GENDER AND MEDIA

Gender Studies
AHSS204

Overview

- Introduction

- Media Representation of Women/Men/LGBTI

- Sexual Objectification

- Media and Body Image

- News Reports on Sexual Violence

Introduction

Sex vs. Gender

"Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (APA, 2011).

Gender as a social construct.

Social construct: A concept or notion of something based on the views developed and maintained by a society or social group.

Gender as a spectrum.

Femininities, masculinities….

Introduction

- **Why study Gender and Media?**

- Media "produce and disseminate many of the resources which we actively and continuously use to understand and think about the world, others, our relationships and ourselves" (Kafiris, 2005, p.8).

- Media are one of the most powerful agents providing entertainment, information and socialization. In comparison to other institutions, they are better in terms of producing and circulating images and messages for people to use in order to construct knowledge and values (Kearney, 2012).

- Observational Learning

"one is not born but rather becomes

a woman." Simone de Beauvoir

Introduction

Studies on the relationship of Gender and Media:

- **1970s**

feminist scholars in cinema and communication studies.

- **1980s**

language, discourse, identity, power & gender

- **1990s**

Other components of identity; race, ethnicity, class, sexuality etc.

- **1990s**

Judith Butler's Queer Theory

(Kearney, 2012).

Introduction

- Media also contributes to the production of stereotypes.

- **Stereotypes** are the beliefs, expectations, and theories about groups in society that influence information processing and guide judgements about and behaviors toward groups and their members (Mastro, 2009, p.378).

- The process of stereotyping leads to ideas that all group member are "the same".

- The repetition of stereotypes reinforce ideas about people, until they become a part of the 'common sense' (Taylor & Willis, 1999, p.41).

Introduction

- **Prejudice** is the set of negative attitudes, emotions, thoughts towards a social group or an individual who is a member of the given social group.

- **Discrimination** can be defined as the unfair treatment of an individual based on their membership to a social group.

- Discrimination differs from prejudice and stereotyping, in that it is not a belief, but rather the application of beliefs (Fiske, 2010).

- These three concepts go hand-in-hand. **Stereotypes** reinforce and strengthen **prejudice** and **discrimination** towards particular groups and members of these groups.

Representation

- **Representations** are the concrete form of abstract concepts.

- Representations involve a process of selection in which some signs are privileged. Therefore, it is significant to understand how such concepts are represented in media or everyday conversation (Hartley, 2002, p.202).

- Representations are based on the producer's (director, scriptwriter, editor, journalist etc.) and the society's values. In this sense, representations are **ideological**.

- Minority and/or disadvantaged groups are usually **misrepresented** or **under-represented**. (women, sexual minorities, ethnic/racial minorities, people with disabilities/mental health issues etc.)

Representation of Women

- Women are represented in **restrictive** and **stereotypical** ways.
- The cultural representations of women as weaker and less capable than men, not only create barriers for women in many spheres of society but also justify and contribute to inequality (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007, p.303).

- Domesticity and sexuality.
- Most stereotypes define women in terms of their relationship to men.
- Women are often depicted as less intelligent and less capable than men.
- Media denies women powerful and independent images (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007, p.303).

- One of the contributing factors is the fact that media is a male-dominated industry.

Representation of Women

Gender Bias without Borders Report

120 popular films from Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, US & UK (2010-2013).

- **7%** of directors, **19.7%** of writers, **22.7%** of producers; **30.9%** of all speaking characters, and **22.5%** of all characters are female.

- Films with a female director/writer had significantly more girls and women on screen.

WMC – Analysis of "Behind-the-scenes" Oscar Nominees 2018

77% of all Oscar nominees for behind the scenes categories are men.

Director = **20%** women, **Producer** = **27%** women, **Editing** = **17%** women

Representation of Women

The Status of Women in the US Report "Divided 2017: The Media Gender Gap"

Analysis of 24,117 pieces of content from Sept 1-Nov 30 2016.

News Media

- Evening broadcasts: **75%** men, **25%** women
- Print: **62%** men, **38%** women
- Internet: **54%** men, **46%** women.

- The majority of media professionals working in **Sports**, **Weather, Crime & Justice, Religion, US politics, Tech, Domestic Issues, World Politics, Culture, Business & Economics, Entertainment, Social Issues and Science** (51%) are men. The majority of media professionals working in **Health (51%), Education and Lifestyle news & commentary** are women.

Representation of Women

- Women's Magazines

- **Cult of femininity**: Ferguson (1985) argues that the "cult of femininity" defines what it means to be a good and real woman.

Ferguson identified four dominant themes:

1) Overcoming misfortune

2) Getting & keeping a partner

3) Being a good wife

4) Keeping a happy family (Kirby, 2000).

- These rituals and obligations in magazines provide women with guidelines on beautification, interpersonal relationships and housework (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007, p.303). This strengthens the notion that women are obligated to fulfill these actions to become an actual and real woman.

Get a Sexy Bod
How to Tone Up Twice as Fast

MARCH 2012 * £3.50

Mad Men's
Christina Hendricks
How she chased her man – and got him!

Reveal Your Best Body!
Our Easy Plan to Look Trim And Toned in Just 1 Month

Happier, Hotter Sex p. 138

BE A NATURAL BEAUTY
48 TIPS TO HELP YOU GLOW

How to find a man who'll really love you

What Guys Hate for You to Wear to Bed

#ButtGoals
SHAPE AN EPIC ASS
IN JUST 8 MINUTES A DAY

HOW TO ROCK HIS WORLD WITH YOUR INNER BAD GIRL

50 WAYS TO SEDUCE A MAN
(IN A MINUTE OR LESS)

Representation of Men

- Feminist and queer studies – Studies on masculinity started to emerge in 1970's. However, masculinity is considerably understudied.

- **Hegemonic Masculinity** is a term coined by sociologist Connell which refers to a representation of society's ideal of how men should behave. Hegemonic masculinity also emphasizes superiority of 'manly' men over both women and the 'not-so-manly' men (Kareithi, 2014).

    1. Physical force
    2. Occupational success
    3. Familial patriarchy
    4. Frontiersmanship
    5. Heterosexuality   (Trujillo, 1991)

Representation of Men

- A cultural studies theorist Easthope (1986) argues that the media and popular culture provide a masculine image which is based on strength, competitiveness, aggression and violence.

- He argues that men internalize such characteristics while learning masculinity through popular culture. Men are generally depicted as in control, strong and heterosexual.
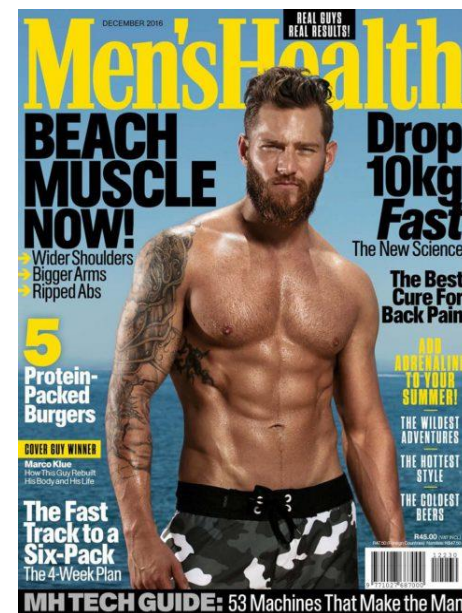
Representation of Men

Toxic Masculinity: A concept used to describe masculine norms which are harmful for both men themselves and the society.

Men compare themselves against a masculine ideal which focuses on power, control and invincibility. When men believe they can't reach this ideal, they feel a sense of shame and defeat.

Generally the way boys are brought up does not include emphasis on social and emotional skills. Men can experience a 'big build' of distress, which may lead to a crisis (Samaritans, 2012).

"Boy's don't cry!" – "Be a man!" – "Man up!" - **Masculinity Crisis**

Men remain around **three times more** likely to take their own lives than women in the UK and **five times** in the Republic of Ireland (Samaritans, 2017).

Representation of LGBTI

- **Lesbian**: a woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

- **Gay**: a person who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. It traditionally refers to men.

- **Bisexual**: a person emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one sex.

- **Trans**: an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth.

- **Intersex:** Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male.

Representation of LGBTI

- **Heterosexism**: the belief that heterosexuality is superior to other sexualities; the presumption that all people are heterosexual and all people should be heterosexual.

- **Heteronormativity**: Refers to the set of beliefs and practices that consider gender to be an absolute binary that reinforce heterosexuality as a norm.

- **Homophobia**
- **Biphobia**
- **Transphobia**
- Fear, intolerance, hatred, unreasonable anger.
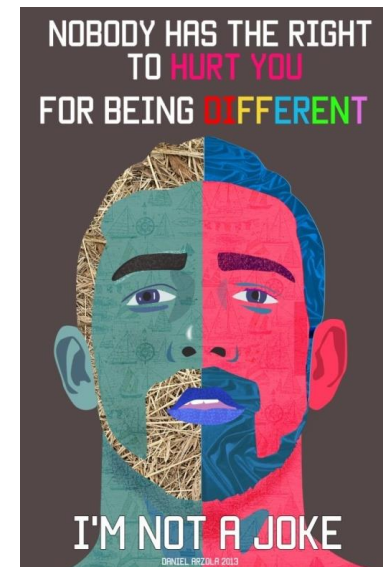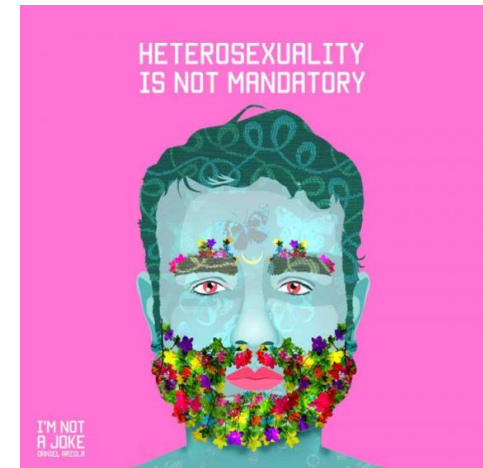
The Genderbread Person v3.2 by its pronounced METROsexual.com

Identity

Attraction

Expression

Sex

Gender Identity
Woman-ness
Man-ness

Gender Expression
Feminine
Masculine

Biological Sex
Female-ness
Male-ness

♥ Sexually Attracted to
Nobody { (Women/Females/Femininity)
(Men/Males/Masculinity)

♥ Romantically Attracted to
Nobody { (Women/Females/Femininity)
(Men/Males/Masculinity)
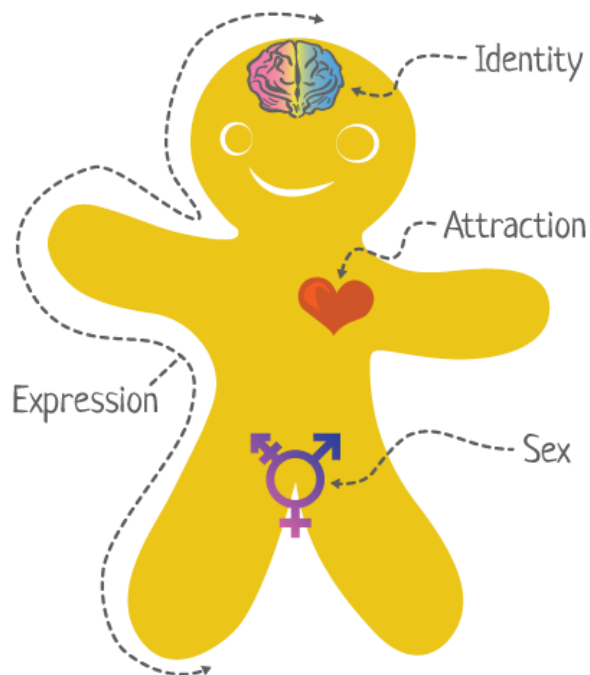
Sam Killermann. Retrieved from http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/genderbread-person/

Representation of LGBTI

- 72 countries continue to consider homosexuality as a <u>crime</u>.

- (It was decriminalized in North Cyprus in 2014).

- Representations of LGBTI individuals tend to be associated to crime, tragedy, sin, perversion or comedy.

<u>GLAAD Report 2017-2018</u>

Broadcast Television: 6.4% LGBTI characters

Cable Television: 103 regular LGBTI characters

Streaming (Amazon, Hulu, Netflix): 51 regular LGBTI characters

All across three platforms: 17 trans characters

Representation of LGBTI

Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative Report – 2016

- Out of the 4,544 characters in top 100 films, only 1.1% were lesbian, gay or bisexual.

- In 2014 and 2016 this percentage was less than 1%. The estimated percentage of LGBTI individuals in the U.S is 3.5%.

- None of the characters in the top 100 films were transgender.

- Only 1 film in the top 100 films had a gay protagonist (main character).

- Over three-quarters of the movies (n=76) did not portray one LGB character that spoke or was referred to by name on screen.

- Only 4 were depicted as married.

- Findings of the reports suggests that LGBTI's are **underrepresented**.

National Geographic – Special Issue - Gender Revolution – Jan 2017

Published Internationally
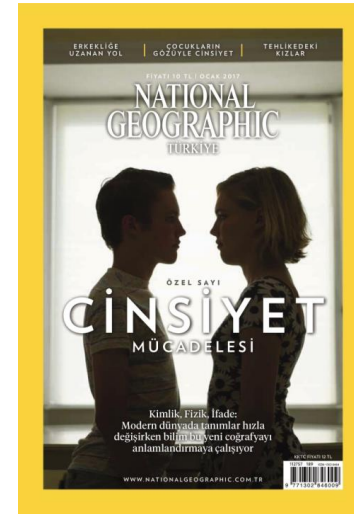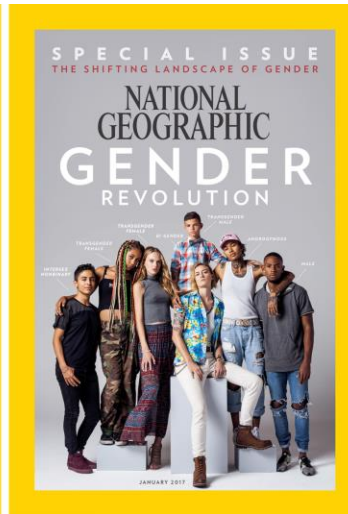
Published in Turkey

Two alternative covers for the issue: One featuring a trans child, the other featuring individuals with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

As understanding of gender depends on the culture, media representation of gender varies.

- The advertising and media industries strengthen stereotypical, patriarchal, heterosexist and heteronormative norms and images.

- Family settings in ads tend to depict heterosexual families with traditional gender roles. Same sex couples are hardly ever depicted in advertisements.

Sexual Objectification
The Male Gaze

- Laura Mulvey - *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975)*.

- "the gender power asymmetry is a controlling force in cinema and constructed for the pleasure of the male viewer, which is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies and discourses."

- According to the Male Gaze Theory women in the media are viewed from the eyes of a heterosexual man in which women are represented as objects for male desire and pleasure. The camera lens = Eyes of a man

- Regardless of their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation audiences view images of women from the point of view of a (heterosexual) man.

- **Video: If women's roles in media were played by men**

Sexual Objectification

- **Sexual objectification** refers to the fragmentation of a woman into a collection of sexual parts and/or sexual functions, essentially stripping her of a unique personality and subjectivity so that she exists as merely a body (Calogero, 2012, p.574).

- Dismembered/Fragmented body parts
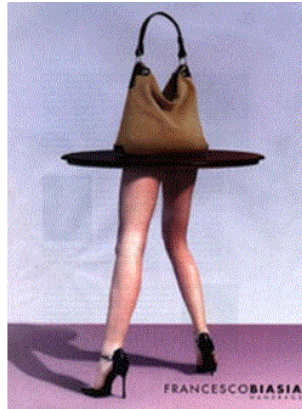
- **Dehumanization,** turning a person into an object leads to the justification of violence against that person.

- Sexual objectification dehumanizes people by turning them into "objects" and "things".

- Many ads use bondage, strangling and other violent acts towards women.

Sexual Objectification

- There is an increase in the sexual objectification of men in media images.

- However, the objectification of men and women differ:

  - The body language of objectified men is generally powerful, strong and dignified;
  - whereas, the body language of objectified women is generally vulnerable, passive and weak.
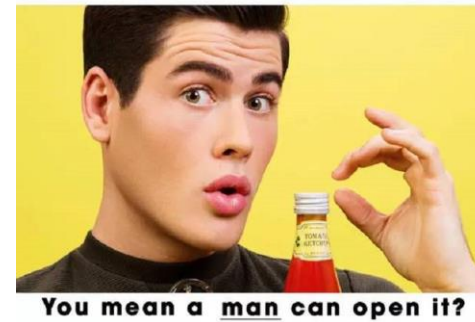
Sexual Objectification Men

- **Hunkvertising**: The objectification of men in advertising.

- Men used in advertisements tend to be: Strong, muscular, powerful, attractive in accordance with traditional beauty standards.

- Magazines & Ads
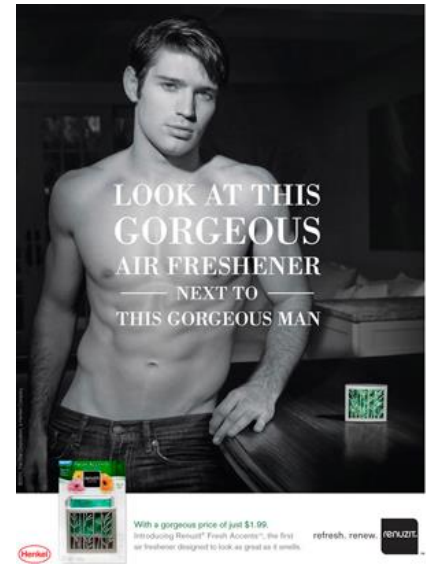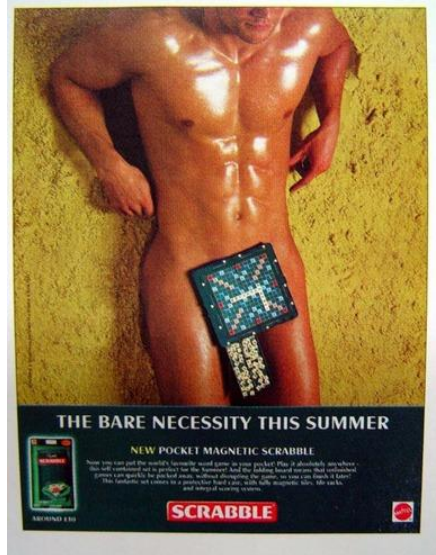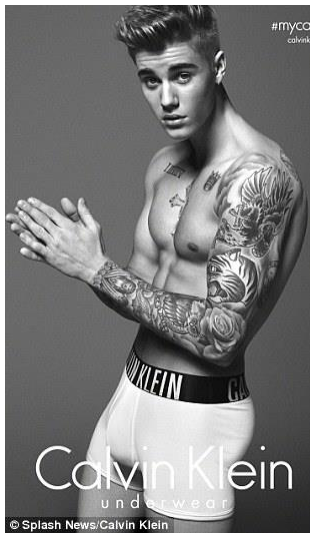
Sexual Objectification

- Sexual objectification is frequently used in advertising to sell products.

- Besides products, advertising also promotes lifestyles and values, beliefs and notions about the world and ourselves.

- The body types used in advertising don't reflect the diverse reality of bodies.
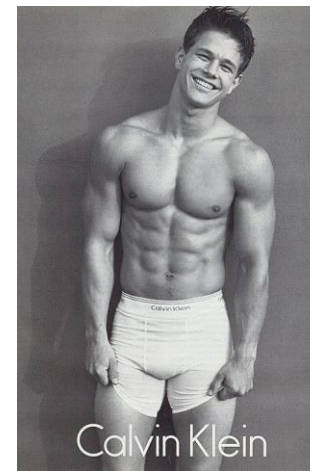
Sexual Objectification in Video Games

- **Hypersexualization/Hyperfemininity**

- In video games, the representation of men and women is even more stereotyped. Female characters are not weak but are usually fighters who are meant to have a particular 'sexy-feminine' allure (Gauntlett, 2002, p.68).

- Females are featured in sexually provocative poses and are represented in highly-gender stereotyped bodies, such as the '**skinny-yet-busty**' body ideal (Harrison, 2009).

Sexual Objectification in Video Games

- **Hypermasculinity**
- Male characters in video games tend to be portrayed as extremely tall, unrealistically powerful and muscular.

- Hypermasculine representations are linked to the drive for muscularity, motivating boys and young men to engage in unhealthy practices such as compulsive weight training and illegal steroid use (Smolak and Stein 2006).

Women aren't the only ones objectified in gaming; how many men do you know that look like this?

Sexual Objectification
Face-ism

- "**Face-ism**, or face-to-body ratio, refers to the percentage of an individual depicted in a photograph representing his or her face" (Matthews, 2017, p.516).

  - Images of women are body-focused
  - While images of men tend to be more face-focused
  - This can be assessed by using a face-to-body ratio.
  - This results in the reinforcing of negative stereotypes about women.
  - And strengthens the notion arguing that the most valuable aspect of a woman is her physical appearance and body.
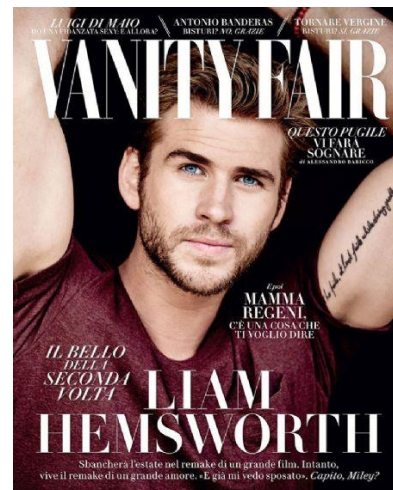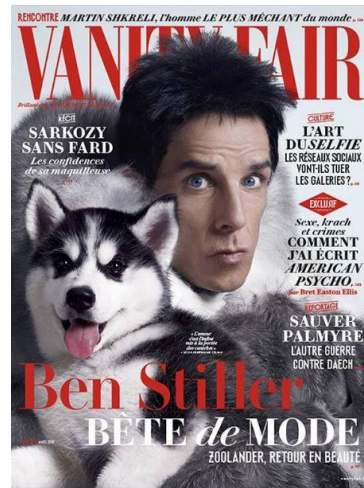
Media and Body Image

- **Body image** is the perception that a person has of their physical self, but more importantly the thoughts and feelings the person experiences as a result of that perception (National Eating Disorders Collaboration, 2011).

- Environmental influences play a large role in how people perceive and feel about their body.

- A person's family, friends, acquaintances, teachers and the media all have an impact on how that person sees and feels about themselves and their appearance (National Eating Disorders Collaboration, 2011).

Media and Body Image

- People are bombarded with images of body through all types of mediums. These images provide unrealistic and unobtainable body ideals. These images usually send messages that thin is beautiful for females and muscular is the ideal body shape for males.

- We are exposed to such images at early ages and continue to see them throughout our lives on an everyday basis.

Media and Body Image

- Individuals from various background and characteristics are affected.

- Teenage girls and women are affected the most.

- Images suggest that the most valuable aspect of a woman is her appearance.

- Young men and boys are also influenced by the mediated images of the ideal body.

- These images may lead to psychological and physiological harm such as:

  - Body shame,
  - Body dissatisfaction,
  - Sexual dysfunction,
  - Appearance anxiety,
  - Eating disorders (anorexia nervosa & bulimia nervosa)
  - Depression etc.

News Reports on Sexual Violence

- The language use in sexual violence reporting is a significant issue. The discourse and language used may lead to justification of the crime and to further harming the victims and/or people close to the victim.

- Female survivors of sexual violence are generally categorized based on sexual "availability".

- In some cases, unrelated information about the survivor is provided.

  (physical appearance, clothing, use of substance/alcohol, occupation...)

- Victim vs. Survivor

News Reports on Sexual Violence

- **Victim (survivor) blaming** is a devaluing act that occurs when the victim of a crime is held responsible (or partially responsible) for the crimes that have been committed against them (The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, 2009).

- **Rape culture** is a term used to describe a set of values and beliefs that create an environment conducive to rape, based on traditional gender role assumptions (Levy, 2008)**.**

- These assumptions also result in a double standard for sexual activity according to gender. While men engaging in sexual activities are celebrated, women are **slut-shamed** (Levy, 2008)**.**

- Trans women, sex workers, children, men (not reported?)

News Reports on Sexual Violence

- How media should/shouldn't report sexual violence?

Shouldn't:
- Use the survivor as the "subject" of the sentence structure
- Use a pornographic, erotic, softened language.
- Represent sexual assault as a sexual behavior or sexuality.
- Sensationalize.
- Focus on the survivor's occupation, habits, marital status, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Should:
- Emphasize that sexual violence is a serious crime.
- Use perpetrator as the "subject" of the sentence
- Emphasize that sexual assault is violence-based, not consensual.
- Emphasize that sexual assault is not sexual but a form of violence.
- Focus on the damage for the individual and society.
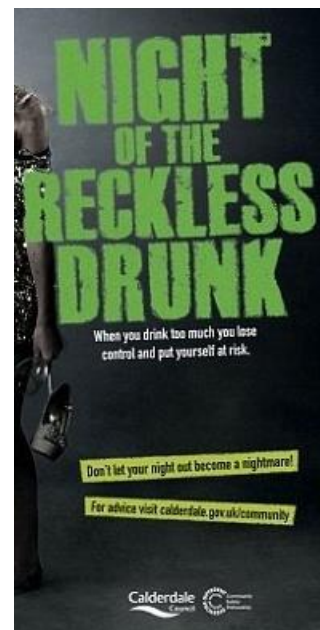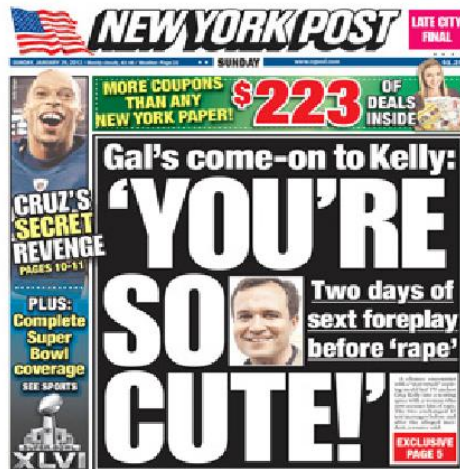
Review

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- News Reports on Sexual Violence

THANK YOU!