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***“STEREOTYPES IN  
CULTURE AND MEDIA”***

# Statistics: Media Messages and Body Image

- A study of mass media magazines discovered that women's magazines had **10.5** times more advertisements and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines did (as cited in Guillen & Barr, 1994).
- A study of one teen adolescent magazine over the course of 20 years found that:
  - **All** of the articles contained in these magazines included statements highlighting that weight loss would improve appearance.
  - In articles about fitness or exercise plans, **74%** cited "to become more attractive" as a reason to start exercising and **51%** noted the need to lose weight or burn calories (Guillen & Barr, 1994).
- In a survey of working-class 5th to 12th grade suburban girls, **69%** reported that magazine pictures influence their idea of the perfect body shape; **47%** reported wanting to lose weight because of magazine pictures (from Dads and Daughters website, [www.dadsanddaughters.org](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org)).
- The average model today weighs **23%** less than the average American woman (Wolf, 1991).
- The average American woman is **5'4"** tall and weighs **140** pounds. The average American model is **5'11"** tall and weighs **117** pounds (Smolak, 1996).
- **42%** of 1st-3rd grade girls want to be thinner (Collins, 1991).
- **81%** of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat (Mellin et al., 1991).
- More than **80%** of grade school girls (6th grade and below) report having been on a diet at least once. **40%** of nine and ten year-old girls report having been on a diet. Most of them were not overweight (Hellmich, 1996).
- **50%** of white girls ages 12-16 consider themselves overweight and only **15%** consider their bodies normal. This is **6** times the rate for boys (Strauss, 1999).
- When asked "What is the best thing about being a boy?" the most common response among middle school aged boys was "not being a girl." When asked "What is the best thing about being a girl?" the top answer was "I don't know" or "Nothing" followed by responses focusing on hair and shopping (Mee, 1991-1992).
- A study of students found that girls with negative body image were **3** times more likely than boys to say that they feel badly about themselves and were more likely to believe that others see them in a negative light. Also, negative body image is associated with suicide risk for girls, but not for boys (AAUW, 1990).
- Women and girls are also consistently taught from an early age that their self-worth is largely dependent on how they look. The fact that women earn more money than men in only two job categories, those of modeling and prostitution serves to illustrate this point (Wolf, 1992).