

## MEDIA INFLUENCE ON VALUES

### The Media: Sex, Lies and More Lies

Some naively claim that the media doesn't really influence our choices. Some scoff at the notion that the media can "sell sex." But, if there is no relationship between TV commercials and viewers' behaviour, why do American businesses spend about \$3 billion annually on advertising for prime time TV?

The entire industry of marketing is based on the premise that consumer values and behaviours can be influenced and manipulated. In other words, they can change the way you think and act. Sadly, the world view of the industry is not to strengthen biblical values. Rather, marketing is geared towards pleasing the flesh:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."<sup>24</sup>

In one of the most comprehensive media studies ever conducted, Linda Lichter, Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman concluded that the overwhelming majority of the news people in major media outlets were hostile to Biblical values."<sup>25</sup> Some of their findings about the media stances are listed below:

1.	Have a pro -abortion stand	97%
2.	Oppose the traditional family structure	92%
3.	Have no strong aversions to adultery	84%
4.	Believe homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle	80%
5.	Believe that journalists should promote their ideas, values and perceptions	70%

In essence, the media are the apostles of another gospel. We do well not to base our values on their perceptions and opinions:

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>1 John 2:16

<sup>25</sup>S. Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman, "Media and Business Elites," *Public Opinion*, (October/November 1981), pp. 42-44.

<sup>26</sup>Romans 12:2

### *TV And Sex*

The Lichter/Rothman Study revealed that the overwhelming majority of the media has no aversions to promoting their ideas and values. Television is one of the mediums through which the "Gospel of Free Sex" is preached to millions every night.

Sexual innuendo permeates our entertainment and advertising industries. Over the course of time, the average television viewer sees 9,000 scenes of suggested sexual intercourse or innuendo in one year alone.<sup>27</sup>

It's estimated that the average high school graduate will have watched over 15,000 hours of television by age 18. More startling is that 81 percent of sexual activity shown or alluded to is committed outside the bonds of marriage.<sup>28</sup>

*The Journal of Communication* reported that, "television portrays six times more extramarital sex than sex between spouses. Ninety-four percent of the sexual encounters on soap operas are between people not married to each other."<sup>29</sup>

### *Pornography*

Pornography, "kiddie porn," has become an all too accepted form of entertainment today. The advent of the VCR increases the likelihood that kids will be exposed to pornography at home. The average viewer of MTV -- Music Television -- spends 68 minutes a day watching rock videos.<sup>30</sup> Many of these videos have been called "porn rock". *Newsweek* noted that rock videos are "something that seems to distill all the worst elements of television into one potent package."<sup>31</sup>

One of the other disturbing trends in the rock videos is the combination of sex and violence, which has prompted psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers to say, "Teenagers have not fused the idea of love and sex. So when you teach them that sex and violence are related, it's extremely dangerous for their future behaviour."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Richard Stengel, "Children Having Children," *Time*, December 9, 1985, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup>Sheila Fletcher, "Experts Seek Answers About Teen Pregnancy," *Oklahoman*, February 2 1984, pp. 1-2; cf. Liebert, Sprafkin, and Davidson. "The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth," 1982, p. 171.

<sup>29</sup>Bradley S. Greenberg, Robert Abelman, and Kimberley Neuendorf, "Sex on the Soap Operas: Afternoon Delight," *Journal of Communication*, Summer 1981.

<sup>30</sup>*Billboard*, July 1985, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>*Newsweek*, December 30, 1985, p. 54. *Cleveland*

<sup>32</sup>*Plain Dealer*, April 15, 1984, p. 1 D.

One study has revealed that people with liberal attitudes about sex were exposed to "erotica" at a younger age than those who had more conservative attitudes about sex.<sup>33</sup> Christianity views pornography as being wrong and sinful because, not only is it addictive, but it promotes false expectations towards your spouse or prospective spouse. In addition, it's usually based on the exploitation and degradation of women and/or children.

Researcher James Check of New York University noted the effects of pornography on its viewers:

The investigation by Check has obvious implications for public health. It shows that, on the whole, common, non-violent pornography has the strongest influence on men's willingness to force intimate partners into forms of sexuality that are not necessarily to their partners' liking, and on the propensity to force sexual access. Violent pornography apparently has the same power to increase rape proclivity, although its influence on the coercion of specific sexual act's is limited if not negligible.<sup>34</sup>

In referring to a 1985 Michigan State Police Study, "A report in the January 1, 1982, issue of *Christianity Today*, involving 38,000 victims of rape between 1956 and 1979 revealed that 41 percent of the victims were sexually molested immediately after the rapist had read a pornographic magazine or had seen a pornographic video presentation."<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, one of the strongest influences on the human mind is the power of images portrayed on the screen. The main problem is that many people can't distinguish reality from television. Dr. Thomas Radecki, research director for the National Coalition on Television Violence, states that, "Our insensitivity to the violence of rape is undoubtedly fostered by our massive diet of entertainment."<sup>36</sup>

Radecki cites recent statistics which show that one out of eight Hollywood flicks depict a "rape" theme. Moreover, he adds that by age 18, the average American will have seen 250,000 acts of violence and 40,000 attempted murders on television." By age 15, the average American child has witnessed 13,000 murders on TV.

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<sup>33</sup>Michael J. McManus, ed., *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* (Rutledge Hill Press, 1986), p. 264.

<sup>34</sup>James Check, "The Effect of Violent and Nonviolent Pornography," (Ottawa: Department of Justice for Canada, Department of Supply and Services contract 05SV.19200-3-0899). June 1984, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>Zig Ziglar, *Raising Positive Kids in a Negative World*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), p. 33.

<sup>36</sup>David Gelman, "The Mind of the Rapist," *Newsweek*, July 23, 1990, p. 52.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid*, p. 52.

According to Nielsen Media Research, the average daily TV viewing of Americans has risen from 5:06 hours in 1960 to 7:04 hours in 1992.

Ours is the first generation in the history of mankind that has gained its "socialization" from a machine -- the television. The gospel of television promotes indiscriminate sex, violence and alcohol abuse. About 90 percent of all movies contain the use of alcohol. The evidence strongly suggests that movies don't necessarily portray real life. On the contrary, they promote values contrary to that of good and wholesome. Fortunately, the rate of immorality isn't as staggering as is depicted on television. Yet, it has de-sensitized the moral consciousness of us, and made it easier -- or at least more acceptable -- to break God's commandments.

The media portrays a false reality about the following behaviours in which no consequences are seen or inferred:

- people drink but don't die in crash cars
- people smoke but don't get lung cancer
- people have sex but don't get disease or pregnant

In sum, the evidence and the broadcasting networks' bank accounts overwhelmingly prove that the media -- subliminally or subversively -- effects our attitudes and our behaviours. Their message is a *lie*. *Our generation has failed to learn this vital lesson: "A house built on sand will not last; neither will a civilization built on dirt."*

The Solution

"But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22