

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

### Sociology

1. Social scientists have been reluctant in the past to recognize a causal connection between television violence and real life violence. Do you believe there is a connection between televised violence and real life violence? Explain.

2. List 10 Acts of violence below. *You will make a tally mark for each one of these acts of violence you see in the cartoons.*

3. On graph paper create a bar graph of the data you have tallied. Be neat and use color.

**Read *Enrichment Reading/ National Television Violence*. Answer questions 1-3 below.**

**Write the notes from the power point. Then answer the following question, "Do you agree or disagree with these conclusions from the Sociology textbook?" Explain.**

## Chapter 4



# Enrichment Reading

## National Television Violence

### Key Findings

Today, violence is not only seen on the streets but also in the schools. During the last five years of the twentieth century, there were over 120 people shot in schools. We now hear stories in the news about young people participating in violent shootings on school grounds and killing innocent bystanders. In a Michigan school in 2000, one six-year-old shot and killed a classmate at school. These violent acts raise questions: Why is there an increase in violence, especially among today's youth? Does television have a negative

effect on individuals? Does television encourage violent behaviors?

In 1994, the National Television Violence Study initiated the first part of its three-year project to assess violence on television. This study, which is the largest study of media content ever undertaken, was funded by the National Cable Television Association. The project examined approximately 2,500 hours of television programming that included 2,693 programs.

The first of the three studies analyzes violent content in television programming. The second study examines children's reactions to ratings and viewer advisories. The final study analyzes the content of antiviolence public service announcements (PSAs).

Following is a summary of the first study conducted in 1994–1995. Collectively, these findings establish the norms that exist in the overall television environment. Many of the patterns observed cause some concern.

### Overall Conclusions about Violence on Television

- ❖ **Violence predominates on television, often including large numbers of violent interactions per program.**

The majority (57 percent) of programs on television contain violence, and roughly one third of violent programs contain nine or more violent interactions. The frequency of violence on television can contribute to **desensitization** and fear, as well as provide ample opportunities to learn violent attitudes and behaviors.

*This man is holding up the V-chip used to control television viewing by children.*



❖ **In the majority of the episodes of violence, the perpetrator engages in repeated violent acts.**

The perpetrator engages in repeated acts of violence in more than half (58 percent) of all violent interactions. This increases the amount of violence to which viewers are exposed.

❖ **In one-quarter of the violent interactions, a gun is used.**

Certain visual cues, such as weapons, tend to activate aggressive thoughts in viewers. Later, these thoughts cause individuals to interpret neutral events as possibly threatening or aggressive.

❖ **In about three-quarters of all violent scenes, perpetrators go unpunished.**

The portrayal of rewards and punishments is probably the most important of all **contextual** factors for viewers as they interpret the meaning of what they see on television. Viewers who would otherwise think of a class of behaviors such as violence as bad may eventually learn that those behaviors are good (useful, successful, or desirable) if they are repeatedly and consistently portrayed as rewarded or unpunished. Across all channel types, this study discovered a common pattern that the majority of violent scenes lack any form of punishment for the perpetrators.

❖ **In a high proportion of violent episodes, the consequences are not realistically portrayed.**

Less than half of violent interactions show the victims experiencing any signs of pain. Furthermore, only about one in six programs depict any long-term negative consequences, such as physical suffering or financial or emotional harm. All of these patterns increase the risk that viewers will believe that violence is not a particularly painful or harmful behavior.

❖ **Violence is often presented as humorous.**

More than one third of all violent scenes

involve a humorous context. Humor tends to **trivialize** or undermine the seriousness with which violence is regarded. Humorous violence can serve to desensitize viewers to the serious or harmful effects of violence.

❖ **Violent programs rarely employ a strong antiviolence theme.**

Only 4 percent of all television programs emphasize a strong anti-violence theme.

*Touched by an Angel*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Mr. Rogers* are among the exceptions.

## What Does it Mean?

**contextual**  
meaning that is derived from the setting or the environment; not stated, but implied

**desensitization**  
the process of preventing an emotional response; make less sensitive

**perpetrator**  
someone who carries out or brings about an action; in law, one who commits a crime

**predominate**  
to exert control over; to hold an advantage in numbers

**trivialize**  
to make something less important or serious than it is

Source: Adapted from "National Television Violence Study: Executive Summary." Studio City, CA: Mediascope, Inc., 1998.

## Read and React

1. What was the stated purpose of the first study?
2. Why does the report state that the contextual factors for viewing violence are the most important?
3. Do you think the report reaches its stated purpose (see Question #1)? Why or why not?