

1975

Evaluation of Diets in Paperback Books and Popular Magazines for the Nutritional Adequacy of Teenage Girls

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a resource which can guide media specialists in the selection and use of diet programs found in paperback books and popular magazines. The media specialist can use the results directly as well as use the criteria to evaluate new diets as they appear. The study will evaluate the diets according to the Basic 4 food guide and the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA). The results are expected to show that one fourth or less of the diets found in paperback books will meet all the criteria. It is expected that the diets found in magazines will do slightly better. Still over one half will be lacking in one or more of the major nutrients. If the above statements are true, the media specialist has a responsibility to provide wise selection and guidance in the use of such diets found in the media center materials.

EVALUATION OF DIETS IN PAPERBACK BOOKS AND POPULAR MAGAZINES
FOR THE NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF TEENAGE GIRLS

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

In partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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July 16, 1975

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Date *July 21, 1975*

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INTRODUCTION

While a good portion of Asia, Africa, and Latin America is wrestling with the problem of starvation of their people, the United States is enjoying the benefits of being the world's highest food producing nation and of having excellent distribution facilities. Ironically, this great advantage has created its own problem for ten to twenty million or more Americans. That is the number of Americans various sources estimate to be overweight or obese.

In the past decade or two the problem of obesity has grown from mild concern to a national obsession.¹ From all sides - family, friends, doctors, manufacturers, advertisers - obese Americans are told to lose weight. They are told that if they lose their excess pounds they will be more attractive, be able to wear fashionable clothes, have a better love life, have fewer diseases, and have a longer life. It is no wonder that many obese people do try to lose weight by one diet or another from time to time. Unfortunately, most obese people are unsuccessful in prolonged and permanent weight losing efforts.²

For most people the cause of obesity is the result of con-

¹Jean Mayer, ed., U.S. Nutrition Policies in the Seventies (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1973), p. 29.

²Mayer, p. 32.

suming more Calories* than the body needs. Successful treatment requires reducing the number of Calories consumed below the amount required for the body's activities.³ Simply stated, for most people this means eating less and exercising more. It calls for a permanent change in dietary habits and requires willpower. To lose one pound a person must reduce his Caloric intake by 3500 Calories assuming his energy needs remain the same. As the average American consumes between 2,000 and 3,000 Calories a day eliminating 3500 Calories is not easy. Except for total or almost total fasting which should take place only in a hospital under strict medical attention, it will take several days or a week to lose one pound. No special food or combination of foods will change the fact that it takes a reduction of 3500 Calories to lose one pound. There is no quick nor painless solution to obesity. Yet that is just what people want.⁴

The phenomenon of people being unsuccessful in losing weight and desiring a quick, easy way out has been too great an opportunity for American enterprise to pass up. Special diets, diet foods, diet equipment, and other diet gimmicks have bombarded the buying public. All promise remarkable success with no work. Like magic the pounds will come quickly off in just the right places. With pressure to be

*Calorie here refers to the food calorie or kilocalorie, not the smaller physics calorie. The Calorie is equal to 1000 calories.

³William A. Krehl, "Nutrition," Collier's Encyclopedia (1974), XVIII, 33.

⁴Jean Mayer, ed., Overweight: Causes, Cost, and Control (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 150, 158-159, 194; see also Neil Solomon, M.D. with Sally Sheppard, The Truth about Weight Control (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 116-126.

thin Americans have succumbed to these sale pitches. Philip White estimates that Americans spend millions of dollars annually for such dieting gimmicks. Many of these may be harmless but ineffective and expensive. Others, however, may be actually dangerous to a person's health.⁵

The Problem

One area of this dieting "rip-off" that may touch secondary media specialists is the diets found in paperback books and popular magazines. Diets such as "Calories Don't Count", "Doctor's Quick Weight-Loss Diet", "Inches-Off Diet", "Air Force Diet", and "Mayo Diet" are just a sample of the diets popular with weight conscious adolescents. With periodicals and paperback book collections becoming a part of many media centers a media specialist may find s/he is responsible for the selection and guidance in the use of these resources.

Wise selection of paperback diet books may be difficult. Publishers are known to publish diets that are appealing to the public regardless of their reliability or safety. Unfortunately, even the fact that a doctor has written the book has not been a safeguard.⁶ Names of diets can also be misleading. "The Air Force Diet" is strongly disclaimed by the United States Air Force⁷ as is the "Mayo

⁵Philip L. White, "Which Diets Work - Which Don't," Today's Health, XII (September, 1971), 59-62.

⁶Kenneth L. Jones, Louis W. Shinberg, and Curtis O. Byer, Foods, Diet, and Nutrition, (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1970) p. 73.

⁷K. E. Plecher, "Air Force Diet Disclaimed," Journal of the American Dietetics Association, IIII (September, 1965) 200.

Diet" by the famed Mayo Clinic.⁸ For a media specialist with little or no nutritional background other than that provided by the mass media and with reliable reviews of these books scattered, selecting reliable paperback diet books can present a problem.

Beyond the selection process the media specialist may be looked to for guidance by media users. Students and teachers may ask for sources of reducing diets. Besides the popular paperback diet books are the hundreds of diets promoted in popular teen and women's magazines. These are extremely popular and found in most media centers. Basically they have the same characteristics as the paperback diet books. Some may be reliable and useful. Others may be worthless or actually dangerous if followed for a long time. With teenage girls already having one of the lowest nutritional statuses of any age group in the United States⁹ and with many on diets sometime during the year,¹⁰ sound nutritional guidance needs to be provided. How can a media specialist provide this guidance? This study attempts to partially answer this need. Which diets proposed in paperback books and popular teen and women's magazines meet the nutritionally sound guidelines of the Basic 4 food guide and the Recommended Dietary Allowances?

The purpose of this study is to provide a resource which can guide media specialists in the selection and use of diet programs

⁸H. N. Hoffman, "Mayo Clinic Disavows 'Mayo Diet'," Journal of the American Dietetics Association, IIII (April, 1965), 279.

⁹National Dairy Council, Nutrition Source Book (Chicago: National Dairy Council, 1970), p. 20.

¹⁰Nancy Jane Bowden, Ph.D., "Food Patterns and Food Needs of Adolescents," The Journal of School Health, XLIII (March, 1973), 165.

found in paperback books and popular magazines. The media specialist can use the results directly as well as use the criteria to evaluate new diets as they appear. The study will evaluate the diets according to the Basic 4 food guide and the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA). The results are expected to show that one fourth or less of the diets found in paperback books will meet all the criteria. It is expected that the diets found in magazines will do slightly better. Still over one half will be lacking in one or more of the major nutrients. If the above statements are true, the media specialist has a responsibility to provide wise selection and guidance in the use of such diets found in the media center materials.

Assumptions and Limitations

In using the Basic 4 and the RDA for the criteria by which to evaluate the diets it has been assumed that diets which meet these standards are nutritionally adequate for most people. These standards were, in fact, designed to give nutrient allowances which will maintain good nutrition in practically all healthy persons in the United States. They are the standards which are often used in evaluating American diets.¹¹

This study has also assumed that the diets evaluated will be presented in a way which allows this method of evaluation. This means an example of the total food intake for a typical day must be given. If such an example is not given an explanation must be given from which a typical day's eating plan can be made up. This assumption

¹¹Eva D. Wilson, Katherine H. Fisher, and Mary E. Fuqua, Principles of Nutrition, 3rd ed., (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), pp. 18, 426.

seems logical since this much information must be given if an user is to follow the diet.

Several limitations of this study need to be emphasized. First, although this study evaluates the diets for nutritional adequacy, no attempt is made to evaluate them for nutritional or medical misconceptions, misstatements, myths, or false theories. There are so many of these and the subject so complex that it is beyond the scope of this study and the knowledge of this author. To do this would require extensive time and extensive nutritional and medical training. Neither does this research make an effort to describe the functions of the different nutrients nor to describe the dangers of following a diet that is too low or too high in certain major nutrients. That is the task of various textbooks. This study is based on the nutritional principle that the RDA will provide a nutritionally adequate diet for almost all healthy persons in the United States and wide deviation either way from these standards may cause health problems for the individual.

A major purpose of this research is not to evaluate the diets for weight loss effectiveness. However, the total number of daily Calories will be listed. Because a reduction of 3500 Calories is required to lose a pound and no special food or combination of foods can change this fact, an idea of the effectiveness of the diet can be gained.¹² No special effort, though, will be made to rate the diets for weight loss effectiveness.

¹²Mayer, ed., Overweight: Causes, Cost, and Control, pp. 150, 158-159, 194.

Definitions

Several terms have been and will continue to be used that need to be clarified. First are the terms overweight and obesity. Although often used as synonymous terms there is a difference between them. An overweight person refers to a person who weighs more than the desirable weight for a person of his height, age, and body structure. The extra weight may be due to an extra-heavy skeletal framework or muscular physique and not to fat. An overweight person is not necessarily a fat person. Obesity, on the other hand, does refer to excess fat. An obese person is a fat person.¹³ For the intended purpose and audience of this study the difference is not of great importance. Their difference, however, is recognized and adhered to in the study.

The Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) are guidelines to the amount of key nutrients a person needs each day. The RDA are divided according to sex and age groups with different nutrient amounts based on that group's particular needs. These standards are set and revised by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. The RDA are often used to evaluate the nutrient content of American diets. The recommended amounts of the nutrients are higher than the minimal requirements of the average person to cover substantially all the individual differences in nutrient requirements of people in normal health. Because of this higher value some nutritionists and researchers feel that most people are getting

¹³Jones, pp. 58-59.

an adequate diet if they meet two thirds of the amounts recommended for each nutrient.¹⁴

The Basic 4 food guide or four food group plan was devised to make dietary evaluation and meal planning easier and quicker. It divides foods into four basic groups - meat, milk and milk products, breads and cereals, and fruits and vegetables. The foods in each group contain generally the same key nutrients in similar amounts. Therefore, a determination of the number of servings needed in each group to meet the RDA was possible. When the number of servings suggested are used in the daily meals a large share of the RDA are met. If the daily meals are low in any group, the diet is probably low in one or more important nutrients.¹⁵ This method is not as accurate or precise as the RDA but is much faster and more practical for daily use.¹⁶

¹⁴Wilson, pp. 18, 426; see also National Dairy Council, Weight Control Source Book, (Chicago: National Dairy Council, 1966), p. 18.

¹⁵National Dairy Council, Weight Control Source Book, p. 14.

¹⁶Wilson, p. 426.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Material written by recognized, well-known nutritionists and doctors was referred to for background information on nutrition, obesity, and weight control. Many of these authorities stated that popular diets that appear in the mass media need to be carefully evaluated in terms of a well-balanced diet.

Jean Mayer, one of the leading nutritionists in this country, in his book Overweight: Causes, Cost, and Control gives a reliable review of what is currently known about all aspects of obesity based on scientific studies. The introduction and two of the chapters were of particular concern to this study. The introduction cited some of the diet frauds that have occurred in this country. According to Mayer, many frauds base their sales pitch on the myth that Calories are not important in losing weight if one follows their "magic formula". Many such diets as Calories Don't Count use this claim. Their success lies in the fact that this is what people want to believe.¹⁷

In the chapter "Obesity in Adolescence" Mayer states that no other age group is more subject to fads. Consequently, the weight conscious adolescent is an easy victim of fad diets. Avoiding whole classes of foods because of misconceptions about their effect on skin and weight is a common dietary mistake of this age group. At the

¹⁷Mayer, Overweight: Causes, Cost, and Control, pp. 1-8.

Adolescent's Clinic of the Children's Medical Center in Boston, adolescent girls were found who went on reducing diets that were so low in protein and iron that many of the girls became anemic. Mayer emphasizes that in considering diets, adolescents should first be concerned with nutritional adequacy.¹⁸

Mayer's chapter "The Treatment of Obesity" includes a discussion of the different types of fad diets and some of the problems they may cause. He does not discuss any specific diets but rather the general types. He concludes, "There is at present no evidence available which would support the idea that any of the more extreme diets recently popularized have any advantage over a Calorically restricted balanced 'normal' diet..."¹⁹

Another expert who says basically the same things as Mayer is Neil Solomon, Maryland's Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, winner of the Schwentlar Award of Johns Hopkins University, and teacher at Johns Hopkins University Medical School. In his book The Truth about Weight Control Solomon discusses many of the misconceptions of obesity and weight control. He supports many of his explanations with scientific studies and research.

One of Solomon's chapters deals specifically with fad diets. He points out that because a well-planned diet limits weight loss to between one and two pounds a week and people want fast results they strike out on their own with the help of paperback books and magazine

¹⁸Mayer, Overweight: Causes, Cost, and Control, pp. 117-130.

¹⁹Mayer, Overweight: Causes, Cost, and Control, pp. 153-166.

articles. These diets limit the dieter to one or two foods so that one gets too much of one kind of nutrient and not enough of others. Solomon then goes on to explain some of the medical problems that may arise from some types of crash diets such as the high protein, low carbohydrate diets; the high carbohydrate, low protein diets; and the high fat diets. However, he does not tell which specific diets fall into the types he warns against.²⁰

On the other hand, Dr. Philip L. White, a top American nutrition expert, does discuss specific diets in "Which Diets Work - Which Don't". Some of the diets he includes are "Doctor's Quick-Loss Diet", "Inches-Off Diet", and "Drinking Man's Diet". He explains some of the possible dangers involved in these diets as well as some of the general characteristics of fad diets. Like the others, White states that a reducing diet should be a well-balanced diet.²¹

Steve Singer in an article in Today's Health warns readers of the numerous diet frauds that go on continuously in the United States. These frauds prey on the desire for a painless and swift means of slimness. The diet frauds include reducing machines, belts, creams, clinics, and books and pamphlets. The main thrust of the article is that people must watch claims that promise something for nothing. They can be suspected of possible fraud. The sensible weight reduction plan is a well-balanced diet and exercise.²²

²⁰Solomon, pp. 113-126.

²¹White, pp. 59-62.

²²Steve Singer, "When They Start Telling You It's Easy to Lose Weight....," Today's Health, L (November, 1972), 47-49.

Jones, Shainberg, and Byer in Foods, Diet, and Nutrition discuss food misconceptions in one chapter. They put part of the blame for widespread misinformation on popular national magazines that print articles which have little or no scientific support. Books also do this. The authors give some examples of doctors who have written books full of false information. One doctor blames sugar and starch for measles, whooping cough, meningitis, and other diseases. Another physician sells millions of books by telling people what they want to hear - one can lose weight by eating lots of high fat foods. Because these books are written by doctors many people accept them without question.²³

Principles of Nutrition by Wilson, Fisher, and Fuqua presents basic nutrition information with sections on the various nutrients and their functions; the processes of metabolism, digestion, and absorption; selection of an adequate diet; dietary recommendations; eating habits and nutritional status of various American subgroups; and problems of overnutrition and undernutrition. Each section discusses research studies which have been done and their findings. The section on obesity describes some of the research which has proven that many fad diets can result in medical problems for their users. They also discuss some claims made by fad diets that research has disproven.²⁴

These references were included here to help support the need and purpose of this study. These sources were chosen as representative of the material written by authorities who are recognized as reliable

²³Jones, pp. 72-73.

²⁴Wilson, pp. 441-454.

and knowledgeable on the subject. They base their conclusions on scientific research which they and others have done.

The major conclusion all agreed on was that a reducing plan should be a well-balanced diet which does not emphasize one food class and exclude others. All warned of the possible dangers involved in following many popular diets. However, most did not name which specific diets found in books and magazines could be potentially dangerous. White did do this but made no effort to include all popular diets. He also discussed by name only diets that were not to be recommended. From his article one does not know if there are any that can be safely used.

While other sources were found which evaluated one or a few specific diets they were scattered about in various journals and periodicals. This makes them an impractical resource for a media specialist to use for selection and guidance in usage of these materials. Numerous ones were also of doubtful reliability.

Jones in Foods, Diet, and Nutrition directly criticized paperbacks and magazines as often being the source of unreliable information. Many of the diets White disapproved of are found in paperback books and magazines. The others also indicated, at least indirectly, that these forms of diet information must be carefully evaluated.

Mayer specifically cited adolescence as an age especially prone to fad diets. Another study indicated that many teenage girls go on at least one diet during the year.²⁵ Wilson described a study done in Berkeley, California in 1966 which studied 1000 adolescents in the

²⁵Nancy Jane Bowden, Ph.D., "Food Patterns and Food Needs of Adolescents," The Journal of School Health, XLIII (March, 1973), 165.

public high school system. One of their findings was that while only 25 percent of the girls were found to be obese, 43 percent of the ninth grade girls and 56 percent of the twelfth grade girls thought of themselves as fat. A different study done in Boston found that only 15 percent were obese (girls) but 30 percent were on reducing diets. The studies showed boys to be more concerned about their height than their weight.²⁶ These sources indicate that adolescent girls are concerned with weight control and reducing diets.

After determining a need for a study which evaluated reducing diets three sources were found which have attempted to do this for the consumer. The book Rating the Diets is designed to not only rate popular diets but also to sort out the "real" facts from the distortions in the weight control business. One section of the book does rate an assortment of popular diets. The rating is in terms of "safety and effectiveness". The authors conclude that the "Prudent Diet", "The Low Carbohydrate Diet", "Dr. Stillman's Quick Weight Loss Diet", and "Gaylord Hauser's New Diet Does It" are safe and effective for long term use. They do not recommend "The Atkins' Diet", "The Taller Diet", "The Zen Macrobiotic Diet", among others.²⁷ Although the authors attempt to rate the diets the criteria they use is vague and unclear. The book also contains many misstatements. Because of this the results are considered questionable.

²⁶Wilson, pp. 389. ; .

²⁷Theodore Berland, and the editors of Consumer Guide. Rating the Diets, (Skokie, Illinois: Consumer Guide, 1974)

The Diet Jungle by Berkowitz discusses weight control in relation to exercise, rates various popular diets, and explains the authors' own method for weight loss.²⁸ In the section on rating diets the authors discuss some of the more popular diets. Some are discussed by their specific name and author. Other diets are grouped together and discussed as a general type of diet. The authors do not give specific criteria by which the diets were judged nor do the authors say which diets they recommend. Rather a list of strengths and weaknesses are discussed for each diet or group of diets. Because the list of strengths and weaknesses between the different diets are somewhat unrelated the reader has difficulty making any judgements on the value of the various diets. In fact, one gains the impression that none of the diets are workable. Since the authors describe their method of reducing in the last section of the book, their evaluation may be biased.

The California Dietetic Association, Los Angeles District did a more objective study on rating popular diets. In A Dozen Diets for Better or for Worse twelve popular weight-reducing diets are judged for nutritional adequacy. The criteria used for the study was the Basic 4 food guide and the Recommended Dietary Allowances for a young adult woman. On the basis of this criteria the diets were either recommended or not recommended for nutritional adequacy. The reasons for either judgement of each diet are explained. The study concluded that based on their criteria only one diet, the Weight Watchers diet, could be recommended unequivocally. The others were lacking in one

²⁸Gerald Berkowitz, Eugene Scheimann, and Paul Neimark, The Diet Jungle, (Chicago: Consumer Digest, 1975)

or more of the nutrients. The study is aimed at people planning to go on a diet and at professionals counseling possible dieters.²⁹

The study A Dozen Diets for Better or for Worse is a well done study. The criteria used in the evaluation is clearly stated and can be understood without extensive nutritional training. The diets can also be easily compared with one another. This study is based on the California study, using the same basic criteria. However, the number of diets included will be expanded, and it will be aimed at the nutritional needs of the adolescent girl rather than the adult woman.

In summary of the literature review, leading nutritionists and doctors advise that the best weight reducing plan include a well-balanced diet with foods from all the basic food groups. Weight loss should be limited to one or two pounds per week. The experts warn against many of the diets popularized by national magazines and paperback books. People are often drawn to these because they claim swift and painless weight loss. Few of these, if any, will result in permanent weight loss and some can be harmful to an individual's health.

The literature review indicated that adolescent girls may be particularly susceptible to fad diets. Adolescence is a time for fads of all types, and studies have shown teenage girls to be very weight conscious. Add this to the fact that teenage girls have the lowest nutritional status of any age group in the United States and a potentially harmful health situation arises. This age group needs guidance.

²⁹California Dietetic Association, Los Angeles District, A Dozen Diets for Better or for Worse, Los Angeles: California Dietetic Association, 1973, pp. 1-20.

in weight control diets.

Three sources were found which attempted to guide the consumer in regard to popular weight reducing diets. However, two of these were of questionable value. The criteria they used to evaluate the diets were unclear and vague. The third source seemed objective and used clearly stated criteria. Out of the twelve diets it evaluated only one was recommended.

METHODOLOGY

The first step in carrying out this study was to determine how to select the diets that were to be used. The first requirement was that the diets appear either in paperback books or in popular magazines.

To select the diets in paperback form Paperbound Books-in-Print, December 1974 was used. All books under the heading Home Economics-Food and Nutrition, and Health and Physical Education-Health and Hygiene that were reducing diets for the average person were listed to be included in the study. A copyright date of 1969 was used for a cut-off date. No books older than this were used. Excluded from the study were books that dealt with diets for special medical conditions, diet cookbooks, exercise books which include a diet as a minor part of the book, behavior psychology diets, and organic or natural foods diets unless specifically designed for weight loss.

The selection of diets found in magazines was done using Scott's Periodicals for School Libraries³⁰ and the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature³¹. A list was made of magazines included in Scott's that were likely to include articles on dieting. The descriptions

³⁰Marian H. Scoot, ed., Periodicals for School Libraries, Chicago: American Library Association, 1973.

³¹Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, New York: H. W. Wilson, 1973, 1974, 1975.

in Scott's was used to determine this. If there was a question as to whether a magazine carried such articles it was included on the list. Scott's was used with the assumption that these are the magazines that are most likely to be found in school media centers, and this study is aimed at the school media specialist.

Since Scott's has a copyright of 1973 it may be possible that a few new magazines have started publication since that time. If any new ones were found that included diet articles and were likely to be found in the school media center they would have been included. None were discovered.

After the list of magazines was made the Reader's Guide was used to find the specific articles that described reducing diets. All diets listed under the subject heading 'Diet' from March 1973 to March 1974 and found in one of the magazines on the list were included in the study. As with paperback books diets that were intended for people with a medical problem, diet cookbooks, exercise programs, behavior psychology diets, and organic diets were excluded. Also excluded were articles which gave "tips" on dieting but not a specific diet program.

The criteria used to evaluate the diets were the Basic 4 food group and the RDA. The servings recommended for the teenage group in the Basic 4 and the allowances recommended for women, ages 15-18, in the RDA were used. This age group was chosen as this is the general age of patrons of high school media centers. Girls in this level of school are felt to be the heaviest users of diets. The values for females either younger or older than this age group generally require a smaller amount of each nutrient. The values for men age 17

15-18 were not included since studies³² have indicated that boys are not as concerned with their weight as girls. They will require more of almost every nutrient than girls so if the diets do not meet the standards for girls they will not meet them for boys of this age.

The nutrients included in the study were protein, vitamin A, ascorbic acid (vitamin C), thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, calcium, iron, carbohydrates, fats, and Calories. Vitamin D was not included although there is a RDA for it at this age level. The food charts do not give the value of vitamin D in foods so it was not possible to calculate this nutrient.

The criteria was set up in table form as shown on page Appendix ^A~~I~~ - Diet Evaluation Table. Each diet evaluated had its own table with its name listed at the top. In the left-hand column the total food intake for a typical day was listed. If a sample of a typical day's meal was not given for a diet one was made based on the description given in the book or article. Using the Basic 4 food guide³⁴ and the tables in Nutritive Value of Foods³⁵ each column to the right in the table was filled in with the servings and nutrient values of each food listed. If the amounts were not listed for the foods in the diet an average serving was allowed. Since the food charts do not list all foods, the researcher had to substitute foods some of the time. When this was done care was taken to substitute with a very similar food.

³³Wilson, pp. 389.

³⁴National Dairy Council, Weight Control Source Book, Chicago: National Dairy Council, 1966, pp. 14.

³⁵National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. Food and Nutrition Board, Recommended Dietary Allowances, 8th rev. ed., 1974, Washington: National Academy of Sciences.

After the nutrient values of each food was filled in on the table, each column was added up with the total placed on line A. See Appendix ^BII, page for an example. Line B gave the recommended values of the Basic 4 and the RDA for teenage girls. The percentage by which the diet met the recommendations for each food group or nutrient was then calculated. This was done by dividing line A by line B and multiplying by 100. Figure 1, using the values for protein from Appendix ^BII, shows how the percentage of the RDA was calculated. The percentages were placed on line C in the appropriate column.

Line A = Total protein in diet = 47 gms

Line B = RDA protein recommendation = 48 gms

$$\% \text{ of RDA} = \frac{\text{Line A}}{\text{Line B}} \times 100$$

$$\% \text{ of RDA} = \frac{47}{48} \times 100$$

$$\% \text{ of RDA} = 98\%$$

Figure 1

Calculation of Percent of RDA of Protein
Met by "New 7-Day Crash Diet"
(Appendix II)

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Using the planned selection process twenty-one paperback books met all the criteria for inclusion in this study. Of these, eighteen were actually obtained and evaluated. The three not used could not be located at bookstores and libraries in Cedar Falls, Des Moines, and Waterloo. When ordered they did not arrive in time to be included. A list of the eighteen books used can be found on page 38 of this paper.

Using Scott's Periodicals for School Libraries a list was compiled of magazines found in school media centers and that might contain diet articles. The list of these magazines is given in Table 1 on the next page.

Of the forty-four magazines listed in Table 1, twenty-three were indexed in Reader's Guide. The Reader's Guide was consulted to find the specific diet articles in the indexed magazines from March 1973 to March 1975. A total of twenty-five diet articles met all the criteria for inclusion in this study. A list of these articles can be found in the bibliography section, page 40. Table 1 shows which magazines on the list contained at least one diet article used in this study.

The selection procedure used in this study was a definite, systematic approach that can be duplicated by other researchers. The criteria and time limits used were felt to limit the scope of the study within reasonable boundaries while allowing a sufficient number of diets to be included. Nine different popular magazines were included

Table 1

Magazines Selected from Scott's

American Girl	Ladies Home Journal**
American Home*	Life and Health
Better Homes and Garden*	McCalls**
Brides Magazine*	Modern Bride
Changing Times*	MS
Co-ed	N.Y. Times Magazine*
Consumer Bulletin*	Newsweek*
Consumer Reports*	Parents' Magazine*
Ebony*	Psychology Today*
Esquire*	Readers Digest**
Essence	Realities
Family Economic Review	Redbook**
Family Health Magazine	Seventeen**
Fitness for Living	Sexual Behavior
Glamour	Teen
Good Housekeeping**	Time*
Gourmet	Today's Health*
Hairdo and Beauty	U.S. News and World*
Harper's Bazaar**	Vogue**
House and Garden**	Young Miss
House Beautiful	Young World
Ingenue	

*Indexed in Reader's Guide

**Magazines with articles used in the study

and thirty-three authors were represented. A total of forty-four were selected and evaluated.

Limitations to the selection procedure were found. Paperbound Books-In-Print (PBIP) does not include all published paperbacks although it probably is as comprehensive as any one list. Several paperback diet books were discovered with a 1969 or later copyright date that were not listed in PBIP. It is doubtful that including these would have changed the general results of the study. However, one purpose of this study is to provide a resource for readers to use in the selection process. Not including them means that the study

does not include some of the more recent and readily available diet books. If this study were to be repeated additional books found from other sources might be included.

The major problem with the selection of articles was that a number of popular teen magazines such as Teen and Co-ed were not indexed in Reader's Guide. These magazines probably carry diet articles which are directed at teenage girls. Including these diets could have helped determine if diets designed strictly for teenage girls better meet their particular nutritional needs than do diets designed for adults.

Although minor changes might be suggested in the selection procedure used, overall, it was adequate. Inclusion of teen magazines not indexed and books from other sources than PHIP would have increased the scope of the study which would help for selection and guidance purposes. However, enough were included to allow general conclusions to be drawn and interpretations to be made. Although only 18 of 21 books (86%) were obtained and evaluated this represented a large enough percentage not to throw the study off. One hundred percent of the diet articles selected were evaluated.

After selecting and obtaining eighteen paperback books each diet was evaluated according to the Basic 4 food group guide. Table 2 on page 26 shows the results of this step. To be a well-balanced diet the day's diet should meet or nearly meet 100 percent of the servings recommended for each food group. When the diet is lacking in one or more food groups the diet is likely to be low in one or more major nutrients needed to stay healthy. As can be seen by examining the percentage in Table 1, not one of the paperback book diets met 100

Table 2
 Basic 4 Evaluation
 Diets in Paperback Books

Name of Diet	Milk %	Meat %	Fruit & Vegetable			Bread Cereal %
			vit A %	vit C %	other %	
Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution.....	25	250	100	100	100	0
Beautiful People's Diet.	0	75	150	100	200	25
Prudent Diet.....	50	125	100	100	250	75
Boston Police Diet.....	8	125	0	100	100	0
Diet Watchers Guide.....	25	200	100	100	350	50
Diet Book.....	3	300	0	100	150	25
New Diet Does It.....	25	100	100	100	300	25
New Drinking Man's Diet.	25	155	100	100	200	0
Fast-and-Easy Teenage Diet.....	33	225	100	100	225	100
It's In to be Thin.....	50	200	100	100	200	50
Eat & Reduce.....	13	50	150	100	375	0
Slimming Down.....	0	200	100	50	100	25
Ice Cream Diet.....	44	75	50	0	125	50
Lazy Lady's Easy Diet...	50	100	0	125	250	25
Miracle Diet.....	71	113	0	150	275	56
Eat, Drink, & Get Thin..	0	400	100	100	200	0
Dr. Quick Teenage Diet..	50	350	0	0	0	0
N.Y. Times Natural Foods Dieting.....	38	150	0	0	50	25
Number meeting 100% or more	0	15	11	14	17	1

percent of the standards for each food group. All but one, The Fast-and-Easy Teenage Diet is low in more than one food group. In fact, thirteen of the eighteen diets (72%) met zero percent in at least one food group. This clearly indicates that these reducing diets are not well-balanced diets. It is likely that each is lacking sufficient amounts of one or more important nutrients.

The two food groups of the Basic 4 most often lacking in the diets in Table 1 are the milk group and bread and cereal group. Not one diet in the group met the standards for milk and only one diet met the bread standard. Only one diet even reached over 50 percent in the milk group and twelve were 50 percent or below in the bread group. While the meat group and fruit and vegetable groups came up short in a number of the diets they were not consistently lacking by so much as were milk and bread and cereal.

Important to note is that while the milk and bread groups generally did not meet the Basic 4, the meat and fruit and vegetable groups often went considerably over. For example, Eat, Drink, and Get Thin provided zero percent of the milk and bread while providing 400 percent of the meat needed. While it may sound good to eat extra meat for protein, it is not good to do this while eliminating other food groups. Milk and breads contain important nutrients that meats are very poor sources of. Calcium is one of these and especially important for young people. Milk and milk products are high in calcium while most other foods contain little. Unless milk is included in the diet one will probably not get enough calcium. What this means is that a diet extremely high in one food group and low in another can not be considered a well-balanced diet.

Generally, Table 1 showed all the diets to be low or lacking in one or more food groups. Many were very high in one food while low in others. This indicated that these diets are not well-balanced in providing adequate nutrients.

The findings in Table 2 should be confirmed in the RDA evaluation of the diets. Table 3 shows the results obtained when these same diets were evaluated by the RDA. For a balanced diet 100 percent of all the nutrient recommendations should be met except for Calories (Cal) which a dieter is trying to reduce and carbohydrates (CHO) and fats.

By studying Table 3 one sees that as in Table 2 not one of the diets supplied all the nutrients. As might be expected knowing that the diets were low in milk and breads, the nutrients calcium (Cal), thiamin (thi) and iron (Fe) met the RDA in less than 17% percent of the diets. Considering the low amounts of milk and breads in the diets this is not surprising. It should be noted that studies done in the 1950's and 1960' showed that the nutrients teenage girls are most often low in are calcium and iron.³⁶

Because of the safety margin provided for each nutrient in the RDA some nutritionist feel that meeting ⁶⁷ percent of the RDA will provided an adequate diet for most people. While the 67 percent may provide an adequate diet for most people it is getting close to the minimal. Anything significantly below this is an indication of a possible nutrient deficiency. Eight-nine percent of the diets were below the 67 percent mark in at least one nutrient. If thses diets

³⁶Wilson, p. 420.

Table 3. RDA Evaluation of Diets in Paperback Books

Name of Diet	Cal %	Pro %	Vit A %	Vit C %	Thi %	Ribo %	Nia %	Ca %	Fe %	CHO gms	Fat gms
Atkins' Diet Revolution..	78	224	165	304	180	108	118	34	92	48	65
Beautiful People's.....	71	110	190	500	99	57	110	14	70	170	50
Prudent Diet.....	56	158	193	266	94	125	91	50	55	158	27
Boston Police Diet.....	41	196	45	111	36	72	136	25	53	33	39
Diet Watchers Guide.....	53	196	467	351	90	136	139	67	99	123	14
Diet Book.....	67	200	65	154	60	75	118	16	79	46	54
New Diet Does It.....	36	127	105	422	67	120	49	47	49	89	24
New Drinking Man's.....	64	160	200	505	94	91	154	48	62	77	50
Fast-and-Easy Teenage....	72	252	214	232	115	152	141	66	108	149	52
It's in to be Thin.....	58	217	232	402	97	183	198	71	80	156	15
Eat & Reduce.....	32	79	126	428	79	82	66	38	42	113	15
Slimming Down.....	45	189	101	81	181	77	162	19	112	79	39
Ice Cream Diet.....	50	96	970	202	61	240	86	68	61	117	34
Lazy Lady's Easy Diet....	52	148	819	429	64	234	158	52	51	153	31
Miracle Diet.....	67	167	826	447	78	280	170	66	65	168	33
Eat, Drink, & Get Thin...	34	120	52	189	88	22	66	12	33	35	51
Quick Teenage Diet.....	56	350	47	4	38	120	101	61	81	29	39
NY Times Natural Foods...	30	104	58	9	49	61	44	31	29	19	42
Number 100% or above	0	15	12	15	3	9	11	0	2	-	-
Number 67-100%	4	18	14	17	12	15	15	3	8	-	-

were used for a considerably^e length of time a nutrient deficiency could develop.

Notice in Table 3 the wide range of percentage of the nutrients provided by many diets. For example, The Lazy Lady's Easy Diet provides only 51 percent of iron while providing 826 percent of vitamin A. This high percentage is not a sign of a good diet as long as other major nutrients are so low.

There is no RDA for either carbohydrates or fats. They were listed here in grams because they are so often talked about in diet programs. The body can normally handle a wide range of both. Fats are^e generally recommended not to make up more than about 35 percent of a day's Calories. With this guideline only the Atkins' diet may be over. Most of the diets are also ~~a~~right for carbohydrates. However, very low limits such as the Quick Teenage Diet with only 29 grams of carbohydrates is likely to result in medical problems.³⁷

To summarize the paperback diet books, none were found which met the nutritive standards for teenage girls. The Fast-and-Easy Diet and It's in to be Thin were the best all around in meeting the RDA. Both, though, were fairly low in calcium and iron. Many of the diets were well over 100 percent for some nutrients while very low for others. According to the data gathered here, following any of the diets for a considerable length of time might possibly lead to a nutrient deficiency for teenage girls.

³⁷Wilson, p.58, 441.

After the diets in paperback books were evaluated, the diets in magazine articles were handled in the same manner. Tables 4 and 5 show the results. Looking at Table 4 shows that once again not one of the diets met 100 percent of all the Basic 4 food groups. As with the paperback books the milk and breads seem the least well met. Only one diet out of twenty-six met the milk standards while three met them for the breads. The meat and fruit and vegetable groups are generally around or above 100 percent except for a few diets.

One difference between Table 2 and Table 4 is the range of percentages found in each diet. The range is less in Table 4, usually in the neighborhood of 50 to 250 percent. Although the results indicate that the diets in Table 4 will be low in some nutrients, the overall balance of the diets is better. Probably fewer nutrients will be low and by so much.

The results of evaluating the diets by the RDA can be found in Table 5. The results pretty much confirm what Table 4 suggests. No diet met 100 percent of the RDA for all nutrients. Thiamin, calcium, and iron were the nutrients most generally low in the diets as may be expected with diets low in milk and breads.

Comparing Table 4 with Table 2 indicated that the magazine diets were somewhat more balanced than the paperback book diets. Table 5 bears this out when using the 67 percent guide rather than the 100 percent. A total of six magazine diets met the 67 percent in all nutrients. They are listed in Table 6. This compares with only 2 of the paperback diets (21% to 11%). However, neither percent says much about the quality of these diets. That is, other than the diets are generally poor nutritionally for teenage girls.

Table 4
Basic 4 Evaluation - Diets in Magazines

Name of Diet	Milk %	Meat %	Fruit & Vegetable			Bread Cereal %
			vit A %	vit C %	other %	
Computer Diet.....	38	175	100	100	100	50
Dr. Atkins' 14-Day Diet...	50	175	0	50	50	0
New 7-Day Crash Diet.....	25	75	100	100	100	75
Baz. 9-Day Wonder Diet....	25	50	100	100	200	75
Easy-to-Follow Diet.....	50	100	100	100	150	50
GH New 7-Day Diet-Exercise	50	88	100	100	88	75
New Natural Food Reducing.	32	100	100	100	350	25
G. Hausers' New Energy....	50	150	100	100	100	100
Start to Shape Up Now.....	25	100	166	100	175	50
How to Make Dieting Work..	25	170	100	100	150	75
Anti-Inflation Diet.....	0	175	100	50	100	25
Carbo-Calorie Diet.....	50	100	167	100	125	50
No-Willpower Diet.....	50	100	200	100	175	50
Baz. Big Bargain Diet.....	75	100	100	100	300	75
Personalized Wise Women's.	0	125	100	150	250	75
Redbook's Quick & Easy Wise Woman's.....	75	130	0	100	250	75
Shape Up Now with GH.....	66	80	50	100	225	100
Dieting.....	25	225	150	150	175	25
Quick-and-Easy Diet.....	50	125	200	100	150	75
Start a Teen Diet.....	75	150	200	100	200	75
Aphrodisiacs.....	50	150	100	100	100	50
Right Diet for You.....	50	100	100	100	100	100
New Eating Plan to Lose Tic-Tac Diet.....	15	25	150	100	125	25
Whizz Diet.....	100	0	0	0	150	0
Nutritionally Sound.....	94	100	100	100	175	75
Wise Woman's Diet You Can Enjoy.....	75	75	100	100	200	75
Number meeting 100% or more.....	1	19	22	22	23	3

Table 5. RDA Evaluation of Diets in Magazines

Name of Diet	Cal %	Pro %	Vit A %	Vit C %	Thi %	Ribo %	Nia %	Ca %	Fe %	CHO gms	Fat gms
Computer Diet.....	53	270	52	280	78	137	199	52	51	107	31
Dr. Atkins' 14-Day Diet..	51	165	68	76	77	77	61	46	88	9	80
New 7-Day Crash Diet.....	35	98	45	336	75	87	65	39	36	101	17
Baz. 9-Day Wonder Diet...	48	103	670	368	62	72	69	63	82	136	33
East-to-Follow Diet.....	51	174	336	335	83	147	99	79	67	118	28
GH New 7-Day Diet.....	61	124	1010	205	83	302	94	85	31	140	33
New Natural Food.....	38	125	107	431	66	109	49	48	50	92	24
G. Hauser's New Energy...	65	179	106	352	130	134	134	71	64	164	41
Start to Shape Up now....	47	124	94	458	63	101	75	54	66	119	34
How to Make Dieting Work.	57	144	373	485	106	124	69	104	66	120	42
Anti-Inflation Diet.....	47	192	111	85	178	74	157	21	122	81	45
Carbo-Calorie Diet.....	47	140	240	220	66	95	77	47	53	111	33
No-Willpower Diet.....	44	129	128	312	122	81	88	34	57	96	34
Baz. Big Bargain Diet....	49	163	69	520	88	150	134	80	47	144	15
Personalized Wise Women's Redbook's Quick & Easy Wise Woman's.....	37	102	935	540	73	225	104	26	65	94	28
Shape Up Now with GH.....	51	160	87	365	81	124	102	88	66	130	29
Dieting.....	63	144	1300	234	100	163	94	61	82	153	41
Quick and Easy Diet.....	90	240	159	410	161	138	153	73	110	149	82
Start a Teen Diet.....	73	220	350	389	267	131	100	90	138	88	54
Aphrodisiac.....	54	186	470	405	96	152	103	93	91	106	38
Right Diet for You.....	74	122	119	480	75	75	82	53	38	167	58
New Eating Plan	78	205	309	744	248	197	169	71	112	131	51
Tic-Tac Diet.....	35	119	190	360	50	76	69	24	53	69	26
Whizz Diet.....	29	71	26	144	41	126	15	98	16	87	14
Nutritionally Sound.....	59	200	140	379	98	172	156	34	60	157	27
Wise Woman's Diet.....	61	146	485	326	123	139	93	97	72	146	48
Number 100% or above	0	24	19	24	9	18	11	1	4	-	-
Number 67-100%	4	26	23	26	20	26	22	11	9	-	-

Only one paperback diet shows carbohydrates and fats to be of questionable amounts. Nine grams of carbohydrates is too low as in the Atkins' diet.

Overall, the diets found in magazines did slightly better nutritionally than did paperback book diets. Still, the majority did not meet the standards.

Table 6

Magazine Diets Meeting 67% of the RDA for all Nutrients

-
- Easy-to-Follow Diet
 - Dieting
 - Quick-and-Easy Diet
 - Start a Teen Diet
 - Right Diet for You
 - Wise Women's Diet

Made predictions of outcome for this study, p. 5, but did not specifically mention that those predictions were rejected, based on the data.

SUMMARY

This study indicated clearly that diets found in these two sources are nutritionally unsound for teenage girls using the Basic 4 and RDA for standards. Not one of the diets meet 100 percent of the Basic 4 or the RDA. When 67 percent of the RDA were used only 8 of the 44 diets met this. This means 82 percent were significantly lacking in at least one major nutrient. The diets were most lacking in the two nutrients, calcium and iron, that teenage girls have been shown to be low in.

For the media specialist this means careful consideration should be given the use of these materials. If the media collection uses reliability and accuracy of nonfiction materials as one criteria for inclusion most paperback diets will not be found there. On the basis of the results in this study none of diet books would be recommended. However, a couple of limitations need to be pointed out.

The study used the nutritive requirements of teenage girls. These are higher especially in milk than are the requirements for adults. Therefore, some of the better diets may be found to be sufficient for adults.

The study also did not evaluate the diets for accurate information other than the Basic 4 and RDA. Therefore, the total relia-

bility of any diet included can not be judged from the study. What is indicated is that when users are using these material they need to be guided in the evaluation of the contents. The media center needs to provide reference materials to make this possible.

Media specialists can learn and use the Basic 4 without too much difficulty. Using this guide they can make use of the materials the center has on diets. More important they can better guide students in their evaluation of them.

What is most clear from the study is that most diets found in paperbacks and magazines are inadequate nutritionally for teenage girls. Students who often use these materials in the media center need to be aware of this.

APPENDIX A
Table 7. Sample Diet Evaluation Form

NAME OF DIET:

Typical Day's Food Intake	BASIC 4						RDA										
	Milk	Meat	Fruit & Vegetable		Bread		Cal	Pro	Vit A	Vit C	Thi	Ribo	Nia	Ca	Fe	CHO	Fat
			V.A	V.C	other	Cereal											
Line A: Totals																	
Line B: Recom. Amts	4	2	1	1	2	4	2100	48	4000	45	1.1	1.4	14	1200	18	--	--
Line C: %																	

APPENDIX B

Table 8. Diet Evaluation Form Filled out with New 7-Day Crash Diet

NAME OF DIET: New 7-Day Crash Diet, by Lucianna Avedon, Ladies Home Journal, Aug. 73, p.32

Typical Day's Food Intake	BASIC 4						RDA										
	Milk	Meat	Fruit & Vegetable			Bread Cereal	Cal	Pro	Vit A	Vit C	Thi	Ribo	Nia	Ca	Fe	CHO	Fat
			V.A	V. C	Other												
4 oz orange j.				1			55	1	250	1.2	.11	.04	.5	17	.25	13	.5
2 sl toast						2	150	4	t	t	.14	.12	1.4	48	1.4	28	2
4 oz skim milk	½						45	4.5	5	1	.05	.22	.1	148	.05	6	t
1 egg		½					80	6	590	0	.05	.15	t	27	1.1	t	6
1 sl toast						1	75	2	t	t	.07	.06	.7	24	.7	14	1
¼ c. applesauce				½			58	t	25	.1	.01	.01	.03	3	.4	15	1
4 oz skim milk	½						45	4.5	5	1	.05	.22	.1	148	.05	6	t
1 lamb chop		1					140	2	655	19	.12	.13	1.0	15	.45	3	t
1 ser. asparagus			1				15	21	--	--	.11	.20	4.5	9	1.5	0	6
¼ c. strawberries				½			11	t	23	22	.01	.03	.25	8	.4	3	1
4 oz orange j,				1			55	1	250	62	.11	.04	.5	17	.3	1	
Line A: Totals	1	1½	1	1	2	3	729	47	1803	168	.83	1.22	9.08	464	6.55	101	17
Line B: Recom. Amt	4	2	1	1	2	4	2100	48	4000	45	1.1	1.4	14	1200	18	--	---
Line C: %	25%	75%	100%	100%	100%	75%	35%	98%	45%	336%	75%	87%	65%	39%	36%		

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