Reality television and its inevitable corruption of society

The idea that reality television is unethical and corrupting to society has been debated widely due to its unrealistic portrayal of real life (Morris & McInerney, 2010). Ferguson, Slamond and Modi (2013) suggest this impractical representation is concerning as reality television holds a high influence on society, due to the genre's increasing popularity. Also, this strong influence has the ability to alter societies values and perceptions of social groups (Lindenfeld, 2013; Morris & McInerney, 2010). Reality television portrays negative views of adolescent girls and unrealistic expectations women while endorsing misogynistic stereotypes, which is damaging and corrupting to society.

This essay will explore the negative aspects of reality television, and the damaging effects it has on society. Reality television persistently has a negative effect on adolescent girl's self-esteem (Ferguson, Salmond, & Modi, 2013). Young children are more easily influenced by the media, in particular reality television due to the lack of personal experience and ability to filter out embellishment (Peek & Beresin, 2015). Peek and Beresin (2015) explain that reality TV programming has dominated the television market within the last decade, and consequently imprints on viewers that what occurs on screen is reality. This popularity is alarming as these TV programs portray women unrealistically by showing only cosmetically skinny-beautiful girls as natural. This portrayal is damaging as adolescent girls cannot distinguish the misleading images, but rather believe this is the ideal body shape. Girls as young as 11 and 12 years of age who participate in the viewing of reality television who idealize thin women, express greater body dissatisfaction (Ferguson, Slamond, & Modi, 2013; Peek & Beresin, 2015). Ferguson,

Salmond and Modi (2013) and Hodel (2016) explain that adolescent girls aged 11 to 17 who watch reality television programs have an increased focus on appearance and willingness to compromise moral value for fame. Reality television endorses women and young girls to sacrifice their own moral compass for personal gain, through the destruction of another woman's success (Ferguson, Slamond, & Modi, 2013; Peek & Beresin, 2015).

Furthermore, studies have shown that observing cosmetic surgery programs increase women's disordered eating attitudes due to the unrealistic portrayal of beauty (Ferguson, Salmond, & Modi, 2015). Therefore, the consequence of adolescent girl's viewing reality television is exceptionally damaging to them and society, through the destroying of natural beauty acceptance and blurring moral values for personal gain. Society faces corruption through the damaging effects reality television has on adolescent girls, but also through the television programs endorsement of traditional female stereotypes. Misogynistic stereotypes have been reinforced within reality television programming, having a harmful effect on society (Lindenfeld, 2013). Despite women being underrepresented within reality television relevant to their world population (Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2018), the representation that is available is typically non-diverse and limited to traditional beliefs of women. Lindenfeld (2013) explains that reality-dating shows, referred to as ' The Bachelor Industry' supports stereotypical expectations of women, demanding they maintain culturally appropriate standards of femininity, including beauty, grace, emotions and dependnce on men. The Bachelor Industry shows women who fail to meet these expectations ultimately fail at

love and being a woman (Lindenfeld, 2013). Aside from the Bachelor Industry of reality television, other forms of unscripted TV endorse the traditional expectations of women such, as pregnancy journey television. Sears and Godderis (2010) and Morris and McInerney (2010) explain that common birthing TV reinforce gender roles and dominant stereotypes by representing mainly women who are white, heterosexual and married as the standard for pregnant women.

Furthermore, Sears and Godderis (2010) examine how pregnancy focused television endorse the traditional, misogynistic belief that women's purpose in life is bearing and caring for children. Thus, reality television programs, in particular dating and pregnancy journey shows are harmful to society as they reinforce misogynistic stereotypes by portraying women as domestic, dependent and the ' ideal' woman based on pre-feminist male ideals. Unscripted television programs are not only damaging to society through the endorsement of traditional female ideals but also through the unrealistic portrayal of women. Reality television often portrays an unrealistic view of women, corrupting societies expectation of them (Morris & McInerney, 2010). In addition to re-affirming misogynistic stereotypes, Downing (2017) suggests the Bachelor Industry portrays women as undesirable ' mean girls' in pursuit of male affection. Downing (2017) and Peek and Beresin, (2015) exposes how this aggressive portrayal of women seeking love is unrealistic and argues the motive of relating to popular girl cliques. The portraying of ' mean girls' encourages relational aggression while normalizing girl-dominant angry behaviour (Downing, 2017; Peek & Beresin, 2015). This depiction of

women is corrupting to society as it exposes an irrational and aggressive side to women seeking romantic affection.

Furthermore, Morris and McInerney (2010) explain that reality-based birth television programs do not provide an accurate portrayal of women and how they typically experience birth. Majority of these type of reality shows lack diversity in the representation of birthing women while mainly portraying married, heterosexual women (Sears & Godderis, 2010; Morris & McInerney, 2010). Also, Markey and Markey (2010) explain that cosmetic-reality television give an unnatural definition of beauty, directly telling women they must change themselves in order to meet societies standards. Through research, Markey and Markey (2010) discovered that cosmetic surgery reality shows alter men and women's perceptions of attractiveness, self-image and individuals physiological and physical well-being. Thus, reality television programs are corrupting to society through the expression of unrealistic expectations and portrayal of women. In conclusion, reality television programs have increased in popularity over the last decade, exposing diverse aspects to social life (Sears & Godderis, 2010). Due to the programs social popularity, reality television holds a significance influence over society, impacting on values and beliefs.