Television Programs Portray Teens Poorly

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praise it has received, the new show seems doomed for cancellation because of its low ratings (20%, according to a recent T.V. Guide), ratings which may be the result of the program's Saturday night time slot.

"The White Shadow" deals with a ghetto high school basketball team. The low income setting provides the screenwriters with some fresh story lines, and helps to alleviate the middle-class sameness of most other programs. Mike Young, a student at Kearny, said of the show, "It's somewhat realistic because most of the shows deal with things in young people's lives."

Among other Kearny students who voiced their opinions about teenage television roles, Donna Salini commented: "I come from a family of eight children, so I can relate to 'Eight Is Enough.' But it's sort of unrealistic because they all happen to be goodlooking and they all happen to be popular." Lisa Thoma, another student added: "In some shows, such as 'Eight Is Enough,' the teenagers emotions and situations are exaggerated. 'Breaking Away' shows teenagers more realistically."

"The Waltons," "Little House On The Prairie," and "Happy Days" are primarily concerned with teenagers of the past. The characters are incredibly good-natured and polite, perhaps in an attempt to depict an age in which teenagers had more respect for their elders. In these programs the emphasis seems to be more on the novelty of the era, rather than on the teenagers themselves.

Many students feel that characters are a little too predictable in television. Taking its place alongside the hip Grandmother and the precocious child is the intelligent, sarcastic teenage rebel. MaryJoe Glutz, a student who was surveyed, commented: "I think (T.V.) teenagers are stereotyped. I don't think they are portrayed well and I think they are a bad influence on real teenagers. The way they are showed makes things like pre-marital sex and drugs okay, when they're not." Ken Layne opposed this, saying, "In relation to teenagers, T.V. is scared to death of drugs. They're afraid they'll insult people."

Particularly unimpressed with characterization and plot schemes, Rich Chuman, another student, stated, "It's almost in the realm of fantasy. It's too surrealistic. It's too impossible." On the other hand, Melodie Allen said, "Television shows that involve teenagers are usually family shows. They try to teach morality."

Teenage women are practically ignored by television. "Breaking Away" and "The White Shadow" are entirely male programs. Women number among the main characters of "Eight Is Enough," but they are dealt with in a perfunctory way.

"Eight Is Enough's" Teenagers' Emotions are Exaggerated

Other than in one episode in which the women stood up against the men, the show tends to promote sexist stereotypes. For example, the sisters of the Bradford family are often to be found washing dishes and preparing meals. The men of the house are shown watching football, reading newspapers, and/or working on cars.

Adding to the shallowness of teenage roles are the many poor casting choices. Most of the actors are approximately five years older than the characters they portray. This creates a situation in which completely developed adults are posing as teenagers. No wonder the actual teenager questions why her or his contemporaries seem so immature.

Teenager roles on T.V. have come a long way since the day of "Leave It To Beaver," "Father Knows Best" and "My Three Sons." But the current shows still seem unable to portray true-to-life plots and subtle, complex, realistic characters. ●

Male Superiority In Math Debated

Through seventh grade, boys and girls do equally well in math. But in ninth grade, where mathematical reasoning becomes the focus, boys pull ahead and stay there.

Sex-biased training girls get at home or in school, has commonly been blamed for the gap in mathematical ability, but new research strongly challenges this veiw. A study, published Dec. 5 in Science magazine concludes "sex differences in achievement in, and attitude toward, mathematics result from superior male mathematical ability."

Conducted by Camilla Benbow and Julion Stanley of Johns Hopkins University, the study concludes that math superiority in boys is mostly the result of genetic factors.

The researchers tested 9,927 students who excel in math from schools in Washington, D.C. and five surrounding states. To be eligible the students had to score in the upper 2 to 5 percent on a standard math test.

Boys averaged 35 points higher than girls and differences were most pronounced among the best students. "Boys outnumbered girls more than two to one in match scores over 500," the study said.

Critics maintain that since the study was done among gifted students, the findings may not apply to the general population. Another question is whether mathematical reasoning can be accurately tested.

Young Woman Sues School For Damages

A one million dollar suit has been filed by a 16-year-old high school student and her mother against Knox County, Tennessee schools. The federal court suit seeks compensation and punitive damages for the violation of Monica Sturm's constitutional rights.

In the legal action, the Karns High School junior charges that she, her purse, and her car were searched in violation of her constitutional rights. Sturm charges that the school policy holding her responsible for over-the-counter drugs found in the car she drove to school, but does not own, violates her rights, and that she should be entitled to damages because the school officials displayed "willful, flagrant and reckless disregard for her rights. . . ."

The suit alleges Ms. Sturm, her purse, and her car were searched without a warrant after she was named by another student as having sold him some pills. Without identifying the pills or verifying the student's accusation, Ms. Sturm was called to the principal's office where her purse was inspected. She was then searched beneath her clothing by a female school administrator and the car she had driven was examined. The officials removed the contents of the car's ashtray and sent it to the laboratory for analysis.

Ms. Sturm was immediately placed on in-school suspension for seven days and informed that if the lab tests were positive she would be suspended for 90 days.

Lab test results showed traces of marijuana in the contents of the ashtray and also identified the pills she allegedly sold as over-the-counter caffeine tablets.

According to the suit, the protective aspects of school policy were not adhered to during the investigation, the school principal's actions were improper, and the principal's report to the Superintendent of Schools was inaccurate.

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Jennifer Church
Debbie Hardin
Sara Hellberg
Cookie Lemke
Jane Lowe
Elaine Martinez
Margie Steinbrunn

The High School Women's News Page is the result of a cooperative effort by young women in schools throughout San Diego. We welcome your contributions. Please send articles, graphics, and letters to P.O. Box 350, San Diego, CA 92101.

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For more information on the Young Women's Journalism and Community Education Project, please contact Chris Kehoe or Lisa Cobbs at 233-8984.