

How Do Media Images Impact Self-Image?



What Is My Self-Image?

Do any of these statements sound familiar? "I'm too short." "I'm too tall." "My hair is too curly." "If only I had a smaller nose or perfect skin, I would be happy." These are examples of self-image, or how you think about yourself.

Some of these self-images are positive and others are negative. As your body grows and changes, so does your self-image. When you get stuck on negative thoughts about your self-image, it can have a negative impact on your self-esteem. Self-esteem is important because it defines how much you feel you are worth. Having a high self-esteem and feeling that people value you can lead to a healthy, happy life.

Take a few moments to think about five specific positive qualities or characteristics that you possess. Write your answers below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now, think about how boys and girls are portrayed in TV shows and movies that you watch. Choose one male or female character from a TV show or movie and list five qualities or characteristics about that character. *(If you are a boy, choose a boy character. If you are a girl, choose a girl character.)*

TV Show: _____ Character: _____

Qualities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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Compare how you view yourself and how the character you chose is portrayed. Write the similarities and differences between your self-image and the media image of the character below:

Similarities

Differences

Why do you think it is important to compare how the media portrays girls and boys your age to how you think about yourself? Explain.

Male and Female Images in Film

Recent studies show that men are more likely to speak in a movie, while women are more likely to wear revealing clothing.

Read USA TODAY's article *Film study: Men talk and women show skin*, to explore some of the data about how men and women are represented in popular films.

<p>Three things I learned about how males and females are portrayed in films</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
<p>Two questions that came to mind when I was reading this article</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.
<p>One reason this article relates to me</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.

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[When it comes to movie roles, women tend to be seen and not heard.

An analysis of the 100 top-grossing movies of 2008 shows that men had 67% of the speaking roles; women had about half that, 33%.

Men also were far more likely to work behind the camera. For every five male directors, writers or producers, there was one female.

At the same time, female characters were more likely to wear sexy, provocative clothing than men (26% vs. 5%) or to appear partially naked (24% vs. 8%).

The sexualization of teen girls in the movies was the most troubling finding to the researchers at Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California.

Female teenage characters were more likely to wear sexy, provocative clothing (40%) than other women — even more than those age 21 to 39 (32%). And the teen girls were as likely to appear partially naked as the older women (30%).

Lead researcher Stacy Smith, a communication professor of entertainment at USC, says “the data speaks to an over-emphasis on beauty, thinness and sexualization of women at younger and younger ages.”

The study, [released in April 2011], also found that 29% of teen girls were called attractive by another person in the movie vs. 18% of women ages 21 to 39 and 8% of women 40 to 64.

Marc Choueiti, the project administrator, says this sends a message to teen girls that they are “eye candy,” which could affect the body image of some young female viewers.

For the study, researchers analyzed 4,370 speaking parts in the top 100 films from 2008, including *The Dark Knight*, *Iron Man* and *Twilight*.

“Women represent roughly half of the U.S. population and buy roughly half of the movie tickets, but they still represent only a third of the speaking roles in film,” Smith says. “Females are missing in action when it comes to speaking roles.”

Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, a University of Missouri researcher who studies the media’s influence on young people and was not involved in this study, says the sexualization of girls is rampant in films, television, music videos and the marketing of clothing to children.

“This is sending a powerful message that it’s important for girls and young women to be sexual objects from a very early age,” she says.

Source: *Film study: Men talk and women show skin*, April 22, 2011. *USA TODAY*

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Do TV Shows and Film Impact My Self-Image?

Many people think that the images portrayed in TV and film may contribute to young people having a negative self-image. In other words, if you don't look like the males with chiseled abs and muscles bulging out of their shirts or the females with flawless figures and perfect skin, then you do not look right. These media sources can cause young people to think they must have perfect bodies. As a result, there is concern that young people will turn to eating disorders and other unhealthy measures to look like the unrealistic images from TV and film.

Do you think the portrayal of males and females in TV and film has a positive or negative impact on your self-image? Explain.

Now that you know how the media tends to portray males and females, how can you use this information to be sure to develop a positive self-image?

Extend Your Learning

Check out the following websites:

- ▶ See how Geena Davis and the Girl Scouts have teamed up to identify ways to promote healthy, positive images of girls and women in the media: www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/advocacy/watchwhatyouwatch/youthsummit.asp
- ▶ Do you want to change the way the media portrays men and women in TV shows and film? Explore this website to find out how you can make a change: www.change.org
- ▶ Find out more about the YWCA and how it empowers girls and women throughout the country: www.ywca.org/site/c.cuIRJ7NTKrLaG/b.7515807/k.BE84/Home.htm