

**Annotated Bibliography:
The Impact of Media Messages and Images
and their Effects on Body Image and Health in Young Women**

Bissell, Kimberly L. Zhou, Peiqin. "Must-See TV or ESPN: Entertainment and Sports Media Exposure and Body-Image Distortion in College Women." Journal of Communication. 54 (March 2004) Issue 1: 5-22. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Surveys college women's exposure and response to two types of media: entertainment and sports, then evaluated their response in relations to body image distortion or eating disorders. The study found that exposure to entertainment media promoting the "thin ideal" was a statistically significant predictor to eating disorders and will be associated with greater body dissatisfaction with body image for white females as opposed to non-white females. The women's exposure to sports media did not return statistically significant results to body image and eating disorders.

**"Body Image and Advertising." Media Scope.
<http://www.mediascope.org/pubs/ibriefs/bia.htm> Online. 17 March 2004.**

Notes the overwhelming use of sexuality and beauty as a marketing tool for advertisers and its effects on young women by promoting the "thin ideal." Cites statistics from studies about young women's responses to advertising in women's magazines that includes consequences such as eating disorders and a distorted body image.

Botta, Renee A. "Television Images and Adolescent Girls' Body Image Disturbance." Journal of Communication. 49 (Spring 1999): Issue 2, 22-42. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Covers a study of which the results suggest 'body image processing is the key to understanding how television images affect adolescent girls' body-image attitudes and behaviors', as opposed to a correlation between 'thin-ideal' media exposure and negative body image. Offers an alternative finding that media exposure does not directly lend to the promotion of a 'thin-ideal.'

Ferris, Julie E. "Parallel Discourses and 'Appropriate' Bodies: Media Constructions of Anorexia and Obesity in the Cases of Tracey Gold and Carnie Wilson." Journal of Communication Inquiry. 27 (July 2003) Issue 3: 256-274. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Places importance on the role of the body and its link to gender identity in popular culture. Describes what society deems appropriate and its reactions through two 'bodies' prominent in popular culture, that of anorexic Tracey Gold and obese Carnie Wilson. Reveals how these types of bodies are rejected from the mainstream or are at the 'border of cultural intelligibility.'

Harrison, Kristen. "The Body Electric." Journal of Communication. 50 (Summer 2000): Issue 3, 119-136. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Covers a study that researched college women's media use and its link to the symptomology of eating disorders as a result of the 'thin-ideal' promoted in a majority of media. The study specifically defines 'thin-ideal' media and how this ideal lends to the development of body image issues in adolescent women. Study's findings found 'thin-ideal' media to have a more significant effect on women, then men.

Heinberg, Leslie J. Thompson, J. Kevin. "The Media's Influence on Body Image Disturbance and Eating Disorders: We've Reviled Them, Now Can We Rehabilitate Them?" Journal of Social Issues. 55 (Summer 1999) Issue 2: 339-354. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Notes the obvious tie between images and messages in mass media to body image and eating disorders. Mentions the changes in media messages from pre-20th Century to the present in their representation of the female body. Implies that responsible social marketing, meaning accurate messages, is better for communication and the media's influence on a person's psychology.

Hendriks, Alexandra. "Examining the Effects of Hegemonic Depictions of Female Bodies on Television: A Call for Theory and Programmatic Research." Critical Studies in Media Communication. 19 (March 2002) Issue 1:106-124. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Encourages researchers to conduct more accurate and strong research on the effects of television media on adolescent women. Encourages the use of social cognitive theory and cultivation theory among researchers.

Martin, Mary C. Gentry, James W. "Stuck in the Model Trap: The Effects of Beautiful Models in Ads on Female Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents." Journal of Advertising. 26 (Summer 1997) Issue 2: 19- . LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Discusses a study created to Assess the unintended effects advertising has on adolescent women, suggesting that these women hold themselves to the standards of advertising models and thus their self-esteem and body image are affected. Based on the social comparison theory. The results suggest that motive is important.

“Media Effects on Girls: Body Image and Gender Identity.” National Institute on Media and the Family. 6 September 2002.

http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_mediaeffect.shtml Online. 17 March 2004.

Cites numerous facts and figures of the media’s effects on girls in body image and gender identity. Has relevant results of studies pertaining to body dissatisfaction as a result of specific forms of media.

Thomsen, Steven R. “Health and Beauty Magazine Reading and Body Shape Concerns Among a Group of College Women.” Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 79 (Winter 2002) Issue 4: 988-1018. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Covers a study that surveyed college women to test three factors related to women’s magazines and body image/size concerns: hope, beliefs about men’s expectations for female thinness and expected weight gain or loss in five years. Has findings that strongly support the link between mass media effects and body image.

Udovitch, Mim. “The Way We Live Now: Phenomenon; A Secret Society of the Starving.” The New York Times. 8 September 2002. LexisNexis. Online. 17 March 2004.

Discusses anorexia, bulimia and their progressions, namely through Claire an adolescent who suffers from anorexia. Introduces the idea of pro-ana in which these eating disorders are not a disorder, but a choice as a result of media’s influence and a budding online culture that supports this lifestyle by providing tips and narratives on websites.

The Impact of Media Messages and Images and their Effects on Body Image and Health in Young Women

The impact of the media in relation to women's perception of the ideal body image is undoubtable. Whether it is television, newspapers, magazines, movies or the Internet, a clear majority of modern media promotes body images that are both unrealistic and unattainable for many women. These images promote thinness, sexuality and enhanced body shapes that are often unnatural. Content analyses of popular media indicate that the body shape standard for women has increasingly become thinner. (Bissell)

In an age where the influence of the media is unavoidable, so is the expectation of women, particularly adolescents and college students, to comply with the standards set by the media, the results of which can lead to eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia nervosa, low self-esteem, a distorted body-image and obsession with appearance.

The significance of this issue on a college campus is obvious, particularly on a campus like the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill that has majority of women in the student body.

A majority of researchers on this topic adhere the issue to the social comparison theory which in relation to this issue suggests that body image disturbance and thin body ideals occur when "women consciously and subconsciously compare their own bodies and physical traits to those of models and actresses who they believe represent social and cultural ideals" (Thomsen). "Although these comparisons have been shown in some cases to lead to short-term increases in motivation for self-improvement, they typically result in long-term discouragement, negative affect and body image disturbance, particularly when

the comparisons lead to the realization that the ideal portrayed in the media is difficult, if not impossible to obtain” (Thomsen).

These negative consequences include anorexia and bulimia nervosa, in addition to obsession with appearance.

A great deal of studies have been conducted in relation to this topic and have revealed interesting findings:

- College women exposed to photos of thin models from *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* reported significantly higher levels of private body self-consciousness and state anxiety than females who viewed control photos (Thompson).
- In a study among undergraduates media consumption was positively associated with a strive for thinness among men and body dissatisfaction among women (Harrison & Cantor, 1997:mediafamily.org).
- One researcher reports that at age thirteen, 53% of American girls are "unhappy with their bodies." This grows to 78% by the time girls reach seventeen (Brumberg, 1997:mediafamily.org).
- Women’s magazines are primarily attacked as the main promoter of the ‘thin-ideal body image.’ 83% of teenage girls report spending a mean of 4.3 hours reading magazines per week (Thompson).
- In a body image disturbance study, media variables accounted for 15% of the variance for drive for thinness, 17% for body dissatisfaction, 16% for bulimic behaviors and 33% for thin ideal endorsement (Botta).