Danny Bruns on Johnson, “Watching TV Makes You Smarter”

Biography (TV theme on the PPT—nice!)

Identified the explicit claim of value here. Or is it a claim of fact? Challenging a widely-accepted view of television, the “Mom View” of arguing against violence / salaciousness.

Explained the “Sleeper Curve,” an allusion to a Woody Allen film (Verrilli interjected).

Discussed the “social networks” of the whole television-watching endeavor. The mutual benefit network between adults and children.

Eble: Asked about “rating systems.” Danny followed with a perfect description of this claim. **Nice work here…**

Claim of Fact: “Watching TV makes you smarter” (The title!)

Went to psychology: Defining intelligence, which is a tricky area. He doesn’t define “smarter” in terms of increased intelligence / what it is, but he does give ways that it can… a bit garbled… went into Dewey / relation of education with intelligence and Johnson’s claim.

Went to evidence: *ER* and *The West Wing*.

Went to emotional intelligence, social dexterity and gauging tone of others. Fluid intelligence. Your Dewey connection was clearer here… nice work!

Memory / Connection: *24, Lost, Alias, The Sopranos* (multiple threads) versus *Starsky and Hutch* and *Dragnet*. “Even the junk has improved.”

**Got away from “arrow pointing”—“didn’t think it had much to do with how TV is making us smarter.”**

* How would you describe the tone of Johnson’s piece? Why might it be well suited to the subject matter?
* Is Johnson justified in equating intellectual demands of TV and reading? Do multiple threading, flashing arrows, and social networks match up with attention, patience, retention, and the need to follow several narrative threads?
* Will shows get to a point where they become too complex?
* Do you agree with Johnson’s multiple claims?
* Has TV helped you improve your memory, ability to connect information, comprehension of material, or social dexterity?

**Tory**: Began… psychology—intelligence is difficult to quantify. Connected back to “Show and Tell,” which includes images for little kids. Common perception of TV shows / films being “stupid, meaningless…” There are many complexities in the production of a show.

Quincy: Sleeper quote… health-food store. Entirety of diet = rich foods. Ironic at the start that he uses a picture of the future that uses stuff that got unhealthier. TV has gotten more nutritional.

Zimmerman: I went back to my own TV-watching experience. *House of Cards*  / *Breaking Bad*…

Quincy: You don’t get bored because of the ambiguity. *The Sopranos.*  You never know what’s going to happen—ambiguous ending. No definite answer.

Nick Schlueter: *Inception*…

Quincy: You don’t get bored… mentioned graphics.

Eble: So… *Game of Thrones, Breaking Bad*…

Quincy: Discussed *Game of Thrones*…

Zimmerman: *World War Z*

Eble: TV has been elevated?

* Quincy: Definitely elevated.
* Schlueter: Much out there…
* Eble: Junk…
* Schlueter: Prominent high art…
* Quincy: Mom watches reality TV—all *Real Housewives* shows.
* Eble: Claim about reality TV in article?
* Quincy: *Survivor*… Monday-morning quarterbacking about *Survivor*
* Zimmernan: *Dancing With the Stars*
* Danny Bruns: Junk today is better, but there was no reality TV.
* Quincy: Focus on *Survivor, The Apprentice*… TV has changed in the past eight years…
* Bugada: You can show much more… say much more… reality TV wouldn’t be socially acceptable.
* Danny: *Naked and Afraid*…
* Tory / Eble: That seems interesting…
* Evan: One step away from torture…
* Tory: Disney / *High School Musical*…
* Quincy: Mindless pseudo-reality…
* Zimmerman: Denby, *Glee* (appeals to adults)
* Eble Art that pretends to be something else…
* Noise… Schlueter tried to talk…
* Himes: Eleven year-olds love it…
* Schlueter: Question to me… (Quincy was texting)
* Bruns: I thought he’d be talking about educational shows.
* Zimmerman: Crystallized versus fluid intelligence.
* Bugada: Dependent on the viewer…
* Zimmerman / Verrilli / Himes: “Missing” TV = you’re not missing anything…
* Schlueter: Those shows are not reflective of reality. Shared a story about Buddy Nabor’s dad. Going to the ER = people talk to each other like humans…
* Eble: *ER*…
* Himes: Moment of clarity for people…
* Quincy: Idea that Johnson brings up—people remember what they watch…*Mary Tyler Moore* show, golden era… halcyon days.
* Eble: Umberto Eco = how to watch television, related to Bugada’s comment.
* Quincy: Poetry, transmitter
* Eble: TV, changing perspectives… keeping the transmitter open.
* Zimmerman: Netflix has changed TV watching. Threads are quicker.
* Quincy: Instant gratification. People will wait for Netflix.
* Eble: Connect to Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu Plus?
  + Tory: Netflix = take up much time. This is keeping you away from society.
  + Eble: What about reading?
  + Quincy: Argument for the humanities. Reading helps you form an inner empathy. Helps you relate. A good show can do the same thing as a good book. Book is hampered by lack of visual, audio representation. I had a touchstone beforehand.
  + Eble: But it swings the other way…
  + Quincy: If you come into a show, this can help.
* Eble: So—TV = taken more seriously.
* Schlueter: TV tropes… CBS & *The Mentalist*…
* Eble: Nothing is new?
* Zimmerman: *House of Cards* = *Macbeth*…
* Quincy: All about him…

Tyler Himes: Largely contributing factor = sheer volume of television shows. 24 hours…if you have enough money or will, you can have that much TV.

* Quincy: There used to be an off-
* Tyler: Widely popular shows with many strings… the sheer volume = more opportunity
* Eble: Networks transforming…
* Eble / Verrilli / Williams / Zimmerman: Salaciousness / sexuality on HBO, Showtime…
* Quincy: Bill Cosby versus Richard Pryor…
* Zimmerman: *Seinfeld / Curb Your Enthusiasm*

Bruns: Johnson has a comment about TV shows reflecting reality—went to a quote from paragraph six. People look down on such gritty realism. Johnson says that this is just more realistic. So—is more edgy stuff “bad?”

* Tory clarified…
* Williams: Breasts versus violence.
* Zimmerman: Everybody is motivated by them…
* Williams: Why try to shield them?
* Eble: Sex / violence split?
* Zimmerman: *24* accepts violence…
* Williams: No penises in sex scenes…
* Verrilli: War movies as creating empathy… French movies with World Wars I & II—they don’t like violence.
* Eble: India / Bollywood…
* Schlueter: Sex = turns into something that it isn’t… What’s the difference between it and porn?
* Bugada: Companies = businesses who put out a variety
* Williams: Taboo with naked bodies.
* Zimmerman: Watching boobs…
* Eble: To that end… read paragraph 35—what are your thoughts about the claim of policy?
  + Zimmerman: You could gather a group of experts.
  + Williams: Everybody in this room is open-minded… but there are people out there (in Texas) who might not want people to watch breasts.
  + Eble: Sure… on the other end, secular folks wouldn’t want faith-filled work.
  + Bruns: I would like to see this.
  + Zimmerman: Shows / complexity, getting too complex?
  + Williams: Threads in too many directions?
  + Verrilli: Spoke of an artsy film that has too much knowledge.
  + Eble: Like *Memento, Inception…*?
  + Williams: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind…*
  + Eble: Teenaged films, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *Dazed and Confused*…
    - Verrilli, Williams, Zimmerman spoke on this…
    - Eble: No definitive story arc…
    - Verrilli: No desire to prove a point….
    - Eble: Lack of moral threads, multiple complexity = entertainment lacking
    - Zimmerman:
    - Eble: Discussion about where we find value in popular culture…
    - Williams: Movies that capture relationships…
    - Verrilli: Ambiguous stories…
    - Williams: Challenge with *There Will Be Blood*…

Eble talked…