

Campus talks about 'Miss Representation'

By **RACHEL MILLER**
COPY EDITOR

A woman's worth is often measured by her beauty and sexuality, say the media, rather than by her talent as a leader in society — an idea that is damaging to the female mindset.

On Thursday, Nov. 10, at 7 p.m. in Elkins Auditorium the Center for the Entertainment, Media & Culture will host a screening of the Sundance documentary "Miss Representation," a film which seeks to offer insight into some of today's biggest issues facing the portrayal of women in the media. The film, the product of writer and director Jennifer Siebel Newsom, seeks to shed light on the media's "under-representation" of women in positions of power in America, as well as the media's emphasis on the association between product and beauty.

Interviewees in the film range from typical teens to congresswomen and journalists including comments by Condoleezza Rice, Katie Couric and Nancy Pelosi.

Professor of rhetoric, gender and society, Sarah Stone-Watt explained the perpetuation of products in the media is an idea that begins in women at a young age.

"There are studies that show that girls as young as kindergarten age are able to distinguish between who is beautiful and who is not based on what they've seen in the media, and they will say things like 'girls can be pretty and boys can't, and the reason why is because girls can wear makeup and boys can't.'"

The project calls for action on a large scale to educate the youth of America through joining the campaign, or creating original insight on the topic via YouTube. There is also curriculum available for schools from kindergarten to college to teach students to think critically about stereotypes and the impact of media. According to missrepresentation.org, the campaign's website, the collective goal is "to empower women and girls to challenge limiting labels in order to realize their potential to encourage men and boys to stand up to sexism."

Professor of psychology Jennifer Harriger holds a particular interest in the film's subject, due to her developed research on body image.



**Harriger
Professor**

"I think this is an extremely important issue—one that affects all women, whether they realize it or not. I, absolutely, believe that this is a real issue that needs to be addressed in society," Harriger said. "Our male-dominated media portrays extremely unrealistic images of women, and exposure to these images is linked to body

dissatisfaction, depression and eating disorders. Women feel powerless to change these (and other) messages, and this film challenges those feelings of powerlessness."

Following the screening, Stone-Watt, Harriger and English professor Joi Carr will hold a Q-and-A, answering questions about the topic of females' representation in today's media.

With high hopes, the documentary and campaign for action will inspire women of all ages to seek self-worth and not be held back by media-perpetuated stereotypes. Harriger believes in the film's potential for change.

"It is my hope that individuals who view this film will feel empowered to challenge these messages in their own lives and on a more global scale."

Psychology major Marissa Belombre agrees that there is a need to shed light on the film's topic.

"I think everyone should take an interest in this topic," Belombre said. "We play just as an important role as men in society. We are more than just 'the mother, the daughter, the beauty queen or the slut.' We have more facets than the stereotypes allot to us."

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—**Marissa Belombre**
Psychology Major
