

2017

Negative affects that Social Media causes on Body Imaging

Katelyn J. Gaffney

Long Island University, katelyn.gaffney@my.liu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liu.edu/post_honors_theses

 Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Social Media Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gaffney, Katelyn J., "Negative affects that Social Media causes on Body Imaging" (2017). *Undergraduate Honors College Theses*. 13. https://digitalcommons.liu.edu/post_honors_theses/13

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the LIU Post at Digital Commons @ LIU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors College Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ LIU. For more information, please contact natalia.tomlin@liu.edu.

Negative affects that Social Media causes on Body Imaging

An Honors College Thesis

By

Katelyn J. Gaffney

Spring, 2017

Digital Design and Technology Department

Rich Del Rosso
Faculty Advisor

Patrick Aievoli
Reader

Date

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2	Video Games.....	26
Introduction	3	Programs that are Used.....	27
Direct Influences of Social Media.....	3	The Computer Process.....	28
Direct Influences of Traditional Media.....	4	Public breast-feeding Debate.....	30
Historical Perspectives.....	5	Not Just “Plus Size” Women feel Targeted...32	
Health Issues.....	8	Society Fighting Back.....	32
Eating Disorders and Diet Pills.....	9	What does the Future Hold?.....	34
Moving into the 1980s.....	10	Conclusion.....	36
New Trends in Social Media.....	11	Work Cited.....	38
Body Shaming.....	12		
Effects of Body Shaming.....	13		
The Average Woman Body.....	14		
Plus Sized Models.....	14		
Fashion World.....	15		
The Affect of Mental Health.....	16		
Affect on the Fashion Industry.....	17		
Mannequins.....	19		
Women and Dieting.....	20		
Effects on Young Boys and Me.....	21		
Taking appearance to extremes – Fad Diet.....	22		
Other Women Around the World Effectuated.....	23		
The Barbie Affect.....	25		

Abstract

The main purpose of this thesis is to present, discuss and criticize the effect of negative body imagining caused by social media. This will be achieved in part by explaining the history of women and the change of their appearances and Body Mass Index during different times in history. It will also discuss the historical differences of what was considered attractive during those times based on different forms of social media and how it changed from time period to period.

Later on in the thesis I will discuss the strong negative influences caused by social media and in the fashion industry. This explains how these two combined forces can cause the average women to view themselves poorly. In comparison to these perfect and unrealistic versions of beauty that media displays and the idea behind the perfect body. Also explaining how this can lead to mental and physical effect on women to fit societies view of perfect. Along with how new technology for designers can change the appearance and look of the actual models, compared to what is being shown to society.

Introduction

Social media has pressured women to fit into what society portrays as beautiful and perfect, these outside influences have led to eating disorders and health issues. I will not only focus on plus sized women but, also women who feel as though they are being targeted for being too slim. Along with the affect social media has on young boys and men as well. These pressures from media do not just influence the American women but all women around the world as well. I will review this by discussing a study that took place in Fiji, after media was introduced and shows how these women were affected and changed the view they have on their bodies.

This thesis will also include an art component, which will consist of photographic images. These images will be manipulated (via Photoshop), the images will consist of an average sized woman to be changed into looking like a model on the cover of a magazine. In doing this I will display how social media has manipulated the perspective of average women into an unrealistic body type. Also showing how easy it is to change the look of any person within a few hours. I will present that a woman's natural body is more beautiful and appealing than a body that looks unrealistically thin and how all body types are different and perfect in their own ways.

Direct Influences of Social Media

Social Media has always had an affect on woman and the way they view their bodies and body imaging. In history women have gone through all different types of extremes to fit society's idea of perfection in their looks and body appearance. The average American women bodies that are most admired are models on magazines that are

shown throughout social media. Today those women are shown to be consistently slimmer compared to the average American woman. There have been recent studies and discoveries that the women that are shown in social media on average are ten times smaller and slimmer than that of the average woman today. This is the main problem as to why girls and especial young woman have problems accepting their natural bodies and beauty. These affect have also been shown to cause the development of eating disorders in girls and women. There have also been studies that took place in other parts of the world after media had been introduced, in places such as Fiji.

Direct Influences of Traditional Media

Traditional media has also a large impact on teenage girls and young women and their appearance. Everywhere you go you cannot escape coming across a magazine, poster, or billboard showing some kind of a model that is viewed as very skinny, and with an unrealistic interpretation of the natural body type. Even the technology today that society has, ever person in today's day and age has a cellphone. Which is nothing less a miniature computer screen or T.V. that is filled with all different forms of social media. These images are repetitive and practically impossible to avoid in the everyday life. If an individual is struggling with things such as negative body imaging of their own bodies, society makes it hard to accept their body for what it is. These images of models are displayed all look somewhat the same, in body type, size, and facial structure. There are no other body types that are displayed in social media the way small and skinny models are exhibited. On average what percentage of the worlds population is born to look exactly as models do in social media? Not every person has the genetic make up to look

the way that these models are portrayed in social media. Even as you search the Internet and see different advertisements all the models not just women but men as well come off all very fit and thin body frames and almost “perfect”. This plants a view of what a women’s body should look like according to social media and society’s expectations. If a woman is at a healthy weight that does not have any health problems. Than the number on the scale and the size of her clothing should not matter.

Historical Perspectives

Different times in history hold different expectations of women and what they should look like based on their historical content. As social media progressed the view of the size of a woman’s body frame grew smaller. Which will be proven in the different times of history. The only time that the appearance of a woman’s body did not play such a huge role was during times of war. Though media was not as diverse as we know it to be today. The media then could be something as a drawing of a woman that was placed on posters for all of society to view. Such as the famous Gibson girl from the 1900s, which caused women to base their bodies of illustrations. This could also cause women to try and look like a body type that was not attainable and not real. Women went to great extremes to try and attain these unattainable look by doing a mixture of things such as dieting, wearing tight clothes, and even sometimes developing eating disorders. Many times in regards to knowing that the body type shown was not real and in some forms altered in some way.

From the 1900s to 1910s the idealistic body type for a woman was know as the aforementioned Gibson girl. This was the ideal of femininity that was represented as

slender and tall, with a “voluptuous” bust and wide hips. This was also known as the “S” curve in woman, this exaggerated look was achieved by wearing a corset, pinching the torso and waist significantly. The Gibson girl was typically portrayed as women with up-to-date on fashion and style along with being physically active and in good health (Women’s Body Image and BMI). During this time in history if you were a heavier woman it meant you came from a wealthier family and were healthy. This caused women to go to great extremes to fit into societies views and norms of what women should look like during this time era. They used clothing was mainly to achieve this look during this time in history.

The ideal women in 1920s changes to what is know as the Flapper. These women were often described as independent, wisecracking and reckless. Their style was easy going and more casual than formal, it was a rejection of the Victorian style. Their appearance was one of boyishness and androgynous youth, with minimal breast, a straight figure, and shorter hair. This drove women to diet and exercise in order to achieve this look. Their dresses were also shorter exposing more of the women’s legs. Larger breast were also frowned upon, bras were made tight in order to flatten the chest of women (Women’s Body Image and BMI). The image of a Flapper woman was not based on a real woman either. Woman based their appearance on illustrations of what a Flapper woman was meant to look like. This was only the beginning of how social media and society had a negative effect on woman and the way they looked according to society at the time.

Styles of women changed yet again, during the 1930s and into the 1940s. It was also known as Fashion in Wartime, during this time images of women changed in relation

to their bodies. The shoulders' width was emphasized; therefore women's attire leads to achieve this look, and wore clothing that showed off a natural waistline. Women's attire leaned more towards practicality, and some women even learned how to tailor an unused men's suit to become usable for a women's everyday wear (Women's Body Image and BMI). Advertisements also now told women how they could avoid a too skinny look, which was a completely different from previous times in history. The main focus during this time was the war so the view of how women should look was not a main concern then.

Also during this era the celebrity image was the most achievable to reach for the average woman. Later in the Post-war period during the 1950s, the ideal body image for women remained a fuller-figure. Consisting of a busty, voluptuous hourglass look. Models such as Marilyn Monroe were seen as one of the most beautiful woman in the world, having curves and stretch marks (Women's Body Image and BMI). During this time it also showed that you came from a form of wealth and were of good health. From studies at this time the average woman's BMI was at one of its highest points and was only slightly higher than the models during that time. While in today's society it is seen as almost taboo to have stretch marks. This time period was more realistic for the average women at the time, and was able to accept their natural bodies.

One of the most famous images was created during this time, which was of Rosie the Riveter. She was shown with her hair wrapped up and wearing form of work clothes. The fashion of women at this time changed drastically. A woman went from wearing fancy dresses and heels to wearing more every day clothes and work clothes. This was also the introduction of women wearing pants and overalls during the day. This was

mainly because women were now found more in the work field. A woman became less feminine but did not abandon her womanly figure entirely. At this time there was also the introduction of Hollywood films that brought the rise of media in the 1950's influenced women and their appearance. With this rise of film women were to always meant to look their best and have flawless skin causing the rise of beauty products (Women's Body Image and BMI). This was the beginning of social media that involved to viewing of real women as models instead of illustration. This took its first main affect on women because of the image of real women being displayed in social media. There was the idea of being an everyday woman during the day and at night to be this showstopper woman and wear makeup.

After the 1930s and 1950s the image of women change most dramatically in history. In the following era of 1960s there was the "Twiggy" look. The typical Twiggy women was so skinny one could see all of the models bones and even rib cage at time. Women had a minimal chest, a slight frame, and short hair giving them a boyish look, similar to a Flapper. This new form also abandoned all curves in a woman. The appearance of women was rather scary and unhealthy appeal. While the average women's BMI rose to about 20.5 there was quite a drastic difference from models such as Soledad Miranda who had a low BMI of 17.6. The view of a thin look continued into the 1970s with Thin is In. The main cause for this drastic change in the image of the woman was the introduction of drugs and diet pills at this time.

Health Issues

In the 70's anorexia nervosa got its first mainstream coverage because of singer Karen Carpenter who was known to diet at starvation levels (Women's Body Image and BMI). As a well-known model it is undeniable that many women during this time tried to achieve a similar look to Karen Carpenter. Also in the 70's women had practically no muscle mass and no main definition of a body also known as the "Hippie" look. This included long, straight hair, which was introduced at the later half of the 60's into early 70's. This began to have a widespread impact on women's health and eating habits; which lead to forms of eating disorders. This also caused the rise of diet pills usage. One can only imagine the impact it had on women to be perfect for society at such an unhealthy weight. This is the really beginning of the strong negative affects that social media had on the view of women's bodies. At this time it was the real first introduction of eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia. Which would over time increase over the years. Changing the way society would see a natural healthy weight.

Eating Disorders and Diet Pills

There are many different eating disorders out in the world today but the most common known ones are bulimia and anorexia, which tend to go hand in hand. Bulimic and Anorexic are very similar and are known, as is an eating disorder that is characterized by a low weight and the fear of gaining weight (National Eating Disorders). Most of the time if you are anorexic you are commonly known to develop bulimic to prevent the intake of food. There are different types of bulimia such as bingeing, purging, and nervosa which each has their own different symptoms. There are so many different known symptoms to bulimia. The most commonly know ones are the rooting of ones

teeth and gums. Often a dentist discovers these eating disorders before any other doctor does. Developing an eating disorder can greatly affect the body of the person who has an eating disorder. There are so many side effects that someone can find today on the Internet, and how to help someone who has developed an disorder.

Also the introduction of diet pills in the 60's introduced a new trend for women to follow. Diet pills are no better than developing an eating disorder and can even influence one to develop an eating disorder. They can have long term affects on the people that take them. Also I have found in my research that the people who tend to take diet pills tend to put the weight back on that they have lost and even some time more weight then what they had lost. Which is not healthy for the body, the constant lose and regaining of weight. Diet pills can also lead to the harm of someone's physical health. Fast heart rate, increased blood pressure, restlessness, and so much more where commonly found in different sources.

Moving into the 1980s

As this new ideal view of body continued into the 1980s known as Supermodels and Hard Bodies, there was a slight change. There was an increase in fitness, the idea of being toned but not overly muscular. The image of women was slenderness and great height was ideal, this brought the rise of super models. At this time for the average American woman to attain such a body as the models that were shown was proven difficult or impossible to achieve. The body types such as Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, and Claudia Schiffer bodies where the most desirable to society at this time. In the 80's about 60% of Playboy magazine models weighed 15% less than a healthy

average weight for their size. The 1990's were considered the Heroin Chic and Bay Watch period where women tend to stay on a slimmer appearance (Women's Body Image and BMI). In the 1990's the Internet becomes a game changer.

Women were expected to maintain an increasingly thin look, and were supposed to have large breasts during the 1990's. Compared to average again women this was an unrealistic expectation, making them turn to unhealthy lifestyles. From here social media continued this appearance in women, making it unattainable for the average sized woman. This look was greatly epitomized by stores that displayed models like Kate Moss who was featured Calvin Klein advertisements (Women's Body Image and BMI). Also during the 1990's the first version of Photoshop was also introduced into the world (Mahesh). With this new technology, media began the transformation of models and their bodies and of course their appearance altogether. At this time Photoshop was not known for what it is today but it was the beginning of a new era for social media.

New Trends in Social Media

There is always some new trend to follow because of social media, which is forever changing. Showing what is "In" currently according to social media. Society is always shown something new in looks, fashion, and appearance in doing this women are always on their toes to fit the new standards caused by media. One month it could be large breast, and in a snap the new "In" could be completely flat chested. Today the biggest fad is being very curvy with a small waist. Before we could know it social media could change that to being extremely skinny with minimalistic curves and no shape. This can cause woman to always view their bodies negatively and never feel comfortable in their

own skin. Social media has the power to impact how society views themselves and other people in a short time period. The negative effect that social media has on society is greater on women who do not fit into society view of the perfect body. Unfortunately the average woman today still has to fight with her body to fit into the new look or trend that comes along constantly. Social media is causing women to try unhealthy ways to maintain the newest look that media displays to society.

Body Shaming

Body shaming can be defined as shaming someone because of his or her body type or how that individual looks. One type of body shaming trend is the sheet of paper challenge, where an individual is to place an 8 ½ by 11 sheet of paper in front of their stomach and if you can see skin outside the paper you're too heavy. A commonly known shaming trend is the thigh gap, which is a space between ones legs if they touch you are seen as over weight. Another shaming trend is the process of jumping up and down to see what moves. The list can go on, I am sure after this thesis is written there will three new forms of body shaming will be introduced into society.

These different ways of body shaming cause young girls and women to shame themselves just because of how they look. It is only a matter of time until a new body-shaming fad is introduced into society adding to the negative body viewing on young girls and women. Harriet Brown, author of *Body of Truth* spoke about this particular form of body shaming when her teenage daughter, who was told by her health teacher to go home and jump up and down in front of a mirror and if anything moved that was consider unhealthy fat (Brown, 54). It is rare not know someone in today's society who feels like

they are targeted by social media and suffers from some form of body negativity and shaming.

Effects of Body Shaming

These ways of body shamming can lead to eating disorders among young girls in middle school and high school ages. Three of the main eating disorders are bulimic nervosa which is defined as an eating disorder is characterized by binge eating followed by purging, anorexic is an eating disorder characterized by a low weight and the fear of gaining weight, and binge eating defined as a disorder with episodes of eating large quantities of food with feeling of loss of control, which can also lead to purging afterwards (National Eating Disorders). These are the most common eating disorders, and there are many more. There have been studies in different areas of the world where social media was introduced and young girls and women admitted to at one point starved themselves to loss weight.

A famous study that took place in Fiji on the impact of social media on young women appeared in two different pieces of my research. First in the article “Women’s Body Image and BMI: 100 Years in the US”, article then in the novel written by Harriet Brown; this study in Fiji was performed by psychiatrist and anthropologist Anne Becker. Television was not introduced until the mid- 1990s in Fiji. Over the next three years teenage girls went from viewing being overweight or at a natural BMI positively to viewing it negatively, 74% thought of themselves as too fat. This caused them to diet or developed some kind of eating disorder and admitted to vomiting at some point to control their weight. The effects of social media can cause young girls and women to go to great

extremes in order to get the ideal body in society's eyes. In my research I have also read different articles and seen different documentaries about how different places around the world view their bodies, and how they should look according to their society's intake on social media.

The Average Woman Body

There is also the fact that the average bodies of women today are not the same compared to what they were like then. Brown also talks about the difference in woman's bodies now and what they were about 20 years ago, stating that the average American woman is in fact heavier by about 20 lbs. and taller than they were in the 1960s (Brown, 12). Even in media today the bodies of women are shrinking compared the average woman out on the streets. It has also been discovered that the weight and proportions of popular female icons, as measured in BMI, has remained consistently below that of the average American woman for some time (Women's Body Image and BMI). Women have become obsessed with weight and the never-ending quest for thinness (Brown, xxii). If women do not learn to love and accept their bodies and natural beauty they were born with, this will sadly become a never-ending cycle leading to more harm than good.

Plus Sized Models

Even social media's example of a plus size model is not hundred percent accurate. The definition of "plus size" has begun to shrink. Twenty years ago models on average were eight percent less than average American women. Now they weigh twenty-three percent less. Ten years ago plus sized models typically ranged from size twelve to size

eighteen, now the size span only ranges from a size six to a size fourteen (Brown). In doing this social media have caused a greater effect on body negativity for women. This shows that even social media does not believe in a realistic sized woman for a plus sized woman. These women are labeled as “Plus Sized Models”, we do not call slender models by a different name they are just models. So why can’t a plus sized model be called just a model as well? It is sad to believe that even plus size models are not even a realistic size for the average plus size woman or women at that, even more so now than before.

Fashion World

Some fashion designers even refuse to even make plus-size clothing; most of the time when designers thinks “fashionable” they associate it with “skinny” and do not even want to think of their garments being worn by plus-size women. Stating that if you are over a certain size you do not belong (Dockterman, 84). Social media has also had an affect on young girls views of what their bodies should or should not look like. Not only do plus size teens and young adults feel targeted, but also American women who are average or smaller sized maybe under the impression that they are not skinny enough or not good enough. There are in fact 100 different body types of women all around the world; women are not all one size. Realistically even if you say a size 8 in one clothing store it does not necessarily mean you are that same size and cut in another. This is very common and causes problems with women when the go to the store and shop (Dockterman). Social media has had a major affect on clothing and the size of clothing you wear. The effect has often been negative.

Society has become so focused on the number on the scale, or the size clothing that someone wears, that we often forget the physical and mental health of an individual. Clothing has become yet another way where a body type could be judged, if you are not a small enough size. If you cannot wear a specific style or brand of clothing you are seen as lesser. In succumbing to this the individual gives up their physical and mental health just in order to fit into societies view of beauty. Social media has contributed to this by not offering a model that fits into the normal body type of a natural young adult or woman. Clothes are meant to express an individual and voice their option even. So why has it become this huge fight to now look and have a specific body type?

The Affect of Mental Health

Social media has an impact on the mental as well as physical health of young girls and women in addition to their physical health. It has been proven in another study that after women were shown media images depicting the modern thin ideal bodies, women then had an increase in anxiety, depression, anger, and dissatisfaction with their bodies (Women's Body Image and BMI). The strongest predictors of negative body image where found to be caused by the lack of parental support, negative moods and feelings, the choice to diet as well, and lack of support from peers (Women's Body Image and BMI). If we as a society came together as a whole and learned to support young girls and women in building self-confidence the mental health and physical health of women would improve over time.

Even now most women and people in society look up to models like Marilyn Monroe. She was known as one of the most beautiful women, and was considered the

biggest sex icon of her time. This comes off slightly shocking because she had curves and most likely stretch marks. In today's media she would be considered a "plus size" model most likely because of her higher BMI. I look up to her because of her natural beauty. There was most likely less photo editing then than there is now. Meanwhile the majority of social media seems to be filled with women and models that are slender and do not fully come off as average size women in society.

Affect on the Fashion Industry

Social media has also played an effect on clothing and the number that is associated with the size of an individual. Elian Dockterman talks about different problems with fashion and how clothes are made today to fit the American woman's body. Dockterman discusses how sizes can change from store to another, as well as from one pair of pants to another pair, located even in the same store. Who determines what is and isn't a plus size model? Every person in society today has a different body and different measurements of their hips, thighs, shoulders, and chest. There are no two people who have the same body measurements. Each store has their own standards to follow for different body types to fit into a specific mold that is not true for each body type or store. The image that is portrayed in social media is a small low BMI woman with unrealistic body measurements, which can affect how some Fashion Designers make their clothes.

Dockterman states "The debate over sizing is an emotional one, especially right now, when so many shoppers are rejecting labels of all kinds, from sexual orientation to gender to, yes, size" (Dockterman, 82). Dockterman also talks about how a large part of

the population now buys their clothing online, and many because they are embarrassed and fear discrimination from other people or the workers. Realistically, even if you are say a size 8 in one clothing store, it does not necessarily mean you are that same size and cut in another. This is very common and causes problems with women when they go to the store and shop. A size eight in about 1967 during the Twiggy period is now equal to a size 00 in today's clothing store (Dockterman, 80 Chart). Stores are also discriminatory to women who are over a certain size. About 67% of American women wear a size 14 or above, and most stores don't carry those numbers. The majority of American women wear a size 14 or above, which is considered a "plus size" or "curvy" in the fashion industry (Dockterman, 80, 83). This is a heart-breaking discovery that most stores and fashion designers know this and still do not make clothing to these body types?

I have recently had an experience that made me feel so self-conscious about my own body. For years as long as I could remember I have worn a size twelve in jeans as a teen to young adult. With the cooler weather on its way, it was time to go out and buy some new clothes. I went into a store where I normally buy my jeans and clothes, and pick out two or three pairs of jeans. I walked into the fitting room to discover that the size no longer fit me in that particular store. I left upset and disappointed in the size and myself. I later found myself in another store trying on clothes and realized that my size was still the same. Later I returned to the original store and held up my old size twelve jeans to their current size twelve and discovered that I had not put on weight but that the store had changed the cut and waist size of their size twelve jeans.

For an average person, like me, this took a mental toll on me. Imagine how someone who was self-conscious or had an eating disorder might have felt. There have

been other situations when I was shopping with my mom once looking for a formal dress to wear to an event I had to attend. We walked into a store and I began to browse the racks, my mother walked over to a sales woman asking where we would be able to find my size. She answered with “We only go up to a size eight here”. Her response to this day still puts me on edge. All because I have a little more meat on my bones and fall into what is now considered a “plus size” in society’s eyes it is hard to feel comfortable in my own skin. How can girls love the bodies they are born with when there are some stores like the ones I encountered that do not go above a certain size in their clothing?

Mannequins

Social media also plays a role in how the Fashion Industry displays to society clothes. Typically different clothing stores use mannequins to place the clothes on for them to be shown for shoppers. These mannequins show little to no resemblance to the actual body type of an average sized woman. Giving a woman and society an unrealistic expectation on how their bodies should look but also to how the clothing should look on the person trying them on. This adds to the negative affect that media has on the influence to how the woman’s body should look. If one is to think of how a mannequin normally looks they are tall, small waistline, longer necks, and small busts. These forms types of mannequins are seen in many different clothing stores. This image is unnatural and typically does not exist in all body types. In doing this it is molding the minds of society to think that this is what women should look like. This also goes for men’s mannequins and plus sized mannequins they are created in a way that does not show differences in the different body types that are found in all different humans in the world. On an average

what type of mannequin actually looks like an average body type of women in society? The fashion industry should show a greater difference in body types in their mannequins, this would be better for society in promoting that every body type is beautiful and is acceptable.

Women and Dieting

Women have also been dieting for as long as history can recall. It is very common for a young woman or adult to diet on and off for most of her life. This is known as the Yo-Yo dieting or weight cycle. This is the process of losing and regaining of weight over and over. This can lead to many different effects on the human body such as heart disease, impaired immune functions, insulin resistance, and much more (Brown, 59). People are known to diet for many different reasons. Normally though we diet for one or two things. The two main reasons are; to one look good, to be healthier, or both. In societies eyes if you are a women and if you want to look attractive you should be thin or at least on the thin side, Brown also states (Brown, 30). There have been many different studies with young girls and all of them at some point think they are overweight.

In one study 40% of six-year-old girls expressed a desire to be thinner. In another study of ten-year-old-girls, 81% of them feared becoming fat. While girls between fifth and twelfth grade feel that magazines images have made them want to lose weight (Women's Body Image and BMI). These issues with seem to have had an effect on self-perception, eating behavior, and health of young girls health. Globally, the rates of eating disorders in young girls such as anorexia and bulimia are steadily increasing (Women's Body Image and BMI). In other polls such as the one conversed by Esquire

magazine women have said that they rather be dead than considered fat. It is sad to think that social media has caused society to think that if they do not meet the same requirements that media displays they would much rather die.

There was also a poll that was conducted in 2012 by British Grazia magazine where it was discovered that men are most attracted to women with curvier bodies rather than ultra thin bodies; this was also common with lesbians and bisexual woman (Brown, 134 and 157). This is the sad truth, sadly many girls and young women, they feel the need to go to great extremes to fit society's unrealistic view of them because of social media, when in reality often many people find them attractive just the way they are built. Every person has they on personal attraction, so polls like this could vary as well based on what an individual finds attractive to them.

Effects on Young Boys and Men

Social media affects young girls and women the most, but they are not the only ones. Young boys and men are also affected but not nearly as much as women, although they do feel the negative effects of social media as well. It has been proven that girls show higher rates of negative body imaging than boys (Women's Body Image and BMI). Women, young girls, men and young boys are surrounded by images of unrealistic body types of what is expected from them. Men are typically displayed, as over muscular and fit, this is common to how social media displays women to society. They are meant to have a specific look to them in order to be attractive. While models in magazines and on the runway influence young girls, young boys are strongly influenced by athletes. There has been also talk about a new form of a disorder which is when a person is to over push

themselves at the gym in order to maintain a weight or size, this is normally founded in young boys and men. Like women, some men go to extremes in dieting, and go to the gym to meet social media's standards.

Taking appearance to extremes – Fad Diets

Social media is also known for exposing society to fad diets. There are many different fad diets going on and the facts on dieting, and what one should and should not do when trying to lose weight. First, one should always keep in mind the safety of their wellbeing and keep in mind what a healthy weight or BMI for their individual body is.

There is a great difference between being fit and healthy, and taking one's physical appearance to the extreme. One could simply search the Internet for days to get told 100 different things to do in order to reach their ideal weight, size and look. America is most commonly known for their "Fad Diets". Fad diets are defined as a weight loss plan or aid that is over-promising in dramatic results. These diets typically do not have results with long-term weight loss and they are usually not very healthy. In fact some of these so-called diets can actually be dangerous to one's health (Nutrition for Weight Loss). There will always be a new fad diet that is being introduced to society giving people always the ability to try something different and new.

There are many different fad diets out there some of the most common characteristics that fad diets offer are one: it sounds too good to be true, two: promises weight loss without exercise, three: promises weight loss of more than one or two pounds per week, four: discourages drinking water, five: food or food groups are excluded or consumed excessively, and the list goes on (Litchfield). If many people know that these

fad diets will not really work for you, then why are they as popular as they are? People often are willing to try anything that promises to help them loss weight simply because they want to look better or feel better or both (Nutrition for Weight Loss). The National Weight Control Registry asked 4,000 people who had lost at least thirty pounds and kept it off for at least a year how they were able to maintain this weight. Many recommendations included things such as eating breakfast, following a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet, self-monitoring weigh-ins, and daily food journals, and lastly to do daily exercise (Litchfield). It is obvious that fad diets are not what people should be doing to maintain their weight, let alone lose weight.

Most people think that dieting is the only real option they have in order to lose weight, but this is not completely true. It has been proven that the best way to make you feel more comfortable and confident in the body that you have today is to maintain your eating habits with light forms of exercise. It is good to know that eating right can greatly help with someone maintain a healthy weight, and avoid certain health problems. It has also been found that dieting can have an effect on someone's mood and sense of wellbeing (Robinson). Simply eating healthier and limiting ones intake of unhealthy food, is better than some crazy diet. If social media supported more natural looking women and eating habits and life styles, I believe that this body negativity and shaming could all be a thing of the past.

Other Women Around the World Effected

It is not just the American women who feel threatened about their sized and how they should look in society's eyes. Western Nations such as Britain; have a popular

message promoting unattainable thinness and widespread dieting among women, one in four are on a diet, and over 50% of girls say that girls their age group struggles with body image. In Australia eating disorders affect a million people and cost the economy \$70 billion a year. In France legislation was passed barring advertisements promoting “extreme” thinness or dieting following the anorexia-linked deaths of several models. While in Italy women are constantly objectified in the media, and many young girls/young women are driven to obtain plastic surgery at their earliest legal age. In Sweden, upper-class young woman are obsessed with their appearance. In Spain and Mexico one in four teenage girls are at risk of developing an eating disorder. Lastly Brazilians are known to overestimate the actual size of their bodies while desiring to be thinner (Women’s Body Image and BMI). Western Nations are not the only one how are affected.

In Eastern and Third-World Nations such as China women do exhibit a significant fear of weight gain. In Japan women are becoming skinnier in recent years, and are very critical of each other’s appearance. In places like Nigeria women are dedicated to helping people put on weight, offering a place where they can do nothing but eat and sleep. In Mauritania young girls are encouraged to eat to gain weight to be more attractive for their potential partners. The idea behind this is that being over weight means wealth in a family. On the Island Nation of Tonga 90% of population is overweight considered status symbol. In Karachi and Pakistan, both countries have high media exposure, which has been recently founded to be linked to the female body dissatisfaction. While in India internalization of media by young women and girls has been linked to an increased drive to be thin (Women’s Body Image and BMI). In some societies, media is driving women

to become unhealthily thin, while in different cultures they do not let media over influence them, such as the Island Nation of Tonga that encourages women to become over weight as a form of social status. While being overly skinny is unhealthy, what is taking place in Tonga is not healthy for young girls as well. It is my belief that one strong exposure to social media is introduced things might change in Tonga.

The Barbie Affect

Young girls are also influenced at a young age about how they should look, by girl's toys such as dolls like the famous "Barbie". Most people do not realize the effect of "Barbie". Studies have shown that over the years Barbie has gotten smaller in waist size. If Barbie were a real woman she would be forced to walk on all fours due to her unrealistic sizes and portions (Olson). Recent studies have also shown that there are some 70 million people who suffer with eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. This also states that about 90 percent of these people are young women between the ages of twelve and 25, more than likely these women played with Barbie dolls at a young age (Women's Body Image and BMI). The dolls landed on toy store shelves in 1959 and became the ideal role model image for young girls. Which later led to the "Barbie Effect" in young girls. This is when young girls had the desire to reach Barbie's unattainable measurements. In 1965 the company came out with a "Slumber Party Barbie," which included a scale with a weight permanently set at 110 pounds (Olson). Why should Barbie come with a scale, let a lot a scale that one cannot change the weight on it? One can only imagine the impact this has on young girls and how they view their bodies. Barbie is a lot more than just a toy for girls to play with. She is also a role model that they

look up to, making a doll that shows unrealistic and unattainable body sizes plays a huge role on how young girls view themselves.

Video Games

It is not just Barbie that displays this image of women to society. Another form that social media uses video games to also show women with these unrealistic body expectations. Video games also add to the negative influence on women and what their bodies are meant to look like. While Barbie is normally meant for the view of girls, video games are directed mainly towards boys and young male adults. Like models that are shown on billboards or on the covers of magazines, women in games are typically shown extremely skinny, with unrealistic curves and body expectations. A prime example of this is in games such as Tomb Raider; Lara Croft is designed with an unrealistic body. She has been shown throughout the years with large breasts and a small waistline. There are times when a gamer can create their own character, but because society is so trained in what the average woman and even men is meant to look like, the gamer tends to create a character that meets society's unrealistic body type. Also in games the women's style of clothing is also unrealistic. The way women are dressed has no true use to the women shown in video games. Compared to men in battle games, the clothing that is available for women has no true coverage or realism to it. This adds to the negative affect that women feel pressured to look a specific way and it is all about their appearance and not their personality or intelligence. This also brain washes men in a way, making them think and believe that is how a woman is meant to look, as they are most commonly shown in video games.

Social Media like all forms of content distribution goes to extremes in making alterations to models and their physical appearance, before even placing the model on billboards or magazine covers. In years past this was done by “airbrushing” a photo now with all the new technology that people work with in the magazine and social media industry, people can now edit out models flaws much more easily, these flaws are what make the differences that make an individual unique.

Programs that are Used

Programs such as Photoshop play a huge part in editing and removing flaws from models and making them look perfect. Another program that can be used is Lightroom, which is similar to Photoshop but not as advanced. Photoshop can make larger than life changes on a photograph of an average size woman. There are so many different tools one can choose from to change the whole physical appearance of a person altogether within a few hours or a few seconds on platforms like Instagram or SnapChat. Though most people know that the images that social media shows to the public are digital edited in some shape or form; they still try to attain the unrealistic characteristics that are displayed to them on a daily basis.

In some ways Graphic Designers are to blame for this up rising of smaller sized women posted all over the media. These people are hired by editors to make models or people look a specific way. Just think about it, a designer is selected by companies based on how well they have been trained in all these different computer programs to make models and just women in general to look a specific way. By cutting down the size of the models waistline, making her breast look larger, and removing any imperfection that the

model has to offer. Designers abilities to land a well paying job is increased and by acquiring and becoming well versed in the skills of removing the natural appearance of a women, thus giving them an unrealistic appearance.

Adobe Photoshop was created for this main purpose, to edit images and recreate the photo itself allowing the designer to give the “object” this case the person the desired look. These “perfect” bodies are then posted all over on billboards, magazines and flyers. It is not always the designer’s fault in making these digital adjustments. Designers are usually given these specific requests from their publication editor or the client themselves.

Mostly designers do not make these decisions completely by themselves. I know I personally would be more drawn to a clothing store or item that displayed a curvier woman who was more similar to my body type and shape or at least displayed some images of a model showing similarities to my body type. If store and social media used a more diversity in different body types there would no need to over edit a model to fit these unrealistic expatiations. At the same time I will admit to occasionally using these different programs edits myself. As a Graphic Designer I do try and make photos of myself or a friend look more appealing to view, such as removing facial blemishes or whitening teeth; but not to the extremes in changing height, weight and size.

The Computer Process

There are many different ways a designer can go about editing the body of someone in Photoshop. One tool that some designer’s use is the Liquify tool is mostly used to push and pull on the photo that is being edited and alter the shape and size of the

model. Another thing that is common that designers do that in editing the models is not only do they mainly alter the size and shape of the models body type. They also change the height and length of the models neck. This technique is normally done with Puppet Warp; this tool is normally used in those topics of the body. Puppet warp can also be used to alter the body of the model as well. Tools such as Band-Aid, Stamp, and Clone tool all can make small changes to the model in editing things such as blemishes and discoloration to the skin. There are endless ways to edit the image using such tools and add on filters, but the request needs to be there because one can use these tools in the opposite direction. Social media contributes greatly to the choice of that direction to making a subject look smaller in size.

Social media plays a much bigger role in society then we think. Just one of them is the negative effect it causes young girls and women in viewing their bodies. At this rate if we keep on this track it will be almost impossible to tell how much of a photograph is of the real model or even a real person. Designers could even take a mixture of different images of more than one person and realistically take the best part of each person and combine it to make the perfect being or body. I also believe that at some point designers won't even need photographic images or models anymore and will be able to create a person completely on the computer via 3D programs and existing libraries of body types and parts.

Mainly because of social media the women's body has also become an over sexualized object. When you go out in public to places such as the mall you are overwhelmed with the view of women in low cut tops, in under garments, or even

extremely short shorts. These images portray women to be seen as nothing much more than sex objects. This brings up the newest debate over public breast-feeding of babies.

Public breast-feeding Debate

Why is society so okay with seeing images of women in items such as nothing more than a bra and underwear, but some people in society cannot stand to see a mother feeding her baby, this is all because of social media (Anderson). Something that is as natural as breast-feeding has become a taboo art in today's age. I have recently become aware of this situation. Women are sometimes forced in places like public bathrooms to feed their babies, and I personally think it is unfair and unhealthy for the babies and their mothers. The main function of women's breast is to care for their young. Realistically a woman is covered and sometimes even more so than the way they are viewed in media. Social media has had a great affect of this subject and viewpoint of a women's body.

While there are mixed reactions to how one should or should not look based off of social media, and how young girls and women should look to attract a partner, we tend to forget that famous line that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". That you do not need to look like a person cut out from a magazine to be beautiful for yourself or for someone else. We are all different, and that is what makes each a person an individual. I once read a quote that said,

"I think freckles, stretch marks, tattoos, bruises, birthmarks, and scars are the coolest thing ever. You started with almost a blank canvas. Look at you now. All this is evidence that you've lived".

I strongly believe in this quote because if we were perfect and all came out of the same mold to look like models are shown in social media we would just be robots. Social media and media in general makes us think we need to look a specific way but that is not always true. I personally find having something different that no one else has is what makes you who you are.

Society has become overly addicted to the image of a woman with a small waistline, long legs, and large breast and practically perfect because of social media. I am not trying to say to eliminate slender women and models in society but to consider all body types and all women that are out there in the world today. There are plus size women, average sized, slender sized, women with body builder bodies, women with large breast, flat chested women, and all the other body types in between. If women learned to embrace their bodies for they are and different bodies types were promoted in social media. Then maybe women around the world will love their body for what it is and not shame it for what it is not. The number of people around the world who have eating disorders might go down.

I personally do not want to watch the yearly Victoria Secret's runway show and hate my body at the end. Or even just runway shows what does there have to be a plus sized model and a regular one. Why can't they be shown together? I am not saying those women are not beautiful and sure that they work hard to look the way they do. I just simply wish to see a woman who has a more similar body type to mine or Marilyn Monroe. This work done by social media has caused such a great negative effect on how women see and accept their bodies. If social media where to try and produce more positive viewing of different body types, women would feel more comfortable and

confident about the way they looked. I feel that mixing different body types in runways shows or on the cover of a magazine would be better for society, to develop more body positivity.

Not Just “Plus Size” Women feel Targeted

In my studies and discussions with different types of people I found that it was not just average to plus sized women who felt targeted but also women who fall on the smaller size side. Women with smaller frames can also feel targeted with saying such as “Don’t you ever eat?”, “You are so skinny, is that healthy for you?” and so many other phrases. Also with the rise of different phrase about curvier women in the music industry a women with a smaller body type might feel uncomfortable being too thin. We need to come together as all body types and learn to inspire and bring each other up. Not shame each other all because we do not look like this “unrealistic” body that social media has caused society to become addicted to. We are all beautiful with our own natural bodies. For all some people know the girl you ask if she every eats; eats ten times a day and the over sized girl that is called fat; is starving herself to be skin. Social media should keep that in mind because they never know how they might negatively affect some on how they view their body.

Society Fighting Back

Lately there have been some efforts to fight back against the rise of social media and their effects on the woman’s mind and body. In response to this widespread of negative self-image and unhealthy eating habits among women and girls a number of

different businesses have launched campaigns to promote positive self-perception. Such as a Brazilian modeling agency that advised women to “say no to anorexia”, in places like France showing model Isabelle Caro appearing overly skinny and unhealthy to make a statement, and the beauty and cosmetic company Dove and their Campaign for Real Beauty which started in 2004, displaying a mixture of women in size and race, with no makeup or digital enhancement (Women’s Body Image). The Nation Association to Advance Fat Acceptance also known as NAAFA is focusing on ending the discrimination of different sizes (Brown, 183). They are not the only ones, last year Mattel; the company who produces Barbie has introduced 23 new dolls and have began to release a new line of Barbie. She now is coming in different skin tones, height, hair colors and styles and of course body shape along with the removal of Barbie’s pointed feet to now meet the realistic form of feet (Bowerman and Malcolm). I can only imagine what good this will do for young girls and woman around the world who suffer from negative body imaging. This will also become a better role model for girls to be or look however they like.

Social media needs to display a larger mix of body types and not label what is or is not considered a normal body type. We are not all the same and that is okay. We were meant to be different in height, skin tone, and body type. Social media has repeated in societies mind what is considered the idealistic perfect type. The problem is that for the average woman this body is not always attainable for some people. This I know from personal experience, with my build and body type I know in theory I could never be a size two; let alone look like a model that social media shows us as the ideal average women and body.

Young girls also get strong influences from women in their lives that they look up to. This could be a combination of the women such and their mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and the list goes on. If the person a young girl looks up to suffers from viewing their bodies negatively and always dieting or trying to change the way they look; this could have a strong influence on how that young girl views her own body. We learn from the people that are dearest to us. This makes a never-ending cycle in society. Young girls learn these traits, which over time they pass on to their own daughters and so on. If women grew up loving their bodies more the influence that they had on the younger generation around them. Society as a whole would not suffer from these body negatives that they do today. The older generation has to help lead a path for the next and upcoming generations to come. If we could show younger girls and boys to love their bodies for what it is, social media would not be able to effect society and view of their bodies.

What does the Future Hold?

At this rate the future is to hold the possibility for more problems in how society views the woman's body through social media. There are no forms of regulations to what can and cannot be shown to the media now these days. For the most part all the body types that are shown are small and skinny body frames, but they tend to look unhealthy. It is undeniable that most of these women who are displayed to society through social media have some kind of eating disorder and are not in a healthy state of body. Yet these are the women that are shown through out the media as the perfect body type for women. There are different body types all around the world as I stated earlier in my thesis there

are no two-body types that have the same measurements for the different parts of their body. Designers and companies should develop certain regulations for their models and how should they be presented to society through the media. I personally think a good standard that the modeling industry should follow is that models need to have at least a certain BMI in order to be a model. I think in doing this form of a regulation in the future to come will help with the strong negative influence that social media has on society and body imaging.

When I was younger it was hard to understand that, like many others I dieted. On and off for some years, as I got older I began to realize that this is the only body I have. I began to notice that nothing was really wrong with the body I had I just needed to take better care of it. I might never be a size two but I am okay with that, I love my body for what it is and everything it is not. In addition I know that my genetic make up my body really was not made to look that way. With the support from my family especially my mom, she always been there for me, and telling me that my body is perfect just the way it is. My mental and physical health is more important than if I can or cannot get into the smaller sizes of clothing or the number that reads on the scale. It is social media that needs to change, they do not need to release a new magazine every week; stating which is the best diet out there and how to get the best body out there with a woman who is thin on the cover. That is also to go for a magazine stating how to love yourself more with an image of a plus sized woman. Different body types of not just women but men as well should be promoted together. Each person is perfect and beautiful in their own way. We are all different, if we were meant to look all the same then we would.

There needs to be a better equal ground for body imaging and how women are displayed to society as a whole. The ways that are currently shown to society is causing a negative affect on the people. This negative affect leads to a larger amount of problems in society such as eating disorders, body shaming, and so much more. Times have changed and so has the image of women, these negative effects that society has created effect the average woman more that society thinks they do. The history of women and the change of their appearances and Body Mass Index has changed so many times to fit into societies expectations of the perfect body for women and men. Every body type is beautiful in its own way and form. This negativity that social media has introduced to women and different body types needs to stop. Or there is no way of telling what long terms harm it may inflict to individuals or society at large.

Conclusion

Social media plays a much bigger role that most people think that it does and now in the 21st century, Social media is everywhere. Your phone has become a mini computer that you can carry everywhere to get to form of social media. Society cannot escape coming across something that will effect how they are to view themselves either.

Covering social media with images and views of unrealistic sized men and women, being women who are typically more a target to be judge by. Women over the years have been viewed as nothing more than objects to social media, based on how their bodies are.

Women have gone through all different types of appearances and different levels of BMI all throughout history.

Social media has pressured women to fit into what society portrays as beautiful and perfect, these outside influences have lead to eating disorders and health issues. The

focus is not just on plus sized women but also women who feel as though they are being targeted for being too slim. Along with the affect social media has on young boys and men as well. These pressures from media do not just influence the American women but all women around the world as well. Social media needs to start taking in consideration the strong negative effects that influence societies the averaged sized women and even men around the world.

Work Cited

Anderson, Ryan. "Breastfeeding in Public: What Is and What Is Not "appropriate"."

Savage Minds. N.p., 23 Sept. 2013. Web 10 Jan. 2017.

Bowerman, Mary, and Hadley Malcolm. "Barbie's New Shapes: Tall, Petite and Curvy."

USA Today. Gannett Satellite Information Network, 28 Jan. 2016. Web. 30 Dec. 2016.

Brown, Harriet. *Body of Truth: How Science, History, and Culture Drive Our Obsession*

with Weight—and What We Can Do about It. N.p.: Da Capo, 2015. Print.

Dockterman, Eliana. "One Size Fits None: Inside the Fight to Take Back the Fitting

Room." *Times*(2016): n. Page. Print.

Mahesh, K. "History of Photoshop: Journey from Photoshop 1.0 to Photoshop

CS5." *Creativeoverflow*. N.p., 12 Sept. 2011. Web. 11 Jan. 2017.

<<https://creativeoverflow.net/history-of-photoshop-journey-from-photoshop-1-0-to-photoshop-cs5/>>.

Litchfield, Ruth, Ph.D.,R.D., Diane Nelson and Micki Nelson. "Facts About Fad Diets."

(2003): n. pag. Iowa State University, University Extension. Web. 4 Jan.

2017.<https://www.iahsaa.org/Sports_Medicine_Wellness/Nutrition/Fad_Diets.pdf

f>

"National Eating Disorders Association." *National Eating Disorders Associations*.

N.p., n.d Web. 17 Aug. 2016.

"Nutrition for Weight Loss: What you Need to Know About Fad Diets."

Familydoctor.org. N.p., 29 Dec. 2016. Web. 04 Jan. 2017.

<<https://familydoctor.org/nutrition-weight-loss-need-know-faad-diets/>>.

Olson, Samantha. "Why Are Barbie's Body Measurements So Unrealistic? Little Girls Aren't Buying It." *Medical Daily*. N.p., 31 Dec. 2014. Web. 14 Sept. 2016.

Robinson, Lawrence, Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., and Robert Segal, M.A. "Healthy Eating." *Healthy Eating: Tips for Planning, Enjoying, and Sticking to a Nutritious Diet*. N.p., Jan. 2017. Web 05 Jan. 2017. <<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-eating/healthy-eating.htm>>.

"Women's Body Image and BMI: 100 Years in the US." *Rehabs.com/explore/womens-body-image-and-bmi/* .N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.