

# SEX, VIOLENCE AND ADVERTISING

Women  
Sexism  
Media  
Gender  
Stereotype  
Gender based violence  
Objectification  
Domestic violence  
Rape  
Abuse  
Sex  
Gender stereotype  
Sexist

- ✓ Awareness of the messages conveyed by advertising:  
- sexual objectification and stereotyping of women.



1 Hour



Worksheets: 'Popular Advertisements'  
and Hand-out: 'Popular Advertisements  
- Role Reversal' (provided)

## PROCEDURE

- 1 Tell the class that in this activity they will look at print advertisements.
- 2 Stick the Worksheet 'Popular Advertisements' on the board, or distribute a copy to each learner.
- 3 Ask each learner to individually answer the questions on the worksheet. Give them about 20 minutes for this activity.
- 4 Once they have completed their answers, go through each question and ask learners to volunteer their answers. *See the Teacher Answer Key for guidelines on what responses to each question should cover.*
- 5 Now put the 'Role Reversal' Worksheet on the board, or distribute a copy to learners. Tell them that these images are from a video made by students at a Canadian University. Ask them to look through the images, and then facilitate a discussion by asking:
  - a. Are these advertisements more shocking than the originals? If so, why?
  - b. Are they still sexy, in the conventional sense? Why, or why not?
  - c. What do you think the students who made the video were trying to do?
  - d. Do you think this was effective?

## TEACHER TIPS



### General

This exercise is most effective if used after the activity that introduces the portrayal of women and men in magazines (Ch6 Ex 1).

The 'Xpanda' advertisement (Image 4) is an example of sexist advertising trends in South Africa. This advert portrays **women** as sexualised, and powerless, but also perpetuates negative views about paternal responsibility. Its portrayal of a girl who is pregnant and the wording 'unwanted visitors' suggests that the young woman is unwanted and that 'the bad new' is that she's pregnant after the one-night stand, and the way to evade paternal responsibility is to slam the door. Further, her school girl attire suggests that she may be quite young. This advertisement alone could be used to develop a rich discussion.



### Making the Link with Gender & Violence

The images of men and **women** portrayed in advertisements may perpetuate an acceptance, or normalisation of **gender-based violence**. For example, women may be shown in highly sexualised poses and provocative, sexualised body positions, or shown as being dominated and subservient. This is problematic because it sends the message that women are sexual objects.

Adverts that use digital enhancing are trying to create images of 'perfect' women, often for the purposes of making them appear sexy. The average person is continuously exposed to advertisements. If sexist images are constantly on display, sexism and violence against women become normalised. Sexist advertising, and images of men's control and domination over women may normalise the idea that **objectification, domestic violence, sexual violence**, and even **rape** are okay.



Learners should reflect on how the media may portray **women** as powerless in society. They should understand how by constantly seeing, hearing and internalising that women are sex objects, meant to be attractive, have value only if they are pretty, have value to men only when they are young, have value only as mothers in the home might impact on young women's self-image. Make the comparison between this process and the way that women in **abusive** relationships internalise the views and ideas of the abuser, that they are worthless, ugly, and only useful for **sex**.

### Assessment Ideas

- 1 Encourage learners to create their own advertisement which does not using female sexualisation or offensive **gender stereotypes**. Learners should reflect on the images they have chosen, and how they were able to avoid using degrading or gendered images to advertise their products.
- 2 Learners can be tasked to re-do the ads that are **sexist**, and create an advertisement for the same product without the offensive images and language.

Learners can be tasked with finding examples of South African advertisements from magazines, newspapers or online that are sexist and use offensive **gender stereotypes**. Learners should write an analysis of the problems with the advertisement.

- 3 Learners can be tasked with finding examples of South African advertisements from magazines, newspapers or online that are creative and do NOT rely on **stereotypes** of male and female behaviours and characteristics. Learners should write an explanation of why they think the advertisement is not sexist and does not use gender stereotypes.



### Variations

- 4 If you have time, and a good internet connection, you could show learners the original video made by University of Saskatchewan: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaB2b1w52yE&feature=youtu.be>

Discussion could still follow the questions listed in ⑤.

### References:

*Silverstreak. (2013) Badvertising: Xpanda Makes the Most Racist, Sexist Ads in South Africa.* <http://www.2oceansvibe.com/2013/04/23/badvertising-xpanda-makes-the-most-racist-sexist-adverts-in-south-africa-audio-pic/>

*Gender Studies, University of Saskatchewan (2013) Representations of Gender in Advertising (video).* Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaB2b1w52yE&feature=youtu.be>





# POPULAR ADVERTISEMENTS

Look at the images below and answer the following questions:

- a. What do you see in each advertisement, and what message is the ad trying to send?
- b. What product is the advertisement trying to sell? Who are the viewers?
- c. What method is the advertisement using to sell the product?
- d. Do any of the advertisements show women in a sexual way? Which ads?
- e. Do any of the advertisements objectify women (show women as objects or possessions)? Give reasons for your answers.
- f. Do any of the advertisements show violence against women? Give reasons for your answers.
- g. Do the advertisements show women as weak or submissive? How are men portrayed in these ads, relative to women?
- h. If gender roles are reversed, and men are put in the same positions as women, would companies be effective in selling their products? Why?



IMAGE 1



IMAGE 2

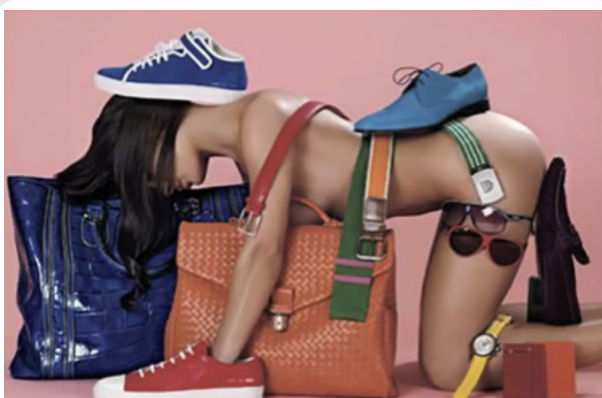


IMAGE 3

# POPULAR ADVERTISEMENTS



XPANDA CAPTION:  
"A one night stand arrived with a bump and some bad news. You should have had an Xpanda"

IMAGE 4



IMAGE 5



IMAGE 7



IMAGE 6

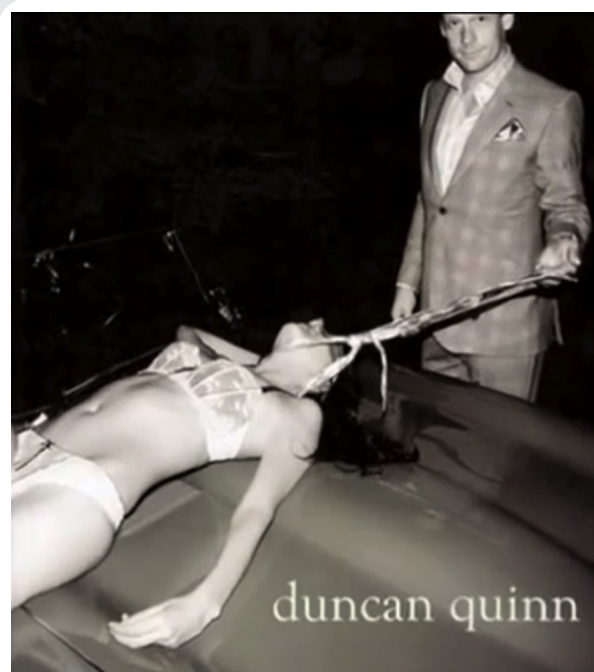
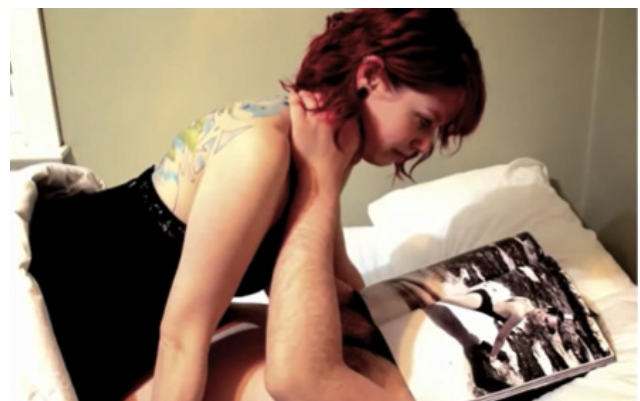


IMAGE 8



## ROLE REVERSAL - POPULAR ADVERTISEMENTS

## How do these images compare?



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### References:

Images from a video made by students at University of Saskatchewan.



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# TEACHER ANSWER KEY: POPULAR ADVERTISEMENTS

The following answers can be used to guide an evaluation of the advertisements.

	QUESTION	ANSWER
A.	WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THE ADVERTISEMENT AND WHAT MESSAGE IS THE ADVERTISEMENT TRYING TO SEND?	<p>LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THAT MOST OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS PORTRAY WOMEN.</p> <p>THE WOMEN IN THESE ADVERTISEMENTS ARE INTENDED TO MAKE THE PRODUCTS SEEM SEXY OR DESIRABLE.</p> <p>THE ADVERTS CONVEY AN IMPLICIT MESSAGE THAT OWNING THE PRODUCT WILL MAKE YOU MORE DESIRABLE TO WOMEN; OR THAT WOMEN WILL BE MORE SEXUALLY AVAILABLE TO YOU; OR THAT YOU CAN MAKE WOMEN DO WHAT YOU WANT.</p>
B.	WHAT PRODUCT IS THE ADVERTISEMENT TRYING TO SELL? WHAT IS THE INTENDED MARKET?	<p>LEARNERS SHOULD LIST THE VARIOUS PRODUCTS (OR BRANDS): TOMATO SAUCE, SHOES, ACCESSORIES, SECURITY GATES, CARS, CLOTHES.</p> <p>THE MARKET IS EVERYONE WHO SEES THE ADVERT. THIS INCLUDES WOMEN AND MEN, GIRLS AND BOYS. THE AUDIENCE FOR THE ADVERT IS SHAPED BY WHERE IT IS PLACED, FOR EXAMPLE, IN CERTAIN KINDS OF MAGAZINES (FASHION MAGAZINES, MEN'S MAGAZINES, WOMEN'S MAGAZINES) OR ON TV.</p>
C.	HOW IS THE ADVERTISEMENT TRYING TO SELL THE PRODUCT?	<p>THESE ADVERTS PLAY ON GENDER STEREOTYPES AND ROLES, OR DESIRES OF CONSUMERS. THE ADVERTS CONVEY AN IMPLICIT MESSAGE THAT OWNING THE PRODUCT WILL MAKE YOU MORE DESIRABLE TO WOMEN; OR THAT WOMEN WILL BE MORE SEXUALLY AVAILABLE TO YOU; OR THAT YOU CAN MAKE WOMEN DO WHAT YOU WANT.</p>
D.	DO ANY OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS SHOW WOMEN IN A SEXUAL WAY? WHICH ADS?	<p>YES, ALL OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS DO. ALL OF THE WOMEN DEPICTED ARE CONVENTIONALLY ATTRACTIVE, AND/OR NAKED OR IN REVEALING CLOTHING.</p>
E.	DO ANY OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS OBJECTIFY WOMEN (SHOW WOMEN AS OBJECTS/POSSESSIONS)?	<p>YES, SOME OF THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, WOMEN ARE SHOWN AS ONE OF (AND SURROUNDED BY) MANY OBJECTS, THEIR FACES MAY BE HIDDEN (WHICH DEPERSONALISES THEM) OR THEIR BODY IS COVERED WITH MEN'S CLOTHING (IMAGE 3), OR THEY ARE EQUATED WITH A CAR (IMAGE 5).</p> <p>MOST OF THE WOMEN ARE SCANTILY CLAD, IN SEXUALLY SUGGESTIVE POSITIONS OR PORTRAYED AS HAVING SEX.</p>



# TEACHER ANSWER KEY: POPULAR ADVERTISEMENTS

	QUESTION	ANSWER
F.	DO THE ADVERTISEMENTS SHOW WOMEN AS WEAK OR SUBMISSIVE? HOW ARE MEN PORTRAYED RELATIVE TO THE WOMEN?	ALL THE ADS SHOW WOMEN AS WEAK OR SUBMISSIVE (THEY ARE NAKED, ON THE FLOOR, UNCONSCIOUS, PASSIVE BODY LANGUAGE, BEING DOMINATED OR SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE BY MEN). MEN ARE PORTRAYED AS THE DOMINANT SEX (ALL THE MEN ARE IN POSITIONS OF POWER AND CONTROL, LOOK PHYSICALLY STRONGER, ARE HOVERING OVER WOMEN, OR STANDING UP WITH DOMINANT BODY LANGUAGE).
G.	DO ANY OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS SHOW VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?	<p><b>IMAGE 2:</b> THE SHOE BESIDE THE WOMAN ON THE FLOOR, AND THE LANGUAGE USED, SUGGESTS THAT VIOLENCE IS A WAY OF MAINTAINING THE WOMAN'S ASSUMED SUBMISSIVE ROLE.</p> <p><b>IMAGE 3:</b> THE SHOES ON THE WOMAN'S HEAD, BODY, AND BUTTOCKS, AS WELL AS HER POSITIONING PORTRAY HER SUPPRESSION, EXPECTED SUBMISSION, AND OBJECTIFICATION.</p> <p><b>IMAGE 4:</b> THE IMAGE AND TEXT ACCOMPANYING THE PREGNANT WOMAN DRESSED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SCHOOL UNIFORM SUGGESTS THAT SHE IS UNDERAGE AND HINTS AT RAPE.</p> <p><b>IMAGE 6:</b> THE IMAGE OF THE WOMAN IN A SEXUAL POSITION WITH THE 'NOW OPEN' CAPTION PERPETUATES THE BELIEF THAT 'WOMEN ARE EASY' OR THAT 'WOMEN ARE ALWAYS ASKING FOR IT'. THIS MIRRORS THE DISCOURSE OF VICTIM-BLAMING.</p> <p><b>IMAGE 7:</b> THE WOMAN'S BODY IN THE TRUNK OF THE CAR SUGGESTS THAT SHE IS A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE (AND POSSIBLY ALSO VIOLENT CRIME).</p> <p><b>IMAGE 8:</b> THE IMAGE OF THE WOMAN IN HER UNDERWEAR AND WITH A NOOSE AROUND HER NECK SUGGESTS THAT THE WOMAN IS A VICTIM OF SEXUAL AND/OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.</p>
H.	WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE EFFECT ON YOUNG WOMEN, OF SEEING THESE IMAGES AS COMMONPLACE? AND THE EFFECT ON YOUNG MEN?	<p><b>THE ADS ENCOURAGE THE BELIEF THAT WOMEN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ARE WEAK AND SUBMISSIVE.</li><li>• ARE POSSESSIONS.</li><li>• CAN ONLY BE VALUED SEXUALLY.</li><li>• ARE 'EASY' AND 'ASKING FOR IT'.</li><li>• CAN BE ABUSED WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE.</li></ul> <p><b>THE ADS ENCOURAGE THE BELIEF THAT MEN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DESIRE TO CONTROL WOMEN AND TO BE IN CHARGE.</li><li>• HAVE DESIRES WHICH SUPERSEDE THOSE OF WOMEN.</li><li>• ARE THE DOMINANT SEX.</li><li>• ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN WOMEN SEXUALLY.</li><li>• ARE INDIFFERENT TO WOMEN'S OBJECTIFICATION AND SUFFERING.</li></ul>

# TEACHER ANSWER KEY: POPULAR ADVERTISEMENTS

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	QUESTION	ANSWER
I.	IF THE GENDER ROLES WERE REVERSED AND MEN WERE PUT IN THE SAME POSITIONS AS WOMEN, WOULD THE COMPANY BE AS EFFECTIVE IN SELLING THEIR PRODUCT? WHY?	<p>THE ADS WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE. THIS IS BECAUSE THE ADS WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AS SEXY – MEN BEING SUBDUED OR VIOLATED LOOKS COMICAL OR RIDICULOUS, AND MAKES ONE UNCOMFORTABLE, WHEREAS SUCH IMAGES OF WOMEN ARE COMMONPLACE.</p> <p>MANY CONSUMERS ARE CONDITIONED TO RESPOND TO THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN AND WOMEN'S SEXUALITY.</p>