

LESSON: Image of Men in the Media

Overview

There are many discussions in the media about the targeting of females and the ways in which females are presented in media. On the other hand, the media spend little time examining the portrayal of men, which should also be a matter of some interest.

The Media Education Foundation has produced some important films that discuss the “tough guy” image one finds throughout the media. This lesson focuses on this one type of portrayal of masculinity (i.e. “tough guy”) and asks the class to conduct their own investigation as to how frequently it is found in various forms of media from music popular among youth to video games they enjoy playing and movies they watch.

Objectives:

- Create awareness of the “tough guy” media portrayal
- Find and deconstruct examples of the “tough guy” media portrayal
- Discuss the “tough guy image in the media
- Reflect on the implications of this type of portrayal of masculinity and what actions individuals can take

Level: Middle / High School

Time: 2 class periods

Preparation and Materials:

- Video Clip from Tough Guise
- Other video clips to consider:
 - Video Clips from Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes
 - Video Clip from Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex & Power
- White Board

Procedures

View the video clip from **Tough Guise** and discuss. Some questions to consider are:

- Why do you think Jackson Katz named his film “Tough Guise?”
- How does Katz feel the media contribute to a definition of manhood as related to power, dominance and control?
- What implications for society does this definition of masculinity have according to Katz?
- When Katz suggests that everyone has a role to play in taking on this serious problem, what is he suggesting that females do? What can males do? What can our institutions do?

Activity

Ask the class to break into teams of two and take a few minutes to brainstorm a list of examples of the “tough guy” portrayal they have seen in the media (i.e. consider all types of media from video games and music, to TV programs, movies, etc.).

Have students share items on their individual lists and write examples on a master list for the entire class to view using a white board or flip chart.

HOMEWORK

- Tell the students that their homework for the evening is to spend 30 minutes and see how many examples of the tough guy image they can find in a popular forms of media consumed by teens (e.g. an MTV music video, the lyrics of a song popular with teens, a video recording from a movie, a clip from a video game, an image from the Internet, etc.)
- Be prepared to verbally deconstruct the examples that you locate in class the next day and if possible bring screen shots and other images you find to class.

SHOWCASE OF “TOUGH GUY” IMAGERY

Set up an area in the room where students can display their “tough guy” imagery. Deconstruct as a group some of the pieces in the showcase.

- How are the men being portrayed?
- What makes the audience draw the conclusions they do? What aspects of this image support this conclusion? (e.g. facial expressions, body type, actions implied, props, background, etc.)
- Are there any similarities that certain pieces seem to share about the ways in which they go about conveying the “tough guy” image?
- Also consider unique observations specific to certain pieces.
- Be sure to allow time to consider other images of men that emerge in the media besides the “tough guy” portrayal.

BLOGGING ABOUT TOUGH GUY IMAGERY

Tell the class to assume we will soon be creating a class blog about portrayal of men in the media. Incorporated in this blog will be their findings about the “tough guy” media portrayal and its implications for society. Ask students to create a blog post offering their own ideas and reflections about the portrayal of men in media. Note that they are welcome to contradict Jackson Katz’s conclusion and provide their rationale for doing so.

Assessment

The oral deconstruction that students are able to give for the examples they bring for the “tough guy” showcase and the blog post they write can both provide an opportunity to assess student understanding and the depth of analysis, evaluation and reflection taking place.