

Mass media and body image essay

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The Mass Media and Body Image The Mass Media and Body Image There are many factors that contribute to the construction of gender.

One factor is the influence of the mass media. The mass media displays very distinct ideas about what the roles of men and women are, especially when it comes to body image. Images of men with bulging biceps and perfectly sculpted six packs, and women with abnormally large breasts that defy gravity and stomachs that have virtually zero fat on them bombard us at lightening speed. These images are one of the main reasons that a young girl named Heidi Montag chose to go under the knife. The article, " Heidi Montag Obsessed With Being " Perfect", " is about a young woman who has undergone multiple plastic surgeries and her reasons for doing this. Heidi grew up in a small town in Colorado and upon moving to Los Angeles, she saw women walking around with bodies straight out of magazines.

She saw women with the " biggest boobs," and this made Heidi " flat and insecure. She became even more insecure after landing a role on the MTV show, The Hills. She dove into the shallow end of the plastic surgery pool with a nose job and a breast augmentation, but that wasn't enough. Heidi became obsessed with her looks and went all the way into the deep end going under then knife for ten hours. She had ten different procedures performed on her body. In an interview with Heidi, she expressed that she wants to be a pop star and that " looks matter; it's a superficial industry. She talked about how she has never felt sexier and more confident. It is clear that the media had influenced the way that Heidi felt about her body, and even influenced her to make drastic changes to it.

In today's day and age, it would be almost impossible to avoid the billboards flashing by as we drive our cars down the highway, or the scantily clad women on the covers of magazines while we wait in the doctor's office. We are surrounded by images of what the mass media tells us we should look or act like. Women's magazines are constantly coming out with articles about how lose the last fifteen pounds, implying that when women do just what the magazine says, they will be happy. These articles are surrounded by pictures of happy, thin, busty, perfectly sculpted women. The real truth is that these images of female beauty are unattainable for all but a very small number of women.

As stated by Brym and Lie, " advertising is highly influential in creating anxiety and insecurity about appearance," and, " the human body has always served as a sort of personal billboard" (Brym and Lie 322-323). These images are not just in the magazines. Commercials on television, movies, covers of C. D's, and women on " reality" shows shove the idea that women must look a certain way in our faces over and over again. Many people accept the reality that they will never look like Angelina Jolie, or the Victoria's Secret models, but there are also those people that think they need to look this way to feel sexy and beautiful. Heidi clearly was influenced by the " billboards" she saw in the industry that she wanted so badly to become a part of.

She bases her ideas of what beauty is on the movie stars, and claims that all of these women are having plastic surgery to keep up their appearance and to make themselves more beautiful. This is a prime example of how the

media contributes to the formation of one's self definition. Body image is an important factor to the construction of gender. People, in general, want to feel a sense of belonging to a particular sex. The mass media not only tells people what they are supposed to look like, but also that if people do not look a certain way that they are an outsider. Heidi Montag has seen women in the media stressing the importance of being sexy and she wants to be a part of this elite group of beautiful women. This, to her and many other people, constitutes a part of being womanly. Heidi has gone from being a normal looking girl, to an almost unrecognizable expressionless woman because she thinks being womanly and sexy requires this.

Mass media has come a long way from telling women that they need to stay home and cook and clean and take care of children while their husbands go to their high paying jobs, but women are being led, more and more, to believe that they need to look a certain way to fit in with other members of their sex. Heidi Montag is an extreme case, and most women do not go under the knife for ten hours. But she is a perfect example of just how much the media can affect a person's self esteem, and their body image. Women are still heavily influenced by the media in what they wear, how they act, how they do their makeup and what they strive for their bodies to look like (whether it be by means of working out or with some help from their plastic surgeon).

Through reading this article, it is clear just how much a person's self image can be affected by the mass media. Works Cited Brym, R. J.

and Lie, J. (2007) *Sociology: Your Compass For A New World*. (Third Ed).

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