

Women of all sizes feel badly about their bodies after seeing models

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The rail-thin blonde bombshell on the cover of a magazine makes all women feel badly about their own bodies despite the size, shape, height or age of the viewers. A new University of Missouri-Columbia study found that all women were equally and negatively affected after viewing pictures of models in magazine ads for just three minutes.

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia

"Surprisingly, we found that weight was not a factor. Viewing these pictures was just bad for everyone," said Laurie Mintz, associate professor of education, school and counseling psychology in the MU College of Education. "It had been thought that women who are heavier feel worse than a thinner woman after viewing pictures of the thin ideal in the mass media. The study results do not support that theory."

The study measured how 81 women felt about themselves, from their body weight to their hair, and then exposed some of them to neutral images, while others viewed models in magazine ads for one to three minutes. The women were evaluated after seeing the images, and in all cases, the women who viewed the models reported a drop in their level of satisfaction with their own bodies.

The study suggests that the majority of women would benefit from interventions aimed at decreasing the effects of the media, regardless of weight. Mintz said past interventions have targeted specific groups of women, such as those with pre-existing eating and body-image concerns, but this study suggests that reducing the acceptance of mass media images of women and trying to stop the social comparison process is important for helping all women.

"Most women do not go to a counselor for advice; they look to Seventeen or Glamour magazine instead," Mintz said. "These unrealistic images of women, who are often airbrushed or partially computer generated, have a detrimental impact on women and how they feel about themselves."

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