

# Literature review on body image essay



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Literature Review “ The perception of the ideal female body presented in the media has a negative effect on an adolescent female’s physical wellbeing. ”

` The media is the means of television, newspapers, magazines and movies. The media plays a large role in influencing young adolescent girls perception especially in regards to body image. (Uttara, 2012). The media can effect an adolescent female’s perception of body image in a positive or negative light especially towards their physical wellbeing. This refers to being free from illness and disease also the care of our bodies through nutrition and exercise.

NASW (2001) explains the media places values and standards in relation to appeal through idolising and promoting images of celebrities and those within society that have what is seen as the ideal body. Although these images and people in which young female adolescents idolise can contradict healthy behaviours. Uttara (2012) further supports this idea by suggesting that unhealthy behaviours are falling into a trend for adolescent females, studies have shown that relationships between fashion magazines have had a major influences towards eating disorders and risky behaviours.

Although a number of sources of the media are now promoting a healthy body and warning people of the effects of unhealthy body weights and behaviours it is still a cause of concern. (Uttara, 2012) The ideal female body image in which the media displays is unachievable for most, although a number of teenage girls will go to extremes and use unhealthy behaviours such as poor eating habits, dieting, extreme exercise and starvation to lose weight. (NASW, 2001) . Uttara (2012) suggests these unhealthy behaviours

can lead to a number of eating disorders, which have a high impact on physical wellbeing.

These include “ anorexia, a psychological disorder that distorts the perception of the body leading to self starvation in order for extreme weight loss” , Bulimia which is “ an eating disorder where people binge eat then purge from guilt” and also on the other hand compulsive overeating disorder “ which is when a person frequently binges on food for comfort”(Uttara, 2012). Vogue (2012) states that “ 5 % of the Australian community will develop an eating disorder in their lifetime”.

Increasing weight concerns have been the results from frequent exposure to media sources like television and magazines, this is due to the increasing importance of a small figure creating body dissatisfaction for many young females. (NASW, 2001). Denise (2012) points out that the small figure the media presents alters the perception of what it is to be beautiful and misleads young females when the media should be pointing out that larger and overweight girls are just as beautiful. (Denise, 2012)

Uttara (2012) establishes whilst there are a majority of unhealthy trends formed by the influences the media presents a number of media sources have recognised the importance of having a healthy body, and are supporting this idea by warning people of the side effects of eating disorders and other poor eating behaviours. Vogue (2012) a leading fashion magazine further implies this idea by stating vogue has made a pact to put forward and promote healthy models by banning the use of skinny models and encouraging healthy eating.

Vogue (2012) further states that the people working within the magazines have seen the impact of dieting and admit that the media play a large role in creating unrealistic body images although they are supporting a change within the media. In contradiction Denise (2012) states that magazines glamorise models and the people we are glamorising do not resemble the average woman and in fact “ models generally weigh 23% less than the average female “ and makes the statement “ the media has not gotten better about this over the years “.

Although we recognise that the media has influences on body image and can create unhealthy behaviours amongst adolescent females, not many people take into account how healthy and what actions the people we glamorise and look up to within the media do to get this “ ideal body”. Adolescent females are frequently being exposed to the media although the images in which are presented are mostly of celebrities showing off their slim and slender bodies emphasising an importance on appearance (NASW, 2001).

Although we do not recognise, many of the people we see are healthy but on the other hand a number are also underweight and on extreme exercise plans (Uttara, 2012). NW magazine (2012) displays this when a slim celebrity Sarah Harding admits “ she isn’t done with dieting, and is working with her trainer to lose weight” its then when the magazine makes comment “ we don’t think you need to lose anymore Sarah! the real story behind the bodies that the media creates as perfect are not as healthy as they seem. Uttara (2012) suggests whilst there are some celebrities and media that do have positive influences and outlooks towards female body image, the majority “ are still focussing on the slim and slender body type”. In conclusion, the

perception of the female body presented in the media has a negative effect on an adolescent females physical wellbeing.

Whilst there are some sources of the media that have a positive outlook towards body image shown by promoting positive eating and healthy bodies, frequent viewing of the images presented within these sources cause body dissatisfaction amongst adolescent females resulting in unhealthy behaviours like self starvation and other poor eating habits that can later result in eating disorders. It is these trends of harmful behaviours influenced by the media's perception of the female body that has a negative effect to an adolescent females physical wellbeing. \* NASW. 2001). Adolescent Girls and Body Image - ( online ) [http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/adolescent\\_health/ah0204.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/adolescent_health/ah0204.asp) [ Accessed Thursday 18th of October 2012 ] \* Uttara. (2012). Media's Influences on Eating Disorders - ( online ) <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/medias-influence-on-eating-disorders.html> [ Accessed Thursday 18th of October 2012 ] \* Denise. (2012). How does the media effect body image in teens? - ( online ) [http://parentingteens.about.com/od/bodyimage/f/media\\_bodyimage.htm](http://parentingteens.about.com/od/bodyimage/f/media_bodyimage.htm) [ Accessed Friday 19th of October 2012 ] \* Vogue. (2012).

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