

Professor x

Health & Medicine, Pregnancy



Professor X English 1A April 17, 2013 Advertising Sex The saying, " Sex sells, " has never been more relevant than in today's media. According to an internet article, " Sexual information, whether in the form of pictures, stories, or sounds, has been shown to evoke a predictable range of emotional responses within viewers" (Reichert). The emotions that are triggered from sexual images are that of arousal and intrigue among viewers. In essence, openly risqué images and behavior in the media have a major influence on its audience. Particularly, the sexual advertising blitz of the last five decades has created major problems among young adults. Moreover, explicitly sexual advertising is specifically targeted towards young girls and boys, which is negatively affecting them and needs to be monitored. The media today is blatantly sexual in television programs. Certain popular television shows are completely about the many sexual encounters a character experiences. For example, the show Desperate Housewives is about a group of women going through struggles and family life, while facing dirty secrets about themselves and their neighbors. The show depicts Gabrielle, a popular and beautiful character, having a steamy affair with her gardener, who happens to be a teenager, and then trying to keep it a secret from her husband. Sadly, " Desperate Housewives is the most popular broadcast-network television show with kids aged 9-12" (Facts and TV Statistics). Another popular TV program that encourages promiscuity and has a huge teenage audience is That 70's Show. The show follows six teenagers in the 70's dealing with " normal" teenage problems such as using drugs, having strict parents, and dating problems. Instead of shining a negative light on some of these teenage situations, That 70's Show glorifies smoking marijuana and pre-

marital sex. Specifically, Kelso, the best-looking and funniest guy on the show, cheats on his girlfriend and is praised for doing so by his friends. These types of characters are what children and teenagers are growing up seeing and idolizing, which causes their sexual behavior. Magazines and their use of advertisement has followed suit representing sex as the number one way of attracting customers. Cosmogirl, a young woman's magazine, has article advertisements on covers that read, " First time sex! Teens who've done it tell you everything" or " Blow his mind! The trick that'll have him aching for you" (Cosmogirl). Unfortunately, these articles are meant for an audience in the age group of 13 to 19 year old girls. Cosmogirl is fantasizing sex for its audience of young women. Another magazine, Men's Health, has also taken steps to attract its readers with sexual articles about how to " properly" please a woman. Articles in Men's Health read " 30 Red-hot Sex Secrets" and " Dress For More Sex" (Men's Health). The truth is, young men and women read these articles in these magazines and become desensitized with feelings of passion and obligation to pursue the acts they read about. The media is directly affecting children's and young adult's views of sex making them feel as though it is just another activity like going to the movies or going bowling. Moreover, the media is specifically targeting young men and women. Television characters on TV shows are idolized by young women and men. Kelso, a teenage character from That 70's Show, engages in adult situations by having sex with his girlfriend and then cheating on her with other women. Young men watch Kelso and think its " cool" or normal to go out and behave as he does. Clothing advertisements in magazines and in young adult stores are provocative. In the story Is Sex all

that Matters?, Joyce Garity describes how, “ A billboard for Levi’s shows two jean-clad young men on the beach, hoisting a girl in the air. The boy’s perfect, tan bodies are matched by hers, although we see a lot more of hers: bare midriff, short shorts, [and] cleavage. ” It seems to be a “ jolly fantasy” where there are no consequences for those who indulge in sex (Garity). In Abercrombie & Fitch, a teenage clothing store, the walls are, “...plastered with huge blowups of fresh-faced, great-looking teens who are either nude or nearly nude” (Lopez). These girls in the photos are wearing extremely revealing clothing as if it is normal to show off one’s body. Also, the girls depicted in these highly sexualized ads are always in fantastic physical shape which puts another burden on young ladies to feel “ wanted” by men. These types of images that are projected to young women create a sense of longing for a fairy tale romance with boys. Most importantly, they promote young women to perform in sexual activities displayed in the provocative images. The affects of sexual advertising in the media are especially damaging on teenage women. According to Ariel Levy, author of the book *Feminist Chauvinist Pigs*, “ Young women are trying to look and behave like those images, as if they were porn stars. As if being able to incite lust is women’s work. That’s just your first job, inciting lust” (Kobrin). The message that is sent to girls through advertisements is that they should be sexual objects. When girls seek to find a lasting and meaningful relationship, they believe sex is a key to holding onto the man that they want. Sex becomes the basis of relationships. As the young women’s magazines continue to promote, “ 50 ways to please your man, ” girls go on believing they can keep a man interested if they are pleasing him sexually. Many young women

believe that sex is the key to romance in a relationship. In *Is Sex All that Matters*, a girl is described saying that, “ She melts over images from a sexual Shangri-la, never realizing that her attempts to mirror those images left her pregnant, abandoned, living in the spare bedroom of a stranger’s house...” (Garity). In the United States, with sex being so rampant, the estimated statistic is that one in three girls will become pregnant before the age of twenty, which can be directly linked to today’s sexualized culture (Teen Pregnancy). Furthermore, sexual attractiveness becomes every girl’s main goal because they are trying to emulate the women they see in picture-perfect advertisements. Girls become insecure about their bodies and want to be skinny like the models they idolize on TV and in magazines. The need to be attractive overwhelms a girl and she then starts to diet so she can fit into the skimpy little outfits that “ sexy” women wear in Abercrombie & Fitch posters. For instance, a 17-year-old student says, “ I know in my head the images are excessive, but to me they feel normal. ” (Kobrin) The acceptance of such skimpy and sexy clothing in an everyday, normal setting has created a new standard among young ladies that accepts small, revealing clothing. This daunting feeling of sexiness in girls becomes their life obsession, which is unhealthy because girls should be secure with who they are. In addition, boys too are affected from advertisements that display sexual images. Young men’s perception of women as sexualized objects is encouraged through sexy pictures and shows of women. Women no longer are an equal with men, but something sought after, won, and then conquered. As sex becomes the basis of romance for women, it happens for men as well. As a boy becomes influenced by TV shows that show other teenagers like him having

sex with their girlfriends, he then begins to expect sex from his own girlfriend. For example, Kelso from *That 70's Show* starts to sleep with his girlfriend and is then praised for it, so young boys begin to believe that sex is what makes them cool and accepted. According to Joyce Garity, " Studies show that by the age of twenty, 75 percent of Americans have lost their virginity. " As boys start to have sex with their girlfriends at a younger age, it creates peer pressure to have sex early and often for all boys. This type of thinking among boys ruins relationships because of sexual expectations. When a girl does not " give it up" to the guy she is dating, the guy then breaks up with her because he can easily get " it" from another girl. Girls then wonder why guys will not love and respect them for who they are, when they are parading around in small outfits. A vicious cycle of ruined relationships and sexual experiences is repeated among young adults. Steps need to be taken in order to monitor and limit the sexuality in the media that children and teens are exposed to. Firstly, Parents need to become educated with the problem. Teen pregnancy is on the rise even with more forms birth control than ever before. Parents of young daughters need to be aware of the facts about teen pregnancy and STDs so they can talk about these issues. Having a baby as a teen makes it much harder for a girl to reach her goals, such as finishing high school, going on to college, getting a good job, or getting married when she grows up, and poses additional challenges to the child as well. Also, experts estimate that about 19 million Americans get an STD every year. One in two of every newly diagnosed STDs infects a teenager or young adult (Weinstock). People are often apt to believe that teen pregnancy and STDs are the only problems related to teens having sex.

However, this is not true. Participating in sexual activity at a young age can lead to emotional problems as well. Teens that have sex early are at risk for depression and teens that have depression are more apt to engage in sex. According to Dr. Leher, a pediatrics specialist, “ Researchers found that boys and girls who have symptoms of depression are more likely to get involved in very risky sexual behaviors, such as not using a condom, having sex with a number of partners, and using alcohol or other drugs when they had sex” (Leher). Parents should tell their kids to wait until marriage to start having sex so that they can live healthier and happier lives. It is crucial that parents become educated about sexual problems so that they can get an early start on an ever going battle against a sexualized culture that wants to capture their children. Likewise, parents also should monitor what their children are doing, watching and wearing. Parents need to take a crucial role in making an effort to censor the kinds of things that their children’s minds are being filled with. According to a study in 1972, “ Adolescents ages 12 to 17 showed that watching sex on TV influences teens to have sex. Youths who watched more sexual content were more likely to initiate intercourse and progress to more advanced noncoital sexual activities in the year following the beginning of the study” (Facts and TV Statistics). Parents can take an active role in the disapproval of such sexualized content. They can block certain channels on their cable TV systems so that their children cannot have access to obscenely sexualized TV shows. In addition, parents also need to learn to say, “ No, ” to their children when they ask to buy risqué clothing. Parents need to be positive role models and provide strong parenting so that they can instill good morals and values into their children. The sexual advertising

blitz in today's society has certainly had damaging effects on the youth. The media's advertising and display of sex has affected young girls and boys so that they are now partaking in sexual activities at a younger age. The youth is becoming desensitized to true love in a relationship because of the naïve notion that sex is the key to romance. Parents need to become educated and take a more functional role in their children's lives to help turn around the lie that "sex sells" and to stop the spread of sexual activity at a young age.