A Peace Education Unit
Media and Peace: Toward Dialogue among Civilizations

Kevin Kester
PhD Student, Adult Education
Ontario Institute of Studies in Education
University of Toronto, Canada

Preparatory Reading for Students:

1. Murray, John P. (2007). Children and Television: Using TV Sensibly. South Texas: Mind Science Foundation. Available at:
   http://www.mindscience.org/resources/MSF10189_ChldrnTVGud-0407.pdf.

2. Trautman, Brian J. (2009). Military Recruiting Advertising and Media Access Undermine Peace Efforts, available at: http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/41292.

3. Students are also asked to select two short articles from readings available at The Center for Media Literacy (www.medialit.org). Students should select and read articles that are directly relevant to the flow of class dialogue, meaning that the topic of the articles is linked with previous class readings and discussions. Students should be prepared to present key learning from the readings in class and bring reference materials for each article. Readings available at: http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/rr3.php.

Introduction

Media heavily influences our lives and our perceptions of the world. For example, consider that by the time most US students graduate high school they will have spent nearly 15,000 hours in front of a television, compared with 11,000 hours in a classroom with a teacher (Murray, 2007). Hence, students spend more time with a television than a teacher. Also, consider that NBC (the US-based National Broadcasting Corporation) is owned by General Electric, one of the world's largest weapons producers; this relationship between television programming and weapons-production certainly informs the types of programs shown on NBC. Yet this relationship and the message embedded in it are hidden from most viewers. Certainly NBC programming will support the worldview that heavy defense spending is a necessity and that evil threats lurk in the distance (Trautman, 2009). Television and mass media, then, is clearly an influential technology that informs our worldviews, beliefs and practices.

When viewed uncritically, television and news media in particular, can give the viewer an illusion of objectivity and truth; when in reality it is produced with a specific bias according to the agencies' worldviews and agenda, including the owners, advertisers, and varying constituencies who benefit from the specific construction of events. In this way, news media has the capacity to not simply *inform* the public, but to *manipulate* viewers via the use of language, emotion, and the visual display of stories. It is important to be a critical consumer of media, to be capable of uncovering, and critically reflecting on the ideologies and cultural nuances that are embedded in the message.

Furthermore, media is only one component of the broader systems of information production and consumption that develop an individual's and collective society's worldviews, including information absorbed from parents, teachers, faith-based groups, clubs and associations. These worldviews are formed through interaction with physical, mental and emotional stimuli and experiences that define an individual's personal life as well as the

collective histories of a people. As a result, exclusive and violent beliefs and behaviors shown in the media and learned from parents and teachers assist the cultivation of cultures of violence (as conceptualized in the theoretical work of Freud, Piaget, and Bandura). These violent orientations or conflict-based worldviews include the notion that violence is a proper means of conflict resolution, the notion that competitive market ideology is the only or most advanced means of the global economic order, and the tenet that military strength is needed to protect citizens and special business interests from outside influences.

Yet other worldviews and possibilities do exist. Cultures of peace might be said to be possible through transforming conflict-based worldviews toward unity-based worldviews (Danesh, 2008) where violence is understood as a deliberate consequence of a choice, competitive market ideology is shown side-by-side with fair trade and shared commons, and military determinism is contrasted with human security and collective defense models. One might consider a dialogue among civilizations as both affirmation of the need for unity-based worldviews and as a strategy for positive and critical global transformation founded on dialogue, cooperation, and nonviolent conflict management. Moving beyond the fragmenting paradigm of competitive market-ideology, violent conflict resolution, and a clash of civilizations, a dialogue among civilizations fosters peace through transformative global dialogue for international understanding, equity and non-violence.

In conclusion, educators and learners must learn to facilitate critical awareness of the influence of mass media on framing global perspectives, international ethics and civic possibilities. Furthermore, education should prepare learners with skills to engage critically with media, including reflection, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. One example of constructive media and civil society efforts to produce and monitor peaceful media is being led by the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC). The AoC Media Fund seeks to normalize images of stereotyped groups in mass media through critical partnerships with film agencies and distribution centers (Alliance of Civilizations Forum Report, 2008). Therefore, noting the tremendous capacity of media to either support or undermine peacebuilding efforts at

local, regional and global levels, this learning unit aims to raise consciousness of, and action toward, the multiple links between culture and conflict as facilitated through contemporary media, where media is not merely the forum but also an actor.

> *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*
> **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19**

Level: High School and Undergraduate courses (youth ages 15-24)

Core Subject: Social Sciences, History, Geography, English, Economics, Arts, Peace and Conflict Studies

Materials: Newspapers, video camera, sample video segments from news stations, various art materials, handouts (attached)

Timeframe: 4-8 weeks (8 class hours)

Theme:

A unit addressing:
Media and Violence
Culture and Worldview
Constituencies and Prejudices
Gender and Human Rights
Dialogue and Civilizations

Core Concepts:

Various forms of violence in our lives
Impact of media violence on our lives
Instruments for mitigating violence
Global inequities as violence
Alternatives to violent conflict
Envisioning peaceful futures

Objectives:

Students will do the following by the end of the lesson:

> *Discuss* the role of identity and worldviews in conflicts
> *Promote* empathy, compassion and love
> *Reflect* on the importance of cooperation and critical thinking in decision-making
> *Contemplate* democratic processes for schools, media and civil society
> *Practice* reflection and dialogue
> *Participate* in critical and multicultural dialogue

Guiding Inquiry:

How do media promote peaceful or violent orientations?
What are multiple forms of violence?
How does dialogue promote cultures of peace?
Who has direct/indirect access to media decision-making and viewing?
How does gender identity influence privilege and media access?
What are ways individuals and communities can become involved locally to promote respect, multicultural dialogue and responsible media?

Facilitation strategies:

The facilitator will use the following critical and cooperative learning methods: Short introduction by teacher, Brainstorming, Group discussions, assessing violations of international human rights, Role-plays, and Group reflection. The timeframe of activities and discussions is open to the teacher's discretion to allow for issues to be addressed in a proper manner (though this unit is estimated at 8 hours).

Learning Sequence

Lesson Proper *(7 weeks; students complete handouts 1-2).*

Short abstract: Students create groups and are given articles to summarize from a certain assigned ideology/worldview. The students are challenged to create a 7-10 minute news production using information from newspaper articles that resemble a perceived ideology. The presentations are recorded and replayed to the class for analysis and reflective discussion.

Schedule of lessons	Activity
Lesson 1	Introduction, group making, Viewing of news segments (Handout 1)
L2	Research news networks (Handout 1)
L3	Summary writing (Handout 2)
L4	Summary writing/simulation practice (Handout 2)
L5	Practicing and run-throughs (Handout 2)
L6	Video-taping Performances (Handout 2)
L7	Viewing with all students (Handout 3)
L8	Follow-up discussion(s) and activity (Handout 3) and (Handout 4)

Lesson 1

1. Introduce activity and divide students into groups of 8 (adjust according to class size).
2. Give each group 4 articles (Headline/Local News, International News, Entertainment and People, and Business and Technology) from a select media source to summarize and present in Lessons 3-6.
3. The groups should elect a leader and delegate responsibilities to group members. The group leader is responsible for keeping track of materials and ensuring group work is accomplished in a timely manner. The different segments—Headline News, International News,

Entertainment, and Business—should be distributed (2 people per segment) to group members. <u>Each of the groups should receive the same 4 articles so as to later explicitly illustrate the perceived differences in ideologies and worldviews</u>.

4. Watch/read news segments of the same events from various sources (television news or newspapers). Reflect on the news segments and underlying ideologies.

Lesson 2

1. Groups are assigned a network station (e.g. Fox News, CNN, Al-Jazeera, BBC, and Christian News). The groups are asked to research the network station to answer the following queries:
2. Who owns the station?
3. Who advertises for the station?
4. Who benefits from the station?
5. Who is the target audience?
6. Allot students classroom time for research and group discussion in the computer lab(s) of the school (if available).
7. Lead a class discussion with the information each group extracted about the networks.

Lesson 3

1. Ask students to choose an ideological viewpoint, such as conservative, liberal, moderate, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, North, South, white, black, indigenous, Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, Anglophone, francophone, etc, to be included into their presentation of the news.
2. Students (in pairs) read, analyze and reconstruct the news segments according to their assigned ideologies/worldviews.
3.

Lesson 4

1. Students (in pairs) summarize their articles through their ideological lens.

Lesson 5

1. Groups practice presenting their news segments (first, in pairs, and then the entire group).
2. Make final preparations for videotaping (Lesson 6). **The teacher(s) will be in charge of videotaping in the next lesson at school. Inform groups that they will have only one chance to present, so they must be prepared (no stopping and restarting—this is a performance).**

Lesson 6
1. Prior to class, teacher(s) will set up a separate classroom (for videotaping) to mimic a news set. While a group is being recorded in classroom 2, the other groups will prepare in the primary classroom. Groups are recorded with each presentation between 7-10 minutes.

Lesson 7

1. View all of the performances (with DVD, VCR) and have groups take notes about the different presentations of the event(s). How do the various ideologies/worldviews affect the presentation of information/events?
2. Lead an open class discussion about the different groups' news segments. In what ways did the group presentations reflect stereotypes? How much of this originated with the broadcasting companies and how much was projected by the individual? (Ask students to write a 1-page reflection for homework to be used in the final class discussion.)

Optional adaptations: Students may make advertisements (e.g. commercials for restaurants, drinks, fitness programs) or weather information for intermission between news segments. These additional ads should add fluidity and relative content to the 4 news segments. Facilitators may also choose to create fictional breaking-news-stories from conflict regions (e.g. Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, China/Taiwan, India/Pakistan). Encourage students to research current issues in conflict regions.

Follow-up discussion and activity
(Handout 3)

I.   ***Discussion***: Through small group and whole-class discussions, dialogue on the following questions at length. (Some questions from Center for Media Literacy)

- What is media?
- What types of media do you encounter/use everyday?
- How do the media usually report on conflicts?
- How do the media paint conflicting parties?
- What makes it seem real?
- What type of person is the watcher invited to identify with?
- What ideas or values are being sold to us in this message?
- Who profits from this message?
- What did the news segments have in common (e.g. camera, angles, focus)? What did you notice watching the simulations?
- How were the news segments different (e.g. presenters, language, issues, values)?
- To what degree did the presentations of the various cultures and worldviews accurately represent that culture? And to what degree did the presentations embody previous prejudices?

- What happens when a third party appropriates the identity and suffering of another?
- What might the media do to circumvent dualistic paradigms toward inclusion and reconciliation?
- What ideologies do we subscribe to in our personal lives?
- How can the right to freedom of expression, as documented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, be used as moral support for indoctrination and homogenization of thought in schools and media; or, conversely, how can the same right be used to justify diverse opinions and worldviews?

Facilitation of discussion: Write the collective ideas of the class from the questions above on the board. This allows students to visualize and connect a variety of views concerning media and intercultural understanding.

II.   **Activity**: In their original groups, a representative from each student group draws the world as perceived through the lens of the group ideology (e.g. Islam and the Middle East, Christianity and the West, economic ideologies of the Global North and South). The drawings may be literal pictures of geography (with particular regions emphasized) or representational symbols of major cultural, religious and political themes. Each group draws with a specific colored marker on the whiteboard so as to visually differentiate between the different regions. Then have an open discussion. First have each group explain their work and receive comments/questions from other groups. Elicit similarities and differences between the groups. Second, leaving the assigned ideologies behind, proceed to an open discussion on the role that ideologies and culture play in interaction between individuals, groups and states. Where and how do ideologies divide people? Where do ideologies unite people? Can we transcend nationalistic and insular thinking toward unity-based worldviews?

Supporting Documentation

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): *Article 19*, Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.   (Available online at www.un.org.)

Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21st Century (1999): *(40) Utilize the media as a proactive tool for peacebuilding*, the media play a vital, and controversial, role in situations of violent conflict. They have the capacity to exacerbate or to calm tensions and, therefore, to play an essential role in preventing and resolving violent conflict and in promoting reconciliation. Apart from their traditional role in reporting on conflict, the media may also be used to build peace in a wide variety of alternative ways. Special attention needs to be directed towards (1) promoting objective, non-inflammatory reporting of conflict situations so that the media serves the cause of peace rather than war and (2) to further explore the use of the media in creative new ways to build peace and promote reconciliation. (Available online at www.haguepeace.org.)

The Earth Charter (2000): *(14c.)* Enhance the role of mass media in raising awareness of ecological and social challenges. (Available online at www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/.)

Evaluation

Suggested Evaluation Procedures:

Have students keep a reflective journal throughout the course of the peace module and on the final day of the course, give students an opportunity to share reflections with their classmates. Or a more intensive evaluation procedure may be the development of a portfolio that includes reflections, research articles, and the development of a peace-oriented project. If school structures require an examination, tests may be constructed with open-ended questions pertaining to an analysis of peace, violence and violations of human rights in the media. The instructor could also create a group evaluation that assesses problem-solving skills based on an example scenario that requires students to propose possible solutions to specific cases of violence in media.

Instructor's reflection:

What worked
What didn't
Suggestions for next time

References

Alliance of Civilizations (2008). *Forum Report*.
    http://www.unaoc.org/content/view/225/220/lang,english/.
Danesh, H.B. (2008). The education for peace integrative curriculum:
    concepts, contents and efficacy, *Journal of Peace Education 5*(2):
    157-173.
Earth Charter, The (2000). www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/.
Hague Appeal for Peace (1999). The Hague Agenda for Peace and
    Justice for the 21st Century. UN Ref A/54/98.
    www.haguepeace.org.

Murray, John P. (2007). *Children and television: Using TV sensibly.*
    South Texas: Mind Science Foundation.
Trautman, John P. (2009). *Media recruiting advertising and media
    access undermine peace efforts*, Retrieved June 2, 2009, from
    http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/41292.
United Nations (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
    General Assembly resolution 217A (III). Downloaded from
    www.un.org. Public Domain.

Student Handouts for Media and Peace

Handout 1

ANALYZING NEWS/ CRITICAL VIEWERS

Analyzing the news programs (adapted from Center for Media Literacy)
After watching the sample news program in class, answer the following questions.

Who (Who created this message?)
What (What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?)
When (When has this worldview conflicted with other worldviews?)
Where (Where is this ideology prominent in the world?)
Why (Why is this message being sent?)
How (How might different people understand this message differently from me?)

Research of news agency (i.e. BBC, Fox News, CNN, Al-Jazeera)
As the research component of this module, find background information on the news agency assigned your group. You may find information in books, magazines, etc., or on the Internet.

Who owns the station?
Who advertises for the station?
Who benefits from the station?
Who is the target audience?

Handout 2

SUMMARY OF NEWS ARTICLES

With your portion of the news (Headline News, International News, Business, or Entertainment), consider the following points: Who is in your story? What is your story about? When did it take place? Where did it happen? Why did it occur? How would this be perceived from your ideological viewpoint?

5 W's:

Who

What

When

Where

Why

Summary

       _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Handout 3

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Write a 1-page reflection on the group work processes, ideological viewpoints, taping of the news program, review of the news, and your reaction to other groups. How did you work together as a group (were you cooperative, competitive, etc.)? How were the different ideologies presented? Did your presentation come across to you as you had intended—is it what you meant to say and portray?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Handout 4

SUGGESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

Dialogue invites us to engage with others in a collective process of thinking, understanding and making meaning of our world(s) of experience. Dialogue offers us the challenge of listening for understanding. Our task is not to agree or to persuade, but to open to the experience of a flow of thought and meaning. To participate in dialogue in this way is an act of courage. What makes this mode of communicating different from other discussions is, in part, the inner reflective work on the part of participants.   The following are questions that may assist participants in shifting from our more familiar practices of defending our beliefs and opinions, to suspending our beliefs in order to uncover, and question, the assumption underneath them.

What am I feeling in my body?
How is my attitude affecting people?
What are the different voices trying to convey?
What voices are marginalized here?
When do my thoughts stop my ability to listen?
Am I resisting something I hear?
What are the facts? And what are feelings, memories, opinions and beliefs?
What has led me to view things as I do?
What assumptions lie beneath my question or my opinion?
What themes or patterns are emerging from what is being said?
Could I perceive things in a new way?
Can I suspend my certainty?
What am I missing that would help me to understand?
What needs to be expressed here?
What purpose would my statement or question serve?
What is no one else saying?