Jaden Roskelley

Wojciechowski

CE 1010 - Period 4

5/6/2013

<center>The Vector Of Violence</center>

The rata-tat-tat and the big boom. The yelling of soldier to soldier. The cry as a fellow comrade falls down from a bullet entering his chest. What is this war? Where is it taking place? The Middle East? A small African country? Honduras? No, this war is taking place on the flat screen TV in someone's house. It could be a movie, or maybe a video game.

The adults watching the movie, not alone in the room, are sitting next to their two young children. One is a small boy who is horrified by what he sees. He hides his face behind a pillow, too scared to run to his room. His sister has the opposite reaction. She sits on the edge of her seat, entranced by the loud explosions and gunshots. She wants to shoot guns and throw grenades like the soldiers. How will she do it though? She's only fifteen but she can't wait. She knows her dad has a few guns in his closet. She figures she can borrow a gun without her dad's permission. But what would be fun to shoot?

What would this innocent girl decide to shoot? A target out in the back yard? What happens when this girl and a friend get in a fight at school? Will this girl lose her temper and take the gun to school? Would the girl be blamed? Or should we blame it on the violent movie that inspired her to learn how to use a gun? Of course this is all hypothetical. If this was real, the young girl would probably not borrow her dads gun without his permission. Can we find a way to prevent things like this from happening? Could we censor this violent media to protect our

nation's youth?

In "An Exploratory Study of Children's Views of Censorship," Isajlovic-Terry and Mckenchine discuss how children view censorship of media, specifically that in books. As they directly express it, "What do children think about censorship of materials that have been developed for or are of interest to them?" Some would say that children would not understand censorship or care about it and that adults should decide what will be censored. These people believe children are not perceptive or smart enough to make these decisions. However, the authors emphasize the children interviewed found some materials more disturbing. The children thought that violence should be censored by their parents, "in movies and like video games mostly." The authors conjecture that children can help their parents decide what should be censored and not censored (Isajlovic-Terry).

I have mixed feelings about what the authors state: that children should have a say in what they want censored. For example, a child might find violence disturbing. He/she may wake up at night from a bad dream about the violent material seen on TV or a video game. That is a good thing, because it will teach the child to be mindful of the violence seen. Conversely, another child might purposefully play violent video games and incorporate the violence seen into his/her lifestyle at a young age. This might cause an adverse effect later in life. Overall, I am conflicted about whether kids should choose what they want censored.

So what happens if violent media or games are viewed? Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson discuss the relation of violent video games and desensitization. They conducted a two part experiment. In the first study, subjects were asked various questions, and then played either a violent or nonviolent video game. After playing the game for twenty minutes, a staged fight

was heard out in the hall. The time it took for a subject to respond to the fight was recorded. In the second study, a small emergency was staged outside a violent or nonviolent movie. The time it took for moviegoers to respond to the emergency was recorded.

The results of the second study yielded no outstanding results. However, the first study did. The results show subjects whose favorite games (found in the questions asked) were those allowing violence "with hands or weapons" were less likely to help the victim of the staged fight. Those "who played a violent game were less likely to report that they heard the fight than those who played a nonviolent game." For all those who responded to the fight, it took more time to respond for those who played a violent game. It was also found that those who played a violent game thought the fight was less serious than those who played a nonviolent game. The authors conclude a correlation between violent media and a decreased helping behavior (Bushman).

I agree with these studies because they are sound evidence that violent media, specifically violent video games, act as a moral sedative. If a young child were to play a violent video game, and afterward witness a friend getting in a fight, the child would be less likely to help his/her friend. Some would say video games are just games, and would obviously have no effect on judgement in real life. Yet I would argue that if we were to keep track violent media intake and helping behavior, we would further confirm the authors' conclusion.

In another study, inkblot tests were taken to explore subconscious effects violent media has on people. Two groups of high school students were tested. The first group watched a three minute video clip, either violent or nonviolent. After the clip was viewed, the students took the Holtzman Inkblot test. The second group listened to a description of the video clips, and took the test. Results showed a significant amount of violent responses after the violent media was

viewed or heard. Also, males had more aggressive responses than females.

The students tested were "academically gifted" and volunteered for the tests. This shows that, although these students are very bright, they are still susceptible to violent media effects. The clips described and portrayed are things that happen every day. These students may see similar situations while driving to school. Even though these students are unlikely to cause violent situations or participate in violent actions, on a deeper level they are affected (Hess).

I agree, because I feel violent media is disturbing. These finding support the desensitization study, that people are less likely to help others if they have viewed violence media (Bushman). Some believe smart people are less affected by violent media; smarter and more aware people can deal with and understand fake violence. According to this study, even those who are "academically gifted" have violent thoughts, even if on a subconscious level.

We can see the effect of violent video games specifically now, and we also can see that kids for the most part do not enjoy viewing violent media. I am sure most parents are sensitive to their children, and would take precautions to ensure their children do not view violence. Media, though, is controlled by others as well, not just parents. Sometimes certain media is discussed and regulated by the government.

Jesse J. Holland wrote an article entitled "Free Speech Versus Kids and Violent Video Games." Holland reported the Supreme Court's discussion of free speech and limiting violent media. The issue was whether or not California should be able to ban the sale of violent video games to minors. The thought that violent video games are like violent movies was argued. Although the Court was deciding on violent video games, a week previous they had shot down a ban on videos depicting animal cruelty. While California lawmakers proposed the law partially

based on studies in support of Bushman and Anderson's findings, Judge Consuelo Callahan said "None of the research establishes or suggests a causal link between minors playing violent video games and actual psychological or neurological harm."

I do not agree with the Judges because I think Bushman and Anderson's studies were proof enough that violent media has a discernible and distinct effect on people. Maybe the judges think it is a violation of the First Amendment, but I doubt the Founding Fathers would support violent media. Overall, I disagree with this source because I believe there should be restrictions and age limits on violent video games; more than we have now, at least. While it's true there is an age restriction on buying M rated video games, underage kids can still play those games once they are bought.

While I believe Bushman and Anderson have great proof of the effects of violent media, and while the Judges do not agree, I think many would agree that our society is violent. Everyday, there are reports of burglary, shooting, kidnappings, and more. We all know of cities or countries in the world, such as Honduras, that are the epitome of violent society. Some even think there is more violence today than there was fifty years ago.

According to Steven Pinker, there is actually a decline in overall violence in the world. He postulates that the evolution of man has actually helped decrease violence among societies. Although we have experienced things such as World Wars and genocides, Pinker argues the decline is a "fractal phenomenon," so we must look at the bigger picture. Presenting information from the archaeologist Lawrence Keeley, Pinker contrasts ways of death from 10,000 years ago to now. Apparently, if we were male nimrods, we would most likely die at the hands of another man. Today however, there is an extremely small chance we would. If violent media was taken

out of the picture in today's society, would that small chance of being killed by a human decrease?

Pinker seemingly suggests there is violent media in the Bible. He quotes this passage from Numbers 31:

> "And they warred against the Midianites as the Lord commanded Moses, and they slew all the males. And Moses said unto them, 'Have you saved all the women alive? Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him, but all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.'"

Would violent media today condone such actions though? If a child were to play a game where he/she were to participate in actions similar to Moses, would that child act those things out in real life?

I have mixed feelings about Pinker's conjectures. Although I agree with his argument that overall violence has declined with civilization, such as not getting your hand cut off for stealing, I still think today's society is too violent. Some argue hunter-gatherers lived in a simple harmony, Pinker reexamines history, stating violence has dramatically declined. I am a little iffy about Pinker's arguments, because I find today's society to be violent.

Society is real though. The Bible is real. Most violent media is acted or generated from a computer. We are smart enough to distinguish between this fact and fiction. We can watch these violent films, or shows, or games, and walk away knowing what we saw was fake. It does not have a degrading effect on us. Or does it?

Realism of the violent media, specifically video games, has a tangible effect on people. A study

was conducted to find these effects. As stated:

> "In this study, we test the moderating role of violent video game realism (defined as the
> probability of seeing an event in real life) by having participants play either a violent
> realistic video game, violent unrealistic video game, or a nonviolent control video game
> for 45 min while assessing short-term change in aggressive feelings, aggressive thoughts
> every 15 min, and physiological arousal continuously."

Two specific effects tested were aggression and physiological change.

I thought the results of this test were unsurprising. After the first fifteen minute interval, there was a large change in aggression for those who played the violent realistic game. Although there was an aggression increase for those who played the violent non realistic game, it was not as much as the realistic game.

Physiologically, after the first time interval, those who played the violent realistic game had a higher heart rate. After the second time interval, those who played the violent non realistic game had heart rates almost the same. Both of the violent games differed greatly from the non realistic game in both aggression and physiological difference (Barlett).

I believe this study adduces the thought that people can distinguish between a video game and real life. Obviously, this study shows aggression increases after playing a violent game for less than an hour. Even fantasy games, such as Star Wars Battlefront 2, bring about increase aggression. Not only will our minds be affected by playing these violent games, our heart rates will increase as well. While I am sure many would continue to play these games, I would hope the results would be taken seriously.

Maybe the results are taken seriously without being common knowledge. A survey was

completed by 922 adults to illuminate the viewing of television by children. 830 adults were

parents and knew everything pertaining to the survey. Two questions on the survey were: "How

often do you limit your child's television watching of violent content?" and "How often does

your child see fighting, guns, or other types of violence on television?" Fifty-three percent

always limit the viewing of violent television, and forty-eight percent said their children only

saw "fighting, guns, or other types of violence" one or two times a week.

The authors also argue media violence leads to aggressive behavior and desensitization,

concurrent with the studies conducted by Barlett, Bushman, and Hess. They also mention that

although the majority of parents limited violent television, children were still reported watching

violence at least once a week. The authors conclude by advising parents to discuss limiting

television viewing with "child health professionals."

I have mixed feelings about this study, because the authors seem to be pushing hard for

any limitation on television. Although I feel violent media is something that should be monitored

by parents, I do not think television should be boycotted altogether. Its seems like the authors are

saying televisions should not be household objects. I think television can be a great source of

knowledge, both academic and social. If we limited the viewing of violent television, maybe kids

would focus more on learning and less on being dumb.

Parents have a lot of control over what their young children watch. As children grow up,

most parents become more lenient with controlling what their now teenagers view. With the

popularity of video games, most teens have favorite games to play. If these teens enjoy playing

violent games, would they enjoy being violent in real life?

In "Aggression & Psychopathology in Adolescents," the authors conducted a study to

find a possible correlation between video game preference and self-reported aggression. As the authors postulate "It was predicted that a preference for violent games would be associated with negative externalizing characteristics, in particular aggressive emotions and behaviors." To find results, students were asked what their six favorite video games were. After grouping non-violent preference from violent preference, a self-report questionnaire was completed.

A relation between self-reported emotional and behavioral problems and violent video game preference was found. But "the specific prediction that individuals with a preference for violent games would report more externalizing problems was not supported." The authors adduced previous studies, showing boys have a higher preference for violent games than girls. The authors also adduce studies showing those who have preexisting emotional problems and seem obsessed with violent games are at a high risk for aggressive behaviors (Funk).

I am a little surprised there was no connection between video game preference and "externalizing problems." I feel all the other studies would contradict this one, in that aggression was related to violent video games. Apparently, if a young boy enjoys a violent video game, he may not act out in violence if he gets angry. Overall, I find this source a little out of the ordinary compared to the other studies found.

So if the parents watching the violent film with their children turned off the movie, and decided to limit the watching of violence in their house, would it help? According to these studies, yes. Although the young girl most likely would not act out on her thoughts, she would have higher aggression and a desensitization to harm (Bushman, Hess). If she did not see violence, she would still maintain sympathy for those in pain. Not to mention the young boy would be saved from fear of what he was viewing.

Even though it would be very difficult to censor all violent media, we see that parents have a lot of control over what their children view (Isajlovic-Terry, Rao). These parents may decide what their young children watch. As the children grow up, they will lack a preference in violent media, and may not seek it out on their own. While overall violence in the world is said to be decreasing (Pinker), I think violent media has a strong influence on how much violence there is.

If we can get parents involved, and even the government (Holland), maybe there will be less violence shown on television, movies, video games, the internet, and many other sources of media. So the rata-tat-tat will not haunt the young boys dreams, and his sister will not find guns so interesting. Maybe aggression rates among children and young adults will decline. Maybe people will be even more sensitive to those in need. Maybe. But the only way to tell is to limit the vector of violence.

Works Cited

1. Barlett, Christopher P., and Christopher Rodeheffer. "Effects Of Realism On Extended Violent And

      Nonviolent Video Game Play On Aggressive Thoughts, Feelings, And Physiological Arousal."

      Aggressive Behavior 35.3 (2009): 213-224. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 13 May

      2013.

2. Bushman, Brad J., and Craig A. Anderson. "Comfortably Numb: Desensitizing Effects Of Violent

      Media On Helping Others." *Psychological Science (Wiley-Blackwell)* 20.3 (2009):73-277.

      Academic Search Premier. Web. 29 Apr. 2013.

3. Funk, Jeanne B.Hagan, Jill Schimming, Jackie Bullock, Wesley A.Buchman, Debra D.Myers,

      Melissa. "Aggression And Psychopathology In Adolescents With A Preference For

      Violent Electronic Games." Aggressive Behavior 28.2 (2002): 134-144. Psychology and

      Behavioral Sciences Collection. Web. 2 May 2013.

4. Hess, Tanya H., and Kathryn D. Hess. "The Effects Of Violent Media On Adolescent Inkblot

      Responses: Implications For Clinical And.." Journal Of Clinical Psychology 55.4 (1999):

      439-445. Academic Search Premier. Web. 2 May 2013.

5. Holland, Jesse J. "Free Speech Versus Kids and Violent Video Games." Desert Sun (Palm Springs,

      CA). 26 Apr 2010: n.p. SIRS Issues Researcher. Web. 01 May 2013.

6. Isajlovic-Terry, Natasha, and Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie. "An Exploratory Study Of Children's

Views

Of Censorship." *Children & Libraries: The Journal Of The Association For Library*

Service To Children 10.1 (2012): 38-43. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 29 Apr. 2013.

7. Malla R. Rao, et al. "Children's Violent Television Viewing: Are Parents Monitoring?."

Pediatrics 114.1 (2004): 94-99. Academic Search Premier. Web. 2 May 2013.

8. Pinker, Steven. "The Surprising Decline in Violence." TED. The Sapling Foundation.

California,

Monterey. 03 2007. Lecture.