Media violence and society

The influence of media is characterized by theories about how massmedia shapea person's behavior and thinking. The development of media is further evidenced by the emergence of the Internet and DVDs, which sophisticated the way an individual receives information from media worldwide (Curran and Seaton, 1988).

The most well-known premises about the influence of media on the society are those related to theories having a passive audience. An example of this theory is the hypodermic needle model, which compares media with an intravenous injection, with the media message being the matter transferred. The explanation is that the information being transmitted by media is voluntarily and obediently received by the audience. This, however, is still dependent on the interfering factors that changes the way an individual perceives the message (Weaver and Carter, 2006).

Another example is the inoculation model, which induces a long-term influence on people by making them resistant or immune to the message conveyed by the media. Here, a person becomes somewhat desensitized by a violent film for example, making him able to tolerate the same degree ofviolenceonce encountered again (Curran and Seaton, 1988).

Different theories have different fall backs and limitations but nevertheless, they can help explain how media influences the attitude of an audience. The theory that violent media result to violence on the part of the audience, especially the younger ones, is also deficient of a logical scientific foundation. This is the main reason why it is regarded more as a hypothesis rather than a theory (Potter, 1999).

Whether or not violent media has bad influences on the society is an argument usually raised when media effects are being taken into consideration. This has also been used widely as a topic on debates, with the usual premise that violent media indeed have bad effects on its audience, which in fact is true.

This argument is supported by many researches which relate the media of violent nature to the aggressiveness and obnoxious behavior of viewers or listeners, especially the younger generations. A study was done using an inflatable clown which was introduced to two groups of children. One group was accompanied by an adult who ignored the clown and settled playing with the other toys. The children also ended up playing quietly and calmly with the toys other than the clown.

The other crowd was grouped together with an adult who executed several aggressive moves on the inflatable clown, such as kicking and punching. The children imitated the moves done by the aggressive adult onto the clown when left alone with the toys. This can be related to the effect of media since the children can see and consequently imitate the actions of the adults (MAN, 2007).

Another study was done after the release of the movie A Clockwork Orange in 1971. The lead role in the film, which also depicts a hero, was both woman-beater and a rapist. The film ended up a controversy when gangs started to copy the character of the lead actor, resulting into many rape and death cases. The director, Stanley Kubrick, was also very sorry that he directed the violent movie.

He banned the movie to prevent further criminal cases and for hisfamily's protection against death threats since he was being held partially accountable for the incidences. These are just a few examples that violent movies are being imitated by the audience (Barker and Petley, 1997).

A research was performed in 1956 to demonstrate the effect of violent media in 24 children. A dozen watched a violent episode of Woody Woodpecker, while the other half watched a non-violent one entitled The Little Red Hen. When the children were observed during playtime after watching TV, those who watched the violent show were the ones most likely to fight with each other and smash their toys (Potter, 1999).

In 1963, three professors conducted a study which involved 100 children to determine the effects of violence in reality, television, and cartoons on the subjects' behavior. The entire population was divided into four, wherein the first group was allowed to witness a real adult shouting at an inflatable doll while at the same time beating it with a toy hammer. The second twenty five preschool children were shown the same incident on TV, while the third group was allowed to watch a cartoon showing the same event.

The fourth was group served as the control, and did not watch any. All the groups were then opened to annoying circumstances. All the first three groups exhibited a significantly higher level of aggressiveness as compared to those who were in the fourth group. The group that watched the incident on TV was as violent and aggressive as those who watched it in the real scenario (Curran and Seaton, 1998).

The Kaiser Family Foundation likewise conducted a study in 2003 showing that 47 per cent of parents have reported that their children have, at one point in their lives, have mimicked the violent actions portrayed by a character on TV. However, the organization reported that children are still more inclined to imitating the positive behaviors they observed. The violence in cartoons, which is commonly characterized by the use of bomb, guns, and deformed bodies, can make children believe that a person can not be hurt by such violent actions which can cause death and accidents when done in the real world.

Furthermore, children often imitate the actions of their super heroes as seen on cartoons and other TV shows. They sort of internalize what they see and formulate their own script which they would resort into when they encounter trouble or something harsh, making violence a way to solve problems (Healthyminds. org, 2007).

Due to the negative psychological effects of animated shows on the target viewers, many cartoons were censored and animators protested because their creations eventually became boring. They stated that many children who watch such cartoons are not negatively affected in terms of attitude and behavior, and that no scientific evidence was established to link the negative behavior of the audience to the violent media (Barker and Petley, 1997).

The majority is being considered in all cases of violent media effects, and it should always be remembered that the subconscious of the audience can still be influenced, regardless of the subject's age, inert attitude andpersonality, and moral beliefs (Weaver and carter, 2006).

It is a fact that even adults can be negatively influenced by violence in media. News containing violent reports can be exaggerated in the delivery of information. This can lead to the people being scared and overreacting to the reported situation, which they can also associate to whatever it is that is happening in their immediateenvironment. They might feel unsafe even if they are protected (Barker and Petley, 1997).

It should always be remembered that parental guidance is an important factor that can alter an individual's, especially a child's, perception of violent media. This intervention can significantly lessen the effects of violent media on society. This should have a stronger influence on the audience than the violent media itself. With all the researches and studies mentioned, it can be concluded that violent media indeed has bad influences on the society. This is particularly true to children and adolescents who received less guidance from their parents during theirchildhood.

Violent media can cause psychological disturbances and aggressiveness in people when faced with frustrating and provoking situations. It can also mold children to be destructive when they grow up. As true as there are people who remain unaffected by violent media, majority can be said to agree with the premise since each and every one in the society, regardless of personality and age, can be subconsciously affected by violent media in some way.

Reference List

Barker, M. and J. Petley. (1997). Ill Effects: The Media-Violence Debate. NY: Routledge.

Curran, J. & Seaton, J. (1988). Power withoutResponsibility. UK: Press and Broadcasting.

Healthyminds. org. (2007). " PsychiatricEffects of MediaViolence." Retrieved May 24, 2007, from .

MAN. (2007). Research on the effects of media violence. Retrieved May 24, 2007, from .

Potter, W. J. (1999). On Media Violence, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Weaver, C. K. and C. Carter. (2006), Critical Readings: Violence and the Media, Maidenhead: Open University Press.