The four similar paragraphs below discuss the social issue of violence in society and consider the following questions:

- How violent is current society?
- What causes violence in society?
- What do we need to do to evolve into a less violent society?

Read each sample paragraph and the reference list.

- What does the writer do well? (Strengths).
- How could they improve their work? (Weaknesses).

Use the concepts from the previous exercise to help you.

a) Phillips (2011) suggests that we are in a violent era caused by a decline in family values and a rise in single parent families and she uses the recent riots in Britain as evidence of this. Pinker (2011) by contrast suggests that current society is in fact in an enlightened non-violent era. He considers the issue historically for example and cites a number of ways in which we are today physically safer than in the past, despite the supposed ‘loss of family values’. Furthermore he argues that violence is part of human nature and not a result of social degeneration as promoted by Phillips. He cites some compelling neurological evidence.

b) Society has always had to deal with unwelcome aspects of life, such as crime and anti-social behaviour and so considerable effort has been made to understand and therefore prevent, reduce and manage such behaviour. However, understanding differs wildly on this. The London riots might suggest that society has become more violent. This is perhaps because of recent social trends such as changes in the family unit. However, we could also argue that human society has always been violent and that current society is in fact less violent than other times in history. Recent family trends therefore appear not to be influencing our behaviour as detrimentally as we believe. It seems more likely that human nature drives violent behaviour and if we understand this we are in a better position to control and prevent violent social unrest.

c) Society has always had to deal with unwelcome aspects of life, such as crime and anti-social behaviour, so considerable effort has been made to understand and therefore prevent, reduce and manage violent behaviour. However, understanding differs wildly. Following the London riots last year, for example, Phillips (2011) suggested that we are in a violent era caused by a decline in family values and a rise in single parent families. However, the riots of have now passed and it is difficult to equate the happenings of one week with her explanation of society in general. Pinker (2011) for example suggests that current society is in fact in an enlightened non-violent era. He considers the issue historically and cites a number of ways in which we are today physically safer than in the past, despite the supposed ‘loss of family values’. Furthermore he argues that violence is part of human nature and not a result of ‘social degeneration’ as promoted by Phillips (2011). He cites some compelling neurological evidence. Therefore, if we misread how violent current society is and declare this false evidence a result of social trends we could slow our progress towards an even more temperate society. As Pinker states, we need to tackle...
violence and crime as part of human nature, rather than a result of social change so that we can continue evolving as a less violent species.

d) Society has always had to deal with unwelcome aspects of life, crime and anti-social behaviour. Considerable effort to understand and prevent, reduce and manage violent behaviour. Understanding differs wildly. Following the London riots last year Phillips (2011) suggested that we are in a violent era caused by a decline in family values and a rise in single parent families. The riots have now passed and is difficult to equate the happenings of one week with her explanation of society in general. Pinker (2011) suggests that current society is in fact in an enlightened non-violent era. He considers historically and cites a number of ways in which we are today physically safer than past, despite the supposed ‘loss of family values’. He argues that violence part of human nature and not a result of ‘social degeneration’. He cites some compelling neurological evidence. If we misread how violent current society is and declare this a result of social trends, we could slow our progress towards an even more temperate society. We need to violence and crime as part of human nature, rather than a result of social change. We can continue evolving as a less violent species.

Reference List


Key Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Could be improved</td>
<td>Needs Considerable Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Needs Considerable Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Could be improved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Needs Considerable Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment [MU3]: This writer writes coherently and puts forward research from two articles. They state the opposing views with the evidence that each writer puts forward and state which argument they find the most convincing and why. There is therefore evidence of critical thinking and strong understanding. However, the sources used are not as credible as they could be and the evidence could be given in more detail. More research was also needed so they need to read more widely. The use of only two sources and one unreliable source has perhaps weakened the argument.

Comment [A4]: This writer has attempted to give evidence and create an argument that violence is caused by human nature rather than society, but this argument is not always clear. There is a lack of connecting words such as ‘however’, ‘therefore’, ‘such as’ and ‘because’ and this makes the relationship between ideas more difficult to understand. There are also many grammatical inaccuracies which mean that some sentences are difficult to process and lack coherence. Some pronouns, such as ‘this’ do not have a clear focus. The writing is not clear and the intended message could be communicated more precisely, more fully and more clearly.

Comment [MU5]: Newspaper evidence is not a credible academic source. Finding a more credible source to put forward the ‘social degeneration’ argument may have strengthened the evidence for this and weakened the support for Pinker’s ‘human nature’ argument.

Comment [MU6]: Stephen Pinker is a well known academic who has gained a strong reputation through considerable research and publication. However this is a new area of research for him, so some further sources to back this up would have been useful.