Lesson 9

The Media

Activity 4

Before we dive into talking about the media, let's consider objectification.

What is it?

To objectify someone usually means that a person is reduced to an aspect or a function of their body. We most commonly talk about sexual objectification, in which a person's value comes only from his or her sex appeal or behavior, and the whole person or their other characteristics are ignored. For example, a man is valued for his "six pack abs" or a woman is valued or reduced down to only "looking hot," regardless of the person she is or the other skills she possesses.

Who is objectified? Who does the objectifying?

By this definition, both men and women can be objectified. However, in U.S. society women are often objectified more than men.

On the other hand, this discussion about objectification is not about placing blame on individuals. Instead, we want to discuss how society treats both men and women, and how the sexuality of men and women is symbolized in our culture.

Some obvious examples are in the media. Magazines often show women (and sometimes men) holding products or wearing clothing. They are shown in sexually explicit poses and outfits to enhance a products image. Paris Hilton's scandalous television ads for Carl's Jr. cheeseburgers shows her in a bikini washing a car. She is not depicted as an expert on cheeseburgers, nor does she discuss her product knowledge. She is not portrayed as a whole person in these ads, she is only viewed as a sex object.

Consider this image of Paris Hilton: http://cache.jalopnik.com/cars/images/paris_bentley.jpg

What kind of effect do you think it has on society?

> **OK:**

> - This picture sells a product
> - Paris Hilton is paid a lot of money for these ads
> - She has a voice in other areas of her public life
> - It's her choice to do these ads, no one forced her
> - It's only Paris that is affected, not anyone else
> - People like it, so it must be ok
> - It's not hurting anyone

NOT OK:

- This picture affects her entire public persona; no one will take her seriously
- This picture hurts girls and women because:
    - It encourages an unrealistic body ideal
    - It oversexualizes all women
- This picture hurts boys and men because:
    - It allows them to think about women only as objects

    …

Now look at [this photo](#).

OK:

- Similar to those we listed for the Paris Hilton ad

NOT OK:

- Consider the influence of adding in a racial component

What do you think? Why isn't it ok to look pretty or attractive and have other people appreciate how you look? Why do girls have to do more work to get ready in the morning? Why do women have to shave their legs and men don't?