

Violence in the Media

Introduction

Violence in the media; what do we perceive it to mean? Well for me it constitutes as a subject of information that stirs the emotions of the viewer in a way that causes disgust or excitement.

Singularly, violence is something we are all used to, from the early ages of school, all the way till we die, some react to it differently and we all seem to experience in varying amounts.

What I'm going to explore are the effects violence in the media has on ourselves; the general public. The greatest distributor of this topic would be the news broadcasters that bring violent stories to us through television, internet & newspapers, not a day goes by without some story indulging in violence being brought to us through media.

We can find violence in smaller mediums such as; films, computer games and books but we generally find this information to be fantasy, disregarding the later, a viewer can still be brought into that story so well it temporarily becomes realistic, now as a general public, who really gets to say what constitutes as violence? And to what quantities do we accept it in? I'll answer these questions below.

From country to country we all have our own means of adjudication and have formed our own governing boards to oversee and regulate what and how much we should see, it is those bodies that we rely on to make sure inappropriate media doesn't get through

to us. The level of violence we can handle is relative to the person viewing it, what I deem a satisfactory level of violence, another would disagree. Now I'm very liberal and believe that violence in the media doesn't equate to viewer's purposely depicting it in real life. I know that a lot of the time people do try to make links from violent media to youngster's real life violence and that it fuels their hatred, but for me it is more to do with the parenting the child has received.

It would seem that with the Internet, people's simplistic ideas of a "Global Village" (McLuhan, 1964) or a Utopian society would create is very much maligned, in truth the Internet did do one thing as predicted, bring people closer together, but with that who was really the one to thing all those people would be kind and honest people? As with all things new there will always be a faction that will try to exploit it and try to make "an easy buck" be it through good deeds or not.

Quite frequently we see articles talking about the relation to violent games and children's re-enactment of them; how games shouldn't have violent themes in them (Daily Telegraph, 25/10/1993) but I argue that it is simply too *easy* to blame the creator of the media. We all say they should think more about the safety of our children before making the game and that its purely for profits (Dark side of Cyberspace, 2003), but in fact the people to blame are the parents of the minors that they buy these games for and allow them to play. All games have to be certified by PEGI who give an appropriate audience age level, making sure that any purchaser knows what they are expecting, as for children re-enacting the violent games they play, (Daily Telegraph, 23/10/93) I agree, going back to the early 90's children used

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to re-enact moves from America's WWF shows, which are of course controlled but have a very violent theme, its is in children's nature to re-enact what they see, its how they show part of their learning.

Moving away from Violence in games, the next chapter will talk about violence within the internet itself "hate websites" a hate website is a site that portrays racial, Homophobic, anti-Semitic or any other dark point of view.

Again where (The dark side of cyberspace, 2003) continues to show how most people think that the internet is responsible for the accessibility of these cultures towards children I'd like to disagree. The people who start these sites will always be around and yes, always try to recruit young people but in a shorter local area without the internet, it is not the creation of the internet at fault but more the cunning of the people running these cultures that pick up on a niche to make their job easier. With more and more of these cultures being hidden within supposedly harmless sites (Isger, 1999) Teens are coming across this information without looking for it, in this case it is the duty of the parent to school their children to know right from wrong to know that these cultures are in a minority due to the majority having very poor opinions on their beliefs.

Breaking slightly away from the main topic, this small part will talk about the role parents have to play in the new world and the new technologies that are around for children to use.

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To surf the internet a machine is needed to access this information and display it back to the user, within these machines is the capability to restrict what kind of websites minors can view, there are programs you can install to help with unwanted E-mail and Viruses, but with all this added technology the parent still needs to consciously take the lead in making sure their children are aware of the dark side of the internet, just like they would about strangers in the street and teaching their children to not talk to them.

Moving onto cyber surveillance, we find this subject growing ever more in media coverage, (liberty, 1999) Governments have for nearly as long as the history of the internet sought to police and control the internet amid fears that it is a potential security threat, (Heins, 2000) an example of this was the creation of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) that former U.S President Bill Clinton brought into law, this act was an attempt to have control over all internet material and thus be able to censor anything they deemed offensive. Now I agree that there is a need to help make sure the wrong people or in some cases, any person doesn't see certain types of information available on the net.

This essay will also bring up the society of Hacker's, a fundamentally missed part to the structure of "Dark side of cyberspace" this society feeds off the "non technically minded" users of the internet, their lack of knowledge in securing a PC leads to open doors for Hacker's to gain entry to a PC, this is done via files being downloaded to the host PC (Worms, Trojans & key loggers) when browsing or installing files on the internet that aren't safe.

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There are many ways in which to prevent intrusions, mainly Firewalls or Anti-Virus Programs (Zonealarm or Norton) although these programs, as with others, are still susceptible to attacks; they block the vast majority of bad files or “hacks”.

In America, 2005, Jonathan James (also known as *c0mrade*) downloaded \$1.7 million dollars worth of software which controlled the International Space Station's life sustaining elements, and intercepted thousands of electronic messages relating to U.S. nuclear activities from the Department of Defence. Sentenced at age 16, he was the youngest person ever incarcerated for cyber crime in the United States. (Newton, Michael, 2004)

Hacking itself has cost the Fortune 1000 company's across the world, the sum of \$45 billion in 1999 (Linda Lee, 2001) and obviously is something we know needs to be protected.

Conclusion

The Dark Side of Cyberspace, does give a good general overlook on this topic, but in some ways it makes the user feel that the internet is in some way a terrible thing that needs to be shepherded in order to become a useful source of information, a lot of the time there are references to lots of quotes about how violence is something the creators are to blame for; that we should make them correct the mistakes we deem wrong. On the other hand it does raise a good argument surrounding the attempts the Governments of the free speaking world to censor the vast majority of the internet and give them more power to control its content, we this in the last chapter of the book

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and it gives a good consistent argument for and against with the “against” coming out on top.

The part on cyber exploitation seemed very out-dated now and not relevant, more and more the internet is becoming a society equally maintained by both men and women and that the majority (of at least women 12-50) find a place they don't feel as a worry or have fears of constant abuse, sexually or hate orientated. With the creation of such sites as Facebook and Myspace more and more women are signing up to these sites with avid motions, here they find a place to catch up with old friends from school days or old work colleagues, the sites are scripted well enough to protect the users from at least unwanted information or intrusions from unwanted men/women, thus giving the feel that the user is in control of what they are sent to their account.

Summing up the internet is just as good/bad as any other form of social network, the greater fear from it, is that a person can now have direct contact with people from all corners of the world, making it easier to gain access to more resources and opportunities. If we all take the care and time to be vigilant towards this inevitable outcome then we make ourselves safer in our use of the internet.

It is down to us to police the internet ourselves, with some help.

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