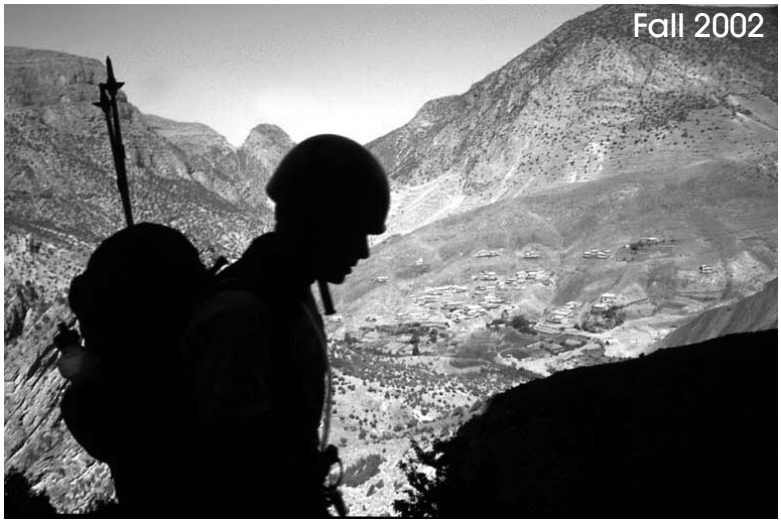
see that 'no, the centre of the universe is not in the oil or the domination. The centre of the universe is in the quality of life of the ordinary person.'… The earth, as Gandhi pointed out, has more than sufficient resources, so that you need not hunger—what he called poverty—the worst form of murder in the world."

In response to the question of how he feels we should deal with the threat of terrorism, Lawson replied, "I'm always prepared to see if we can, through good, overcome evil. I want to see us use law… to deal with terrorism." And in reference to America's official position on Iraq, Lawson said, "the Bush administration wants to violate international law."

Finally Lawson was asked, "what are we teaching our young men?" His reply was, "I maintain that domestic violence and war are of a similar kind. They are male-dominated decisions that brutalize women and children. I sometimes say that domestic violence is the parent of our war-makers. I abhor the fact that in the United States our war makers, our power-brokers, beat up on poor countries or small countries; there is no equality in that at all. And I abhor the fact that they think it's manly to go to war when women and children are the fundamental victims of war making."

The Reverend James Lawson continues to work with the working poor and union organizing of the poor. He also continues to lecture and teach on the practical applications of non-violent struggle. In December 2002 he was involved in a major protest in New York City against the US administration's attitude towards Iraq. It was a privilege to welcome James Lawson to SFU in October 2002.

Violence and its Alternatives Lecture Series



Attention to Violence and its Alternatives forms a major element in the mandate of the Institute for the Humanities. Many SFU faculty are also researching specific aspects of violence and our response to it in our culture. This fall we presented the work of three faculty members with longtime interests in socio-cultural violence.

Is the World Wired for Violence? Reflections on Media and Democracy in the Wake of September 11

—Robert Hackett

Violence and Media

Is the world wired for violence? Do the dominant practices and institutions of public communication, nationally or internationally, share any complicity in the bloody start to the third millennium—in the spectacular terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent "war on terrorism"?

The orthodox problematic, rooted in a functionalist perspective of the media as an independent power centre within a consensually-based social structure, directs attention to questions about media-promoted violations of social norms. For example, do media representations of violence in 'action films' de-sensitize consumers to violence, or even generate copy-cat crimes? Can insurgent terrorists manipulate the media to generate spectacles (the 'theatre of terror') which can demoralize a population, destabilize a society, or induce authorities to over-react in ways which attract political sympathy for the terrorists' cause?

These concerns are not without validity. Contemporary terrorism, propaganda of the deed, historically arose with the emergence of mass media, initially the daily press, which could multiply its impact. The 9/11 terrorists clearly knew that their atrocities would be amplified, globally and immediately, on television.

But the limitations of the orthodox view are highlighted when we

consider how media may facilitate or legitimize not only insurgent violence, but also repression and counter-violence. Most obviously, we have seen how media were spectacularly abused in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia to fan the flames of ethnic nationalism and ultimately genocide. But there are less obvious ways in which media are implicated in violence. The overabundance of violent representations in globally distributed media products (notably, Hollywood action films) are related more to economic imperatives than audience demand, but they have implications for how audiences see and act in the world. American communications scholar George Gerbner writes of a "mean world syndrome," in which heavy television viewers become more fearful and distrustful, more accepting of authoritarian policies and simplistic Manichean views of conflict (good versus evil).

Even in liberal democracies, media may facilitate violence insofar as they endorse or legitimize aggressive foreign policy on the part of the State. It is not just a question of media content, but of structure. Commercial media are increasingly operating in global markets, undergoing conglomeration, privatization, hyper-commercialism. Corporate media are integral to the ideology and process of global corporatization, which has both costs and benefits. Media help create global public opinion, which can inhibit (albeit selectively) the violation of human rights by particular regimes; but they also promote a culture of consumerism, which arguably breeds inequality, declining sense of community, and ecological devastation. Notwithstanding the Internet, and significant regional media production centres (India, Brazil, Egypt), global information flows are still dominated by media corporations based in the developed West. The North to South media flow makes more visible to the South the arguably growing gaps between rich and poor, creating a 'fishbowl' effect of rising expectations and resentment. At the same time, the dominant US media largely insulate the population of the world's most powerful country from foreign perspectives, perspectives which might enable more informed judgements about their own government's policies.

According to Georg Becker, media are themselves integral to hierarchies of power and their associated patterns of structural violence.

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> If mass-media reception as well as production are at once expression and motor of structural violence; if communications technology can be understood, historically, only as an integral part of the emerging military industrial complex; if the access to and the power over the mass media are unequal and unbalanced… then the mass media can fulfill their original hoped for function as 'peace-bringers' [only] under rare and exceptional circumstances. The representation of violence in the mass media, then, is part and parcel of the universal violence of the media themselves.

US Media and 9/11

Such structural imbalances exact an especially bitter toll at moments of crisis, which are moments of truth for political and media systems, highlighting tendencies which are latent in normal times.

The 9/11 terror attacks were a case in point. As official and media rhetoric escalated rapidly, from "there has been a terrorist attack" to "an act of war" to "we are at war," the American media's dominant narratives, the shared mindset underlying the selection and presentation of news, quickly jelled into a kind of 'master frame'—this is a war (not a campaign or police action) between absolute good and absolute evil. Like a lightning bolt from Satan, September 11 was an unprovoked attack on 'Freedom and Democracy'. You are either for us, or against us. The American people will unite behind its leaders, use whatever means and make whatever sacrifices are necessary, to crush evil and ensure the triumph of good. This is a crusade for 'Infinite Justice'—the original brand name of the retaliatory operation.

Frames are unavoidable in journalism, as in any form of effective story-telling. Comprising mostly implicit assumptions about values and reality, they help to construct coherent narratives out of a potential infinity of occurrences and information. The problem is that when they are accepted uncritically, frames can lead journalism to exclude relevant but dissonant information.

In America's alternative press, but rarely in the dominant media, other frames were in play—that violence begets violence, or that the double standards and hegemonism of the US government's foreign policy were part of a broader pattern from which the evil acts of September 11 emerged.
But America's dominant corporate media highlighted stories which fit the master frame—such as heroism and tragedy in Manhattan, and (at last, six years after it had seized power) the Taliban's appalling human rights record.

Not that these topics were inappropriate. The real problem was the omission of news that did not fit the master frame. In *Media* magazine (Fall 2001), I listed relevant questions largely ignored in the crucial weeks after September 11. What geopolitical fires fuelled terrorism? Was 9/11 a case of 'blowback', facilitated by previous US support for Islamic fundamentalists fighting the Soviet

the Soviet Union? What were the policy options besides massive military retaliation? If this is a war on terrorism, what is terrorism, who is the enemy, how far do the intended targets extend, and what counts as victory? What is the state of public opinion elsewhere in the world? What political agendas are piggy-backing on to 9/11? How are civil liberties being affected? What's the extent of 'collateral damage' in Afghanistan?

Such blind spots had several sources. Since the 1980s, US media have cut back drastically on international news coverage. Accelerating media concentration and commercialization have yielded a corporate culture increasingly hostile to radical dissent, or even to the liberal public service ethos associated with the Walter Cronkite generation. The political elite, on which the media depend for orientation, closed ranks. Years of flak from conservatives, convinced despite all the contrary evidence that the media contributed to defeat in Vietnam, have left the press anxious to prove its patriotism. The September 11 events themselves made for an emotionally compelling and gut-wrenching (but in the long run, dangerously simplistic) story line built around the stuff of legend—heroes, villains and victims. The sense of threat contributed to a powerful 'rally round the flag' effect. And as a trump card, there was *de facto* censorship within the media. Several columnists who offered even mild criticism of Bush were fired. In a country with fewer and fewer media employers, it doesn't take too many such examples for journalists everywhere to feel the chill.

Small wonder that in the four months after 9/11, according to the Project for Excellence in Journalism, the press heavily favored pro-administration and official US viewpoints—62% of stories, with 30% mixed, and only 8% reporting all or mostly dissenting viewpoints. (And 'dissent' does not mean the Taliban, just any policy perspective different from the Bush administration's.)

On the fundamental question of war and peace after 9/11, American media have largely failed to play the role prescribed for it in liberal theory—a 'watchdog' keeping powerholders accountable, a public forum helping to formulate a democratic consensus between alternatives, a comprehensive news provider nurturing an informed citizenry. Those failures and blind spots have undoubtedly facilitated the escalating militarization of US foreign policy. And yet in September 2001, American public faith in the media reached the highest levels pollsters have recorded since 1968.

In describing the 'theology' of American nationalism, Galtung writes of the Judaic/Christian myths of a chosen people in exile with a special relationship with God, a Manichean construction of world space with the US at the centre as the epitome of good, the world's beacon of freedom with a right and duty to take on the godlike characteristics of omniscience, omnipotence, and beneficence.

What does this dismal combination—democratic failure and public approval—tell us? Peace researcher Johann Galtung reminds us that media criticism can only take us so far. Media institutions are influenced by, as well as influence, the surrounding political culture. Just as audiences are part of the media system, journalists are part of that culture. The media's framing of 9/11 meshed well with the dominant frame of America's experience of war, which in turn is related to the foundational myths of American nationhood. In describing the 'theology' of American nationalism, Galtung writes of the Judaic/Christian myths of a chosen people in exile with a special relationship with God, a Manichean construction of world space with the US at the centre as the epitome of good, the world's beacon of freedom with a right and duty to take on the godlike characteristics of omniscience, omnipotence, and beneficence. In this worldview, the terror attacks were not only an atrocity and a tragedy, but an act of sacrilege, one motivated by incomprehensible evil, outside the realm of politics and history. To the extent that audiences and media shared the assumptions of this frame, the US media's construction of the events would appear not as a one-sided version, or even as a narrative at all, but as (to invoke Cronkite's famous sign-off phrase) "the way it is."

Global Media Democratization?

From the viewpoint of humane governance and democratic communication, the implications of the media's role in 9/11 are multiple and unfolding. Here, I can only sketch a few points.

First, if media are indeed part of systematic structural violence that fosters resentment, fundamentalism and ultimately insurgent terrorism; if media's processes of exclusion and marginalization preclude equitable participation by different social groups in the construction of public cultural truth (as Robert A. White puts it); if the structures and flows of global communication contribute more to conflict than understanding; then a process of media democratization is one prerequisite for humane global governance.

Building a democratic public sphere independent of state and corporate control would require widespread structural reform of the ownership, financing, control, production and distribution, of technology, programs and networks. The idea, as Karol

Jakubowicz has put it, is to enable each significant social and cultural group to circulate ideas, perspectives and information in such a way as to reach all other segments of society. While public broadcasting at its best has sometimes approximated such a public sphere within individual nations, the challenge is to begin that project at a global level. While UNESCO's *MacBride Report* was buried by a campaign of vilification in the 1980s, the serious North-South (and other) imbalances of communicative power which it highlighted have yet to be addressed.

Yet we should not assume that more and better dialogue, or more accessible and pluralistic media structures, will automatically resolve global conflicts. Quite apart from the many other levels of institutional change needed to assure a humane future, democratization of the media implies more than structural reform; it entails cultural shifts. As Charles Husband argues, the right to communicate, even if embedded in widespread access to the means of communication, needs to be supplemented by the right to be understood—which requires an ethos of willingness to listen to the 'other', and indeed to insist that the 'other' be heard. That ethos poses a challenge not only to allegedly closed and pre-modernist cultures in the Islamic world, with their tendencies towards fundamentalism and authoritarianism, but also to the consumerism, arrogance, indifference, and the persistent temptations of racism and fascism in the West. A globally democratized media system could encourage Americans, as citizens of the world's hegemon, to come to terms with their own history and role in the world, as seen through the eyes of others. Such a breakthrough could be pivotal to progress on issues of global economic justice, environmental sustainability, and political democracy.

Robert Hackett, School of Communications, Simon Fraser University, lectured in the Institute for the Humanities series on Violence and its Alternatives, September 12, 2002.

Race, Gender and Aggression: The Perceptions of Girls About the Violence in Their Lives[1]

—Margaret Jackson

In the street or in school, it's the same. I don't feel I belong. But I learned that if somebody beats on me, I'd better beat back or I'll keep getting hurt. Actually, now I get respect because of it.

—Lena, immigrant girl, aged 14

Lena's words capture the dilemma experienced by many young marginalized girls in Canada today, but which seem especially true for young immigrant and refugee girls. To fit in, to survive, they may turn to aggression; otherwise they may find themselves the target for aggression. Numerous authors focus upon individual risk factors to explain and/or predict why some girls are more prone to aggressive and violent behavior than others. In the present paper, the examination shifts to consider the social context within which the particular factors of race and gender can prove to be 'risky' for girls.

Evidence that the social location of immigrant and refugee girls constitutes a form of risk in and of itself comes from a 1993 UN Working Group Report in which the members indicate that such girls "experience higher rates of violence due to the impact of racism and sexism in their communities and the host society and due to dislocation as the result of immigration" (Barron, 2001:1). As Jiwani (1998) comments, the girls are "caught between two cultures where their own is devalued and inferiorized, and where cultural scripts in both worlds encode patriarchal values" (p.3). As well it appears that refugee girls are actually in a more vulnerable position than refugee boys are in this regard.

In some cultural contexts, girls are less valued than boys and, consequently, are at higher risk for neglect and abuse. Their participation in educational endeavors, for example, is frequently prematurely curtailed and they are subject to sexual abuse, assault, and exploitation in greater number than are boys (*UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children,* 1993, as quoted in part by Cameron, 2001:2).

It will be the intent of this paper to make a closer consideration of the sociocultural factors which may contribute to and have an impact on the immigrant and refugee girl's vulnerability relative to aggression. Framing the analysis throughout, the voices of the young women themselves serve as the data. In the attempt to make meaning of their experiences, the theoretical lens employed is anti-racist, feminist and rights-based. The rights-based perspective is appropriate, as it is evident that these factors of race and gender "place the immigrant and refugee girl-child at greater risk for all forms of discrimination and human rights violations" (Cameron, 2001:3). In essence, examining how these sociocultural factors uniquely intersect (Jiwani, Janovicek & Cameron, 2002:49) for the girls will provide an understanding which should then be contrasted with a similar focus

[1] This paper is an earlier and shortened version of a chapter to appear in *Girls and Aggression: Contributing Factors and Intervention Principles,* edited by M. Moretti, C. Odgers, and M. Jackson. New York: Kluver Academic/Plenum Publishers (2003).