

## Video Guide

### *THE KILLING SCREENS: MEDIA AND THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE*

45 minutes, color, video, 1994

Dr. Jean Kilbourne is the narrator. Dr. George Gerbner, former Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, is the main presenter. Gerbner has been studying for 25 years the effects of TV. He has published several studies as a part of the Cultural Indicators Project (the most comprehensive study of the impact of TV). The major research finding is that the more people watch television the more they believe that the real world is like the TV world they are viewing.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES: WRITE your answers on a separate sheet.**

1. Is violence in the mass media making society more violent? Or does TV mirror society?
2. How much violence is there in the mass media?
3. Why is there so much violence in the mass media?
4. What are the effects of mass media violence?
5. What can be done?

#### **I. The Amount of Violence on TV**

- A. 5 violent acts per hour during prime time
- B. 25 violent acts per hour on Saturday cartoons
- C. TV is on daily for about 7 hours in homes in industrial countries.

#### **II. Stories of Power**

- A. For the first time in history the stories told to the young are not being told by parents, the church, the school, the tribe, but by a small group of people who are in international corporations which sell things. The market is across countries and cultures.
- B. Those characters shown on TV are 3 men for every women, white males in the prime of life, who are involved in power, conflict and solve problems through violence.
- C. The most watched programs are not the violent programs.
- D. Violent programs are made for the global market because violence travels well, violence does not need much change when shown to people in other countries while humor is often culture bound.
- E. Violent imagery shown to viewers may be the highest in history.

#### **III. Happy Violence**

- A. Violence in fairy tales, great books, and stories told to children was an important part of the story which showed the destruction and pain of violence.
- B. Violence today is used to hype dull programs, to solve all problems, with no serious consequences to the victims.
- C. The violence rate on TV is between 6 to 8 violence acts per hour in prime time and 20 to 30 violence acts per hours during Saturday cartoons. This rate has been stable over the last 25 years. Two Murders are shown during prime time each night.

#### **IV. Accelerating Violence**

- A. Some viewers avoid watching violence.
- B. Most viewers watch the violence and are not aware that they are becoming desensitized to the violence.
- C. Some viewers search out violence and watching increasing amount of violence.
- D. When violent films are remade or a sequel is done, the violence is increased.
  - 1. Robocop - 32 deaths in the first edition, 8 1 in the next
  - 2. Deathwish - 9 deaths in the original, 52 in next
  - 3. Rambo - 62 deaths in the original, 106 in the third remake
  - 4. The Godfather - 12 deaths in the original, 18 in the second, 53 in the third
  - 5. Mutant Ninja Turtles - the most violent program that is shown for children, 130 acts of violence per hour. It is a part of a selling campaign that celebrates the martial arts.

#### **V. Violence Is A Social Relationship (between aggressors and victims).**

- A. Analysis of the violence tells us something. Who has the power in society? Who are the victims?
- B. For every 10 aggressors, there are 12 victims on TV.
- C. For every 10 women aggressors, there are 16 women victims.
- D. Women and minorities are more often likely to be the victims.
- E. The impact on women and minorities: They internalize the view they see and are more likely to believe that they are entitled to fewer resources, dependent on authority, and that the main stream culture is hostile to them.

#### **VI. The Lessons of Violence**

- A. Our beliefs about the world are shaped by TV. If we see lots of violence and crime on TV, we are more likely to believe that crime is increasing and must be stopped.
- B. Lots of violence on TV teaches several lessons:
  - 1. Violence is the way to solve problems.
  - 2. A major lesson is called the mean world syndrome. Those with less education, fewer options in life, fewer skills and/or resources to evaluate what is being shown watch more TV begin to believe that the world is very dangerous. They feel more threatened, less secure, and less sensitive to violence.
  - 3. Heavy viewers are more angry about what is shown.
  - 4. Heavy viewers demand more protection, want more police, want methods to suppress violence, are more frustrated.

#### **VII. Citizenship In The Cultural Environment**

- A. Large transnational companies decide what is to be supported and shown on TV. Voters have few ways to reach and influence them. The framers of the Constitution were afraid of power in the hands of government. They did not predict that an equally strong force would develop outside of government in large corporations.

- B. We need a new cultural environment movement bringing together existing groups, citizens, educators, professionals, scientists, and artists to work with the media and legislators to diversity the voices influencing what is shown on the media, to liberate what is shown, and to restrain some of the influences of the market.
- C. We have taken for granted for too long that nothing could be done.
- D. Some may think it is impossible. But the impossible only takes a longer time to do than the possible.

### **VIII. What Parents and Teachers Can Do.**

- A. The U.S. is one of the few industrial countries that does not have high quality programs for children in prime time. We need to push for such programs.
- B. Parents should not use TV as a baby sitter. It was not designed for that.
- C. Parents should not use TV as a reward or punishment.
- D. Parents can encourage selective viewing. The issues is not only how much is watched but also what is watched.
- E. Parents can participate with their children in viewing so parents know what their children are seeing and can talk with them to help them understand what they have viewed.
- F. Parents and teachers can provide alternatives to TV.
- G. Parents and teachers can demand that schools teach the skills of critical viewing of the media.
- H. Parents can't just focus on just their children because children will come in contact with other children who have watched lots of TV, lots of violence, and lots of values different than theirs.

### **IX. Summary by Jean Kilbourne**

We can't understand TV without understanding where it comes from, who produces it, and its purposes. TV does not accurately portray the real world, TV shows large amounts of violence, and TV pulls children from more important activities. The marketing strategy of selling things has resulted in programs dealing with conflict, power, and high levels of violence. In addition, the cumulative impact of TV has negative consequences on how the viewer perceives the world. It is time to deal with the impact of TV on children and society.

### **X. LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Write your answer on another sheet of paper.**

- A. What is the central idea?
- B. What is the major idea in each section?
- C. What did you learn?