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## Media violence and domestic violence: Subtle and not so subtle links

Dr Wayne Warburton




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## Topics

- Background
- Not so subtle links
  - Video games
  - Violent Music
  - Violent porn
- Subtle links
  - Media and alcohol
  - Cultures of honour
  - Reporting of DV
- Fixing the problem

It's after school.  
Push here to see a girl  
**beaten** to death.  
...or help stop it.

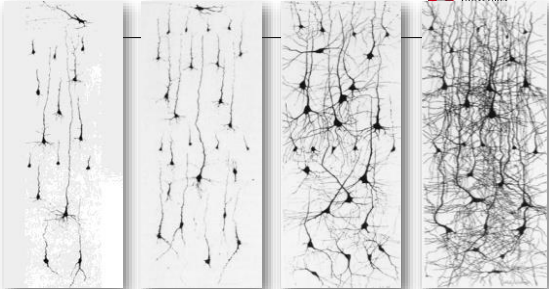


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## Background

- The human brain wires up every second of every day in response to what we experience
- Not in an abstract way – it is a physical, electrochemical connection, with pathways that can be established, grow stronger or fade away.

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Newborn 3 months 15 months 2 years

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## Background

So, what we experience matters

- **Amount** of exposure important
  - Teens Av ~9 hours per day entertainment media;
  - 6.40 on screens
- **Intensity** of exposure important
  - Much media content is made to have 'impact'
- Much happens **out of conscious awareness**
  - The subtle messages are just as (or maybe more) important than the obvious ones
  - Only a small percentage of our thoughts and feelings are in conscious awareness at any given time, but this doesn't mean they don't impact behaviour

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## Background

For this talk, we are interested in how the media can influence the way people think, feel and behave in terms of domestic violence

It seems very likely that the media has all sorts of subtle and not-so-subtle influences.

First, just a few facts and figures about DV in Australia

### DV Facts and Figures

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ABS Personal Safety Survey 2012

- 1 in 3 women had experienced physical violence.
- 1 in 4 women had experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner.
- 1 in 5 women had experienced sexual violence.
- 1 in 6 women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner.
- Women were most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a current or former partner

### DV Facts and Figures

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- Australian police deal with a domestic violence matter every two minutes (657 matters on average every day of the year) Overall, the count is approximately 239,846 per year in Australia
- Young women (aged 18 – 25) twice as likely to experience physical or sexual violence; possibly up to 4 times more likely for young women aged 14 – 19
- ATSI women twice as likely to experience DV and 34x as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence.

### DV Facts and Figures

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- In Australia, at least one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner and intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor (Vic Health, 2004).
- Domestic or family violence against women is the single largest driver of homelessness for women (main driver for 55% of women with children presenting to specialist homelessness services)

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### Video games

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How?

- Reinforcing gender stereotypes
- Players hurting and killing women
- Implicit influences because people tend to have greater concern over other factors

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### Video games

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How much?

- **Digital Australia 2016**
  - Industry worth \$2.46billion
  - Average adult spends 88 minutes per day
  - Average male 100 minutes per day
  - 77% of children under 18
  - 71% of working adults 18-64
- **Commonsense media 2016**
  - Amongst teens who play, av is 145 min/day
  - 10% average > 4hrs day; Males more


**Video games** 

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- Misogyny, prejudice, stereotyping




Female body armour, decreases with progression




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Male body armour typically increases with progression in game




Master Chief from Halo






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Men



women



Women subservient, available

Samara from Mass Effect 2  
Samara is a nearly thousand-year-old asari justicar, a member of an ancient monastic order following a strict honor code.

**Video games**

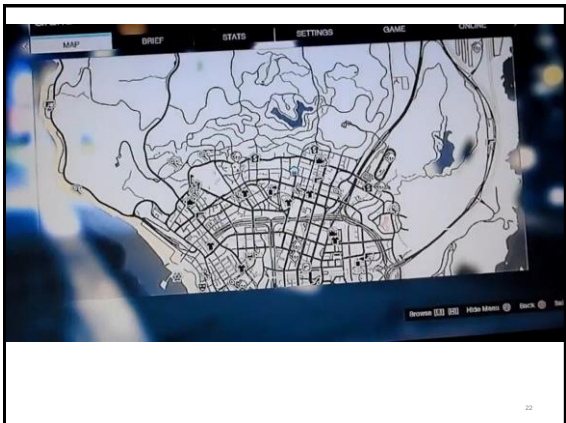
Players in popular games can enact brutal violence to women.

Many examples, but Grand Theft Auto is widely used, so is our example here

The video clip in two slides is very violent – please don't look if you have no wish to see the violence.

**Grand Theft Auto**

- Broke every record when released
- Rated M17+ in USA but banned in several countries (Rated MA15+ in Australia)
- Played by 56% of US children aged 8-18**  
(Rideout et al., 2010)
- GTA V set new records in 2013
- \$815.7million in 1st 24 hours; >1billion 3 days
- 6 Guinness sales records – highest grossing entertainment product, fastest selling etc.



**Video games**


The killing:


- Casual
- Simply for the sake of killing or getting ones' money back
- Brutal and often repeated
- Increasingly lifelike
- Models violence against women
- Women dehumanised
- Absent any realistic consequences
- Absent empathy for victims

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**Violent Music** 

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- Two genres most likely to have misogynistic lyrics or lyrics which condone violence to women
  - Rap
  - Heavy metal and its sub-genres
- Increase in misogynistic themes (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2006) esp. in concept videos; rap and heavy metal **MUSIC** (Adams & Fuller, 2006; Beentjes & Konig, 2006; Conrad et al., 2008; Frisby & Aubrey, 2012; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009)
- I tossed up whether to include lyrics from each genre, but the examples were so disturbing, I couldn't justify reproducing them here.


25

**Violent Music** 

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- In rap, violence is mainstream. For example, Eminem has sold millions of CDs, yet some of his songs contain lyrics explicitly misogynistic and violent toward women.
- Heavy and death metal are less mainstream but access to songs, lyrics and video clips much easier over the last 10 years. Many extreme themes including: rape, necrophilic rape, extreme violence and dismemberment during sex, among others.


26

**Kill you lyrics (Eminem)** 

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- Extreme misogyny. Women 'sluts', 'bitches' and 'whores'; 'vile venomous volatile bitches'
- Pervasive theme: Raping and killing women
  - Choking 'whores'
  - Shooting 'bitches'
  - Graphic description of beheading with a chainsaw accompanied by the sound of a revving chainsaw
- Cues for aggression, and linking aggression to women, throughout
  - (e.g., the line: Blood, guts, guns, cuts, knives, lives, wives, nuns, sluts)

27


**Violent Music** 

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Studies have shown that:

- Men, after listening to misogynistic music were more likely to be aggressive toward women and see women more negatively; *Same effect for female participants towards males after hearing man-hating music* (Fisher & Greitemeyer, 2006)
- Adolescent males with high music video exposure more accepting of rape (Kaestle, et al., 2007; see also Kistler & Lee, 2009)
- Exposing males to violent music increased adversarial sexual beliefs (Peterson & Pfost, 1989)


28

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[.orhelpstop.it](#)



29


**Violent porn** 

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UK Government 1996 report concluded

- *They (pornographic videos) are also a major factor in coercing women-into practices that are unacceptable to them and into situations which lead to domestic violence*
- 73% of women believed that pornography had some influence in causing violence in the home
- 13% believe it to be a major cause

30


**Violent porn** 

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Bridges et al, 2010

- Examined 50 bestselling porn videos
- Looked for aggressive content
  - physical aggression (pushing, biting, gagging, choking, mutilating, etc)
  - verbal aggression (name calling, threatening physical harm).
- Analysed 304 scenes
- Only 10.2 % did not contain any aggression
- Women were the targets of aggression 94.4 % of the time

31


**Violent porn** 

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Mary Anne Laydon, University of Pennsylvania

- Pornography is a potent teacher of both beliefs and behaviours, and in fact provides the ideal conditions for learning. It can teach not only specific sexual behaviours, but general attitudes toward women and children, what relationships are like, and the nature of sexuality
- Pornography is rich with what Beck (1999) described as permission-giving beliefs. Specifically, these pornographic depictions, which distort the truth about the desires of women, "legitimize men's sense of entitlement, use of force, violence, and degrading acts", implicitly communicate that it is acceptable and even normative to engage in this sort of behaviour" (Marshall, 2000, p. 67).

32


**Violent porn** 

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Laydon

- A male masturbating to images of women being beaten, raped, or degraded, is learning that the subjects enjoy and desire this treatment, and is thereby being taught that he has permission to act this way himself

33


**Violent porn** 

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Research

- Males who viewed sexual violence obtained higher scores both on scales measuring acceptance of interpersonal violence and rape myths, when compared to males who viewed either a physically violent or a neutral film (Weisz & Earls, 1995).
- High pornography users were higher than low pornography users in acceptance of rape myths, acceptance of violence against women, adversarial sex beliefs, reported likelihood of committing rape and forced sex acts, and sexual callousness (Check & Guloien, 1989).

34

**Violent porn** 

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- 39% of battered women said that their partners had tried to get them to act out pornographic scenes they'd been shown, as compared to 3% of other women (Sommers & Check, 1987).
- Batterer's use of pornography increased a battered woman's odds of being sexually abused by almost 2; the same increase as batterer's use of alcohol (Shope, 2004)
- Of women whose abusers used pornography, 58% said the pornography affected their abuse (Shope, 2004)

35


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**Media, alcohol and DV** 

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Alcohol a key factor in much DV

- Being intoxicated or having alcohol abuse problems are among the most robust predictors of IPV (Murphy & Eckhardt, 2005).
- Consistent significant linear relationship between alcohol consumption and intimate partner violence (Kantor & Straus, 1997) and between alcohol-related problems and IPV (Cunradi, Caetano, Clark & Schafer, 1999).
- Murphy and O'Farrell (1996) found that over half of the female partners of men receiving treatment for alcohol problems had experienced IPV from that person in the prior 12 months.

37


**Media, alcohol and DV** 

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Alcohol a key factor in much DV

- Fals-Stewart & Kennedy (2005) found that:
  - For men in a DV program, the odds of DV increased **8fold** when they were drinking compared to not drinking
  - For men in an alcohol treatment program, the odds of DV increased **11fold**
- **Disinhibition theory**
- **Social learning & deviance disavowal theory** - posits that people learn a "script" for violence by observing that individuals are excused and forgiven for violent behavior that occurs while drinking.

38

**Media, alcohol and DV** 

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Media

- Reinforces drinking culture
- Advertising for alcohol
- Role models that use alcohol and treat women poorly
- Defines masculinity and alcohol norms
- May uphold implicit notion of diminished responsibility for actions when intoxicated

39

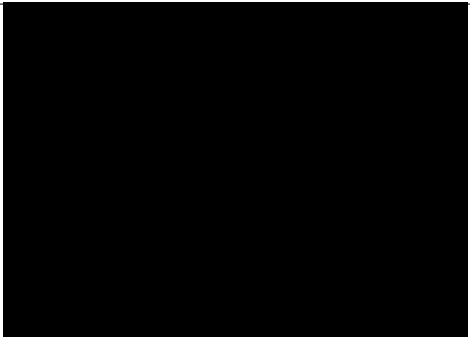
**Media, alcohol and DV** 



40

**Media, alcohol and DV** 

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41

**Media, alcohol and DV** 

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42


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43

**Cultures of honour** 

- In 'honour cultures', honour is seen more in terms of status, reputation and precedence
- Based on a person's (usually a man's) strength and power to enforce his will on others or to command deferential treatment (Vandello & Cohen, 2003)
- Emphasis on a man's strength and ability to protect his family and possessions
- Hypersensitive to insults and threats to reputation
- Threats to reputation, to 'honour' are met with aggression and violence.


44

**Cultures of honour** 

In honour cultures, gender roles are typically:


- Man: strong, powerful, enforcer, active
- Woman: modest, faithful, deferential, passive.
- Avoids behaviours that could threaten the 'good name' of the family
- Must uphold the good name of the and the reputation of husband (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

45

**Cultures of honour** 

- Male violence against women necessary and proper to preserve man's integrity
- Not responding with violence to perceived misbehaviour of female partner seen as shameful, especially if misbehaviour public
- Infidelity or perceived infidelity especially damaging to man's reputation
- Pressure to punish infidelity with violence
- Women expected to remain loyal and proper even when the relationship becomes violent.


46

**Cultures of honour** 

Why? Perhaps *precarious manhood* (Vandello et al., 2008).

- Research shows that in honour cultures manhood is in a precarious state requiring continual social proof and validation
- *We argue that male violence often results from threats to masculine identity and social standing, arising from real or feared infidelity, desertion, or public humiliation. From this perspective, male violence is a tactic at the extreme end of a continuum 'from vigilance to violence'* (Buss, 1988; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Shackelford, Goetz, Buss, Euler, & Hoier, 2005) *used to control women's behavior and to demonstrate (or re-establish) manhood* (Vandello & Cohen, p. 653).

47

**Cultures of honour** 

Honour culture in Australia?

- Sety (2012): 49% of youth identified at least one situation where they thought DV was justified. Most often infidelity.
- Vic Health Study (2013)
  - 19% saw women as partly responsible for rape if intoxicated
  - 9% of respondents agreed with the statement: "It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together"
  - 11% agreed that "domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol"
  - 28% agree "Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship"

48



### Cultures of honour

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The role of media

- This is subtle, but media made in a country, in all sorts of subtle ways, can reflect the culture and underlying social norms of that country, thus propagating them
- This is what Gabbiadini (2016) had to say about normative stereotyping in terms of the objectification of women and modelling of masculinity and male treatment of women:

### Cultures of honour

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"The media often depicts women as sexual objects because they are often assigned the role of offering men sexual pleasure via their physical attractiveness and sexual accessibility. This kind of objectification reduces women to entities whose primary function is male sexual gratification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Similarly, **the portrayal of men in the media as socially powerful and physically violent reinforces assumptions about how men and boys should behave socially, as well as how they should treat women and girls** (Wood, 1997)."

(Gabbiadini, 2016).

### Cultures of honour

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Which brings us to another subtle media influence – how media reports DV and how media influence public perceptions and attitudes about DV

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### Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media

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- Right now Australia faces some questions about how it reports DV.
- Here are a few areas of concern that have been documented in recent research:

### Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media

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Media reporting of DV often:

- Shifts blame to the victim
- Excuses the behaviour
- Propagates myths about DV
- Trivialises DV or sensationalises characteristics of victims
- Omits important information or stories
- Provides little information about where to get help. (See Sutherland, 2015)

**Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media** 

Omissions

- Little coverage about DV in high-risk and vulnerable groups
  - Migrants
  - Elderly
  - Those with disabilities
  - Indigenous women
  - Children witnessing DV
- Despite these groups being particularly vulnerable to DV.


55

**Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media** 

Trivialisation



56

**Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media** 

Trivialisation

- Lots of information about victim, little about perpetrators
- Use of sensational headlines, graphic language and photographs that trivialise the issue and focus on other aspects
- Tendency to report only physical and sexual abuse

(See Sutherland et al., 2015)


57

**Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media** 

Trivialisation

**Florida Man Says He Killed Sick Wife Because He Couldn't Afford Her Medicine, Sheriff Says**


58


**Reporting of, portrayals of, DV in media** 

Propagating myths

- Victims should have known better or predicted the violence
  - Research from groups like the Bureau of Crime Statistics show that much DV cannot be predicted
- DV is about love and passion
  - Compare these headlines

59

**Reporting of DV; shaping social norms - Blame shifting** 



**Children murdered in SA went hungry as slain mother put ice habit ahead of her family**

**Man murders woman and children. That is all. THAT IS ALL YOU CRETINOUS GOBLINS**

Stacey Lee - 7News Adelaide on June 2, 2016, 6:53 pm


You are not entitled to erase his crime by making her life the subject of your salacious headlines

60

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**Media tackling DV**

Guidelines on better reporting for journalists

APC Australian Press Council

**Advisory Guideline on Family and Domestic Violence Reporting**

**Introduction**  
Family violence is a serious cause of public concern and debate. Reporting on family violence once reflected an earlier social view that family violence was essentially a private, family matter that did not merit significant media coverage or the intervention of police and the criminal law, except perhaps in the most extreme cases. However, social attitudes have shifted dramatically and there is now community acceptance that violence against women is unacceptable and against the law.

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**Media tackling DV**

Guidelines on better reporting for journalists

the **evas**

www.evas.org.au  
Celebrating Media Contributions to Eliminating Violence Against Women

**RESPONSIBLE REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR JOURNALISTS**

**When reporting on Violence Against Women:**

**DO**

- ▶ Label it "Violence Against Women", "family violence" or "sexual assault". Avoid using terms like "relationship problems", "domestic dispute", "troubled marriage", "unwanted sex" or any other term that minimises violent behaviour.
- ▶ Contextualise the story. Provide information about the prevalence, incidence and impact of violence against women.
- ▶ Be aware of how source selection will shape the story.
- ▶ Acknowledge that violence against women is not a

**DON'T**

- ▶ Treat violence against women crimes as unusual or bizarre. They are not.
- ▶ Focus on or blame the behaviour of the woman/girl who has been a victim of violence.
- ▶ Perpetuate commonly held beliefs that are not true, e.g. alcohol causes men to behave violently.
- ▶ Assume that some cultures or "classes" are violent and others are not.
- ▶ Minimise or sensationalise violence against

FOR JOURNALISTS

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**Media tackling DV**

Guidelines on better reporting for journalists

**Reporting on domestic violence**

A guide for ACT media

whmi  
women's centre for health matters

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**Media tackling DV**

Media as a medium to change attitudes

- Raise awareness
  - Extent
  - About IPV
  - About men's role
- Raise awareness
- Provide accurate information
- Dispel myths
- Challenge stereotypes
- Change public opinion

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**Media tackling DV**

- Dear Daddy Campaign, Norway
- In Australia
  - RESPECT campaign (Australian government); media, website, resources
  - The Line campaign (Our Watch, links with AFL); media, website, resources
- Here is a video from the RESPECT campaign:

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**Media tackling DV: RESPECT** 



**Media tackling DV** 


Portrayals of masculinity


- We need to change the societal and cultural norms which adolescent males or younger boys are exposed to in their daily lives, including through public awareness campaigns


Men as advocates and role models

- The Line campaign in Australia

68

**Media tackling DV: The Line** 



**What we can do** 

- We need to support initiatives challenging social norms around domestic violence
- Raise awareness about media and DV
- Reject media that seems to excuse/approve DV (either in subtle or obvious ways)
- Challenge what our children see in the media; open the conversation.
- It took about a generation to change attitudes to drink driving, but it worked
- The time to prepare a new generation to respect others in relationships is NOW

70