

would wipe out the problem of violence in the United States or any other society. The same can be said for the proliferation and easy access to guns, or for poverty, drug addiction, and other risk factors. As Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith puts it, "It's not an either or. It's not guns or media or parents or poverty."

We have all witnessed the four effects that I have discussed . . .—fearfulness, numbing, appetite, and aggressive impulses—in the context of many influences apart from the media. Maturing involves learning to resist the dominion that these effects can gain over us; and to strive, instead, for greater resilience, empathy, self control, and respect for self and others. The process of maturation and growth in these respects is never completed for any of us; but it is most easily thwarted in childhood, before it has had chance to take root. Such learning calls for nurturing and education at first, then for increasing autonomy in making personal decisions about how best to confront the realities of violence.

Today, the sights and sounds of violence on the screen affect this learning process from infancy on, in many homes. The television screen is the lens through which most children learn about violence. Through the magnifying power of this lens, their everyday life becomes suffused by images of shootings, family violence, gang warfare, kidnappings, and everything else that contributes to violence in our society. It shapes their experiences long before they have had the opportunity to consent to such shaping or developed the ability to cope adequately with this knowledge. The basic nurturing and protection to prevent the impairment of this ability ought to be the birthright of every child.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Has this essay in any way changed your views on the question of how media violence affects young people? Select a statement or passage that especially interests you, either positively or negatively, and discuss your response to it.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS OR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Summarize the viewpoints of both John Grisham and Oliver Stone on the matter of "copycat" killings. What does Bok think that both men sidestep in their arguments? What do you think of Grisham's and Stone's arguments? Do you agree with either one? Do you think that Bok is correct in her comments on their arguments?
2. What do you understand Bok to mean by the term "aggressor effect" (paragraph 6). What do investigators have to say about violent pornography and the aggressor effect?
3. What is your response to this statement: "No reputable scholar accepts the view expressed by 21 percent of the American public in 1995, blaming television more than any other factor for teenage violence" (paragraph 9)? What does Bok have to say about the studies conducted by Brandon S. Centerwall?
4. Bok notes the difficulty of showing the precise causal relationships between tobacco smoking and cancer and between drunken driving and automobile

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