

MEDIA VIOLENCE EXPLAINED
MATTHEW S. EASTIN (ED.), ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MEDIA VIOLENCE,
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Encyclopedia of Media Violence is a very recent editorial outcome that has been published in October by the reputable Sage Publications. In 134 signed entries developed in 456 pages, this book intends to become a reference in the field of communication and media studies, psychology or sociology. The encyclopedia editor, Matthew S. Eastin, is an associate professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Texas at Austin. He has published papers in prestigious journals such as *Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, *Human Communication Research* and he edited another two books. His main research concerns the media behavior, with a special focus on video games engagement, including violence.

How to justify this new publication in the context of a large existing literature? Even though we talk a lot of media violence and actual cruel examples appear all the time, this term is often a mere buzzword and not a well comprehended phenomenon. Furthermore, the technological changes and the new media advent have complicated the picture of media violence research which had to widen its object (not only popular press or TV, but also violence on the networks, Internet or other mobile devices). If in the case of TV we are exposed and watch violence, in videogames, for instance, we can simulate it or even perform it. The cyberbullying is a fact now, and along with other aggressions it has to be examined and all these findings have to be regarded from the standpoint of the possibility of translating them into public policy.

In this respect, the contributors of *Encyclopedia* proposed “the most comprehensive look at the subject” (p. xix) and there are a few facts that can sustain this assertion. Firstly, we have to notice the interdisciplinary of the approaches and the valid theoretical openings of the book. New research perspectives, such as the magnetic resonance imaging data from aggressive media exposure, are integrated and used in order to get a better and more rigorous image of media violence. Secondly, we notice the good epistemic foundation of the articles, the definitions and the context of media violence being carefully examined. Thus, we find explanations or re-utilizations of known theoretical models of violence in media (symbolic catharsis, social learning theory, cognitive priming theory etc.). Also, the methodologies used to assess content and draw conclusions about media violence effects are developed in the entries. Thirdly, *Encyclopedia* provides a reliable model of scientific writing, and this is easily noticeable from the constant, which emphasizes the dissociation desire between valid inferences and popular myths. Fourthly, this scientific approach is made in a very comprehensive, jargon-free manner, so the readers of this book can belong to one of the many types of public (students, researchers, professors, general public). Thus, the book contains cross-references, suggestions for further readings and a helpful index that can facilitate the reading experience. Moreover, media violence is specifically analyzed within each medium separately, so that it offers an almost complete picture of the subject. Finally, the *Encyclopedia's* articles examine not only the theories and research, but also the provocative debates for

which media violence constituted the main incentive.

For these reasons, we consider the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Media Violence* as an event that fulfills a difficult goal, namely the

“domestication” of the concept of media violence in a scientific, but accessible manner, offering a theoretical construction that is both nuanced and exhaustive.