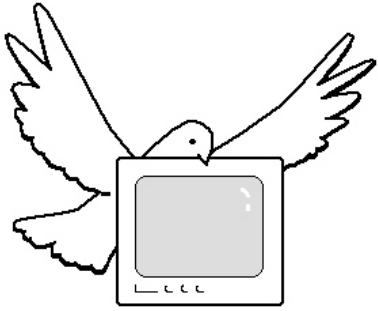


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## Bowling For Columbine, What Hides Behind The Screen

Michael Moore's movie *Bowling For Columbine* is great. When I went to the cinema to watch it, just to know that it was on the screen competing with other films using violence and sex as marketing ingredients, I thought "This is a record". Hats off to Michael Moore. A few things bother me though, well three.

During the film, MM has an interview with Marilyn Manson. His answers to Michael Moore look excellent, but these were the answers of a man using hate propaganda as commercial ingredients. During his show, Marilyn Manson asks crowds of teenagers to repeat after him: "We love hate, We hate love".

The "artist" knows that aggressivity is good for the market, it sells. Michael Moore made a big mistake helping this teens' abuser look brilliant and not helping us understand his marketing strategy.

The second point against *Bowling* is the interview with What's his face. During medialiteracy workshops with 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, students are asked to pick TV programs that teach cruelty to children. South Park is always part of the top three. Teenagers believe that South Park is the worst TV program on the air according to kids and teens from all parts of Canada. South Park teaches them verbal violence against their peers. Cruel and vicious humour is one of the most common and damaging bacteria in our children's daily culture. SP comes close behind wrestling shows. Michael Moore made a mistake by welcoming SP's producer in his movie. Showing young people to laugh at characters who channel their frustrations and anger against vulnerable people around them might be financially lucrative but it is socially suicidal. There are better ways to treat a sick boy than giving him a microphone to spit at people he hates and a crowd to support him.

The point is that MM and SP brought confusion in Michel Moore's film. Gratuitous violence in entertainment is not the result of freedom of expression, it is a form of censorship by commerce. These entertainment products are on the side male chauvinism and hate propaganda, just like NRA is on the side of helping teens kill each other with guns, as if it were allowed by the US Constitution.

Later in his movie, Michael Moore compares US and Canada. Moore seems to ignore that violent crimes are on the rise in Canada, despite the overall crime rate going down. The trend has been going on for more than 15 years. The age group mostly responsible for the rise is the 15-25. The number of people in the 15-25 bracket has been going down for almost a quarter of a century but they commit violent crimes enough to push the average violent crime rate up. Isn't it amazing ? That makes the rise even more frightening. The violent crime rate of young people is twice as high as the adults. Most

victims are also young people. And today's young people will grow old with their peers, with these guys.

All professional organisations in the fields of health and education agree that violent entertainment is a major cause for the increase of violent crimes and troubled behaviours. Videogames and violent entertainment are not bad only because they favour copycat attitudes.

That is only a minimal part of the iceberg. The worst and deepest effect is the erosion of the power of EMPATHY in our culture. Violent entertainment has convinced most kids and teens to behave not to be on the victim's side. So they prefer having fun with aggressors, they feel safe ganging with them, they believe these these guys are cool. Recent research even considers that videogames provoke the atrophy of players' frontal lobe, the center for moral judgment. Violent entertainment is child abuse hiding behind the First Amendment.

Bowling For Columbine is still an act of courage in the world of entertainment, despite the biases mentioned above. Anytime Michael Moore want to find out more about violent entertainment, anytime he wants to shoot a movie about it, about kids and teens addiction to fear, physical violence and verbal violence, we know many activists, teachers, parents and researchers ready to volunteer to help him.

Next time, Michael Moore can make an even more powerful movie. Not only showing us the face of Charlton Heston but also how the whole marketing industry uses violent entertainment to target children. Michael Moore can become a real hero for fighting the culture of violence, sexism and racism issued by Hollywood every year, to feed children every day across the world. Not many men or women have the talent and the courage to do it. Could he?

Jacques Brodeur

<http://www.edupax.org/>