

Media Infection of the Innocent Mind

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6th-8th Grade Interview Questions

- Who are your role models and why?
- What is your daily routine when getting ready and how much time does it take?
- How do you feel about boys and do you have a boyfriend?
- What are some of your favorite shows and why?

In the Industry of Fashion, Media, and Reality shows many things are displayed and exposed. Things such as: The “unattainable ideal of beauty”, “good girl gone bad”, sex, and the all too famous “I’m hot you’re not” saga. All of these themes throughout the Industry flood our airways, highways, and brain waves constantly.

The question is, who are the Industry’s targets? Is it Adults, the “in crowd”, or young adults? The Industry may try to direct attention to a certain audience, but what if the wrong crowd intercepts it? From what I discovered in these few weeks, the message is being delivered to a vulnerable and innocent audience, of pre-teen girls.



Photo Courtesy of : Flicker

I interviewed 2 girls from each class 6th-8th Grade, ages 11-14. They were all students in middle school, who had a lot of stories to tell. I also interviewed 2 moms and 2 dads after they watched a video called Onslaught.

Parents Interview Questions

- What did the video make you think?
- Do you think your daughter is being affected and how?
- What will you try to do to prevent your child from falling in the trap?

The video is a Dove Self-Esteem Commercial that shows a little girl in taking the images of women being exploited, and distorting their body images, and using products to “enhance their beauty”. All of the parents were shocked to see the film and it made them rethink what they invite in their homes. Lastly, I observed students at the Middle School just to see how the Industry has impacted their images. It was a lot to take in, but it opened a lot of people’s eyes,

Tween Corruption

Kerri 6th Grade 11 years old

Kerri: “My role models are Rihanna, Beyonce, and Eva from America’s Next top model.”

Kerri: “I think they are really pretty, Rihanna has these crazy cool eyes and I like her tattoos. Beyonce has long her and skin is really clear unlike mine, I wish I were really pretty like her or Eva. Eva has a tomboyish attitude that makes her really cool.”

Kerri: “When I get ready in the morning it takes me about 1hr and 30 minutes. I usually get up at 6am since I have to be at the bus stop at 7:30am. I do my hair: I have to straighten with the flat Iron then style it, put on my make-up... that takes forever, Iron my clothes and make sure I’m comfortable with my outfit.”

Me: Why are you so concerned about the way you look for school, your just coming to school?

Kerri: “Because I feel like I have to look nice, I don’t want to come to school looking retarded or something.”

Me: How do you feel about boys and do you have a boyfriend?

Kerri: “Yes I do have a boyfriend... we have been off and on for two months.

Me: How does he feel about your style/appearance?



Courtesy of: flicker

Field observation of Middle school students

- Provocative gestures and actions.
- Obscene language.
- Discussions of sexual activity.
- Female students constantly concerned about their appearance.
- Male students showing no concern about their appearance.
- Like styles and fashion.
- bullying from Male to female.

Kerri: "He likes it, he told me he wishes I looked more like Keyshia Cole and a few other celebrities. But.. That's why I wear make up and weave so that I can look more like them for him."

Me: does that make you feel uncomfortable about being yourself?

Kerri: " No I am just trying to impress him."

Me: Okay, well next question what are your favorite TV shows and why?

Kerri:" I like to watch iCarly, I love to watch BET and 106th and Park, I'm always trying to get styles tips, Family Guy is funny to me so I watch that, and I love Tyler Perry's house of Payne."

Kila 7th Grade 12 years old:

Kila: " the chicks from the bad girls club (BDG), the Kardashians, Keri Hilson, and my older sister."

Kila: " They are my role models because, they girls from BDG are just too funny, cool, and scandalous. The Kardashians are really pretty to me. I wish I looked just like Kim. She always has the hottest outfits and they get away with so much stuff. And, Keri Hilson has a really pretty voice and her hairstyles are always really wild, I love it. My sister because she is my best friend she helps me through a lot."

Kila:" It takes me an hour to get ready for school usually. Then it depends on the day, because if its game day then I have to wear my cheerleading gear to school, especially if its competition season. I have to do my make-up, and hair, and I love to wear glitter so I try to add that in somehow.

Kila:" No, No, No... I don't have a boyfriend, I just date boys so they will do stuff for me.

Me: " Stuff like what?"

Kila: " Buy me things, do my homework for me, stuff like that. Sometimes I just like to use them as a boyfriend for a while then I get bored and let em go. Boys are just stupid."

Me: " Is there a reason you treat them like that?"

Kila:" No, its just fun... plus that's what keeps me popular."

Me: What are your favorite TV shows and why?

Kila:" Of course Bad Girls Club! I can't wait until to the new season premiere, all of the MTV shows, especially Disaster Date. I like Family Guy, Best Week ever, and most reality series, like America's Next Top Model, The Kardashians and Project Runway, stuff like that.

Kila: " I like those shows because most of them are funny. A lot them have style tips, make-up tips and stuff. And they are fun to watch."

Me: Alright thank you!



Denise 8th Grade 13 years old:

Denise: ' My role models are Drew Barrymore, Hayley Williams of Paramore, Fergie, and Hillary Duff.

Denise: " Drew Barrymore is just really cool. I loved her new movie Whip it! She's really pretty and I like her wild attitude. Fergie I like her because she has this crazy look that just suites her personality. She also has a pretty singing voice.

Hayley seems like a fun person I went to one of their concerts and she was totally awesome... I was like oh my gosh when I was there... it was amazing. Then Hillary Duff I like her because she has her own website to teach people how to apply make up and she gives style tips... it's cool."

Denise: " It only takes me an hour and a half to get ready. My mom usually fusses because she thinks it takes me forever to get ready. But I have to look nice and not like a dork."

Me: So if you don't take an hour and a half to get ready you will look like a dork how so?

Denise: " Well I have to do my make-up and hair, and make sure my outfit coordinates. I mean really what's the point of being cool if you can't be the center of attention?"

Me: Do you have a boyfriend?

Denise: " I just broke up with my boyfriend two weeks ago. He is so stupid, but now I have a crush on this new guy. I'm trying to get him to go with me."

Me: Why?

Denise: " Because he is HOT!

Me: What else?

Denise: "He seems like he is really sweet but mainly because he is just too cute. Ugh he reminds me of Kevin from the Jonas brothers."

Me: What are your favorite shows and why?

Denise: "Bad Girls Club, The Kardashians, All the MTV shows especially Parental Control, Family Guy, iCarly, Degrassi, Project Runway and America's Next Top Model."

Denise: " I like those shows because they are cool. A lot of them are really funny. And some of it I swear is my life story."

Me: How so?

Denise: " I rather not tell."

Me: okay that's fine... thanks for your time.

Inexperienced Reality

Guys were smacking girls on the rear ends... and the girls were giggling?

After my interview with the middle school students I did a field observation. I noticed that most of the girls wore the same thing. But somehow their things were just that unique. I also noticed that they girls walking around were constantly fixing their hair; they were in a mirror, fixing their clothes, or applying make-up. I was really surprised when I saw 11-14 year olds wearing make- up.

That was just really odd to me. The boys on the other hand were acting as though there wasn't a care in the world. I did see and hear a lot of vulgar conversations and actions.

Guys were smacking girls on the rear ends... the were girls giggling. Not something I think a parent would want to see. Also conversations about sex and other obscenities were being thrown around. I felt like I was listening to a whole bunch of inexperienced adults talking. It was a little unsettling.

Uncured Nurturer

After I interviewed two sets of parents who have children around the same age as the middle school kids. They watched the video Onslaught and I asked them question pertaining to the Dove video Onslaught.

The reactions were breath taking but very interesting. Many of the parents decided to pay closer attention to their daughter's descions and help them through the struggle of finding their true beauty.



Courtesy of Dove: Capture from onslaught video

Interview 1 Sherry and Don

“ I Saw a bottle of... Slim Quick in our daughters room... I know that she is being affected by the Industry.”

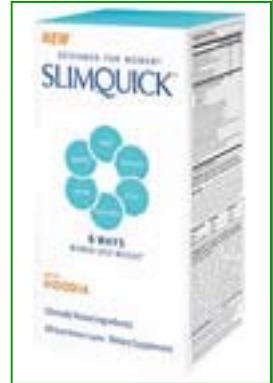
Sherry: “Oh my God. That really throws me back. I never think about it when I go out and buy some of those products or when I entertain some of those images. I never thought about them affecting my child.

Don: “ That is scary that our daughter faces decisions and criticisms like that on a daily basis, but we tell her how beautiful she is and that we love her. I would hope that keeps her from falling into those traps.”

Sherry: “ I think she is affected because she is constantly looking at herself and picking herself apart. I tell her don’t worry about it, its just baby fat or the acne will go away. But after looking at that and thinking about myself what message am I really sending her? (Sobbing).

Don:” All I can do is keep her confident. And make sure her priorities and morals are in line.”

Sherry:” You know, I hope that the morals and confidence haven’t left her. But I will just be a lot of more self conscious about things I say or do around her.”



Courtesy of : diet supplements

Interview 2 Carol and Gary

Gary: “ Excuse my language but that shit is crazy. I don’t think my little girl will be doing anything like that.”

Carol: “ Gary you never know. I think that we have built a great level of confidence in our daughter, but I am pretty sure that they images and ads have affected her. I just saw a bottle of slim quick in her room the other day and she’s only 16.”

Gary: “ What is she taking slim quick for? She ain’t big.”

Carol: “ I know that, but if you see something that you desire or someone you want to look like you are going to try to get there. I remember I always wanted to look like Pamela Anderson when she was on Baywatch or even that girl Kelly from Save by the Bell.

Carol: I do feel like the Industry has affected many women and not just our daughter it’s really sad though, but what can you do? Except for letting your daughter know she is the most beautiful person that I know.”

Gary: “ Tell her to stop brain washing herself. I know my daughter won’t let this phase take her over... she will overcome it. I think it’s just her little friends in her ear all the time.”

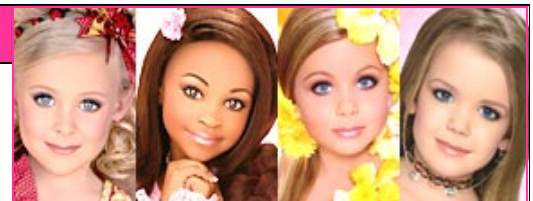
Me: You don’t think that’s an issue.

Gary: “ Listen to you parents first friends second, if she wants to listen to her friends she can stay with them. Listen to me we are good.”

Me: Mokay, well thank you for your time.

Any Antibiotic

During my research I encountered many reactions and different experiences. I even tried to think back to the times when I was in those children’s shoes. The concern about being popular, the need of having to look nice and have the latest clothes. I remember when those things were important to me and when I craved to look a certain way.



Courtesy of : Toddlers and Tiaras

I do think that those parents are going to take more steps to make sure that their children have confidence within themselves. I really hope that some of those little girls will mature and learn to forget about the little petty things that surround their little worlds right now. Again I will ask the question do you think that the Industry is targeting the correct audience? After what I have learned I think they are planting their ideals in the innocent minds of the youth.