

# Media Bash

*“Is no news good news?”*

- Complexity** Level I
- Group size** 10 to 30
- Time** 90 minutes
- Overview** This activity uses research and observation techniques to address the problematic use of violence in the media.
- Objectives**
- To ‘confront’ participants with the obvious use of violence in the media
  - To develop gender awareness among participants
- Materials**
- Flip chart
  - Magazines
  - Television
  - Computer
  - Computer games
- Preparation** Make some space in the room (remove tables and chairs) so that the participants have space to work in groups on the preparation of a poster / flipchart.

## Instructions

Inform participants that they are going to analyse TV programmes, read magazines, observe advertising and commercials, etc, using a pair of ‘gender / violence glasses’.

If this activity is being conducted with a group that meets on a regular basis, tell participants that on this occasion the activity will be introduced and that they will have to watch TV and observe the media available in their local context during the upcoming week. This is a kind of homework task. In this case participants work alone and bring the results of their observations with them to the next session of the group.

Alternatively, if you are working in a one-off residential seminar, it is possible to run the activity on the spot, by conducting the analysis during the session on the basis of media materials chosen and provided by the facilitator. In this case the facilitator can also choose to record, in advance, relevant television programmes and advertisements as a supplement to print and other types of media. Participants may be asked to work alone or in sub-groups (depending on the number of people attending the seminar). In this case, and especially if participants are asked to work in groups, the facilitator should take into account that this kind of ‘research and analysis’ is a challenging task that is time consuming and should revise the time frame and the organisation of the discussion accordingly.

LEVEL: I



GROUP: 10-30



TIME: 90 MIN.



- Whether working individually or in groups, participants are asked to:
  - Count how many times they see violence or violent expressions in TV programmes, commercials, magazines
  - Collect (cut out, record) expressions of violence as shown in media so that they may show them to the other participants
  - Count how many times men are visualised as ‘perpetrators’ or as ‘victims’ of violence
  - Count how many times women are visualised as ‘perpetrators’ or as ‘victims’ of violence
  - Count how often they see a particular scene of violence from the point of view of the perpetrator or the victim
  - Record the ways in which media encourage violence
  - Record the extent to which media treat expressions of violence initiated by men and women differently
- Ask participants to form groups of four and to share with each other what they found. Ask them to display the materials they collected (20 minutes). Then ask the entire group in plenary to compare the ‘findings’ and draw some conclusions on the use of violence and its impact for young people of different genders.
- Participants will most probably find more ‘male’ expressions of violence. Discuss why violence committed by men is more frequently found in the media (and elsewhere?), as well as potential strategies for combating the kinds of violence referred to in the discussion.
- Discuss violence against men and why it is such a sensitive and controversial issue.
- **Debriefing and evaluation**
- Ask participants if they have ever looked at the issue of violence through gender glasses before. If not, what did they learn by taking this new perspective? Did anything in particular surprise them?
- More specifically, you can continue the discussion by asking the following guiding questions:
  - What was the most ‘eye opening’ aspect of this activity?
  - What did you learn from your participation?
  - Are the materials found and displayed representative of where you live?
  - How can the media be influenced to change the way it presents violence, stereotypical images of perpetrators of violence and different genders?
- **Suggestions for follow-up**
- Encourage participants and / or colleagues to undertake further reading or research into the issues of media and violence. Some relevant reading material in English includes the following books:
  - Buckingham, D. (2000). *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of*

Electronic Media, Polity Press.

- Cohen, S. (2001). *State of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*, Polity Press.
- Shanahan, J. (1999). *Television and its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research*, Cambridge University Press.
- Kirsch, S.J. (2006). *Children, Adolescents and Media Violence: A Critical Look at the Research*, Sage.
- De Zangotita, T. (2005). *Mediated: How the Media Shape Your World*, Bloomsbury.

Some of the above are 'academic' books, in that they base themselves on research. Nevertheless, they are worth looking into for a better understanding of the relationship between violence, the media and society and as a backdrop to educational work in this field.

Run the activity 'Front Page', adapted to the issue of gender, with the same group for an in-depth exploration of bias and stereotyping in the media using simulative non-formal education techniques, p. 135, *Compass*<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Ideas for action***

Contact your local media providers and ask them about their policy on the reporting of violence. Challenge them to use 'gender lenses' in developing their approach to reporting violence. Organise a discussion in your group with media professionals and students about the responsibility of media professionals for the contents and approach of their reporting.

<sup>7</sup> [www.coe.int/compass](http://www.coe.int/compass)