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AP Language

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Does Media Violence Cause Real World Violence?

Everyone knows the game Grand Theft Auto. It's the one where you can do pretty much anything you want, hijack cars, beat prostitutes, or just go on a rampage and kill police officers. This immediately seems like a bad influence on young people, could it and similar things be responsible for all or most of the violence in our society? Todd Gitlin, a professor of culture and sociology at NYU says that its not, that Hollywood violence is just a political scapegoat to draw attention away from real causes of violent crime such as poverty, inequality and guns. Mr. Gitlin is somewhat right; in the larger scale media violence does not cause all violent crime, but this violence can be attributed to the acceptance of violence in our culture and they way people accept violence can make them more inclined to be violent or allow others to be violent.

Hollywood violence can't be blamed for all violent crime in our society, because there are many other factors that contribute to these problems. Poverty is a huge influence on violent crime. Poorer areas of cities have higher rates of violent crime than those with higher incomes, and that can't be attributed to more consumption of violent media. Inequality can cause violent crime in some areas, and that can't be attributed to media violence either. People who may feel put down by poverty or inequality can become violent, and those will be much more powerful factors than media violence. Guns may be the biggest contributor to violence. ~~Gun control is a huge issue~~ in the U.S., and it is debatable whether guns cause rates of violence to go up. But it is certain that many violent crimes involve guns, and that many couldn't happen without them. If Hollywood violence was the sole factor on violent crime, than areas with higher poverty and inequality or cultures with more attachment to guns would have no more violent crime than those without. So there are other influences on violent crime besides the media.

Media violence rarely directly causes violent crime. Very few people would rob a bank simply because they saw a movie in which someone did. The same is true of almost all violent crime. Other

factors provide much more direct causes for violent crime than Hollywood violence. There are always other reasons for crimes besides media influence, whether they be monetary need from poverty, racial reasons, or simply human nature. Violence in media can't make the same type of impact on a person as poverty or bad experiences to make someone commit violent crime. This is what Gitlin is saying and this is where he is correct.

While media doesn't necessarily directly influence people to make decisions to be violent, it can change people's attitudes toward violence and desensitize them to it. People become desensitized to violence by watching so much of it, and this does make people tend to be violent. American society has become much more accepting of violence than it was even 20 years ago. And this can lead to people being violent. Murders happen many times because people think of it as not as big of a deal as it really is. In movies villains kill hundreds of innocent citizens without breaking a sweat, and some people may think of real life like that. This can trick people into accepting violence because it seems normal. In school shootings throughout the past several decades the shooters have had these types of attitudes, killing as many innocent people as they can with great arsenals of weaponry. In some movies the good guys are the ones doing all the killing, and this sets a very poor standard for people to follow. When the character that people are meant to identify with during the movie kills tens or hundreds of people, what can you expect the viewer to think of that? War movies and westerns can often have this effect, as the heroes can be seen killing many people during the course of the movie, but still be the hero at the end of the movie. This type of violence makes people more accepting of violence, which does not cause them to be violent, but can give other factors more directly affect violence a greater impact on people. This is where Todd Gitlin is incorrect in saying that media violence does not cause real world violence, because this mass cultural acceptance of violence because of the media can allow people to become more inclined to be violent.

Todd Gitlin says that media violence doesn't cause violent crime, and he is right because many other factors such as poverty and inequality directly lead to violence, but media violence does make people more accepting of violence, which makes it an indirect cause. So when someone sees a player committing murder in Grand Theft Auto, that may not make them go murder someone, but it may make

them more accepting of such violence.

Big Picture/80

- **Structure: I'd put the guns and poverty last. As an explanation for the real cause. Make the topic sentences really clear--show their direct meaning and relationship to each other.**
- **More analysis to explain your claims**
- **Watch diction that is, at times, low level. Work on incorporating more advanced vocab.**