

## **Speech That is Considered Violence and Its Effects On Society**

### **Lecture Summary/Introduction**

Cybercrime (deviance) is any criminal or deviant activity that is mediated with computer technology or the internet (Graham, 2022). Typically, cybercrime is born when someone deviates from the normal use of technology (Graham, 2022). They use said technology to gain unauthorized access to another computer, take something that is not theirs (whether that be information, money, etc.), and any other use that is not the original intended function of the technology (Graham, 2022). This brings up an interesting concept as one cannot state that the technology is illegal because the original function is not criminal. This argument is used in many other legal circumstances, stating that the tool itself is not the problem. It implies that the deviant person is the problem.

There are four major types of cybercrime: cybertrespass (usually against property), cyberviolence (against person, typically calculated based on how much actual harm was caused or how much harm was threatened to be caused), cyberfraud (financial/white collar crimes), and cyberpornography (Graham, 2022). CFAA determines what is a protected computer in cybertrespassing laws (Graham, 2022). Different types of speech may be considered violence. Cyberfraud is any deceptive activity done online or through digital devices to achieve a gain (typically financial) (Graham, 2022). Cyberpornography is the publication, storing, or trading of sexually expressive materials online and on digital devices (Graham, 2022). There is deviance in all four types of cybercrime, but cybertrespass is the most common (Graham, 2022). The basic

concept is that, despite a computer being made for people to access information at the highest rate yet, people deviate from that functionality to commit these four types of cybercrime.

### **When Speech Equals Violence and the Implications**

The concept I found the most interesting that you went over in the lecture is certain types of speech being considered violence. What kind of implications does this have on freedom of speech and society as a whole? How is the violence measured fairly, especially when each person's stress tolerance levels are different? Some people may shrug off what would destroy others' mental fortitudes. According to the New York Times, chronic stress can shrink your telomeres (Barrett, 2017). Telomeres determine your lifespan, most of which is typically thought to be a genetic determination (Barrett, 2017). Chronic stress, however, can act almost as an illness as the New York Times reported that it can cause your body to produce proinflammatory cytokines (usually produced for physical injury) that can cause physical illness (Barrett, 2017).

The problem with equating certain 'offensive' speech to violence is that it stops academic debate or any other kind of debate. You want academic, political, and philosophical discourse since it allows for the advancement of civilization. We cannot progress as a society if we do not talk back and forth about our ideas and somehow work together. A divided society causes clashes and stalemates in field of progression. If something is considered violence, and therefore not legal, it is essentially snuffed out like a candle (making the idea never quite see the light of day). This can have the opposite effect that people want it to (they want to feel safe). More and more ideas that do not line up with the ideas of people in power will be

quieted following this line of thinking. This is something you can observe in countries where they do not have a representative democracy and free speech (rather they have a dictator whom you must always agree with at the extreme end of this type of situation). Most people want to be heard and feel safe to a certain degree, but quieting offensive speech is not the way to allow for this to take place.

The Barrett states that offensiveness is not inherently harmful to your body as it is built to withstand intermittent periods of stress (2017). She also talks about the difference between that and actual long-term stress that causes damage to your nervous system. I agree with the statement that some 'debaters' are not actually there to debate but to incite violence against other groups, to provoke strong emotions and tear the other person down, etc. These are the types of speech that would be considered at least leading to violence if not violent themselves). I know here in the United States that hate speech is something that is almost immediately removed from social media platforms (and people who speak similar rhetoric lose their jobs/are forced to resign). Even in a country with some of the most liberating free speech laws, there are still things you cannot say.

You can have civil discourse while being respectful of the other person. Hurling insults and tearing the other debater down is where it becomes more harmful than good. You can see instances of this in recent presidential debates. I remember quite vividly Donald Trump and Joe Biden going back and forth calling each other liars for a good portion of it without really answering wholeheartedly the question being asked about serious economic topics. This may

not be considered violence but is an example of how it starts to take away from progression as a nation. Civil conversation is vitally necessary to be a successful society.

An example of people who should be losing their platforms noted by Barrett is when Milo Yiannopoulos (regularly insulting people he has 'debated') debates in his way on a college campus (2017). Constant hateful/inflammatory remarks from a debater make the conversation not a debate at all (but akin to rampant bullying). Constant bullying can lead to excess physical and mental harm to the individual (Barrett, 2017). Most platforms remove these types of media entirely whether they are considered legal or not since they reserve that right. The Terms and Conditions agreement that no one hardly reads is typically what binds you to these types of rules on things like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. An argument that is not entirely subjective, but based in facts that is offensive to some, is what should be promoted or at least discussed.

## **Conclusion**

There is something to be learned from opposing arguments since you must entertain the opposing idea and that some of it may be correct objectively. The difference between violent speech and offensive speech is determined to uphold the freedom of speech in this country. I found this concept rather interesting as I had never delved into the speech that is not allowed/frowned upon in today's society. Essentially, speech is considered violence when it is perceived (obviously in court a judge does this) as inciting violence (calling a vengeful audience to action) or perceived as rampant bullying. Quieting speech that is considered violent by some may not be the best course of action. I have noticed more and more universities among other

institutions not allowing certain people to speak on their campuses due to people (students/staff) being offended (not threatened by harmful speech that can be considered violent in the definition mentioned above). The implications of this are massive as they erase the opportunity for debate/progress. I think debate is one of the single most important things in the umbrella of academia, so this trend in society is quite alarming. The consequences of this are already being seen as most universities are perceived as liberal or left leaning. Whether this is a good thing or not is still left up to debate, but too much of one side of an idea with no compromise from both sides of an argument can be problematic. That is the root of the issue of labeling offensive speech as violent. Free speech must be protected by determining the difference between offensive and violent speech and analyzing whether someone's debate tactics are one or the other. That is what promotes progress.

## References

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