

COMM375: CHAPTER 5 READING NOTES

CHAPTER 5: EFFECTS OF MEDIA VIOLENCE

- **Copycat Phenomenon** - When people sometimes imitate the exact behaviors that they see depicted in the media.
 - When these behaviors are violent or illegal, this translates into a significant social problem.
 - Rod Sterling's - "The Doomsday Flight"

 - Also, "The Burning Bed" - starring Farrah Fawcett, who plays an abused housewife decides to burn the bed of her husband while he slept, the court ruled it as a case of self-defense.
 - In the days following the broadcast, several women around the country who were victims of abuse decided to copy the behavior of Farrah Fawcett and murdered their husbands.

 - The Government's threat in 1996 to introduce a rating system for television programs designed to protect children from the unwanted effects of violence and other objectionable content spurred the networks to act.
 - Manufacturers now produce TV sets with a V-Chip that permits parents to block out programs that contain unwanted violence.

- **THE PRESENCE OF VIOLENT CONTENT**
 - Entertainment media contains a consistent staple of violence
 - BECAUSE - Good drama revolves around conflict, and violence is one of the common consequences of conflict.

 - As statistics on TV viewing changed, the sheer amount of violence being beamed into the average American household went beyond what anyone could have imagined.

- **THE CAUSAL LINK BETWEEN VIEWING VIOLENCE AND BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY - The Research of Albert Bandura**
 - Albert Bandura developed the **SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**, which emphasized the importance of rewards and punishments.
 - According to Bandura, if a child watched a person on TV who seemed attractive and who received rewards for acting aggressively, then the child would be more likely to imitate that character's behavior.
 - Bandura's studies helped researchers to understand a number of things about TV violence and children;
 - First, viewing TV violence could cause children to behave more aggressively, particularly if the violent characters were attractive and received rewards for their actions.
 - Secondly, the effects emerged most strongly for boys and not girls.
 - A third conclusion, that can be drawn from Bandura's social learning effect is that the effect is quite general; it doesn't matter whether researchers make up the videos used in these experiments or borrow them from standard TV programs like old Batman and Superman cartoons.
 - Although Bandura's studies offered initial insights into the effect of TV violence, many questions remained
 - What about more serious acts of aggression?
 - Could violence in media really cause more beatings, robberies, assaults, and murders?

- **THE LONG-TERM STUDIES OF LEONARD ERON AND ROWELL HUESMANN**

- Studied more than 800 children under the age of 10
 - Eron & Huesmann wanted to know how much violence these children watched on TV
 - They also wanted to know how aggressive each child was in daily life activities.
- They found that there was a tendency for those children who watched higher levels of TV violence to also have higher scores on the ratings of aggressive behavior.
- The children who had the higher numbers on TV violence also tended to be the adults who became involved in more serious crimes.

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- **THE RESEARCH OF BRANDON CENTERWALL**

- Centerwall selected other countries similar to the US, South Africa was one of those countries
 - When the homicide rate was examined in South Africa between 1945 and 1974, he discovered that the rate actually dropped 7% during that time.
 - One of the major differences between South Africa and the United States during those years was the ban on TV imposed by the South African Gov't
 - When the Gov't lifted the ban on TV in 1974; by 1983 the murder rate had increased by 56%
- Centerwall claims that roughly half of all homicides in the United States are a direct result of television-watching.

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- **THE CATHARSIS HYPOTHESIS (Pg.104) START HERE*****