Victims, villains, or vamps?
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What is women's "place" in mass media? Scholars suggest that in spite of changes in women's roles and status in our larger society, the media still portray women in simplistic stereotypical ways—as helpless, as all-powerful, as sexual objects. This session explores how the media represent women as both perpetrators and victims of violence and considers how media messages might change to offer more realistic depictions of women.

- Women have been portrayed in mass media as:
  - Victims who are helpless, dependent, powerless.
  - Villains who are destructive, independent, all-powerful.
  - Vamps, who are sexually alluring—and that can be a good or a bad thing.

- Women as victims:
  - The "good" rape victim, who didn’t know her attacker.
  - The "bad" rape victim, who did know her attacker (and deserved her attack).
  - Rape survivors?
  - What do the media tell us about rape?

- Women as villains:
  - The "good" mother who killed her children because she cared too much (usually married, living with the baby’s father).
  - The "bad" mother who killed her children because she cared so little (usually single).
  - Motherhood as work, not a calling.
  - What do the media tell us about the stresses of mothering?
Women as vamps:
- The “good” trafficked women who did not choose prostitution.
- The “bad” trafficked women who chose this line of work.
- Is sex work every freely chosen?
- What are the gender inequities that lead to trafficking for sexual exploitation?

Issues for the media to consider:
- Sources – Who speaks, who is spoken about?
- Circumstances – What do we know about women’s choices?
- Language – How do we talk about crimes?