Media's Effect on Body Image

The popular media (television, movies, magazines, etc.) have, since World War II, increasingly held up a thinner and thinner body image as the ideal for women.

\* In a survey of girls 9 and 10 years old, 40% have tried to lose weight, according to an ongoing study funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

\* In a study on fifth graders, 10 year old girls and boys told researchers they were dissatisfied with their own bodies after watching a music video by Britney Spears or a clip from the TV show "Friends".

\* A 1996 study found that the amount of time an adolescent watches soaps, movies and music videos is associated with their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin.

\* One study reports that at age thirteen, 53% of American girls are "unhappy with their bodies." This grows to 78% by the time girls reach seventeen.

Source: National Institute on Media and the Family

A Focus on Appearance

A Kaiser Foundation study by Nancy Signorielli found that:

\* In movies, particularly, but also in television shows and the accompanying commercials, women's and girls' appearance is frequently commented on: 58 percent of female characters in movies had comments made about their looks, as did 28 percent in television shows and 26 percent of the female models in the accompanying commercials. Mens' and boys' appearance is talked about significantly less often in all three media: a quarter (24%) of male characters in the movies, and 10 percent and 7 percent, respectively, in television shows and commercials.

\* One in every three (37%) articles in leading teen girl magazines also included a focus on appearance, and most of the advertisements (50%) used an appeal to beauty to sell their products.

\* The commercials aimed at female viewers that ran during the television shows most often watched by teen girls also frequently used beauty as a product appeal (56% of commercials). By comparison, this is true of just 3 percent of television commercials aimed at men.

Source: National Institute on Media and the Family

Eating Disorders

\* The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that eating disorders affect more than 5 million Americans each year.

\* An estimated one thousand women die each year of anorexia nervosa. As many as one in ten college women suffer from a clinical or nearly clinical eating disorder, including 5.1% who suffer from bulimia nervosa.

\* Approximately five percent of adolescent and adult women and one percent of men have anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating disorder.

\* Fifteen percent of young women have substantially disordered eating attitudes and behaviors.

\* The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that about 9,000 people admitted to hospitals were diagnosed with bulimia in 1994, the latest year for which statistics are available, and about 8,000 were diagnosed with anorexia.

\* Males account for only 5 to 10 percent of bulimia and anorexia cases. While people of all races develop the disorders, the vast majority of those diagnosed are white.

\* Studies indicate that by their first year of college, 4.5 to 18 percent of women and 0.4 percent of men have a history of bulimia and that as many as 1 in 100 females between the ages of 12 and 18 have anorexia.

\* Statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics show that "anorexia" or "anorexia nervosa" was the underlying cause of death noted on 101 death certificates in 1994, and was mentioned as one of multiple causes of death on another 2,657 death certificates.

\* In the same year, bulimia was the underlying cause of death on two death certificates and mentioned as one of several causes on 64 others.

\* Five to ten million adolescent girls and women struggle with eating disorders and borderline eating conditions.

\* Each year millions of people in the United States are affected by serious and sometimes life-threatening eating disorders. More than 90 percent of those afflicted are adolescent and young adult women.

\* According to The Center For Mental Health Services 90 percent of those who have eating disorders are women between the ages of 12 and 25.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health, National Center for Health Statistics, National Eating Disorders, SAMHSA'S National Mental Health Information Center

\* 8,000,000 or more people in the United States have an eating disorder.

\* 90% are women.

\* Eating disorders usually start in the teens but may begin as early as age 8.

Source: National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders