



FACT SHEET

PROFANITY, VIOLENCE, SEXUAL CONTENT IN TELEVISION

Profanity [i]

- Profane language is used once every six minutes on network TV shows, once every two minutes on premium cable shows, and once every three minutes in major motion pictures.
- The media has turned taboo terms into casual chat. Today, the media teaches children that it is "cool" to talk dirty.

Violence

- By end of elementary school, children witness 8,000 murders on television and over 100,000 other acts on violence on television and by 18 they will have witnessed 16, 000 murders and 200,000 acts of violence [ii]
- There are five violent scenes in an hour of prime time and five murders a night [iii]
- Violent acts breakdown: [iv]
 - 40% committed by attractive characters
 - 75% went unpenalized and the perpetrators showed no remorse
 - 37% the bad guys were not punished
 - 40% include humor
 - More than 50% did not show the suffering of the victim
 - 50% would be lethal or incapacitating if they occurred in "real life"
 - Less than 5% incorporate anti-violence messages
- Violence can affect child three ways: [v]
 - Desensitization to real-life violence
 - Increased fear, "Mean/Scary World Theory"
 - Increased aggressive behavior

Sexual Content [vi]

- 3 out of 4 family hour shows on the four major networks contain some sexual content
- 9% of scenes with sexual nature deal with the risks and responsibilities of sexual activity
- Children and teenagers are considered especially impressionable to prime time television's influence in the area of sexuality because of their limited experience with sex.

[i] Children and The Media: THE ISSUES. [Homepage of PSVratings] Available: <http://www.psvratings.com/defaultfull.aspx?pid=25>

[ii] American Psychiatric Association

[iii] The Man Who Counts the Killings, by Scott Stossel, Atlantic Monthly, May 1997

[iv] National Television Violence Study, Executive summary, 1994- 95. (1996). Studio City, CA: MediaScope, Inc.

[v] American Psychological Association

[vi] Sex, kids and the family hour: A three-part study of sexual content on television. A special report from Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation (1996). Oakland, CA: Children Now, Kaiser Foundation. ED 409 083