

MURDER AND MEDIA: WHAT ELEMENTARY TEACHERS CAN DO ABOUT VIDEO VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT. The influence of television and video violence on children's behavior is of concern to many. A number of cases of children's violence, inspired by television and video shows, has been reported. This article examines some of the research relating to the influence of television and video violence on children's behavior. The research of Vooijs and van der Voort in the Netherlands dealing with teaching about differences between television violence and real-life violence is also examined and their conclusions are presented. Suggestions are made for dealing with this concern, for example teaching about ethics, peaceful conflict resolution, and media literacy. The philosophy of caring is discussed for possible use in the classroom, and the role of the parent or guardian is also noted.

RÉSUMÉ. L'influence de la violence à la télévision et dans les jeux vidéo sur le comportement des enfants est une source de préoccupation pour beaucoup. On signale un certain nombre de cas de violence perpétrés par des enfants et inspirés par des émissions de télévision et des jeux vidéo. Cet article analyse certaines des recherches qui portent sur l'influence de la violence à la télévision et dans les jeux vidéo sur le comportement des enfants. Il examine aussi les recherches menées par Vooijs et van der Voort aux Pays-Bas sur l'enseignement des différences entre la violence à la télévision et la violence réelle, et présente leurs conclusions. L'auteur prodigue des conseils pour faire face à ce problème, notamment en donnant des cours sur l'éthique, le règlement pacifique des conflits et la littératie médiatique. La philosophie de la bienveillance est analysée pour être éventuellement utilisée en classe, et l'on traite également du rôle des parents ou du tuteur.

The appalling incident on July 8, 1995, at La Ronge, Saskatchewan, where a mentally impaired 14-year-old murdered a seven-year-old, mutilated the body, and then prepared a concoction of the murdered child's rendered flesh should give every teacher pause. The 14-year-old, Sandy Charles, claimed he was inspired to murder Jonathan Thimpson

by the video film *Warlock*.¹ This crime is but one in a series of alleged media inspired violence in what may be a cause-effect relationship. In February, 1993, a two-year-old was beaten to death in England by two 11-year-olds and the crime was linked to the film *Child's Play*. In October of 1993, a two-year-old in Ohio died in a fire caused by her brother who was allegedly inspired by the cartoon show *Beavis and Butthead*. In October 1994, a five-year-old girl in Norway was killed by three playmates who kicked and stoned her to death. The playmates were five- and six-year-olds who were Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles fans. That same month in Ajax, Ontario, an adult of 27 was shot by a 17-year-old whom it was claimed, was influenced by the film *Faces of Death* (Canadian Press, 1996). Concern over media violence and violence in general has drawn the attention of physicians. The American Medical Association has posted an internet page on media violence (AMA, 1997) and Canadian physicians have founded an organization called DOVE (Doctors Against Violence Everywhere).

Caution is needed in dealing with media reports of alleged TV-motivated violence by children. In the above mentioned *Child's Play* incident reported by the Canadian Press, Buckingham (1996) claims that media hype was responsible for the video being implicated in the killing (pp. 24 - 27) and that the chief investigating officer stated that there was no connection found to link video viewing with the killing (p. 22). Buckingham raises a caveat that should be considered concerning claims of TV-inspired violence: "Throughout history, assertions about the negative influence of popular cultural forms have served as a focus for much broader anxieties about moral decline and social disorder" (p. 21). This article will go beyond the reports of TV-inspired violence and examine research associated with this topic.²

V-Chips and program classifications

Technology has been used to screen out inappropriate TV shows for children. An example of this was a television set with a programming device that caregivers of children could set to block out certain TV shows, using a numerical code of 1-999. However in my experience with the device it was not successful or useful since my children were able to access the programming procedure and find the code by trial and error. A complaint to our former cable company about blocking inappropriate shows elicited the impractical reply that we should remove the TV tuner. Currently a "V-chip" is under development that would block inappropriate TV shows and would be activated by a code trans-

mitted along with the show. Because the United States is developing such a classification code, Canada has developed a similar one for compatibility between both nations once the V-chip is available. However if the U.S. classification is revised, then the Canadian classification system will be reconsidered (CRTC, 1997, pp. 2, 8-9).

Programs will be rated with the following categories: Exempt, CTR-E (news, sports documentaries, talk shows, music videos, variety programming); Children, CTR-C (children under 8 years); Children over 8 years, CTR-8+; Family, CTR-FAM; Parental Advisory, CTR-PA; Over 14 Years, CTR-14+; and Adults, CTR-18+ (CRTC, 1997, appendix). This rating system will be used only with conventional English language stations, networks, and specialty services. French, as well as pay and pay-per-view programs, will use provincial rating systems (CRTC, 1997, pp. 5-6). The CRTC notes that broadcasters will adhere to the self-regulatory Canadian Association of Broadcasters' (CAB) Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming. The Code contains the following: "animated programming targeted to children shall not invite dangerous imitation; violence will not be shown as a preferred way of resolving conflict; the consequences of realistic scenes of violence will be portrayed; and violence will not be the central theme in animated programs." The Code also sets 9:00 p.m. to begin the broadcast of violence for adult audiences. In my opinion this Code is rendered worthless since any violence unsuitable for children can still be broadcast at any time as long as it has "appropriate viewer advisories" (CRTC, 1997, pp. 7-8). It is interesting to note that CTRC has agreed to allow the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, a self-regulatory body that deals with the CAB Violence Code, to arbitrate disputes about television program classifications (CRTC, 1997, p. 9).

What are the implications?

Watching television and videos is a major entertainment in our society. Even though some productions are labeled with a warning not to be viewed by certain age groups, that is insufficient to prevent children from viewing them. Some parents are also responsible for not monitoring, or even caring, what their children watch. Yet, is it a false assumption that television media can corrupt, or that violent media can act as a catharsis to violence and that the incidents of alleged TV-inspired violence listed above are merely out of the ordinary happenings? Can it be shown that the children were influenced solely by the media, or was their violence due to a combination of factors, including violent

scenes on TV? For purposes of this article, violence is defined as actions causing injury to others or one's self.

An early example of the influence of media violence is found in the research of Granzberg (1980a) where television was introduced into one subject Cree community, while a second Cree community without television served as a control. The research focused on 49 boys in grades three to five: 33 in the subject group and 16 in the control group. The communities were studied over a four-year-period and standardized questions were used to determine the willingness of the boys to use violence. In the subject community the willingness to engage in violence increased and in the control group it decreased. Conflict resolution in traditional Cree culture stresses nonviolence (Hallowell, 1955). Granzberg (1982) noted that in the subject community, "After television was introduced, the children fought more, used more dangerous weapons, and did more damage to each other (for example, the number of eyes lost in fights increased greatly)"(p. 45). Granzberg was not specific about the violence, only that the behavior of the children was imitative in general, thus, "A 'Kung fu' series produced a wave of karate behavior; the Olympic telecasts produced a surge of athletic activity. . . ." (p. 45). Granzberg (1980b) also noted that, "According to many, children's proneness to copy television has produced an increase in the level of violence in their behavior. For example, after an episode of *Happy Days* was broadcast in which Fonzie's 'All American' friends got into trouble with a leather jacket gang called the 'Red Devils,' gangs of kids appeared at school the next day calling themselves red devils, blue devils, green devils, etc. The fighting that took place under these banners disrupted school activities for several days" (p. 118). Although Granzberg clearly found that introduction of television did increase violence, he noted that a cultural element was also involved and, "Because the Algonkians perceive television as a modern conjuring device, they are more susceptible to the messages of television and see it as the teller of the truth" (1982, p. 43).

Arguing against the impact of media on causing violence, McGuire (1986) notes, ". . . we concluded above that the evidence indicates, even with varying time lags, that there is only a slight relationship between exposure to televised violence and viewer aggression or between exposure to commercial ads and purchases" (p. 231). This finding must be considered within the context of other studies noted in this article that affirm the relation of television to violence. It is interesting

to note that McGuire introduces the previous quotation with the following:

A long string of empirical studies from Sherif (1936) and Asch (1956) to Fishbein (1980) and Berkowitz (1984) have demonstrated that people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by their perceptions of what is generally condoned or normative. Therefore, repeated depiction of a belief or behavior on television, by conveying to the viewers that it is socially acceptable and even culturally prescribed, increases the likelihood that viewers will adopt it. (McGuire 1986, pp. 230-231)

Research confirms that children exposed to violent media are affected by it. Centerwall (1989) examined 38 studies of television and violence between 1972 and 1986 and summarized, "Studies at the level of the individual indicate that exposure to television increases individual levels of physical aggressiveness" (pp. 52-53). Molitor and Hirsch (1994) replicated the research of Ronald Drabman and Margaret Thomas (Drabman & Thomas, 1974a, 1974b, 1976; Thomas and Drabman, 1975) who are frequently cited in research articles dealing with media violence (Molitor & Hirsch 1994). In these experiments two groups of children, one exposed to media violence and one not exposed to media violence individually observe younger children on a TV monitor who begin to argue and fight. The procedure hinges on how long it takes the child viewing the monitor to call an adult's attention to the disturbance. Thomas and Drabman's research found that the children who observed media violence took longer to call an adult than did the children who did not observe media violence. The updated replication by Molitor and Hirsch obtained the same results. Molitor and Hirsch conclude "that the earlier Drabman and Thomas findings still operate. Children tend to tolerate the violence of others – in this case, younger children – more if they have seen TV/film violence" (p. 202).

Levin and Carlsson-Page (1995) conducted an informal study of the reaction of teachers to the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. (They cite Lisosky [1995] that this TV program is more violent than any previous programs, having an average of 200 violent acts per hour.) They requested interested teachers of children ranging from two to seven years old to complete an anecdotal questionnaire about how the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* influenced their pupils and how they dealt with it. They received 204 completed questionnaires from 17 U.S. states. Ninety-eight percent of the responses noted an increase of the children's violence and aggression, and most were concerned about

play, violence, and role models dealing with the show. One teacher's anecdote is worth noting: "One boy was a real problem because he was obsessed with Power Ranger play. Then, he suddenly dropped them. We talked to his parents, who said they had put away their TV set." This study is of interest for the concerns expressed by the participants but is of limited value since the participants do not represent a random population sample and are a self-selecting group. This study is also weakened because the authors had requested participants to respond to how they dealt with the show and no information of this nature is mentioned in the article. The authors did provide for teacher use some suggestions that appear to be their own.

Vooijs and van der Voort (1993) note that "the depiction of violence in television programmes increases the chance that children in the audience will act aggressively themselves" (p. 139). They also mention that TV violence provides false ideas about "social reality" and can diminish "prosocial behaviors such as helping and sharing."

A survey of research on media violence by Ledingham (1996) notes that "The results of studies on the effects of televised violence are consistent." Citing Huesmann and Eron (1986), Ledingham notes that children develop new ways of being aggressive and determine if they will be rewarded when aggressive to others by observing aggression. She also cites Joy, Kimball, and Zabrack's study (1986) which found that children became "significantly more aggressive two years after television was introduced to their town for the first time."

On the other hand Ledingham (1996), citing Hearold (1986), points out that TV's positive educational value "probably" outweighs TV violence's negative effects. Other factors in addition to TV violence may affect children such as violent toys, e.g., guns. Potts, Huston, and Wright (1986), noted in Ledingham (1996), found that preschoolers playing with guns engaged in more acts of aggression than preschoolers who only watched a violent TV program.

Another important factor is the response of a child's parents to the child's aggressive behavior, as well as their influence as role models for violent or peaceful behavior (Ledingham, 1996). Singer and Singer (1986), noted in Ledingham's survey, found children less aggressive in homes where parents "consistently notice and praise their children for finding peaceful solutions to conflicts."

Television Violence: A Review of the Effects on Children of Different Ages (Josephson, 1995) is an examination of the published research regard-

ing the TV media's influence on children. This study includes films that have been transcribed to video format as well as those programs made for video viewing. It notes that children can be desensitized by television violence to see the world as a frightening place and to expect "physical violence to resolve conflicts" (p. 9), "that television makes 'at risk' children more aggressive" (p. 45), and that the research definitively shows "that television violence leads to increased aggression" (p. 49). TV media may also encourage some children to overcome their fears by identifying with what frightens them. One child explained how he overcame his fears about *Nightmare on Elm Street*: "I pretended I was Freddy Kruger. Then I wasn't scared. Now, that's what I always do and I am never scared" (p. 32). Couple this with the finding that ". . . aggressive fantasies . . . serve as rehearsals for violent responses to real-life events" (p. 30) and it is of serious societal concern. Josephson's survey of the data as well as the other sources cited above raise sufficient concern to deal with TV media as a critical thinking classroom topic involving questions, research skills, and inquiry units (Kirman, 1996). However, is television alone to blame for violent behavior? Phillips notes, "At present, we have evidence suggesting that three types of mass media stories trigger imitative behavior: stories about suicide, murder-suicide, and championship heavyweight prizefights" (Phillips, 1986, p. 304).

Marshall McLuhan (1964, p. 19) warns that an effect of media and technology is "that we become what we behold." If the circumstances are as dire as many of the above resources present it, then dealing with media violence should begin on the elementary level. Young children watch TV and videos and they should have the tools to help them place TV and video violence in a proper perspective, that is, relating it to reality. It is here that elementary teachers have a critical role.

What can teachers do?

Teachers realize the importance of high standards for role models for young people. Research affirms the influence of teachers as role models (Fraenkel, 1977). Clearly, television appears to provide an electronic role model for some children that is not counterbalanced by other socializing elements. As teachers and role models we have a duty to do something – but what?

Students must be "media proofed," that is, taught to use critical thinking as a tool to make informed decisions about what they view on TV and videos. The activities noted later in this paper will provide a number of critical thinking exercises for children.³ While every subject

involves elements of critical thinking, media can be dealt with specifically in social studies, health, and language arts. Within these aforementioned subject areas the following can be taught to help "media proof" children: ethics, peaceful conflict resolution, and media literacy. Ethics is the study of morality regarding the self and others. Peaceful conflict resolution presents alternatives to violence. Media literacy examines television as communication and art.

ROLE OF TEACHERS

Ethics

Ethics, like critical thinking, can be taught in all subject areas, but social studies with its emphasis on people, politics, and society seems most appropriate for the introduction and application of ethics. Teaching ethics means teaching about what our society considers to be "fair play" in our actions. Our actions usually reflect our values, that is, what we most esteem as worthwhile standards in life regarding what is right and what is wrong. We are not born with values, they are given to us by society through the process of acculturation. This is a very complex process involving what a child is told, sees, and hears. It is a continual learning experience that is ultimately translated into action. Here is where the teacher can have an influence as part of the acculturation process. The objective is to make the students aware of the consequences of their actions. However, this can only be done if there is a clear idea of what is right and what is wrong.

Rightness and wrongness are usually not taught explicitly as a curriculum topic but are part of the behavioral expectations of our society. There are stories for primary grades that contain moral messages and some social studies topics deal with human actions both good and evil, but teachers are usually expected to reinforce good behavior and deal with wrongful behavior *in loco parentis*. The norms for right and wrong are there but are more often part of the hidden curriculum. However, television provides role models through the explicit behavior of actors or cartoon characters. For schools this means making explicit the hidden curriculum of positive societal values and actions appropriate to one's self and others as expected *in loco parentis*, and not merely reacting in response to their violation by children.

The philosophy of "caring" has much potential to translate hidden positive societal values and actions curriculum into an explicit one for the classroom. Milton Mayeroff (1971), William Leiss (1990), and in

particular Nel Noddings (1984) are prominently associated with caring. Caring provides a framework for instruction dealing with positive social behavior. Caring is defined by Noddings (1984) as follows:

First, the action (if there has been one) either brings about a favorable outcome for the cared-for or seems reasonably likely to do so; second, the one caring displays a characteristic variability in her actions – she acts in a non rule-bound fashion on behalf of the cared-for. (p. 25)

A classroom instructional epistemology derived from caring is the “ethical factor” (Kirman, 1992). It provides a decision-making yardstick for personal actions based on love, kindness, and respect for human dignity. These are defined as follows:

- Love is the unselfish concern for the well being of others.
- Kindness is concerned helpfulness.
- Human dignity is the inherent nobility and respect due each person.

A major element of teaching about the ethical factor is that of conducting the classroom through the use of the principles of ethics and encouraging students to apply these in their dealings with one another. Thus being moral means helping another within reason, and is right, but causing harm to one’s self or another is wrong. Within the subject area of social studies it can be used as a standard for conduct in examining history and current events. Because of this the ethical factor can be used with social studies curricula, such as Alberta’s, that do not refer to values, but rather to attitudes. The former deals with the standards for desirability or worth, while the latter deals with opinion or purpose.

It is this author’s view that a key element to promote caring in the classroom is promotion of the concept that the children and teacher are all responsible for one another and ultimately we are all responsible for our fellow humans. This can be implemented by encouraging cooperative rather than competitive behavior, teaching and emphasizing peaceful resolution of conflict among the class members, and orienting current events discussion of conflicts to how these disputes might be peacefully settled. It is important that the teacher model a caring attitude since research has shown that this is critical (Fraenkel, 1977).

Conflict resolution

Studying social relationships is part of the health curriculum and is a subject area where conflict resolution can be dealt with. One technique that can be used to teach students about conflict resolution is “Aggres-

sion Replacement Training" also known as ART (Goldstein & Glick, 1987). It is a process by which students confront their aggressiveness through a combination of discussion and role play to learn self-control. It presents ideas, among others, on how to: express complaints, deal with the feelings of others, cope with stressful conversations, respond to anger, avoid fights, be helpful to others, face accusations, deal with peer pressure, express affection, and respond to failure. ART was originally developed for the secondary level, but it can be modified for the elementary level as well. It is being used for the rehabilitation of the young teenage boys who were found guilty of murdering Rev. Frank Toope and his wife, Jocelyn, in suburban Montreal (Wilton & Zacharias, 1996).

A publication of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Early Violence Prevention: Tools for Teachers of Young Children* (1995), provides information for early childhood teachers to deal with children's aggression, including non-violent strategies and how to approach media violence. In fourteen chapters the book covers a range of topics dealing with real life violence, problem solving skills, coping with patterns of aggressive behavior, sharing, role modeling, and the effects of media. Another resource on anger control is a four-page brochure produced by the American Psychological Association (Sileo, 1992) with ideas that teachers can modify for use at the elementary level. It deals with the nature of anger, expressing anger, anger management, and strategies to control anger.

Project VIP (1995) (Violence Is Preventable) is another approach for helping to teach children about violence. It is designed for students from 8 to 12 years and provides strategies for the children to use to cope with violence. As the children learn conflict resolution strategies they are practiced in various activities. A leader's guide and a student workbook are used and are available in class sets of 25 workbooks. The procedure of learning violence-coping strategies and applying them in activities is also similar to the procedures noted above in ART.

The types of readings selected for children may also have an influence on children's behavior. An approach to readings that could promote peaceful behavior is provided by Myers (1994-95). She discusses books dealing with global peace, jealousy, peace among groups, misunderstandings, and playground disputes, all of which are suitable for classroom use and discussion.

Media literacy

Television is a powerful and attractive art form and because of this its messages can be learned and emulated. For example, language arts

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classes can be the setting to examine and discuss the following questions, selected and modified for the particular grade level:

- There is a difference between reality and fantasy. Does this pose problems regarding media role models?
- The underlying economic motive of the media is to make money by keeping viewer attention. Are viewer ratings and not morality the bottom line? Is this morally right?
- Is it ethical for shocking and inappropriate behavior to be shown on television in order to maintain ratings or sales?
- Should what is shown on television be accepted without question? Is there a moral criterion to judge whether something shown on television is right or wrong or good or bad?
- Would it have been possible for any given program showing violence to have resolved the situation peacefully? How?

Activities dealing with the above questions are:

- Role play different endings after viewing a video.
- Re-write video scenarios to eliminate violence or inappropriate responses shown in the video
- Discuss criteria for right and wrong, good and bad as expected by the students' families. Then show one or more videos and have the class discuss the videos and their relation to the criteria.

Teaching about media literacy does not mean limiting the instruction to TV or TV violence. The subject of media bias in general (of which violence can be an element especially for ratings regarding TV) can be discussed and examined to give a broader view of the effects of media on society and extrapolated to TV programs. Newspapers can be used for this purpose. Suggestions for using newspapers in the classroom to examine bias in news reports have been published (Kirman, 1992; Lamb, 1980; Susskind, 1983; Carey & Greenberg, 1983), and one of the most available tools for examining bias in the media is advertising, which can now be found even on internet sites (Kay & Stansell, 1981; Tutolo, 1981; Allen, Wright, & Laminack, 1988; Freese, 1988).

THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

The home plays an important role given the amount of time many children spend watching TV. School is only one part of the children's lives. For parents this means monitoring their children's TV and video

viewing and discussing the implications of what their children have watched. Parents and guardians should also discuss with their children what they watch and provide guidance regarding television viewing. One way teachers can foster this without infringing on parental rights and responsibilities is to encourage the children to raise questions about their television viewing with their parents and guardians. Some teachers may also want to contact the children's families and mention the importance of such discussions. However, unless the parents provide specific guidance against violence, viewing TV with an adult may be counterproductive. Ledingham (1996) cites research to the effect that viewing TV with an adult may intensify TV's effect on children, and that if parents and children view TV together it may be "more likely" to be something preferred by the adult. This could lead to children viewing violence in news and shows chosen by the adult.

Ledingham (1996) provides a set of guidelines for parents and guardians, which teachers can provide to them, regarding their children's TV viewing:

1. A single violent TV show won't permanently damage a child.
2. Rules should be made and enforced, but be flexible.
3. The earlier you begin to influence your child's TV viewing the better.
4. To reduce violent content make rules about the quality rather than the quantity of what children may watch.
5. Be able to live with the rules and enforce them.
6. Provide technological alternatives, e.g., seeing a favorite video many times or previewing videos for acceptability.
7. Provide a list of acceptable programs.
8. Purchase an electronic control device if the children have a separate TV.
9. Provide alternatives to TV viewing, such as community programs and outdoor activities.
10. The approach should reflect the child's age.
11. Discuss TV with your children and elicit their views of it.
12. Your own viewing habits may have to change when the children are around.

TV VERSUS REAL LIFE

The research of Vooijs and van der Voort (1993) dealing with TV violence is of interest. The objective of their study was to help children between the ages of 10 and 12 realize that there is a difference between violence on television and real life violence. There were 165 subject students in six classes and 159 students in the control group. The subject group used a series of six specially made 20-minute videos and student workbooks and the teachers were provided with a manual. The program format used TV clips alternating with commentary. This provided new information to challenge the children's' pre-existing beliefs. The workbook reviewed and reinforced the content of the videos. The learning theory was based on the concept of "decentration" (Leyens, Herman, & Dunand, 1982) in which the viewer is focused on elements providing a different "frame of reference" to evaluate what he or she is viewing. For example, in the sixth video, "The use of violence to resolve conflict in films was contrasted with conflict resolution in real life" (Vooijs & van der Voort, 1993, pp. 142, 143). The program was reported to have been both "well received," and "[t]he lessons produced a significant reduction in the level of realism children attribute to violent television programmes" (p. 150). However, the researchers did question whether the results of the project could be generalized to the children's home TV viewing since the results were obtained under supervised school conditions. They also questioned the long-term effects of such education since their earlier research had shown that after two years there was a weakening of effects. They believe that a one-time program is insufficient to produce "critical consumers of television" and that "the lessons should be in a longer, more broadly conceived curriculum" (p. 151).

A Canadian attempt to encourage children to realize the difference between what may be depicted on TV and reality is the National Film Board (1996) video *Live TV*. It is for Grades 1 - 6 and deals with a television that turns into a human-like creature that attempts to solve problems using a TV style violent approach but only creates more problems. There is no evidence that this video meets its objective of discriminating between TV programs and reality; however, the various scenarios in it do provide a focus for classroom discussion. The video is also subject to the above caveat of Vooijs and van der Voort (1993) about such instruction needing to be within the context of "longer, more broadly conceived curriculum" (p. 151).

Hearold (1986) proposes a positive program to deal with televised violence and sex:

Many organizations and groups have chosen to work for the removal of sex and violence in television programs. It is a defensive position: eliminate the negative. Alternately, I would recommend accentuating the positive: apply money and effort to creating new entertainment programs with prosocial themes, especially for children (to whom the empirical evidence most clearly applies). (p. 116)

Media violence cannot be dealt with in isolation. It is necessary to deal with violence in general. This means examining violence in daily activities and current events and applying some of the above procedures to consider alternative behavior. It also means running the classroom with an ethic that reinforces positive relationships. Regarding all of the attempts to deal with television violence we must remember the caveat of Marshall McLuhan, "that not even the most lucid understanding of the peculiar force of a medium can head off the ordinary 'closure' of the senses that causes us to conform to the pattern of experience presented" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 329). This presents a challenge to developers of education materials to be concerned that "it is experience rather than understanding, that influences behavior, especially in collective matters of media and technology, where the individual is almost inevitably unaware of their effect upon him" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 318).

The prophetic words of Pope Pius XII are a fitting conclusion to this article, "It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of modern society and the stability of its inner life depend in large part on the maintenance of an equilibrium between the strength of the techniques of communication and the capacity of the individual's own reaction" (quoted in McLuhan, 1964, p. 20).

NOTES

1. This incident was extensively covered by *The Edmonton Journal* from July 14, 1995 to September 9, 1997. Coverage of this incident appeared on: July 1995 (date/page number) 14/B5, 15/A3, 19/A10, 22/A3; January 1996 18/A1 and A3; 1 June 1996 19/A3 (two articles), 20/A1 and D1, 21/B7, 18/A3; 19/A3 (two articles), 20/A1, 21/A1, B7, 24/A1, A3, 25/A5, 26/A3, 27/A1, A3, 29/B5; August 1996 2/A3, 3/A1, A3, 10/A3; September 1996 4/A4, 24/A3, 26/A8; September 1997, 9/A1.

2. While this article deals with TV violence the question of violent video games and a possible link between these games and child violence has yet to be extensively examined and published in the professional literature.

3. In addition the Fall, 1997 issue, (Vol. 32, number 1), of *Canadian Social Studies*, has "critical thinking" as its theme and will provide teachers with the most current ideas for a theoretical foundation to develop their own classroom critical thinking activities.

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