

Teenage Girls + Media = Low Self-Esteem

Studies Show Connection between Media and Self-Image

By Kelly Nault

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Is it really true that teenage girls + media = low self-esteem?

The issue of media's impact on teenagers has generated a lot of interest in the last decade. Despite contradictory findings, all researchers agree that teenage girls as a group are focused on their looks—especially on what they don't like about themselves! Marketing departments and ad agencies spend millions each year targeting teenage girls who spend much of their hard-earned dollars (and their parents' hard-earned dollars!) on looking good. Although the message of "girl power" is prevalent in today's marketing messages, so is the irrefutable idea that "sexy" and "thin" are in!

The dieting industry alone generates 40 billion dollars per year in America. If you believe diets are just for adults, you will be shocked to learn that a Harvard study (Fat Talk, Harvard University Press) published in 2000 revealed that 86% of teenage girls are on a diet or believe they should be on one. Diets are common among both teens and children. According to the National Eating Disorders Association, 51% of 9 and 10-year-old girls actually feel better about themselves when on a diet. As a society, our obsession with thin is relatively new. Most people (especially teens) are shocked to find that sex icon Marilyn Monroe actually wore a size 14!

But pick up a fashion magazine today and you'll find models that are thinner than 98% of all the girls and women in America. Turn on a television and see 'sexy' celebrities such as Paris Hilton, Britney Spears, and Lindsay Lohan baring their flesh. It is these role models who have become the standard of what is in vogue in the twenty-first century.

Do Teenage Girls have Low Self-esteem because of Media?

One of the most fascinating shows on self-image for teens was aired on Discovery Channel's *Sex Files* program (Episode 12: Girl Power). During the show, they reported on eating disorders on the island of Fiji. In 1995, this tropical paradise had only 3 percent of girls with eating disorders.

Then western television programs were introduced, including "hits" such as *ER*, *Melrose Place*, and *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Three years later, the eating disorders in girls on the island rose to 15%. A surprising follow-up study reported 74% of Fijian girls feeling "too fat or big" and 62% had dieted in the last month—surprising in a culture that typically upholds curvaceous women as beautiful.

Reading for Information

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Directions: Use your Lit Book – page 62, and the article on the other side to complete the information below.

1. The purpose of a newspaper article is to _____.
2. The structure of a typical newspaper article can be described as an _____.
3. In this type of article, there is usually a _____ lead.
4. The lead gives the _____ of the story, followed by the most _____ ideas of the article down to the _____ important details.
5. The headline of the article on the other side of this paper is _____.
6. "Studies Show Connection between Media and Self-Image" is the _____ of the article.
7. The byline for the article is _____. The byline tells us who _____ the article or who the article is "by."
8. The dateline of an article tells the reader _____ and _____ the information was reported.
9. The main idea of this article is _____.
10. Two types of evidence used to support the main idea are _____ and _____.