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[Media](#)



The Media and its Impact on the Range of Understanding Identity in Adolescents

The effect of media representation of various issues has long been a topic of discussion for developmental experts. However, the nature of such a research question is especially important with reference to the development and understanding of adolescent female identity. As such, the media regularly show sex as a risk free activity, portrays the world as a dangerous place, and

severely influences one's body image. These representations have a negative effect on the way that individuals, especially adolescent women identify with an understanding of their own identity.

A thorough discussion of how the media influences adolescent female interpretations of sexual identity would require a dissertation length response. However, for purposes of this brief analysis, the author will examine how the media has fundamentally changed the ways that girls engage with and accept their own body image, the manner in which sex and the repercussions thereof are understood, and the role of violence within sexual relations (Brown 15). Firstly, one should consider the gratuitous nature with which sex and sexual relations is discussed within the media. It is nearly impossible to turn on primetime television or read a magazine that does not seek to cheaply engage the reader with a type of frivolous and non-consequential understanding of human sexuality. A series of negative implications are glossed over to include the ever-increasing risk of STDs, pregnancy, emotional/psychological trauma, and the inability to form lasting and meaningful physical relationships due to a high premium being placed

upon sex (Samson et al 283). Such common interpretations are no doubt one of the reasons that HPV is represented in one out of every 4 women between the ages of 14-30 within the United States.

Likewise, it does not take a specialist to note that there is an ever increasing incidence of violence in all forms of media. This cannot only be understood as a function of entertainment but also as a function of news programming which takes particular interest in some of the more gruesome elements of violence that exist within society. The representation of violence within the media in all its forms serves to relate an unrealistic view of the world model as it currently exists and no doubt has a profound effect on the way that adolescents view their surroundings. One study put forward that the average child will have viewed around 8, 000 murders on television prior to finishing elementary school (Nelson 1). This fact in and of itself gives the reader pause when realizing the sheer size of the problem and demands a response to such an issue.

Lastly, the effects of the media can specifically be seen on the way that bulimia and other related eating disorders that are exhibited within our current society (Bleakley et al 310). It is the belief of this author that these are merely evidence of the fact that a constant stream of wafer thin models, actors, and celebrities are incessantly paraded before our young women in an attempt to provide a type of “role model” for womanhood which all girls should seek to fulfill (Cohen et al 464). Naturally, such an approach is shortsighted and has far reaching implications for how women and girls will identify with their own body image and by extension the personal self worth they ascribe to their own lives.

Regardless of one's political point of view or the level of acceptance one to a given practice, the fact of the matter is that the media is having a profound effect on how society's youth identify with sex, violence, and their own personal self image and/or worth. As such, it is the strong belief of this author that even though the statistics sometimes disagree with regards to the true scope and nature of the societal ramifications of the media's portrayal of the issues herein noted, they nonetheless exist and exhibit a profound impact on society's youth.

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