

Beauty and media essay sample

[Media](#), [Advertising](#)



American culture is beauty obsessed. Everywhere people go, they are bombarded with advertisements. Whether it is for makeup or food, most of the advertisements utilize body images to sell. Women and men's appearances on printed images that are being advertised are often admired by the general American public. The issue is in the way that images are presented in a highly deceiving way. Many Americans are aware that the images have been tampered with and perfected by airbrushing professionals; however, they still influence what the public thinks beauty is in today's society. Both genders have directly and indirectly been affected by media's social influences over body image, but women are much more affected to accept and fall into the pressures of body image. Adolescence have easy access to media; teenagers spend hours each day using print media, television, videos and video games, radio, CDs/tapes, and computers. Media has a huge impact on how beauty should be and is perceived in society with unattainable images that have set unrealistic standards of beauty, which may result in body image and self-esteem issues. Through these various types of media, youngsters are exposed to thousands of advertisements daily which set unrealistic standards of beauty.

Hundreds of studies confirm that media influences attitudes and behavior in which the influence of the media on the proliferation of eating disorders cannot be refuted (Irving 260). From an early age, children are bombarded with images and messages that push the idea that in order to be happy and successful, they must be thin. Nowadays, a lot of the messages in magazines, radio, and television imply that being overweight is unacceptable. The terrible part is that a deceiving message is being sent out

to teenagers. Adolescents often feel flawed if their weight, hips, and breasts do not match up to those of models and actors. Media's portrayal of women is just a mirror of what society wants teenagers to look like. Advertisers often emphasize sexuality and the importance of physical attractiveness in an attempt to sell products, however many people are concerned that this is a kind of pressure on women and men to focus on their appearance. Images were not inclined to the manipulation with Photoshop and airbrushing which creates unattainable images as it is now seen today. Magazines did not start airbrush and Photoshop their models until the 1980s.

Back in the fifties, models and actresses like Marilyn Monroe would grace the weekly covers but they would have been judged as overweight by today's standards. According to ABC News, "Twenty years ago, models weighed 8% less than the average women today, they weigh 23% less than the average woman" (Lovett). Yet, despite how thin models are already, they continue to hide and make changes to models' bodies. They all have a sun kissed tan, perfect hair, and a blemish-free face with no acne. This has caused an obsession on youth and adolescence to look a certain way. Therefore, editorials portray their cover models as all being young and thin but that is only thanks to technology and not because of the actual models. These Barbie like images send the wrong message and idea to young women. Photoshop and airbrush are currently at their most extreme while such programs have existed for removing minor imperfection such as stray hairs, advanced technology has made it possible to manipulate an image creating unrealistic perfection. Celebrities are airbrushed to perfection on their album or movie covers but it is not actually them.

Aside from enlarging eyes, trimming thighs, and airbrushing away wrinkles, more dramatic measures are now taken. It is now not unusual for editors to actually replace body parts on their models. Editors do discriminate against guys, for example, “ In May, Men’s Fitness reportedly incited thickness in tennis star Andy Roddick by enlarging his already muscular arms” (Bennett 3). This seemed to defeat the purpose of the article it was located it in since it promoted a story about biceps. While many teenage girls wish to be Kim Kardashian and teenage guys wish to be with her, many do not know that she does not actually look like what she does on their postured walls. She is just one of the many celebrities who have their waist and legs slimmed down and she, specifically, her cellulite removed. Unfortunately, the perfected images send the wrong message to teenagers. Teenage girls’ view the images from media of unrealistic beauty as one that they need to follow. Girls want to cut jeans into short shorts. They want to cut a slit in their t-shirts so that their cleavage shows. Girls want to cut holes in their jeans to show a little skin or a trace of their underwear. It is hard for them because there are so many ads in magazines and on TV that are displaying provocative clothing.

Stores like Abercrombie & Fitch have received negative press for selling padded bikini tops for young girls. The message that media gives about thinness, dieting and beauty tells “ ordinary” women that they are always in need of adjustment. The female body is looked at as an object to be perfected (Gerber). Jean Kilbourne argues that the overwhelming presence of media images of painfully thin women means that real women’s bodies have become invisible in the mass media. This statement implies that the

constant exposure of images and texts suggests the idea that the thinner a woman is, the better she is. This has a strong influence on women which then contributes to eating disorders and low self-esteem issues. Many women internalize these stereotypes and therefore judge themselves by the beauty industry's standards (Kilbourne). These images of unrealistic beauty have negative impacts on teenage girls. Girls are presented with these images through magazines, billboards, and the web. According to a Dove campaign, "an average girl will see more than 77,000 advertisements by the time she's 12," which focuses on improving girls' self-esteem (Etcoff 43). Any girl can agree to saying that teenage years are the hardest; girls are at their most awkward and vulnerable point in development.

After being subjected to these images of "perfect" females, their self-esteem suffers. In fact, the Dove global campaign surveyed "thousands of girls in and out of the States and found evidence that girls who saw these pictures felt insecure afterwards" (Etcoff). The young girls used words such as "ugly" and "fat" to describe the way they felt. Most of teenage girls in America are devoted readers to the monthly issues of Cosmo girl, Seventeen, and Vanity Fair so that can be a key factor and explain the reason why "53% of thirteen year old American girls are unhappy with their bodies.... the number grows to 78% by the time girls reach seventeen" (Etcoff). The horrible trend has only increased in the recent years and it seems to be causing more serious problems among teenagers. Low self-esteem derived from the media has caused teenage girls to try to conform and change to these standards. Along with low self-esteem, depression may be a result to the pressures that media sets on the unrealistic standards of

beauty. Teenage girls may undergo extreme diets to fit and look like the media says they should. The main goal of most teenage girls is to look like their favorite celebrity on the cover of some magazine or billboard, but the cost to look like such models is causing harms to their body.

This might mean limiting themselves to one small meal a day or taking laxatives to prevent gaining weight. Many girls even fall victim to eating disorders. Even celebrities are not excluded from these pressures, and there are always stories on the news about them being hospitalized from exhaustion due to a lack of healthy diet. Tween role model, Demi Lovato spoke out on the pressure presented to her which led her to become bulimic, “ I’m a role model to young girls t not have eating issues and to not say, ‘ Hey, it is OK to starve yourself’ or ‘ It is OK to throw up after your meals’- that is not OK” (Lovato). Reality is that more and more girls are falling susceptible to anorexia and bulimia, “ about seven million women in America” (Glenn), according to South Carolina’s department of mental health. Some may argue that the media is not the reason society is obsessed with beauty but it is society itself that sets the example of what people should look like. Others may argue that girls were watching what they eat to be healthy. This means that girls feel more in control as they could decide when and where to watch their weight.

Importantly, strategies included eating healthier and eating less junk food. Multiple issues can be argued about whom and what is at fault for the way society views beauty, but media does influence the way society thinks of beauty. Media’s images have changed the standard of beauty to be

something that is not attainable by the regular person. Airbrushed photos have had a direct result of teenagers, specifically girls. The images they are subjected to have led them to feel inferior and insecure about their body which leads many to have unsafe lifestyles. It is unfortunate that social pressure still exist among females. The media gives young, thin, beautiful people a lot of attention which makes the viewing audience, such as teenagers get the idea that they must look as young, thin and beautiful as the ideal model. The popularity and extensiveness of TV, movies, and magazines leads the media to be among the most influential and efficacious communications of the “ ideal thin.” With the influence in the media, many of the young women think the women shown throughout the media are the ones they want and have to be.

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