

**Factors of Adolescent Self-Concept:  
Mass Mediated, Peer, and Family Communication**

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**Abstract**

This paper focuses on the main factors that cause an influence to the self-image and self-esteem of an adolescent. Specifically, this paper focuses on what is believed to be the three primary factors of flux to the self-image and self-esteem of an adolescent: mass mediated social influences, peer interactions, and messages received from family members. The review of literature in this paper leads to two research questions: (1) What factor seems to cause the greatest amount of increased self-esteem for an adolescent who does not have siblings? (2) What factor seems to cause the greatest amount of decreased self-esteem for an adolescent who does not have siblings? The methods chosen to answer these research questions would be experimental research and focus groups.

**Literature Review**

Despite the amount of research that has been conducted with the hopes of better understanding the development of an individual's self-concept, the vast number of factors affecting a self-concept results in the inability to definitively label the greatest factor among shaping a self-concept. Although scholars agree that communication is a main factor of self-concept, the debate centers on what medium of communication affects the self-concept to the highest extent. While one study (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1986) argues that mass media has the greatest effect on self-concept, another (Rill, Baiocchi, Hopper, Denker, & Olson, 2009) suggests that peer interaction is the most significant contributing factor to affecting self-concept, while another (Lanza-Kaduce & Webb, 1992) claims that the messages received from the family have the greatest bearing on self-concept.

The importance of being able to accurately understand the development of the self-concept is

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I have included the abstract only so you can see how the literature review and proposed method relate to their research questions. **DO NOT FOLLOW THIS FORMAT—reference the prompt found [here](#) when preparing your final document.**

crucial because of the significance self-esteem has on the level of satisfaction regarding one's life. Most importantly, Dailey (2009) stressed the importance of psychological development, which is specifically essential during the middle and late adolescent periods. During this psychological development, which continues throughout the life span, the adolescent years are specifically sensitive to the development of personality, self-esteem, and self-conception. This paper intends to investigate what is believed to be the three primary factors of a self-concept: mass mediated social influences, peer communication, and family communication.

### **Proposed Method**

In attempt to answer the research questions, a combination of experimental research and focus groups would be used. The nature of this study would require both quantitative research and qualitative research to fully answer the research questions. The quantitative research method, experimental research, would be utilized so the research team would have the ability to manipulate the factors being tested. This study would be attempting to discover which factor has the greatest influence on the self-esteem of an adolescent who does not have siblings. This study would be focused on determining causality, and therefore, being able to identify the factor that has the greatest influence among the participants is essential. The qualitative research method, focus groups, would be used so the research team might better understand how the participants were affected throughout the experiments. The focus groups would be used as extended conversations after the experiment was conducted so the participants could share comments that were not necessarily reflective throughout the experiment. Self-esteem is highly subjective and expressed differently by each participant. The participants must have the opportunity to express which factors affected their self-esteem levels most. Without focus groups, the research team might misinterpret the results of the participants.