millions of people?s homes

every day, and this contributes to the growing amount of violent crimes that

are being committed in our communities. This cycle of more and more sex and

violence being portrayed as reality on television will not stop until something

is done.

Not one parent that I know wants his or her children watching people

getting blown away and thrown off cliffs. But the reality of it is that parents

cannot be there 24 hours a day to monitor what their children are watching.

In fact the television is often used as a baby-sitter, so that the parent can

do housework, have an adult conversation, or just relax after work.

The types

of people who are the most likely to be harmed by the surplus of violence on

TV are children. Ed Donnerstein stated in the February 15, 1996 edition of

the Boston Globe the following:

Violence turns out to do a lot of harm when

it looks harmless. One of these lessons children learn watching television

is that there are few consequences to the person who commits violence ? or

to the victim. Add to this ?positive? portrayal of negative behavior the fact

that children?s programs were least likely to show the bad effects of violence

and most likely to make it funny” (Goodman pg. 23).

We are showing children

that violence is humorous and it can?t do harm.

A researcher by the name

of Meltzoff studied learning in infants. He concluded that babies start to

learn even before birth. A study by Meltzoff demonstrated observational learning

in 14-month-olds. After watching an adult on television handling “a novel toy

in a particular way,” the babies were able to imitate the behavior when presented

with the toy 24 hours later (Wood pg.292). This study indicates that babies

learn imitation very early in life. This is why parents should be more particular

with what they allow their susceptible children to view on TV.

The Mighty

Morphin Power Rangers, television show for children, is a very good example

of how violence on TV can affect our children. It is one of the highest rated

kids television shows today. The Power Rangers are everywhere, on everything,

from lunch boxes to boxer shorts. And kids want it all. This creates a bind

for the parents who know that these items are not so good for their kids.

The

Power Rangers is one of the most violent shows around right now and kids love

it. The violence in the show has led New Zealand and two of the major networks

in Canada to ban the program from their daily schedules. Nancy Carlson-Paige

of Lesley College said in the December 1, 1994 Boston Globe,” Locally, teachers

see evidence that Power Rangers interferes with normal childhood development.

It threatens to undermine children?s mental health because of the way it influences

their play” (Meltz pg. A1).

Chris Boyatzis of California State University

at Fullerton completed the first scientific study of the impact of Power Rangers

on children. It showed that those who watch the show are seven times more

aggressive

in their play than those who don?t (Meltz pg. A1).

Micki Corley, head 4-year-old

teacher and coordinator of the Preschool Experience in Newton Centre said in

the same December 1st Boston Globe,” They are confused by it. They mimic the

movements without understanding the consequences. I see kids saying things

like, ?If I?m the Red Ranger, I?m not really Joe hitting Mary. I?m Tommy or

Zack hitting someone evil.? But it?s Mary who is hurt and Mary who cries. You

can see the confusion on their faces. They?ll say, ?But I didn?t do that?”

(Meltz pg. A1). One can see that at this stage in the preschooler life he or

she is not able to distinguish between real and pretend.

Kids and Power Rangers

supporters will say that the Power Rangers do have good points about them also.

They say that the characters show respect for adults, they are likable people,

and there is always a moral. In fact, the program labels the morals at the

end of each show. What we have to ask ourselves is, “Is it really worth it?”

Marilyn

Droz, director of research for the National Coalition on Television Violence,

conducted a study on the Power Rangers. This is what she came up with:

1.

Seventy percent of the kids who watch the show say the fighting is what they

like best.

2. In an hour of Power Rangers programming, there is an average

of 211 acts of violence. A typical Saturday morning cartoon hour generally

has 25 violent acts per hour. A typical hour of an adult show has six acts

of violence (Meltz pg. A1).

The Power Rangers are an entertaining part of

our childrens? day but the few minutes a day they watch may have severe

circumstances.

The morals, and views of reality of the kids are shattered. These children

do not think that what they are doing is wrong when they hit or kick. They

say,” The Power Rangers do it, why can?t I?” This makes it even tougher on

the parents. They must explain that what the Power Rangers do on the television

set is make believe. This confuses the child because they see it with their

own eyes, yet it is not true.

We must not pin point the Power Rangers as the

one show that influences our children?s violent behavior. Other violent kid

TV programs have a similar effect upon children.

Cartoons and child programming

get most of the attention under this issue because of the damage they can do

to the children, but also theatrical movies, and not prime-time series television,

bear much of the blame for TV?s blood-and-guts reputation. The UCLA Television

Violence Monitoring Report, as published by the September 20, 1995 edition

of the Boston Globe, stated that of 121 television series airing during the

1994-95 season, 10 were frequently violent or used violence in questionable

ways (Elber pg. 84).

Television and the American Child by George Comstock,

states on page 27, that the National Television Violence Study, which took

three years to finish, shows shocking information about what we are viewing

everyday. What the analysis of 2,693 television programs from 23 channels showed

is that a majority of programs contain what the researchers call “harmful violence.”

They found that in 73 percent of the scenes, the violence went unpunished.

In nearly half of the programs with slug-fests and shoot-outs, the victims

miraculously never appeared harmed. In 58 percent they showed no pain. In fact,

only 16 percent of the programs showed any long-term problems ? physical,

emotional

or financial. We must show the children that the things that the characters

do, do hurt people, and that violence is never the answer to any problem. We

must teach the next generation how to work out his or her problems with his

or her “enemy” by talking the problem out with the other, and compromising.

Another, more scientific, solution for the problem of violence on TV is the

V-chip, technology that would enable parents to block violent programming.

President Clinton said on the matter of the V-chip, as stated in the March

6, 1996 edition of the Boston Globe, “We?re handing the TV remote control back

to America?s parents so that they can pass on their values and protect their

children” (Jackson pg. 15).

New president of Creative Coalition, a group

that lobbies for First Amendment rights, and ex-actor Christopher Reeves, support

the V-chip, if Legislation maintains parental control of television viewing

and ensure that only the industry would rate the programs. Reeve recognizes

“a serious need” to curb television violence but asserted that the industry,

not Congress, was best suited for the job (Hohler pg. 11).

I do not agree

with the passing of the V-chip. Why should the people who want programs with

good morals pay for this? Parents should not have to empty their pockets to

block violence and sex. All programming should be family friendly. If lightweight

comedies, public television and weekend sports are not steamy enough, then

press your code and unleash AK-47 terror and near-porn into your living room.

Instead the Sesame Street viewers have to shell out the cash, instead of the

Chainsaw Massacre fans. They should go to the electronic store and buy a television

with a S&G-chip, for sex & guts. Let them earn their violence by paying for

it. Parents of peace are about to make electronic stores rich. Fans of gutter

and gore do not have to lift a finger for either their clicker or their wallet.

I

do not believe that we should be trying to solve this problem by putting a

mere computer chip into the TV. We need to solve the problem by going to Hollywood

and telling the industry that this type of programming in not necessary. We

need to tell them to be creative, and use their brains. They are taking the

easy way out by showing this stuff. In the long term we all suffer for it.

There

probably will never be an end to the controversy of television violence. We

are getting more and more information and on the effects of television violence.

All of these findings have produced an increasing awareness of the basic problem

and of the need for change. We know excessive viewing of television violence

is harmful to the viewer. It is time we take a solid stand on the issue and

tell the producers of these shows that we don?t want them.

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