ForeWord Reviews

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Glued to the Tube: The Threat of Television Addiction to Today's Family
Cheryl Pawlowski
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Few people would deny that television is the hot medium communications scholar Marshall McLuhan said it was, the giant glowing heart at the center of American popular culture. Practically every home has at least one TV, and most have more. It's a tuned-in society, yet not without ambivalence about this electronic hearth that gathers people to its threshold for hours at a time. Many have already condemned TV producers for loading the airwaves with unavoidable streams of sexual and violent content. Few, however, have looked as intelligently and insightfully at the impact of ubiquitous TV viewing on the American family as Pawlowski.

In her opening chapter, Pawlowski states, "For better or for worse it can be argued that TV is not only a part of the family, but has become its dominant member." She cites statistics gathered by Joshua Meyrowitz in his book, No Sense of Place, that indicate children ages two to five watch between twenty-five and thirty-two hours of TV per week and these viewing habits often last a lifetime. She concludes, "That means today's average child will eventually spend about ten years of his or her life watching TV."

In subsequent chapters, Pawlowski gives a concise media history, showing how people went from Ozzie and Harriet to The Simpsons and Maury Povitch. She explains how TV has usurped the critically important roles of family manager, gender mentor, sexual advisor, hero, arbitrator of family conflict, and friend. The result is squelched imagination, poor communication, and disenchantment with vital family intimacy. Pawlowski predicts a bleaker, future-media landscape as TV and computer merge into an even more powerful and omnipresent medium.

Pawlowski, however, doesn't leave the reader with a bleak scenario. After her cogent analysis of the threats TV addiction poses to the family, she offers concrete steps for individuals to take back control, including organizing "No-TV Weeks" with other families, keeping a TV-viewing diary, analyzing and talking about what the family sees, planning alternative activities, and making family life a priority. Her extensive list of resources and key addresses at the conclusion, as well as a detailed bibliography, render this beautifully executed and sorely

needed book a valuable resource.

Bronwyn Jones