Samples of high-quality essays in response to our question about media violence.

**Tiffany Power – Group 23**

Two teenage girls killed one of their friends after reading about slenderman on a website that was based around crimes and horrific stories (Hanna, 2014). This type of crime often brings up the debate as to whether or not media violence causes real life violence. Most experts report that media violence does in fact cause real life violence. However there is another side to this debate stating that media violence brings about a liberating feeling and can make the world seem more dangerous. This paper will examine both sides of the media violence debate.

Experts around the world have been conducting studies to prove that media violence causes real life violence. The social learning theory proves some of this by stating that an individual learns behaviors and consequences from watching others (Hanson, 2014). Therefore, if an individual constantly watches violent media and is never taught how to properly react it can make them more violent. Two psychologists discovered in 217 studies a short term effect of media violence on actual real life violence (Emmons, 2013). However the violent effect is only increased if exposure is prolonged to individuals (Emmons, 2013).

According to others they state that media violence does not cause real life violence. Instead it is seen to give a cathartic feeling to people or it makes the world seen as a dangerous place. The cultivation analysis theory sides with this view of the debate. The cultivation analysis states that watching a large amount of television can alter the way an individual views society (Hanson, 2014). And within that theory is mean world syndrome that states watching violent programs often makes the world seem more dangerous. Being exposed to media violence can bring violent feelings to the surface and makes them vanish producing a cathartic feeling (Klagge). The only evidence that proves that media violence doesn’t affect real life violence is in some studies there are other factors that produce a violent individual (Pozios, 2013).

I believe that media violence does cause real life violence to happen to an extent. If a child watches too many violent programs it can make them want to use guns or fight with their friends. However even regulating the media it is impossible to keep individuals out of a violent world (Emmons, 2013). Giving the right amount of communication can help prevent individuals from becoming violent. Even if that does not work some individuals just have more psychological issues that can make them more prone to real life acts of violence (Pozios, 2013).
Also by regulating exposure to media violence can keep the effects that will happen to an individual low.

Works Cited

Brett Bergee – Group 55

In classic cartoons, Wile E. Coyote relentlessly attempted to destroy the Road Runner. The outcome was always the same: the coyote ended up getting smashed, mashed, and put in a cast. However, in the next scene, he was never permanently injured or remorseful for his behavior; rather, he was miraculously healed and up to his old antics. Some believe that media violence is considered entertainment, but such portrayal of consequences actually instills a harmful attitude towards violent behavior.

Albert Bandura’s social learning theory states that we observe actions and consequences around us, then use information to create social rules by which we guide and judge behavior.¹ We take in what the media shows and interpret the information to set up a standard for our behavior. We learn by watching as well as doing; it is safe for us to learn by observation. Critics of this theory refer to faulty evidence gathered in Bandura’s “Bobo doll” experiments. Children exposed to violence were abusive towards the Bobo dolls, but that is actually the dolls’ express purpose; hitting a Bobo doll is no more indicative of media-influenced violence than kicking a soccer ball.²
George Gerbner’s cultivation analysis theory states that although media violence does not directly affect behavior, it can significantly skew our world view.¹ Television programming constantly exposes us to an inaccurate portrayal of violent behavior and its consequences. According to the National Cable Television Association’s three-year study, 75 percent of violent acts on television are depicted as having no consequences and causing no remorse.³ Opponents to cultivation analysis, such as Northwestern University’s Paul Hirsch, argue that viewers interpret what they view in the media based on many influences, such as age, race, and cultural background. According to this viewpoint, world view cannot solely be attributed to what the media presents, but also to environmental factors surrounding the person interpreting it.⁴

I do not believe that media violence causes violent behavior, but it does change our beliefs about such behavior and its consequences. For example, my stepchildren (ages 7 and 10) are constantly exposed to violence on cartoons, so-called children’s programming, and inappropriate video games. They frequently hit, punch, kick, and push other children and adults. They do not see that punishment is earned. Their behavior is always someone else’s fault, even when blood is drawn. At no point have I seen them apologize or express remorse for their behavior unless it was to get something they wanted. I believe that their behavior is a direct result of observing few consequences for violence in their media exposure.

Works Cited:
1 Hanson, R. (2014). Mass Communication: Living in a Media World. 56-64.
Hayley Pottle – Group 1

The 1990’s show *Friends* said it best, “If you don’t own a TV, what is all your furniture pointed at?” People are consuming more media today than ever before, and one of the biggest outlets is television. But does media cause real-life violence?

*Fox News* released the top reality shows of 2012 (1) that are provided for entertainment, but often depict violence. *Fox* stated that one of the biggest audiences of reality shows are adolescent girls and that it negatively affects them. *The Girls Scouts Research Institute* did a study that found that girls who consumed reality television regularly thought that “being mean earns you more respect than being nice” (1.) Also, therapist Dr. Nancy Irwin stated, “TV is a powerful influence on all of us, but particularly young girls who are looking for role models. These shows glamorize the backbiting, gossiping, criticizing and competing with each other through beautiful hair, makeup, and clothes.” (1.) Another example of how media causes real-life violence is TV viewers of NASCAR. An article from NPR stated, “New research indicates that five days after major NASCAR races, there is a measurable increase in traffic accidents caused by aggressive driving. According to this new research, people who watch a NASCAR race go out on the roads themselves and drive more recklessly.” (2)

Two theories from *Mass Communications: Living in a Media World* suggest that consuming a significant amount of media can cause violence. First, Cultivation Analysis- “An approach to analyzing the effects of television viewing that argues that watching significant amounts of television alters the way an individual views the nature of the surrounding world.” (3) The other theory is the Social Learning theory- “the process by which individuals learn by observing the behaviors of others and the consequences of those behaviors.” (3) These two theories show that when an individual exposes themselves to violent behavior, they will respond with violent behavior. In contrast, many people believe that the media does not cause real-life violence. One theory from *Mass Communications: Living in a Media World* is the Mean World Syndrome from George Gerbner that suggests many watchers of violent programs will believe that the world is more violent and dangerous than what statistics and facts show; that violent programs do not inspire violence, but rather, fear.

I believe that engaging in too much media can cause real-life violence. I think that each of us as individuals are affected by what we consume and will respond accordingly. NPR, the Girls Scouts Research Institute, and Dr. Nancy Irwin show that media cause real-life violence.
The repetition, or perhaps reification, of narratives about media violence in the wake of rampage killings and other high-profile violent crimes is almost as common as the crimes themselves. There is substantial forensic evidence that media portrayals influence copycat behavior or alternately desensitize the public to violence (Pozios, 2013), just as there are anecdotal claims of media violence, especially in video games, as a form of shared aesthetic catharsis (Klagge, 2012). But just how common is this violence?

According to a Gallup poll, a majority of Americans believed crime was on the rise in 2009 (Jones, 2010). But in reality, victimization rates have been declining year on year, and in 2009 the chance of becoming a victim of any sort of crime was less than 1 in 500, with a .006% chance of dying in a homicide (Kochanek et al., 2009). Why are Americans convinced crime is so widespread?

Arguably, this has as much to do with the framing of media narratives on violence and its sensational qualities as it does with the audience's particular attitudes toward violence (Potter, 2006). While perhaps not intentional on the part of opinion leaders, this is valuable in the social process of manufacturing consent for various criminal justice, defense, and law enforcement policy objectives, which incidentally are highly profitable for contractors and law enforcement alike (Mueller, 2006).
These narratives both serve to influence the direction of crime in highly motivated individuals and also to frame the social and political content of those crimes. For example, it can be argued that many rampage killings have historically contained an element of political violence, but media discussion of these crimes as a category is often limited to the assailants' access (or lack thereof) to firearms or behavioral health care, stifling the discussion of what sociopolitical factors might ultimately be driving them to violence. (Ames, 2010)

From these to domestic violence to sexual assault, the reification of “mean-world syndrome” in various forms of mass media, especially as disseminated through television news and social media, creates both public consensus of public threats that are overstated and also an often horrifying backlash that serves to reinforce these perceptions. (Ruth & Reitz, 2003) Our responsibility, then, is to create narratives that counter these industrial-strength perceptions of terror with real-world examples of social justice.

Works Cited
Emily Fitzgerald – Group 15

Violence in the media, in my personal experiences, does have a direct correlation to violence in real life. I noticed that the two boys I watched over the summer were very rough, violent, and threatening to one another. These two boys also continuously watched TV and played multiple different video games including violence. In a study from Singapore, it was shown that increased violent video game activity went along with a child’s increased aggressive behavior (Park, 2014).

Craig Anderson, the director of the center for the study of violence at ISU, believes that violent video games set up kids to react in more violent and hostile ways (Park, 2014). On the other hand, researchers at the University of Oxford found that aggression does not come from violent video games, but frustrating and difficult video games cause aggression (Drake, 2014). I believe that media violence is teaching children that violence is acceptable and okay, through video games, social media, and TV programs. In TV episodes, especially on channels like Disney and Nickelodeon, it is funny to see a character get hurt, especially with the stock laughter clip that is played. This shows children that pain can be funny, instead of showing them the true consequences of the pain. Dr. Gail Gross stated, “(children) have a difficult time differentiating what is real and what is make believe, and tend to emulate or copy what they are seeing (Gross, 2013).

Each side of the media violence argument uses surveys and observations of children to back up their findings. Children are known to copy what they see on TV, their family’s behaviors, and even the behavior of strangers. I believe that the social learning theory goes well with violence in the media. This correlates to children watching violence, and learning the consequences, whether they are positive or negative. In video games and TV shows, there are little to no consequences for violence, showing children that there are no repercussions for their actions. The uses and gratifications theory can also relate to violence in the media, stating that this theory views the audience as active receivers of information that they choose. This relates to the fact that children do not know what they are opening their minds to with violet video games and TV shows, because they just see them as entertainment, but do not see the negative effects of
the media. The media has a huge control over people, children especially, with the use of TV and video games to promote violence.


Meredith Lewanowicz – Group 19

Over the last several decades, violent depictions in TV and film have grown significantly. In response, people began to believe the growing generation would be inclined to aggression and violent behavior. This is an example of belief in the Direct Effects Model, which proposes that audience members receive media messages passively, believing everything the message indicates; it would back up the idea that violence among teens and young adults is completely due to their consumption of media violence. For decades, there has been a continual debate about whether or not this is accurate, and both sides have evidence vying for their opinions.

In favor of the Direct Effects Model, an article from the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology states, “Television often depicts aggression as effective in solving problems, exciting, funny, glamorous, justified, legitimate, pleasurable, and rewarding. The eventual result of such a winsome dramatization of aggression is that many young viewers learn to accept and even imitate violence.” (Rosenkoetter et al, 2004. P. 25-26). On the other side of the argument, extensive studies by George Gerbner argued that viewing TV violence did have its effects, however, they were not the effects that most people would assume. Gerbner used Cultivation Analysis to observe the effects of TV violence on children. During a hearing in Congress, Gerbner argued the reality of what he called Mean World Syndrome, essentially meaning an inaccurate, overly fearful view of the world. (Hanson, 2014).
Gerbner’s theories can also be related to the Limited Effects Model, which states that people are active viewers who form their own opinions, rather than passively absorbing opinions in media messages. Though this model was theorized in the context of elections/voting, it can also apply to the topic of TV violence. One might propose that people who view violence on television do not immediately assume it is an accurate depiction of reality; however, they take time to process and form their own opinions and decisions.

Personally, I believe that, while TV violence may not be the direct cause of real life violence, it at least gives people opportunity to be more and more comfortable with the idea of violence, which could eventually lead to small infractions. I believe that environmental circumstances (childhood, family/friend relationships, socioeconomic state, etc.) have a much greater affect on one’s propensity to violence. In an article by thriller novelist Shannon Greenland, the author writes, “What you learn from the research is that some perpetrators had extremely violent childhoods…some have psychological issues, while others went through some sort of trauma. But nowhere did I read that books or television caused them to commit their violent acts.” (Greenfield, 2014)

