Attention to violence and its alternatives forms a major element in the mandate of the Institute for the Humanities. Many SFU faculty and graduate students are also researching specific aspects of violence and our responses to it in our culture. In the Spring and Fall of 2003 the Institute for the Humanities hosted a number of lectures and presentations on this topic.

The Culture of Violence and the Politics of Hope: Community Mobilization around Media Risks

—Stephen Kline and Kym Stewart

Introduction

Emmanuel Kant, audacious author of the essay *Perpetual Peace*, suggested that there are only three questions that matter. The first is *What can we know?* The second is *What may we do?* But the third, and most difficult is *What should we hope?* Anticipating the growing cynicism and frustration of democratic movements struggling with the increasingly concentrated cultural power of corporations in market society, Raymond Williams believed it was especially important for cultural critics and educators to remember the politics of hope by envisioning the positive alternatives to the growing hegemony of popular culture. Those concerned with peace education have clearly learned this lesson. Frustrated by the 50-year struggle to establish regulatory policy for the media's contribution to the socialization of aggression and admitting the growing difficulties of bringing new media-like video games into the ambit of cultural regulation, this paper explains the rationale for our development of a Canadian media education strategy designed to reduce the anti-social attitudes of youth through a community-based risk reduction initiative.

Paradox of Empires and Culture of Violence

One perplexing issue facing all would-be empires is how to recruit and train soldiers who will fight the enemy. To this end, cultures from Sparta to America have celebrated individual military prowess as a quality of manhood. Yet there is a paradox that underlies a militaristic empire's need both to train and motivate some youth to fight the enemy, while maintaining the cultural mechanisms for control of violence and maintenance of order at home. To this end, the values of self-restraint and obedience are also traditionally privileged in imperial cultures and cultivated in families and in schools, so that the nations' youth become good law-abiding citizens, play by the rules, and exercise control over their aggressive impulses.

"The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton", proclaimed the Duke of Wellington, musing on the successes of the British Empire in this regard. Wellington believed that games and field sports were an excellent means for training young soldiers mentally and physically—in both obeying orders and in fighting the enemy. Games were an effective venue of imperial socialization, he felt, not only because play rehearsed and consolidated martial skills and trained the physical body in rugged endeavour, but also because it fostered disciplined attitudes, team spirit and strategic sensibilities. And, like their British cousins, America too has encouraged martial play cultures among boys, celebrating in games, sports and generally in popular culture the values of the frontier entrepreneurialism which forged the American nation. Guns in particular have had a special place within the American socialization of militarized masculinity, not only as a useful skill and a right of self-defence, but arrogantly as the technical means projecting the *Pax Americana* throughout the world.

This American culture of violence, as we now call it, was amplified after the Second World War by the mass media. Marshall McLuhan (1964) foresaw a problem emerging from the growing mediation of 'war' not only in the TV news and films, but within the 'play' cultures of the nation. Noting how two New Guinea tribes, the *Willigiman-Wallalua* and the *Wittaia,* had transformed centuries of confrontation into a surprisingly bloodless ritual that looks like a dangerous field sport, McLuhan remarks: "These people… detect in these games a kind of model of their universe, in whose deadly gavotte they participate through the ritual of war games". Games, he notes, are not just for entertainment and distractions, but a mass medium reinforcing collective models "of inner psychological life". McLuhan also suggested we must realize that there is a new dynamic of war and peace in the mediated global village that reveals the important place of war games in American culture. Underlying this fascination for war games, he warned, was the force of mass media consolidating the mentality of tribal

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conflict which undermined enlightenment hopes for a culture of perpetual peace.

Few heeded McLuhan's warning: cars sprouted missile wings, scientists turned their militaristic gaze to the stars, and boys played with ray guns, robot warriors and video games, making the last fifty years into a period of unprecedented expansion of the children's cultural industries in the entertainment economy. As the mass-mediated marketplace was transformed into the military-entertainment complex, the cult of militarized masculinity was augmented by action toys like G.I. Joe, and shooters like Soldier of Fortune (Kline, 2003). Video games have in fact added a strikingly new level of intensity to the culture of violence, growing into a 10 billion dollar industry, which enables children, as young as seven, to experience first hand the conflicts of drug lords and the counter-terrorist man-hunts.

War play has persisted therefore as a theme in children's popular culture for economic as well as cultural reasons: as U.S. Senator Fritz Hollings stated recently, "Violence sells, and money talks, and no amount of self regulation and no amount of antitrust exemptions is going to change the profit incentive."

From Critiquing the Military-Entertainment Complex to Risk Reduction Strategy

As McLuhan predicted, the triumphalism of the *Pax Americana* has been undercut by the mean streets of 'Die Hard', leading many parents to fret anxiously about the growing aggressiveness at the heart of American children's culture. In the face of rising post-war youth crime rates and violence in the playgrounds of the nation, the U.S. Surgeon General launched a research programme in the 1960's to study the relationship between media and anti-social and aggressive behaviour among children and youths (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Hamilton, 1998; Pearl et al., 1982). Acknowledging that the psychological processes are complex and diverse, the U.S. Surgeon General (2001) recently summarized forty years of research stating that heavy media consumption can be viewed as a significant risk factor in the development of aggressive and anti-social behaviour in children: "a substantial body of research now indicates that exposure to media violence increases children's physically and verbally aggressive behavior".

Viewing media as a risk factor, they point out, does not mean that every child will jump up from a video game console and immediately shoot a schoolmate; but rather, that boys, especially those who find long term pleasure in watching violence repeatedly, and who identify with aggressive characters, may over the long term become desensitized to the implications of aggression (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). Most researchers recognize that media violence is only one of the contributing factors in the socialization of aggression, which is why as Garbarino (2001) states, "an accumulation-of-risk model is essential if we are to understand where televised violence fits into the learning and demonstration of aggressive behavior." But in a media saturated culture, even a small desensitization or attitudinal effect can have a huge impact when spread across the whole child population. Several researchers have even compared the level of risk found in media studies to those which link smoking to lung cancer, where the mechanisms explaining the risk are still not known.

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Not all smokers get lung cancer, nor do all heavy consumers of violent media become instant killers. The American Psychologists and Paediatricians Associations recently came to a similar conclusion noting that the cultural mechanisms by which media influence children's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are rather well understood —social learning, "mean world"syndrome, desensitization, identification and modelling of behaviour.

Although the correlations are complex, a series of recent longitudinal studies have added weight to scientists' claim that violence is a too-predominant theme in children's fictional programming, and that heavy viewers of TV violence, are more likely to be aggressive and anti-social later in life (Murray, 1995). One especially well designed longitudinal study published in *Science* recently confirmed that young boys who watch a lot of television are particularly vulnerable to violence in media: whereas 45% of the boys who watched television more than 3 hours per day at age 14, subsequently committed aggressive acts involving others, only 8.9%, who watched television less than an hour a day were aggressive later in life (Johnson et al., 2002). These researchers noted that even after controlling for other factors known to contribute to aggressiveness in young people "like childhood neglect, growing up in an unsafe neighborhood, low family income, low parental education and psychiatric disorders" there remain "significant associations between television viewing during early adolescence and subsequent aggressive acts against other persons" later in life.

In the wake of a number of school yard slayings by avid video game players, military psychologist Lt. Col. David Grossman became a leading US critic of the entertainment industry, arguing that "the main concern is that these violent video games are providing military

quality training to children" (Grossman and DeGaetano, 1999). Like the training of soldiers, Grossman (1999) believes that violent video games break down the psychological barriers that prevent killing: "children don't naturally kill; they learn it from violence in the home and… from violence as entertainment in television, movies and interactive video games". The disturbing blend of participation, engagement, rewards and practice that video games provide is the perfect instructional environment for soldiers. Moreover, as in army simulations, the repeated shooting at targets in the video games not only enhances weapons skills, but also desensitizes some young people to the horror of killing by turning enemies into dehumanized targets. In other words, the aggression-training effect of simulators requires that killing be experienced as a game—as a pleasurable and enjoyable act of imaginary entertainment. Like soldiers, and with constant practice, players of violent video games will eventually have extremely low or even no empathy towards victims of their brutality. One of the central thrusts of Grossman's argument is that the rise of violent video gaming may be an even more risky medium than television.

With the burgeoning of media, the politics of youth culture has increasingly hinged on these issues of violence with battle lines drawn between the opponents of perpetual war and the increasingly deregulated media industries. The peace advocates maintained that the media's constant celebration and promotion of militarized masculinity constitutes a profound threat to our civil society: boys especially raised to identify with combative heroes can also direct that aggression against their peers -- not to mention legitimate authority (OSDUS, 2001; Council of Europe, 1999; Eron et al., 1994; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). The constant pressure of mass media's unrestrained celebration of violence, many researchers believe, overwhelmed the moral forces of civility and responsibility cultivated within families and schools. Peace advocates point out that the weight of evidence shows that heavy media consumption constitutes a 'lifestyle risk' in our media-saturated culture, reinforcing children's aggressive social interactions, rough play and acceptance of violence as a normative solution to social conflict. Industry-sponsored critics have contested these findings, pointing out that children can distinguish between media fantasy and reality, and point out that the correlations are moderate in strength, and that the experimental evidence does not confirm that media are the primary direct cause of violent behaviour (Freedman, 1984; Goldstein, 2001). They also suggest that violent fantasies can actually meet children's deeper psychological needs; just as folk stories did, helping them to adjust to the realities of conflict that surrounds them (Jenkins, 1998). It is therefore unfair to censure children's media.

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Confronting Media Risks

The Canadian public has long been convinced that heavy consumption of violence from American media is a significant 'risk factor' contributing to aggressive attitudes and behaviours in Canadian children (Josephson, 1995; Gosselin et al., 1997). The *Canadian Standing Committee on Communications, Culture, and Television Violence* concurred: "We have clearly found that the violence portrayed on television reflects and shapes unhealthy social attitudes. It cannot be ignored" (Bird, 1993). In the globally deregulated mediascape, however, the Canadian public's calls for action concerning media violence have run aground on the shores of media deregulation. The hope that a legislative *cordon sanitaire* could be developed around children under 12 years of age, who are considered, in at least Canadian law, to be especially vulnerable to marketing pressures, has dissolved into cynicism and frustration. Recent policies—including Spicer's 9 o'clock watershed, industry self-regulation, anti-violence advertising campaigns and the V-chip—have been ineffective in reducing the risks to children. The Clinton's Children's Broadcasting Act has also had little effect in the U.S. on the levels of violence in TV programming available (Cole, 1995), or on children's access and exposure to violent and anti-social themes in media (Kline & Stewart, 2000). Moreover, the industry has successfully kept state regulation of the Internet and video games out of the public sphere (Kline, 2000). In spite of the convincing scientific evidence and continuing public anxiety, solutions to blocking the flood of American violence into Canada have not been found. The most recent example of the industries' muscular approach to deregulation was the world leading legislation for regulating video game violence that was fought for by a coalition opposing violent entertainment (COVE) in BC, and which was subsequently dismissed by the Liberal government under pressure from the industry lobby. Indeed, it seems increasingly difficult for even concerned Canadian parents to monitor, let alone

control, young children's exposure to violent and aggressive contents in the electronic media.[1] Given the freedom of commercial speech provisions in the Canadian constitution, many peace advocates feel increasingly frustrated by the unwillingness of governments to address these known risks of media culture through effective legislation.[2]

Cultural Development through Media Risk Reduction: Towards the Politics of Hope

Recognizing the pivotal role that television and video games play in children's culture, Dr. Tom Robinson at the Medical Center of Stanford University remarked how little effort has been devoted to the reduction of 'media risks', through in-school programmes similar to those successfully employed for drug, alcohol, and tobacco (Robinson, 2001). A risk management strategy, he argues, not only acknowledges that media presents risks to children's development, but implies that reducing these risks might have significant long term benefits for children's health and safety. With this in mind, Robinson (2002) designed a media education programme to persuade children to reduce their total media use (films, TV, and video games) without specifically promoting more active behaviours as replacements. Applying this 'risk reduction' intervention strategy, Robinson (2002) similarly argued that if heavy viewing of TV violence increased the risk of aggressiveness, then "reducing the amount of time that grade-school children spend watching television and playing video games can make them less aggressive toward their peers." In a carefully controlled experiment, these researchers found that at the end of this eight month study, children in the intervention group had reduced their TV viewing by about one-third and their ratings of peer-judged aggression were about 25 percent lower than those at the control school. The reduced media consumption school also engaged in about half as much verbally aggressive behaviour—such as teasing, threatening, or taunting their peers—on the playground when compared with students at the control school.

Both boys and girls benefited from the intervention curriculum, and the most aggressive students, according to the study, experienced the greatest drop in combativeness (Robinson, 2001a). Comparing students at the same school that received the media education curriculum with those at the control school, Robinson found that the media risk reduction treatment significantly reduced the risk of obesity associated with heavy viewing of media (Robinson, 2001b). Other studies suggest using media less may enhance creative play, improve self-esteem, promote social skills and strengthen pro-social values implying that targeting media risks may be a very effective way of intervening in a cluster of interrelated developmental risks necessary for improving the health and safety of children (Kline, 2000).

Robinson's promising research indicates that targeting media consumption through the schools may be a highly effective way of diminishing the interacting developmental risks associated with aggressive and anti-social behaviour. With the help of the Crime Prevention Community Mobilization Fund of Canada, we have launched a media education pilot project in North Vancouver which sets out to mobilize the community around reducing the risks associated with violent media consumption. The initiative involved the schools, police, community groups, and families in an effort to break the cycle of violence by diminishing peer 'acceptance and valorization' of media violence within the elementary school setting. We chose elementary age children because they are still in the throws of regularizing their media consumption habits, are subject to peer influence, and generally their parents still monitor and guide their media use (Kline and Botterill, 2001). By targeting the families of elementary children between 7-11 years, this preventive programme sets out to denormalize the culture of violence before children have fully consolidated aggressive attitudes and behaviours.

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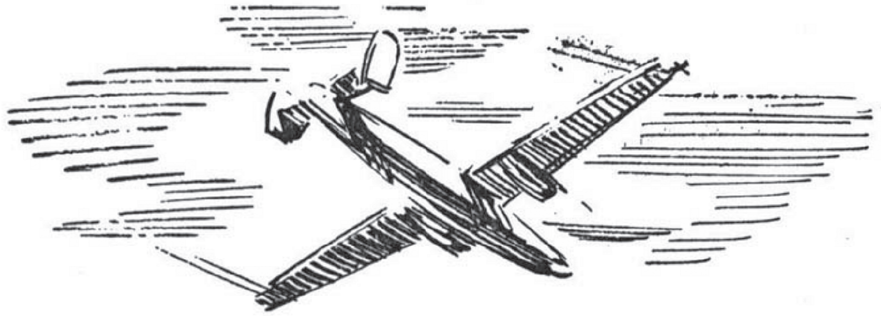
Beyond The Canute Complex: Media Education as Cultural Judo

A media education strategy underwrites our hope that we can intervene in the culture of violence: this strategy acknowledges that contemporary socialization is now



profoundly influenced by the media colonization of domestic space and leisure time. This means that children's experience is caught between three powerful agencies of socialization: the schools, the family and the peer group steeped in popular culture. Since young people on average spend more than five hours using media daily—the imprint of popular culture is experienced within each of these domains. As Daniel Bell pointed out, in a postmodern world the core cultural contradiction of capitalism lies in the tension between the work ethics and civilizing mission of the schools, and the leisure values and consumerist cultural preoccupations of the mediated popular culture. The former stresses traditional industrial values prescribing a curriculum of critical and analytic skills as the core competence of the literate subject. The later emphasizes the pleasures associated with cultural consumption and the psycho-social benefits of sharing stories and social play.

For a long time, parents and educators worked hard to buffer the schools' educational mandate from the encroachments of popular entertainments with a "check your Ninja Turtles at the door" stand-offishness. Since this approach failed, more and more educators recognized it was impossible to stop kids from bringing popular culture influences with them into the classroom. Children consume media because they share experiences and get peer support for doing so. Their influence is articulated in the drawings, stories and play of children. Many concluded that the schools had to learn to work within the changing social landscape of the postmodern world by developing a 'media education' strategy. Discussions of programs and video games are becoming a topic in children's peer interactions, and need to be allowed into the schools as well (Potter, 2001). Rather than building barriers to popular culture, our media education strategy welcomes media into the classroom in order to help children understand their own current use of it, and it also challenges them to explore what they can do if they did not rely on media so much to entertain themselves. Although there are competing interpretations of how to do this, our own position amounts to a kind of cultural judo. We believe that the mandate of education in the schools can now only be protected by teaching kids to be critical of popular culture in their lives. But it is hardly adequate to deconstruct media in a way that denies that children take pleasure in watching stories and playing games. If we only condemn their popular culture, we will be seen as prohibiting something that is fun and part of their peer culture. To change peer interactions we need to make alternatives to media, if not cool, then at least acceptable for many children. The task then must be to challenge them to change their leisure, without asking them to give up an element of their leisure activities they truly value.

Media as part of Family Life:
Our strategy has been based on research studying the family dynamics that surround Canadian children's media use. We know that there are many circumstances in family life that make media the easiest solution to boredom and loneliness. Children develop their habits within a family dynamic, in which parents model and negotiate limits to media consumption as part of the family solution for a busy life. For example the conflict over what to watch is resolved by giving kids a TV of their own, often in their bedroom. Not only do many parents not know what their kids are doing with media, but few families regard TV or video games as a way of talking about moral and aesthetic attitudes with children. The majority of parents in our communities take a laissez faire attitude to their children's media use, and never bother to communicate why playing or watching too much is not acceptable.

Media Risk Reduction Strategy:
Our media risk reduction strategy used a social marketing approach combined with a media education approach. The pilot project spanned over 7 weeks, with the final experimental question asking; 'What would you do if you turned off TV,

video games and PC's for a whole week?' The pilot project enlisted the help of four elementary schools, therefore researchers access to eight classes ranging from grade 2 to grade 6. A carefully constructed curriculum was developed to allow the students full freedom to express their preferences for media programmes and games without judgment from the researchers. It became essential that the program challenge the students to change their habits, rather than condemning their media-rich leisure habits.

What is it that we can do to motivate children to watch less TV? Children spend more time with media than they do in the classroom. But they cannot check the knowledge, attitudes and social behaviours they are exposed to in popular culture at the school door. Since children bring their fascinations and interest in popular culture with them into the school, media educators developed strategies for dealing with media within the framework of a curriculum. The approach this project is based on views media education as a kind of 'judo' that absorbs the force of popular culture on children by critically reframing their relationship to it in the classroom.

A week long media diary was used to get students to study and discuss their own media usage patterns. Parents were encouraged to participate in the media audit to help promote discussions about media use within the family. The audit asks students to estimate how much time they spent with a variety of media related activities, from reading to chatting online. They were also asked to report their choices of TV programmes and games for that week.

The media risk reduction strategy pilot project developed a five phase curriculum which uses learning exercises to promote further understanding of the role that media plays in the lives of children today. Each lesson combines critical media education and approved curriculum goals, which includes research, art, writing, social skills, math and creative problem solving. These projects and assignments were given in-class or as homework assignments when their application corresponded with current in-class modes of learning.

Heroes and Heroines: This unit examines the role of heroes and heroines in the lives of the students. In-class discussions asked children to define a *real life* versus a *fictional* hero or heroine. These discussions were combined with written and art work to allow the students to express their selection of their favourite heroes or heroines.

Scripting and Re-scripting: This unit continues with the idea of heroes and heroines and adds a new dimension, a commonly seen dichotomy: hero versus villain. The discussion allows for student led definitions of heroes and villains and the examination of real life villains: bullies. The class focused on stereotyping and media contrived resolutions of conflict as compared to real life resolution. In order to fully understand the difference, the student were asked to role play either a real life bullying situation or a fictional hero versus villain conflict resolution pattern. Older students are taught to analyze the conflict resolution patterns found in the media as part of a content analysis activity. This application and analysis was based on the students' perceptions and allowed them to examine the violence on the screen rather than 'zone out' and accept the violence as part of their leisure activities.

Fair Play as moral principle: This lesson takes a historical approach to games by asking the children to interview their parents about the games their parents played as children. This information was shared and used to develop a game list which the students added their current favourite games to. The objective of this lesson was twofold. First we wanted the children to brainstorm non-media activities that might be used as alternatives to media use during the upcoming Tune Out week. Second, we wanted to ask for game preferences to lead into the examination of 'rough and tumble' play, boundaries, rules and regulations and elements of games that make playing fun. The unit explores the difference between conflict and cooperation in games and the way limits and rules promote both fair and fun game play. As part of the game session the students were asked to develop their own games using five commonly found household objects: cup, string, ball, marbles and bean bag. The development of games included the invention of rules and regulations, game playing penalties as well as goals.

Tune Out Preparation Week: The second last week was used to prepare for the upcoming Tune Out the Screen Challenge. Activities included making Tune Out posters, writing stories or advertisements to encourage others to Tune Out the Screen. The students were asked to select a level of participation in Tune out week from three choices: will not participate, will decrease time spent with the media and the final choice was to fully participate in the Tune out week (going cold turkey). Alternatives to media use were encouraged and the

class designed Tune Out week alternatives posters to have in their classrooms as references. Parents were asked to support their children in finding alternative activities and to promote healthier lifestyle choices.

Tune Out Week: Children were asked to keep time diaries which will be used in the evaluation of how well their actions correlate with their intended plans. Both parents and children were asked to take part in the challenge of Tune out week, the evaluation of the project as whole and the process of altering any sections of the program.

For full results visit our website at www.sfu.ca/media-lab/risk

Stephen Kline is a faculty member in the School of Communication at SFU and his areas of particular interest include social communication of advertising and children's culture.

Kym Stewart is an MA candidate in the School of Communication at SFU who is focussing on children's culture, interactive media, and more recently New Media usage in South Korea.

NOTE: A complete list of works cited in this document, but not included here, is available from the editor; e-mail grahama@sfu.ca

Twisting the Cross: Terrorism and the Shaping of American Society

—Michael Fellman

- A religious fanatic named John Brown rides into Harper's Ferry, seizes the national armory, thrusts the issue of race incontrovertibly into the American debate, and makes the Civil War inevitable.
- William T. Sherman burns his way through the South, using his troops to spread fear among Confederate civilians. Lives are spared but property is not. The deterioration of morale on the homefront destroys that of the troops more effectively than any cannon.
- In collusion with local and state authorities, a paramilitary army of ex Confederate white supremacists uses burning crosses and hangmen's ropes to terrify freed slaves, and the white South rises from the shambles created by war to establish the apartheid system that Reconstruction was supposed to prevent.
- During a labor rally in Chicago's Haymarket Square an unknown person throws a bomb at the police, killing one and injuring others. The cops open fire, killing uncounted strikers and several of their own force. After a trial in which no evidence is produced linking them to the bomb thrower, seven anarchist leaders are sentenced to death for their political opinions.
- At the turn of the twentieth century, American troops torture and slaughter Filipino nationalists and bully whole towns as the U.S. picks up the white man's burden and openly colonizes a foreign country for the first time.

What do these five significant chapters of nineteenth-century American history have in common? Terror. For it is an unremarked yet salient fact of America's development as a nation that what truly reordered American society yesterday, yet threatens that order today, is nothing other than terrorism. Historians are used to crediting trends like industrialization and the practical application of ideas like liberty with the coalescence of American nationhood. But it was terror that did even more to shape the nineteenth century, and it was those hundred years in which America was truly made.

Terrorism is a more complicated, more expansive tool than we currently credit. We simplify it at our peril. To both utilize it and oppose it, we must understand it. And there is no better place to start than with our own past.

We know that terror involves not only the use of threats and violence to intimidate, coerce and selectively destroy civilian populations for political purposes—it is also the state of fear, submission or flight such tactics produce. But what we need to accept is that while together these two processes can certainly destroy societies, they can make and shape them as well. It is certainly true that the doctrine of universal human rights, enacted both in ethics and in law, is the ideal norm of democratic governance; yet we only have to look back over our shoulder to see that terrorism has frequently been embraced as an