

**MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF AN 'IDEAL' BODY IMAGE: CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUNG
WOMEN'S BODY SATISFACTION AND SELF-ESTEEM**

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Running head: MEDIA AND BODY SATISFACTION

Media's Portrayal of an 'Ideal' Body Image: Consequences for Young Women's
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Abstract

Media's portrayal of women, particularly body size and shape, has drastically changed over the past decades, which may be a contributing factor in lower body satisfaction and self-esteem in adolescent females. This study examines the relationship between mass media's portrayal of an ideal body image and the ratings of young adolescent and older adolescent females' body satisfaction and self-esteem. The motivation used for reading magazines was examined as well as a number of beauty and fashion magazines read. A total of 49 young adolescent females (ages 10-14) and 71 older adolescent females (ages 18-22) were given four questionnaires: demographics questionnaire, reading motivations questionnaire, Body Parts Satisfaction Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Results suggest that those who reported using self-evaluation as a reading motivation had lower scores on self-reports of body satisfaction and self-esteem. Young adolescent females do not use self-evaluation as a reading motivation more often than older adolescent females. However, older adolescent females reported using self-improvement more often. Young adolescent females reported higher satisfaction with body image and more self-esteem than older adolescent females. These results suggest that young adolescents do not have lower body satisfaction and self-esteem than older adolescents. However, using self-evaluation to read beauty and fashion magazines can negatively effect body satisfaction and self-esteem. This information can help adolescents learn how to use media for comparison in a way that does not effect body satisfaction or self-esteem. It can also influence the media to be concerned about the effects on the current ideal image of adolescents' body satisfaction.

Media's Portrayal of an 'Ideal' Body Image: Consequences for Young Women's Body Satisfaction and Self-Esteem

In almost every beauty and fashion magazine, there are models representing an ideal image for women. These models have what the media has defined as the 'perfect' body type, which is at the present time a young, thin, tall, fit, radiantly healthy, white woman. Today, models are on average 5'9" and weigh 117 pounds, whereas average women are 5'3" and weigh 164 pounds (Wiseman, et al., 2005). Many believe that the media's portrayal of what is desirable and normal may be a contributing factor in the development of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in women (Tiggemann, 2005).

Only recently have magazines included advertisements for plus-size women. The Dove brand is beginning to use average size people for their advertisements rather than unrealistic models. In recent ads, they have eliminated the traditional models and are using women of all ages and looks to sell their products. They have even started the Dove Self-Esteem Fund to help adolescents deal with the pressures of the media's portrayal of women. The fund is educating young girls on a broader definition of beauty (Campaign for Real Beauty, n.d.). However, many people are having difficulty accepting various female physiques in magazines because many women do not want to see someone that looks like them in a magazine (Sims, 2005). They want to be able to fantasize about what they could look like in the future. As a result, changes in advertisements move slowly.

Media's portrayal of women, particularly body size and shape, has drastically changed over the past decades. America is increasing the trend toward a thin ideal for women as evidenced by an increase in the gap in body weight between models and average women (Flegal, et al., 2004). For example, as reported by Wiseman et al. (2005), the average model in the

1950's was within 5% of the size of the average American woman. Presently, approximately two-thirds of Americans are overweight and the average model is 15% to 20% below what would be considered a healthy weight for her height. Consequently, most fashion models are thinner than about 98 percent of average women (Wiseman, et al.). Because the media's portrayal of a woman's body type is becoming thinner, women and in particular adolescent girls, are becoming more dissatisfied with their own bodies (Levine, 1996).

Adolescents are affected by unrealistic models because adolescents are among the most frequent users of many forms of mass media, particularly specialized magazines, where these models can be found in many forms of advertisements (Arnett, 1995). For many young women, media is the primary source of information for developing an adolescent's identity and for promoting gender socialization (Arnett, 1995). Adolescents are especially vulnerable to these images because it is a time when they are going through many physical changes in their life due to puberty. Pubertal changes often bring on feelings of body dissatisfaction due to the fact that these changes can result in adolescent females being further from the thin sociocultural standard of beauty for women (Magdala, 2002).

Nearly half of the space of most magazines for adolescent girls is devoted to advertisements, mostly for fashion and beauty products (Arnett, 1995). Fashion and beauty is also a prominent topic of the articles in these magazines (Thomsen, et al., 2002). The advertisements depict models who are flawless. However, these flawless photographs of women have almost always been "touched-up" by computers. Models do not really look like the images shown in magazines because computers change the appearance of models to fit the media's ideal image with the use of retouching software (Reaves, et al., 2004). This software allows the removal of any flaws or imperfections of the skin, such as blemishes or wrinkles. It can also

slim the hips and make the legs look thinner. Therefore, media images of female beauty are unattainable for all but very few women and even the models used in the advertisements have a hard time portraying the perfect image, until they become an unrealistic and unattainable image with the aid of a computer.

Anne Becker and colleagues (2005) studied how the media creates pressures to be thin. Two separate cohorts of adult women, ages greater than or equal to eighteen years of age and residing in a traditional Fijian village, were examined to investigate differences in the prevalence rates of changes in attitudes relevant to body shape satisfaction before and after the introduction of television. The first cohort was obtained in 1989, with a sample size of 53. The second cohort was obtained in 1998, with a sample size of 50, after the introduction of television in 1995. Therefore, broadcast television was unavailable to the 1989 cohort, but 84% of the 1998 cohort accessed televised programs (Becker, et al.). Body mass index was calculated for the participants and the Nadroga Language Body Image Questionnaire was administered to measure body satisfaction levels and attitudes toward body size and shape. This questionnaire asked specific questions pertaining to feelings towards the individuals' body satisfaction. For example, the question "Are you happy/proud of your body or ashamed of it?" was used to measure body satisfaction. Participants rated the question on a 7-point scale with 1 being 'ashamed of it' and 7 being 'like it/proud of it.'

Results from Becker, et al. (2005) study indicate a significant increase in the prevalence of overweight and obese subjects between the two cohorts after the introduction of television. The percentage of women who were overweight in the 1989 cohort was 60%, which increased to 84% in the 1998 cohort. Body satisfaction levels were significantly lower in 1998 than in 1989. The mean score for the question measuring body satisfaction in the 1989 cohort was 6.0 and

decreased to 4.8 in 1998, indicating that participants were more ashamed of their body. There were also higher levels of interest in changing body shape in the 1998 cohort. For example, the question, "Would you like to change your shape?" from the Nadroga Language Body Image Questionnaire was asked to measure attitudes towards changing one's body shape. This question was also rated on a 7-point scale with 1 being 'very much' and 7 being 'never.' Mean scores for level of interest in changing body shape in 1989 was 4.5 and decreased to 3.9 in 1998, indicating that participants increased the desire to change their body shape. Although there was a small sample size, results do show a small effect on women's body satisfaction after the introduction of media such as television to the small population. The data also suggest that after the introduction to television, levels of concern about body type increased slightly. The decrease in body satisfaction could also be attributed to the increase in obesity. Using a larger sample size may have shown a greater effect size.

The idea that media images can affect young women's body satisfaction and self-esteem can be explained by social comparison theory. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) holds that people have a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison with the opinions and abilities of others. A person's opinions and evaluations of their own abilities strongly influence behavior. Festinger provides an example to better understand his theory of social comparisons. A poet will evaluate his ability to write poetry based on other people's opinions of his ability to write poetry. In other situations in which the criterion for evaluating one's ability is obvious and distinctive, a person's evaluation depends more on the actual comparison of one's performance with the performance of others. For example, a person evaluating his ability to run will compare his running time to that of another person's running time.

Although Festinger (1954) discussed mainly evaluations of physical abilities, his theory can be applied to the evaluation of body types and appearances. A person's behavior is affected by both opinions and beliefs about their current situation and by the evaluation of their abilities (Festinger, 1954). "The holding of incorrect opinions and/or inaccurate appraisals of one's abilities can be punishing or even fatal in many situations" (Festinger, 1954, p. 117). Therefore, if a young woman already has a negative opinion about her body, looking at fashion magazines may have a negative effect on her self-esteem as well. According to Festinger (1954), people also choose individuals who are most similar to themselves for comparison, rather than choosing an individual who is very different. Furthermore, people will evaluate the correctness or incorrectness of an opinion by comparison with others whose opinions are similar to their own opinion. Young women can easily compare themselves to models in fashion and beauty magazines because the media finds models who are able to relate to their young readers, with hopes of selling their products (Milkie, 1999).

Other studies have also been conducted based on the social comparison theory. Martin and Kennedy (1993) found that female pre-adolescents and adolescents compare their physical attractiveness with that of models in ads. In their study, they investigated females in Grades 4, 8, and 12. Females were given a questionnaire along with full color ads containing highly attractive models, moderately attractive models, and ones containing no models. Participants were asked to rate the models based on a 7-point attractiveness scale from "very ordinary looking" to "very beautiful" (Martin & Kennedy, 1993, p. 520). Self-esteem and self-perception of physical attractiveness sub-scales from "The Self-Perception Profile for Children" (Harter, 1985) or "The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents" (Harter, 1988) were also completed after viewing the advertisements. In addition, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire

measuring the tendency to compare to models in advertisements. Martin and Kennedy's results suggest that the tendency of female pre-adolescents and adolescents to compare themselves to models in advertisements increases with age. They also found that the tendency to do so is greater for those with lower self-perceptions of physical attractiveness.

In a similar study with similar results to Martin and Kennedy's study, Richins (1991) examined whether or not female college students compare themselves to models in advertisements. Richins also investigated the effects of highly attractive models in beauty and fashion magazines on female college student's satisfaction with their own body image. Participants were given a survey on advertising. The first part of the survey measured attitudes towards advertisements for clothing and cosmetic products. The second part assessed whether the females consciously compare themselves with models featured in the ads. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was administered along with questions assessing the participants' overall satisfaction with their appearance. Richins found that more than 50 percent of participants compare themselves with models in advertisements. Results also suggest that these comparisons may result in changes in self-perceptions of physical attractiveness or body image.

There are two different types of social comparisons; an upward comparison and a downward comparison, according to Festinger (1954). An upward social comparison is when a person compares themselves to others who are better than them on an attribute (i.e. more intelligent). A downward social comparison is when a person compares themselves to someone who is worse than them on an attribute. When comparing oneself with models in fashion and beauty magazines, a young woman is most likely to use an upward social comparison because they believe the model is better looking.

A study conducted by Hornstein, et al. (1968) showed how social comparisons can influence behavior. In the study, a total of 105 wallets were dropped which contained two dollars in cash, a check, and an identification card with the name, address, and telephone number of the wallet's owner. A letter was wrapped around the wallets and was addressed to the owner of the wallet. The letter was written by someone who had previously found the wallet and described their feelings about returning the wallet. The letter had two different variations. Some letters were composed by an articulate English-speaker, which most resembled the person picking up the wallet. The other letter was written by someone less familiar with English. Letters had a positive tone, neutral tone, or a negative tone. According to Hornstein, et al., all the letters began in the same manner:

"I found your wallet which I am returning. Everything is here just as I found it."

This was the neutral letter. The positive and negative letters continued by discussing the previous finder's feelings about finding and returning the wallet (Hornstein, et al., 1968). The positive letter was as follows:

"I must say that it has been a pleasure to be able to help somebody in the small things that make life nicer. It's really been no problem at all and I'm glad to be able to help."

The negative tone letter said:

"I must say that taking responsibility for the wallet and having to return it has been a great inconvenience. I was quite annoyed at having to bother with the whole problem of returning it. I hope you appreciate the efforts that I have gone through."

Results from the study suggest that people returned the wallet more often when the previous finder was characterized as being similar to the participant. The wallet was only returned 30 percent when the letter was written by a non-native speaker and was positive or neutral. In

contrast, the letter was returned 65 percent of the time when the previous finder was a native speaker and the letter was positive or neutral. However, letters from a native speaker with a negative tone were returned only 10 percent of the time. If the person finds a wallet that they can relate to or feel similar to the owner, they will be more motivated to return it to that person. Positive, negative, and neutral letters reported by the non-native speaker had no significant effect on the return rate. The percentage of returns with a neutral letter from a non-native speaker was 27%, a positive letter from a non-native speaker was 33%, and a negative letter from a non-native speaker was 40%.

Many people question a young woman's reasons for comparing herself to the media's portrayal of a woman in beauty and fashion magazines. A number of studies have looked at the possible motives for why young women compare themselves to the models portrayed in these magazines. Gentry and colleagues (1996) suggest that female pre-adolescents and adolescents may compare themselves to models in ads for any one (or a combination) of three motives: self-evaluation, self-improvement, or self-enhancement.

Self-evaluation, originally proposed by Festinger (1954), is the judgment of value, worth, or appropriateness of one's abilities, opinions, and personal traits. Many female pre-adolescents and adolescents consider the models in fashion and beauty magazines to be superior to them in terms of physical attractiveness. Therefore, these females typically use an upward social comparison, which is believed to produce negative effects. Self-improvement is an individual's attempt to learn how to improve or to be inspired to improve something about them self. When using the self-improvement motive, females may use either an upward or downward comparison. The type of comparison used depends on whether the female perceives the comparison to be threatening or if she perceives it to be inspiring. Self-enhancement is an individual's biased

attempt to maintain positive views of them self to protect or enhance self-esteem. Females most likely use a downward comparison because the self-enhancement motive is most useful in making one feel better about oneself or one's circumstances (Wood and Taylor, 1991). It is believed that when using self-enhancement as a motive for social comparisons, females' self-esteem and self-perceptions temporarily improve.

An experiment conducted by Martin and Gentry (1997) suggest that motives do play an important role on the differential effects for changes in self-perceptions of physical attractiveness, body image, and self-esteem. Martin and Gentry hypothesized that young girls compare their physical attractiveness with that of advertising models and depending on the motive used for social comparison, their self-perceptions and self-esteem may be affected. To test their hypothesis, the researchers used female pre-adolescents and adolescents in grades four (mean age of 9.8), six (mean age of 11.9), and eight (mean age of 13.8). They created ads by using pictures from magazines such as Seventeen, Sassy, Teen, and YM. The ads created were kept simple and showed either partial or full body photos of models. The motivations for comparisons were manipulated with instructions given before the exposure to the ads. Martin and Gentry manipulated the girls' motives by showing the participants a drawing of a girl looking at an advertisement in a magazine. They were also told a story about how the girl compared herself with a model in an ad for a particular motive. After the participants heard the story, they viewed the ads created by the researchers and were asked to view themselves like the girl in the story had viewed the ads.

Martin and Gentry's (1997) results showed that out of all the participants who self-evaluated for comparison, self-perceptions of physical attractiveness and self-esteem were lowered. Subjects who used the motives self-improvement or self-enhancement for comparison

had higher self-perceptions of physical attractiveness and a short-term gain in self-esteem and self-confidence. They hypothesize that this occurs as a result of the reader fantasizing about becoming her "ideal" self and experiences the belief that it is possible.

Another study conducted by Pinhas and colleagues (1999) examined changes in women's mood states after looking at pictures of models in fashion magazines. For this study, 118 female university students completed the Eating Disorder Inventory, which measures psychological features of eating disorders, and the Profile of Mood States. The participants also completed the Body Parts Satisfaction Scale that measures satisfaction with 24 body parts and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. A week later, half of the students viewed a series of slides containing full body images of women models taken from fashion magazines. The other half of students viewed images without people in them, such as cars. After viewing the photographs, the participants were asked to complete the Profile of Mood States and the Body Parts Satisfaction Scale once again. Results indicate that women feel depressed moods after looking at images of the thin ideal. The women also felt more anger after looking at the images of the models.

A meta-analytic review was performed by Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2001) on the effects of experimental manipulations of the thin beauty ideal, portrayed in the media, on female body image. They hypothesized that females younger than 19 would be more susceptible to thin images and that larger doses of exposure to these images would have a more negative effect. The researchers collected data from 25 studies to examine the main effect of mass media images on the ideal body type. Results from the meta-analytic review suggest that women not yet in college are more adversely affected by the presentation of thin media stimuli than people aged 19 and over. After viewing media images of thin models, body satisfaction for females was significantly more negative than after viewing other non-model images such as cars or houses.

Results also showed that as the number of stimuli presented expands, women are less affected by thin media images.

Some believe there are intervening factors that should be considered when examining the relationship between mass media exposure and body satisfaction levels. For example, Levine and Smolak (1996) argue that exposure to magazine images of slender models does not have an immediate negative effect on the body image of young women unless they are already sensitive or anxious about their body shape because of pre-existing eating-disordered attitudes. Based on this idea, Thomsen, McCoy, and Williams (2002) evaluated personal motivations related to women's readership of beauty and fashion magazines and which motivations were predictive of women's anorexic risk. These researchers studied 536 college women, ages ranging from 18 to 26 years old, to determine links between motivations, reading frequency of fashion magazines, and anorexic risk.

Thomsen, et al. (2002) developed 17 statements that reflected possible reading motivations for beauty and fashion magazines. The reading motivations examined in this study were based on the desire to lose weight, be popular, improve themselves and their interpersonal relationships, and be entertained. Questionnaires measuring reading frequency were administered, along with the reading motivations questionnaire. Participants also completed the Mizes Anorexic Cognitions Scale (MACS), which measures the existence of eating-disordered thinking. Thomsen, et al. found that women, whose reading motivation was to improve themselves, had higher levels of reading frequency of beauty and fashion magazines. Women had lower levels of reading frequency when their preferred motivation was to be entertained. They also found that anorexic potential was greatest when the motivation to lose weight is present and, to a lesser extent, by the desire to be more popular.

Additional studies have looked at the relationship between reading fashion magazines and the use of dieting methods and the development of eating disorders. Thomsen, Weber, and Brown (2002) examined the association between reading frequency and the use of pathogenic dieting methods, such as taking diet pills and restricting calories. These researchers collected data by means of a self-report survey administered to 502 high school females. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency of reading beauty and fashion magazines. Participants were placed into three different groups depending on the reading frequency. Frequent readers are those who read once a month or more. Moderate readers are those who read two to eleven times a year, and those who read once a year or less were considered infrequent readers. Participants were also asked to indicate if they have in the past or present used any of the dieting methods.

Thomsen, et al. (2002) found a positive correlation between reading frequency and the frequency with which the participants used restricting calories as a dieting method. Of those who restrict calories almost always, 53.8% were frequent readers of fashion and beauty magazines and 46.2% were moderate readers. A positive correlation was also found between reading frequency and the frequency of participants who used diet pills, such as appetite control pills or weight loss pills. Of those who take diet pills as a dieting method almost always, 76.9% were frequent readers and only 23.1% were moderate readers. The participants who indicated that they were infrequent readers, 0% used diet pills or restricting calories as a dieting method.

This study will attempt to determine the relationship between mass media, particularly fashion and beauty magazines, and young adolescent and older adolescent females' body satisfaction and self-esteem. This study will also determine which motivations were most likely to be used among young adolescent females as opposed to older adolescent females when reading these magazines. It is also suggested that when using self-evaluation as a motivation,

levels of body satisfaction and self-esteem decrease. When using self-improvement and self-enhancement, levels of body satisfaction and self-esteem increase. To address these issues, three hypotheses have been formulated. The more frequently women read beauty and fashion magazines per month, lower amounts of self-esteem and body satisfaction will be reported. Young adolescents will report lower feelings of body satisfaction and lower self-esteem than older adolescent females. Young adolescent females will also report using self-evaluation as a reading motivation more often; where as older adolescent females will more likely report using self-improvement and self-enhancement for comparison.

Method

Participants

A sample of young adolescent female participants from fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, with chronological ages ranging from 10 to 14 years old was recruited from a middle school and junior high school located in central Illinois. Letters were sent home to all the female students in this school who were enrolled in grades five, six, seven, and eight.

A random sample of older adolescent females, ages ranging from 18 to 22, was also examined in the study. Women in this age group were obtained through an email sent to randomly selected female undergraduate students from a university located in rural Midwestern community.

The total sample for the study consisted of 49 young adolescent females, solicited from 200 possible middle school students (25%), and 71 college age adolescent females participated out of 300 emails sent (23.6%). The total number of participants was 120.

Materials

To examine the effects of media, specifically fashion and beauty magazines, on body satisfaction, a survey was used asking the participants to identify any fashion and beauty magazines that they have read in the past year from a list of beauty and fashion magazines (see Appendix A). Participants also indicated how many times they have read the selected magazines in the past year and in the past month, along with information about subscriptions and the magazine. The magazine list included any magazine with a primary focus on beauty tips and products, current fashion and clothing styles, cosmetic use, health care, and feminine hygiene issues.

The Body Shape Questionnaire (Cooper et al., 1987) was used to measure ratings of body satisfaction for the participants (see Appendix B). This test determines an individual's concern about body weight and shape. The BSQ also includes questions that focus on other important body image symptoms, such as distressing preoccupation with weight and shape, embarrassment in public and avoidance of activity, and excessive feelings of fatness after eating (Rosen et al., 1996). The BSQ is a self-report instrument and has a total of 34 questions all of which have been derived by conducting interviews with various groups of women including patients with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Higher scores on the BSQ indicate higher levels of body satisfaction. The reliability coefficient for this questionnaire is .88 (Rosen et al., 1996).

Studies on the Body Shape Questionnaire reveal that this questionnaire is strongly correlated to the Body Dysmorphic Disorder Examination (BDDE; Rosen, et al. 1995), which measures feelings of shame and embarrassment about appearance (Rosen, et al., 1996). In addition, positive correlations were shown between the BSQ and Appearance Evaluation, Appearance Orientation, and Body Areas Satisfaction, subscales of the MBSRQ. These

correlations indicate that negative body image attitudes expressed on the BSQ are related to other types of negative body image symptoms, including concerns about nonweight related appearance features (Rosen, et al.). Therefore, based on these studies, the Body Shape Questionnaire is a reliable and valid measure of body image.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) was used to measure levels of self-esteem. The RSES consists of ten items and participants rated each item from strongly agree to strongly disagree (see Appendix C). Higher scores on the RSES indicate higher levels of self-esteem. Robins et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study in which the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, along with the Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale, was administered to 508 undergraduate students. Over four years, results from this study showed that the mean reliability estimate was .88. Previous studies have reported reliability for the RSES ranging from .72 to .88 (Gray-Little et al., 1997). Data collected in Robins et al. (2001) study also showed high correlations between the RSES and the Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale, ranging from .72 to .76 across the six assessments, with a median of .75. Thus, these findings support the construct validity of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, finding a strong correlation with other measures of self-esteem.

To assess reading motivations for magazines of the participants, a survey was revised from Martin and Gentry's study (2002) and, therefore, reliability and validity have not been tested. This survey includes six statements in which the participants rated each statement from 1 to 5 on how well the statements were related to them (see Appendix D). The first statement addresses self-evaluation as a reading motivation, the second statement addresses self-improvement, and there are three statements dealing with the use of self-enhancement as a reading motivation. These three statements address both upward and downward social comparisons when using self-enhancement as a reading motivation. There is also a control

group statement on this survey addressing the use of no reading motivations when reading beauty and fashion magazines.

Procedure

Participants completed the four questionnaires and scales: the demographics questionnaire, the reading motivations questionnaire, the Body Shape Questionnaire, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Following the completion of the questionnaire, an explanation of the purpose of the study was given to the participants. A contact number was also given if any questions pertaining to the study arise.

Young adolescent participants under the age of 18 were required to obtain a parent's signature on a permission slip before participating in the study, as well as sign an independent consent form. The participants, in fifth through eighth grade, completed the study while in school. The students who brought back a permission slip were sent to the cafeteria during their study hall class, where the survey was administered by the researcher and principal. The cafeteria was monitored to assure students were working individually so as to ensure complete confidentiality for the participants and to assist any individuals who may have questions about the survey.

The sample of older adolescent females was obtained with the use of an online survey at a university in the Midwest. The same survey that was administered to the young females was put into a survey online for the participants to complete through the internet. The survey was made available online through surveyz.com and was emailed to a random sample of female students. College age students gave informed consent by proceeding with the online survey after receiving the email. Participants were debriefed through an email sent to them upon completing

the survey. The email included contact numbers to call if they needed more information about body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

Scores from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Body Shape Questionnaire were summed and averaged, among the young adolescent group of females and the older adolescent females group. Scores from the reading motivations survey were also summed and mean scores were calculated for each motivation. To ascertain whether there are significant differences between the scores, t-tests and correlations were performed.

Results

The mean age for the young adolescent group was 11.39 years old and 20.35 years old for the older adolescent group. Percentages, shown in Figure 1, were calculated to show the number of beauty and fashion magazines read by the two adolescent groups in the past year. College age students read fashion magazines more frequently. Forty-five percent of older adolescent participants read them every month, compared to fourteen percent of younger adolescents. Thirty-two percent of younger adolescents reported reading fewer than two magazines a year, compared to only eight percent of college age participants. Mean scores were calculated for the two groups on the number of times the participants had reported reading beauty and fashion magazines in the past month. These findings were inconsistent with the findings on the number of magazines read in the past year. Results showed that young adolescents read an average of 4.69 magazines in the past month and older adolescents read an average of 9.55 magazines in the month. However, the difference between the two adolescent groups in the number of magazines read in the past month was not found to be significant after a t-test was performed, $t(118) = 0.88$, $p > .05$. This suggests that older adolescents do not read significantly more magazines a month than younger adolescents.

Scores from the Body Shape Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were summed for both groups of participants. Mean scores and standard deviations from these two questionnaires, for the young and older adolescent groups, are shown in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the younger adolescent females' mean scores from the BSQ were lower than the older adolescent females. This table also shows that the younger adolescent females' mean scores from the RSES were higher than the mean scores of the older adolescent females.

To determine whether there were significant differences between the two adolescent groups' scores on the Body Shape Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, t-tests were performed. The total difference between the young adolescent group and the older adolescent group's scores on the BSQ was found to be significant, $t(118) = 7.11, p < .05$. Significant differences between the groups of adolescents' scores on the RSES was not found, $t(118) = -1.71, p > .05$. This shows older adolescents reported more negative perceptions of their body, but no significant difference was found for self-esteem.

A second analysis was performed to determine if there was a strong negative correlation between the number of magazines read per month and levels of body satisfaction and self-esteem. Results do not show a significant correlation between the number of magazines read in a month and body satisfaction reported by all participants ($r = .06, p > .01$). In addition, a correlation between the number of magazines read in a month and self-esteem for all participants was not found to be significant ($r = .02, p > .01$).

Reading motivations were also examined using correlations and t-tests. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation for each of the three reading motivations used by younger and older adolescent females. In Table 2, mean scores indicate that younger adolescents had lower scores for self-evaluation and self-improvement, and higher scores for self-enhancement.

To ascertain whether there were significant differences between younger adolescents' scores and older adolescents' scores on reading motivations, t-tests were performed. Differences on scores between the two groups on self-evaluation was found to be significant, $t(118) = 5.56$, $p < .05$. A significant difference was also found for the use of self-improvement as a reading motivation, $t(118) = 4.55$, $p < .05$. However, a significant difference between younger and older adolescent females was not found for self-enhancement, $t(118) = -0.75$, $p > .05$.

A correlation coefficient was calculated to determine whether there was a strong negative correlation between the use of self-evaluation as a reading motivation and levels of body satisfaction and self-esteem. Results indicate a significant correlation between the self-evaluation reading motivation and body satisfaction ($r = .61$, $p < .01$). A negative correlation between self-evaluation and self-esteem was also found to be significant ($r = -.49$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

The goal of the study was to examine the relationship between beauty and fashion magazines and adolescent females' body satisfaction and self-esteem. Specifically, young adolescent and older adolescent females were compared in their reading motivations for beauty and fashion magazines and how that can affect their ratings of body satisfaction and self-esteem. Several studies have looked at reading motivations of adolescent females and the use of social comparisons, but few studies have linked the use of particular reading motivations of beauty and fashion magazines to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. As suggested by Thomsen et al. (2002), it may be important to not only understand how often an adolescent reads beauty and fashion magazines, but also what reading motivations are being used when reading these magazines, as a way to assess the degree to which she may be at risk for a distorted body image. The findings of this study are an important step in linking reading motivations to body

dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. In addition, the data reveal interesting and unanticipated results compared to previous findings.

Although the results did not support the three hypotheses, there were significant findings. Results of the survey of 49 young adolescent and 71 older adolescent females did not reveal a negative correlation between the number of beauty and fashion magazines read in the past month and ratings of body satisfaction and self-esteem. The number of magazines read by older adolescents in the past month was almost twice as many as reported by the younger adolescents. However, when examining the responses to the question addressing the number of magazines read in the past year, the data was inconsistent and did not match with the number of magazines read in the past month. On average, younger adolescents reported that they had read approximately five magazines in the past month, but indicated that they had only read magazines once a month to every few months in the past year. The older adolescents indicated reading on average approximately nine magazines in the past month, but reported that they had read beauty and fashion magazines only once per month in the past year. The inconsistency in the reporting of magazines read in the past month and past year may have influenced the results and may be the reason for why a negative correlation between magazines read and body satisfaction and self-esteem was not found. It may be beneficial to have participants keep a diary to record the number of magazines they read every month as a more accurate measurement rather than relying on memory alone.

Results also did not support the second hypothesis stating that young adolescents will report lower feelings of body satisfaction and lower self-esteem than older adolescent females. Young adolescents, in fact, had significantly higher scores than older adolescents on the Body Shape Questionnaire. These results indicate that younger adolescents, ages 10 to 14, are more

satisfied with their bodies than older adolescents, ages 18 to 22. Scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, however, were not significantly different between young and older adolescent females, but younger adolescents on average, reported higher feelings of self-esteem than the older adolescents.

There are several possible explanations for these results. For instance, Martin and Kennedy (1993) found that as adolescents get older, tendencies to compare themselves to models in beauty and fashion magazines increase. Therefore, the 10 to 14 year old participants may be too young and are not affected by these magazines. Because the college age participants were older, they may have made more comparisons to models in the magazines, which can explain why older adolescents reported lower body satisfaction and lower self-esteem. These findings support other research as well. Richins (1991) suggested that college age females do compare themselves to models in magazines and that these comparisons produce changes in self-perceptions of body image.

Other possible explanations are that the sample of young adolescents did not have much access to beauty and fashion magazines and that they are not interested in these types of magazines. Many participants had reported reading magazines that were not related to fashion or beauty issues. The young adolescent sample may also have been too young and some may not have experienced pubertal changes. Because these participants may not have experienced any pubertal changes, higher reports of body satisfaction and self-esteem would be expected compared to older adolescent females who had been through puberty. Future studies should consider asking younger adolescent females whether they have experienced menarche to ascertain their pubertal status.

College age participants, on the other hand, are still maturing even as freshmen and sophomores. It would be very interesting to conduct further research on the differences between newly entered college students' and older college students' reports of body satisfaction and self-esteem and the influence of mass media. The college age participants may also have a greater access to more types of mass media, including beauty and fashion magazines.

Finally, the findings of this study did not fully support the third hypothesis. It was found that the mean older adolescent females' reported use of self-evaluation as a reading motivation was higher than the mean of younger adolescent females. This difference between the two groups of adolescents was found to be significant. In addition, there was a significant difference between the two groups for the use of self-improvement, which suggests that older adolescents also use self-improvement more often as a reading motivation than younger adolescents. This finding supports part of the third hypothesis, which states that older adolescent females will more likely report using self-improvement for comparison. For the use of self-enhancement as a reading motivation, there was no significant difference between the two groups of adolescents.

Furthermore, an important finding was a strong negative correlation between using self-evaluation as a reading motivation and reports of body satisfaction and self-esteem. This finding supports other studies, specifically Martin and Gentry's (1997) study which found that the use of self-evaluation led to lower self-perceptions of physical attractiveness and self-esteem. Older adolescent female participants' reported using self-evaluation as a motivation for reading beauty and fashion magazines more than younger adolescents and this may explain why older adolescents reported lower feelings of body satisfaction and self-esteem.

Some limitations to this study include how the surveys were sent home to the parents of the young adolescents. A copy of the survey was sent home with the students for the parents to

look over before signing a permission slip. The survey was reformatted into a condensed form and was sent home attached to a newsletter for the parents to read with the permission slip attached. In doing so, participants of the study may have seen the survey before it was administered. This potentially could have affected the results if the participants were able to discuss the contents of the survey before participating in the study. It is unknown if this potential exposure may have impacted results. Future studies should make sure that none of the participants see the surveys prior to administration.

Future research should also seek to understand more about the influence of reading motivations on body satisfaction and self-esteem. This could be very helpful in identifying adolescents who are at risk of developing a distorted body image. If motivations for why young females read beauty and fashion magazine were understood, interventions could be created to help adolescents understand more effective ways of reading these types of magazines. Additional studies need to be done to determine if using self-enhancement and self-improvement have positive effects on body satisfaction and self-esteem. If so, interventions could teach adolescent females ways of reading beauty and fashion magazines with the use of these two motivations.

Examining the difference between young college students, ages 18 to 20, and older college students, ages 20 to 22, may also be beneficial. This would help to understand whether the reports of low body satisfaction and self-esteem were due to young college students who are still maturing, or if college age females deal with low body satisfaction and self-esteem throughout their college career. If college age females have lower body satisfaction and self-esteem throughout college, ways of detecting distorted body images and more information about this topic should be made available to help females deal with this issue.

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Appendix A

Beauty and Fashion Magazines Questionnaire

Age: _____

Magazines	Have you read any of these magazines in the past year? (check all that apply)	Write the number of times you have read this magazine in the past <u>year</u> .	Write the number of times you have read this magazine in the past <u>month</u> .	Which magazines do you have a subscription to? (check all that apply)
Allure				
American Salon				
Clear				
Cosmopolitan				
Elle				
Glamour				
Lucky				
Marie Claire				
Total Image				
Vanity Fair				
Seventeen				
Teen Vogue				
Cosmo Girl				
Jane				
YM				
Elle Girl				
American Cheerleader				
Girls' Life				
Teen People				
Other - Please List				

In the past year, about how many times have you read a beauty and fashion magazine?

None One per week One per month One every few months Twice a year Once a year

0 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Body Shape Questionnaire

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
1. Has feeling bored made you worry about your shape?	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Have you been so worried about your shape that you have been feeling that you ought to diet?	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Have you thought that your thighs, hips, or bottom are too large for the rest of you?	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Have you been afraid that you might become fat (or fatter)?	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Have you worried about your flesh not being firm enough?	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Has feeling full (e.g., after eating a large meal) made you feel fat?	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Have you felt so bad about your shape that you have cried?	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Have you avoided running because your flesh might wobble?	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Has being with thin women made you feel self-conscious about your shape?	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Have you worried about your thighs spreading out when sitting down?	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Has eating even a small amount of food made you feel fat?	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
12. Have you noticed the shape of other women and felt that your own shape compared unfavourably? . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Has thinking about your shape interfered with your ability to concentrate (e.g., while watching television, reading, listening to conversations)?	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Has being naked, such as when taking a bath, made you feel fat?	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Have you avoided wearing clothes which make you particularly aware of the shape of your body?	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Have you imagined cutting off fleshy areas of your body?	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Has eating sweets, cakes, or other high calorie food made you feel fat? . .	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Have you not gone out to social occasions (e.g., parties) because you have felt bad about your shape?	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Have you felt excessively large and rounded?	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Have you felt ashamed of your body?	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Has worry about your shape made you diet?	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Have you felt happiest about your shape when your stomach has been empty (e.g., in the morning)?	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
23. Have you thought that you are the shape you are because you lack self-control?	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Have you worried about other people seeing rolls of flesh around your waist or stomach?	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Have you felt that it is not fair that other women are thinner than you? . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Have you vomited in order to feel thinner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. When in company have you worried about taking up too much room (e.g., sitting on a sofa or a bus seat)? . .	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Have you worried about your flesh being dimply?	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Has seeing your reflection (e.g., in a mirror or shop window) made you feel bad about your shape?	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Have you pinched areas of your body to see how much fat there is? . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Have you avoided situations where people could see your body (e.g., communal changing rooms or swimming baths)?	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. Have you taken laxatives in order to feel thinner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Have you been particularly self-conscious about your shape when in the company of other people?	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. Has worry about your shape made you feel you ought to exercise?	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix C

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

*Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

- | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1.) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2.) At times, I think I am no good at all.* | SA | A | D | SD |
| 3.) I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4.) I am able to do things as well as most other people. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5.) I feel I do not have much to be proud of.* | SA | A | D | SD |
| 6.) I certainly feel useless at times.* | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7.) I feel that I am a person of worth. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8.) I wish I could have more respect for myself.* | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9.) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.* | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10.) I take a positive attitude toward myself. | SA | A | D | SD |

(Items with an asterisk are reverse scored; SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3)

Appendix D

Reading Motivations Questionnaire

*Please rate each statement on the extent to which the statement represents how you read beauty and fashion magazines.

- A. When viewing models in beauty and fashion magazines, I ask myself "do I look this good?" I ask myself, "Who is better?" "Am I just as beautiful as the model?" I compare the features of my body to the features of the model's body.

Not like Me				Very Like Me
1	2	3	4	5

- B. When viewing models in beauty and fashion magazines, I often think about what it would be like if I only knew how to look as good as the models. Can I improve the way I look? Can I learn how to be just as beautiful? I wonder if I buy the products from the advertisements, will I look just as good?

Not like Me				Very Like Me
1	2	3	4	5

- C. When viewing models in beauty and fashion magazines, I believe I am better looking than the model and I love the way I look.

Not like Me				Very Like Me
1	2	3	4	5

- D. When viewing models in beauty and fashion magazines, I know these women spend many hours preparing and that is why they look so good. If I had that many hours to spend on myself, I would look just as good as them. I also believe that it is better to be myself. Some people are gorgeous, but who wants a present that is all wrapping and no gift?

Not like Me				Very Like Me
1	2	3	4	5

E. When viewing models in beauty and fashion magazines, I believe it is impossible to look as good as them. I do not think it is the way you look that matters, but the way you feel inside that matters the most.

Not like Me			Very Like Me	
1	2	3	4	5

F. When reading beauty and fashion magazines, I do not look at the advertisements. I do not even notice the models featured in these magazines.

Not like Me			Very Like Me	
1	2	3	4	5

*Please rank order the 6 statements from above with 1 being the statement that BEST describes you and 6 being the statement that LEAST describes you.

___ A

___ B

___ C

___ D

___ E

___ F

Appendix E

Consent Form

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of beauty/fashion magazines on young adolescents' and older adolescents' self-esteem and body satisfaction. The study will also determine the differences between the way young adolescents and older adolescents read beauty/fashion magazines. Participation will involve completing a survey, which will include a questionnaire addressing the amount of time spent reading beauty/fashion magazines and the names of these magazines. The survey will also include the Body Shape Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The estimated time to complete the survey is between 15 and 20 minutes. Surveys will be administered during study hall or a break in school. The results of this study may be published in scientific literature or presented at professional meetings using grouped data only.

Feelings of anxiety may be a potential risk as a result of participating in this study. Information will be provided to the participants upon completing the survey. This information will provide contact numbers and the school counselor as people to talk to if such feelings do arise from the study. You can withdraw from this study at any time for any reason without penalty. Individuals will receive a snack after completion of the survey in appreciation for taking the time to participate in the study. Individuals may also benefit from this study by understanding the effects of beauty/fashion magazines and the appropriate ways to read these types of magazines.

If there are any questions pertaining to this study, please contact the principal investigator, Sarah Hemberger at 309-298-6884. Questions may also be directed to the study advisor Dr. Ruth Kelly, Department of Psychology, WIU at 309-298-1897. Any questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 309-298-1191.

Participant _____

Date _____

Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix F

Parental Consent Form

Dear Parents:

My name is Sarah Hemberger, a former student from PORTA. I am an undergraduate student from Western Illinois University in Macomb, IL. I would like to do a study of the female students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. This study is for my honors thesis project titled, "Media's Portrayal of an 'Ideal' Body Image: Consequences for Young Women's Body Satisfaction". The purpose of this study is to determine if there are differences in the way young adolescents and older adolescents read beauty/fashion magazines. This study will also help understand the different effects beauty/fashion magazines have on young adolescents' versus older adolescents' self-esteem and body satisfaction.

To get the information needed for this study, the girls will be completing a survey during a study hall or a break in school. The questions on the survey will address the amount of time spent reading beauty/fashion magazines and what reading motivations are used when reading these magazines. The Body Shape Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale will also be included in the survey. The amount of time the girls will spend participating in the study is approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

Feelings of anxiety may be a potential risk as a result of participating in this study. Information will be provided to the participants upon completing the survey. This information will provide contact numbers and the school counselor as people to talk to if such feelings do arise from the study. The participants also have the option to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty. Data and names of participants will be kept confidential. Upon completion of the survey, snacks will be provided to the participants in appreciation for taking the time to participate in my study. Feedback on the overall results (not individual results) will also be given to those interested.

In order for your daughter to participate in my study, I will need to have your written permission. If you have any questions, please contact me at 309-298-6884. Questions may also be directed to the study advisor Dr. Ruth Kelly, Department of Psychology, WIU at 309-298-1897. Any questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 309-298-1191.

Thank you for all of your help.

Sarah Hemberger

I have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to the participation of my daughter in this study. Please keep the consent form above for your information and return the bottom signed.

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

Participant's Name _____

Would you like to receive feedback on the overall results of the study? Yes No

If you answered "Yes," please list an email address or a home address: _____

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation of BSQ and RSES Scores of Younger and Older Adolescents

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
<i>Young Adolescents (n = 49)</i>		
BSQ	62.31	26.09
RSES	22.57	5.39
<i>Older Adolescents (n = 71)</i>		
BSQ	103.80	34.63
RSES	20.89	5.14

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation of each Reading Motivation used by both Groups of Adolescents

	Self-Evaluation	Self-Improvement	Self-Behavioral Control
Young Adolescents			
M	2.10	2.45	3.37
SD	1.16	1.49	.989
Older Adolescents			
M	3.27	3.55	3.25
SD	1.11	1.16	.734

Figure 1

Percentages of Magazines Read in the Past Year by Young and Older Adolescents

