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# THIN DREAMS

Director: **Susie Mah**  
Producers: **Micheline Le Guillou,**  
**Gerry Rogers**



**M**ade for secondary-school students, *Thin Dreams* is a look at how young women in high school feel about their bodies, and how their self-images are affected by North American society's obsession with thinness. Whether fat, skinny, or "just right" from others' perspectives, the majority of high-school females worry about their weight, talk endlessly about it, and either diet or plan to diet. Most are convinced they are fat.

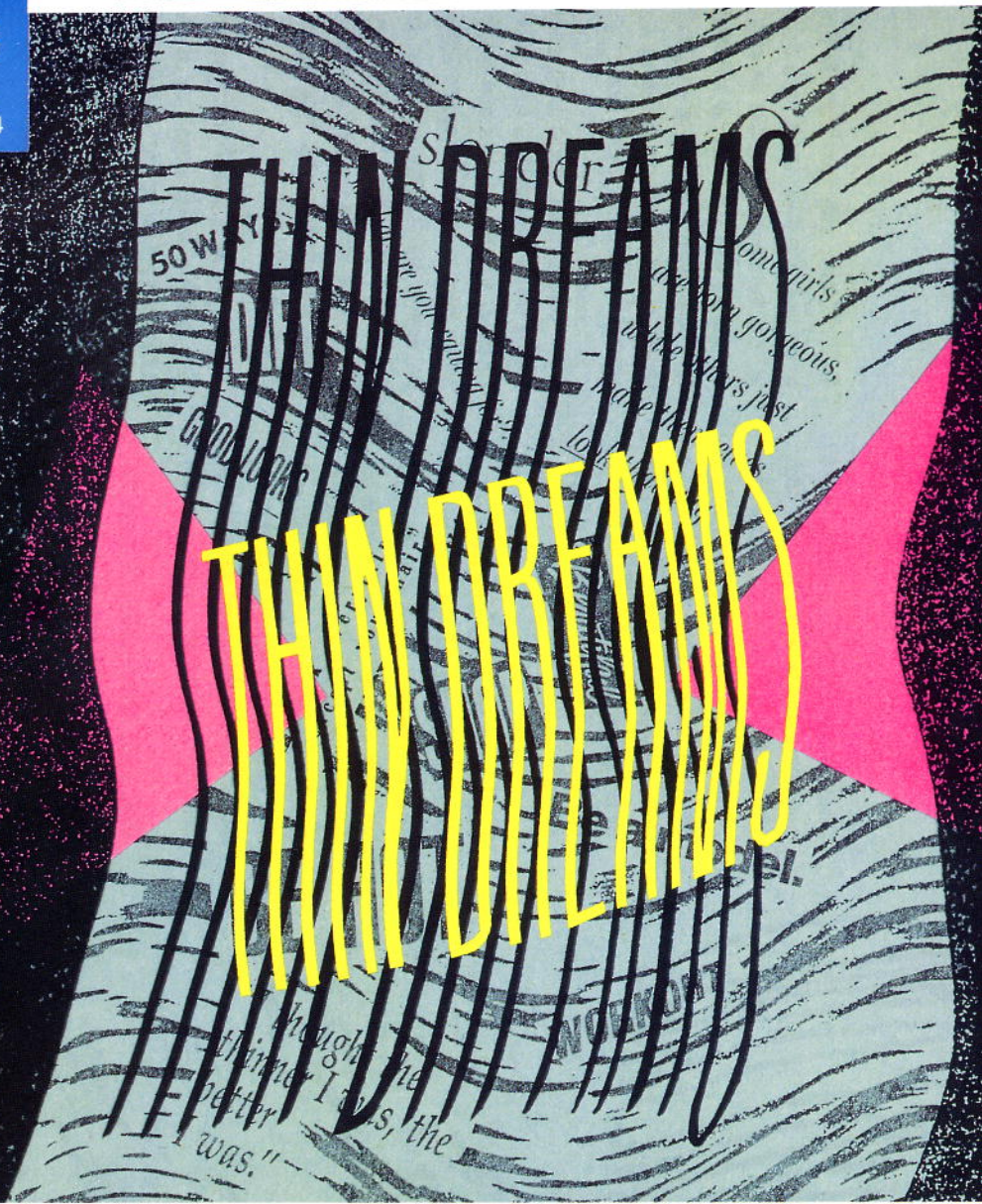
*Thin Dreams* is an excellent discussion starter on body images, societal values, and the power of the media and of advertising. In mixed female/male classes, discussion can extend to how male students feel about their bodies, and the various factors that help to shape these self-images.

This film was produced as part of a training program for young women filmmakers, sponsored by the Secretary of State's International Youth Year Secretariat and Studio D of the National Film Board.

The reverse side of this video jacket offers suggestions for discussion.

20 minutes 38 seconds  
Order number: C 0186 054

THIN DREAMS



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Young women talk about their obsession with thinness.



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# THIN DREAMS



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Color

Screening time: 20 minutes 38 seconds

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Through discussion and dramatic improvisation, the young women in the film explore the various factors influencing their body images. For example, they examine the power of advertising and the media in determining how we believe we should look; the "polite" language used to describe individuals who are fat ("chubby," "overweight"); and the badgering from fathers and boyfriends who have a preference for "thin."

A shopping expedition illustrates the lack of fashionable clothing for people who are indeed fat, while scenes in a high-school cafeteria show how compulsive female adolescents can be in trying to help each other stick to diets that are occasionally bizarre. In a group discussion, the young women talk about the potential consequences of starvation diets, and the depression and confused feelings that can stem from the belief that one is too fat.

Talking among themselves about the images they have of their own bodies helps the young women decide that, in the end, they want to be liked for who they are, not for their weight or their clothes. Although they sometimes dress to please those they love, they all conclude that dieting must be done primarily for oneself.

## Audiences

Secondary-school students, grades 7 to 11, in Guidance and Family Life Studies and Values Education; Young women's groups.

## Suggestions for Discussion

1. Are any of the situations described in the film familiar to you from personal experience?
2. Do you think the film presents an accurate picture of young women's concerns about their self-images? Why or why not?
3. In small groups, discuss the images you have of your bodies. Consider, as well, the various factors in your lives that have influenced these self-images (for example: family role models; family attitudes; the influence of friends; the influence of movies, magazines, rock videos, and advertising).

4. Carefully study your favorite TV show, book or movie. Who is your favorite female character? How does she dress? What does she weigh? How does she seem to feel about her body? Who, in her world, seems to influence her self-image? Consider how this character may be affecting your own self-image. Present your findings in class.

5. In small groups, research current or past magazine and newspaper advertising. Collect pictures that include a female model. Use advertisements that are trying to sell different products: clothes, cars, vacations, festivals, hair styles, make-up, etc. Organize the pictures into a collage, or in a scrap book. Add some notes on how advertising influences the way we feel about our bodies. Present your project to the rest of the class.

Other films produced by Studio D under the International Youth Year Training Program are: *Beyond Memory*, *Children of War* and *First Take Double Take*.

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**Produced by the International Youth Year Training Program, with the assistance of Studio D of the National Film Board of Canada.**

