

Create a Climate of Respect



What you can do:

- Don't fund sexism: Refuse to purchase or display magazines, videos, websites, posters, or music that portrays women or girls in a sexually degrading, objectifying, or abusive way.
- Learn about objectification and how it affects violence against women

In this packet, you will find:

- What it means to live in a rape culture
- What objectification is
- Why pornography is a big deal
- How pornography affects men and women

How does objectifying material impact violence against women?

In basic, materials that objectify women matter because we live in a rape culture.

A rape culture is...

A culture in which rape and other sexual violence are common

A culture “in which prevalent attitudes, norms, practices, and media condone, normalize, excuse, or encourage sexualized violence.”**

Individual sexist acts may seem harmless, but they ultimately foster disrespect for women and women’s well-being, which makes rape and abuse seem more acceptable. In this way, telling a sexist joke, using sexist language, blaming a victim of sexual assault, or displaying an objectifying poster actually contributes to a culture that allows sexual violence to occur.

Another aspect of living in a rape culture is that we tend to see reported acts of violence as individual and unconnected. In reality, sexual violence is a very large trend rooted in our cultural beliefs and practices. Being aware of this reality and knowing ways to change the culture are the first steps in ending violence against women.

☹☹ 1 in 4 college women will be the victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault. (Koss 1988)

☹☹ Among college women, 9 in 10 victims of rape and sexual assault know their offender.*

☹☹ 80-90% of acquaintance rapes involve alcohol and/or drugs.*

☹☹ Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in our country. (FBI statistic)

☹☹ 51% of college males **admit** perpetrating one or more sexual assault incidents during college. (Berkowitz 1992)

☹☹ 10% of survivors of sexual assault are male.*

☹☹ 98% of the perpetrators of sexual assault are male.*

☹☹ 92% of all domestic violence crimes are committed by men against women, but men can be victimized, and violence occurs in all forms of relationships (heterosexual, gay, lesbian).*

☹☹ LGBT people are at approximately the same risk as heterosexuals for being sexually assaulted by an acquaintance.*

* The Sexual Victimization of College Women (2000)

What is objectification?

Sexual objectification is seeing a person as a sexual object and emphasizing their sexual attributes and physical attractiveness, while de-emphasizing their existence as a living person with emotions and feelings of their own.

Depictions of women in advertising and media, images of women in pornography, strip clubs, prostitution, and men evaluating women sexually in public spaces are examples of objectification.

We have all probably seen posters of nearly naked women displayed in dorm rooms on campus. Think about the effect those posters can have on our culture:

- How do the posters make women in the room feel?
- Do the images set a standard for what is considered beautiful?
- How do the posters impact men's view of women?
- When looking at the women in the pictures, do you think about what career they might want, what their family life is like, or anything about them other than their sexual use?
- Will viewing the images on a daily basis make it easier for you to sexualize women in general?
- How will it change how you treat women?

Pornography is sexually explicit material with little or no artistic merit.* Posters, magazines, videos, and websites are forms of pornography.

*Dictionary.com

What's the big deal?

“The relationship between particularly sexually violent images in the media and subsequent aggression... is much stronger statistically than the relationships between smoking and lung cancer.”

-Researcher Edward Donnerstein, Dean, University of Arizona

Studies show that after viewing pornography, men are more likely to...

- Report decreased empathy for rape victims
- Give shorter prison sentences in a mock rape trial
- Report believing that a woman who dresses provocatively deserves to be raped
- Report anger at women who flirt but then refuse to have sex
- Report decreased sexual interest in their girlfriends or wives
- Report increased interest in coercing partners into unwanted sex acts*

Pornography isn't just an interest or leisure activity or fantasy- it is part of the continuum of violence that encourages violence against women.

It harms all women by creating sexual myths, generating violent sexuality, and perpetuating sexist thoughts.

Some forms of pornography push the limits of degradation and cruelty toward women by showing actual sexual violence. Snuff films are an extreme example in which women are actually raped and murdered in the making of the film.

Woman-hating is a central theme in pornography- from the language used to describe women to the ways sexual acts are expressed. Think about what women are called in pornography. (hot slits, fucktubes, fresh ass, etc.) Do these words portray women as real people?

*This information is from a Gail Dines conference

How does pornography affect men and women?

“I have been using porn for fantasy and masturbation since I was 12. It is only in the last year or so that I see how much it has affected my view of women and of reality, not to mention stolen literally thousands of years of my life. In a very real way, I have been in a delusional state regarding women and the reality of sexual relationships and boundaries. Porn will do that to you... **It has affected every relationship I have ever had with a woman.** I sometimes still gaze a little longer than I should at women and in an inappropriate way, but I now think “this is a human being, with friends and family, who just wants to be happy just like me.” It helps. I guess this is just a reflex I will have to deal with for a while since my brain has been conditioned for over 20 years to objectify.”

-Mark (oneangrygirl.net)

“See, J, with his gigabytes of pornographic images and stories, showed me what a horrible effect pornography has on our society. He told me I had a perfect body. The more he said it, the more disgusting I felt. I am 5’4” and 102 lbs. That makes me at least 13 lbs underweight for my height. [...] Every one of my boyfriends has told me I have a beautiful body, but I don’t see this as beautiful. In the eight grade, my **anorexia** went unnoticed. I got down to 86 lbs at 5’2” before a friend forced me to eat.”

-Clara (oneangrygirl.net)

What can you do to create a climate of respect?

Refuse to buy and utilize magazines, videos, websites, posters, or music that depict women in a sexually degrading, objectifying, or abusive way.

You may have to find other magazines to look at or take down a few posters, but remind yourself of the value in doing so. You can be a part of changing our cultural climate from one that encourages violence against women to one in which women are valued as people.

Don’t be afraid to tell people about the changes you are making and encourage them to do it too. That’s how change happens!