

Disclaimer: This is a machine generated PDF of selected content from our databases. This functionality is provided solely for your convenience and is in no way intended to replace original scanned PDF. Neither Cengage Learning nor its licensors make any representations or warranties with respect to the machine generated PDF. The PDF is automatically generated "AS IS" and "AS AVAILABLE" and are not retained in our systems. CENGAGE LEARNING AND ITS LICENSORS SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY AND ALL EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY WARRANTIES FOR AVAILABILITY, ACCURACY, TIMELINESS, COMPLETENESS, NON-INFRINGEMENT, MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Your use of the machine generated PDF is subject to all use restrictions contained in The Cengage Learning Subscription and License Agreement and/or the Gale In Context: Opposing Viewpoints Terms and Conditions and by using the machine generated PDF functionality you agree to forgo any and all claims against Cengage Learning or its licensors for your use of the machine generated PDF functionality and any output derived therefrom.

Movies Don't Facilitate Violence Gun Laws Do

Author: James Rocchi

Editor: Stefan Kiesbye

Date: 2010

From: Is Media Violence a Problem?

Publisher: Gale, a Cengage Company

Series: At Issue

Document Type: Viewpoint essay

Length: 1,588 words

Content Level: (Level 3)

Lexile Measure: 1020L

Full Text:

Article Commentary

James Rocchi, "The Moviegoer: School Shootings, Violent Entertainment and Other Funny Games," *Huffington Post*, February 19, 2008. Reproduced by permission.

Film critic James Rocchi writes for MSN Movies and the Now or Then column for the American Movie Classics Web site. He's written about pop culture and movies for publications such as *Mother Jones* and Metro Newspapers, and he was the film critic for Netflix from 2001 to 2005 and the film critic for San Francisco's CBS 5 from 2005 to 2008.

After each of the recent school shootings, commentators and politicians have called for stricter laws governing television content and video games, citing the bad influence violent media had on the shooters. Yet no evidence exists to sustain such arguments, and the discussion about media violence is a smoke screen, keeping U.S. society from having a discussion about the real culprit: guns. In all school shootings, minors or mentally unstable adults were able to buy guns, often legally and without an appropriate background check. They were able to buy ammunition and fulfill their violent fantasies, acts that stricter gun laws could have prevented.

I had already been thinking about violence in entertainment since I saw *Funny Games* at Sundance [film festival]; Michael Haneke's English-language remake of his own 1997 film is a grim piece of moviemaking, and one designed to start arguments about why and how we watch violent films. And then the NIU [Northern Illinois University] school shooting last Thursday [February 2008] brought all those thoughts to the front of my brain, with Illinois legislator Rep. Robert Pritchard imploring us to examine a "culture of violence" in movies and video games, and FOX News guest and headline-grabbing hack Jack Thompson suggesting that violent video games played a role in events at NIU. Anytime there's a mass shooting, it seems, the discussion comes up as to whether or not violent culture leads to violent acts.

Responding to Continued Criticism

As a film critic, I can only say one thing in response to those cultural pundits on the Right and Left who suggest that mass shootings are inspired by movies and video games, which is, simply, "You're wrong." And that may seem a little sharp, but now and then a little sharpness is the only way to even scratch the stone-solid wrongheadedness of some people's thought processes. There are a variety of exercises in logic one can run through to demolish the theory that violent entertainment correlates to violent activity in a matter of seconds. Various mechanisms distribute American pop culture throughout the world, whether legal ones like multinational theatrical and DVD distribution or illegal ones like DVD piracy and peer-to-peer downloading. American pop culture is viewed and appreciated (or, in some cases, viewed and despised) worldwide by a large, avid audience. And yet, Western democracies like Germany, Canada, Australia and Britain don't have a statistically similar rate of mass shootings or gun murders. Economically and demographically similar audiences are watching these films, and yet, viewers in other nations aren't making the leap to arming themselves and shooting people as the final possible act of film appreciation.

And, as I've joked with gallows humor before when this line of argument comes up, if you're suggesting that a violent pop culture causes violent activity, then when we follow that suggestion to logical conclusions, there shouldn't be a single person alive in Japan. And I know that joke may seem fairly broad and easy, but like every joke there's a kernel of truth in it; the extremes of some Japanese pop culture are far more violent than any American equivalent. Cultural conservatives on the Right and Left, though, can't explain why the gun-toting action of some anime and films like *Battle Royale* isn't being recreated in the streets of Tokyo on a regular basis.

Violence and the Second Amendment

I didn't grow up in America, so I have no great or grand investment in the Second Amendment as an iconic principle of the American character. However, I'm in the process of becoming an American citizen, and I've been able to read English for a long time, so I feel like I have as much right to assert my position on the matter as any taxpayer. The Second Amendment protects the right to keep and bear arms for the purposes of a well-regulated militia. (And, much like some of the other language in the Bill of Rights, the times have changed; in my neighborhood, I'm more worried about getting tagged with a stray bullet than I am about British soldiers.) In a perfect world (which is to say, my perfect world and not yours), if you're a private citizen who'd like to own a gun, great; join the National Guard. You'll have access to it when you're on maneuvers and deployed. Otherwise, you don't. And as for hunters and rural farmers who "need" firearms, I'd be willing to make a compromise for them: They can own one single-shot bolt-action long rifle with no magazine whose ballistic signature is already on file at the local police station which would also be the only place you can buy and store your bullets. (I once had a lengthy discussion about this with a cabbie in Vegas who was an avid hunter; when I suggested that if he truly loved hunting he could enjoy it just as much with a bow and arrow or single-shot bolt-action rifle, he countered that he wanted more firepower than that, because "I hate to see animals suffer." "Well," I noted with careful timing as we arrived at my destination, "then *maybe* you shouldn't be shooting them.")

Cultural conservatives on the Right and Left, though, can't explain why the gun-toting action of some anime and films like *Battle Royale* isn't being recreated in the streets of Tokyo on a regular basis.

Other than that? Stop selling guns, stop selling ammo smash the molds and melt the inventory, with a very short amnesty period for people to turn their guns in, after which possession of a gun, never mind use, brings a life sentence. And I know this penalizes 'law-abiding' gun owners but, seeing as how robberies and thefts from 'law-abiding' gun owners are how so many murder weapons come into the hands of criminals or the mentally ill, I don't have a lot of sympathy for that as an argument or a philosophical principle. Maybe you could talk me into seeing things that way. Maybe my thoughts about guns are a bunch of crazy jibber-jabber, and you can explain to me why they're naïve or impractical. I don't know. At least we'd be talking about it.

Having the Wrong Discussion

But when tragic events like the NIU shooting happen, we *don't* talk about the guns. We talk about the media, or the killer going off their medicines, or how there were no warning signs or how there were plenty of warning signs. My jaw dropped at a quote in a story about the NIU shooting, as Internet gun seller Eric Thompson, who also sold equipment to the Virginia Tech shooter [student Seung-Hui Cho, who killed thirty-two people and wounded many others in a rampage on April 16, 2007], expressed his shock after learning his store had sold Glock magazines and a holster to NIU shooter Steven Kazmierczak: "I'm still blown away by the coincidences. I'm shaking. I can't believe somebody would order from us again and do this." You sell gun accessories, and yet you can't believe someone would use them to do what they're made for? And if you're so shaken, why are you still in business?

No, guns don't kill people. But they make it a lot easier to do so, especially at a moment's notice as the result of some insane impulse; we can't legislate against someone wanting to pick up a gun, but we can make it less easy for them to have one, or four, or more at hand when they reach out for one. And gun companies don't kill people; they just make a lot of money as their products are used to kill people. If Kazmierczak had stepped into that class with a golf club or a knife or a baseball bat or a length of chain, many would still be hurt and some might still be dead. But he stepped into that class with three pistols and a shotgun, all of them legally obtained, and it makes me nauseated and ashamed that the first unbidden reaction I had to the NIU shootings was that five victims and the killer's own suicide seemed like a 'low' death count. And yes, we need better mental health funding in this country, so that the cracks people slip through are smaller. And we need to have constant serious discussions about what our entertainment says about us, and what that means. But at some point, someone I don't know who, but I strongly doubt it'll be any of the current presidential candidates, some of whom would rather offer prayers and more prayers than policy initiatives, some of whom would rather write books instead of laws someone needs to stand up and say that the very American principle of private gun ownership is leading to a very American practice of murder and tragedy. Mr. Pritchard and Mr. Thompson and others on the Right and Left suggest we need to look at the "culture of violence." But we've been talking about the culture of violence in relation to mass shootings for years and years now; when do we start *really* talking about guns?

Books

- Craig A. Anderson, Douglas A. Gentile, and Katherine E. Buckley *Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Mark Andrejevic *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.
- Hector Avalos *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005.
- Martin Barker and Julian Petley, eds. *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Jonathan Bignell *Big Brother: Reality TV in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn *Reality TV: Realism and Revelation*. London: Wallflower, 2005.
- Jane Buckingham, ed. *What's Next: The Experts' Guide: Predictions from 50 of America's Most Compelling People*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.
- Canadian Teachers' Federation *Kids' Take on Media: What 5,700 Canadian Kids Say About TV, Movies, Video and Computer Games and More*. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2003.
- Nancy E. Dowd, Dorothy G. Singer, and Robin Fretwell Wilson, eds. *Handbook of Children, Culture, and Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006.
- Jonathan L. Freedman *Media Violence and Its Effect on Aggression: Assessing the Scientific Evidence*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

- Douglas A. Gentile, ed. *Media Violence and Children: A Complete Guide for Parents and Professionals*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.
- Interactive Digital Software Association *Video Games and Youth Violence: Examining the Facts*. Washington, DC: Interactive Digital Software Association, 2001.
- Henry Jenkins *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Deborah Jermyn *Crime Watching: Investigating Real Crime TV*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2007.
- Gerard Jones *Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Misha Kavka *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Steven J. Kirsh *Children, Adolescents, and Media Violence: A Critical Look at the Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006.
- Arthur G. Miller, ed. *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: Guilford Press, 2004.
- Jolyon Mitchell *Media Violence and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, eds. *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. 2nd ed. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- W. James Potter *The 11 Myths of Media Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003.
- Harold Schechter *Savage Pastimes: A Cultural History of Violent Entertainment*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005.
- Karen Sternheimer *It's Not the Media: The Truth About Pop Culture's Influence on Children*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003.
- James P. Steyer *The Other Parent: The Inside Story of the Media's Effect on Our Children*. New York: Atria Books, 2002.
- David Trend *The Myth of Media Violence: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Bryan Vossekuil, Robert A. Fein, Marisa Reddy, Randy Borum, and William Modzeleski *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States*. Washington, DC: United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education, 2002.

Periodicals

- American Academy of Pediatrics "Media Violence: Committee on Public Education," *Pediatrics*, vol. 108, no. 5, November 2001.
- Craig A. Anderson et al. "The Influence of Media Violence on Youth," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, vol. 4, no. 3, December 2003.
- Asian News International "Violent Media 'Indeed Impacts Adolescent Behaviour,'" November 20, 2008.
- *Birmingham Post (England)* "Why We Must Protect Our Children from Violent Films," September 27, 2007.
- Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. Anderson "Media Violence and the American Public: Scientific Facts Versus Media Misinformation," *American Psychologist*, vol. 56, no. 6/7, June/July 2001.
- Brad J. Bushman and Joanne Cantor "Media Ratings for Violence and Sex: Implications for Policymakers and Parents," *American Psychologist*, vol. 58, no. 2, February 2003.
- Joanne Cantor and Barbara J. Wilson "Media and Violence: Intervention Strategies for Reducing Aggression," *Media Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 4, November 2003.
- Jason L. Deselms and Joanne D. Altman "Immediate and Prolonged Effects of Videogame Violence," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 33, no. 8, August 2003.
- Jeanne B. Funk et al. "Violence Exposure in Real-Life, Video Games, Television, Movies, and the Internet: Is There Desensitization?" *Journal of Adolescence*, February 2004.
- Douglas A. Gentile and J. Ronald Gentile "Violent Video Games as Exemplary Teachers: A Conceptual Analysis," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 37, no. 2, February 2008.
- Douglas A. Gentile, Muniba Saleem, and Craig A. Anderson "Public Policy and the Effects of Media Violence on Children," *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 2007.
- Gary W. Giumetti and Patrick M. Markey "Violent Video Games and Anger as Predictors of Aggression," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 2007.
- Peter S. Goodman "Violent Media May Trim Real Violence, Study Says," *International Herald Tribune*, January 8, 2008.
- Kevin Haninger and Kimberly M. Thompson "Content and Ratings of Teen-Rated Video Games," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, February 2004.
- Alice Holbrook and Amy E. Singer "When Bad Girls Go Good: Models of the Self and Reality on VH1's *Flavor of Love Girls: Charm School*," *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, Spring 2009.
- David Kushner "With a Nudge or Vibration, Game Reality Reverberates," *New York Times*, July 3, 2003.
- Monique A. Levermore and Gina L. Salisbury "The Relationship Between Virtual & Actual Aggression: Youth Exposure to Violent Media," *Forensic Examiner*, June 22, 2009.
- Michel Marriott "Making High-Tech Play Less Work," *New York Times*, February 12, 2004.
- Andrew K. Przybylski, Richard M. Ryan, and C. Scott Rigby "The Motivating Role of Violence in Video Games," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2009.
- Jill Richmond and J. Clare Wilson "Are Graphic Media Violence, Aggression and Moral Disengagement Related?" *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, July 1, 2008.
- Victoria Rideout and Elizabeth Hamel "The Media Family: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers and Their Parents," Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, May 2006. www.kff.org.
- Lawrence I. Rosenkoetter et al. "Mitigating the Harmful Effects of Violent Television," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 1., January-February 2004.
- Kaveri Subrahmanyam "Youth and Media: Opportunities for Development or Lurking Dangers? Children, Adolescents, and the Media," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, August 2003.

Source Citation (MLA 8th Edition)

Loading...

Gale Document Number: GALE|EJ3010187218