

The negative messages the media sends out essay sample

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine possible connection between the prominent negative message of the overuse of violence that prevails in the modern media and the real-life violence. For this purpose, we try to establish popular views on the matter, provide reasoned alternative views, and find a proper balance between them.

Today our society is permeated with numerous tough issues that occupy public attention and cause heated widespread debate. For a long time among such problematic questions has been the debate about whether the large amount of violence depicted in the media serves as a powerful negative message which, by making violence seem routine and thus to a certain degree justified, actually instigates it in our real-life. Let us try to see whether the link between this negative media message and the real-life violence exists.

Today views of the potential negative media influence have become almost a self-evident truth, but, paradoxically, the media violence continues to attack us. I believe this suggests that inclination to consume media representations of violence is in the first place one of the basic demands of the modern audience, hence the reaction of creators of media content to satisfy such a demand. But here we may notice the possibility that in reality the connection between violence and the media is not only one-sided, and that other prime reasons may underlie violent behavior in people, so that to blame media may mean to ignore the essence of the problem. Personally I am sure that violence in the media is not that much a purposeful message which serves

as a real cause of the real-life violence, but rather is the tip of the iceberg that suggests that something is wrong with people themselves.

It is interesting to point out that whether one adopts a similar position on this issue or clings to the camp of the media accusers, it is easy to find support. For example, Oliver Stone, the director of the controversial film “ Natural Born Killers”, strives to show the inconsistency of the claims of those who, as he says, have set out for “ the hunt for witches to explain society`s ills . . .” (Stone, 2005). Stone argues that media and art rather serve as a mirror that reflects the state of society, and I readily agree with him. However, what I do not agree with in Stone`s position is his denial that a piece of media art, like for instance his “ Natural Born Killers”, may actually instigate someone to violence. I do believe that this is possible, but of course with the principal reservation that a violent film or a video game can only be the last link in the chain of preconditions that had lead to violence, so the role of the media is not sufficient to blame it. Surely, this may suggest that unrestrained violence in the media should still trouble us.

In this regard, the essay by Maggie Cutler “ Whodunit - The Media?” helps uncover the true complexity of the role of the media in the instigation of violent behavior, which I suppose is a rightful way to approach the problem. For this purpose, the author tries to define the very terms of discussion, gives different statistical facts, mentions intricate interdependencies between social tendencies and changes in the media messages, and acknowledges the inevitable limitations of available statistical and analytical data. Still, I am cautious to accept without reserve one of the conclusions of

Cutler that “ however strong media influences may be, real life is stronger” (Cutler, 2001). In fact, as the extend to which the media content fills our life is growing (TV, computers, Internet, the emerging possibility to be always connected to media content via mobile communication, etc.), the media may soon become of one the most significant aspects of our reality, so the influence of its messages should not be underestimated.

On ground of this we may conclude that, even though the overuse by the media of violent images may be considered as a negative and even unethical message, the link between the media and real-life violence is not very clear. Moreover, what complicates this issue is the ultimate connection of the problem of the violence in the media to the principle of justice, when in a democratic society people can freely pursue their preferences. In this connection, the fact that views which we have mentioned have been freely and widely discussed already for a long time exemplifies that the number of people who belong to defenders and critics of the role of the media in promotion of violence is commensurable. In this situation, I feel that the only proper way to maintain social justice is not to abandon the free and honest discussion over the matter, and to hope that in the process we can better understand ourselves, because only from an increased understanding a real improvement can commence.

Sources

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