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Media Influences and Gender Equity in Mathematics Education. Preliminary report.

Research has pointed to schools and society as environmental influences on student beliefs about mathematics. The popular media offers its own images of people who can be good at mathematics. Television shows, movies, newspapers, and magazines portray certain types of people as successful or unsuccessful in mathematics. This paper highlights findings from a series of activities to encourage interactive discussion and reflection in high school mathematics classrooms. Females in upper level mathematics classes rated themselves as having less confidence than males. Students participating in the activities were capable of identifying gender bias in certain media resources. In addition, viewing a movie clip was sufficient for some students to modify their descriptions of someone who is good at mathematics. (Received August 04, 2005)