

## **Media Violence Debate**

### **What do critics of media violence effects say??**

- Hey, TV only reflects society, so it's not a cause.
- TV violence distracts and diverts attention from more important causes.
- TV violence research is unconvincing - lab studies have "demand characteristics" and use dolls instead of people as targets, and field and correlation studies are not consistent enough.

### **Response by those who believe media violence effects occur:**

- There's more violence on TV than in society, so it doesn't just reflect it accurately but emphasizes violent attitudes and actions; even if it did accurately reflect society that isn't a good defense for not using media to change society for the better (see recent reports of how many murders, rapes, aggravated assaults, etc. a typical American child or teenager sees in the media each year).
- TV violence is **A** cause, not **THE** cause, and we all acknowledge that; it's something we can deal with more easily than some of the other important causes of violence, but yes, it shouldn't replace other attempts to address those causes.
- Young children don't understand "demand characteristics" in advertising, so how could they understand them in research studies? The Bobo doll studies are only one little piece of evidence, and inconsistencies occur because of different measures with different degrees of universality.

### **Effects are significant statistically, are they practically significant?**

- Even if 5-15% of violence is TVs "fault," that's a lot of deaths! Even 1 death is important.

### **When will media violence have a negative effect?**

It depends on: (see Strasburger, 1995, p. 31)

- Is it rewarded (vs. punished??)
- Is it shown as justified (vs. unjustified, unprompted)??
- Does "good guy" (vs. "bad guy") commit it??
- Is it shown as having realistic consequences (suffering, etc.) (vs. no or minor consequences)??
- Is the viewer susceptible (based on experiences and background including role models, family training, education, SES, etc.)??

Strasburger, V. C. (1995). *Adolescents and the Media: Medical and Psychological Impact*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.