Steven Pinker

Violence Vanquished

[*Wall Street Journal*, September 24, 2011]

BEFORE YOU READ

Are we living in a world that is more peaceful or more violent than the world of the past? If violence is on the decline, what measurement do we use to prove that to be true?

WORDS TO LEARN

insurrection (para. 1): a revolt, rebellion, or resistance that occurs against a civil authority or government (noun)
millennia (para. 4): plural form of *millennium*, a period of 1,000 years (noun)
incredulity (para. 5): disbelief (noun)
carnage (para. 5): slaughter (noun)
genocide (para. 6): deliberate and systematic extermination of a group of people based on race, politics, or culture (noun)
anarchy (para. 8): lawlessness (noun)
horticultural (para. 8): having to do with gardening and plants (adj)
subside (para. 10): to become quiet; to abate (verb)
benevolent (para. 11): characterized by goodwill (adj)
welfare (para. 11): well-being (noun)
homicide (para. 12): murder (noun)
consolidation (para. 14): unification (noun)
commerce (para. 14): an exchange of commodities (noun)
despotism (para. 16): tyranny; rule by someone with unlimited power (noun)
initiate (para. 18): to begin (verb)
inept (para. 20): without skill; incompetent (adj)
insurgency (para. 20): rebellion (noun)
proxy (para. 23): one who acts in place of another (noun)
cascade (para. 24): an object resembling a waterfall (noun)
obliterate (para. 24): to destroy completely (verb)
pogrom (para. 24): an organized massacre, usually pertaining to the massacre of Jews (noun)
repeal (para. 25): to revoke (verb)
snipe (para. 27): to attack (verb)

Steven Pinker is a professor of psychology at Harvard University, where he conducts highly acclaimed research on visual cognition. He writes frequently for the New Republic, *the* New York Times, Time, *and other publications, and is the author of eight books. He has been named Humanist of the Year (2006) and is listed in* Foreign Policy *and* Prospect *magazines' "The World's Top 100 Public Intellectuals" and in* Time *magazine's "The 100 Most Influential People in the World Today."*

judiciary (para. 29): court system (noun)
circumvent (para. 29): to go around; to avoid (verb)
altruism (para. 31): the practice of showing concern for others, unselfishly motivated (noun)
parochial (para. 33): limited; provincial (adj)
complacency (para. 36): feeling of security or self-satisfaction without awareness of actual dangers (noun)
thwart (para. 36): to oppose or foil (verb)
irredeemable (para. 36): not redeemable; hopeless (adj)
tribulation (para. 38): distress or suffering (noun)
impetus (para. 38): a driving force (noun)

On the day this article appears, you will read about a shocking act of violence. Somewhere in the world there will be a terrorist bombing, a senseless murder, a bloody insurrection. It's impossible to learn about these catastrophes without thinking, "What is the world coming to?" 1

But a better question may be, "How bad was the world in the past?" 2

Believe it or not, the world of the past was *much* worse. Violence has been in decline for thousands of years, and today we may be living in the most peaceable era in the existence of our species. 3

The decline, to be sure, has not been smooth. It has not brought violence down to zero, and it is not guaranteed to continue. But it is a persistent historical development, visible on scales from millennia to years, from the waging of wars to the spanking of children. 4

This claim, I know, invites skepticism, incredulity, and sometimes anger. We tend to estimate the probability of an event from the ease with which we can recall examples, and scenes of carnage are more likely to be beamed into our homes and burned into our memories than footage of people dying of old age. There will always be enough violent deaths to fill the evening news, so people's impressions of violence will be disconnected from its actual likelihood. 5

Evidence of our bloody history is not hard to find. Consider the genocides in the Old Testament and the crucifixions in the New, the gory mutilations in Shakespeare's tragedies and Grimm's fairy tales, the British monarchs who beheaded their relatives, and the American founders who dueled with their rivals. 6

Today the decline in these brutal practices can be quantified. A look at the numbers shows that over the course of our history, humankind has been blessed with six major declines of violence. 7

The first was a process of pacification: the transition from the anarchy 8
of the hunting, gathering, and horticultural societies in which our species spent most of its evolutionary history to the first agricultural civilizations, with cities and governments, starting about 5,000 years ago.

For centuries, social theorists like Hobbes[1] and Rousseau[2] specu- 9
lated from their armchairs about what life was like in a "state of nature." Nowadays we can do better. Forensic archeology—a kind of "CSI: Paleolithic"[3]—can estimate rates of violence from the proportion of skeletons in ancient sites with bashed-in skulls, decapitations, or arrowheads embedded in bones. And ethnographers can tally the causes of death in tribal peoples that have recently lived outside of state control.

These investigations show that, on average, about 15% of people in 10
prestate eras died violently, compared to about 3% of the citizens of the earliest states. Tribal violence commonly subsides when a state or empire imposes control over a territory, leading to the various "paxes" (Romana, Islamica, Brittanica, and so on) that are familiar to readers of history.

It's not that the first kings had a benevolent interest in the welfare of 11
their citizens. Just as a farmer tries to prevent his livestock from killing one another, so a ruler will try to keep his subjects from cycles of raiding and feuding. From his point of view, such squabbling is a dead loss—forgone opportunities to extract taxes, tributes, soldiers, and slaves.

The second decline of violence was a civilizing process that is best 12
documented in Europe. Historical records show that between the late Middle Ages and the 20th century, European countries saw a 10- to 50-fold decline in their rates of homicide.

The numbers are consistent with narrative histories of the brutality 13
of life in the Middle Ages, when highwaymen made travel a risk to life and limb and dinners were commonly enlivened by dagger attacks. So many people had their noses cut off that medieval medical textbooks speculated about techniques for growing them back.

Historians attribute this decline to the consolidation of a patchwork 14
of feudal territories into large kingdoms with centralized authority and

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[1] Hobbes (para. 9): Thomas Hobbes. English philosopher who wrote the book *Leviathan*, about the structure of society and government. In that book, he wrote that people live lives that are "nasty, brutish, and short."

[2] Rousseau (para. 9): Jean-Jacques Rousseau. French philosopher who wrote about an idealized state of nature, in stark contrast to Hobbes's, in *Discourse on Inequality* and *On the Social Contract*.

[3] Paleolithic (para. 9): Refers to the early stage of the Stone Age.

an infrastructure of commerce. Criminal justice was nationalized, and zero-sum plunder gave way to positive-sum trade. People increasingly controlled their impulses and sought to cooperate with their neighbors.

The third transition, sometimes called the Humanitarian Revolution, 15
took off with the Enlightenment.[4] Governments and churches had long maintained order by punishing nonconformists with mutilation, torture, and gruesome forms of execution, such as burning, breaking, disembowelment, impalement, and sawing in half. The 18th century saw the widespread abolition of judicial torture, including the famous prohibition of "cruel and unusual punishment" in the eighth amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

At the same time, many nations began to whittle down their list of 16
capital crimes from the hundreds (including poaching, sodomy, witchcraft, and counterfeiting) to just murder and treason. And a growing wave of countries abolished blood sports, dueling, witchhunts, religious persecution, absolute despotism, and slavery.

The fourth major transition is the respite from major interstate war 17
that we have seen since the end of World War II. Historians sometimes refer to it as the Long Peace.

Today we take it for granted that Italy and Austria will not come to 18
blows, nor will Britain and Russia. But centuries ago, the great powers were almost always at war, and until quite recently, Western European countries tended to initiate two or three new wars every year. The cliché that the 20th century was "the most violent in history" ignores the second half of the century (and may not even be true of the first half, if one calculates violent deaths as a proportion of the world's population).

Though it's tempting to attribute the Long Peace to nuclear deter- 19
rence,[5] non-nuclear developed states have stopped fighting each other as well. Political scientists point instead to the growth of democracy, trade, and international organizations — all of which, the statistical evidence shows, reduce the likelihood of conflict. They also credit the rising valuation of human life over national grandeur — a hard-won lesson of two world wars.

The fifth trend, which I call the New Peace, involves war in the world 20
as a whole, including developing nations. Since 1946, several organizations have tracked the number of armed conflicts and their human toll world-wide. The bad news is that for several decades, the decline of interstate wars was accompanied by a bulge of civil wars, as newly

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[4] Enlightenment (para. 15): Important philosophical movement of the eighteenth century (also known as the Age of Reason).

[5] nuclear deterrence (para. 19): The theory that the buildup of nuclear weapons and accompanying threat of mutual annihilation would prevent the use of such weapons.

independent countries were led by inept governments, challenged by insurgencies, and armed by the cold war superpowers.

The less bad news is that civil wars tend to kill far fewer people than 21
wars between states. And the best news is that, since the peak of the cold war in the 1970s and '80s, organized conflicts of all kinds — civil wars, genocides, repression by autocratic governments, terrorist attacks — have declined throughout the world, and their death tolls have declined even more precipitously.

The rate of documented direct deaths from political violence (war, 22
terrorism, genocide, and warlord militias) in the past decade is an unprecedented few hundredths of a percentage point. Even if we multiplied that rate to account for unrecorded deaths and the victims of war-caused disease and famine, it would not exceed 1%.

The most immediate cause of this New Peace was the demise of com- 23
munism, which ended the proxy wars in the developing world stoked by the superpowers and also discredited genocidal ideologies that had justified the sacrifice of vast numbers of eggs to make a utopian omelet. Another contributor was the expansion of international peacekeeping forces, which really do keep the peace — not always, but far more often than when adversaries are left to fight to the bitter end.

Finally, the postwar era has seen a cascade of "rights revolutions" — a 24
growing revulsion against aggression on smaller scales. In the developed world, the civil rights movement obliterated lynchings and lethal pogroms, and the women's-rights movement has helped to shrink the incidence of rape and the beating and killing of wives and girlfriends.

In recent decades, the movement for children's rights has significantly 25
reduced rates of spanking, bullying, paddling in schools, and physical and sexual abuse. And the campaign for gay rights has forced governments in the developed world to repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality and has had some success in reducing hate crimes against gay people.

Why has violence declined so dramatically for so long? Is it because violence has literally been bred out of us, leaving us more peaceful by nature? 26

Why has violence declined so dramatically for so long? 27

This seems unlikely. Evolution has a speed limit measured in generations, and many of these declines have unfolded over decades or even years. Toddlers continue to kick, bite, and hit; little boys continue to play-fight; people of all ages continue to snipe and bicker, and most of them continue to harbor violent fantasies and to enjoy violent entertainment.

It's more likely that human nature has always comprised inclinations toward violence and inclinations that counteract them — such as self-control, empathy, fairness, and reason — what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature." Violence has declined because historical circumstances have increasingly favored our better angels. 28

The most obvious of these pacifying forces has been the state, with its monopoly on the legitimate use of force. A disinterested judiciary and police can defuse the temptation of exploitative attack, inhibit the impulse for revenge, and circumvent the self-serving biases that make all parties to a dispute believe that they are on the side of the angels. 29

We see evidence of the pacifying effects of government in the way that rates of killing declined following the expansion and consolidation of states in tribal societies and in medieval Europe. And we can watch the movie in reverse when violence erupts in zones of anarchy, such as the Wild West, failed states, and neighborhoods controlled by mafias and street gangs, who can't call 911 or file a lawsuit to resolve their disputes but have to administer their own rough justice. 30

Another pacifying force has been commerce, a game in which everybody can win. As technological progress allows the exchange of goods and ideas over longer distances and among larger groups of trading partners, other people become more valuable alive than dead. They switch from being targets of demonization and dehumanization to potential partners in reciprocal altruism. 31

For example, though the relationship today between America and China is far from warm, we are unlikely to declare war on them or vice versa. Morality aside, they make too much of our stuff, and we owe them too much money. 32

A third peacemaker has been cosmopolitanism — the expansion of people's parochial little worlds through literacy, mobility, education, science, history, journalism, and mass media. These forms of virtual reality can prompt people to take the perspective of people unlike themselves and to expand their circle of sympathy to embrace them. 33

These technologies have also powered an expansion of rationality and objectivity in human affairs. People are now less likely to privilege their own interests over those of others. They reflect more on the way they live and consider how they could be better off. Violence is often reframed as a problem to be solved rather than as a contest to be won. We devote ever more of our brainpower to guiding our better angels. It is probably no coincidence that the Humanitarian Revolution came on the heels of the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, that the Long Peace and rights revolutions coincided with the electronic global village. 34

Whatever its causes, the implications of the historical decline of violence are profound. So much depends on whether we see our era as a 35

nightmare of crime, terrorism, genocide, and war or as a period that, in the light of the historical and statistical facts, is blessed by unprecedented levels of peaceful coexistence.

Bearers of good news are often advised to keep their mouths shut, 36
lest they lull people into complacency. But this prescription may be backward. The discovery that fewer people are victims of violence can thwart cynicism among compassion-fatigued news readers who might otherwise think that the dangerous parts of the world are irredeemable hell holes. And a better understanding of what drove the numbers down can steer us toward doing things that make people better off rather than congratulating ourselves on how moral we are.

As one becomes aware of the historical decline of violence, the world 37
begins to look different. The past seems less innocent, the present less sinister. One starts to appreciate the small gifts of coexistence that would have seemed utopian to our ancestors: the interracial family playing in the park, the comedian who lands a zinger on the commander in chief, the countries that quietly back away from a crisis instead of escalating to war.

For all the tribulations in our lives, for all the troubles that remain 38
in the world, the decline of violence is an accomplishment that we can savor — and an impetus to cherish the forces of civilization and enlightenment that made it possible.

VOCABULARY/USING A DICTIONARY

1. Do you know what a *skeptic* is? What is the definition of *skepticism* (para. 5)?
2. Define *infrastructure* (para. 14). How might you guess its definition by examining parts of the word separately?
3. What does *pacification* (para. 8) mean? From what language does it derive?
4. *Decline* is often used as a verb, meaning "to refuse." In this essay, it is used as another part of speech. What part of speech is *decline* (para. 3), and what does it mean?

RESPONDING TO WORDS IN CONTEXT

1. Pinker refers to the *footage* of some visual media (para. 5). How do you define *footage* in this context? What is its literal meaning?
2. Twice, Pinker uses the word *utopian* in this essay. In one instance, he says that genocides "sacrifice[d] a vast number of eggs to make a utopian omelet" (para. 23), and in the other, he speaks of our current way of living as one that might appear "utopian to our ancestors" (para. 37). Considering the context of his examples, what do you think *utopian* means?
3. Pinker makes a distinction between a *state* and an *empire* in paragraph 10. What is the difference between those terms?

DISCUSSING MAIN POINT AND MEANING

1. Does Pinker think we are evolving into more peaceful beings? Explain his argument.
2. Over this history of humankind, what was one of the earliest lifestyle changes that led to a more peaceful coexistence?
3. What types of past violence does Pinker mention, and how are they used to support his position that things have improved?

EXAMINING SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS, AND ORGANIZATION

1. Examine the two questions that Pinker begins with and how they differ. Are the questions an effective introduction to the essay? Why or why not?
2. Both *behead* and *decapitate* mean "to cut the head off of." Pinker uses *beheaded* in paragraph 6 and *decapitated* in paragraph 9. Would it make a difference if they were switched? Examine how the particular word choice fits its paragraph.
3. Pinker's essay is one of the longer ones in this textbook. How does he organize his material? Why is this mode of organization effective in a longer essay?

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Has Pinker left any important areas of "declines of violence" (para. 7) out of his essay? Identify anything that you think has been overlooked.
2. The title of this essay is "Violence Vanquished." Do you think, in light of the violence that still exists, that this is a misleading title? Why or why not?
3. How do you understand "the better angels of our nature" (para. 28)? How do you view humankind's struggle between violent impulses and the desire to counteract them?

WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. What do you think of Pinker's examples? Do you believe that we live in a more violent time or one less violent than times past? In a short essay, explain why you think what Pinker is saying is true or not true.
2. Describe, in writing, a historical event that illustrates the violence of its period or is an example of nonviolent behavior in an otherwise violent time. Research your work after you have described the particular event and see if your research stands in agreement with or in opposition to what you've written.
3. Write an essay that considers the effect of one of the "six major declines of violence" (para. 7) on your own life. Quote examples used in Pinker's essay as you explore their effect of your personal experience. How would your life be different if a particular "decline" had not occurred?

Jacob Ewing (student essay)

Steven Pinker and the Question of Violence

[Ashland University, April 27, 2012]

BEFORE YOU READ

After reading Steven Pinker's "Violence Vanquished" (p. 187), what do you believe about Pinker's claims? Do you find them convincing, or do you think that his interpretation of the data provided left something to be desired?

WORDS TO LEARN

pacifying (para. 5): bringing peace to or quelling anger (adj)

Note: Jacob Ewing's essay was written in response to the following assignment:

> *Steven Pinker's recent book* The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined *has provoked a great deal of conversation. After reading carefully the essay, "Violence Vanquished," adapted from his book by the* Wall Street Journal, *join the controversy by writing a short response to Pinker in which you confirm and/or challenge some of his findings and conclusions. Be sure to select several specific claims that Pinker makes and systematically point out their merits or weaknesses. You may bring in additional readings to support your points.*

In his essay "Violence Vanquished," which appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* (September 24, 2011), the Harvard Professor of Psychology, Steven Pinker, claims that the modern era is the most peaceful time in the history of the human species. He says that now more than ever before, we are less likely to die a violent death at the hands of another human being. He cites statistics that show how violence of all kinds — murder, war, genocide, and so on — have decreased across the board. 1

Pinker is aware that this fact seems not only unlikely but blatantly wrong, especially in light of the seemingly endless acts of violence that characterize so much of today's news. Yet, despite the horrors in Darfur, Syria, and Iraq and in virtually every major American city, Pinker is likely right in his general claim that violence is diminishing across the globe. It would be hard to argue with his statistics that prove that violence among human beings is at its lowest point in history. 2

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But there are still some major issues to consider when evaluating Pinker's position. For instance, what exactly constitutes violence in this argument? It would first be helpful to analyze the author's definition. Throughout the piece, he discusses violence in terms of how likely one is to die at the hands of another human being. This is a convenient statistic, especially for an argument as numbers-driven as Pinker's, but violence extends well beyond just murder or warfare. Rape, assault, bullying — these are all ways in which human beings act violent toward one another, yet none of these phenomena are mentioned in his article. 3

There are still other types of violence that permeate society. Most young boys have, at a certain point in their childhood, gotten into a wrestling match or a fist fight, often with someone very close to them — a brother, a cousin, a best friend. Now, this type of violence is not on par with murder, but it is certainly an aspect of our society that goes unmentioned by Pinker's analysis. Violence manifests itself in modern society in a variety of ways, many of which Pinker ignores and some of which are not extreme enough to even be on his radar. 4

Violence manifests itself in modern society in a variety of ways.

In the latter half of the article, Pinker attempts to determine what exactly has caused the decline in violence he has described. He appeals first to modern governments, saying, "The most obvious of these pacifying forces has been the state, with its monopoly on the legitimate use of force." Here again, Pinker's point is not as simple as it appears. The state's ability to monopolize the use of force has absolutely helped quell vigilante justice and personal vendettas, but it has also created a potential for violence that is absolutely unprecedented. 5

Indeed, one could assume that at this moment, several of the world's major powers have the ability to launch a nuclear attack with weapons far more powerful than those used on Japan at the end of the Second World War, when a single plane dropping one atomic bomb over Hiroshima left over 100,000 human beings dead. The number of deaths that could result in a nuclear attack today is unthinkable. With modern weapons that absolutely dwarf the original atomic bomb, and with so many states having access to such weapons, Pinker's assertion that the state has brought about an alleviation of violence becomes less evident. He would be quick to point out that such an attack has not happened; it might be better to say that such an attack has not happened yet. As Robert Jervis says in his article "Pinker the Prophet," "If we think we're playing Russian roulette, then the fact that we were lucky does not count quite so strongly for our living in a less violent time."[1] 6

[1] *The National Interest*, Issue 116, Nov./Dec. 2011, p. 57.

Pinker also cites the global market as a source for this newfound peace. He points out how unlikely it is for a war to break out between the United States and China because "they make too much of our stuff, and we owe them too much money." But the fallacy of this point comes a paragraph earlier, when Pinker describes commerce as "a game in which everybody can win." This sentiment holds true when considering two nations like the United States and China — strong centralized governments, stable economies, freedom from internal conflict. This allows trade to occur between these two nations in a peaceful, mutually-beneficial manner. 7

But what about countries that aren't fortunate enough to be a world power? What about countries where the extraction of precious natural resources has resulted in some of the most gruesome violence of the twentieth century? One only need analyze the history of the diamond trade in Africa to realize the type of violence that can come as a direct result of commerce. Diamonds are a precious commodity, and any opportunity to make money in a place like Sierra Leone is likely to end in violence. Even more recently, the mining of coltan — a mineral used in most cell phones and laptops — has been the source for violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In these cases, commerce and trade have actually created violence — not alleviated it. 8

Pinker is constantly alluding to the Enlightenment as another source for what he calls "the most peaceable era in the existence of our species." It would be hard to argue that the Enlightenment didn't at least help people realize that killing one another may not be the best thing to do. That seems obvious now. But what about people who are raised in our enlightened society, taught about playing nice and the sanctity of life and the golden rule, yet still kill people? The list of school-shootings over the past twenty years is already terrifying and growing by the year. These acts are carried out by people who are presumably enlightened, products of our education system, who have had the opportunity to learn how important and beautiful and sacred life is; yet the shootings still happen. 9

Pinker is quick to mention how "about 15% of people in prestate eras died violently," but fails to mention that the populations of these societies were savages by contemporary standards. Death happened at a much higher rate, but these people were wholly unable to comprehend the philosophical implications of the deaths they were causing. It was their way of life, and they didn't have the advanced knowledge to consider that life might be lived some other way. The same cannot be said about modern day murderers. If our society is truly as enlightened as Pinker likes to think it is — as we all like to think it is — then the fact that so many people still function outside of the collective societal reasoning, the fact 10

that murders happen every day, should be far more shocking than the fact unenlightened savages killed one another at a higher rate than we do today.

Pinker's assertion that violence is in consistent decline is both intriguing and inspiring, but is not as solid as it appears on the surface. To his credit, Pinker readily concedes that violence still has an enormous presence in human society. But the way in which he measures violence — human death caused by another human being — is not necessarily the full story on the matter. Furthermore, his desire to appeal to state power, global commerce, and the modern enlightened mind all have some important implications, as noted above, to which his article does not do justice. 11

The final claim that Pinker never addresses is an omission for which no one could blame him. One of the most frequent instances of violence over the past decade has been natural disasters — earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and so on. The amount of human life lost as a result is enormous, yes, but it wouldn't have anything to do with an assessment like Pinker's. Or would it? If one day, the world of science comes to discover that these patterns in extreme weather were caused by human beings, by the way modern society functions, is Pinker's argument changed at all? Are we considerably more violent if that is the case, even if it is unintentional? This is undoubtedly speculative, but if Pinker's project is to consider how violence works on the macro-level, it might not be a bad idea to at least consider the possibility that human beings kill one another in more ways than we realize. 12

VOCABULARY/USING A DICTIONARY

1. What is the definition of the word *permeate* (para. 4)?
2. What are the origins of the word *quell* (para. 5)?
3. What is the definition of the word *commodity* (para. 8), and what part of speech is it?

RESPONDING TO WORDS IN CONTEXT

1. In paragraph 3, Ewing states, "Rape, assault, bullying—these are all ways in which human beings act violent toward one another, yet none of these phenomena are mentioned in his article." How is the word *phenomena* used here? Is it appropriate for the context? Why or why not?
2. In the sentence, "With modern weapons that absolutely dwarf the original atomic bomb, and with so many states having access to such weapons, Pinker's assertion that the state has brought about an alleviation of violence becomes less evident" (para. 6), what does the word *dwarf* mean, and what part of speech is it?

3. The title of Pinker's essay is "Violence Vanquished." What is the meaning of the word *vanquished,* and based on Ewing's assessment of Pinker's claims, do you believe this word to be appropriate in the title? Why or why not?

DISCUSSING MAIN POINT AND MEANING

1. How does Ewing's definition of violence differ from Pinker's?
2. How does Ewing refute Pinker's claim that the global market is a source of non-violence? Is Ewing's argument effective? Why or why not?
3. According to Ewing, what is the major cognitive difference between modern-day murderers and "savages" who killed each other on a more regular basis?

EXAMINING SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS, AND ORGANIZATION

1. How does Ewing choose to organize his essay? Is this an effective way to respond to an article? Why or why not?
2. In paragraph 2, Ewing states, "It would be hard to argue with [Pinker's] statistics that prove that violence among human beings is at its lowest point in history." Why do you think Ewing makes this concession, and how does it affect his argument?
3. What is the purpose of the concluding paragraph? How does it support the rest of the essay?

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Examine the difference between Pinker's definition of violence for the purposes of his argument, and Ewing's definition of violence. Why might Pinker have chosen that measurement of violence for his study?
2. When discussing school shootings, Ewing implies that modern violence is actually more violent simply because humans are enlightened. Do you agree with this assessment? If so, how might you measure violence? If not, do you support Pinker's method of measuring violence?
3. Which of Ewing's arguments do you find the most convincing? Which are the least convincing? Explain your reasoning.

WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. In a short essay, respond to both Ewing's and Pinker's essays. Try to put the texts in conversation with each other, choosing which points to highlight from each, and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of both arguments.
2. If you were going to write a response to Pinker's essay, how would you respond? In a brief essay, explain how you would structure an argument either supporting or refuting Pinker's claims, and then explore how your essay might be different from Ewing's. Look at different aspects such as structure, tone, and overall argument.

Alex Kotlowitz

Defusing Violence

[*The Rotarian*, February 2012]

BEFORE YOU READ

What's the best way to help communities beset by violence cope with the escalating violence they face every day? How can effectively working toward defusing violence become an effort made by a community?

WORDS TO LEARN

impoverished (para. 1): poor (adj)
shrine (para. 1): places or objects that are considered sacred (noun)
tally (para. 1): a count (noun)
rigorous (para. 2): strict; tough (adj)
deterrent (para. 2): something that discourages or inhibits (noun)
shortcoming (para. 4): an imperfection; a flaw (noun)
emulate (para. 4): to imitate (verb)
epiphany (para. 4): an insight (noun)
glib (para. 4): offhand (adj)
credibility (para. 5): quality of being trustworthy (noun)
empathize (para. 5): to experience empathy (sensitivity to another's experience) (verb)
rant (para. 7): wild talk (noun)
agitated (para. 8): excited or excitedly troubled (adj)
lure (para. 8): to attract or entice (verb)
defuse (para. 8): to make less dangerous (verb)
cajole (para. 9): to persuade or coax (verb)
grievance (para. 9): complaint (noun)
instinctively (para. 9): innately (adv)
potentially (para. 10): possibly (adv)
mediation (para. 11): an attempt to reconcile (noun)
profound (para. 12): deep; wide-reaching (adj)
intercept (para. 13): to seize or halt (verb)
persist (para. 14): to carry on; to persevere (verb)

Alex Kotlowitz is best known for the best-selling novel There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America *(1991), which was selected by the New York Public Library as one of the 150 most important books of the century. He is also the author of* The Other Side of the River: A Story of Two Towns, a Death and America's Dilemma, *and most recently,* Never a City So Real. *Kotlowitz has contributed to public radio, as well as many magazines and newspapers. He is a writer-in-residence at Northwestern University, and a visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame.*

In the impoverished neighborhoods on Chicago's South and West sides, violence has come to define the landscape. At the end of the last school year, a marquee at Manley High School read: *Have a Peaceful Summer.* Signs for neighborhood block clubs, ordinarily a mark of celebration, detail all that's prohibited. One warns: *No Drug Selling.* Another cautions: *No Gambling.* A city sign declares: *Safe School Zone — increased penalties for gang activities and the use, sale or possession of drugs or weapons in this area.* On street corners and on stoops, in front of stores and in gangways, makeshift shrines appear — candles, empty liquor bottles, stuffed animals, poster board with scrawled remembrances — monuments to the fallen, victims of the epidemic of shootings in our central cities. Politicians have called for the National Guard. Chicago's police superintendent conceded that his officers can't respond to every call of a gun fired because there are so many gunshots. So many children have been murdered that a few years back, the *Chicago Tribune* began to keep a tally of public school students killed. 1

Chicago is not alone. Thirteen cities have higher murder rates, including four — New Orleans, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Detroit — where the rate is more than twice that of Chicago. For the past 10 years, homicide has been the leading cause of death for African American men between the ages of 15 and 24. The response traditionally has been more rigorous policing and longer prison sentences, the notion being that the threat of getting locked up for a long stretch would be a deterrent to anyone even thinking about picking up a gun. But with over 1.5 million people in America's prisons, that feels like a lost argument. Moreover, lock people up, and most come back to their communities one day. (In Chicago alone, an estimated 20,000 to 27,000 men return from prison each year, and most of them to seven neighborhoods.) It's enough to make even the most committed and persistent among us throw up our hands. 2

Yet time and again I have met people in these communities who haven't given up, who see promise where others see despair. 3

Time and again I have met people in these communities who haven't given up, who see promise where others see despair.

Consider Cobe Williams. Now 37, Cobe grew up on Chicago's South Side, in a neighborhood marked by abandoned homes and struggling families. His father was in prison for much of Cobe's youth and, shortly after getting released, when Cobe was 12, was beaten to death by a group of men. Despite his dad's shortcomings, Cobe looked up to him, so he spent many of his teen years trying to emulate his father's life: running with a gang, selling drugs, shooting at others and 4

getting shot at. Cobe served three stints in prison for a total of 12 years. In his last appearance in court, he had an epiphany of sorts. His four-year-old son ran up to him in tears, and at that moment, Cobe realized he wanted to do better than his dad. He wanted to be a real father to his son. It would perhaps be too glib to suggest that he's changed. Rather, he's figured out who he always was — and who he wants to be.

Cobe is trying to return what he has taken from his community. He 5
works for CeaseFire, a violence prevention program that views shootings through a public health lens. Organizers believe the spread of violence mimics the spread of an infectious disease, so they have hired individuals like Cobe, men and women formerly of the street, to intervene in disputes before they escalate — to interrupt the next shooting. Hence the job title: violence interrupter. Given their pasts, these people have credibility on the streets. And because they've been there themselves, they can empathize with someone intent on revenge. For a year, the film director Steve James and I followed Cobe and two of his colleagues, recording them as they went about their work for our documentary, *The Interrupters*.

One day, Cobe received a call from a young man, Flamo, whom he'd 6
met in the county jail some years earlier and who has a reputation on the streets for, as Cobe says, "taking care of business." Someone had called the police on Flamo, reporting that he had guns in his house. When the police came, Flamo wasn't home, but they found some guns and arrested his brother, who was in a wheelchair as a result of having been shot, and handcuffed his mother. By the time Cobe got to Flamo's house — with us in tow — Flamo had been downing vodka, was packing a pistol, and was waiting for a friend to bring him a stolen car so he could "take care of business." He knew who had called the police and was looking for payback. Boiling with rage, at one point he violently kicked a wall in his house: "You ain't just crossed me, you crossed my mama. For my mama . . . I come in your crib and kill every . . . body."

Cobe told us later he had thought this was a lost cause, a failed inter- 7
ruption. But about 10 minutes into his rant, Flamo turned to Cobe and asked, "How can you help me? Right now. How can you help me?"

It was a plea, really. If Cobe were the police, he might have arrested 8
Flamo at that point, but instead, Cobe did something so simple it seems almost laughable: He asked Flamo to lunch. They headed to a nearby chicken shack, where Flamo, still agitated, called a friend to get some bullets. But Cobe asked Flamo who would take care of his kids if he got locked up. He reminded Flamo that his mother needed him. He bought some time. Cobe then lured Flamo down to CeaseFire's office and invited him to attend the weekly meeting of the Interrupters — men and women with résumés similar to Cobe's whose job, like his, is to suss out simmering disputes in their neighborhoods and try to defuse them.

By the time the meeting was over, Flamo had calmed down enough that he no longer was intent — at least at the moment — on exacting revenge.

I suppose the story could end here, but what's so striking is how Cobe stayed with Flamo, calling him, taking him out for meals, cajoling him to get a job. In the end, I came to realize that all Flamo had needed was someone to listen, someone to acknowledge his grievance, someone to believe in him. Cobe knew this instinctively. In his own life, Cobe had a grandmother who refused to give up on him. Despite all the trouble he had gotten into, Cobe told me, "She never turned her back on me." 9

Over the course of the 14 months of filming, it became apparent that the one constant for those like Cobe and Flamo, for those who were able to emerge from the wreckage of their lives and their neighborhoods, for those who were able to walk away from a potentially violent encounter, was to have someone in their lives with high expectations for them, someone who treated them with a sense of dignity and decency, someone who wasn't afraid to slap them across the head when they did something wrong (when Cobe was a teenager, his grandmother had refused to bond him out of jail) but who never viewed them as inherently bad. Someone who saw something in them that others didn't. 10

Cobe and the others around the CeaseFire Interrupters table practice old-fashioned conflict mediation, which is used by a handful of community organizations across the United States, including some that have directly replicated CeaseFire's public health approach. But what Cobe and his colleagues have come to realize is that keeping someone from shooting someone one day is no guarantee that person won't shoot someone the next week — so they stay with that person. They don't let go. 11

This is not to discount all the forces working against those who are growing up in the profound poverty of our cities. If we are serious about addressing violence, people — especially young people — must believe in their own futures. And believe they have a future. These are neighborhoods where the schools are still lousy, where blocks are littered with foreclosed homes,[1] where jobs are hard to come by. These are neighborhoods physically and spiritually isolated from the rest of us. These are neighborhoods where young people can look at the city's glittering skyline and realize their place in the world. These are neighborhoods where the American dream is a fiction. 12

Cobe and his colleagues know that, but they plow ahead, trying to intercept the next potential shooting, trying to pull people off the ledge. But mediating conflicts is more than just persuading people to go their 13

[1] foreclosed (para. 12): The proceeding by which a bank attempts to regain property in the event that a borrower defaults on payments.

separate ways. The Interrupters look to give people a way to walk away while maintaining their self-respect. At one point while we were filming, Ameena Matthews, another of the Interrupters, persuaded a young man who'd just been hit in the mouth with a rock not to retaliate. "I saw that you was walking away, to defend you and your family," Ameena told him. "Man, I thank you. I mean for real. For real, that's what gangster is about right there." She was telling him that it was really "gangster" of him to walk away, that that was the best way he could defend his family. Now that's turning things on their head.

It may seem self-evident, but it's worth contemplating nonetheless: 14
Once people stop believing in you, you stop believing in yourself. The Interrupters recognize that. It's not enough simply to step between two people and push them apart. You need to persist, to listen, and to give them something to hold on to, something that gives them a sense of possibility, whether it's a job, a decent place to live, an education, or just a helping hand.

At one point, Flamo told Cobe: "I was really plottin' on how to get them. 15
But you was just in my ear . . . You constantly in my ear. You buggin' — me for a minute. . . . You know how that be — like I'm sleepin', the fly keep landin' on you, you know what I'm sayin'? You's buggin' me till eventually I had to get up and attend to that fly."

At a screening of the film in Chicago, a teenage girl from the South 16
Side got up to ask a question. She was near tears. She talked about how hard her life was, how she was getting into fights, how she was doing all she could not to give up. She turned to Flamo, who was in attendance, and asked him: "What do I do? What do I do, *now*?" Flamo pointed to Cobe and told her: "Take my fly."

VOCABULARY/USING A DICTIONARY

1. What does *prohibit* mean? What sorts of items are *prohibited* (para. 1)?
2. What does the word *stint* (para. 4) mean in this essay, and what part of speech is it?
3. What's the definition of *intervene* (para. 5)? From what language does it come?

RESPONDING TO WORDS IN CONTEXT

1. What kind of phrase is *suss out* (para. 8)? Where does it come from?
2. Cobe gets to Flamo's house with Kotlowitz's film team "in tow" (para. 6). What does *in tow* mean?
3. Kotlowitz says that Ameena's use of the word *gangster* (para. 13) really "turn[s] things on their head." What does *gangster* mean? What does *gangster* mean when Ameena says it?

DISCUSSING MAIN POINT AND MEANING

1. What is Kotlowitz's documentary about?
2. How did Cobe help Flamo back away from a violent reaction when he was on the cusp of behaving violently?
3. Why is Kotlowitz and James's film called *The Interrupters*? Is it an apt title?

EXAMINING SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS, AND ORGANIZATION

1. How is the connection between violence and illness made in the essay? Where and how is that connection stressed?
2. Kotlowitz organizes the essay around certain characters and images, just as he organizes his documentary around them. Where does the essay feel most cinematic? Explain.
3. "Defusing Violence" begins with a description of Chicago's South and West sides, stressing the hopelessness and violence found there. Is this an effective way for Kotlowitz to begin his essay? Why or why not?

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Kotlowitz writes, "Organizers [of CeaseFire] believe the spread of violence mimics the spread of an infectious disease, so they have hired individuals like Cobe, men and women formerly of the street, to intervene in disputes before they escalate—to interrupt the next shooting" (para. 5). How is violence like an infectious disease, and how is it different?
2. Why is CeaseFire effective? Do you think there are other actions that can be taken to help?
3. Prisons are meant to deter people from violence and punish them once they have committed violence; however, Kotlowitz argues that they are ineffective. Do you think he has a point? Is there a way to make the prison system more effective?

WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Recommend, in writing, that someone watch Kotlowitz's documentary. As you plug the film, try to give your reader a flavor of what he or she will see and convince someone of the importance of the work, based on what you've read in this essay.
2. Do you have a "fly" (para. 15) in your life who is there for you in the way Cobe is there for Flamo? Write a brief character sketch describing that person and his or her influence on you. (If you don't have a "fly," imagine what attributes such a person would have and how he or she might help you.)
3. Imagine living in a neighborhood similar to the one Kotlowitz describes in his first paragraph. With that neighborhood in mind, write a persuasive essay about why CeaseFire should be brought in. What are the worst issues plaguing the community and how do you think CeaseFire might help?

Annette John-Hall

Using Video Games to Reduce Violence

[*Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 3, 2012]

BEFORE YOU READ

How do you feel about violent video games? Were you allowed to play them as a child? If so, how do you think they affected you later in life?

WORDS TO LEARN

credo (para. 13): a statement of beliefs or aims (noun)

aficionado (para. 14): a person who is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about a subject (noun)

We've heard it for years — a violent culture begets violence. 1
Conventional wisdom says, if you want to understand the 2
not-so-subliminal reasons for incivility, you don't have to look any further than the movies, the music, and the video games — the elements of pop culture we so readily identify with and glorify.

Those blasted video games are the worst. Violent video games, more 3
than violent television shows or movies, can increase aggressive thoughts and behaviors because they're interactive. At least that's what the American Psychological Association says.

Always sounded a little simplistic to me. I can't imagine a video game 4
having more of an influence on a kid than a parent. But when Philadelphia has suffered 34 homicides in 33 days, you can't help but wonder about everything.

What I do know is, I didn't expect to 5
come to this conclusion.

How about this: Yes, young people are 6
playing violent video games, but as a way to decrease their aggressive thoughts, not increase them.

And parents are using video games as 7
effective tools for raising their children.

Parents are using video games as effective tools for raising their children.

Annette John-Hall is a columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer. *A native of Berkeley, California, she is a former sports writer for the* San Jose Mercury News, *the* Rocky Mountain News, *and the* Oakland Tribune.

That "aha" moment presented itself at the University Family Fun Center in University City, where Eric Small reigns as the gaming king supreme with a joystick as scepter. 8

It wasn't always this way a decade or so ago when many of the city's arcades, including Family Fun, were considered hot spots for crime. 9

But that was before Small, 39, better known as "Big E," took his childhood passion for gaming and parlayed it into international tournaments held right here in Philly. Next up is Winter Brawl 6, Feb. 18 and 19 at the Sheraton Suites Philadelphia Airport, where Small expects more than 1,000 gamers to take it out on each other — but only on the video screens. 10

"Never had a problem," says Small, who is as affable as he is a physical contradiction to his name. "I have security at the door to make sure nobody walks out with a PlayStation, but [the competition] is all friendly arguing and bickering." 11

Small's gamers battle in games like *Street Fighter* and *Soul Calibur V*, master assassins and superheroes fighting to the death. 12

You would think any game that takes Leonardo da Vinci's quote "Our life is made by the death of others" as its credo was just the kind of violent indoctrination that easily impressed minds don't need. 13

But actually, says Kenneth Scott, a *Street Fighter* aficionado, its effect is the opposite. 14

"If I was mad at school, I would go home and play *Street Fighter*," says Scott, a student at Community College of Philadelphia. "It was therapeutic." 15

(I can just see Scott taking cleansing breaths as he blows his on-screen enemies to smithereens.) 16

I'll admit I don't see the appeal. Watching Scott playing *Street Fighter* has all the nuance of typists working in those back-in-the-day steno pools[1] — frantically banging on buttons seemingly with no rhyme or reason. But gamers say there is a method to the kill — the deft combination of hand-eye coordination with a chess player's anticipation. 17

"I used to teach my sons through video games. It's about pattern recognition and being adaptive," says Victor Melbourne, 38, a childhood pal of Small's and a longtime gamer. "You can get some good bonding time in, too. I'd lose to them on purpose and sneak the knowledge in later. . . . It's like putting medicine in ice cream." 18

Small credits gaming with expanding his own horizons. He has traveled as far away as Japan to promote his tournaments. 19

Tournament competition allows kids to meet and interact with new people, says Vada Golphin, 19. The homies he sees hanging on the corner don't get that. 20

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[1] steno pool (para. 17): A group of office workers known as stenographers who were assigned the task of typing letters and documents written in shorthand.

They just become targets for real violence. 21

"Here," Golphin says, "the violence ends once the game is over. Any 22 beef you have stays on the screen."

VOCABULARY/USING A DICTIONARY

1. What does the word *subliminal* mean (para. 2), and how was it originally used?
2. What is a *scepter* (para. 8), and what are the origins of the word?
3. What does the word *affable* (para. 11) mean? List two similes as well as the definition.

RESPONDING TO WORDS IN CONTEXT

1. In paragraph 2, John-Hall uses the phrase *conventional wisdom*. What does this phrase mean?
2. What does John-Hall mean when she says that Small is "as affable as he is a physical contradiction to his name" (para. 11)?
3. In paragraph 17, John-Hall writes, "Watching Scott playing *Street Fighter* has all the nuance of typists working in those back-in-the-day steno pools." What does *nuance* mean in this context, and what statement is she making about watching Scott play *Street Fighter*?

DISCUSSING MAIN POINT AND MEANING

1. Does John-Hall's argument follow or refute conventional wisdom?
2. List three positive outcomes of video games that John-Hall mentions in her essay.
3. How would you categorize John-Hall's essay? Is it an argument? A journalistic article? A personal essay? What specifically in the piece supports your categorization?

EXAMINING SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS, AND ORGANIZATION

1. What type of support does John-Hall use as evidence for her argument?
2. How does John-Hall organize her essay? Do you find this organization effective? Why or why not?
3. How do the quotes John-Hall chooses to use support her argument? Choose one quote that you think is particularly effective and examine why that quotation works well within the context of the essay.

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Do you agree or disagree with John-Hall's argument about video games and violence? Why?
2. John-Hall's essay focuses on the violence in video games, but she also mentions several other aspects of pop culture that are often blamed for

inciting violence. Do you think video games differ from these other types of media? Why or why not?

3. Think of another piece of conventional wisdom that you find to be untrue and explain why you don't think it should be a commonly held belief.

WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Write a short essay in which you explore how video games have affected your life. Do you play them regularly? Does that affect your daily interaction with people? If you don't play, have you seen video games affect the people around you, in either a positive or a negative way?
2. Even if you agree with John-Hall's argument, evaluate her essay point by point, and for every support for her argument, think of a way to counter that support. Essentially, you want to build an argument against her by refuting her reasons for support.
3. In a short essay, evaluate why John-Hall might have chosen the three people she did to interview. What do they all have in common, and why might John-Hall have thought they were representative of the violent video game-playing community?

Spotlight on Law and Society

Robert Atwan

Can the State Prohibit the Sale of Violent Video Games to Minors?

[*U.S. Supreme Court, Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association*, June 27, 2011]

The United States Supreme Court in June 2011 struck down a California law that prohibited the sale or rental of violent video games to children under the age of eighteen. The California law, enacted in 2005, was based primarily on psychological research that showed "a connection between exposure to violent video games and harmful effects on children." But the Court refused to buy into these studies, countering that the "studies have been rejected by every court to consider them . . . and with good reason: They do not prove that violent video games cause minors to act aggressively (which would at least be a beginning)." The Court did not find compelling one study which "found that children who had just finished playing violent video games were more likely to fill in the blank letter in 'explo_e' with a 'd' (so that it reads 'explode') than with an 'r' ('explore')." 1

At first, the California law might appear to be a morally conservative step to help curtail violence. Yet, it was opposed by one of the Supreme 2

continued

Court's most notable conservatives, Antonin Scalia, who wrote the majority decision. Scalia basically maintained that the law violated the First Amendment of the Constitution; video games, he argued, were a form of protected speech. He thought, too, that if the law's purpose was to prevent the exposure of minors to violence, then why not prohibit depictions of violence in other forms, such as Saturday morning TV cartoons? Why single out video games? He thought this focus on just the games raised "serious doubts about whether the State is pursuing the interest it invokes or is instead disfavoring a particular speaker or viewpoint." In addition, he argued, that the law violated the rights of young people whose parents or guardians approved of the games.

Scalia thought that "California's argument would fare better if there were a longstanding tradition in this country of specially restricting children's access to depictions of violence, but there is none." "Certainly," he wrote, "the books we give children to read — or read to them when they are younger — contain no shortage of gore. Grimm's Fairy Tales, for example, are grim indeed. As her just deserts for trying to poison Snow White, the wicked queen is made to dance in red hot slippers till she fell dead on the floor, a sad example of envy and jealousy'. . . . Cinderella's evil stepsisters have their eyes pecked out by doves. And Hansel and Gretel (children!) kill their captor by baking her in an oven." A cursory glance at a typical high school reading list shows that violence isn't confined to video games alone: "Golding's *Lord of the Flies* recounts how a schoolboy called Piggy is savagely murdered by other children while marooned on an island." 3

Although six of the other justices sided with Scalia, two of them had some reservations about the Court's decision. Justices Samuel Alito and Chief Justice John Roberts were skeptical that video games could be easily lumped with books, movies, and other kinds of protected speech. In his concurring opinion, Samuel Alito warned that new technologies could be grounds for new judicial thinking about free expression. Both Alito and Roberts sympathized with the goals of the California legislators: 4

"The California statute that is before us in this case represents a pioneering effort to address what the state legislature and others regard as a potentially serious social problem: the effect of exceptionally violent video games on impressionable minors, who often spend countless hours immersed in the alternative worlds that these games create. Although the California statute is well intentioned, its terms are not framed with the precision that the Constitution demands, and I therefore agree with the Court that this particular law cannot be sustained. 5

I disagree, however, with the approach taken in the Court's opinion. In considering the application of unchanging constitutional principles to new and rapidly evolving technology, this Court should proceed with caution. We should make every effort to understand the new technology. We should take into account the possibility that developing technology 6

may have important societal implications that will become apparent only with time. We should not jump to the conclusion that new technology is fundamentally the same as some older thing with which we are familiar. And we should not hastily dismiss the judgment of legislators, who may be in a better position than we are to assess the implications of new technology. The opinion of the Court exhibits none of this caution. . . .

When all of the characteristics of video games are taken into account, there is certainly a reasonable basis for thinking that the experience of playing a video game may be quite different from the experience of reading a book, listening to a radio broadcast, or viewing a movie. And if this is so, then for at least some minors, the effects of playing violent video games may also be quite different. The Court acts prematurely in dismissing this possibility out of hand." 7

In the two dissenting opinions, Justices Stephen Breyer and Clarence Thomas agreed with the California legislators, arguing that the Court viewed the First Amendment too broadly and that there is a long-standing history of American courts protecting minors since colonial times. In a pages-long appendix to the dissent, they attached an enormous number of research studies showing that "there is substantial (though controverted) evidence supporting the expert associations of public health professionals that have concluded that violent video games can cause children psychological harm." 8

Although the California law was struck down, the differences of opinion expressed by the Supreme Court regarding the protection of minors, free speech, the value of research studies, and new technologies, indicate that the video-game violence issue may be far from settled. 9

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

1. Do you think that the violence depicted in video games is similar to that depicted in literature or film? What do you make of that comparison? In what ways does the violence in video games differ? How important are those differences in deciding whether video games constitute an entirely different medium of expression?
2. Read over carefully the statement by Justice Alito. Though he agreed to overturn the California law, in what way do his comments undercut the authority of the majority decision? What legal possibilities is he opening up?
3. Do you think that psychological research conducted by professionals could sway a court's decision one way or the other? Why or why not? In your opinion, what sort of study could have a decisive impact on legal thinking in this matter?