

Free essay about unrealistic body images presented in the media promote physical ...

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Critique 1:

Pressures to conform

When girls grow into adolescents, they start experiencing changes in their bodies and the puberty they attain at this age makes them attracted towards boys. They want to look good before them. At about the same time, their parents and peers expect them to look good or maintain their body. The girls in their teens are made to think that they should be fitting the ideal image of a teenage girl. These adolescent girls come across the portrayals of the girls in the media especially the fashion magazines and want to imitate them without realizing the fact that most of the figures of the girls in the magazines or any other advertisements are nothing but edited or cropped up figures. The teenage girls are thus under constant pressures from their parents, peers to look good and attain an unattainable body image. Milne rightly captures the mindset of the adolescent girls and grown up women to conform to what they are led to believe as ideal images of beauty. According to her, many women have undergone traumatic experiences of eating disorders as a result. The women who read these magazines question their own bodies and decide that theirs are fake. Fasting is the only course of action without expense and others courses of action are cosmetic surgeries to their faces, breasts, buttocks and what not.

Critique 2:

Social Bodies: Tightening the Bonds of Beauty

In the chapter of her book titled Social Bodies, Sullivan uses many examples of body modification to establish her thesis that ordinary is different

depending on what culture is one part of. In some cultures, women are not allowed contact with outside men and are confined to their homes for child care and domestic functions and are forced to hide their bodies from public view as they are widely believed as incapable of controlling their sexual urges. Sullivan talks about female circumcision and male circumcision resorted to for two opposing objectives, the former for her subjugation and the later for empowerment of men. Australian aboriginals have the practice of removing two front teeth in women when they attain puberty. Sullivan ends with a note that respecting the right of women to make decisions about their own bodies should not be oblivious of the cultural impact on the larger society. She maintains that rather the cultural and social context should influence individuals in making decisions about their own bodies. This goes to explain that if women set themselves on modification spree, it will be an endless agony for the society at large. If women are preoccupied with their ways of looks, they will tend to ignore the duty they owe to society which should be kept intact with established norms.

Argumentative Essay

The aim and objective of this paper is to argue whether or not the media is largely responsible for misleading the women to becoming conformists to a non-existent fact of perfect women bodies and that it only promotes physical and psychological disease among them.

The factors that influence women are the desire to be thin and the need to attract men. At times, it is also to distract men. Media is largely responsible for pushing women to this state of affairs by portraying the images of models

that are graphically made showing thin images of women that are unrealistic in healthy conditions. Being obese is bad for health and hence this is another reason why women want to reduce their weight. In their anxiety to lose weight for ever, they even die due to emaciation or commit suicide.

Eating disorders are of two types; anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Anorexia nervosa is characterized by excessive loss of weight and the belief that one is still fat despite being extremely thin. Bulimia Nervosa is characterized by binge-eating and self-induced purging in order to prevent weight gain. Both are obsessive disorders. Major factors influencing these eating disorders are low self-esteem, peer-pressure to be thin, cultural norms propagated by the media, countering of negative emotions, over-control by parents who do not allow children to express their emotions, and history of sexual abuse. These are like mental illnesses caused by multiple factors that are socio-cultural, psychological and biological. Biological ones are : people's pre-disposition to eating disorders, depression and anxiety and certain styles of personality such as obsessive-compulsive personality and excessive or deficient secretion of neurotransmitters which are chemicals produced in the brain, particularly serotonin. Alcohol and drug addiction are sometimes found to have served as influencing factors for the development of eating disorders. Often, eating disorder and co-occurring disorder are found to reinforce each other thus developing a vicious cycle..

Victims of eating disorders are found to share certain common personality and behavioral traits. They are avoidant personalities characterized by perfectionism, emotional and sexual inhibition, feeling of being good without being rebellious and being wary of ridicule, criticism and humiliation. They

are highly sensitive to failure and even the slightest criticism that make them feel not being “ good”. Some others are of obsessive-compulsive personalities, borderline personalities and narcissistic personalities. A number of other disorders such as phobias, panic disorder, post-traumatic disorder are also associated with eating disorders. Hence, they can also be influencing factors. Another important factor is the distorted view of one’s body image aggravated by social, psychological and biological factors. Excessive physical exercise by female athletes in their bid to remain competitive has also been an important factor. These athletes avoid accumulation of fat around their breasts and hips. Powerful influence of the media perpetrated by fashion and entertainment industries cannot be underestimated. Sports activity by women in sports in which body shape and size are the determinants, is another factor that influences eating disorders . Untreated eating disorders will result in malnutrition, atrophy of muscles, drying of skin, hair and nails, dental diseases, sleeplessness, chronic fatigue, ulcers, low-blood-pressure, diabetes, anemia, failure of kidney, liver and pancreas, osteoporosis, arthritis, infertility, seizures, heart-attack and even death. Death and suicide occur due to complications of the disorders. Although eating disorders are treatable, victims refuse to admit that they are ill and avoid treatment. Intervention by family and friends in the form of support is a key factor for successful treatment and recovery.

Aesthetic Plastic Surgery unknown in the 1950 has moved from a skeleton practice to a well-recognized speciality in the US and that the practice is well regulated and increasingly being pursued by the medical doctors. From 1992

to 2003, the increase in breast implants is 657 %, lift in the buttock is 526 %, liposuction 412 %. About 3, 841 surgeries of breast implants have been carried out in girls under 18 years in 2003 alone. The American teenagers underwent 5, 606 interventions of botulina shots representing 950 % more than the figure for 2002. The medical profession is motivated by the greed and is resorting to cosmetic surgery literally taking medicine back to nineteenth century when quacks had been indulging in such practices through fraud and deception with serious repercussions to human health solely for their monetary benefit. Sullivan tries to explain that beauty is a cultural practice and it is a threat to women. The beauty practices have extensive harmful side effects on women's bodies and their lives.

Conclusion

The essay of Celine Milne delves at length the repercussions of women's conformist tendencies toward distorted social pressures and the ultimate result of women ending up with eating disorders. Sullivan's essay goes one step further in looking at the ways in which women are misled into modifying their bodies for which medical profession is partly to blame in its bid to medicalization of beauty. There is no denying the fact that media has been largely responsible for misleading women to conform to faked images of female bodies in their magazines. If only medical profession vows not to make cosmetic surgeries except for medical reasons, women would start realizing that what is portrayed in the media is nothing but a figment of imagination.

Sullivan's essay goes one step further in looking at the ways in which

women's bodies are subject to mutilations as an expression of male power over women and the ways in which men are enhancing their body images by resorting to tattooing of their bodies for different reasons at different times. Sullivan's observation on cultural impacts on women bodies represents male power over women's bodies and the present impact of women's own obsession with their impracticable artificial body images speaks volumes of their own destructive tendencies over their bodies which in a way help men reinforce their parochial and patriarchal supremacy over women.

The extreme form of dieting is self starvation. It has been in practice since time immemorial though they were for religious considerations. The 20th century fasting by the young girls are due to their inherent desire to be slim. The desire is so intense that they are ready to die which is quite paradoxical. This paradox explains that it is psychological since it is irrational. The psychological therapy alone is the ultimate remedy for this ailment.

The role of the media in perpetrating the disorder is rather misplaced. Media deals with so many other issues. People fall into drugs abuse, indulge in violence and other anti-social activities after they follow the media. Human beings are rational and they know what is right and what is wrong. They cannot be simply be misguided by the media pressure. Inherent desire in human beings to be beautiful is the probable cause of the people attempting to deny themselves food on misconceived notions. Media has been only portraying slim girls as beautiful. The dieting articles which distorts facts may be responsible in misleading the potential anorexics. But it is always possible to counter check with authentic literature as they are likely to do in other aspects of life and career. It can be assumed that sufferers find it

convenient to adopt to such dieting blinded by their inherent desire to be beautiful. The models and others do not that claim they are slim because of self-starvation. Hence it can be concluded that it is all in the mind and the media cannot be blamed.

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