Media Essay, Research Paper

Media Awareness

The case that I decided to focus on is an older abuse case, but it has recently been

resolved in the courts. It is a child abuse case involving James and Bonnie Zeleski. They

were both charged with abusing their infant daughter. The child was brought to the

hospital with a fracture in each leg, a fracture in each arm, a thigh fracture, three broken

ribs, a ripped esophagus, pneumonia, malnourished and several other cuts and bruises.

The girl was transferred to an Omaha hospital. The father, James, was charged on June

3, 1998 with Class 4 Felony Child Abuse. His wife, Bonnie, was later charged and

convicted of a Class 3 Felony. James was sentenced to three years probation and six

months in jail. His wife was sentenced to 15 to 18 months in prison.

I think that this case was fairly portrayed by the media. I know at the time, there

were several letters to the editor and opinion printed on the subject, but the Grand Island

Independent seemed to be fair and stick to the facts. It was a horrible crime and I think

they did a good job being unbiased. I think that it is a good idea to publicize crimes like

this. From my other studies, I have learned that the informal sanctions, public

humiliation and shame, are far more effective than the formal sanctions in preventing

crime. When people who are having a hard time dealing with being a parent see

something like this in the media, they may stop to think about their actions. A good idea

would be to run several articles on where parents can go to for help. The combination of

the two, may help prevent this from happening to another child.

As a mother I have a definite interest in this crime. I cannot even begin to

understand how anyone could do something like that to someone so helpless. I am also

interested in this case from the legal perspective and how the case was resolved in the

court system. I personally think that the sentencing was very lenient.

I think this is a good activity. I studied journalism for a while and I am very

aware of how the media can distort a situation. I think as a human service worker it is

very important to know what is going on and how the situations are being resolved.

Anytime situations like this can be brought to public attention I think it can help. Just

getting one person to think about their actions possibly save the life of a child.

Bibliography

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Grand Island Independent, Saturday, January 9, 1998

Grand Island Independent, Thursday, February 18, 1998