Danielle Colello

Professor Mangini

Research Project

28 April 2019

A Consensual Friendship

This is America. This is the land of the free. This is what I’m told to look like and dress like. This is how I’m told to respond to men. This is the role I’m supposed to play. Growing up as a young girl in America the media has become a part of everyday life. We are constantly on some form of media. Whether that be social media, TV, the radio, or images young women are always being bombarded with structuralizing views that come from men. When I say structuralizing that means,” to organize or incorporate into a structure” (Webster, Merriam. “Structuralize.” Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, 2019). There are so many shows and movies that little girls are addicted to that subliminally are teaching them what behavior is and is not acceptable in Americas society. If only we would teach the young girls about energies, and how whatever energy you put out will be matched by the universe and come back to you. Then maybe we wouldn’t have young girls trying to repeat what they see in media. But maybe they would actually consciously want to put out positive energy and be loving toward one another. In the documentary,” Miss Representation” they thoroughly discuss the impact the media has on women in todays society and how they can tear women of power down and make them seem like a mere object and less credible. (Newsom, Jennifer. “Miss Representation.” Kanopy, Kanopy, 2011.) I would even say that the power of the media has the ability to make women seem less intelligent. Now if the media can affect intelligent women in power what does that say about how they can affect any women, but most importantly young girls. The portrayal of women in todays society is horrendous. However, the fact young women are not taught how to properly interact perpetuates this learned behavior through the media. The media glorifies abusive and toxic relationships to create a social norm for young girls.

There are so many relationships in our life that mold who we are and who we become. What we don’t realize until later in life is that there are relationships that are not your significant other or parent that is essential to your growth in the world. When we think of the word relationship we typically tend to think of a significant other. However, relationship is defined as, “The way in which two or more objects, concepts, or people are connected.” So really a relationship includes, your dog, a friend, a way of thinking, ect. so a friendship is absolutely a relationship. Healthy friendships are very important for your mental health and overall health and growth in life. Who we surround ourselves with has the power to heavily influence ideas and decisions we make in life.

Let me explain what I mean by the media is creating a, “social norm.” “A social norm is described as the accepted behavior that an individual is expected to conform to in a particular group, community, or culture.” (Roundy, Lisa. “What Are Social Norms? Definition & Examples in Infants, Children & Adults.” *Study.com*, Study.com, study.com/academy/lesson/what-are-social-norms-definition-examples-in-infants-children-adults.) So the media is creating a sense of community bound by these norms.

I myself, was a victim of abuse by “best friends.” I’ll list some toxic behaviors you may not have realized were toxic, because I sure didn’t, at the time. If something goes wrong in their life they blame you, or take it out on you. They always need to be the center of attention. If something is great in your life, they’ll degrade it. They are dependent on you and expect you to give them what they want. They will guilt trip you into doing what they want. They think “sorry” fixes everything, even physical abuse. They use your own flaws or personal concerns against you. These are just a few of the abusive behaviors that I feel go so un noticed in our society that are demonstrated largely by young girls. One thing that helped me was learning about energy. The universe will match your energy with a frequency. This concept helped me conceptualize my own thoughts on life and what I wanted to put out into the world. This could be a very useful tool in helping young girls develop a positive sense of self and build healthy relationships with their peers.

Let me give you some examples of the messages the media gives to young girls. The show Gossip Girl was a hit amongst young girls for years. The show is based on four elite friends at an upscale high school. All throughout this show there is deceit, lying, backstabbing all throughout this entire friend group. One girl sleeps with her best friends’ boyfriend. Then that girl tries to take down her friend. Meanwhile they are having sleepovers and braiding each other’s hair. Well not really, they have people for that.

The betrayal is always happening behind the persons back and then they pretend to be friends once together all while making condescending remarks to each other passive aggressively. Forms of media like these are showing young easily influenced girls that they are expected to interact like this.

Another example of how the media portrays a certain image or message to these girls that shapes their sense of community with one another is the classic film, “Mean Girls.”  the entire movie is about a girl pretending to be some popular girl’s friend who is abusive toward her which perpetuates this behavior for other young girls because they see this as “cool” and “the norm” when its completely not. Meanwhile the entire movie this girl is plotting against the abusive popular girl to take her down and is discreetly abusive towards her as well. The protagonist and the antagonist are doing essentially the same thing to each other in different ways and this creates a sense of community for young influential girls that this behavior is what “friends” do. .

` These young girls are not being properly nurtured in life to the point where they feel compelled to constantly compare themselves to each other and see each other as competition. They need to put on their masks every day and prepare their masks for what they feel is appropriate to show the world. (Newsom, Jennifer. “The Mask You Live In.” Kanopy, Kanopy, 2015). A little girl is expected to wear makeup and a cute little dress and look perfect. So, these inadvertently become the things that we grow up basing our entire worth and value over and its such a “social norm” we don’t even recognize were conforming to what the media, what the old white powerful men in charge want us to conform to. But this issue is magnified by our friends and peers when we are challenged to behave a certain way.

The media has so much more power than we even realize. We cannot allow these invasive, horrible messages to actually have an impact on how young girls interact. We need to teach them better messages through the media. We need to be teaching them about real things like energy so they can learn how the energy they put out has an effect on the world around them. Even at young ages I believe most young girls will be able to at least grasp the concept of energy. If we can teach young girls the concept of energy at a young age this will inadvertently be able to develop their own ideas of putting out positive energy. Getting back what you put out. I believe if this was more of a focus instead of catfights and toxic friendships in the media then we wouldn’t perpetuate a community of girls who tolerate toxic and abusive relationships.

Works Cited

<https://dccc.kanopy.com/video/mask-you-live>

<https://dccc.kanopy.com/video/miss-representation-0>

(<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-are-social-norms-definition-examples-in-infants-children-adults.html>

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/structuralize>