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Time for some 'macho' decoding; VIOLENCE

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London police Chief Murray Faulkner tells the crowd that when it comes to getting rid of violence in society, "We can give up on the Boomer generation."

He's talking about guys like me.

Faulkner was addressing about 280 people -- most of them male high school athletes and their coaches -- at yesterday's third annual Father's Day Breakfast, a seminar sponsored by the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children at UWO's faculty of education.

"Why is it that men are so violent?" asks Faulkner. "Why is it that we seem to have lost our course in life?"

He tells the crowd that most violence, most road rage and most sexual assaults are committed by men. He says we need to start talking about why men are so violent.

I nod and take notes. Actually, I don't need to take notes, because I've heard the message so many times before.

And the more I hear it, the more uncomfortable I feel.

CBC-TV sports reporter Scott Russell, who was a host on Hockey Night in Canada from 1989 to 2003, is one of the keynote speakers at the seminar.

"I find the violence that threatens hockey absolutely unfathomable," says Russell. "(The idea that) if you don't drop your gloves and fight, you're not honourable -- that's hogwash."

I sit in the darkened London Convention Centre and recall how, just the other night, I started yelling at my TV because I wanted the Detroit Red Wings to play more aggressively. I'm sure that at some point I yelled, "Hit him! Hit him!"

It felt quite good.

Russell tells the crowd that "It's saddening to me that hockey has no greater movie to speak of its glory than Slap Shot."

Slap Shot is one of my favourite films.

Katie Cole, a teacher at Medway secondary school and a consultant to the Provincial Coalition on Media Violence, tells the students that modern media is filled with unhealthy images.

To illustrate her point, she mentions the animated satire Family Guy, comic Seth Rogen and the TV shows Jackass and Nitro Circus.

I love Jackass and Nitro Circus. Rogen makes me laugh. I find Family Guy hysterically funny.

Peter Jaffe, director of the London Family Court Clinic and one of the men spearheading this conference, tells me violence in pro hockey is "still legitimized." As an example, he mentions a recent Stanley Cup playoff game where Chicago Blackhawk player Martin Havlat was knocked unconscious by Detroit defenceman Niklas Kronwall.

I thought it was a clean hit.

Am I some sort of knuckle-dragging avatar of violence? Am I wrong to think that black comedy is healthy, anger unavoidable and that the muscular mayhem of battling athletes serves as an entertaining safety valve for our intrinsic aggression?

I don't know.

But I certainly agree with Cole's advice to the students: Never stop "examining" and "decoding" the messages that reach you.

And that goes double for the ones from columnists, police chiefs and psychologists.

Is Gillespie a hand-dragging Neanderthal because he enjoys Slap Shot, Family Guy and aggressive hockey? Weigh in on his blog at lfpres.com/blogs

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