

Media Drawbacks

- Shanna Smith

Today's media is looked down upon for so many reasons: it's invasive, controversial, and often spreads "facts" that essentially amount to lies. But nothing is more distasteful than the media's effect on the way girls look at themselves.

The reason behind teenagers' self-consciousness is crystal clear; the media depicts unrealistically tall and skinny girls, who adolescents try to emulate just to fit in. How many times do you glance at a magazine display and see a cover story of a celebrity's most recent weight loss?

There are many means by which the media enforces this self-consciousness on girls, the most important being celebrities' and models' appearances. It seems like every celebrity is either stick thin or is looked down upon for being "fat." I cannot count how many times I have seen an average-weight celebrity be called overweight or been slammed for not dieting on Entertainment Tonight or in People magazine. These are images and ideas that remain with impressionable girls, and create an ideal that is impossible for girls to attain.

However, society's version of "beautiful" does not only come from celebrities. Models in almost every clothing advertisement have the "ideal body": long legs, a flat stomach, and virtually no body fat. And, to make it worse, many models are touched up to seem even thinner. Adolescents strive to look exactly like models in magazines, but the models don't even look like that! Designers hire models with the good intention of promoting their product to draw in customers. It seems, however, that this deed has done more harm than good.

Why must only tall and skinny girls, who represent a very small percentage of society, be the faces of clothing stores? Wouldn't it make more sense for an averageweight, average-height model to show off the clothing? This way, customers can see what the store's clothes actually look like, instead of being misled by how outfits look on the "ideal" body. And if more average-size models were employed, wouldn't celebrities stop obsessing over losing weight, and then wouldn't society stop striving to be stick thin?

After asking the above question to almost every girl and woman I know, I received the same response: stores must use tall and skinny models because they make their clothes appealing. If one store began to use "normal size" models, no one would buy their clothes. Although this answer is true in our society right now, it doesn't have to be. Whether we know it or not, our views of beauty are based on what the media tells us is beautiful. If every store begins to use models of all shapes and sizes, and every magazine stops showing off the most recent celebrity weight loss, it seems like this problem could slowly but surely be fixed. It will take a while, but once society stops telling girls what their body shape should be, these same women might finally be able to be comfortable in their own skin.