

Three Reasons Why Media Coverage May Be Contributing to Mass Shootings

If you are like me, you've probably followed the media coverage of the shootings in El Paso and Dayton quite closely. These massacres provide brutal reminders of the terrible impact of gun violence.

Of course, media outlets constantly have something to say about this sort of crime, whether it be the initial report of the incident or the constant updates. But could this never-ending coverage in fact be contributing to the steady increase of mass shootings?

1. The Amount of Coverage

While the news industry is built upon the principle of keeping the public quickly informed at all times, the practice may have a negative effect upon the mental wellbeing of their audience. As we know, commentators across the spectrum make quite a fuss about the influence of violent entertainment, including Grand Theft Auto video games or the graphic Quentin Tarantino films. However, they've rarely held their own news industry up to such scrutiny, despite the explicit content that they broadcast in the name of journalism.

2. The Specificity of Coverage

Not only do news outlets often report mass shootings, they also dive into great detail on how the crime was committed. Many times programs break down the individual steps the perpetrator took in building up their arsenal, infiltrating a location, and carrying out their deed. I wonder whether such a feature can come across more as a how-to guide than the impartial relaying of current events. Have news organizations

ever thought that some viewers might be taking notes?

3. The Focus of Coverage

News programs often make a bizarre and terrible public sensation of the person who commits a mass shooting. Their faces are flashed across screens. Long features are made delving into their background. They are transformed from an unknown and wretched murderer into a complex mystery of their own making. It's small wonder that certain minds would find this inspirational. After all, they now have the opportunity to become famous. When their names are mentioned, people will nod their heads. The media has given them the chance to make a final, violent statement for all the nation to notice.

I realize that news programs have a duty to report on these atrocities. This responsibility is a vital part of their ultimate duty to keep the public informed and safe. But perhaps it is this end goal that should be kept in mind, influencing the way stories are reported, and not the sensational backstory of the perpetrator. Programs should be careful not to turn a villain into a kind of hero simply because he gets all this attention. Instead, facts should be reported and rarely revisited, thus allowing communities and families to move on and heal.

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