

March 5, 2014

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What's the Fat Problem With *Girls*?

Posted: 02/27/2014 1:49 pm EST Updated: 02/28/2014 9:00 am EST



Photo Credit: GQ.com

"I think that I may be the voice of my generation," Hannah Horvath, the character that [Lena Dunham](#) plays on her hit HBO drama *Girls*, told her parents. "Or at least a voice...of a generation." And the brilliant young writer, director and star just may be right. For starters, she's been praised for her "[revolutionary](#)" willingness to model a different view of the female body than the "thin-white-dressed-to-the-nines beauty standards....delivered to a supermarket near you by the *Vogues* and *Elles* of this world."

But this season she's started to approach yet another issue, her weight. The last few episodes have included a lot of fat jokes about her body, more than the two previous seasons combined. In the most recent episode, which took place on Long Island's North Fork, Elijah's friends made fun of Hannah who was dressed in a green string bikini for the majority of the episode, while all the other characters were fully clothed. "Doesn't Hannah remind you of crazy-ass Sadie?" Elijah's boyfriend casually remarks. "Sadie is fat as shit!"

While Hannah looks completely shocked that someone would refer to her as fat, Lena seems to have taken her character's nudity to another level. "Hannah's increasingly unflattering outfits have slowly crossed over from "quirky and ill-fitting, but plausible" to "seemingly designed so that people will mock her," wrote [Rhea St. Julien](#). "It's a road the show hasn't gone down before."

While there's been no dearth of chatter about the amount of nudity on the show, most in the media have been reluctant to address both Lena and Hannah's weight problem in a healthy dialogue. Howard Stern recently referred to her as '[a little fat chick](#)' which she took in stride. But rather than the two extremes: name calling or celebrating her weight as a bold and courageous political statement against our beauty obsessed culture, it's time to address the dangerous impact on society. "Lena Dunham is really the first woman I've ever seen on screen who looks like me," Kate Spencer wrote in [The Daily Beast](#). "Every time Hannah/Lena takes off her clothes, every time she establishes that she is, for the most part, comfortable in her body, it gives me a little bit of hope for myself." She sends "female viewers an important message," wrote the [LA Times](#), that "You have value, no matter your body type."

But in fact there is nothing to applaud here. Despite the good news about [reduced rates of obesity in children](#) that was published this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Medical Association, and the Academy of Pediatrics still consider obesity as a national epidemic and a major contributor to some of the [leading causes of death](#), including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some types of cancer. More than one third of U.S. adults - 35.7 percent of us - qualify as obese, and the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents, especially among minorities, has almost tripled since 1980 with approximately 17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents aged 2--19 years as obese.

While I deplore Hollywood's pressure on women to be underweight and perfect, I don't believe that obesity can be a positive political statement. We should all be advocating for a healthy lifestyle, with a good diet and sufficient exercise. Obesity is a serious health issue that should not be celebrated or accepted. It is not okay to teach young woman to be comfortable with a lifestyle that can lead to the second leading cause of preventable death in the US today.

Hannah has long struggled with love, work, and friendship but now her weight seems to be front and center. Although it can make the viewer uncomfortable, Lena is putting Hannah in such awkward wardrobes and situations, for which she is ridiculed about her weight. I think it's a bold and courageous move. I hope in future episodes, her character finds a way to serve as a healthy role model for her overweight generation--and not by being comfortable with her obesity, but by actually doing something about it.

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