STUTTERING Essay, Research Paper

American Women: Fading Away

American society has a notion that woman must be super skinny. This notion

has caused a rise in eating disorders. The body images are related to the

different levels of self esteem. Poor body image is associated with depression.

Researchers have found that white women have the highest rate of anorexia and

bulimia. Most actresses and models are so skinny; these women are role models

for girls, so these girls want to be skinny. Young girls have a tendency to look

up to famous women as role models. Since women in America have a view that to be

beautiful one must be skeletal, there is a rise in eating disorders, like

anorexia and bulimia because women feel that they are never skinny enough.

Eating disorders are brought on by personality, family pressures, genetic

susceptibility, and culture. One?s negative body image causes that person to

possibly develop an eating disorder. ?The term body image refers to the

affective component of body image or the feelings one has about one?s body.

Research on body esteem is important because low body esteem has been associated

with vulnerability to depression, anxiety, and low self esteem, which all

contribute to eating disorders? (Calhoun & Henriques, 357). The most

popular eating disorders are bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa. Bulimia is

more common than anorexia. It is characterized as cycles of bingeing and

purging. It usually begins when young women attempt restrictive diets. After

binges these women purge by vomiting or taking laxatives, diet pills, or drugs

to reduce fluids. Women may attempt severe dieting, which cycles back to

bingeing; otherwise the bulimic becomes anorexic. Eating binges average about

1,000 calories, but intake during a binge can be as high as 20,000 or as low as

100 calories. Bulimic people average about 14 episodes of binge- purging a week.

Bulimic people that do not progress to anorexia have a normal to high- normal

body weight, but it may fluctuate by more than 10 pounds because of the binge-

purge cycle. (Grow, 217).

Anorexia leads to a state of starvation and emaciation, losing at least 15%

to as much as 60% of their normal body weight. Half of these people, known as

anorexia restrictors, reduce weight by severe dieting, the other half, known as

anorexic bulimic, maintain starvation by purging. Although both types are

serious, the bulimic type, which imposes additional stress on an unnourished

body, is the more damaging. (Grow, 217).

It is estimated that 8 million Americans suffer from eating disorders,

approximately 7 million women and 1 million men. Most of these cases begin

before 20 years of age. One study reported that two thirds of high school

students were on diets, although only 20% were actually overweight. 90% of

reported eating disorder cases are in women. Bulimia has increased at a greater

rate than anorexia over the past several years. Some experts claim this problem

is underestimated because many people with bulimia are able to conceal their

purging and do not become noticeably underweight. A report concluded that 80% of

female college students have binged. (Philbin, 23).

Researchers found that white women are more prone to eating disorders. White

women are more concerned about their bodies and eating habits. White women are

more likely to have more restrictive diets and negative body image. White women

are more likely to have a low self esteem, which adds to a low body image. This

may be because most models are white women and other white women want to be like

them. Also much of women?s clothing is made to fit slender women. The fashions

that are in style are usually low cut, short, tight and form fitting. Society

thinks that only slender women can look right in this kind of clothing.

Young girls in the Unites States are being trained by the media, their

families and peers to adopt a negative judgment of their bodies. ?Some girls

may be especially accepting of implausible ideals about thinness and/or or may

have personal body- related experiences in early adolescence, including

idiosyncratic response to the developing body within and outside the family,

which leads to extreme body dissatisfaction and vulnerability to depression?(Rierdan

& Koff, 615). They devalue their bodies and believe they most always lose

more weight. They criticize themselves and lose their self esteem. Most young

girls begin worrying about their bodies when they hit puberty. At this time

young girls have an increase of body fat and they realize the culture?s ideal

of thinness. Since teenagers see that overweight teenagers are badgered, they

will do anything they can to never be overweight. A negative body image is

associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. When many women feel their

lives are out of control, so they use food as power. These women feel food is

the only thing in their life they can control. These women develop anorexia and

bulimia.

Models and actresses are many women?s role models. Throughout the years,

women in the spot light keep getting taller and skinnier. These role models are

too involved with being skinny. ?The impossibly thin body has become the

height of fashion. ‘You can?t be too thin,’ is the rather bleak formulation of

this ideal. Some researchers believe that these extreme fashion standards are a

factor in the recent and alarming rise in anorexia nervosa and bulimia among

young women? (The New American Body v10 n3:1). From Twiggy to Kate Moss the

fashion industry has encouraged extreme thinness and a distorted view of women?s

bodies. To be a model one must look unhealthy and emaciated. Anorexic and

bulimic women are glorified on television and magazines. Just by turning on the

television one can see society?s view of beauty. Many actresses must lose

weight to star in a television show or movie. Kate Winslet had to lose much

weight in order to be skinny enough to star in ?The Titanic." Sarah

Michelle Gellar?s stunt double was given the ultimatum to either lose weight

or lose her job because she weighed 105 pounds. Miss America contestants and

Playboy centerfolds are getting taller and skinnier. Almost all young models and

actresses are extremely thin and many women look up to these role models and

want to look just like them. Even mannequins in stores are extremely skinny.

Their hips measure only 31 inches and the average women?s hips measure 37

inches. Most young girls play with Barbie Dolls. These dolls have the

stereotypical ideal figure for American women. There was a study done on Barbie,

the researchers figured out what Barbie?s measurements would be if she was a

real woman. She would have a large chest and hips, yet her waist would be so

tiny that she would not be able to stand. This is yet another example of how

young girls are taught that beauty is thinness.

Even women who are in the right weight bracket want worry about losing just 5

more pounds. Women have a view that they can never be thin enough. It is

impossible for women to achieve their ideal weight because as they lose weight

they continue to drive to be thinner. Vivan Meehan, the founder and president of

National Association of Anorexia and Associated Disorders (ANAD), explains how

perfection is a factor of eating disorders. Meehan says, ?We are in a society

that suggests we must be perfect in everything and feel that we must somehow

live up to these unrealistic standards? (23).

American society gives women a distorted view on beauty. Women feel to be

beautiful they must be underweight. The media portrays the stars in movies and

television shows as being malnourished, yet beautiful. Models and actresses are

role models to women and many women want to lose weight to look like them. This

causes a rise in eating disorders. Women?s ideal weight keeps getting less and

less. No matter how much women lose, they want to be thinner. They do not know

when to stop. Their bodies just deteriorate until they can no longer stay alive.

Many women will do anything just to be thin and feel beautiful, even if it

results in death.

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