

An example of the media creating the context



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An example of the media creating the context for eating disorders is the fact that “ the average fashion model weighs about 120 pounds. However, the National Center for Health Statistics tells us that the average American woman weighs about 169 pounds” (“ Body Image in the Media”). There is obviously a difference here. People are made to think that they abnormally heavy or overweight, because what they see on television tells them they are.

Since they see this so much in the media, they believe that this 120 pound body is typical. This lack of knowledge and media literacy-that is, knowing what is true and what is not, what is real and what is not in the media- leads to them feeling inadequate in comparison to the people on television. This feeling of inadequacy can lead to the development a negative body image.

People won't feel good about themselves and will try to change the way their bodies look. Social media is another platform that helps to create the context for eating disorders. Instagram is a prime example of social media where people are encouraged to look a certain way. The incentive is more followers and popularity.

This is another reason that people feel the need to be thin. They feel that this is the only way to be noticed. Think about it: How many times do you take a selfie before you post it? Why do we take the same pictures so many times, but from different angles, positions, and lighting? We are trying to get that “ perfect” image that we are conditioned to think is necessary. Women who want to hold the positions of model, actress, or beauty pageant participant think that they have to look a certain way to get these same jobs.

This is because of the existence of sizeism in the world, which happens when people are discriminated against because of their size. People who are bigger do not get the same job or opportunities as people who are smaller. Even as all of this is happening, the average North American woman is not getting smaller.

This is a testament to the underrepresentation there is in the media of most women. On the average television show, we may see one or two people that are "overweight" by the media's standards. When there is an overweight character, they are usually made fun of or given a nickname that can be seen as hurtful.

An example of this would be that on Disney Channel's *K. C. Undercover*, there was a character nicknamed "Big Ang" (short for Angie) because of her size.

Young girls especially, see this, and feel that to be liked or noticed in a positive way, they have to be paper-thin, when this is just not the case. "Both boys and girls (aged 9-14 years old) who were making an effort to look like the figures in the media, were more likely than their peers to develop weight concerns and become constant dieters" (Morris and Katzman). This shows that the media are a driving force behind the problem of negative body image. Both males and females feel the pressure to look a certain way, which leads to constant dieting and potentially eating disorders, which can develop from the inability to stick to a diet. The figures in the media, however, are not presented accurately most of the time.

These people are airbrushed, their imperfections are taken away, and their bodies are modified to get the "perfect" finished product. When all is said

and done, the person we see is far from the real person. People need to know this. Maybe it will stop them from trying to reach unattainable body images.

There are celebrities who are speaking out against the unattainable body image the media puts out. Actress Lena Dunham from the HBO series *Girls* thanked Glamour magazine for leaving her un-photoshopped when she appeared on the front cover of one of their magazines with her costars. Actress Zendaya called out *Modeliste* magazine for making her look slimmer than she really is in photos taken of her.

They took the photos down and put the untouched photos up. We need more of this. We need more people in the industry speaking out against this issue. The change starts in the industry from which the problem stems. As a result of media influence, many people (younger ones, especially) are suffering from eating disorders. They are falsely advertised to.

They are not educated on media literacy, so they might now know the truth about what the media is telling/showing them. The media needs to promote positive body image and stop making people feel that they are inadequate by comparison to the figures in the media. Dieting articles need to emphasize that these diets are for people that really need them (those who are in need of a lifestyle change due to their quality of life being threatened or the development of health issues due to bad eating habits), and they need to emphasize how to diet healthily. There should be women of all shapes and sizes on television, and they should be talked about in a positive light no matter their size. There also needs to be more women in the roles of decision-making in the industry.

When this happens, representation will be more accurate and evenly spread.

There are solutions to the problem. We just have to be willing to find them.