

TikTok Case Analysis, Amplification of Violence

Today, I logged into TikTok to observe current trends. Within a half-hour of scrolling, I found the content overwhelmingly centered on violence. Nearly every video, if not every other, depicted physical fights, confrontations, or interactions with law enforcement. In addition, I observed repeated instances of carjackings and hit-and-run incidents. Not only did this content make up a significant portion of what I viewed, but it also appeared to be encouraged by users through views, shares, and commentary.

This raises a serious question of reality versus representation. Is TikTok's algorithm prioritizing and amplifying violent content, or does this reflect a genuine shift in current social trends? While the platform may not create violence itself, it undeniably reinforces it through circulation and engagement. As users interact with extreme content, the algorithm responds by promoting similar material, contributing to a cycle in which such behavior becomes increasingly visible. Over time, repeated exposure can normalize what would otherwise be considered exceptional, and in some cases, may even create incentives for more extreme conduct.

In conclusion, the prevalence of violent content observed during this session was shocking. While some of these incidents may reflect real, localized increases in crime, often highlighted on platforms like Citizen, the digital amplification creates a perception that violence is widespread and socially tolerated. At the same time, law enforcement in these videos were all placed in volatile and high-risk situations. In all cases, they were responding under pressure and attempting to manage very difficult circumstances. If exposure to and normalization of violence continue at this scale, it may signal deeper challenges ahead for public safety and social cohesion.

Thank you to the public servants who are on the front lines of these violent altercations and clashes.

~Cowardrey