

Lecture 4

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

8:12 AM

Ideal Self

Role of the Media

- Many people turn to the media (books, magazines, tv) for role models with whom to compare themselves.
- These comparisons are often unfavourable for the average person, since the media perpetuates a myth of perfection (the false notion that a state of perfection exists and is attainable).
- They myth of perfection can lead to dissatisfaction with our bodies and influences how we communicate.

Media Impact on Body Image: Barbie

- Dr. Helga Dittmar, a psychologist at the University of Sussex, has studied media impact on body image
- In one study, Dr. Dittmar had 200 girls look at pictures of either Barbie or Emme
 - She asked them to pick figures that represented their actual body shape, the body shape they ideally desired and their ideal body shape as an adult
 - Emme has a average body
- The difference between the shape girls thought they had and the shape they wanted was then analyzed.
- The results showed that girls aged 5-6 were more dissatisfied Barbie doll images than after seeing other pictures
 - For those aged 6-7 the negative effects were even stronger
- Most of us know that Barbie's figure is not possible for most women
- Children do not yet have the capacity to make this judgment and yet, according to Mattel, 99% of girls aged 3-10 years old own at least one Barbie.

Media Images of Beauty and Thinness

- Daytime soap operas and popular prime time shows feature glamorized beautiful, thin female actresses.
- Lean, often emaciated young women walk the runways of fashion television and Paris, NY, and Milan.
- US Weekly magazine reported weights well below healthy for most popular actresses; and if their natural size and beauty was not good enough, they are photoshopped.

Men are Not Exempt

- In one study, 1/3 of young men reported experiencing high levels of dissatisfaction with the shape, size, condition and/or appearance of their body

But there are cultural differences

- Research has found many cross cultural differences in how people think about health and beauty. Some neat experiments have shown this.
- For example, in China viewing idealized bodies had no impact on the self esteem of Chinese participants of both genders.
- In North America, African American girls and women report higher self esteem and a greater disregard for media images of black women
 - There is also lower incidence of some eating disorders in black women compared to white women.