

CREATING CRITICAL VIEWERS

A Partnership Between Schools and Television Professionals



The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences

Creating Critical Viewers

BY

Dorothy G. Singer, ED.D. and Jerome L. Singer, Ph.D.
Yale University Family Television Research and Consultation Center

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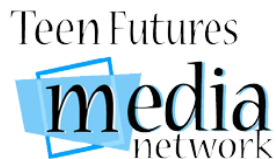
Pacific Mountain Network



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Introduction

On average, adolescents spend almost 25 hours a week watching television. The time school-age children spend with television equals or exceeds the time spent in school and doing homework. Television is now a common and constant learning environment. Despite this, rarely do educators teach young people how to understand television...how it works...and how it influences our lives. Indeed, adolescents' views of possible roles may now come through television.

Given the influence of television in the home, should teachers use it as an aid in the classroom? What are the incentives for using television—the gains, the losses? How does a teacher justify the use of television in the classroom to parents who are concerned about the many hours their children are already spending in front of the set at home? Do children merely think that television in the classroom means a time for fun and games?

TV as a Teaching Tool

It is possible to harness the potential of television, using the combined partnership of teachers and TV professionals working together in the schools, to teach young people to become intelligent, critical consumers of television. Some curricula have been developed and implemented in schools throughout the country to enable students to learn how to analyze television and other media that influence and pervade their lives.

Tuning Up Student Skills

The skills that students learn in this particular course can be generalized to other areas such as language arts, social studies, economics, art and music. Students will learn how to:

- Analyze material
- Interpret messages (direct and hidden)
- Note details
- Understand sequencing
- Integrate aural and visual elements
- Identify fact, opinion
- Identify emotional appeals, reactions and motives
- Draw inferences, predictions, and conclusions

These critical thinking skills will also encompass (through the classroom exercises and homework) the mechanics of writing—use of proper grammar, spelling, use of dictionaries, and of course the ability to read with emphasis on comprehension and interpretation.

Lesson Objectives

- To raise students' awareness of their television viewing habits
- To be able to identify the different formats of programs and basic scheduling strategies
- To develop an understanding of how many different people are involved in a television production and the potential for career choices
- To understand the conventions and formal features of TV
- To be able to differentiate between the different elements of fantasy and reality

- To learn to recognize various effects and how they are used to distort reality or arouse excitement, suspense and interest
- To develop an understanding of why there are commercial advertisements on TV
- To help students identify some of the different styles and forms of advertising and to adopt a critical approach to analyzing and even appreciating commercials
- To examine the strengths and limitations of television news casting and news formats
- To explore the implications of freedom of the press, comparing TV news with radio news, newspapers and news magazines
- To examine other kinds of information we obtain from TV
- To develop the ability to identify stereotypes used on TV
- To understand that TV influences our feelings about and knowledge of ourselves and our relationships with others
- To develop the ability to identify subtle, as well as obvious, characteristics of TV characters and messages
- To help students recognize the distortions and risks of imitation produced by TV's portrayals of violence
- To understand how television may influence our social customs and attitudes, confront the possible anti-social values portrayed on TV, and assist students in thinking through some of their own ethical values in comparison with those presented on TV
- To give students some understanding about how TV conveys both positive and negative messages about such issues as nutrition, alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking and STIs/HIV
- To explore how TV can be useful in promoting information about the environment

Teaching Partners

An important element in utilization of this kit is the partnership between the schools and the local television stations. Personnel will be helpful throughout the implementation of the lessons by presenting videos relating to the subject matter; offering teacher workshops; addressing the students in areas of their expertise; permitting visits to a TV studio if feasible; demonstrating various camera techniques, and if possible, encouraging student productions. The local media personnel will be a valuable resource for teachers in helping to make this curriculum lively and meaningful.

Do it Your Way

A word about format: this booklet is designed so that it will truly be a workbook. Feel free to reproduce any pages that will assist your students in better comprehending each lesson. Add your own notes; any articles you may find that will be of use to you; any references to our suggested list; and any comments that may be used in possible updates or revisions of this kit. As far as "Homework" is concerned, we offer a list of ideas following each lesson. Your students have a choice from these. You may want to suggest other assignments as well. We regard you, the teacher, as the most valuable component of this program.

A Final Word

The potential for integrating visual and written material offers an exciting opportunity to enhance reading depth by using the powerful attraction of television to motivate students. Today's youth are more media savvy than ever before. The challenge for teachers is to adapt to a youth culture that increasingly develops its consciousness in the form of media texts. They can do so by guiding them into a more active exploration of a combination of media. They can explore the tremendous riches to be gained from reading and applying one's own imagery to the content, rather than accepting the packaged fantasy on the screen. Perhaps with an interactive orientation to television, we can find a deeper form of human literacy.

Dorothy G. Singer, Ed.D.
Jerome L. Singer, Ph.D.
Yale University
Family Television Research and Consultation Center

Chapter 1

What You Watch and Why

In addition to raising participants' awareness of their viewing habits, this lesson is designed to introduce ratings systems, programming blocks, and TV formats. Statistics on how many hours teens watch TV are also introduced and discussed.

Objectives

- To raise students' awareness of their television viewing habits
- To be able to identify the different formats of programs and basic scheduling strategies

Resource Materials

- **TV Diary Form**
- **TV Formats List**
- **Homework**

Background Information

This lesson should help raise your students' awareness concerning their television viewing habits. According to the AC Nielsen Co., children aged 12-17 watch an average of 23 hours of TV every week. It would be useful for the class to keep a record or diary of the programs viewed during the week and on weekends. Use the **TV Diary Form** included in this lesson for listing day and hour, and how many hours viewed. You may also wish to distribute the **Homework** assignment, for students to make the best use of their diaries. Ask your students to keep this diary before you begin this TV curriculum. When the students bring their TV diaries to class, this will be a good starting point for a discussion of the various formats on television.

Students should become familiar with the different kinds of programs on television. Samples of these are listed on the **TV Formats List** handout. It is also important for students to understand that cable channels, like magazines, are targeted to specific audiences. There are channels that feature sports, news, weather, and health and lifestyle programs, just as there are magazines that are aimed at particular groups of people.

Students should be aware of the main issues involved in scheduling on cable, as well as on major networks. For example, the networks feature their news programs at three time slots: early morning, early evening, and late at night, in order to reach the largest possible audience. Similarly, soaps are presented in the afternoon when the female audience will be available. Saturday morning, when there is no school, is the time for children's programming. Programs that attract the largest prime-time audiences are situation comedies, general drama, suspense/mystery drama, and adventure and feature films. Exceptions are such special programs as the Olympics or news programs during a crisis such as the Iraq War.

The networks and cable systems are concerned about reaching the largest possible audience because advertising rates are based on audience rating. Audience viewing for both network and cable is measured by various companies that provide continuing estimates of TV viewing. The term Households Using Television (HUT) refers to the percentage of all television households in the survey area with one or more sets in use during a specific time period. In the United States, 99% of households have at least one television set, and the number of TV sets in the average household is 2.24. 56% of households pay for cable television.

Ratings refer to the estimate of the size of a television audience relative to the total group sampled. Ratings are expressed as a percentage. "Share" refers to the percent of households using television that are tuned to a specific program in a specified area at a specified time. A share of 60% would be an extremely high figure. Many shows get cancelled if their ratings fall. Sometimes competing programs that are shown at the same hour reduce the ratings of both.

Your students may have heard of the "Nielsen families." "Family" means household; singles may be families, or unrelated people in a household may be a family. The nation is divided into media markets, and within each market computers provide a sample survey audience based on telephone numbers. If chosen, you get a "people meter," which is a small, digitally-activated box that resembles a cable channel selector. Persons punch buttons to indicate what and when they are watching. There are about 5,000 people-meter Nielsen families in the nation whose choices affect the national ratings. In addition, four times a year, 200,000 Nielsen families fill out diaries of what they watch. Local ratings are a result of information collected by diaries and household meters. No household is monitored for more than five years.

Nielsen can also provide broadcasters information about age and sex of viewers. This information is critical to advertisers in helping them determine where to place an ad. A detergent manufacturer would want its ad placed within a program that drew large female audience. A shaving cream manufacturer would want its ad placed within a program that attracted a large male audience.

In addition to A.C. Nielsen, which is the nation's largest audience sampling company, Arbitron, the American Research Bureau, is a local rating service that utilizes diaries, telephone surveys, personal interviews, and electronic meters in selected markets. Like Nielsen, it also monitors cable.

There have been criticisms raised about the accuracy of Nielsen and Arbitron ratings, especially in diaries. The meters also do not pick up whether anyone is actually watching a particular program. People may walk away from the set after they punch the button. Heat sensitive devices have been suggested as a way of recording whether or not a person remains watching the screen. These are not as widespread yet, but they may become the preferred mode in the future.

Procedures

1. Using the students' diaries, you can list figures on the blackboard that yield information about the per-day and per-week viewing habits of the entire class. You can also list the top choices of programs viewed, and the class can determine into which format these programs fit.
2. The average American household spends 6 hours, 47 minutes per day viewing television. Students need to know that research reports have found that children who are heavy viewers of television (10 hours or more per week) have had lowered reading scores and have performed less well on tests of creativity. Some studies have reported a relationship between heavy TV viewing of action/adventure programs and aggression. Research also found that children who watched programs that were violent and where African Americans were portrayed in negative ways were much more prejudiced against African American children than those who did not watch such programs. Obviously, television can affect our behavior, learning, and attitudes. On the positive side, programs that were designed to offer teenagers valuable information about alcohol, drugs, cultural differences, and interpersonal relationships have produced positive changes in attitudes after students viewed such programs in the schools under controlled conditions. Programs such as afternoon specials on the networks have been used in studies to determine the effects of such carefully planned content.

3. Ask students the following questions:

- How many hours of TV did you watch yesterday?
- Do you watch more TV on weekends?
- Are there particular programs you watch regularly?
- List these programs on the board. Which format do they fit?
- Why do you watch these particular programs?
- Have you ever been influenced by program content? How?
- Do you ever discuss TV programs with your friends? With your parents? What programs do your parents watch?
- Do you ever watch TV with your parents? Which programs?
- Do you ever use a guide to help select your programs?
- Do you rent movies? If so, which ones?

4. Find out if there are differences in number of hours viewed between males and females.

5. Compare types of programs viewed by males and females.

6. Ask: Do you think the Nielsen system is a good one? What are the weaknesses?

Glossary

Households Using Television (HUT) – The percentage of all television households in the survey area with one or more sets in use during a specific time period.

Rating – The estimate of the size of a television audience relative to total group sampled, expressed as a percentage.

Share – The percent of the households using television or persons using television which are tuned to a specific program or station in a specific area at a specified time.

Reference Materials

Alison Alexander, "The Effect of Media on Family Interaction," D. Zillman, J. Bryant, and A.C. Huston, *Media, Children and the Family: Social Scientific, Psychodynamic, and Clinical Perspectives*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994, pp. 51-59.

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Nielsen Media Research, www.nielsenmedia.com



TV DIARY

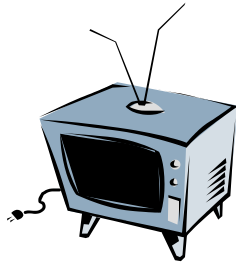
| Day | Program Name | Time Watched No. of Minutes |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Sunday | | |
| Monday | | |
| Tuesday | | |
| Wednesday | | |
| Thursday | | |
| Friday | | |
| Saturday | | |
| TOTAL | | |



PROGRAM FORMAT LIST

There are many different kinds of programs on television and some of these will be discussed in greater detail in other lessons. Here are some examples of the basic programs.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Adventure / Sci-Fi / Fantasy | <i>Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Jake 2.0, Angel, Star Trek: Enterprise, Alias</i> |
| Cartoons | <i>The Simpsons, The Powerpuff Girls, Samurai Jack, Rugrats</i> |
| Comedy Series | <i>Friends, The Bernie Mac Show, Will and Grace, George Lopez, What I Like About You, Scrubs, Everybody Loves Raymond</i> |
| Drama Series | <i>Law and Order, CSI, E.R., NYPD Blue, The Practice, 24</i> |
| Entertainment News | <i>60 Minutes, 20/20, Access Hollywood, Entertainment Tonight, E! News Live</i> |
| Educational Programs | <i>Sesame Street, Reading Rainbow, Animal Planet: African Safari, Zoom</i> |
| Game Shows | <i>Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, Who Wants to Be a Millionaire</i> |
| MTV / VH1 | <i>TRL, Behind the Music, countdowns</i> |
| News Programs | <i>The ABC Evening News, MacNeil-Lehrer Report, Meet the Press, The Daily Show</i> |
| Reality Shows | <i>The Real World, The Bachelor, Survivor, Sorority Life, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy</i> |
| Soap Operas | <i>General Hospital, Guiding Light, All My Children</i> |
| Sports Programs | <i>Sports Center, Inside the NFL, Monday Night Football, NBA Inside Stuff</i> |
| Talk Shows | <i>Oprah, Ellen, Regis & Kelly, The Charlie Rose Show, The View</i> |
| Teen Dramas | <i>The O.C., Everwood, Gilmore Girls, Dawson's Creek</i> |
| Variety Shows | <i>Saturday Night Live, Late Show with Conan Obrien, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno</i> |



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Using the TV Diary worksheet the teacher distributes, keep a TV diary for one week. List the following for each day of the week including Saturday and Sunday:

- Name of programs watched
- Number of hours watched
- Total hours for each day
- Total hours for the week

Why did you select the programs you watched?

2. What other forms of media besides TV do you use for entertainment and for education? How do they compare?

Do you learn more from other media than TV?

From which medium do you get more depth of information?

Which of the media keeps you more interested and why?

Which of these: books, magazines, newspapers, radio, movies, or comics stimulates imagination and creativity?

3. Watch a program that you ordinarily don't watch. Who do you think watches this kind of program? Why?
4. Write down the names of programs listed on your local newspaper that you think the following people would watch:

- Your parents
- An 8-year-old
- A grandparent
- A teenager
- A single female in her 20s
- A single male in his 20s

Categorize these programs under the program formats as demonstrated on the sample list.

Chapter 2

Who Creates TV Programs?

Participants are introduced to the creative team responsible for TV programs. After discussing the various members of a creative team, participants complete a TV viewing assignment that increases awareness of the individuals behind the scenes.

Objective

To develop an understanding of how many different people are involved in a television production.

Resource Materials

- Careers in Television
- Homework

Background Information

Television productions are the result of a team of people who work together to produce the programs we see. First, there is the idea. It can be an idea for a variety show, a drama, a special event or even a commercial. As you shall see, we will talk more about the different types of programs below. The idea for a program may emanate from a writer, a producer, or even an actor. Nevertheless, the producer is the key person, the one in charge of finding the funds for the show, budgeting these funds, and choosing the other members of the creative team to help develop the idea.

After a decision is made to go ahead with the idea, a script is necessary. The script contains the written text of both the picture and sound parts of the program. A scriptwriter is responsible for writing the entire program content. The producer will work closely with the director to transform the script into a TV program, noting such items as music, laugh track, special effects, and locations. The set designer will be called upon to help determine what kinds of scenery and props will be needed. After plans are drawn, carpenters will build and paint the set. A costumer and make-up artist will be assigned to work with the producer and director to ensure that actors and actresses look exactly right for their parts in the production.

The director now takes over. Rehearsals are held regularly until the dialogue and actions are learned. A floor director is in charge of correct placement of scenery and props that will eventually be moved into the studio. In the studio, the camera operators will then be instructed concerning where cameras are to be placed and which camera shots will be used. The lighting director works closely with the director to decide where studio lights will be arranged to ensure adequate lighting. The sound engineer is responsible for arranging microphones in different parts of the studio so that no matter where the actors are, their voices are audible.

During the actual taping of the program, the director, technical director and engineer are in the control room where they can see the studio on small monitors placed above their control panels. This enables the director to get ready in advance for each scene he or she may want to tape.

Sometimes a teleprompter is used in the studio. This enables a person, such as a news anchorperson, to read the lines from a script. The teleprompter is placed directly over the camera lens, reflecting the script through a two-way mirror. The camera can “see” right through the glass side, but the actor or newscaster cannot see the camera through the mirrored side – he or she can only see the words reflected there by the teleprompter. In this way it appears as though the actor or anchorperson is speaking extemporaneously. Encourage students to closely observe a

television news program. Sometimes the anchorperson's eyes can be detected moving back and forth slightly as he or she reads from the teleprompter. The floor director wears headphones (as do the camera operators and talent in rehearsals) so that the director in the control room can relay instructions.

Editing is an important part of a television production. It takes place from the beginning to the end of a videotape process. Editing decisions are made during pre-production, production, and post-production. Each time a director determines which camera angle or shot is used, editing occurs. Many pictures are taken during interviews, for example, but only a short piece of the tape may be used on a program. Deciding what to keep and what to eliminate are part of the jobs of the editor and director. Inherent in editing is the power to communicate effectively, but there is the danger that editing can be used to propagandize, cheat or lie. Excellent editing of videotape may also "save" a creation that lagged in pacing or other creative effects. Sometimes, if the sound or voice quality did not seem quite right in the drama, a sound editor can even dub in a different voice that that of the original actor.

On Careers in Television

Your students may begin to think about possible careers in television. Training for technical personnel is usually found in special technical schools as well as colleges and universities that offer media courses. Some high schools even have facilities where rudimentary production skills can be learned. There are special programs in communication, television and film offered throughout the country at schools such as New York University, University of Southern California, UCLA, University of Pennsylvania, Boston University, and Syracuse University, to name a few of the most outstanding ones.

The programming departments of the major networks usually employ people with excellent writing skills. Research jobs are also available in programming and marketing departments, and require knowledge of statistics. Hosts of many television programs have had training in speech, drama, and even movement. A background in art and computer graphics is helpful if applying for a job in the art or graphics departments of a production company of TV station.

Some colleges and universities require an internship or practicum along with theory. The internship at a local TV station is an important component of media training. Students get hands-on experience in a real situation. Working closely with a local cable station through the community access program, an individual can actually write, produce, and direct a program with the help of the cable personnel. Students can inquire about such opportunities from your local cable station manager.

Procedures

1. Discuss the functions of the various personnel involved in creating a TV program. Here's an opportunity to motivate students to think about possible careers in the TV industry. You may find the **Careers in Television** handout useful.
2. The salaries of some of the "talent," that is, the anchor persons on news and the star actors of dramatic shows, are often much higher than those of the writers, directors or producers even though the latter group may have more responsibility for the program. Discuss how students feel about this issue.
3. Review the vocabulary.

4. In partnership with your local TV station, invite a director or make-up artist to speak to the class. Ask your local TV station to provide you with short segments of the various kinds of programs. Show some in class. If a make-up person visits the class, ask for a student volunteer who is willing to be the subject for a make-up demonstration.

If you plan to produce a short TV segment with help from your local station personnel, here is a good opportunity to select students for the various jobs involved in such a production. Even if you cannot actually produce a program, this will be a good way to determine whether or not the students can describe what each job would entail.

Activity

Distribute the **Homework** assignment. Have students complete this assignment and review the results in class the following day.

Glossary

Animation - The process by which objects or drawings is made to appear as if they are moving. Separate drawings are photographed one at a time on film or videotape. When shown together, it looks like the characters are moving. Cartoons use animation.

Director - Person in charge of coordinating all the people who work on a show.

Edit - The work of selecting and ordering the material to appear in a program, using both technical "cutting out" of videotape material and deciding on sequences in which material will appear.

Networks - Networks make TV programs that are shown all over the United States. Networks have a programming department that supplies the programs to the local TV stations. Some programs are produced by the networks and some by independent producers.

Producer - The person who creates and organizes the program. The producer is in charge of finding and spending the money for the program.

Switcher - An electronic component that allows the operator (usually the technical director) to select and switch between different camera angles and special effects.

Technical Director - The crewmember responsible for operating the video machines, especially the special effects generator or switcher.

Titles - Graphic information superimposed as part of a video production. Titles include credits, captions, and any alpha-numerical information.

Reference Materials

David Draigh, Behind the Screen: *The American Museum of the Moving Image Guide to Who Does What in Motion Pictures and Television*, Astoria, New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, New York: Abbeville Press (distributor), 1988.

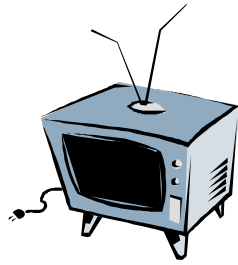
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Cy Schneider, *Children's Television: The Art, the Business, and How it Works*, Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1987.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN TELEVISION



Accountant
 Assistant Director
 Associate Producer
 Audio Engineer
 Business Manager
 Camera Operators
 Carpenters, Painters
 Composers
 Computer Graphics Operator
 Costumers and Seamstresses
 Director
 Editor
 Engineers in Control Room
 Floor Director
 Journalist
 Lighting Director
 Make-up Artists
 Musicians
 News Anchor
 Producer
 Production Assistant
 Publicity and Promotional Personnel
 Researcher
 Sales Representative
 Script Writer
 Set Designer and Location Expert
 Sound Effects Person
 Technical Director
 Writer (Rewrites for broadcast news
 provided by journalists or press
 service)



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Watch your favorite programs tonight. From the credits, write down the names of:

Director _____

Producer _____

An Actor or Actress _____

Camera Operator _____

Sound (or "Audio") Person _____

Make-up Person _____

2. Imagine you are a scriptwriter. Write a story idea for a script that you want to present to a producer for a possible program.
3. Watch a program tonight. Change the ending and write it down.
4. Be a TV critic for your local newspaper. Write a review of a program you watched for your readers.
5. Write a short scene for an MTV video to accompany your favorite song.

Chapter 3

The Aesthetics of TV – Illusion and Reality

This lesson is designed to help viewers distinguish between different elements of reality and fantasy in TV programs. Participants learn about the techniques used by TV crews to create the visual effects seen in TV programs.

Objectives

- To understand the conventions and formal features of TV
- To be able to differentiate between which parts of a program are real or pretend, and to be able to discriminate between the different elements of reality and fantasy
- To learn to recognize different camera effects, and how special effects are used to distort reality or to arouse excitement, suspense or interest

Resource Materials

- Illustrations of Camera Techniques
- Practice Script
- Script for Special Effects
- Homework
- Clips of TV programs representing various camera effects and special effects

Background Information

One of the characteristics of television that distinguishes it from other media is its form, not its content. Television's unique features include visual techniques such as zooms, cuts and special effects; its action and pace; and its auditory features such as music, sound effects, and of course, dialogue. Producers of children's programs are keenly aware of the salient features that attract and hold children's interest. Animation, peculiar character voices, lively music and sound effects are some of the formal features that research has shown to be important in holding children's attention to the screen.

Formal features also give us signals concerning the content. Think about the times you turn on the TV set without knowing the name or kind of show you are about to see. If the music is scary and the lighting is dim, you are pretty sure that you are in the middle of a mystery or detective show. On the other hand, if you hear lively music, detect a laugh track, and see a well-lit set, you probably have tuned in to a situation comedy. You may not even need to be in the same room as the TV set in order to code the content. The screeching of tires, blaring music, and even a few gunshot noises alert viewers to the inevitable car chase scene.

Television programs can never duplicate reality because of constraints of time and space. Incidents or "stories" in real time may take months or even years to unwind. On television, a story may have to be completed in a half-hour, one hour or sometimes two hours. Mini-series may continue over a few days. Space is also a premium on television programs. In a weekly series, often only two or three settings are shown. The set of *Friends*, for example, consists mainly of two apartment living rooms and the Central Perk Café. And almost all of the action on *ER* takes place, predictably, inside the ER. If a character must travel to another place in a TV story, we usually see only the beginning and end point of the trip – not all the stops in-between.

Because TV programs are restricted by time, sets and locations, and by the need to develop a story quickly, special use is made of music, various camera shots and special effects. These constraints also affect the characterizations of the people in the story. There isn't enough time to develop characters as fully as a writer of novels can. The director must give us rapid insights into each character's personality by use of dialogue, physical appearance, clothing, body movement, and mannerisms. Camera angles, special effects and music can help.

Before you begin a discussion of camera angles, you may wish to distribute the handout entitled **Illustrations of Camera Techniques**.

Messages in commercials, in a dramatic episode or in comedy, are all enhanced by music. Camera effects also play an important role in conveying messages and emotion to us. The name of a product is important and so a **zoom lens** is used to bring that name in close to the viewer. If a facial expression is crucial to a dramatic episode, again the zoom will bring that face closer. If we want to see a person appearing to be far away, the zoom is used to place the character off in the distance. We call all these pictures **close-ups** and **long shots** depending on whether we want the object or person to appear large and close-by, or small and in the distance. Cameras may be tilted so that we may see either the upper or lower parts of bodies or objects made bigger or smaller. If a zoom shot moves in to show a close-up of a character in tears, we may feel more saddened. A long shot of someone walking off may create a feeling of loneliness or regret.

Certain **props** are also used in programs to help the action along. In action-adventure shows, for example, break-away tables and chairs are thrown. These are specially designed pieces of furniture that easily fall apart on contact. Plastic bottles made of spun-sugar shatter easily, but since they make no noise, sound effects are added to sound like breaking glass. When fights are staged, the actors do not touch each other's jaws, but again, sound effects of punches give the illusion of a real fistfight. Sound effects are used for animal noises, car chases, thunder, and other loud noises. Special lighting effects can create lightning, sunlight, and nighttime.

The **switcher**, we remember, allows the director to change from one picture to another. A quick change is called a **cut**. A slow cut where we see one image disappear as another appears over it is called a **dissolve**. A switcher is also used by the technical director to place words or pictures on top of a main picture. This is called a **super**, which is short for **superimpose**. Supers are used over scenes to give us the names of people involved in the program, or to give us information about products in commercials. The phrase, "batteries not included," is superimposed at the bottom of the screen in an ad for a special toy or flashlight.

Multiple cameras, in conjunction with the switcher, may be used to create different shots of a person or objects. Switching between two or more cameras lends variety to a scene that otherwise might seem static or boring. When you watch a program featuring a symphony orchestra, for example, different cameras may show us the face of the conductor, focus on a particular instrument, or even show us some of the people in the audience.

Switchers can also be used to create the illusion that a newscaster is presenting news from a foreign country, or that an actor is in some exotic locale. Actually, the director sets up slides or a moving picture of any background. This background will be seen only on the TV monitor in the control room. When the viewers watch the TV program, it will look as though the person is standing in front of the scene while in actuality he or she is standing in front of a specially colored background over which special effects can be projected. This technique is called **chromakey**, and it allows the director to create as many places as he or she has slides or films.

Except for live coverage of sports and news events, most television is not produced in “real time.” It is instead constructed of multiple segments taped at various times and places then put together to tell a story through **editing**. Editing is an electronic process similar to cutting film into pieces, then taping them back together in a different order, or leaving out portions.

Many special effects can be accomplished through editing, such as a person leaping to the top of a tall building. This can be done by a succession of three camera shots. First, a shot is taken of a person jumping from the ground. In the second shot, the person is moving quickly through the air, but it is really a jump from a trampoline that is out of camera range. The third shot is of the person bending his or her knees and pretending to “land” on top of the building. The three shots are edited together to make one long, spectacular jump. This type of jump can also be made in another way by taking the picture of a person jumping down and then reversing the film to make it look as if the person is jumping up. Each segment of the tape is shown over again several times before moving on to the next segment. We see this effect used in superhero programs or in adventure stories. Fast motion is used to make a hero’s running seem super-fast.

People can be made to disappear on television through editing. The camera may take a picture of an actor or actress. When the performer walks out of view, the camera continues to roll. Later the editor can remove the portion of tape in which the performer left the scene, giving us the illusion that the actor or actress has truly disappeared. Sometimes a sound effect like a “ping” or plucked string may make the effect seem magical.

We often see people driving cars on TV. Actually, they may be sitting in a machine in a TV studio. The “car” has a steering wheel and interior, but no wheels. It can also shake as if it is moving or swerving around curves. Ultimatte is used to provide a moving background of other cars or pedestrians, and sound effects of horns or screeching tires add realism to the scene.

Wipes are special ways of moving from one scene to another. An image from one video source literally “wipes” a previous image off the television screen along a sharp vertical, diagonal, or even horizontal line. **Wipes** and **fades** are forms of **dissolves** that are used in creating special video images. If we want to suggest the passage of time, a change of location, dream effects, etc., we can use dissolves. A split screen, often used in commercials, shows us images from two or more cameras that appear on the screen simultaneously.

The video camera itself permits a wide array of special effects to help enhance a story or a product. According to Doris A. Dondis, a pioneer in visual literacy, “Part of the present and most of the future will be made by a generation conditioned by photography, film, and television, and to whom camera and visual computer will be an intellectual adjunct.” A critical TV viewer will need to understand how the camera plays a role in affecting our emotions and thoughts through sudden zooms to long shots or close-ups.

To encourage awareness of how certain shots, camera techniques, and scripts work together, you may wish to distribute the **Practice Script** handout.

Procedures

1. Ask the class to share with each other any programs they watched during the week that used special effects.
2. Ask the class to describe how music adds to a story. Suggest that they turn down the volume during a mysterious scene and then compare how they feel to when the music is on.

3. Ask: which programs on TV use real people, realistic characters, and animal characters?
4. Before you describe how someone disappears or jumps to a high building, see if the class can describe the methods used.

If possible, a camera operator or editor from a local TV station would be an appropriate guest for this lecture. Ask your guest to demonstrate some of the effects and show the clips.

5. List examples of the following programs:
 - real people talking about real events
 - actors portraying real events
 - actors portraying fictional event
6. Ask: what is the difference between an actor and a character?
7. Discuss with the class times they watched TV and were confused between reality and fantasy. Why?

Activity

Have your students complete the **Script for Special Effects** handout by brainstorming some video cues (including camera angles or special effects) to accompany the provided dialogue. Then, as a homework assignment, have your students answer the questions listed on the **Homework** handout.

Glossary

Chromakey - A special effect created by lacing one image with another. The first image serves as background for the second. The director uses slides or moving pictures that can only be seen on the control room monitor. The viewer, however, will see both scenes as if they were actually concurrent.

Cut - A quick change from one picture to another without overlapping.

Dissolve - A special effect in which one picture gradually fades out as another fades in.

Edit - To electronically "cut out" unwanted parts of a videotape recording or to rearrange segments in a desired order.

Fiction - A pretend or made-up story.

Laugh Track - Prerecorded laughter that is used to give the illusion that a live audience is watching the program.

Prop - Furniture or objects used by actors in a scene to make the scene seem like a real place.

Zoom - Moving from a wide-shot to a close-up or vice-versa. A special telephoto lens controls this and creates the illusion of moving a camera toward or away from a subject.

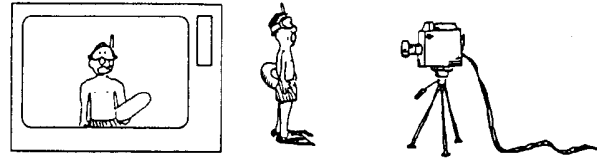
Reference Materials

- Richard D. Lindheim, *Inside Television Producing*, Boston: Focal Press, 1991.
- Robert J. Schihl, *Studio Drama Processes and Procedures*, Boston: Focal Press, 1992.
- Dorothy G. Singer, Jerome L. Singer, and Diana M. Zuckerman, *The Parent's Guide: Use TV to Your Child's Advantage*, Reston, VA: Acropolis Books Ltd., 1990.
- John C. Wright, Michelle St. Peters, and Althea C. Huston, "Family Television Use and its Relation to Children's Cognitive Skills and Social Behavior," J. Bryant, ed., *Television and the American Family*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990, pp. 227-251.

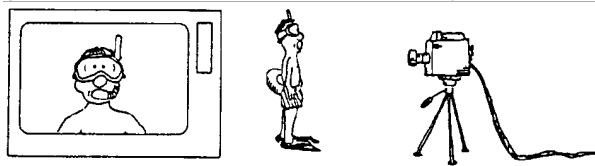
Illustrations of Camera Techniques

The Zoom Lens: Zooming In and Zooming Out

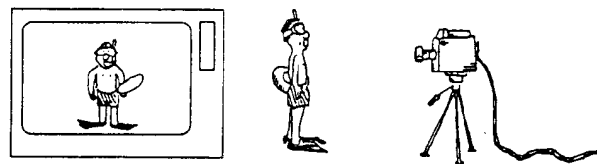
Here is a picture of a man at the beach taken by a TV camera.



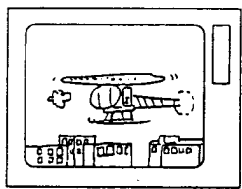
This TV camera has a special lens called a zoom lens. Without moving the TV camera, you can very quickly make things look closer or farther away from you by turning the zoom lens. When you turn the zoom lens very quickly to make things look closer to you, you are zooming-in. This is how the man would look if the TV camera zoomed-in. He might seem more powerful when up close to you.



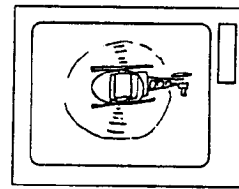
When you turn the zoom lens on the TV camera very quickly to make things look farther away from you, you are zooming-out. This is how the man would look if the TV camera zoomed-out. Here the effect might make him look more helpless or weak compared to the great ocean.



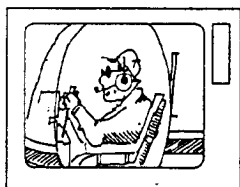
Camera Effects



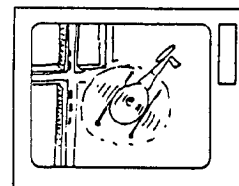
Long shot of helicopter. This kind of shot might show the helicopter as small and weak compared to the large city.



Camera tilted looking up at the helicopter and sky above. This might give us a "worm's eye" view—we'd feel small in comparison.



Close-up shot of the pilot inside the helicopter. Here a shot can "humanize" the helicopter—we might feel companionship with the pilot—almost as if we're flying.



Camera tilted down at helicopter and streets below. This effect might create a sense of the danger of flying when one could drop down so easily.

Long-Shot and Close-Up Shot

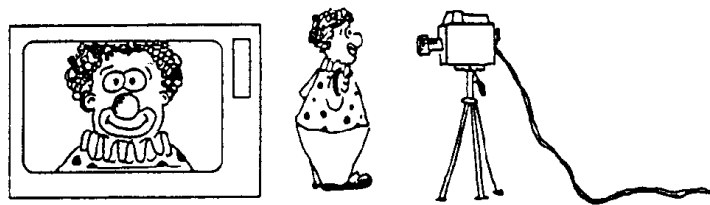
Here is a picture of a clown taken with a TV camera.



When the TV camera is moved far away from the clown, you can see the clown from head to toe. You can also see things around the clown. This is a long shot of the clown. He might seem more sad or lonely when far away.



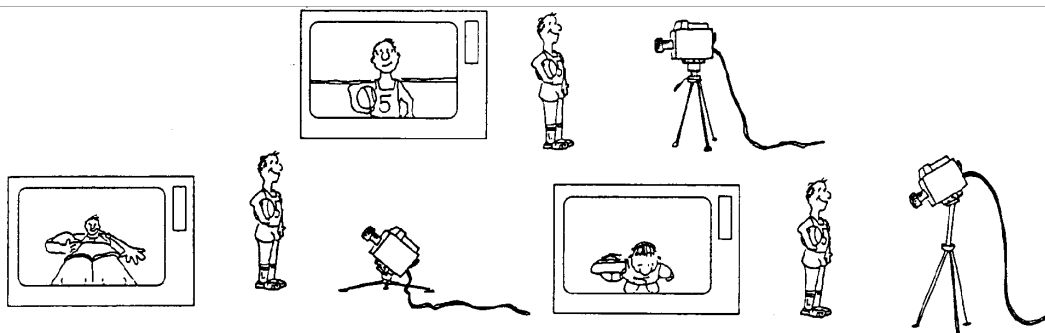
When the TV camera is moved very close to the clown, you can see only the clown's head. You can hardly see any of the things that are around the clown. This is a close-up of the clown.



A close-up might make you feel warmer to the clown or his smile might seem more friendly. We see more details with a close-up shot.

Tilting the Camera Up and Down

Here is a picture of a basketball player with a camera: A "natural" view.

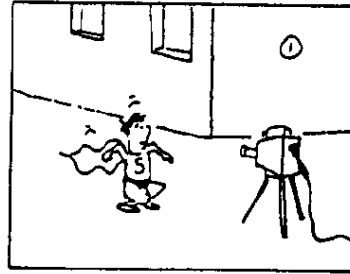


When the TV camera is held near the ground and is tilted up, this is how the basketball player will look: A "giant" view where we feel small in comparison.

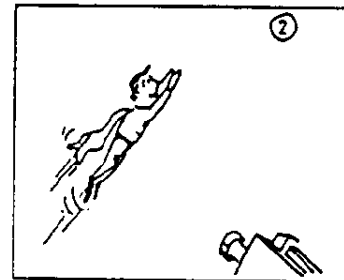
When the TV camera is held up high and is tilted down, this is how the basketball player will look. A view that makes the player seem "smaller" or "weaker."

Editing: A Bionic Jump

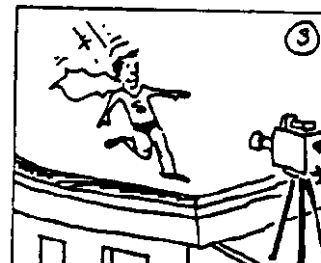
The person jumps from the ground.



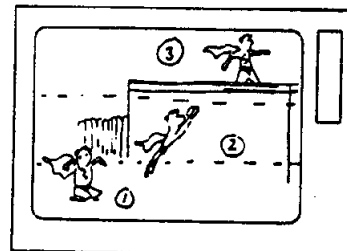
In the second shot the person is moving through the air but is really a short jump from the trampoline that is out of camera range.



The third shot is of the person bending the knees and pretending to land on top of the building.



All three shots are edited together. To make one spectacular jump.



Editing: Making Things Appear

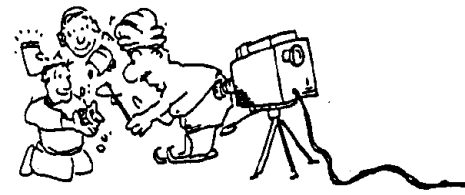
With the camera rolling the genie stands above the man listening to his wish for gold.



With the camera rolling the genie grants the man's wish by waving the magic wand above the empty hands.



Camera Off. While the camera is off a stagehand pours gold coins into the hands of the man. The actors do not move.



The camera starts recording again and the gold appears magically in the actor's hands. A sound effect of metal or a musical effect of harp strings might be added here.





PRACTICE SCRIPT

| VIDEO | AUDIO |
|--|--|
| (Fade up on) | <u>FADE IN THEME MUSIC: 05</u> |
| LS STUDIO | <u>TAPE</u> |
| GC TITLE Campus Comment | <u>FADE THEME UNDER</u> |
| DISSOLVE TO MS ANNOUNCER | ANNOUNCER: Good morning and welcome to today's version of Campus Comment. Today we have with us in the W-U-B-C studio _____. He/She (name) has some comments about _____. (topic) |
| CUT TO CU GUEST | GUEST: Thank you...(AD LIB COMMENT: 30) |
| CG LOWER THIRD: Name | |
| | END CUE: ...and that's how I feel. |
| CUT TO 2 SHOT | ANNOUNCER: Thanks for expressing your opinion, _____. |
| CUT TO CU ANNOUNCER | Next time President Clinton will be here to talk about student financial aid. I'm _____, and this has been Campus Comment. |
| LS STUDIO CG CENTER: Campus Comment | <u>FADE UP THEME. CUT MICS. HOLD: 05</u> |
| FADE TO BLACK | <u>FADE THEME OUT</u> |

Note: CU = Close up
CG = Character Generator

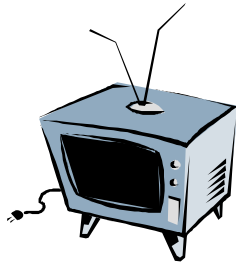
LS = Long Shot
MS = Medium Shot



SCRIPT FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS

On the left hand side of the page, fill in what kinds of camera shots, special effects or music you'd use to make the scene more exciting to the viewer.

| VIDEO | | AUDIO |
|---|----------|--|
| (write alongside dialogue) | | |
| Scene: Father and daughter are taking a walk in a meadow on a country farm. | | |
| | FATHER | It's so peaceful. I wanted you to see our family's old farm. |
| | DAUGHTER | I feel so relaxed here. |
| | FATHER | What's that noise I hear? |
| | DAUGHTER | It's getting louder. Something's coming. |
| | FATHER | Watch out! It's an angry bull! |
| | DAUGHTER | Help! |
| | FATHER | I'll jump into this tree! Now grab my hand and swing up! |
| | DAUGHTER | (screams) |
| | FATHER | Hold on tight and swing up! Hurry! |
| | DAUGHTER | He missed us! |
| | FATHER | There he goes off into the distance. |



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Contrast a program like *The Simpsons* with *Friends* or another situation comedy. Why do you think the producers chose animation for *The Simpsons*?

Can you think of any programs that once used live actors and are now in cartoon form?

2. Write a short script. Keep the dialogue in one column and the special effects, sound effects, and musical directions in a parallel column.
3. Watch a TV program and note any instances where camera work was used to sensationalize a subject.

Why did the director do this?

What technique was used?

4. Find a program that uses a hook, or situation or predicament that will make you want to watch that show. What did the director use – sound effects, a particular camera shot, music?
5. How do docudramas fuse reality and fiction?

Chapter 4

Commercials

This lesson is designed to help participants become critical viewers of TV commercials. After discussing the costs of commercials, target audiences, and impact on the viewer, youth analyze sample TV commercials, with particular attention to techniques used and their effects. Finally, participants storyboard their own commercials, brainstorming which techniques would best suit their products.

Objectives

- To develop an understanding of why there are commercial advertisements on television
 - a) U.S. television's base: The government's leasing of our airwaves to private companies
 - b) The television industry's economic basis – the sale of advertising time
 - c) The advantage to companies and organizations of advertising on television
 - d) The special features of television as an advertising medium
- To help students identify some of the different styles and forms of advertising
- To encourage students to adopt a critical approach to analyzing and even appreciating commercials
 - a) Direct and indirect messages
 - b) Enhancing the impact through lighting, color, camera effects, sound and the combination of print, speech, and pictorial messages
 - c) Who are the people of commercials (for example, commercial endorsements)?
- To learn the vocabulary of advertising

Resource Materials

- Advertising Techniques
- Commercials Chart
- Blank Storyboard Outline
- Homework

Background Information

In the Communications Act of 1934, designed at that time of course for radio, the United States Congress legalized a system for licensing certain segments of the public airwaves to private companies. These stations, originally operated by small, local companies, paid a fee for their license and then broadcast only on certain airwave frequencies. Many stations gradually combined to form larger companies, and eventually the three Networks emerged: ABC, CBS, and NBC, with which local stations could affiliate.

Under modern law, national organizations in radio or television broadcasting can own outright only a very limited number of stations. Hence, large numbers of the thousands of radio and television stations have chosen to affiliate with the major networks (the Big Three or Fox, Turner, etc.). This allows the stations, while not owned by these networks, to nonetheless carry the network programming. Cable Television is now programming for multiple systems operators, companies that hold franchises for the cable wiring of the local communities.

The key concept in United States television is that of private company management. Except for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the national network of non-commercial Public

Broadcasting Service stations, nearly all of television is made up of private businesses. There companies depend upon profits to fund the exorbitant technical and personnel expenses of broadcasting. They can earn money almost exclusively through selling advertising time during and between the programs they broadcast. This system is no different from that employed by newspapers and magazines from their earliest beginnings, except that the print media sell space on a page while the radio and television media sell time.

In most other countries around the world, the airwaves are controlled more by government-sponsored agencies, so one sees fewer commercials. Often, however, the government control limits the freedom of the press in these countries. Television broadcasting around the world is changing in the direction of private ownership, so that in the future commercials may become widespread beyond our borders.

Because it costs a great deal to produce television programs, the local stations and the networks must charge very large sums for commercial time in order to make a profit. This cost is much more than advertising in a newspaper or even in most national magazines. The audiences for TV programs are much larger than the readerships of print media, so the advertiser's product or message is "exposed" to a higher percentage of potential buyers. If, like the Gillette Company, you want to bring out a new product such as the Sensor razor blade, where better to advertise that during a Super bowl football game where you're assured of at least 50-million male viewers? In 1994, one 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl cost \$900,000. In 2003, the average cost of a 30-second spot during game time reached a record high of \$2.2 million.

Advertisers have realized that not only do you get a large audience on TV but you also can expose your product in a more vivid manner than in print or on radio. The sleek lines of a new-model car in motion, or the sheer joy of lively groups of young people drinking *Coca-Cola* are much more compelling in a moving, colorful medium like TV. One can still print messages on the TV screen, but one can also add elements such as persuasive speakers, sound effects, and music.

While research does not demonstrate that TV advertising is always worth its great cost (the expense of producing the commercials in addition to the cost of airwave time), many companies are convinced of its value. TV has proven to be especially effective for introducing new products and for sustaining regular sales of very widely used products like home-cleaners, toothpastes, and painkillers.

Because of the high cost of advertising, we generally only see 30- or 15-second "spots," repeated many times so that they become part of our consciousness. This leads to the annoying interruptions we experience, usually during the most crucial moments of a Sitcom or Action-Adventure show. The advertisers hope the suspense of the program will hold our attention to the screen long enough to see their messages. More important than this bothersome effect, however, is the possibility that the great power of television may make one susceptible to desiring, and subsequently purchasing products that are beyond one's means or that have in reality been "oversold" by the vividness of the TV presentation.

Children are especially susceptible to the persuasive influence of TV ads for toys, "junk food," or cereals with high sugar content. Because of this, the Networks have agreed to voluntarily limit certain advertising to children, and industry-financed groups such as the Children's Advertising Review Unit of the Council of Better Business Bureaus have been developed to write guidelines on ethical advertising to children. Congress recently passed legislation designed to reduce the number of minutes of advertising time during children's programming. This legislation also addresses certain exploitative practices such as promotion within a show of superhero figures, dolls, or other products which are based on that show.

Procedures

1. Begin with a survey. How many have bought products because of television commercials only to be disappointed? How many have been involved in arguments with family members because they wanted products advertised on television that were too expensive or deemed by the family as “unhealthy” or “worthless?”
2. The teacher can then briefly review the reason for television commercials described above. This can serve as the basis for a discussion of whether we could have television in some other way, how the economics work, and if television is really free except for the monthly cost of cable. Compare television advertising with ads in newspapers or magazines. Under what circumstances would magazine advertising actually be more effective (for example, camping products advertised in magazines such as *Outside*, which might be too specific for the broad audience of TV)?
3. To become a critical viewer of commercials one needs to first be able to identify the types and formats of ads. Ask for class examples of **general product advertising** such as soap powders, cars, beer, deodorants, pain medicines, telephone systems, toys, and breakfast cereals. Then ask about **political advertising**, for example, promotion of a particular candidate or party. Next, consider **self-promotion ads**, in which viewers are told about upcoming shows or advised to watch a certain personality on the nightly news later in the evening. Finally, there are **public service announcements**, promotions of worthwhile social activities or agencies, alerting people to centers for dealing with abused children or spouses, famous sports figures or movie stars warning about the dangers of drugs, etc.
4. To examine commercials more analytically, have the class match some commercials to the categories they fall under. You might also obtain sample commercials from a local advertising agency or your local station, or you can simply tape some off the air from a VCR. Then distribute the **Advertising Techniques** handout, and review:
 - Is there a distortion in size or motion of the object being advertised (for example, a very close shot of a car, or angle shots making it seem to move faster or turn corners more smoothly)?
 - How are sound effects used to create suspense or interest?
 - How is the product lit to make it appear brighter, shinier, softer or sexier?
 - Are there lots of happy people standing around using this product? Does a user seem more popular afterwards (as in a cologne ad)?
 - Are there catchy musical jingles that we'll be likely to remember?
 - Are there celebrities whom we recognize and trust, for example Michael Jordan, the all-around athlete promoting sneakers and sports drinks, or Mischa Barton, who plays the crush-worthy girl next door on the sunny and glamorous *The O.C.*, discussing the benefits of Neutrogena face products to a clean and clear complexion?
 - Does it use emotion in its message (humor, friendship, fear)?

- Discuss how some of these messages are “half-truths” – how they may not make clear the limitations or great expense of a product. They may not (except in rapid “voice-overs” or quickly-flashed printed words) let you know that each of a cluster of toys or products is “sold separately,” that “assembly is required,” or “batteries not included.” There has been a recent spate of products emphasizing “low cholesterol,” “low calories,” “low sodium,” etc., without making clear that there are other nutritional problems presented by the products.
5. As a useful class exercise, divide the class into two groups. For one group identify a product you think is really useful and worthwhile (for example, a fluoride toothpaste, or a well-constructed bicycle). For the second group choose a product that is actually relatively useless, a large, empty clear-glass bottle. How would you design a 30-second commercial that would be honest but attractive? Work out a concept such as a story line or little adventure, and then develop the details. This can provide the class with writing and drawing opportunities. Sound effects and a jingle or catch phrase might even be employed. Use the **Blank Storyboard Outline** to prepare it, and, if some students of the school have access to a video camera, actually produce the commercial.
 6. A useful and provocative discussion can be developed around the issue of whether certain products should be banned from being advertised on television. Would such an action by the government violate the free speech guarantees of our Constitution? We do know that the industry has withdrawn advertising for cigarettes because of federal law and has voluntarily withdrawn ads for “hard liquors.” Is there a difference between such voluntary withdrawal and federal censorship?
 7. How similar and different are political advertising and commercials? Should there be industry standards or even government influence on the styles of advertising for candidates in office? What about Public Service Announcements, e.g., statements about drug abuse or child abuse? Should they be held to standards comparable to commercials?
 8. Ask the class to create a list of products designed to emphasize physical beauty or attractiveness. Are such commercials exaggerating? Also review your list for relevance. Because there’s a pretty woman or handsome man in an automobile, does that mean the car will run better or sell at a reasonable price? Because the ads have funny characters like Homer Simpson or the Verizon Wireless guy, does that mean the products are necessarily better?
 9. If a VCR or TV is available, turn off the sound while watching a commercial. How much can you tell or how attractive is the product without voice, sound effects and music?

Activity

Distribute the **Homework**, and the accompanying **Commercials Chart**. As homework over a weekend, have the students complete the assignment while watching TV. You may wish to remind students that the handout on **Advertising Techniques** may help them to recognize different techniques and effects used in ads. During the following class period, ask the class to volunteer some of their observations.

Glossary

Advertisements – Methods of making a product or service known to people and encouraging them to remember and buy a product.

Commercial Message – The term most frequently used on TV for an advertisement.

Market Share – The television company, local or network, sells commercial time based on the estimated size of the audience at a given time. Market Share refers to the percentage of TV viewers at a particular time who are watching a particular show. The price depends also on what kind of audience is most likely to be watching (for example, young children on Saturday morning, the elderly who stay home on Saturday nights, a largely male audience for football games, a largely female audience for Soap Operas).

Sponsor – A company that buys advertising time on a local station or network, usually through an advertising agency that produces the commercial.

Voice-over – Narration of a program or commercial by a person who is heard but not seen.

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Robert M. Liebert, Joyce Sprafkin, *The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth*, New York: Pergamon Press, 1988.

Ellen Seiter, *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

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ADVERTISING TECHNIQUES



Using the chart below, go over the techniques used in advertising to make products seem better than they really are.

| Advertising Techniques | Advertising Effects |
|--|--|
| Close-Up | Makes product look larger |
| Sound effects | Makes product seem more fun or exciting |
| Special lighting | Makes product look more attractive |
| Including additional toys or accessories | Makes product seem more fun or exciting |
| Product shown with happy people | Makes it look as though everyone enjoys the product |
| Music or songs | Helps you remember the product |
| Attractive people using product | Makes it seem as if using the product makes you attractive or popular |
| Celebrity talks about product | Makes it seem as if using the product makes you attractive or popular |
| Product shown without any people nearby | Makes product look larger |
| Written information such as “batteries not included” | Makes the message seem less important if announcer does not also give the same information |
| Emotion such as humor, friendship, fear | A stronger response than to a strictly intellectual appeal |



COMMERCIALS CHART

While watching TV during the weekend, use a chart like the one below to keep a record of number of commercials or amount of time used by commercials.

How many TV commercials do you watch every day? Next time you watch TV, keep track of the number of commercials for a half-hour program (or for half of an hour program), by writing the name of each product that is advertised. (Also list commercials for political candidates.)

Name of Program: _____













Type of Program: _____

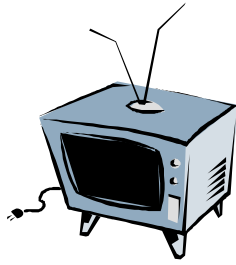
Time that Program Begins: _____

| | Name of Product | Number of Seconds | Technique Used |
|----|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | |
| 9 | | | |
| 10 | | | |

Name: _____ Date: _____

STORYBOARD OUTLINE

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Project: _____ | | Page ____ of ____ |
| a.  | b.  | c.  |
| d.  | e.  | f.  |
| g.  | h.  | i.  |
| j.  | k.  | l.  |



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. While watching TV during the weekend, use the Commercials Chart to list the amount of time, frequency, and the specific selling techniques of a few commercials.

Can you see where the techniques make the product especially attractive?

Can you see how you might be especially tempted to believe the endorsement of an authoritative-looking older person for a product when in reality they are simply actors being paid to read the lines they say?

2. From your list of commercials, count how many are repeated several times in one hour.

Do you believe repetition or attractiveness is more important for becoming interested in a product?

3. Compare an advertisement on television with a product advertised in a magazine or newspaper.

Are the same points about the product emphasized in each medium?

From which advertisement did you learn most about the product?

Chapter 5

News, Information and Commentary

This lesson helps participants become critical viewers of TV news, and other programming designed to inform or educate. After discussing how news is gathered, edited, and prepared for TV presentation, participants write “raw” news scripts, and compare TV news segments as a homework assignment.

Objectives

- To review the various ways in which television brings us news of the world and of our community
- To examine the strengths and limitations of television news casting and news formats
- To compare television news with radio news, newspapers, news magazines, and to explore the implications of freedom of the press
- To examine other kinds of information we obtain from television such as history, geography, political discussions, and consumer guidance

Resource Materials

- **TV News Comparisons**
- **Homework**
- Sample television news script from a local TV station
- Sampling of newspapers, magazines and TV news reports covering the same day or the same new items

Background Information

Today we are accustomed to seeing the news as it happens, whether it is a fire in a nearby community, an announcement by the President, an actual battle between two foreign armies ten thousand miles away, or the first human stepping onto the Moon, 150,000 miles away. It is important for students to realize that this experience has been possible for human beings only within the last fifty years. Until well into the twentieth century it took days or weeks before newspapers could report on invasions, the deaths of kings or of popes, or great natural disasters. We live, therefore, in a remarkable period when we not only obtain instant news on the radio but can watch dramatic events unfold before us just as they are happening thousands of miles away.

This instant availability of news is a tremendous asset for democratic society. At the same time it is important for students to recognize that the news we receive through the publicly-owned airwaves of the United States is coming chiefly from commercial companies to whom our government has leased (licensed) these airwaves. Commercial companies like ABC, CBS, NBC, and Turner Cable are presenting news under the constraint that they must be able to surround the news broadcasts with commercials. Their primary income stems from the money they make through renting 15-, 30-, or sometimes 60-second time periods to other companies who want to advertise their automobiles, beers and deodorants at times when they can reach large numbers of viewers. Therefore, most television newscasts are not simply public service vehicles for the networks and local stations. They draw large viewing audiences and the companies compete to make them even bigger attractions so that they can sell the commercial time slots for higher prices.

Television news can be seen as part of the entertainment goal of the industry. We don't merely see "news readers" and "talking heads" providing detailed accounts of events. Instead, we have glamorous "anchorpersons," "news teams," and many cut-aways to "live footage." Segments are generally short, rarely more than three minutes, and features are included that are attractive to audiences but scarcely important in terms of world, national, or local news. In addition to weather and sports, these sometimes include celebrity interviews usually with movie, TV, or popular music stars whose productions are soon opening. Weather reports are often extended beyond what most people need or want to know, but are intermingled with promotions, interviews at county fairs, or other "folksy" comments. A news hour like MacNeil-Lehrer on the Public Broadcasting Service contrasts with Network or Local news because it concentrates on major events, limits "live coverage" of dramatic events, and focuses on detailed news analysis without commercial interruption. But it is very much an adult-oriented program and, of course, as a national broadcast it does not meet the needs of viewers who are interested primarily in local news, which they can normally obtain from commercial stations in their areas.

In times of emergency, such as 9/11, the commercial networks do more detailed coverage and are able to interview world leaders, government officials, and experts on particular issues. Networks and local stations, also present regular discussion programming, although these (because they draw smaller audiences and are therefore not as attractive to advertisers) are often placed at times when overall viewing is down (for example, *Meet the Press* on Sunday mornings, or *Nightline* in late evenings).

Information shows about history, geography, ecology, or national issues like homelessness, interracial relations, or business and economics are generally represented by occasional Documentaries. Sometimes such material is dramatized and presented with star casts and storylines typical of fictional programming. Such Docudramas can be useful as teaching devices, although one must be careful to point out which elements were true events and which scenes or relationships were introduced for excitement or viewer appeal. For example, in the '70s a tremendously successful miniseries, *Roots*, captured the spirit and implications of the seizure of black Africans and their transportation and subsequent lives as slaves in America. Most of the characters and events depicted, however, were fictional. More recently, the documentary miniseries, *The Civil War*, received critical acclaim for presenting many details of the war in a compelling and fairly accurate way. HBO's *Band of Brothers*, 2001, chronicled the story of an Infantry Regiment that parachuted into France on D-Day. Produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks of *Saving Private Ryan* fame, the miniseries held closely to the text of the Stephen Ambrose book by the same name. While not intended for young viewers, *Brothers*, like *Ryan*, contained gritty and graphic footage of the violence and devastation of war, prompting real life veterans to remark on its hyper realistic accuracy, while some critics accused the series of sensationalism.

Procedures

1. This lesson can begin with a review of what we mean by news and other "real events," and how they contrast with the fictional content of most television programming such as soap operas, sitcoms, and action-adventure shows. The major ways the news is presented can be reviewed with some background so that students can realize how recently in human history newspapers, newsmagazines, and radio and television news have come about. The importance of news for political freedom and public safety should be stressed, and our Constitutional right for freedom of the press can be reviewed as it applies to written and televised material.
2. To explore in detail how news is gathered, edited, and prepared for television presentation, it may be possible to request a local station to send a representative from the news department.

Such a speaker can trace the process from the reporting and “wire service” news collection through the preparation of scripts and editing of video materials. He or she can also explain how choices are made regarding which items to feature, since there is far more news than can be presented in the usual one-half hour including time for commercials. If the station is willing, a class visit to the newsroom may be possible, or perhaps a few students might be able to conduct such a visit as a special assignment.

3. A useful exercise for the class would be to show a typical day’s wire service “ticker tape” and related “raw news.” They could then discuss what news to cover, what to omit, how to order the sequence of news, and how to fit in the commercials. Such materials would be available from a local TV or radio station, or from a local newspaper. The decisions about what is news, how much to focus on exciting features for which video footage is available (for example, an accident or fire), and what to emphasize can help students to realize the responsibilities of a TV news discussion of press freedom as well as methods of “slanting news” (for example, focusing live footage on the opposition to current law or local situation). Separating “opinion” from news reporting can be reviewed, and subtitles like “Commentary” can be mentioned.
4. The class can also be asked to mention Documentaries or Docudramas they’ve seen. To what extent do they enjoy these programs, believe the material, or find them useful for learning about the world?

Activity

Distribute copies of the **Homework** assignment. You may wish to divide students into groups, asking each group to focus on different network and local news shows, e.g., ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN. To assist in their comparisons, students can use the **TV News Comparisons** chart.

Glossary

Anchor Persons – The central figures, the main news readers, around which a typical news show is built. Often there are two anchor persons, usually a man and a woman, sometimes from different ethnic groups. The three major networks still use men: Peter Jennings (ABC), Tom Brokaw (NBC), and Dan Rather (CBS).

Documentary – A specially produced informational program that explains and depicts events in history, animal life, geography, science, the arts, or politics. *The Civil War* was a recent successful series.

Docudrama – A dramatic presentation of an event in history or a biography of an important but sometimes little-known person. It attempts to capture the meaning and spirit of events without being literally factual. It usually has some fictional characters and events to heighten viewers’ interest.

Freedom of the Press – The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution for freedom of news reporting and of most types of writing from government control.

Hard and Soft News – Television newscasts carry some news items that are very important and meaningful to people on a national level. They may affect all of us or are important to know for our political, economic, or environmental security. Results of an election, passage of a new tax law by Congress or a State Legislature are examples of hard news. Soft news includes items like an interview with a TV actress who will be joining a soap opera on a particular network, or a local item about a kitten stuck in a tree, requiring the Fire Department to rescue it while a relieved child looks on.

Media – The different forms in which local and national world news are available, from TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, and street posters.

News Magazine – A lengthier show, usually one hour, which features more detailed coverage of national or world issues such as the drug problem, political corruption, etc. Examples are *20/20*, *60 Minutes*, and *Prime Time*.

News Program – Typically a half-hour of television coverage of the latest news. Usually broadcast nationally in the morning for two hours (*Good Morning America*, *The Today Show*), but for a half-hour in early evenings. Some local stations may offer several half-hour segments emphasizing local events and weather before the national news airs.

Special Events Coverage – A live broadcast of an event. Examples are a presidential address, a rescue attempt in a mine, or the launching of a Space Shuttle.

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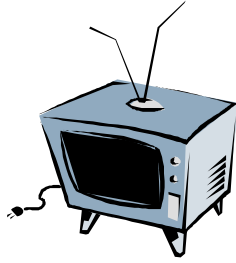
TV NEWS COMPARISONS

Name _____

Name of Show _____ Network _____

(Use a stopwatch or second-hand on a watch.)

| Nature of Feature/Topic (listed in order) | Length per Feature Segment | Nature of Commercial (e.g., soap) | Length per Commercial Segment | Field Footage (out of studio) Yes/No |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Total Number: | Total (in minutes): | Total Number: | Total (in minutes): | Total "Yes": |
| | | | | |



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Watch a local and a national news show.

Use the TV News Comparisons worksheet to record the items covered and how much time was spent on coverage.

How much time was given to commercials?

Since the network news shows air at different times in some areas (for example, ABC at 6:30, NBC at 7:00), try to compare the time allotted and sequence of news plus video footage for two different network shows. Or one can compare a major network with The Cable News Network (CNN).

2. Compare the TV coverage of several news items with the coverage given by a local newspaper or national newsmagazine like *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *U.S. News and World Report*.

If possible, also try coverage on a national radio news show like *All Things Considered* on National Public Radio (NPR).

Compare the media for detail, comprehension, and ease in remembering.

Do the commercial interruptions interfere with your memory for effects?

3. Try writing a television news item. See how well you can express it in words, draw simple pictures you'd use, and then try reading it in the time limits of real television.

Chapter 6

Stereotypes

Participants identify stereotypes on TV, and increase their awareness of the limited and controversial representations of ethnic minority groups (e.g. African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans), the elderly, the mentally and physically challenged, women, and gays and lesbians.

Objectives

- To develop the ability to identify stereotypes on TV
- To understand that we are all members of different groups which are neither inherently good nor bad, but are important parts of the world we live in
- To understand that TV influences our feelings about and knowledge of ourselves and our relationships with others
- To develop the ability to identify subtle, as well as obvious characteristics of TV characters and messages
- To understand that even “realistic” programs may not necessarily be objective in the ways the characters are portrayed
- To compare and contrast the traits of TV characters with characters from literature, film, and people we know (the universality of human traits)

Resource Materials

- Television clips from current programs that show the elderly, ethnic minority groups, the handicapped, women in stereotyped roles (secretaries, nurses, assisting men in more powerful positions), and gays and lesbians
- Magazine photos or ads that portray stereotypes (“The Marlboro Man,” professor with glasses)
- **Homework**

Background Information

There has been a change in television over the past decade concerning the presentation of more programs that highlight issues that affect American society. Programs that deal with divorce, custody issues, AIDS, battered wives, and cancer are among some of the topics that have been produced on prime-time dramatic shows as well as on the movies of the week. Even the situation comedies have tackled such subjects as drugs, teenage pregnancy and sexuality, anorexia, bulimia, and high blood pressure. In general, we used to see too many images on TV of sociable but helpless women, “macho” men, African-Americans as foolish or as drug dealers. More recently, TV has attempted to portray African-Americans in more socially acceptable roles as police officers, lawyers and judges.

Some programs now feature women in interesting roles, combining career and marriage, or even as spies and superheroes, but network television is still dominated by more male than female characters; more youthful than middle-aged or elderly characters; more Caucasians than ethnic group members; more professionals (doctors, lawyers) than blue-collar workers. On TV, the male pursues the American middle-class dream through ambition and involvement in exciting professions. Generally, men gain power, prestige, and financial security through their work, while women on television tend to achieve status through marriage or inheritance. Most of the female characters on TV are young and glamorous.

A major breakthrough for African-Americans was *The Cosby Show*, a program about a well-educated family in which both parents had careers. *Cosby* helped pave the way for shows like the contemporary family comedies, *My Wife and Kids* and *The Bernie Mac Show*. *Girlfriends*, UPN's hit urban relationship comedy, explores contemporary social issues including sex and HIV/AIDS. *Oprah* remains one of the most popular daytime talk shows of all time, and features an African-American hostess. But even today, African Americans and other minorities tend to be in comedy programs rather than in children's programs or in daytime serials ("soaps").

While women make up approximately 47% of the workforce in the U.S., on TV only 28% of female characters are seen "on the job," as opposed to 41% of male characters. Men on TV are more likely to talk about work than women are (52% vs. 40%), and less likely to talk about romantic relationships (49% vs. 63%). Presently, 96% of the voice-overs in promotional announcements are done by men because, according to the advertising industry, only the male voice adds authority. Research has found that because of the ways in which women are portrayed on TV, children tend to admire the most beautiful female characters, ignoring other qualities such as intelligence or compassion. Television seems to encourage females to want to be slim and beautiful even though there may be implicit messages about the heroine's competence.

While there has been a recent increase in the number of gays and lesbians on TV, advocates for fair representation have been critical of the perpetuation of certain stereotypes. *Will and Grace* features two main characters who are gay, but there is very little seen or heard of their romantic lives. *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* has had unprecedented commercial success, and while its five gay leads represent different behaviors for out men, the show has been criticized for perpetuating the idea that gay men are excited by, and skilled at personal grooming techniques and interior décor. Ellen Degeneres, after receiving media attention for coming out on her sitcom in the late 90s, is currently appearing as a talk show host on *Ellen*, on the Oxygen network. Apart from shows like *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* on premium cable, Degeneres remains one of the few representatives of the lesbian population on television.

Older characters on television had been portrayed in negative ways before such programs as *Murder She Wrote* and *The Golden Girls*, which aired in the late 80s and early 90s. Other programs followed, such as *In the Heat of the Night*, and *Diagnosis Murder*, which showed older characters as competent, intelligent, and interesting. Recently, however, most older television characters are cast in the roles of meddlesome neighbors or relatives, inserting judgments, opinions, and home cooked meals into main story lines involving younger generations. Examples of this are Ray's parents on *Everybody Loves Raymond*, Jerry's parents on *Seinfeld*, and Jen's grandmother on *Dawson's Creek*.

Television still lags behind in presenting mentally or physically challenged people in major roles. Two shows that aired into the early 90s, *L.A. Law* and *Life Goes On*, made a breakthrough because they portrayed mentally or physically challenged people living satisfying lives. "Benny" on *L.A. Law* was a mentally challenged adult who worked in the law firm doing simple jobs. "Corky," a teenaged character with Down Syndrome on *Life Goes On*, was presented as a wholesome young man without patronizing him in any way. Viewers recognized both characters' limitations, but felt empathy for them, and were able to laugh with them. Television of recent years has not been as successful at representing the mentally and physically challenged.

Television only presents a part of the American experience. While some progress has been made to improve the ethnic makeup of television by depicting African American families, singles, and teens, very few roles represent the Native American and Asian American populations. Only one family sitcom portraying a Hispanic family, *George Lopez*, has had commercial success. Working

women on TV are glamorous and manage to keep perfect households. Very few programs show how retired people live, although retirees comprise a large segment of our population.

Procedures

1. Ask the class if they can remember when a character in a TV program dealt with issues of prejudice. How was it handled?
2. Ask the class to think about neighbors, friends, and family members. Are any like the TV characters they watch?
3. Can the class match any TV characters to characters in literary fiction? Do the TV characters seem to be more an exaggeration of type than in real life or in literary characters?
4. Discuss who the characters are in commercials. How do they look in terms of sex, age, weight, racial types, and general good looks?
5. Discuss Saturday morning cartoons. What impressions do children get about personality traits from these cartoons? Who are the heroes and what are they like?
6. How does the director convey information about a character? How might he or she utilize dialogue, facial expressions, clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, food a character eats, type of car a character drives, the house or apartment a character lives in, etc., to help define that character?
7. Discuss MTV and the male and female portrayals. Are these songs and scenes demeaning to either sex? To both? In what ways?

Activity

Have students complete the **Homework**, and discuss the results as a class. You may also wish to have students perform skits involving the non-stereotypical characters they have created.

Glossary

Caricature – An exaggeration of a person's qualities or features.

Character – Any kind of person that a scriptwriter or actor makes up.

Identification – When you think that another person has qualities and traits like your own.

Prejudice – To judge people, or have ideas about them before you know them.

Stereotype – The fixed ideas we have when we think about a type of person.

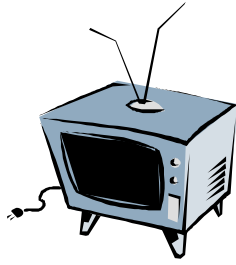
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HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Choose a character from a TV show. Write a brief personality profile about this character. What about the character gives you clues to his or her traits?
2. How would you change a character on TV and make that character become more likeable?

Less likeable?

Less real?

More real?

3. Add a new character to one of the TV programs you watch. Try to have your character combat a common stereotype. You may want to have your character be elderly, mentally or physically challenged, from an ethnic minority group, or gay or lesbian.

How would you describe your character in a positive way (e.g., good at problem-solving, intelligent, shows kindness and respect to others)?

What kinds of story elements could you use to create a positive message about your character (e.g., she/he solves the mystery, protects others, tells the truth, catches the bad guy)?

Chapter 7

Action, Aggression and Violence

Participants identify acts of physical and verbal aggression on TV, and increase their awareness of the controversies regarding youth imitating acts of violence they see in the media. Youth also explore non-violent coping mechanisms and problem-solving techniques.

Objectives

- To help students recognize the distortions and risks of imitation produced by television's frequent portrayals of violence
 - a) Television in action-adventure programming, cartoons, and in news and documentaries graphically depicts on a daily basis far more acts of aggression and violence than most of us will ever encounter over a lifetime
 - b) Because such violence is often part of interesting action or adventure stories and the horrible consequences of aggressive acts are rarely depicted, viewers may simply regard such behaviors as exciting and imitable
- To explore alternative ways of personal problem-solving without aggression
- To consider ways in which adventure and action can be entertaining features of television shows without depicting so many acts of violence
- To provide students with definitions and vocabulary relating to physical and verbal aggression as well as to non-violent coping or peaceful problem solution and negotiation

Resource Materials

- **Physical Aggression Chart**
- **Verbal Aggression Chart**
- **Homework**
- Clips of TV shows that contain violent confrontations, shooting, car chases, or punch-outs.

Background Information

The most controversial aspect of television is the extremely high frequency with which acts of aggression or violence are depicted on the screen. While many peace-loving people find the numerous shootings, physical fights, stabbings, or car chases shown daily to be personally repulsive, there are other important reasons for concern. Despite earlier beliefs that watching violence in a fantasy sense would drain people of their natural inclinations for such behavior (the so-called "catharsis" theory), practically all scientific evidence contradicts this view. A great many research studies indicate that children or adolescents will be **more** inclined to aggressive actions after seeing them in fictional stories on television or in movies. While no one would argue that television is the major cause of violence in our country, research evidence points to increases in violence in heavy-viewing children and adolescents. It also points to a general increase in the homicide rate in the United States and Canada since television was introduced. For example, researcher Brandon Centerwall found that following the introduction of television in the United States, the homicide rates increased 157% for whites and 63% for minorities between 1955 and 1975.

It has been estimated that by the age of 18, a U.S. youth will have seen 200,000 acts of violence on television. Given that children under the age of 8 often cannot discriminate between fantasy and

reality, some alarming connections have been made between watching TV violence and re-enacting it. For example, in October of 1993, a 5-year-old boy set his bed on fire with a cigarette lighter, starting a blaze that ended with the death of his 2-year-old sister. He began playing with fire after hearing Beavis and Butthead say fire was “fun.” In April of 2000, a 12-year-old boy contributed to the death of a 6 year old girl while trying to mimic a wrestling move he had seen on the WWF. As recently as May 2003 a teen was critically injured after trying to duplicate a 5-story stunt leap into a swimming pool that he had seen on MTV’s *Jackass*.

Television’s well-documented excessive depiction of violence presents problems not only because it can lead to imitation by children and adolescents but also because it may influence certain attitudes. Because heavy viewers see so much of this behavior they begin to assume that their neighborhoods are much more dangerous than they may actually be, and they show a much greater fear of victimization than may be warranted. This is especially true for groups like attractive young women or the elderly who are often represented on TV as victims. Children are also likely to view the world as a “mean and scary place” if they are heavy viewers. Children and adolescents may also develop attitudes that aggression is an acceptable way of responding to a momentary problem because: (a) “the good guys” on television shows use force as much as do the criminals or evil-doers, and (b) the full consequences of an act of violence even by the heroes are rarely shown on television. Thus, the distress of relatives, the likelihood of inquiry and lawsuits, and prison are usually omitted for the detectives, police or other characters in television stories.

Increased attention is being paid to the devastating consequences of aggression and violence in our society. The Brady Bill was passed in 1993 in honor of James Brady, Chief of Staff under President Reagan. James Brady was shot during the assassination attempt on the former president. The Brady Law requires a 7-day waiting period on the purchase of firearms and calls for background checks on people who wish to purchase guns. The efforts of people at all levels of government may be necessary to attack the difficult problem of violence.

The networks are increasingly admitting to the role of television in promoting violence. Networks have adopted a rating system. Shows rated TV-G, TV-PG, and TV-14 display their ratings on screen within the first few seconds of airtime. Additionally, the FCC has adopted a rule that all televisions (with screens 13 inches or larger) must be equipped with a V-chip, a feature that allows parents to block programs based on the rating system selected by the parents.

This lesson can be especially instructive by turning it around from a focus on violence towards a representation of methods of self-control and problem solving without physical force. School systems are increasingly introducing lessons on coping skills and methods of impulse control as ways of preventing potential delinquency, conduct disorder and substance abuse. By helping students to recognize that television violence is thoroughly exaggerated and fictional and to consider alternative ways in which characters might deal with the problems in stories, the young viewers may begin to distance themselves from violence as a desirable action and also may adopt a more critical analysis of the medium’s use of aggression as a “shortcut” to problem-solving.

Procedures

1. Defining Adventure, Action, Aggression, Violence and Assertion: Ask for spontaneous class definitions, then proceed to show how Adventure can imply exploration, heroic achievement, scientific discovery, etc., without any attacks. Action, which means rapid motion, can be seen in sports, in whitewater rafting, in rescuing a person from drowning or from a cliff-ledge. It doesn’t necessarily mean attacking someone. Aggression as defined by psychologists does not mean hurting someone or some property intentionally. Aggression can be physical, as in punching, kicking, shooting...or verbal, as in insults or “put-downs.” Violence is an extreme form of aggression, usually involving danger to life or limb. One shouldn’t confuse Aggression with

Assertion—one can express oneself forcefully, take a firm position, criticize someone's argument, defend one's own arguments or rights without engaging in aggression or violence.

2. Now show, if possible, a television clip, easily obtained by just any evening's watching, that includes a series of violent confrontations, shooting, car chases, punch-outs. If not available, read an excerpt like the following:

Two men rush out of a bank carrying assault weapons and sacks of money. They push some passersby to the ground, leap into a car, and speed away with a motorcycle policeman in pursuit. The car darts down an alley, knocking over a dumpster and its refuse. The motorcycle policeman follows partway in, leaps off to a knee. The robbers open fire but the policeman rolls away, seizes an assault weapon from his bike, fires at the car which bursts into flames and explodes.

3. Now ask the class to think about how typical this scene is for television. How often do such aggressive and violent acts occur? Ask the class to describe examples of recent scenes from Action-Adventure (e.g., Detective) shows. You might actually call your local police department or state police barracks and ask for a speaker on the frequency of actual serious punch-outs, shootings or wild car chases in your neighborhoods. How often have your local police been forced to fight physically or to shoot their guns in the line of duty? What are the consequences for a policeman if he actually does shoot someone? Ask the class to report on how dangerous they think their neighborhoods are. Then compare each student's rating to actual police statistics, on the one hand, and to their own TV viewing, on the other. Heavy viewers, especially those who prefer Action-Adventure and violent cartoons may overestimate the dangers. This is actually what research has found.
4. Discuss adventure shows and excitement. Is so much TV aggression necessary? Do students ever feel impelled to imitate the aggressive behavior they see? Explain that TV fights are carefully staged. They use breakable chairs, spun-sugar bottles which can look real when broken on somebody's head, careful camera angles to make it seem as if one person is hitting another when in actuality the blow carefully misses. What are the real consequences of aggression? This can open some worthwhile discussion.
5. It may be useful to explain how research is carried out to show the effects of television violence. For example, children or adolescents watch either non-violent or violent shows, then later are given opportunities to respond to frustration. If they've seen the violent show they're more likely to be aggressive. Another approach involved following up children or adolescents over a period of time. Records of their television viewing are kept at home. Those who watch more TV, especially violent shows, often are more likely to get into fights or hit others without provocation.
6. Now move to a discussion of alternatives to physical aggression. Have students provide examples of provocative incidents they have seen on television. Then describe how one can explain oneself, offer to "negotiate," express regret, etc. Show the list of steps for self-control, which are part of a Social Problem Solving Manual developed by Professor Roger Weissberg and used in the New Haven Connecticut school system. Discuss how characters on TV might respond to crises using some of these methods. Could a story still be exciting?

Activity

Distribute the **Homework**. Also distribute the **Physical Aggression Chart** and the **Verbal Aggression Chart**, as students will need them to complete the assignment. Have your students keep track of both types of violence, how these acts are treated by the television shows' creators, and the consequences of each act.

Confronting a Problem

1. Stop, calm down, and think before you act.
2. Say the problem and how you feel.
3. Set a positive goal.
4. Think of lots of solutions.
5. Think ahead to the consequences.
6. Go ahead and try the best plan.

Glossary

Action – As shown on TV it usually involves vigorous movement, high leaps, rapid running, racing, flying, and it can include physical fighting, shooting, car chases.

Adventure – As shown on TV or in movies and books, adventure refers to actions involving exploration, risky climbing, athletic activities, aggression, hunting animals, etc.

Aggression – a) Physical aggression involves someone intentionally seeking to hurt another person by physical means, hitting, kicking, punching, choking, stabbing, shooting, etc. It can also involve damaging property, e.g., wrecking someone's car, breaking windows; b) Verbal aggression involves intentionally trying to hurt someone by insults to the person or family, ridicule, mockery, calling the person names or "put-downs."

Assertiveness – Engaging in verbal methods of stating one's position clearly and firmly, expressing one's feelings, making clear one's rights in a matter, engaging in non-violent actions to demonstrate what one's position is in a situation.

Violence – A situation of tremendous danger and threat to life and limb. An exaggerated form of aggression. In television one can distinguish between natural violence – an earthquake or tornado – and extreme human aggression such as planting a bomb in a theater, machine-gunning innocent people. On television **gratuitous** violence refers to scenes of shootings or extreme aggression that are not really essential to tell the story.

Reference Materials

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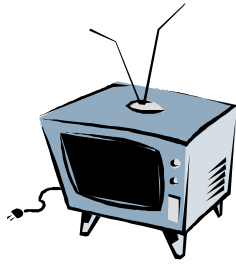
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Chapter 7: Action and Violence



Chapter 7: Action and Violence



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Use the **Physical Aggression Chart** while you watch TV for a few days. Write down the number of angry or dangerous events, whether one or more characters hit, kick, choke or in any other way attack another or voluntarily do damage to property.

Was anyone hurt in the fighting?

What happened to the people who were hurt?

How could you change any violent acts and still maintain interest in the program?

2. Use the **Verbal Aggression Chart** while you watch television. List examples of shows you've watched. What kinds of verbal aggression have you seen?

Did people say cruel or hurtful things?

Did they mock or ridicule each other?

Did the program make it sound funny?

Was there audience laughter afterwards?

How would you have felt if someone said this to you?

Could you handle the situation without fighting?

3. Watch both fictional programs and the news, recording examples of aggression. Make a list of what different things would follow from an attack, such as personal suffering, relatives' suffering, and legal effects.

Chapter 8

Ethics and Morality

Participants discuss the ethical decisions TV writers, producers, and networks have to make to provide programs that both entertain and address social issues. After discussing examples of television that are contradictory in their portrayal of characters who are successful despite destructive or immoral behavior, participants outline their own scripts dealing with issues of character.

Objectives

- To understand how television may influence our social customs and attitudes
- To help students confront the possible anti-social values portrayed on television
- To assist students in thinking through some of their own and their families' ethical values in comparison with those presented on television programming

Resource Materials

Homework

Background Information

Can a television writer maintain his or her integrity when preparing a script for commercial networks? Compromises are made, and sometimes a writer feels pressured to inject violence and sex into the scripts to help keep the ratings high. Often a writer, producer, or director has to make ethical decisions that may involve great sums of money or have painful consequences for human beings. The former involves choice. The latter is a real dilemma. It may be easy for some to forego the money and stick to their principles, but in the case of an ethical decision involving human beings it may be more difficult.

Television has the power to develop themes and characters that can help teenagers make important decisions about interpersonal relationships, business, politics, sex, religion, and health issues including nutrition and drugs. Each Network has a Standards and Practices department that reviews material before it is aired. This is difficult because no one wants to interfere with freedom of speech, which is guaranteed to us by the First Amendment. And yet, the Networks are concerned about "good taste" and do not want to offend any of its viewers.

Before a script for a series is brought to producers, certain criteria are set. First, the product must be commercially viable and consistent with a Network's value structure. Programs depend on sponsorship by companies who want to reach the largest possible audience. As a result, many scripts that are too controversial, or too intellectual, or too issue-oriented, may not get produced. Second, characters must be interesting so that the audience will identify with them. Third, the plots, whether for a drama or comedy series, must have substance and something to say about the quality of life. Series such as *Law and Order*, *Gilmore Girls*, and *My Wife and Kids* meet these criteria and still managed to deal with important issues. A major question is how to create a dramatic program that is passionate about a subject and yet is completely balanced in order to please a vast audience. The news programs follow a Fairness Doctrine whereby both sides of an issue must be equally presented, but dramatic programs rarely can present both sides of an issue in depth. A writer tends to adopt a point of view that lends power to the story and may treat the opposite point marginally.

How can ethics be conveyed on television? We see premarital and extramarital sex on the Soaps; but pregnancies are few. We see drinking and snacking on TV, but the consequences

are not shown. It would be unusual to see a program that shows what it would be like to have a baby when there is no money, when the father is gone, when the young mother drops out of high school. *7th Heaven* and *Joan of Arcadia* try to deal with consequences of people's actions, and both shows incorporated morals and values.

On television we sometimes see the world of business presented in a way that conveys mixed messages. Characters on shows like *Las Vegas* and *The O.C.* lie, cheat, drink, have extramarital affairs, and yet are shown living successful, glamorous lives. Programs such as *Law and Order*, *Without a Trace*, and *The West Wing* often deal with moral and ethical issues. *The Practice* often lets the viewers decide whether or not the characters acted properly in their choice of defense tactics.

Soaps are quite popular with teenagers and young adults. The various themes give us some idea of the kind of values presented daily. Teenagers also watch music television. Concept videos are those that build a story around a song and are sometimes called minimovies or visual fantasies. Music videos remain predominantly male-oriented and male-dominated. In 1999, approximately 60% of characters in music videos were male, and almost two thirds of videos featured females as props or part of the background. A 1997 study reported that 22% of videos on MTV contained overt acts of violence, and 25% depicted weapon carrying. As far as sex is concerned, in 1996, 75% of music videos contain sexual content. Sex is mainly implied rather than shown, with non-intimate touching first, followed by more intimate touching and kissing.

Procedures

1. Review the five words in the Glossary.
2. Ask the class:
 - From whom and what do you learn your values, ethics, and social responsibility? Is there someone you turn to when you are in conflict?
 - What are your main values? Do you feel that you have changed your views since childhood?
 - Have you ever had to test your sense of right and wrong? How did you resolve the issue?
 - Do characters on TV offer you ideas about how to live your life?
 - If you watch MTV, what kind of impressions do you have about the way men treat women?
3. Talk about the "movies of the week" where issues such as divorce, battered spouses, child custody, AIDS, and alcoholism are treated seriously. Are these influential?
4. Read descriptions of the soap storylines from a local newspaper or *TV Guide*. Ask the class to comment on these themes. Why are such themes presented? What are your reactions to such themes?

Activity

Distribute the **Homework**. Have students complete the assignment by watching television at home, and recording the ethical and moral issues they encounter, and by outlining their own stories of how lying, cheating, etc. affects character.

Glossary

Doctrine – Principle of law established through past decisions.

Ethics – The discipline dealing with what is good and bad, and with moral duty and obligation.

Moral – Relating to principles of right and wrong behavior.

Morality – A doctrine or system of moral conduct. Rules of conduct.

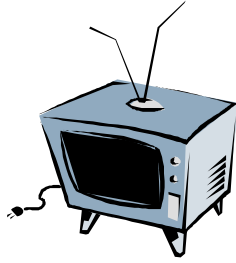
Values – The standards by which you live.

Reference Materials

Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values*, New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Henry J. Perkinson, *Getting Better: Television and Moral Progress*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990.

William K. Schrader, *Media Blight and the Dehumanizing of America*, New York: Praeger, 1992.



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Pretend you are a producer and your task is to develop a comedy series for a network. In one episode you want to deal with “cheating.” Outline this episode.
2. Watch some dramatic television shows. Write down any issues that deal with values or ethics.

Were you satisfied with the ways in which these were handled?

How could you change the script?

3. Can you think of a dramatic story that deals with how deception or lying affects a character? Write a brief summary of how this story would evolve.

Chapter 9

Health Issues and Safety

Participants identify health and safety issues on TV, including drugs, alcohol, tobacco, nutrition, and sexuality. This lesson is designed to increase awareness of the discrepancies between the facts regarding health issues, and the way in which they are portrayed in fiction.

Objectives

- To give students some understanding about how TV conveys both positive and negative messages about such health issues as nutrition, alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, and HIV/AIDS
- To alert students about television's role regarding safety issues such as driving, wearing seat belts, and risk-taking in general

Resource Materials

- Teacher Reference: Office of National Drug Control Policy for the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, "Substance Use in Popular Prime-Time Television," available at www.mediacampaign.org
- Teacher Reference: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Applied Statistics, "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statistics," available at www.samhsa.gov
- Teacher Reference: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Research Center, available at www.tobaccofreekids.org
- Teacher Reference: Children's Defense Fund: National and State Data, Key Facts about safety of American children, available at www.childrensdefense.org
- Teacher Reference: Know HIV/AIDS, "About the Epidemic," available at www.knowhiv aids.org
- Teacher Reference: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Daily Reproductive Health Report for February 7, 2001, "Media & Society: Sexual Content on Television Has Increased Since 1997, KFF Study Finds," available at www.kaisernetwork.org
- **Alcohol Guidelines Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors**
- **Entertainment Industry Task Force on AIDS**
- **Homework**

Background Information

The period between twelve and eighteen years of age is a crucial time in terms of identity formation and acceptance of society's norms and values. Even though teenagers watch less TV than younger children, they are susceptible to televised portrayals of violence, sex, drug usage, and risk-taking in general. When teenagers watch TV they see a distorted view of teenagers. The teenagers on TV are beautiful, precocious, and sexually involved or talking about sex, with wisecracks accentuated by laugh tracks. Alcohol is used on many prime time programs as the main beverage and as a "treat" after a hard day's work, to take the edge off anxiety, or for sociability. Obese characters are rarely depicted on TV, and yet we see a good deal of snacking and drinking but little exercise.

The afternoon programs targeted on teenagers on the three Networks have dealt responsibly with such topics as alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, and drug abuse. Unfortunately, these programs are infrequent and air at a time when many teenagers are not home. Programs such as *Gilmore*

Girls, My Wife and Kids, Dawson's Creek and *Everwood* have tried to deal with themes of premarital sex, teen pregnancy, and drug use. It is difficult, however, despite the conscientiousness of the producers, writers, and directors, to adequately deal with the subtleties of such issues in a half-hour or hour program.

Alcohol

More than 40% of network programming, including those with teenage characters, show the consumption of alcohol. Settings are usually happy and sociable, and programs rarely depict negative consequences such as hangovers, family violence, mounting debts, car accidents, or absenteeism from work and school. Stress reduction, celebration, and enjoyment are the usual reasons for the drink. Drinking is condoned on TV, according to the studies carried out at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. Drinking is part of the backgrounds on many programs, and the drinkers are usually good, steady, likeable characters, with minor exceptions. Few are perceived as unstable, "bad guys."

Recovering alcoholics are often portrayed as likable and strong, if not heroic, such as *ER*'s Abby Lockhart, and *The West Wing*'s Leo McGarry. The now classic *Cheers*, set in a Boston bar, won every critical award for its accurate presentation of alcohol abuse. The show's humor is not dependent on alcohol consumption and one or two drinks is the cut-off point for a customer. In nearly every episode, the writers have introduced the phrase, "*You've had too much, it's time to go home.*"

In reality, in terms of actual per-capita consumption, alcohol is the fourth most popular drink of choice, preceded by water, coffee, and tea. Sixty-one percent of teenagers ages 16-19 had used alcohol in the last 30 days when asked in 1998 by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Rarely on prime time TV do characters refuse a drink and opt for water or fruit juice. Rarely do we hear a character in prime time state that alcohol is the nation's leading drug problem. Instead, when alcohol use is the topic featured on TV, it is largely in response to a crisis or for social reasons.

There are currently over 11 million alcoholics and 7 million alcohol abusers in the United States. Alcohol is the second-leading contributor to deaths in this country, and the major cause of all traffic fatalities, yet TV has still not refrained from using alcohol in the background or among the featured characters.

In the year 200, the beer brewing industry spent more than \$770 million on television advertising. By the time teenagers reach driving age, they will have seen 75,000 ads for alcohol. Beer and wine ads have increased on TV while hard liquor ads have not been shown. As a result, advocates of a ban on alcohol advertising point out that hard liquor consumption has *decreased* in the U.S., while beer and wine consumption have increased. Perhaps to counteract future bans on alcohol advertising, broadcasters have increased their public service announcements and public affairs programs devoted to drunk driving. Unfortunately, a common pattern among teenagers is termed binge drinking – large amounts consumed on weekends, followed by driving a car, leading to accidents.

Smoking

There has been a dramatic shift in the smoking habits of Americans since the 1964 Surgeon General's report on the dire consequences of smoking. TV characters now smoke at rates lower than the general population. According to researchers, tobacco use is portrayed in 6% of TVG rated programming, 20% of TVPG, and 24% of TV14. Cigarette ads have been banned from TV, but we do see many smokers in movies shown on TV. According to the CDC, 28% of high school students use tobacco. Approximately 20% of 12th graders, 12% of 10th graders, and 6% of 8th graders are daily smokers. The fact that cigarette smoking is recognized as the most important

single preventable cause of death in our society should convince writers, directors, and producers to try and eliminate smoking from all of their programs.

Drugs

While there is little drug usage on TV, substance use is frequently discussed or mentioned in both dramas and sitcoms. Illicit drugs are mentioned in about 20% of network television programs, but used in only 3%. When programs such as *Law and Order* or *NYPD Blue* deal with drug dealers, they are generally caught and punished, and almost always characterized as in the wrong. For the most part, drug use has been shown to be a negative form of behavior on TV. There are exceptions, such as the smoke-filled basement scenes in *That 70s Show* which imply, though do not show, the use of marijuana.

The three most commonly used drugs in the U.S. are alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. However, growing concern over youth experimenting with “the drug of the moment,” is reflected in TV programming. In the early 90s, for example, many programs and after school specials dealt with anabolic steroids used by young athletes for muscle-building, and their potentially devastating affect on the liver, heart, lungs, and reproductive system. More recently, ecstasy has been an important issue for programs to explore, due to a rise in youth rave culture. In an episode of the teen soap *Dawson’s Creek*, a character took ecstasy at a rave and suffered from heart failure. Television has also been largely responsible for educating the public on rohypnol, or the date rape drug. While teen shows like *One Tree Hill* deal with single instances of drinks at parties being laced, rohypnol is a regular theme on shows like *Law & Order: SVU*.

Sex and HIV/AIDS

Television, especially prime time programs and the soaps, expose teenagers to sexual scenes which, if not explicit, certainly contain innuendo. It has been approximated that 62% of scenes of all prime time TV shows contain some sexual content. Research has documented a sexual reference or act occurs on average 6.6 times per hour during daytime soap operas. *General Hospital*, which has the highest rating among teenage audiences, has been reported to contain over 15 sexual references per hour.

Some programs do mention condoms or safe sex, but despite progress that has been made, these are exceptions rather than the rule. It should be noted that, in the early 90s, *General Hospital* was the first daytime soap to promote a central storyline about a character who was HIV positive, and later died of AIDS. The character, Stone, was heterosexual, young, and healthy looking, and when he died he left behind daytime’s first long-running HIV+ character, his girlfriend, Robin. The story of Robin and Stone helped educate a mass audience about the dangerous consequences of unsafe sex, while humanizing the victims of this deadly virus. Also in the early 90s, *Life Goes On*, a popular family drama, featured an HIV+ teen, and sensitively dealt with the emotional and physical effects of the virus on intimate relationships. Unfortunately, HIV/AIDS has seldom been dealt with on more recent programs.

It is important, therefore, that your students are familiar with information about HIV/AIDS. It remains the 6th leading cause of death among young people ages 15 and 24. It is estimated that one half of all new HIV infections are in those under the age of 24. Over 800,000 cases of AIDS have been reported in the U.S. since 1981, and nearly 500,000 have died in the epidemic. The number of HIV/AIDS cases appears to be growing, as well. During 2001, an estimated 5 million people became newly infected with HIV. Worldwide, 40 million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS. Schools are now teaching about AIDS using a variety of media including print, television and films. Many are available from local, state and federal agencies.

Safety

Seat belts are now used fairly regularly on TV programs. Writers do not even need dialogue to demonstrate this act. We see our favorite characters buckle-up when they get into their automobiles. This was not always the case. An effort made by various researchers, educators, and parent groups exerted enough pressure on producers that seat belts became commonplace on television even before they became mandatory in real life. Public service announcements on TV alerted the public to the importance of seat belts as a major factor in saving lives in accidents.

Nutrition

Nutritional habits on television are generally depicted as unhealthy. Although the topic of food occurs an average of nine times per hour during a prime-time dramatic series, we do not see family nutrition as balanced. Snacking takes place more than actual meals, especially during weekend and daytime children's programs. Ads for candy, sugar cereals, potato chips and pretzels far exceed any ads for fruit, raisins or other healthy snacks. About 24% of males and 14% of females on TV are overweight or obese—half their percentages of occurrence in the general population. Two major health problems among teenagers are anorexia and bulimia, especially among females. The amount of television viewing correlates with between-meal snacking, a greater consumption of advertised foods, and more attempts by children to influence their parents to purchase foods advertised on TV.

Procedures

1. Show some TV clips of programs or ads relating to these topics, for example, alcohol, snacks, PSAs about drugs, drinking, or smoking.
2. Select fact sheets from one or more of the following sources, distribute and discuss the data.
 - Office of National Drug Control Policy for the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, "Substance Use in Popular Prime-Time Television," available at www.mediacampaign.org
 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Applied Statistics, "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statistics," available at www.samhsa.gov
 - Teacher Reference: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Research Center, available at www.tobaccofreekids.org
 - Children's Defense Fund: National and State Data, Key Facts about safety of American children, available at www.childrensdefense.org
 - Know HIV/AIDS, "About the Epidemic," available at www.knowhivaid.org
 - The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Daily Reproductive Health Report for February 7, 2001, "Media & Society: Sexual Content on Television Has Increased Since 1997, KFF Study Finds," available at www.kaisernetwork.org
3. Ask students to discuss any alcohol drinking they have seen recently on TV, and the circumstances that led to the drink. Was it stress, celebration, or just a device to keep the actor's hands busy?
4. Ask about peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs. How can they resist such pressure? What other actions besides taking alcohol or drugs can a person do to cope with bad feelings? What are some of the immediate and long-term effects of alcohol and drugs? Why do teenagers use alcohol and drugs? Why do they smoke?

5. When students watch a TV program, do they see consequences of drinking? Why not?
6. Do students feel that they are overweight? Do they diet or exercise? How does television influence students' body image? Do they buy food products advertised on TV?

Activity

Distribute the **Homework**. Instruct students to complete the assignment by watching television and recording their observations. You may wish to distribute the handouts **Alcohol Guidelines Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors**, and **Entertainment Industry Task Force on AIDS** to help students evaluate how TV programs are presenting health and safety issues.

Glossary

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is the final stage of HIV, which causes severe damage to the immune system. AIDS is defined by a t-cell (immune cell) count of less than 200. This fatal stage of the disease is also characterized by numerous secondary infections and cancers.

Anabolic Steroids – Compounds closely related to the male hormone testosterone, developed in the 1930s. Legitimate uses are for certain kinds of anemia, severe burns, and some types of breast cancer.

Cannabis – The dried pistillate parts of Indian hemp. Marijuana and Hashish are names commonly used. The dried material looks like parsley. It can be rolled into cigarettes, made into cakes or balls, and smoked or eaten.

Cocaine – White crystalline powder obtained from coca leaves. It is called coke, snow, nose candy, Big C, lady, white, and snowbirds. It is inhaled or injected.

Depressants – These may be barbiturates or tranquilizers, or methaqualines (ludes and quaaludes) in the form of capsules or tablets taken orally. Large doses can cause stunted speech, staggered gait, and altered perception. Very large doses can lead to respiratory depression, coma, and death.

Hallucinogens – Drugs such as PCP (Phencyclidine) and LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) that lead to severe hallucinations changes in body function. Heavy users of PCP (also known as “angel dust”) often experience paranoia and violent behavior. LSD users may experience panic or confusion; even when use has ceased, “flashbacks” may occur.

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus attacks the immune system, leaving the body vulnerable to a variety of life-threatening illnesses. Only blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk have been proven to transmit HIV. Though HIV infections can be managed with medication, there is no known cure, and progressive infections lead to AIDS.

Narcotics – Drugs such as heroin, codeine, morphine, and opium, which induce feelings of euphoria followed by drowsiness, nausea, and vomiting.

Reference Materials

Television Programs

In The Shadow of Love: A Teen AIDS Story, PBS, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA, 22314.
A Dangerous Affair, about a teenager who contracts AIDS, Product Knowledge Educational Video, HBO, 1100 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036.

Articles

Charles K. Atkin, "Effects of Media Alcohol Messages on Adolescent Audiences," V.C. Strasburger, G.A. Comstock, eds., *Adolescents and the Media*, Philadelphia, PA: Hanley & Belfus, Inc., 1993, pp. 527-542.

Linda Harris, Margaret Hamburg, "Back to the Future: Television and Family Health-Care Management," J. Bryant, ed., *Television and the American Family*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990, pp. 329-347.

Selling Addiction: A Workshop Kit on Tobacco and Alcohol Advertising, Center for Media and Values, 1962 S. Shenandoah, Los Angeles, CA 90034, 1991.

Steven H. Shriften, "Alcohol and Cigarette Advertising: A Legal Primer," V.C. Strasburger, G.A. Comstock, eds., *Adolescents and the Media*, Philadelphia, PA: Hanley & Belfus, Inc., 1993, pp. 623-634.

ALCOHOL GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCERS, WRITERS AND DIRECTORS



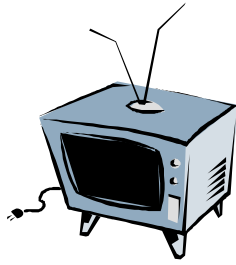
- Avoid glamorizing drinking or serving alcohol as a sophisticated or an adult pursuit;
- Avoid showing the use of alcohol as an activity that is so normal that everyone must indulge. Allow characters a chance to refuse an alcoholic drink by including non-alcoholic alternatives;
- Try not to show excessive drinking without consequences, or with only pleasant consequences;
- Demonstrate that there are no miraculous recoveries from alcoholism;
- Don't associate drinking alcohol with macho pursuits in such a way that heavy drinking is a requirement for proving oneself as a man;
- Portray the reaction of others to heavy alcohol drinking, especially when it may be a criticism.



ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY TASK FORCE ON AIDS

The following points regarding the depiction of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS-related behaviors in the media were developed by the Entertainment Industry Task Force on AIDS as a resource to the television, motion picture and music industries. They are not, in any way, meant to limit the creative process.

- Recognize sex as a healthy and natural part of life requiring responsibility to oneself and one's partner.
- Encourage parent-child and peer conversations about sex that include information about preventing sexually transmitted diseases.
- Recognize and respect abstinence.
- Acknowledge that all segments of society are at potential risk of HIV/AIDS; i.e., characters with HIV/AIDS should not be depicted only as males, homosexuals, intravenous drug users or whites.
- Emphasize that there is no evidence that HIV is transmitted through casual contact, but only through the exchange of blood, semen and vaginal fluids.
- Show people with HIV/AIDS the sensitivity and respect accorded people with other diseases.
- Depict casual sex only if it is important to the story.
- Indicate consequences of unprotected sex.
- Include discussion of safer sex and condom use in appropriate scenes.
- Indicate consequences of shared needles in scenes involving IV drug use, tattooing and ear piercing. Show or refer to use of new needles or proper methods of sterilizing needles.
- Recognize the complexities of the testing issue and differentiate between testing HIV positive and being diagnosed with AIDS.



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. Watch three prime-time programs. Record any instances of alcohol use, cigarette smoking, seat belt use, and food consumption. Tally these results.

What were the circumstances and reasons for each of these acts?

2. Be a student reporter. Do a survey of students in a class. Find out how much TV they watch per week and their consumption of alcohol.

Is there a relationship? Be sure to keep your answer sheets without any names.

3. If you see any scenes on TV with reference to sex, do the characters discuss “safe sex” or use the word condom?

Are relationships established before a sexual act?

What are the possible consequences of a presentation of sexual behavior without safeguards?

Prepare a summary of your findings for class presentation.

4. During a weekend or evening’s viewing, log commercials that feature alcohol. What are the settings and reasons for beer commercials?
5. Watch the commercials on Saturday morning. List the products advertised.

What are your conclusions?

Chapter 10

The Environment

This lesson is designed to increase awareness of environmental issues, and how they are portrayed by fictional characters on network programming, in the news, and on documentary programs produced by public television and educational cable networks.

Objectives

- To explore how the power of television can be useful in promoting information about our environment
- To become aware of possible conflicts between sponsors of programs and issues dealing with the environment

Resource Materials

- Clips of videos on environment issues from local TV news or program departments
- If unavailable, ads for programs including sponsor identification
- Homework

Background Information

“Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.”

These words by H.G. Wells are particularly meaningful to educators who are concerned about environmental literacy. Network television has played a role in offering its audience excellent programs about our world such as *NOVA*, *Blue Planet*, *National Geographic Explorer* and programs on cable networks such as The Learning Channel and the Discovery Channel, among others.

It is important to understand that television does not cause environmental problems, but through television we can learn more about our planet and how to preserve it. Of major concern to all of us is the pollution of water by dumping of solid and hazardous waste. These toxic wastes affect fish as well as our drinking water. Forests in the United States, Canada, and Europe are currently being destroyed by pollution in the form of acid rain. Pesticides used to spray fruits and vegetables harm not only those products but also pollute the air we breathe. Illegal dredging and filling of wetlands in certain states endangers the wildlife that lives in these areas. Fumes from automobiles, airplanes, and gasoline-operated motors such as lawnmowers, saws, and tractors contaminate the air. Rocket fuel for space shuttles emits harmful exhaust into the air, posing a threat to wetlands near launching sites. Cyanide used in extracting gold from low-grade ore affects wilderness areas in states such as Arizona. Endangered species – owls, bears, red-cockaded woodpeckers, among others – are threatened by logging. The deforestation of the Amazon region in Brazil, where many rubber trees are cut down, may seem far away to us, but such destruction must be our concern if we truly see the world as a “global village.”

What can television do to help inform the public about these issues? An example of how television can be influential is the case of King Broadcasting (King 5). Located in Seattle, Washington, King Broadcasting owned a half-dozen TV stations (network and cable) and a half-dozen radio stations from Honolulu to San Francisco, as well as a video production company. King was especially interested in the Northwest environment. One of its major products was a documentary dealing with road construction in national forests. The company's interest in the environment goes back to

1969, when it broadcast eight town meetings at which thousands of people gathered to discuss the environment. This was a full year before Earth Day, the first attempt to awaken the conscience of our nation to the need for protecting our planet.

WHLA, an ABC affiliate in Washington, D.C. has aired award-winning programs on ecological issues. Many television producers, however, still feel that news about soil erosion and chemical seepage is not particularly appealing or graphically dramatic to their viewers. Of course, television is a business that depends on ratings of shows to keep sponsors interested in paying for advertising time. Many producers feel that environmental programs are simply not “entertaining” enough to attract a large audience. Occasionally a network will offer reports on the nightly news dealing with environment, particularly as they relate to current events, such as the effects of oil drilling on the ecosystems of Alaska

In 2001, poll results suggested that most Americans strongly supported the Global Warming Treaty discussed at environmental summits in Kyoto, and its aims to reduce dangerous emissions from power plants and cars. President Bush signed a National Environmental Education Act in 1990, which established an office within the Environmental Protection Agency and authorized twelve million dollars for seeding Environmental Education efforts. In 1970, President Nixon established an Office of Environmental Education within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, but it never received enough funds to survive. Perhaps we have learned more in the past thirty years and are beginning to recognize that we must promote environmental literacy.

Hopefully, renewed interest in green living and environmental protection issues will inspire further television programming dealing with the environment. PBS stations recently broadcast a series of seven programs called *Journey to Planet Earth*, which dealt with issues of population, politics, infectious disease, and farming technologies and their effects on our world. In 2003, Frontline presented *Fooling with Nature*, a program dealing with the dangers that man-made chemicals pose to wildlife and human health.

In addition to PBS programs, commercial networks have also made contributions. Many TV shows have made a conscious effort to show characters engaging in eco-friendly disposal. *Frasier's* lead insists on recycling and encourages others in his workspace to do the same. NBC's *The West Wing* won acclaim from environmentalists for the episode entitled “Privateers,” in which the President's staff must deal with a breaking news story about the effects of global warming on the melting of glaciers. In 2001, the Environmental Media Association awarded their prestigious Board of Directors Ongoing Commitment Award to the animated character Lisa Simpson, and her creator Matt Groening. For over a decade, Lisa has championed many environmental causes such as pollution, ethical treatment of animals, and deforestation. Since many of the primary polluters of our environment, such as automobile manufacturers and oil companies, sponsor many of the network programs, it is not in their best interests to fund programs attacking the negative aspects of their products. Nevertheless, television offers us a great opportunity to see how we can preserve our environment. Characters on situation comedies can become alert to our need to conserve. The use of a line such as “don't let the water run” when someone is brushing teeth gets a message across to millions of viewers that this is a wasteful act, especially in regions of our country where water is at a premium.

Procedures

1. Ask the class to discuss why they think commercial networks do not produce more programs that deal with the environment. Be sure to discuss the kinds of sponsors who use television to advertise products such as automobiles, detergents, and paper.

2. Ask how a scriptwriter might write about the environment within the context of: *Everwood*, *My Wife and Kids*, *The Simpsons*, *Law and Order*, or any other programs students watch.

For example, the family on *My Wife and Kids* could practice recycling and a scene could show them sorting articles in the kitchen; the DA's office in *Law and Order* might be working a major case against a chemical company responsible for dumping toxic chemicals; or characters on a show may do something environmentally correct without scripted words, such as using their own canvas shopping bags in a scene in a market.

3. Ask how commercials on TV add to our consumerism and perhaps our wastefulness.
4. Ask the class to discuss what they do to help the environment. What else could they do?

Activity

Distribute the **Homework**. Instruct students to use this sheet to help record their observations of mentions and reports on the environment as they watch TV.

Glossary

Acid Rain – chemical compounds in the air that can erode both natural and man-made structures. Generally these chemicals are a result of industrial emissions.

Deforestation – to divest a land of its trees.

Ecology – the branch of biology that deals with the relations between organisms and their environment.

Ecosystem – the ecological community is made up of closely interrelated living things and their physical environment – they are inseparable and interact with each other.

Erosion – the action of all forms of nature that wear away the earth's surface.

Pollution – when substances make the environment foul or unclean. Example: air and water become polluted by wastes and toxic chemicals.

Toxic Waste – waste infected by poisons.

Wetlands – land that is wholly or in part covered or soaked in water.

Reference Materials

The Cousteau Society, 930 W. 21st Street, Norfolk, VA 23517, promotes the preservation of the world's oceans and their marine inhabitants; produces films, books, and articles; funds research expeditions.

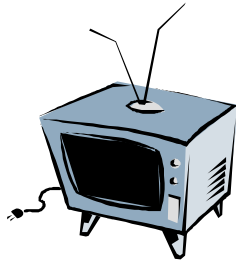
Roger L. DiSilvestro, *Audubon Perspective: Fight for Survival: A Companion to the Audubon Television Specials*, New York: Wiley, 1990.

James Firebrace, ed., *Losing the Picture: The Future for Television's Coverage of Global Issues: A Report from the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project*, Oxford: Oxfam, 1990.

The National Geographic Society, Washington, DC 20036. Sponsors special television programs that deal with the environment.

Really Wild Animals, National Geographic Society Kids Video, Washington, DC, 1994.

"TV and the Environment," *Television and Families*, vol. 10, no. 2, Spring 1988. Special issue on television and the environment.



HOMEWORK

Need more space? Use a separate sheet of paper for your responses.

1. As you watch TV, note any references to the environment, and any violations you see. Keep a list and note how the scriptwriter could have averted such abuse – or how the writer could remedy it.
2. Take a neighborhood walk; explore your school; take a good look at your home. Note any environmental infractions or wasteful practices. How could television play a role in correcting these?
3. Be a TV anchorperson. Design your special segment about the environment.
 - Who will be your guest?
 - What graphics will you use?
 - What will be your theme?
 - Write out the format.
4. Note any PSAs that deal with the environment. Try to write one on any aspect of the environment you wish.
5. When you watch a program, list the sponsors. Are any of these involved in environmental issues?

How?

Appendix

The Technical Side of TV

Objectives

- To develop an understanding of what television is – how it becomes a picture on the TV set
- To become familiar with the vocabulary related to the technical aspects of television

Resource Materials

- Magnifying Glass
- How TV Comes to Your House

Background Information

The word television is made up of two words: **tele**, a Greek word that means “far away,” and **videre**, a Latin word meaning “to see.”

Video Signals

Television is made up of a series of still pictures that are flashed so rapidly, we think we are watching a moving picture. The lens of the television camera focuses on an object or scene that we wish to see. This image is then focused onto the surface of a photosensitive tube contained within the camera itself. This tube can convert light into video signals. Brighter areas of an image produce a stronger current than darker areas. An electron gun at the far end of the tube directs the electrons toward the inside surface or target of the tube. This beam is called a **scanning beam**. It sweeps across the target from left to right, top to bottom. It produces a signal for one field that is half of a full video picture. A full video picture, or frame, is composed of two fields. Each frame is made up of 525 lines, and takes 1/30 of a second to produce. Thus 525 lines of an image frame, or **raster**, is scanned every 1/30 of a second.

If we want to take a picture of a person, the TV camera tube is focused on that person. The camera lens focuses the light from the scene onto a light-sensitive screen, or target. The target becomes charged, matching the intensity of light that strikes it. Since it is impossible to store this electrical image of the person as whole, thousands of individual picture elements or “dots” must be scanned, one at a time, by an electron scanning beam in an orderly fashion – from left to right and top to bottom, one line at a time as we described the process above. When the entire target is scanned, the electrical image of our person is now converted into a video signal.

The color picture we see on our TV set is composed of hundreds of thousands of red, green, and blue dots. Colors on the screen are determined by the relative color, number and brightness of the dots. Use the magnifying glass to look at a TV screen and see these dots.

Transmission

In addition to this picture signal, there is a **sync** signal, or pulse, that enables you to receive the picture on your TV set. The images we receive are most commonly transmitted through cables, or indirectly through radio frequencies. Television sets can pick up signals and change them back into the picture. We can receive these signals live, or they may be recorded for later.

Signals can reach your TV set in several ways. TV stations, using either a live signal or a tape, link to a broadcast tower in your local area, which transmits video signals on a particular frequency. The signals are received by an antenna in your TV set, and converted into pictures and sounds.

Satellite communications have also become important in terms of expanding television reception. TV signals can be relayed over oceans and across vast distances. A signal is relayed to a satellite transponder (a device which receives and then re-transmits TV signals), as in the drawing, **How TV Comes To Your House**.

Unlike broadcast TV, cable television uses wire to carry signals directly into your TV set (usually resulting in a better picture). Digital cable works similarly, but uses a digital video signal instead of an analog signal (this may also result in a higher quality transmission, because image information can be sent in a more controlled manner).

If possible, invite a local TV technician to demonstrate the use of a camera to your class. Review the following vocabulary.

Glossary

Airwaves – invisible electric signals sent from the TV station to your TV set at home.

Antenna – the air contains TV signals sent from stations. These signals are caught by the antenna.

Broadcast – to send pictures and sound by television airwaves.

Cable – a system by which television pictures and sound are sent to your TV set by cable (similar to a phone line) instead of by airwaves.

Raster – the area of a television tube that is scanned by the beam from the electron gun and displays the television or video picture.

Scanning Beam – focused flow of electrons from the electron gun in the camera or TV picture tube.

Sync Signal (Synchronization) – pulse signals that precisely coordinate and maintain the scanning process from the video camera to the TV display screen.

Reference Materials

Eric Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982 (revised edition).

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Christopher Sterling, *Electronic Media: A Guide to Trends in Broadcasting and Newer Technologies*, New York: Praeger, 1984.

HOW TV COMES TO YOUR HOUSE

