

The Media Assault on American Values

A Special Report of the Culture and Media Institute

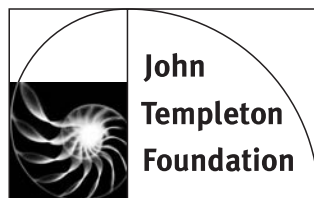


The Media Assault on American Values

The conflict between the media,
personal responsibility and respect for religion.

SPECIAL REPORT





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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Are the media influencing Americans to duck responsibility for their own decisions and behavior? By undermining core moral values, are the media leading Americans away from a mature acceptance of personal responsibility for their own lives and for their obligations to others?

According to the National Cultural Values Survey, a major study of American cultural and moral values, most Americans think so. The study, commissioned by the Culture and Media Institute, finds that large majorities of every significant demographic category of American adults believe the media are harming the nation's moral values.

The first section of this CMI Special Report, *The Media Assault on American Values*, discusses the survey's revelations about how the American public perceives the news and entertainment media. The survey addresses American perceptions of the influence of the media as a whole, and specifically of the news and entertainment industries.

The second section of the report analyzes the relationship between exposure to media and Americans' acceptance of responsibility for their own lives and treatment of others. The survey compares American adults according to how many hours of television they watch, on average, every evening. This report defines Americans who watch an hour or less of television each evening as "light television viewers." Americans who watch four or more hours of television each evening are "heavy television viewers."

Major findings

- 1. 74 percent of Americans believe the nation's moral values have declined over the past twenty years, and large majorities hold the media responsible for contributing to that decline.**
 - Americans believe the media influence values.** 64 percent of Americans agree the media are an important factor in shaping moral values in this country. Only 7 percent say the media are not important in shaping moral values.

- **Americans believe the media are harming moral values.** 68 percent of Americans say the media have a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 9 percent say the media impact is positive.
 - **Americans overwhelmingly blame Hollywood for harming moral values.** 73 percent of Americans say the entertainment industry is having a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 7 percent say the entertainment industry is having a positive impact.
 - **Most Americans blame the news media as well.** 54 percent of Americans believe the news media have a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 11 percent say the news media have a positive impact.
- 2. The media are undermining America’s sense of personal responsibility. The more a person watches television, the less likely he will be to accept responsibility for his own life and for his obligations to the people around him.**
- **Acceptance of responsibility to provide for his own needs.** 64 percent of heavy TV viewers believe the government should be responsible for providing retirement benefits to Americans, compared to only 43 percent of light TV viewers. 63 percent of heavy TV viewers prefer government health care to private health care, compared to only 43 percent of light TV viewers.
 - **Acceptance of responsibility to support the needs of others by making charitable contributions or volunteering time.** 56 percent of heavy TV viewers did not volunteer time to worthy causes last year, compared to 27 percent of light TV viewers. 24 percent of heavy TV viewers made no charitable contributions in the past year, compared to 11 percent of light TV viewers.
 - **Acceptance of responsibility to respect the rights of others by practicing classical virtues like honesty, reliability and fairness.** 31 percent of heavy TV viewers say they would cheat a restaurant by paying a bill that omitted some items. Only 19 percent of light TV viewers said they would cheat the restaurant.
 - **Acceptance of responsibility to uphold high moral standards on social and sexual issues like divorce, sex outside of marriage, abortion and homosexuality.** 52 percent of light TV viewers would limit the availability of divorce, compared to only 44 percent of heavy TV viewers. 51 percent of light TV viewers describe themselves as pro-life, compared to 37 percent of heavy TV viewers.
- 3. The media are undermining commitment to religion. The more a person watches television, the less likely he is to value religious principles and obedience to God.** 47 percent of light TV viewers attend church or religious services at least once per week, compared to 28 percent of heavy TV viewers.
- 4. The media have a seductive effect. The more a person watches TV, the less likely he is to believe the media are influencing the nation’s moral values.** 78 percent of light TV viewers believe the media are harming American moral values, but only 58 percent of heavy TV viewers agree.

Conclusion

The widespread American belief that the news and entertainment media are damaging the nation's moral values is clearly justified by the results of the National Cultural Values Survey.

The most telling finding is that increased exposure to television correlates with a decline in acceptance of personal responsibility. According to the survey, the more hours people spend in front of the television, the less likely they are to accept personal responsibility for their own lives and for their obligations to the people around them. They are less likely to conduct themselves honestly, and they are more likely to hold permissive attitudes about moral issues like divorce, extramarital sex, homosexuality and abortion. They are less likely to honor Godly values and religion in public life.

The great majority of Americans perceive a decline in the nation's moral values. This is another way of saying Americans perceive erosion in the responsibility and integrity of their fellow citizens, sexual mores and the nation's submission before God: the very areas apparently being undermined by the media.

The Media Assault on American Values

The conflict between the media,
personal responsibility and respect for religion.

BY BRIAN FITZPATRICK
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This Culture and Media Institute Special Report, *The Media Assault on American Values*, is the second in a series of reports presenting the most important findings of CMI's major survey of American cultural and moral attitudes, the National Cultural Values Survey. CMI is a division of the Media Research Center, America's foremost media watchdog.

The first Special Report in this series, *America: A Nation in Moral and Spiritual Confusion*, summarized the survey's overall findings. The survey established that Americans overwhelmingly believe that our nation's moral values are in decline. 74 percent of American adults believe moral values in America are weaker than they were 20 years ago.

The Media Assault on American Values will report the survey's revelations about how the American public perceives the news and entertainment media, and how the media may be influencing the nation's social and moral values.

Methodology and Survey Interpretation

The National Cultural Values Survey was conducted by the professional polling firm of Fabrizio, McLaughlin & Associates in December 2006. The polling company collected data from a total of 2,000 American citizens aged 18 or more, 1,000 by telephone interviews and 1,000 via the Internet. The margin of error for the entire sample is +/- 2.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

The first section of this Special Report discusses overall public attitudes toward the media, and comments on the overall data by comparing responses from clearly defined moral or ideological values groups. The ideological values groups are familiar: Republicans, Democrats and independents; and conservatives, liberals and moderates.

The moral values groups require an introduction. This Special Report assesses the moral attitudes of Americans through two lenses, behavior and philosophy. First, people who attend church at least weekly are labeled frequent churchgoers. They are compared to people who rarely or

never attend religious services, who are called non-churchgoers. Second, the survey assesses Americans according to their moral philosophies. The survey reveals that 94 percent of Americans have adopted one of three distinct sets of moral values, and CMI has labeled these three groups Orthodox, Independents and Progressives.

The Orthodox, 31 percent of Americans, almost unanimously believe in God and believe in living their lives by God's principles. Orthodox tend to see moral issues in absolute right and wrong. They generally welcome religious influence in public and private life.

Their opposite numbers, the Progressives, are secular in orientation. Only about half of Progressives say they believe in God. Progressives, who represent 17 percent of Americans, view moral issues in shades of gray, rather than in absolute right or wrong. Most Progressives believe in living by their own personal sets of moral values, even if they conflict with God's principles. They are generally hostile to religious values in public life.

The Independents, 46 percent of Americans, overwhelmingly believe in God, yet they tend to see moral issues in shades of gray. Most Independents believe in living by a combination of their own values and God's principles. They accept religious values in public policy on some issues but not on others. Independents appear to maintain a "live and let live" attitude, but they are very committed to law and order.

The second section of *The Media Assault on American Values* investigates media influence on American moral values by examining the relationship between Americans' moral and social attitudes and their television viewing habits. The Special Report divides Americans into two categories, according to how many hours of television they watch, on average, every evening. People who watch an hour or less of television each evening are defined as "light television viewers." People who watch four or more hours of television each evening are "heavy television viewers."

I. Americans Believe the Media Are a Powerful, Destructive Influence on Moral Values

Major Finding: 74 percent of Americans believe the nation's moral values have declined over the past twenty years, and large majorities hold the media responsible for contributing to that decline.

An overwhelming majority of Americans agrees that the media are very influential, and that they are harming our nation's moral values. Americans place heavier blame on the entertainment media, but they hold the news media responsible as well. Adults who perceive moral decline in America consider the media the second greatest influence on moral values in our culture, exceeded only by the family.

1. Americans believe the media exert powerful influence on the nation's moral values.

How influential are the media? 52 percent of American adults say the media are an important factor in forming our moral values, and an additional 12 percent say media are the *most* important factor. Only 7 percent say the media are not a factor in shaping moral values.

People who adhere to traditional moral values are more likely to believe the media are a major influence on moral values. 73 percent of Orthodox think the media are influential, compared to 62 percent of Independents and 54 percent of Progressives. 72 percent of frequent churchgoers consider the media influential, compared to only 54 percent of people who never attend church.

Among ideological groups, 71 percent of Republicans believe the media are a major influence on American values, as do 64 percent of Democrats, and surprisingly, only 58 percent of political independents. 67 percent of conservatives, 66 percent of moderates, and 62 percent of liberals agree.

The higher a person's level of education, the likelier he is to consider the media an important influence on moral values. 69 percent of people with postgraduate degrees and 67 percent of college graduates consider the media influential, but only 59 percent of people with high school degrees or less do so. 77 percent of Americans who describe their occupation as "student" acknowledge the media's influence.

Major Finding: 64 percent of Americans agree the media are an important factor in shaping moral values in this country. Only 7 percent say the media are not important in shaping moral values.

74 percent of Americans perceive American moral values to be in decline, and this group considers the media to be the second greatest factor in the decline. CMI asked these respondents what is most responsible for American moral values being weaker than they were 20 years ago. The respondents suggested a number of possible causes, including the Bush Administration, Churches, Culture/Society, Drugs, Economy/Money, Government, Individual Decisions, Liberalism, Secularism, Parents/Families Failing, Schools/

Education, Secularism, and Television/Media. A plurality of 35 percent blamed Parents/Families as the principal cause. The second most frequently identified culprit, suggested by 26 percent, was Television/Media.

66 percent of American adults say young people today have a weaker sense of right and wrong than young people did 20 years ago. Of this group, 57 percent believe Parents/Families are most responsible for moral decline among young people, while 21 percent blame Television/Media.

Major Finding: 68 percent of Americans say the media have a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 9 percent say the media impact is positive.

2. Americans believe the media are harming the nation's moral and cultural values.

The consensus is overwhelming: any way you measure it, Americans from virtually every demographic category agree that the media, both entertainment and news, are undermining America's moral values.

Among the moral values groups, 76 percent of Orthodox say the media are harming America's moral values, as do 67 percent of Independents and 60 percent of Progressives. 74 percent of frequent churchgoers, and even 66 percent of people who never attend church, agree.

Within the ideological groups a greater range of opinion exists, but the overall results are the same. 82 percent of Republicans, 65 percent of independents, and 61 percent of Democrats point a finger at the media, as do 76 percent of conservatives, 67 percent of moderates, and 58 percent of liberals.

Greater levels of education do not necessarily lead to greater agreement that the media are damaging American moral values. Only 60 percent of high school graduates agree, but among college graduates, the percentage climbs to 73 percent. Then the numbers fall to 68 percent for Americans with postgraduate degrees. Though full-time students are likelier than the population as a whole to perceive the media's powerful influence on American values (77 percent to 64 percent), only 64 percent of students believe the media are harming our cultural values. Could it be that people who have spent more years in higher education have been more extensively indoctrinated with the values promoted by the media? 73 percent of homemakers say the media are harmful; maybe kids should listen to their moms more.

3. Americans overwhelmingly agree that the entertainment media are damaging American moral values.

Prominent members of the entertainment media often assert that Hollywood does not shape American values so much as it reflects the values already adopted by the public. The public disagrees sharply.

Major Finding: 73 percent of Americans say the entertainment industry is having a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 7 percent say the entertainment industry is having a positive impact.

Director Paul Verhoeven Denies Hollywood's Influence on Culture

As reported by movie critic Michael Medved, August 1995.



"We're just artists, we just do what artists do. We hold the mirror up to nature and we show nature the way it is. The problem isn't what we show; the problem is society that is ugly, and violent, and horrible. We just show things as they are."

--Paul Verhoeven, director of numerous "realistic" Hollywood films including *Showgirls*, *Basic Instinct*, *Total Recall* and *Robocop*.

A tremendous majority of Americans believes the entertainment industry is undermining our nation's moral values. 73 percent of Americans say entertainment media have a negative impact on moral values; 43 percent describe the impact as strongly negative.

Although majorities in every moral values group agree that Hollywood is harming the nation's values, the sizes of the majorities within the groups differ sharply. People who are more religious are more at odds with Hollywood. 82 percent of Orthodox say Hollywood is damaging our values, and 73 percent of Independents, but only 62 percent of Progressives. 81 percent of frequent churchgoers agree, but only 67 percent of non-churchgoers. 81 percent of pro-lifers agree, but only 69 percent of pro-choicers. 75 percent of those who believe in God agree, but only 63 percent of nonbelievers. 77 percent of those who believe God created life on earth, but only 67 percent of those who believe that life evolved through forces of nature, agree.

Differences are marked among the ideological groups as well. 86 percent of Republicans think Hollywood is harmful, compared to 68 percent for independents and 68 percent for Democrats. 80 percent of conservatives, 72 percent of moderates, and 64 percent of liberals agree. 84 percent of people who think the government is too big agree, in contrast to 61 percent of people who would like to see a more activist government.

Higher levels of education are consistent with greater levels of concern about the entertainment media. 66 percent of high school graduates, 77 percent of college graduates, and 78 percent of Americans with postgraduate degrees believe Hollywood is damaging our moral values. However, only 64 percent of students see Hollywood as harmful, compared to 82 percent of homemakers.

Women (76 percent) tend to see Hollywood more critically than men (70 percent), and married people (77 percent) more than singles (63 percent). 80 percent of married women think Hollywood is damaging American moral values, but among single men, the number drops to 57 percent.

4. Most Americans believe the news media are damaging American moral values.

Americans differ in opinion about the effect of the news media more than they differ about the effect of the entertainment media, apparently because of the influence of political ideology. Right-

NBC News Anchor Brian Williams Denies the Bias

On Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, July 29, 2003



"I'm not going to judge anybody else in the business, but our work — I can speak for NBC News and our newsroom — it goes through, talk about checks and balances. We have an inordinate number of editors. Every word I write, before it goes on air, goes through all kinds of traps and filters, and it's read by all kinds of different people who point out bias."
– Brian Williams

Despite the denials of the media elite, most Americans believe the news is politically biased. 44 percent of Americans say the news media favor the left, and 17 percent say the news media favor the right. Only 27 percent say the news is balanced.

of-center groups consistently condemn the news media. Even among liberal groups, however, sizable pluralities agree that the news media are damaging American moral values.

Within the moral values groups, 61 percent of Orthodox, 53 percent of Independents, and 46 percent of Progressives believe that the news media are harming American moral values. 61 percent of frequent churchgoers and 50 percent of non-churchgoers agree. 61 percent of pro-lifers agree, but only 49 percent of pro-choicers.

Opinion is more sharply divided among the ideological groups. 68 percent of Republicans and 54 percent of independents consider the news media to be harmful to moral values, but only 45 percent of Democrats. By political philosophy, it's 65 percent of conservatives, 49 percent of moderates, and 45 percent of liberals. 68 percent of people who want to reduce the size of government are critical of the news media, but only 40 percent of those who would increase the size of government.

Only 47 percent of Americans with high school diplomas or less view the news media as harmful. 56 percent of college-educated adults think so, and 55 percent of Americans with postgraduate degrees. 47 percent of full-time students agree.

Men tend to be more critical of the news media than women. 58 percent of men believe the news media are harming American moral values, but only 49 percent of women agree. Married men, at 63 percent, are much more skeptical of the news media than single men, at 47 percent.

American attitudes toward the beneficial or harmful effect of the news media on moral values generally resemble their opinions about whether the news media are politically biased, but responses to the latter question appear to be even more strongly influenced by the observer's values.

Overall, 44 percent of Americans see the news media tilting left, 27 percent say the news media are balanced, and 17 percent say the news media favor conservatives.

Among the moral values groups, 58 percent of Orthodox believe the media are biased to the left, and 12 percent to

Major Finding: 54 percent of Americans believe the news media have a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 11 percent say the news media have a positive impact.

the right. Among Independents, it's 43 percent left, 16 percent right. 25 percent of Progressives perceive a bias to the left, and 28 percent say the news media are biased to the right. Among frequent churchgoers, it's 63 percent left, 10 percent right; for non-churchgoers, it's 32 percent left, 24 percent right.

The ideological groups disagree more sharply than the moral groups about media bias. 72 percent of Republicans perceive a bias to the left, and 6 percent to the right. 27 percent of Democrats perceive a tilt to the left, and 26 percent say the news media are biased to the right. 65 percent of conservatives see a leftwing bias, and 9 percent right. 24 percent of liberals see a bias to the left, and 32 percent right. 64 percent of Americans who would reduce the size and scope of government believe the news media are biased to the left, and 12 percent say to the right. Among big government supporters, it's 25 percent left, 24 percent right.

II. Media Influence on American Cultural and Moral Values

Perhaps the most intriguing finding in the National Cultural Values Survey is the relationship between media consumption and attitudes on moral issues. The survey indicates that people who consume more media tend to be less committed to the virtues, values and beliefs that contribute to personal responsibility, individual character and social stability.

The survey compares American adults by the number of hours of television they watch per evening. Light TV viewers – 22.5 percent of Americans – are people who watch one hour or less of television per evening. Heavy TV viewers – 25 percent of the public – are people who watch four or more hours of television per evening. The moral and social values of these two groups often contrast sharply. Also, increased exposure to television appears to have a disarming effect on the viewer. The more a person watches television, the less likely he is to believe that the media are influencing moral values.

1. Television viewing and personal responsibility.

Major Finding: The more a person watches television, the less likely he will be to accept responsibility for his own life and for his obligations to the people around him.

Personal responsibility is the hallmark of good character and citizenship. Our nation will prosper only so long as the average American accepts responsibility for his own decisions and actions, and also acknowledges his obligation to help others and to treat others properly. The survey's data indicate that the media are not helping to instill personal responsibility in the minds of Americans.

A. Responsibility for providing for your own needs.

Do Americans believe they are responsible for providing for their own needs, or do they expect the government to assume the responsibility? Americans who view more television are significantly more likely to look to government.

Retirement: are individuals responsible, or is the government? 40 percent of Americans say people should be responsible for planning and saving for their own retirement and not depend on government benefits like Social Security. 52 percent of Americans say the government should be responsible for providing retirement benefits for everyone through programs like Social Security.

These percentages differ significantly according to TV watching habits. 46 percent of light TV viewers prefer personal responsibility for retirement, compared to 27 percent of heavy TV viewers. 43 percent of light viewers think government should be responsible, while 64 percent of heavy viewers look to government.

Health care: private or government? 39 percent of Americans say they prefer a private, for-profit health care system in which people can choose their own insurance coverage, but not everyone is guaranteed coverage. 53 percent of Americans say they prefer a government-run, not-for-profit system in which people are assigned their coverage and everyone is guaranteed coverage.

As the survey found with retirement, a far higher percentage of heavy TV viewers prefer to rely on government rather than accept personal responsibility. 63 percent of heavy viewers prefer a government-run health system, compared to 48 percent of light viewers. 29 percent of heavy viewers prefer a private system, much less than the 43 percent of light viewers.

Size of government: too big or needs to get bigger? Two Americans in three (66 percent) say the federal government is too big and does too many things, and only 18 percent say the government needs to be bigger because it doesn't do enough.

Though only a minority of Americans say they want to increase the size of government, heavy TV viewers are significantly more open to the idea than light TV viewers. 26 percent of heavy TV viewers say the government needs to get bigger, more than double the 12 percent of light viewers. 67 percent of light TV viewers believe the government is too big, but only 58 percent of heavy viewers think government is too big.

B. Responsibility to provide for the needs of others.

Do Americans seek to lend a helping hand to those in distress? People who watch more TV are less likely to look out for the needs of their fellow man.

Charity takes it on the chin among heavy TV viewers. Only 16 percent of Americans say they do not give to charity. 11 percent of light TV viewers say they don't give; the number more than doubles to 24 percent for heavy TV viewers.

45 percent of all Americans say people should always feel obligated to help the less fortunate and give back to their communities, and 49 percent say people should help the less fortunate and give back to their communities only when they are in a position to help.

49 percent of light TV viewers say people should always feel obligated to give back to their communities. Only 38 percent of heavy TV viewers feel obligated to give in spite of their financial circumstances.

The less charitable attitude is also reflected in actual giving. 51 percent

MTV Preaches Selfishness and Extravagance, not Charity and Thrift

My Super Sweet 16, May 2, 2007



"People are definitely, like, jealous of me and my lifestyle just because I give off the rich girl vibe."

-- Amberly, whose father threw a \$300,000 party for 800 guests to celebrate her 16th birthday. Her dad also took her to Paris to find the perfect dress and gave her a 2007 Audi convertible.

Heavy TV viewers are twice as likely as light TV viewers to make no charitable contributions and refuse to volunteer their time.

of Americans report that they give money to their churches. 59 percent of light TV viewers give to church, but only 40 percent of heavy TV viewers do. 39 percent of light TV viewers give to relief organizations like the Red Cross; only 23 percent of heavy TV viewers do. In fact, light TV viewers are more likely to give to virtually every kind of charity.

The following table lists the percentages of all Americans and light and heavy TV viewers who say they give to various types of charities:

	Total	Light	Heavy
Churches	51	59	40
Red Cross et al.	34	39	23
Medical research	32	28	18
Children	25	28	18
Education	20	26	10
Religious relief orgs	18	22	13
Environment	9	15	5
Don't give	16	11	24

Volunteering shows similar results. The following table lists percentages of all Americans and light and heavy TV viewers who say they volunteer time to various causes and charities.

	Total	Light	Heavy
Churches	36	47	21
Red Cross et al.	10	12	6
Children	9	12	5
Education	13	20	6
Religious relief orgs	7	9	4
Environment	4	7	2
Don't volunteer	39	27	56

Major Finding: The more a person watches television, the less committed he is to classical virtues such as honesty, reliability and fairness.

C. Responsibility to respect the rights of others by treating them properly.

Can Americans trust the word of the guy next door? Can they count on others to deliver services and pay their bills on time? It may depend on how many hours an evening their neighbors watch television.

Honesty is less valued by heavy TV viewers. Heavy TV viewers are more willing to cheat a private business or the government. For example, they say they are more likely to cheat a restaurant that forgot to include some items on the bill. 25 percent of all Americans said they would cheat the restaurant, and 19 percent of light TV viewers, but 31 percent of heavy TV watchers said they would cheat.

Heavy TV viewers are also more likely to work under the table while collecting unemployment benefits. 33 percent of Americans said they would work under the table. 30 percent of light TV viewers would do so, and 37 percent of heavy TV viewers.

Reliability is less valued by heavy TV viewers. 72 percent of all Americans say people should always be reliable. 27 percent say people should be reliable when possible, and just 1 percent say people should not worry about being reliable.

75 percent of light TV viewers say people should always be reliable, and 24 percent say people should be reliable when possible. Among heavy TV viewers, 66 percent say people should always be reliable, and 31 percent say people should be reliable when possible.

Fairness is not as important to heavy TV viewers. 73 percent of all Americans say people should always treat others fairly regardless of how they are treated. 21 percent say people should treat others the same way they are treated, being fair only if they have been treated fairly.

The difference between light and heavy TV viewers is dramatic. 79 percent of light TV viewers say people should treat others fairly regardless of how they are treated, and 16 percent say treat others the way they are treated. Among heavy TV viewers, 65 percent say people should treat others fairly no matter what, and 27 percent say people should treat others as they are treated.

D. Acceptance of responsibility to uphold high moral standards on sex-related issues.

Heavy TV viewers tend to be more liberal in their attitudes toward social and sexual issues. People who watch more television are more open to sex outside of marriage, more likely to support abortion, and more likely to believe divorce should be available for any reason. They are less likely to believe homosexuality is morally wrong or to oppose same-sex "marriage."

Sex between unmarried adults. Heavy TV viewers are significantly less likely to condemn sex between unmarried adults than light TV viewers, 26 to 39 percent.

Major Finding: The more a person watches television, the more permissive his attitudes toward sexual issues like sex outside of marriage, abortion and homosexuality are likely to be.

CBS Portrays Extramarital Sex as No Big Deal

Two and a Half Men, April 16, 2007



Charlie and Myra exit a coat closet after having sex before her brother's wedding ceremony.

Charlie: "You know what? I just realized something, I'm two for two at Judith's weddings."

Myra: "What a coincidence, I'm two for two at Herb's weddings."

Charlie: "Huh? Ok, what about funerals? Can you beat a three-way in a hearse?"

Myra: "No."

Charlie: "You have to think about it?"

Myra: "It's a grey area."

People who watch more television are more permissive about sex. 39 percent of light TV viewers say sex between unmarried adults is wrong, but only 26 percent of heavy TV viewers agree.

Overall, 32 percent of American adults say sex between unmarried adults is always wrong, 49 percent say sex between unmarried adults may be right depending on the situation, and 16 percent say it is always right.

39 percent of light TV viewers say sex between unmarried adults is always wrong, 45 percent say it depends on the situation, and 14 percent say it is always right. Only 26 percent of heavy TV viewers say sex between unmarried adults is always wrong. 48 percent say it depends on the situation, and 20 percent say it is always right.

Abortion. Light TV viewers are far more likely to say abortion is wrong than heavy TV viewers, and they're much more likely to describe themselves as pro-life.

Overall, 34 percent of Americans choose the option "abortion is wrong," and 56 percent say it depends on the situation. Only 8 percent say "abortion is right."

44 percent of light TV viewers say abortion is wrong, compared to 27 percent of heavy TV viewers. Only 7 percent of light viewers say abortion is right, compared to 10 percent of heavy TV viewers.

51 percent of Americans describe themselves as pro-choice, and 44 percent say they're pro-

life. Light TV viewers are 43 percent pro-choice, and 51 percent pro-life. Heavy TV viewers are 57 percent pro-choice, and 37 percent pro-life.

Divorce. Should divorce be freely available, or should it be restricted? 45 percent of Americans believe divorce should be legal for any reason at any time, and 48 percent would limit divorce to cases of adultery, abandonment or abuse.

41 percent of light TV viewers believe divorce should be legal for any reason, and 52 percent support limits on divorce. 48 percent of heavy TV viewers say divorce should be legal for any reason, and 44 percent would restrict divorce.

13 percent of Americans say divorce is wrong. 19 percent of light TV viewers would agree, but only 10 percent of heavy TV viewers.

Homosexuality. Heavy TV viewers are much more willing to accept homosexuality than light TV viewers. Overall, 49 percent of Americans say homosexuality is wrong. 26 percent believe it depends on the situation, and 14 percent say homosexuality is right, for a total of 40 percent who are willing to accept homosexuality in some or all cases.

55 percent of light TV viewers say homosexuality is wrong, compared to 43 percent of heavy TV viewers. 36 percent of light TV viewers will accept homosexuality in certain cases, compared to 44 percent of heavy TV viewers.

Same-sex "marriage." 61 percent of Americans believe marriage should be between a man and a woman, and same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry. 33 percent of Americans say same-sex couples should be allowed to marry just as men and women do.

64 percent of light TV viewers oppose same-sex "marriage," compared to 57 percent of heavy TV viewers. 31 percent of light TV viewers accept same-sex "marriage," and 35 percent of heavy TV viewers.

Boy Scouts vs. homosexual activism. Heavy TV viewers are substantially more likely than light TV viewers to side with the homosexual activist movement in its conflict with the Boy Scouts of America.

Overall, 64 percent of Americans say the Boy Scouts, as a private organization, have the right to make their own rules and to refuse to allow homosexuals to serve as troop leaders. 28 percent say that despite the fact that the Boy Scouts are privately funded, banning homosexuals from serving as troop leaders is discrimination and it should not be allowed.

67 percent of light TV viewers would support the Boy Scouts, but only 57 percent of heavy TV viewers. 34 percent of heavy TV viewers would force the Boy Scouts to permit homosexuals to be troop leaders, compared to 24 percent of light TV viewers.

2. Television viewing, God and religion.

Heavy TV viewers are just as likely as other Americans to believe that God exists and to believe He created life on earth, yet they are more likely to go their own way on moral questions. They are far

NBC Promotes Homosexuality and Attacks Marriage

Will & Grace, April 18, 2000



Jack tells Will: "The problem is heterosexual marriage. If God meant a man and a woman to be married, He would have given both of them penises."

Heavy TV viewers are significantly less likely than light TV viewers to say homosexuality is wrong (43 percent to 55 percent), and to oppose same-sex "marriage" (57 percent to 64 percent).

USA TODAY's Top 25 TV Moments of the Past 25 Years

published May 14, 2007

1. 9/11 Coverage (2001)
2. FOX Network is born (1986)
3. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (1986)
4. *The Sopranos* (1999)
5. *NYPD Blue* (1993)
6. The O.J. Simpson Trial (1994)
7. *The Simpsons* (1989)
8. *The Cosby Show* (1984)
9. *The Real World* (1992)
10. Johnny Carson's last show (1992)
11. Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction (2004)
12. Dan Rather leaving *CBS Evening News* (2005)
13. *thirtysomething* (1987)
14. *Dawson's Creek* (1998)
15. *American Idol* (2002)
16. *Seinfeld* (1990)
17. Ellen comes out (1997)
18. The Apple commercial (1984)
19. Dan Quayle and *Murphy Brown* (1992)
20. *The Jenny Jones Show* murder (1995)
21. *The Civil War* (1990)
22. Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show* (1998)
23. Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings (1991)
24. *Lonesome Dove/War & Remembrance* (1989)
25. The M*A*S*H finale (1983)

Take a close look at USA TODAY's "top" moments in the past 25 years of television history, and you'll see a rogue's gallery of television shows responsible for undermining American values and moral virtues.

Patriotism: M*A*S*H began as an indictment of the Vietnam War, and later made an art form of ridiculing patriotism, traditional values and the military as symbolized by the show's villains, Major Frank Burns and Major Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan.

Responsible sex and marriage: M*A*S*H portrayed American surgeons and nurses serving in a combat theater as if they were taking a cruise on the Love Boat. *Seinfeld* attacked the principle that sex belongs within marriage. *Murphy Brown* promoted childbearing outside of marriage, and gave network talking heads the opportunity to ridicule Vice President Dan Quayle for rightly pointing a finger at the show. *Thirtysomething*, *NYPD Blue* and *The Sopranos* all boosted exposure of American families to extramarital sex. *The Real World* and *Dawson's Creek* broke the taboo against teen sex on TV. Ellen DeGeneres's on-screen coming-out party led to an avalanche of openly homosexual characters on prime time shows. Desensitizing the public by repeated exposure to homosexuality is a central strategy of the homosexual activist movement, and the networks are cooperating fully.

Modesty: *NYPD Blue* pushed the envelope by broadcasting naked people having sex, and parade of naked rear ends.

Decency in language and self-control in conduct: *NYPD Blue* made television uglier, and *The Sopranos* took on-screen violence and f-bombing to an even lower level.

Respect for parents: *The Simpsons'* Homer Simpson is far from the first father depicted as a fool on prime time, but Bart Simpson brought disrespect for dad to a whole new level.

Fair and balanced news: coverage of the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings was an incessant promotion of a transparent political smear. The satirical *The Daily Show* has actually become a news source for millions of Americans, and it's anything but fair and balanced. A measure of justice: Dan Rather got his comeuppance after using forged National Guard documents to "get" President George W. Bush.

Personal responsibility: Shows like *Oprah Winfrey* and *Jenny Jones* are long on self-centered, feel-good fluff and short on substance. Oprah herself has personally undertaken many charitable projects, but her show continually turns people to collective solutions to problems.

Purposeful living, serious attitude, work ethic: *The Real World* championed purposelessness and the pursuit of hedonism. The O.J. Simpson trial coverage was an exercise in pure voyeurism.

Major Finding: The more a person watches television, the less likely he is to value religious principles and obedience to God.

less likely than light TV viewers to believe that people should live by God's principles, or to believe the Bible is God's authoritative word. They are far less likely to attend church or religious services.

Belief in God. 87 percent of Americans say they believe in God, and 8 percent say they do not. 85 percent of light TV viewers are believers, and 9 percent are not. 88 percent of heavy TV viewers believe, and 7 percent do not.

Creation vs. evolution. 69 percent of Americans believe God created life on Earth, while 22 percent believe life evolved through forces of nature. 68 percent of both heavy and light TV viewers agree that God created life on Earth, and 22 percent of both groups believe in evolution.

Bible: truth or fiction? 52 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the authoritative word of God and His laws, while 41 percent say the Bible is a collection of stories that outline a set of moral values. 57 percent of light TV viewers consider the Bible to be authoritative, compared to 48 percent of heavy TV viewers. 36 percent of light TV viewers say the Bible is just a moral guide, compared to 43 percent of heavy TV viewers.

Church attendance. Many Americans appear to have decided that television and church don't mix. Overall, 36 percent of Americans attend church or religious services at least weekly, while 38 percent attend rarely or never. 47 percent of light TV viewers attend frequently, compared to only 28 percent of heavy TV viewers. 29 percent of light TV viewers rarely or never attend, but the number leaps to 51 percent for heavy viewers.

God's values or mine? 36 percent of Americans say people should always live their lives by God's teachings and principles. 45 percent say people should combine God's teachings and a personal set of morals and values. 15 percent say people should live their lives by their own personal set of morals and values, even when they contradict God's teachings and principles.

43 percent of light TV viewers try to live by God's principles, compared to 32 percent of heavy TV viewers. Surprisingly, the percentages of people who place their values above God's are about even, 16 percent of light TV viewers and 15 percent of heavy TV

Fox Entertainment Denigrates Religion

The Family Guy, November 20, 2005



God leers at a woman in His bed holding a condom, and says: "Oh come on, baby. It's my birthday."

Many Americans apparently have decided that faith and television don't mix. 47 percent of light TV viewers attend church regularly, compared to only 28 percent of heavy TV viewers. Only 32 percent of heavy viewers say they live by God's values above their own, compared to 43 percent of light viewers.

viewers. 37 percent of light viewers and 50 percent of heavy viewers take the middle position, that people should live by a combination of God's values and their own views.

Physician-assisted suicide. 42 percent of Americans believe physician-assisted suicide is wrong. 8 percent say it is right, and 45 percent say it depends on the situation, so a total of 53 percent are willing to accept the practice in certain cases.

46 percent of light TV viewers say physician-assisted suicide is wrong, and 49 percent are willing to accept it under certain circumstances. 39 percent of heavy TV viewers say they condemn physician-assisted suicide, and 57 percent are willing to accept it in certain cases.

3. Television viewing and legal issues.

Though greater television viewing generally correlates to left-of-center attitudes, heavy TV viewers tend to be more conservative than light TV viewers on legal issues. Have these folks been watching lots of reruns of *Law and Order*?

Immigration. 62 percent of Americans believe America should cut back or stop all immigration from other countries. 50 percent of light TV viewers agree, but 66 percent of heavy TV viewers agree.

Obeying the law. 65 percent of Americans believe it's always wrong to break the law, while 31 percent say it's okay to break the law if nobody is hurt or if the law is unnecessary or stupid. 62 percent of light TV viewers say it's always wrong to break the law, and 68 percent of heavy TV viewers say it's always wrong.

Death penalty. Heavy TV viewers are significantly more likely to support the death penalty. Overall, 19 percent of Americans say the death penalty is wrong. 26 percent say it's right, and 52 percent say it depends on the situation, for a combined total of 78 percent who can accept the death penalty in certain cases.

24 percent of light TV viewers oppose the death penalty, but only 16 percent of heavy TV viewers do. 71 percent of light viewers will support the death penalty in certain cases, and 80 percent of heavy viewers.

Major Finding: The more a person watches TV, the less likely he is to believe the media are influencing the nation's moral values.

4. The seductive effect of television viewing.

In Greek mythology, the Sirens were minor gods who lived on an island surrounded by dangerous reefs. The Sirens sang enchanting music to lure unsuspecting sailors to the island, where their ships were wrecked on the reefs. Are the entertainment media singing their own version of a siren song, bewitching heavy

TV viewers? Light TV viewers are far more likely than heavy viewers to believe the media are harming America's moral values.

Do the media influence moral values? 64 percent of Americans overall believe the media are an important factor in shaping the nation's moral values, and 33 percent say the media are a minor factor or have no influence at all on moral values.

70 percent of light TV viewers believe the media are an important factor, but the number drops to 62 percent for heavy TV viewers. 29 percent of light viewers, and 33 percent of heavy viewers, say they do not believe the media are an important influence on moral values.

Do the media harm moral values? 68 percent of Americans believe the media have a negative effect on moral values in America, and only 9 percent say the media have a beneficial effect. 76 percent of light TV viewers see the media's impact as negative, but far fewer heavy TV viewers, only 58 percent, agree. 6 percent of light viewers believe the media are helping moral values, and the number more than doubles to 14 percent for heavy viewers.

What about the entertainment media? 73 percent of Americans think the entertainment media are damaging our moral values, 18 percent say the media effect is neutral, and only 7 percent think the entertainment media are having a beneficial impact on values.

77 percent of light TV viewers see the entertainment media as harmful. Far fewer heavy TV viewers, only 65 percent, agree. 4 percent of light viewers believe the entertainment media are beneficial for moral values, but the number nearly triples to 11 percent for heavy viewers.

And the news media? Heavy TV viewers are less likely than light viewers to conclude that the news media either harm American values or are politically biased.

Overall, 54 percent of Americans believe the news media are damaging the nation's moral values, 32 percent believe the effect is neutral, and 11 percent say the news media are benefiting moral values.

60 percent of light TV viewers consider the news media to be damaging the nation's values, and 10 percent believe the media are helping matters. In contrast, 44 percent of heavy TV viewers believe the news media are damaging the nation's values, and 12 percent say the news media are beneficial.

44 percent of Americans overall perceive liberal bias in the news media. 27 percent of Americans think the news media are balanced, and 17 percent believe the news media have a conservative bias.

49 percent of light TV viewers believe the news media have a liberal bias, compared to 40 percent of heavy TV viewers. 23 percent of light viewers believe the media are balanced, and 17 percent believe the news media have a conservative bias. 29 percent of heavy viewers consider the news media to be balanced, and 16 percent say the news media are biased to the right.

Conclusion

Americans overwhelmingly believe the news and entertainment media are damaging the nation's moral values, and CMI's National Cultural Values Survey suggests they have good reason to think so.

Greater exposure to the media, as measured by the number of hours of television watched per evening, clearly is correlated with a decrease in standards across a wide variety of social and moral issues. The more people watch television, the likelier they are to hold permissive attitudes about issues related to sexual morality, including extramarital sex, homosexuality and abortion. At the same time, they are less likely to honor God and religion, and to respect the application of religious values in public life.

Beyond the overt moral issues, the media appear to be adversely affecting American attitudes toward the deeper questions of character. Greater exposure to the media correlates to erosion in personal responsibility as measured by commitment to self-reliance, charity and honesty.

The great majority of Americans perceive a decline in the nation's moral values. This is another way of saying Americans perceive erosion in the personal responsibility, honor and integrity of their fellow citizens. They also see a decline in sexual mores, and the nation's commitment to religious values and practice: the very areas apparently being undermined by the media.

Kristen Fyfe and Colleen Raezler contributed valuable research assistance to this Special Report.

About the Culture and Media Institute

The Culture and Media Institute's mission is to advance, preserve, and help restore America's culture, character, traditional values, and morals against the assault of the liberal media elite. Founded in October 2006 with a challenge grant from the Templeton Foundation, CMI has already attracted attention from the Rush Limbaugh Show, Fox News Channel, CNN and many other news outlets.

Using the unique resources at Media Research Center, CMI is exposing media campaigns against the traditional values of faith, self-reliance, patriotism, marriage, decency, civic pride, gratitude, industriousness, and good manners. CMI staffers appear regularly on TV, radio and in print, and publish periodic reports as well as articles for outside publications.

CMI's staff is wielding a vital weapon in America's ongoing culture war: scientifically sound media studies, accompanied by lively commentaries. CMI's National Cultural Values Survey will serve as the foundation for a series of studies examining what Americans believe and how the media are affecting the nation's views on a range of issues.

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About the MRC

Founded in 1987, the Media Research Center (MRC) is America's largest and most respected media watchdog group. Its mission is to create a media culture where truth and liberty flourish in America.

The Alexandria, Virginia-based organization brings balance and responsibility to the news media through its **News Analysis Division**, which documents, exposes and neutralizes liberal media bias; the **Business & Media Institute**, which audits the media's coverage of economic issues; **TimesWatch.org**, which monitors the New York Times; and **NewsBusters.org**, the MRC blog, which exposes liberal media bias 24 hours a day.

The MRC is also home to the **Cybercast News Service (CNSNews.com)**, an Internet news outlet that is dedicated to providing unbiased coverage of the news of the day.

In 2006, the MRC launched the **Culture and Media Institute** with a mission to advance and help restore America's culture, character, traditional values and morals against the assault of the liberal media elite.

Former CBS reporter and now best-selling author Bernard Goldberg says of the MRC, "The Media Research Center folks don't give the media hell; they just tell the truth and the media think it's hell."



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