

## Media Impact on Gender & Sexuality – Day 4

### I. Objective

Today we will be talking about how the media effects our perceptions and expectations of sexuality and how we view gender. Remind students that some of the topics can be difficult or complex for students and staff so it's critically important that we do our best to make sure our AG is committed to respect and sensitivity during the activities this week.

II. Review the schedule or timeline for the week as needed. (display if possible)

### III. Facts

"Media" includes all forms of mass communication ideas, information, entertainment, and education conveyed through television, radio, film, computers, books, magazines, billboards, etc. The media that we consume affects us on many levels. For quite some time now there has been a growing concern among scientists, parents, psychologists, government institutions, and society at large about the harmful effects of media on people, particularly children. Below are some representative findings:

- Gender inequities in commercials link attractiveness and sexism, and there is a positive relationship between exposure to sex-stereotyped media content and stereotypical attitudes and behaviors (Lynn T. Lovdal, 1989).
- The depiction of violence against women results in callousness toward female victims of violence and attitudes that are accepting of such violence (Understanding Violence Against Women, 1996).

Mass Media is a tremendously powerful force that impacts our social environment. Media messages influence our perceptions and attitudes and affect our behavior. In an average year, youths will be exposed to thousands and thousands of sexual references, innuendos, and jokes as opposed to a few hundred references to birth control, self-control, abstinence, or sexually transmitted infections. The entertainment media has become the main educator on sex, courtship, and relationships. When movies and programs perpetuate negative stereotypes about women, men, sex, and relationships, teens receive the wrong messages about how to act – especially in dating situations – and how others should respond.

### IV. Sex Sells – Using Sex to advertise & Sexist advertising

- Using Sex to Advertise:
  - Product has nothing to do with sex.
  - Teen believes that if they buy or use the product it is a conduit to sex.
  - Even once educated, teens still have a hard time discerning this form of manipulation.
- Sexist Advertising:
  - Women portrayed as objects of desire or sexual pleasure for men, disregarding the women's identities as individual human beings.
  - Young women develop an unhealthy view of "female beauty."
  - Young men are shown examples of masculinity that they think they must follow in order to meet society's expectations of "macho."

## V. Activity

### Decoding the Message

- Display the **Advertisement Collage**: Perfumes, jeans, & automobiles
- Ask students the following questions:
  - Describe the images in the ads – what do you see? Who do you see?
  - What are the women in the ads doing/saying? What are they wearing?
  - What are the men in the ads doing/saying? What are they wearing?
  - What are their bodies saying or suggesting?
  - Are there similarities in the way that all the women are portrayed?
  - Are there similarities in the way that the men are portrayed?
  - What role does “sexiness” or “sex appeal” play in the ads?
  - Are the ads talking to women? Men?
  - How does this affect you? Do you think you are influenced by advertising?

Discuss the fact that advertising is a means for selling. Advertising sells products by using images that create connections between the product and a favorable outcome for the consumer who buys it – for example. “If you wear this perfume, you will attract a man;” “If you drink this drink, you will attract this woman.”

Big Question: Does the media effect your perceptions of sexuality and relationships? Is this perception actually real? Are your ideas and beliefs about relationships based in reality? Think of some actual adults you know who have healthy relationships. What do you notice about their relationships?

Source: *In touch with teens: Relationship Violence Prevention Curriculum, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*

### Closure:

- Add any information that you believe is important to the conversation. Be aware of the possible need to debrief students or refer (to the counseling center).
- Review the group agreement implementation and ask for any edits or updates to the agreement.
- Allow for down time/casual conversations as students prepare to exit AG.