

Breakout

Objectivity

ACTIVITIES AND TRAINER NOTES	SLIDE NO.
<p>Make some clear statements about the confronting nature of the material, and how students can take care of themselves. Make it clear that the classroom setting is not a therapeutic environment and is not the place to reveal sensitive personal information. Experience in the violence against women (VAW) sector tells us that people who make personal revelations in the classroom can be left feeling unsupported and exposed. Alert students to the student counselling resources are available at your institution. Emphasise the need for respectful debate and argument, even when people strongly disagree. Discussion is encouraged, but respect is not negotiable</p> <p>What is objectivity? Journalists tend to use terms like the ones on PP 2. Often, the word “objectivity” is taken to mean “balanced”. But who decides where the balance should be struck?</p>	2
<p>A moment’s thought tells you that objectivity can’t be the same as balance, if by that we mean giving the same weight to two sides of an argument.</p> <p>That would mean journalists would have to give the same attention and weight to climate change deniers and climate change scientists, or to use an example from the past, to the tobacco companies who said smoking didn’t damage health, and the doctors who presented evidence that it did. Or to use another example from recent times, to the Catholic Church saying abuse victims were lying, or to the victims and their lawyers.</p> <p>Kovach and Rosenstiel suggest that objectivity is best understood as reporting in line with the evidence. That is, that the objectivity lies in your willingness to seek out the evidence, and to be rigorous in observing it.</p> <p>So objectivity means reporting in line with the evidence. Fairness means being fair to the facts.</p> <p>But how do we apply that in real life? It can be complicated.</p>	3 - 5
<p>Let’s think about family violence as an example.</p> <p>There are men’s groups who claim that it is a lie to say women are the main victims of family violence. They claim there is an undisclosed epidemic of women’s violence against men.</p> <p>Meanwhile most domestic violence bodies claim the reverse is true – that women are the main victims, and that most perpetrators are men.</p> <p>Given that family violence happens behind closed doors, how do you weigh this up, and decide how to report?</p>	6-7

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<p>You seek out the evidence. PP 8 shows some sources of evidence.</p> <p>(Ask students to think of other potential sources. Possible answers include testimony from victims and survivors; academic experts; crime statistics agencies in their state; courts; welfare workers etc)</p>	8
<p>The evidence shows that violence in our society is gendered. Women are more likely to be subjected to violence by partners, men are more likely to be victims of violence from strangers. In all cases, the perpetrator is usually male.</p> <p>That doesn't mean that women are never violent. Or that men are never victims.</p> <p>And we must always remember that most men are not violent, but loving husbands, fathers, brothers and sons.</p> <p>But the patterns are clear.</p> <p>So in this case objectivity means not just believing advocates, no matter how passionate, but making sure our reporting reflects the evidence, and is not beholden to lobby groups or the peddling of myths.</p>	10