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Essay #3

Francine Russo, in her article, “Your Mirror Image,” expresses the concerns of mothers who are obsessed with the way their bodies look, which in the same way has made their daughters uncomfortable with how they identify their own bodies. “. . . Mothers who were fixated on their body image are more likely to have daughters with eating disorders than less self-conscious moms (233-234). Reading this article shows that media also advertises and promotes a very unhealthy trend of extreme dieting and other bad eating habits to young women. Most of the media put on their covers images of skinny emancipated females. Therefore it influences the subconscious mind of the majority of young women. Women are determined to spend their money trying to achieve this unattainable look they consistently see in media advertising.

In her article, “Body Image and the Media,” Gillian Smyth discusses the influence the media has on young women’s body images. According to Smyth, “approximately ninety percent of women are dissatisfied with their appearance in some shape or form.” In fact somewhere along the line we lost our ability to reason and bought into the media influence on our body images. Women of all ages but especially young women look at magazines, TV, movies, and other media products full of images that show skinny women’s bodies. Achieving this skinny look does not come naturally; it inevitably leads to practicing some form of dieting, excessive exercising or abnormal eating behaviors. In addition, Russo reports “On any given day, forty five percent say they are dieting. Scarier yet . . . study found that forty six percent of girls nine to eleven say they are “sometimes” or “very often” on a diet . . . “ (234). Similarly, Smyth reports that “thirty five percent of girl’s age’s six to twelve have been on at least one diet and fifty to seventy percent of these girls felt that they were overweight.” Women who are insecure about their bodies are more likely to buy beauty products and or diet pills or other diet supplies. Research has indicated that exposure to images of thin, young, female bodies is linked to the development of unhealthy eating habits in women and girls.

Russo writes that “research shows that eighty percent of American women check out and disapprove of their reflections minutes after waking” (234). In other words consequences of this trend are huge. The media promotes slim unnatural looking women’s bodies as being beautiful. This is perceived by the subconscious mind of a young women as being a role model to follow and aspire to be like. The level of eating disorders are increasing rapidly every year. We have allowed outside influences to determine our body images and there could be nothing further from the truth. For example, the media influence on body image is everywhere you go, in everything you read, and everything you see. According to Smyth, “reports show that twenty years ago the average model weighed only eight percent less than the average woman. Today models weigh at least twenty-three percent less than the average woman. Advertisers believe that thin models sell product.” By presenting an ideal look which is difficult to attain and maintain the cosmetic and diet product industries are confident of growth and profits. There is a lot of money going to these industries. It is certainly worth their while to continue emancipated women as being the norm. All in all, the media does impact women’s body image significantly and it can affect women’s physical and mental health in a negative way. Russo emphasizes that “It’s better to talk about bodies in terms of their strength and abilities rather than their appearance” (234). The only way to end these negative effects coming from the media is to teach women it is important to promote a healthy lifestyle focusing on special importance an internal beauty like improving self- esteem and self-confidence. Not on being like a skinny model.

Works Cited

Russo, Francine “Your Mirror Image*.” Viewpoints.*  Ed. W. Royce Adams 7th ed. Boston, Wadsworth, 2010 (233-234).

Smyth, Gillian *“*Body Image and the Media*.” Ezine Articles.com* 12 Dec. 2009. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.