

THE DEADLY TRIANGLE
Women, Violence and the Media
Media Violence—Its Effects on Women

HF #30

This lesson was presented at the 2004 NAFCE National Conference in Richmond, Virginia by Harriet Steenson. The entire packet can be purchased from the National Association for Family and Community Education, 73 Cavalier Blvd. Suite 106, Florence, Kentucky. Call 877-712-4477 for member pricing and shipping.

Goals and Objectives:

Participants will become aware of how media violence affects women by:

- Understanding the purpose of media
- Identifying the connection between pornography and main stream media advertising
- Understanding how violent video games increases the risk of violent behavior

Participants will be given ways to defuse the deadly triangle of violence.

Materials Included:

Backgrounder on media, violence in advertising, purpose of media, violence in video games

April 5 Pledge Sheet

Hearth Fire Series #30 (Resisting the Deadly Triangle of Violence)

Lesson evaluation form

References Cited:

Bockhovan, Mike. "Media and Culture," *GI Independent*, 2004.

Barnet, Martha, "Point, Click and Kill," *The Journal*, 2003.

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Kang, Mee-Eun. "Images of Women in Magazine Advertisements," *Ohio State University*, 1993.

Kilbourne, Jean. Can't Buy My Love. Touchstone Book, 1999.

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FCE members throughout the nation have been participating in activities relating to curbing media violence in children's television for some time. We have gathered articles, signed pledges, educated our families about supervising television viewing and protested violent programs to local stations. Some have written letters to the Federal Communications Commission and legislators to ask for changes in prime time scheduling and increased educational programming.

Recently, research has been uncovering a connection between media violence and violence on women. Is there a connection between slasher movies, vivid record album covers, violent films, Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction," violent video games and documented acts of violence on women?

Media Violence in Advertising

We see about 1,500 ads every day, even if we don't concentrate on them. Ads sell romance, sex, popularity and also teach attitudes.

Discussion: Describe the people we see in prime time ads. What observations have you made about ads? In the front page of a paper, what grabs your attention first? What is second? And then?

(Advertisers know that pictures are noticed first, then headlines and finally, the story.)

Advertising is the purpose, the reason for TV and radio programming, newspapers and magazines.

When ads turn women into things by depicting part of the body, those ads dehumanize women. Violence on a thing is the first step toward justifying violence on women. Pornography takes violence against women and sexualizes it. Sex in advertising is pornographic because it dehumanizes and objectifies people.

The rate of sexual assault, violence against women in the United States is the highest in any industrialized nation in the world. One in five women has been the victim of rape or attempted rape, most often before their 17th birthday. More than half have been physically assaulted.

Discussion:

What happens in adolescence to change girls?

There is a sudden high risk of suicide, learning disorders, and eating disorders. They begin to accept some of the media attitudes and conform to them. Advertising helps to create a climate in which certain attitudes and values flourish. One of those attitudes is that women are valuable only as objects of men's desire, that violence is erotic and romantic.

Most women in magazine ads are depicted as childish, dependent, irrational, subordinate and domestic. These stereotypes were listed in a study by M.E. Kany, who researched twenty years of ads and found that women in the magazines of the 70's were seen:

- a) As dumb, a sex object, or a victim
- b) in stereotypical roles, housewife, nurse, teacher, etc.
- c) working outside the home, but also working inside the home
- d) inferior in roles
- e) represented on floors, nude or on beds.

Think about an add for shaving gel, featuring a razor and a photo of a handsome man, using the line "Two ways a woman can get hurt." What are we selling?

An ad for a camera features a woman's torso wrapped in plastic, her hands behind her back. A smiling woman in a lipstick ad has a padlocked chain around her neck.

Activity on Media Analysis:

*Ask members are asked to bring "disposable" copies of women's magazines (McCalls, Better Homes and Gardens, Good Housekeeping, Redbook, Ladies Homes Journal, Cosmopolitan, etc.) to their next study group meeting. If the group is too large, divide them into small groups of four or five. Then have them look for ads with women pictured. See if the conclusions reached by M.E. Kany have substance. Invite one to share what they have discovered.

*If time is a problem, the instructor could bring some preselected ads and give small groups a dozen or so to study. A spokesperson could be selected to report on what the group discovered.

Media Violence in Video Games

Are you ready to play the best selling video game in America? Let a 17 year old tell you about it. "First, we have to kill a bunch of people," he starts. Then you highjack a car, head to a busy intersection, jump out and start shooting. Pick off a homeless person here, a young woman there, and toss a Molotov cocktail at some bystanders, who are engulfed in flames. Police cars and an ambulance screech to a halt nearby. When officers and rescue workers get out of their vehicles, the 17 year old cries, "Now watch this!" then mows them down with an automatic weapon. We jump back in the virtual car and speed off to a mall, where the killing begins again.

This is a description of Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. It was the hottest selling game last Christmas. There are others in which murder and illegal acts are rampant.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association and other groups signed a statement of concern, saying that "Research strongly suggests that prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence in real life."

Senator Joseph Lieberman has been an outspoken critic of violence in the video game industry since 1993. In response to his and others call for change in retailers policies, these changes were made:

Sears: Stopped carrying mature-rated games altogether

Target, Kmart and Walmart: Enforce policies of not selling mature-rated games to Minors

Blockbuster: allows minors to rent mature-rated video games only with a parent's prior written consent.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO DEFUSE THE DEADLY TRIANGLE OF WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND THE MEDIA?

- ✓ Learn to decode violent advertising.
- ✓ Contact local stations about offensive programs. FCC rules allow affiliates to reject network shows they deem 'unsuitable' or that they want to replace with programs of 'greater local or national importance.'
The FCC was given more clout in the Congressional House of Representatives' Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act in 2004. Fines for indecent, sexually violent programming went from \$5,000 to half a million dollars. The local stations will pay that price.
- ✓ Contact your government representatives about media violence affecting women.
- ✓ Participate in the April 5th Campaign against media violence. It has made an impact on children's programming!
- ✓ **Strengthen girls and women through stories of strong women.**
Researchers find that both men and women heroes have a high degree of concern for others and are willing to take risks.
Women are more likely to act heroically when 1) they know the people in danger, and 2) when they gradually become aware of the plight of their neighbors, friends and co-workers.

Activity for defining strong women:

Take a piece of paper and draw a long table. Put an X at the head of the table and label it with your name. You're the chairman of the Board, the President. Now put 8-9 X's around the table and label them with names of strong women who've made you who you are today. Write the names of the women who've strengthened you, mentored you, the ones you go to or wish you could go to for advice. Think about why you have selected these women.

For a follow-up activity, we can give thanks to these heroes in our lives who do what is needed. They teach us how good we can be and how good we ought to be. Thank them, in writing if they are still able to receive them. Bless and thank them silently, if they are no longer here to accept your thanks. Strengthen the women around you so they can defuse the deadly triangle of media, violence and women.

Submitted as (Circle one)

Individual Club Council

Club/Council name _____

These pledges were collected by:

Family ChoiceE-TVtm Pledge Sheet

Name: _____

Address: _____

I PLEDGE TO TUNE OUT VIOLENCE ON APRIL 5

Please - only one name per line

NAME	STATE	ZIP	FCE MEMBER (CIRCLE) YES OR NO	MOST VIOLENT TV PROGRAM	FAVORITE NON-VIOLENT TV PROGRAM
1.			YES OR NO		
2.			YES OR NO		
3.			YES OR NO		
4.			YES OR NO		
5.			YES OR NO		
6.			YES OR NO		
7.			YES OR NO		
8.			YES OR NO		
9.			YES OR NO		
10.			YES OR NO		
11.			YES OR NO		
12.			YES OR NO		
13.			YES OR NO		
14.			YES OR NO		
15.			YES OR NO		

Association for Family and Community Education
(State) _____

Mail by April 15 to: NAFCE Tune Out Violence Chairman

(Revised 7/2003)