











MASSACRE AT VIRGINIA TECH



- April 16, 2007
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
Blacksburg, Virginia

At least 33 people were shot to death at Virginia Tech, including a gunman who police say took his own life. That gunman, whose identity has not yet been released, is blamed for at least 30 deaths and 15 injuries inside an engineering building. Police are still looking into whether he was responsible for two shooting deaths that took place hours earlier at a dorm across campus.

- [Columbine](#)

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman

- ***"Kids are being taught to kill"***
- 14 year old Michael Carneal stole a .22 pistol and after a few practice shots, took it to school and fired eight shots at kids in a prayer group.
- He hit eight kids, five of them in the head. Three died
 - *"I train numerous elite military and law enforcement organizations around the world. When I tell them of [Carneal's] achievement they are stunned."*



- *The FBI says that the average, experienced, qualified law enforcement officer, in the average shootout, at an average range of seven yards, hits with less than one bullet in five.*
- **Where does a 14 year old boy get the skill and the will to kill?**

- [clip](#)



Possible Answers

1. A Culture of Violence
2. Natural Born Killers? No
3. Brutalization and Survival
4. Classical Conditioning
5. Operant Conditioning
6. Modeling
7. Fighting Back: Education , Legislation and Litigation

A Culture of Violence?

- The actual murder rate continues to drop in North America
 - **But**, this is not due to fewer attempts to kill **INSTEAD** we have better life saving skills and techniques...
 - Aggravated assault (people trying to kill each other) rates have gone up from 60 per 100 000 in 1957 to over 440 per 100 000 by the mid 1990s

How bad is it?

- **In Canada the assault rate increased 5 times from 1964 to 1993**
 - **this kind of increase also occurred in Norway, Greece**
 - **it quadrupled in Australia and New Zealand**
 - **tripled in Sweden,**
 - **doubled in Belgium, Denmark and England-Wales, France, Hungary, Netherlands and Scotland**

One Factor



- In nations where TV appears, there is an immediate increase of violence at school and within 15 years a doubling of the murder rate (Journal of American Medical Association, 1992)
 - Children in the U.S. are exposed to very high levels of media violence. Research shows that there are about **5 to 6 violent acts per hour** on prime time television, and 20 to 25 violent acts on Saturday morning children's programs.
 - According to estimates, by the time young people graduate from high school, they have viewed **over 200,000 acts of violence**. This heavy exposure to violence on TV and in video games may result in aggressive attitudes and behaviours, or becoming desensitized to violence

Natural Born Killers?

- Most soldiers have to be trained to kill
- During WWII only 15 to 20% of riflemen would fire at an exposed enemy soldier
- When they realized this the military systematically fixed the problem by training people to kill
- By Vietnam, the firing rate rose to over 90%



Brutalization and Survival

Military training methods include brutalization



- At boot camp heads are shaved, people are dressed alike, lose sense of individuality, and are immersed in and learn to embrace violence and discipline as survival skills

According to Grossman...

- *children are being immersed in media violence as young as 18 months and cognitive psychology suggests that before the age 6 or 7 they can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality*
- *they may be learning that being shot, stabbed or hurt and vice versa are normal survival skills in a brutal world*

Classical Conditioning

- In WWII young Japanese soldiers were made to kill in front of their peers, friends would cheer them on and they would be treated to Sake, a good meal and “Comfort Women”
 - They learned to associate killing with pleasure
- In North America kids repeatedly watch violence, and killing at the theatre paired with popcorn, soda, friends and good times
 - Have we learned to associate killing with pleasure?



Unconditioned > **Unconditioned**
Stimulus **Response**

popcorn/friends > **fun**

Conditioned > **Conditioned**
Stimulus **Response**

movie violence > **fun**

Operant Conditioning

Stimulus > response training

- **Soldiers are trained to shoot at realistic man shaped silhouettes instead of targets**
 - The pop up is a stimulus
 - The shooting is the response or operation
 - The reward is the score or praise the shooter receives



Stimulus **Response >** **Reward** **= Repeat Response or increased behaviour**

_____ _____ _____ = _____

Violent video games reward players with points and notoriety

Modeling

- **Military uses the drill sergeant to model violent behaviour during training**
- Media provides role models for children ([Bandura experiment](#))
 - School yard killers are transformed into famous individuals
 - In the 1970s cluster suicides took place, where TV reporting of teen suicides resulted in more suicides
 - Following the Virginia Tech massacre there were copy cat threats made to schools across the US



When the modeling of violence is shown on television it is learned

[Just for gags](#) [Like Father Like Son](#)

What can we do?

- Should we regulate violence and permit only adults to access it like we do with guns, porn, alcohol and so on?

According to Grossman, The answer lies in

1. Education - inform parents of the effects of media violence
2. Legislation - outlawing violent video games / arcades
3. Litigation - hit the distributors of violent media financially through law suits to make them understand