

Pressures to be thin essay



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Models represent what clothes should look like on women. With the occupation relying purely on looks, models are under a lot of pressure from agents and designers to have the perfect body image. In western society, this image means that they all have to be thin. It affects not only the models, but also the public who desire to look like them. To achieve this size 0 body image, women often develop eating disorders or turn to drugs. To stop this epidemic, designers need to stop hiring waif looking models and instead hire women who promote a healthier image.

Although, it is not just the models who need to change. It is society's obsession with being thin and people's constant dissatisfaction with their body images that more importantly needs adjusting. Models define beauty in western society. They dictate what the latest dress or bikini should look like on a woman. The creation behind the occupation of a model is that they are supposed to act like a clothes hanger or a porcelain model in a shop window. Their aim is to show off the clothes, not for the woman to show off herself.

Kate Moss proved this definition recently when she modelled as a mannequin in a store window to promote her new clothing line. Moss is one of the highest paid supermodels in the world. Our society sees her as beautiful, sexy, successful and powerful, unlike overweight people who are seen as lazy, useless and unpopular. Having ribs, collarbones, hipbones, shoulder blades and spines showing has now become normal and accepted on catwalks.

With models meeting the definition of beauty with these characteristics, our definition needs to change. Beauty should not represent bones or people

starving themselves. To achieve our society's definition of beauty, models often develop eating disorders or turn to drugs to help them stay thin. This activity is not always hidden, with drugs and alcohol often found backstage at fashion shows. Designers and agents do not condemn this behaviour because it results in models staying thin.

Janice Dickinson, the first American supermodel and now an agent says, "models are supposed to be thin. They are not supposed to eat. I've got 42 models in my agency and I'm trying to get them to lose weight. In fact, I wish they'd come down with some anorexia.

I'm not kidding. I'm running into a bunch of fat-assed, lazy little bitches who on't know how to do the stairs or get their butts into the gym" (Dickinson, 2007). This statement may shock some, but most in the fashion world actually agree with her. Many designers and agents have the same opinion, which is why the models are still under the continuous pressure to be thin. It is not just the models who develop eating disorders, it is also women who aspire to look like them.

When teenagers see models taking drugs instead of eating, it gives them a solution of how to loose weight. A study by the Office of National Drug Control (2007) explains that 71. % of grade eleven students use drugs occasionally. Some of these students also have eating disorder, with 43% of 16-20 year olds diagnosed (General Eating Disorder Statistics, 2005). Even though students are taught about the affects of drugs and dieting at school, this information is over ridden when they see their favourite models doing it.

It makes drugs and diets more common and normal. Our society no longer sees a problem with teenagers dieting, encouraging it to stop obesity.

Although for many, depression with not having a models figure can lead to unhealthy diets and eating disorders. Unlike average women, often models have fast metabolisms and start dieting so young, that they skip puberty and do not develop properly. Gemma Ward, who is 19, is an example of this. She has a tiny frame, small bust and a figure of someone in their early teens.

For a woman with a naturally large frame and slow metabolism, it is very difficult to achieve the appearance of a model. Extensive dieting is needed, which can often lead to eating disorders when weight loss is not happening fast enough. This leads to the question, is all dieting controlled? A diet is defined by Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary as “ a regulated course of eating and drinking” (1976, p. 356). While an eating disorder is defined by them as “ loss of appetite resulting in excessive weight loss” (p.

165). An eating disorder can be regulating how much one is eating, say only one meal a day. In this instance, an eating disorder can be hidden as a diet. A tactic used by not only average women, but also models. Websites encouraging people to loose weight is another tactic used to achieve a models body.

These websites are mainly forums or active email discussion ists, where images of thin models are posted as an inspiration to keep on dieting. Disturbing thoughts are emailed on these sites such as “ I was recovering but I really want to be thin again, thanks for the boost all the models out there... the feeling you get when you see the weight drop and you see bones

is like nothing else on earth" (Roslyakova, 2007). This shows how easily girls have become warped by the media, endlessly assaulted by images of women who are unnaturally thin.

The fashion world is becoming out of control, putting clones of girls on catwalks and in magazines. A trap is being set for generations to come, who will have endless pressures to be thin. Society's obsession with weight and being thin is slowly being noticed and needs adjusting. With most fashion models thinner than 98% of American women, (Smolak, 1996) society is looking for someone to blame.

Designers and agents are the most obvious suspects. They encourage plastic surgery and dieting in order to make more profits. A report by the British Medical Association says that "models commonly have body fat levels as low as 10%, the average for a healthy woman is 22% to 26%" ('Models link to teenage anorexia,' 2000). Designers and agents ignore these results and do not understand that woman with such low fat levels are risking their lives.

In 2006, a Uruguay model fell to her death as she left a runway. It is thought that she had a "diet of lettuce leaves and Diet Coke" (Nussbaum, 2007). Did the designers notice how unhealthy this girl was when they hired her? All they noticed was how their clothes looked like on her. Models are not to blame for this behaviour, it is the designers who are responsible.

They are the ones pressuring these girls to be a certain image. If designers asked for heavier models, the girls would put on weight in order to stay hired. This would then take some of the pressure of models to be so thin and allow them to have a healthy lifestyle, while still having a successful career.

The public watch fashion shows and they buy clothes that have appeared in magazines and advertisements.

When seeing a waif looking model, they know that their weight is unhealthy. Most people understand that these women must be on diets for their entire careers. They agree with the views from doctors and nutritionists that models should “ present a healthy image with at least a 18% Body Mass Index” (Guerra, 2006) in order to stay on catwalks. Although, people keep on buying the clothes they see modelled, not realising that by doing this, they are actually continuing the profits of designers who use anorexic girls to model their clothes.

This means that the public are actually encouraging designers to continue. If people stop buying these clothes, the designers will be forced to change their models. Models body images have always been an issue in society. They are seen as too thin and are blamed for the high level of eating disorders among young girls. Pressure is put on them by designers and agents to be size 0 and their lives are threatened because of it. Although at times, the issue is not about the models, designers and agents.

It is about society's discomfort when exposed to our obsessions with being thin. Designer's clothes are sold because of how good they look on models. Models are not the only ones who need to change, it is society's views of perfection and weight. Healthier models need to be hired to promote healthier body images, not just for young girls, but also for aspiring models.