

How does the media effect the body image of teenagers? assignment



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How does the media effect the body image of teenagers? Advertising in teen magazines and on television typically glamorizes skinny models who do not resemble the average woman. In fact, today's models generally weight 23% less then the average woman. Considering the average person in the United States sees approximately 3, 000 ads in magazines, billboards, and television every day, your teenager is getting the wrong message about body image much too often.

Media targeting teenage girls are emphasizing the ideal of thinness as beauty. When you stop and think about the fact that the average height and weight for a model is 5'10" and 110 lbs, and the height and weight for the average woman is 5'4" and 145 lbs, it's easy to see why this creates a tremendous health risk for young girls. Images of female bodies are everywhere. Women??? and their body parts??? sell everything from food to cars. Popular film and television actresses are becoming younger, taller and thinner.

Some have even been known to faint on the set from lack of food. Women's magazines are full of articles urging that if they can just lose those last twenty pounds, they'll have it all??? the perfect marriage, loving children, great sex, and a rewarding career. The American research group Anorexia Nervosa & Related Eating Disorders, Inc. says that one out of every four college-aged women uses unhealthy methods of weight control??? including fasting, skipping meals, excessive exercise, laxative abuse, and self-induced vomiting.

The pressure to be thin is also affecting young girls: the Canadian Women's Health Network warns that weight control measures are now being taken by girls as young as 5 and 6. American statistics are similar. Several studies, such as one conducted by Marika Tiggemann and Levina Clark in 2006 titled "Appearance Culture in Nine- to 12-Year-Old Girls: Media and Peer Influences on Body Dissatisfaction," indicate that nearly half of all preadolescent girls wish to be thinner, and as a result have engaged in a diet or are aware of the concept of dieting.

In 2003, Teen magazine reported that 35 per cent of girls 6 to 12 years old have been on at least one diet, and that 50 to 70 per cent of normal weight girls believe they are overweight. Overall research indicates that 90% of women are dissatisfied with their appearance in some way. Researchers report that women's magazines have ten and one-half?? times more ads and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines do, and over three-quarters of the covers of women's magazines include at least one message about how to change a woman's bodily appearance??? by diet, exercise or cosmetic surgery.

Television and movies reinforce the importance of a thin body as a measure of a woman's worth. Canadian researcher Gregory Fouts reports that over three-quarters of the female characters in TV situation comedies are underweight, and only one in twenty are above average in size. Heavier actresses tend to receive negative comments from male characters about their bodies ("How about wearing a sack?"), and 80 per cent of these negative comments are followed by canned audience laughter. There have been efforts in the magazine industry to buck the trend.

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For several years the Quebec magazine Coup de Pouce has consistently included full-sized women in their fashion pages and Chatelaine has pledged not to touch up photos and not to include models less than 25 years of age. In Madrid, one of the world's biggest fashion capitals, ultra-thin models were banned from the runway in 2006. Furthermore Spain has recently undergone a project with the aim to standardize clothing sizes through using a unique process in which a laser beam is used to measure real life women's bodies in order to find the most true to life measurement. However, advertising rules the marketplace and in advertising thin is "in." Twenty years ago, the average model weighed 8 per cent less than the average woman??? but today's models weigh 23 per cent less. Advertisers believe that thin models sell products. When the Australian magazine New Woman recently included a picture of a heavy-set model on its cover, it received a truckload of letters from grateful readers praising the move. But its advertisers complained and the magazine returned to featuring bone-thin models.

Advertising Age International concluded that the incident "made clear the influence wielded by advertisers who remain convinced that only thin models spur the sales of beauty products." Another issue is the representation of ethnically diverse women in the media. A 2008 study conducted by Juanita Covert and Travis Dixon titled "A Changing View: Representation and Effects of the Portrayal of Women of Color in Mainstream Women's Magazines" found that although there was an increase in the representation of women of colour, overall white women were overrepresented in mainstream women's magazines from 1999 to 2004.