



Sex in the Media

MEDIA EDUCATION MATERIAL FOR TEENAGERS



Contents

Introduction	3
Our mediatized lives	4
The sexualized media culture	4
The media literate can see beneath the surface	5
Lesson model: Sex in the Media	7
Introductory assignment: One picture, many interpretations	8
Video and discussions	9
Assignments for further handling of the subject	16
The material Sex in the Media as a part of the curriculum	19
In first language and literature studies	19
In other subjects	20
Background literature	20

The National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) is subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Its tasks include promoting media education, children's media skills and developing a safe media environment.

Guide written by: Project Researcher Lauri Palsa and Senior Advisor Saara Pääjärvi, KAVI

This text is commented by Sanna Spisak (Media Researcher, Media Educator).

Introduction

The role of media in society has grown continuously, and the media has become a natural part of everyday life. This applies not only to the specific forms of media. The importance of media contents has grown, and a new environment of visual culture has emerged. It's important to take notice of the surrounding culture: what is it like, and what are its components? Media offers a lot and can be used as support for educating. Media education is after all education in media culture.

The aims of this material:

- support media literacy and the ability to perceive media culture
- support participation in media culture
- support the development of critical thinking

Sexual content in media is in today's culture more open and accessible. It interests adolescents, but also causes misgivings. The purpose of this material is to support media literacy by providing tools for analytical examination of sexual contents. The starting point is that members of the media society are active interpreters of media, not just passive recipients. A media literate person is

able to take a more critical approach to the images presented in media, and can be active within media culture.

The material *Sex in the Media* is aimed at professionals working together with adolescents in the eight grade or older. The material is especially intended for first language and literature studies, but can be utilized in other subjects or within youth work.

The material consists of information, questions for discussions and assignments, and it covers three separate topics: sexual content in commercial media, gender depictions, and pornography as sex education. The material is intended to be used together with the video [Sex in the Media](#).

Sex and sexual content are sensitive subjects for many, including adults, and media interpretations are very individual. An adult should allow adolescents to reflect on this subject, and show respect for their thoughts. This is why the opinions presented in the *Sex in the Media* video, and the quotations included in this material, are entirely based on actual opinions of teenagers.

A teacher knows his/her students, and can use the material in a way that suits the entire group. Depending on the teacher's decision, the subject can be dealt with in different ways: with the entire class, in smaller groups or individually.

How does this material cohere with the goals of different subjects in basic education and upper secondary education?
Read more on page 19.

Our mediatized lives

The growing role of media within a culture is referred to as the medi- atization of society. As an example, media is today used much more diversely. With the help of various forms of media we can search for information, enjoy culture, connect with other people, and make our voices heard. In addition to these target-oriented functions, the media culture surrounds us with different pictures and sounds, whether we want it or not, e.g. advertisements in the street scene or a radio channel playing in the waiting room. Even various institutions like schools or authorities are to an increasing degree operating in the same way as the media, or on the terms of the media.

Also on the individual level, life has become mediatized. Our knowledge of the world and our experiences have become more media-centred. Media is a part of our social world along with family, school, friends and the rest of our environment. The media also affects how emotional and conscious our relationship with the world and other people becomes. Media content makes us think about things like our thoughts, habits and appearance.

Even though the media isn't strictly dictating the identity or values of a person, it's important to be aware of its significance. Therefore it's relevant to take notice of the contents in media culture. *What is a mediatized culture like?*

THE SEXUALIZED MEDIA CULTURE

Erotic mural paintings and texts from thousands of years ago show that sex has always been a part of cultural contents and communication between people. In spite of this, sexualization in the media has been a hot topic the last few decades. It is often said that even media content that has very little to do with sex can be saturated with intense sexual content.

Most notably styles that have been borrowed from pornography, or porn, that have become common when portraying people in popular culture. Poses, facial expressions, arrangements and clothes copied from pornography can be seen in car advertisements, music videos, movies, selfies etc.

Concerns about child welfare have been an important perspective in the sexualization debate, but on

"Sex is forced on everyone, everywhere these days, but now I can filter it a bit and recognize it for what it is. I don't believe everything the media says."



"The media is full of all kinds of sex-related stuff. Most of it is entirely useless propaganda. Kids can easily get a completely messed up idea of everything."

the other hand, sexualization has made it easier and more natural to talk about different issues related to sex and sexuality. Also, sexual orientations that deviate from heteronormativity have received more room and attention in media culture, and the image of what normal sexuality is has become more diverse.

Images with sexual nuances have become so quotidian that it's nearly impossible not to run into them.

Therefore it's relevant to contemplate the role of media contents in everyday life. Is the sexualization of media something you can notice in your own environment, and how is it visible? What thoughts does that bring to your mind?

THE MEDIA LITERATE CAN SEE BENEATH THE SURFACE

Media culture is not a world of its own, but a part of our everyday lives and environment. Diverse media content promotes rich language development and a wide range of texts. The consumer and citizen then interprets this language and text environment, either intentionally or unintentionally. Developing media literacy strengthens the skills needed in our current media society.

There are no shortcuts to understanding and mastering media under all circumstances. Media phenomena are often connected to other structures and phenomena of society in many ways. If we think about sex, gender and sexuality in media, there are so many elements and perspectives that an educator can't provide an answer to all related questions. Therefore it's important to discuss media together with adolescents in an open and approving spirit, listen to their opinions, and think about the educational properties of media culture. This approach further develops analytical skills in reading and listening.



“Being critical does not mean that one is negative, rather that you have an inquisitive and curious attitude towards the world. Being critical means a certain perspective, not taking information as granted --”. (Juha Herkman 2007).

Critical media education emphasizes an approach that strives to observe, analyse and classify the structures and contents of media. Understanding the effect people have on media contents is essential. The contents do not appear out of nowhere, or through an anonymous “machinery”. Pictures, movies and websites are created by humans, and they’re the results of conscious choices. Media content is created within a certain societal and

historical context, and every consumer interprets the content based on individual or communal experiences.

The sexualization of media culture can be examined more closely by looking at specific *representations*. The word *representation* refers to the depiction of a certain thing or occurrence. Media depicts descriptions of reality, not actual reality. For example, a sex-scene in a TV show is a more or less revealing portrayal of how the people in question could be having sex. When a representation in media is interpreted, it can awake different associations. One viewer may find the sex-scene boring, whereas another viewer may think it’s wonderful. Also, if you’re watching it together with your partner or your grandmother will probably affect your interpretation. In representations, the meanings the depicted phenomenon is based on are always somehow linked to the surrounding world and social relationships.

For example, how a certain country is depicted in media affects its popularity as a travel destination. At the same time, the travel experiences of people affect what type of media content regarding a specific country it is worth producing. If many people in the audience have their own experiences of the country it becomes harder to gain acceptance for programs that only scratch the surface.

Representations are the building blocks of media culture, but also make up a part of society and the world. A representation can have a *descriptive*, *representative* and *productive* character.

When something is depicted, the representation becomes a part of a bigger totality or category. For example when a specific person is depicted, the representation may also stand for the gender or ethnic background of the person in question.

The productive character of a representation is on the other hand connected to how depictions in media become a part of our reality. Representations are simultaneously expressing our current cultural reality, and participating in building new realities. A filmmaker can for example cast a stereotypically beautiful woman as the lead character of the film in order to match the classical ideal of beauty. At the same time they are strengthening and rebuilding the cultural “fact” that this is what a beautiful woman looks like.

Representations affect the way we perceive our environment, but it can be necessary to use simplified representations in order for people to quickly and easily understand things. At the same time representations are building frames of reference perceiving the world. Especially overly stereotypical depictions leave a lot of the diversity of the world on the outside of our examination.

Meanings associated with the representations are not final. They are produced and interpreted interactively. How we depict and interpret specific things affects the general opinions in everyday life. At the same time the attitudes of media consumers affect the way future media depictions are produced and interpreted. Such circumstances mean that people have the opportunity to be active, influential, or to start a cultural resistance with regards to the media.

Within the field of media education, media is not regarded as a good or a bad, or a useful or a harmful thing. Each depiction in the media produces specific interpretations and experiences. These can then be utilized in various ways when teaching.

Lesson model: Sex in the Media

The aim of this lesson is to deal with the subject using the video and discussions as tools. Both this lesson material and the Sex in the Media video are divided into three parts. These are: sexual media content and commercialism, gender depictions in the media, and pornography as sex education. Depending on the group and the teacher, the subject can be dealt with the whole class, or the students can be divided into smaller discussion groups.

The video contains opinions by young people on the role of sexual media content in their own lives. The opinions presented are to some degree mutual contradictions. This will support the discussions. When discussing or trying to answer questions, it's important to accentuate the fact that there are no correct answers, and that everyone is entitled to their opinion.

INTRODUCTORY ASSIGNMENT: ONE PICTURE, MANY INTERPRETATIONS

The same media content can mean different things for different people. The aim of this assignment is to understand the ambiguity of media content by living the part of another person.

Before the lesson: Choose some thought-provoking pictures from the Internet, newspapers or magazines that are related to sexuality or gender. Possible alternatives include advertisements, album covers, posters for movies or games, or other pictures from popular culture.

Start the lesson by dividing the class into smaller discussion groups or pairs. Begin by explaining that the aim is to discuss different interpretations of media content, especially from the perspective of sexuality, gender and sex.

Come up with as many characters as there are members in the group. For example, the characters can be Tytti, a 16-year-old high school student from Helsinki, Jani, a 35-year-old reporter from Jyväskylä, and Ella, a 71-year-old retiree from Pihtipudas. Give the characters stereotypical properties, morals and attitudes.

Hand out the pictures picked out beforehand, and ask the students to live the part of one of the characters. Within the groups the students should think about how the different characters would interpret the picture: what is their opinion and why?

Each group should then present the interpretations and opinions of their characters with the rest of the class. Discuss and validate why you think this is how they would react. Were there differing opinions within the group? Then try swapping characters without changing their interpretations: what if Jani would have the same values and attitudes as Ella, or the other way around?

Discuss whether it's possible to know how a person would interpret things just by looking at them or talking to them. Have you ever noticed that you hastily completely misjudged someone else's opinions? Does one have any control over how one interprets pictures in the media? If so, how would you control it?

VIDEO AND DISCUSSIONS

The lesson's discussion section is divided into three parts, in the same way as the video. The teacher can show the entire video all at once, or as shorter clips. If you watch the video one part at a time, discuss the part you just saw before moving on.

Sex sells

Knowing the media business helps one understand the reasons behind the sexualization of media. Especially in commercial media you can notice that a lot of sex and sexuality is utilized. Sexualization is part of a bigger change within the media business: *commercialization* of the media.

In Finland, the market share of commercial media has grown especially since the 1990s. Therefore the methods and motives within the industry have also changed. The main purpose of commercial media is to generate profits. When society as a whole has become more mediatized also other industries have started utilizing the media for commercial purposes, especially in marketing.

In advertisement there are a lot of contents and elements that can be interpreted as sexual. Images with sexual nuances can be used for marketing clothes, cosmetics, and also other media products or contents. Ads create the image that just by using the marketed product you automatically become more sexually attractive.

Advertisements are not exclusively good or bad. Advertising is providing information about offered products and services, and all marketing is not automatically done for commercial purposes. Seen from the perspective of media education it is not suited to its purpose to strive for strict regulation of marketing, since freedom of speech also applies to marketing.

But, it's important to acknowledge the aims and methods of marketing, analyse ones own relationship to the representations presented in marketing, and to reflect on their role in building media culture.

Are there noticeable differences in the level of sexual media content in commercial and non-commercial marketing?

Is the sexuality of people of all types and ages visible in the media?

The attractiveness of advertisements is to a degree dependant on how pleasing they are. We may like watching commercials, or we can benefit from the information in advertisements. But do we notice how advertisements affect us, our attitudes or our behaviour? Even though marketing strives for maximal influence, conscious consumers are at least partially in control of how they interpret the message.

“I have noticed that there aren't any fat people on popular TV series and films anymore.

I suppose it has made an impression on me, because now I work out more and go jogging, which on the other hand is a good thing.”

“Beautiful people simply sell things more effectively.”

Discussion topics:

- What kinds of sexual contents have you noticed in marketing?
- Why are sexual contents used in marketing?
- Are there products or product categories that you especially think are marketed using sexual contents?
- What types of advertisements do you think sexual contents are suited for? Have you come across advertisements where the sexuality has felt very “cosmetic”?

Men and women in the media

The media is today one of the most central educators. Media also describes how gender can be understood, developed and interpreted. In the western world people have traditionally been divided into two very different genders, men and women. In reality there are very few people that perfectly fit the stereotypical portrayals of the feminine woman or the masculine man. Gender, and how it is viewed, develops both biologically and socially.

Gender depictions in media are not uniform: many qualities are associated with gender. Therefore the question of how women or men are portrayed in the media can have as many answers as there are respondents. It's important for the young people to observe how sexes are portrayed in the media, how the portrayed gender fits one's own perception, and how many different interpretations there may be within a group of people.



“The media gives the impression that a woman has to be thin to be beautiful. Men, on the other hand, have to be full of muscles, and sturdy. But that is at least a little more true to life.”

Even though the way gender is portrayed has become more versatile lately, when analysing media on a more general level it has been noted that certain ways of depicting gender are still very dominating. For example, on TV and in various games women are usually depicted from the viewpoint of their relationships to male characters. Instead of being main characters they are in supporting roles like a male character's mother or girlfriend. Gender or sexual minorities are on the other hand very often depicted from the viewpoint of their position as a member of a minority. For example, if a character is homosexual the focus is on themes related to homosexuality.

When reflecting on the role of gender and sexuality in the media one can examine what type of properties are associated with gender depictions, and what properties are not. For men, the stereotypical image in representations includes courage, rationality, strength and aggression. For women there is a tendency to accentuate properties such as solicitude, emotionality or focusing too much on their appearance. Even media content aimed at small children often contains these elements: boy heroes fight to save the world; girl heroes are mostly depicted in a home environment focusing on human relations. In the life of a young person, these ideal images that the media contributes to may be connected to appearance-related pressure or social pressures of growing up.

"The idea of beauty in the world today is totally fake, because all of the images in the media have been photoshopped."

It's important to cover the ways gender is portrayed in media and to remind young people about the representative character of media. One can then realize that the image media creates may be one-sided or stereotypical. It's possible that many types of gender expression and gender identities that one identifies with are overlooked. However, a portrayal of gender should not be understood as the one and only ideal image. Properties such as age, sexual orientation or social status affect how gender representatives are portrayed.

What is then the correct way of portraying gender and sexuality? Also the critique aimed at images in media has been accused of being normative. For example, it's common that digital games are criticized for being degrading to women solely because of an eroticized appearance, whereas an in-depth analysis may show that the female character is a very strong and independent "superhero" seen from a functional perspective.

Representations can never depict a specific category perfectly, so that all possible internal gender differences are taken into consideration. The truthfulness of images is therefore a question of interpretation. Even though the heroes found in media content are usually strong male characters, all men certainly don't see themselves as privileged due to these characters. On the contrary, they may feel like they are forced to fit that specific role.

Seen from the perspective of media education it's important to become conscious of how incomplete a created image can be, and to become familiar with different methods of depicting gender. Some important questions are: how have the images been selected, what is the scenario, and what is the objective.



And what about ones own media choices? So much media content is produced that there are depictions of sexuality and gender for everyone. If content offered by the media seems one-sided, what does that say about your own media habits? How could one diversify the media experience? The great variation of ideal images can be illustrated by looking at the media content produced by different cultural groups: for example, are the female and male characters in music videos by punk groups or rap artists somehow different? And can there be variation within one subculture?

Ideals are of central importance for young people, and dissatisfaction with ones own appearance may increase when it doesn't meet the beauty ideals in the media. Therefore it's important to remind young people that the media doesn't always strive for truthfulness.

"Women in the media are skinny, big-breasted and beautiful. That's why I have had all kinds of eating disorders, and been through several depressions about my body."



Characters used in marketing can purposely represent something unattainable in order to sustain dissatisfaction, and a willingness to change oneself for the "better" by buying certain products. This unattainable ideal image is maintained using methods like digital image processing.

Media has also been strongly criticized for emphasizing appearance. In addition to the public debate, researchers have for decades taken notice of subjects such as the way women are portrayed in media culture. The media has been accused of things like sexism and degrading portrayals. As an example, it's more common for female athletes to be portrayed for their appearance, rather than their athletic achievements, than it is for male athletes. Therefore people have demanded for more varied and realistic depictions of gender. As a consequence, many companies have committed to using more diverse characters in their marketing.

The ideal images maintained by the media, and the massive supply of sexualized catalogues may encourage young people to publish, almost exclusively, self-portraits in which they attracting the sexual attention

of other people. According to a Swedish report, the selfies girls and boys publish tend to be very stereotypical: girls are cute, and boys are “machos”.

However, one should remember that people have always wanted to appear as attractive. Along with the emergence of social media, sexual communication between adolescents is for the first time present online so that adults also can see it. This can be confusing for adults. Publishing pictures and receiving positive feedback can strengthen the identity and self-confidence of adolescents.

Together with the adolescents you should freely discuss the possible interpretations such pictures may lead to, and the significance of the feedback given.



Discussion topics:

- In the media, what kinds of qualities are associated to members of different genders?
- How do you think sexual minorities are portrayed in media, and what are their qualities?
For example, are homo- and heterosexual men portrayed in the same way?
- How do the portrayals of young men or women differ from those of middle-aged or elderly people?
- What is the ideal image media has created?
How is it apparent? Who do you think defines what is beautiful?
- In what media formats have you noticed portrayals of men and women that differ from the usual, stereotypical ideal images?
- Do people treat pictures of girls and boys differently in social media? What are the differences? What kind of feedback would you like to receive from others, assuming you publish your pictures online? What kind of feedback would you not want?

Practical assignment:

What are the stereotypical images of people your age in social media? Why do you think this is the case? Could girls/boys photograph themselves in a different way? In groups, try some really stereotypical poses (e.g. in front of a mirror) that differ as much as possible from how you normally would pose for a picture. What impression do the different poses give of a person?

Pornography as sex education

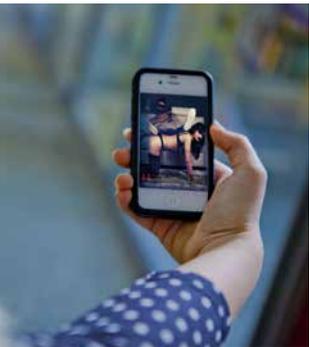
In short, pornography can be defined as material with the purpose of causing sexual arousal. Pornography can occur in both visual and written form, and is produced by both professionals and amateurs. Pornography has a multitude of different subcategories with specific narratives and aesthetics. Something that one person may see as the best kind of porn, can be a huge turn-off for someone else.

It's quite difficult to precisely define pornography, but in this text the word refers to a way of depicting sexual situations and characters. Porn could also in some cases be defined based on the quantity and type of nudity. In such cases porn is usually a very straightforward and pronounced way of depicting sex. In other words, all depictions of sex in the media are normally not defined as pornography.

In this material, pornography is on one hand a media genre, but also a broader cultural phenomenon. Pornography has some own stylistic features, but is also connected to a broader cultural scenery. For example, it's linked to sexuality and commercialism.

"Lots of people have a distorted perception of sex because of porn. The first time, people think they must get it spot on because 'that's how they did it in that online video too'. In porn the women are all wearing makeup and sexy lingerie, and the sex is so over the top. Every move is timed down to the last minute."

Today's media culture and media products are often criticized for being overly sexualized and eroticized. Some talk about a pornified culture and media. On the other hand, some see this phenomenon as a part of the sexual liberation and as something positive.



“I think people who have a sex life understand the difference between sex and pornography.”

Porn is visible within media culture in the form of many different styles, portrayals and stories. For example, pornographic “Fanfiction” has become fairly popular on social media. Fanfiction is primarily produced by fans of a specific character, show or movie (e.g. Harry Potter, soap operas), and often appears as written serials on web forums.

With the aim of protecting children, the Finnish Act on Audiovisual Programmes and the Criminal Code prohibit the provision and distribution (e.g. screening or renting) of pornography to people under the age of 18. In spite of this, many young people see pornography intentionally or unintentionally. One of the problems is that our legislation does not apply to foreign websites. In addition, within other fields of popular culture, such as literature, music videos and marketing, there may be references to pornography.

Even though porn and references to porn in media are a visible part of culture, not all adolescents have the possibility to constructively discuss the subject together with an adult. By talking openly about pornography together with adolescents it’s possible to correct some myths or misunderstandings related to porn. In school and within youth work it’s important to bring up the subject in order to give the adolescents the opportunity to discuss it together with an adult they can trust. Remember that adults can also have misconceptions. Therefore teachers should make sure they bring a professional attitude.



How people feel about pornography varies a lot. Some people react very strongly (for or against), others don’t care that much. For example, some think that pornography increases pressure related to performance and appearance. The porn industry also has its drawbacks, such as sexual abuse, although obviously not all porn actors are victims. Someone else may think that porn can be a source of inspiration when it comes to sex. In addition, various styles of pornography can broaden the image of sexuality, and show alternative forms of sexuality that are not shown in mainstream media.

“Sex is depicted as just fucking. Where are the feelings, the mutual respect? Where is the love?”

In this material the aim is to highlight the representative nature of pornography. In the same way as other media contents, pornography is not a depiction of the truth as such, and it’s not intended as realistic sex education. It’s important to highlight this perspective when talking to adolescents, because studies have shown that especially boys watch pornography with the intention to learn. Even though there are a lot of elements of real sex in porn, especially professional pornography uses a lot of effects familiar from movies, e.g. screenplay, angles of view and editing. The performers may be wearing a lot of make-up, and the images

may be digitally processed. In pornography, the main objective is to cause sexual arousal, whereas the true feelings of the performers are much less important. However, thanks to the Internet, the amount of amateur pornography has skyrocketed, and therefore there is a large supply of more ordinary sex videos.

Discussion topics:

- There is no correct definition of porn. How would you define pornography?
- Have you come across sexual depictions in media, allowed for minors, that you would define as pornography?
- Why are sexual depictions used in media?
- What kind of images regarding sex does pornography contribute to?
- Seen from the perspective of a young person, what kind of benefits or harms could be related to sexual depictions or pornography?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR FURTHER HANDLING OF THE SUBJECT

There are three additional assignments for further handling of the subject. The additional assignments can be done in groups, in pairs, or as a home assignment.

Writing assignment about sex in the media

In addition to discussions, the subject can also be treated through a writing assignment. The topics in this material are divided into three separate parts, one for each part of the related video. The writing assignment can be done independently, or by comparing the opinions expressed in the video to one's own thoughts. The text can be an essay, a blog post, or a polemical article.

Topic alternatives:

Sex sells

Sex and sexual content is utilized in marketing. Think about the reasons behind this phenomenon. Why are sexual contents used in marketing?

Men and women in the media

How are genders depicted in media? Choose one specific medium and use examples to describe how gender is represented. What significance do gender depictions in the media have in your life, or in the lives of people in general?

Pornography as sex education

Do the pornographic ways of portraying sex in media affect the way people see sex? Seen from the perspective of a young person's life, what positive or negative effects do you think detailed and straightforward depictions of sex in the media can have?



Media analysis in groups

Critical media analysis is a central method for developing media literacy. By analysing specific media texts it's possible to concretize more general subjects. The media analysis is a group assignment in which group members analyse a media text from a chosen perspective. The perspective can be related to depictions of sex in media, sexuality or gender.

The assignment is to analyse a media text somehow connected to the subject. A media "text" can also be a picture, a music video or a digital game. The following questions can be utilized in the media analysis, assuming they fit the chosen media text. The observations are compiled in a way chosen by the group, and the results are presented to the other groups.

- What type of media text is it? A short introduction.
- In what roles are the characters portrayed? What are their relationships to each other? How do these relationships come up?
- How does the text depict genders? Are the depictions stereotypical, surprising, interesting or realistic?
- What is the main message about sexuality or gender? What do you think the text is trying to say?
- How is the message highlighted? Do you think the message is easy to interpret, or were there contradictory interpretations within the group?
- What thoughts about sexuality or gender does the media text provoke? Is it easy to identify with the characters?
- What kinds of values or attitudes are connected to the text? How can you tell?



Media culture analysis in groups

In this media culture analysis the focus is on how individual representations are connected to broader societal subjects. The aim of the assignment is to develop the ability to conceive and to analyse different sections of media culture.

Representations in media are linked to previous depictions in media. They are connected through things like subjects, methods of portraying, and references used. One can dissociate oneself from previous portrayals in the form of parody, or one can try to copy previous portrayals. The whole picture may not be very clear or organized, but rather overlapping, interlocked, or even contradictory.

Ambiguity is an integral part of media culture analysis. The receiver understands the whole picture after an individual interpretation. The aim of this analysis is to highlight the characteristics of media portrayals, and their complexity. This way, one can notice that media texts are not stable. They are constantly changing, and can be interpreted in many different ways.

The students' assignment is to choose a specific phenomenon or thing around which a totality of representations has formed. These representations may be related to depiction of gender or sexuality, ideal images, or different role expectations.

The students should search for multiple pictures related to this one totality. It is desirable that the pictures are from different media formats and different time periods to make their connections, similarities and inconsistencies more interesting.

The object is to present the found connections between representations to the other groups, so that they can understand the totality.

- In what ways are the chosen pictures related to the totality of representations the group defined them as belonging to (e.g. a sexy man, a beautiful bride)?
- Do the portrayals maintain the usual image, or are they contributing with something new?
- What is the message conveyed by the totality?
- Does this image correspond to the images the students themselves had before the assignment?

The material Sex in the Media as a part of the curriculum

IN FIRST LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDIES

The material supports all-round abilities to communicate, read and write, in accordance with the **basic education curriculum**. Using these tools the students can develop their identity and self-esteem.

The material gives the opportunity to really think about the role of the media, and its methods of producing images and changing people's attitudes and choices. In addition to the evaluating skills related to interpreting media, skills needed for a responsible and active participation in society are developed, as well as self-assertion. In other words, all skills needed for participation in media culture develop.

According to the basic education curriculum, first language and literature studies should be based on the linguistic and cultural skills of the students. The starting point is therefore the adolescents' own thoughts, experiences and interpretations.

In accordance with the **curriculum for upper secondary schools** the material can be used within first language and literature studies for promoting active citizenship and developing communication skills.

Important areas include information retrieval, criticism of the sources, and information interpretation. Developed text skills are related to the ability to filter, interpret, evaluate, utilize and produce different types of texts, so that the objectives and contexts are well known. Another important objective is that the student should learn how to enjoy culture and to appreciate its versatility.

IN OTHER SUBJECTS

The material Sex in the Media can also be utilized in other subjects, since there are certain universal themes in the curriculum.

In basic education the material goes well together with the theme Communication and media skills. It improves the ability to interpret media content and objectives, and to understand the changes taking place in the media environment.

In upper secondary schools the material goes well together with the theme Information and media skills. The aim is a better understanding of how central the role of the media is in our culture. The material supports criticism of the sources.

In social studies the material can be used when examining the relationship between media and society. In psychology or health education the material can be used when examining how the media affects the individual and the collective.

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