

EFFECT OF MEDIA PORTRAYED THIN IDEAL IMAGES ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS

By

Marium Javaid Bajwa

ID # 080103-013

Session (2008-2012)

BS Psychology

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of BS (Hons) in

Psychology

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

University of Management and Technology, Lahore

2012

Appendix A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

I am a final year student of Psychology undertaking a research /thesis these days. The purpose of this research is how young girls are psychologically affected through the female images that we usually watch in the media. I am quite excited about this research and think it will help us to understand the psychological processes that influence our feelings and attitudes towards ourselves and others in terms of body shapes and dress designs etc.

I need some students to participate in this research with me therefore I request you to take part in it and take answer some of the questions I ask you. Moreover I shall show you some pictures of young girls and ask you to report your observations about them. All this information will be kept confidential and it will be used for the purpose of analysis only to answer the research questions only. All that you have to do is to spare just 20 minutes to assist me in this work on either TUESDAY (12:00 pm – 3:00 pm) or on Friday (11 pm – 3pm) per your convenience.

Please sign on the bottom of this page if you agree to participate in this work voluntarily for which I shall be

very thankful to you. Moreover, If you have any questions or query about the research, please feel free to ask

here and now.

Marium Javid Bajwa

BS Psychology

Student ID:080103013

I agree to participate in the above study and will be available on time as a subject.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Abstract

Media portrayal of images of thin model girls are said to have created new socio-cultural ideals for young women, which are affecting them in ways that include internalization of thin figures. This has led to low self-esteem, negative affect and body dissatisfaction among young girls. The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of exposure to media portrayed thin ideal images on women's mood and body satisfaction. Sample comprised of 97 female undergraduate students aged 16-21 participated in the study. Scores on positive and negative level of mood, body dis/satisfaction, self-esteem and discrepancy between ideal self and actual self were worked out as a baseline data before random assignment of the subjects was made to experimental (N=49) and control conditions (N=47). After exposing the experimental group to thin-ideal images, scores of the participants was obtained afresh as a post-test on mood affect and body dis/satisfaction. BMI (Body Mass Index) was also calculated at this stage. Results suggested that exposure to thin-ideal images increased negative affect significant, whereas affect on body satisfaction could not be established. Self-esteem played a major role towards internalization of media thin-ideal images; those with low self-esteem showed increased negative mood and low body satisfaction than those with high self-esteem. Participants with discrepancy between their ideal self and actual self displayed low self-esteem and low body satisfaction. Thus low self-esteem of students were more vulnerable to mood affect and body dissatisfaction. Likewise overweight persons (with high levels of BMI) suffered from these affects more than average and thin weight persons.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Women's magazines, movies, commercials and advertisements are filled with portrayal of thin ideal images which constructs the glorification of slenderness of human body. In doing so, media blurs the boundaries between reality and glorified fiction (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Several studies indicate that media is used as a social comparison standard affecting woman's self-esteem regarding her body image. Besides, her eating patterns are also affected negatively by what she hears and watches from the media. Beauty standards and body image does not affect boys as much as on the girls, since they learn that their body should serve to attract others. (Stephens, Hill, & Hanson, 1994). Female body is projected and reflected as the object of desire in media due to which the focus of young adolescent girls is shifted from achievements and academics to appearance consciousness (Levine & Smolak, 1998). According to Heinberg and Thompson (1995), Altabe and Thompson (1996), and Fallon (1990), media portrayed of thin ideal images led to wish for thinness, body dissatisfaction, self-esteem problems, body image distortion and promote the development of eating disorders in some women. Heinberg and Thompson (1995) found that those who are exposed to appearance-related media have tendency to internalize and idealize such body images and are less satisfied with their body shape than females who were exposed to non-appearance related images.

Young women in Pakistan are now judged by her appearance and attractiveness more pervasively all the time on the media. According to Media Pakistan (2009), the growth of

television is remarkable. Up to the year 1997 there were only few TV channels in the Pakistan which increased to more than 100 local and foreign TV channels by 2009. Due to increasing influence of media in Pakistan thin-ideal images has changed the perception of local population towards body image and standards of living. The increasing influence of media has ignited feelings of body dissatisfaction. Due to massive exposure of media, adolescents have become very concerned about their body shape, beauty and attractiveness. The research studies that linked adolescents, media and body image (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996; Tiggemann, 2003) found that watching soaps, movies and music videos, as these programs promote thin ideal body images result in problematic effects including body dissatisfaction. Many popular magazines both females and male-oriented magazines tempt women to focus on their physical attributes (i.e. body shape, face features, complexion, muscle tone, bone structure, hair styling, makeup, clothing, etc). Obsession of thinness is increasing day by day because thinner female characters received more compliments and respect from men than did heavier characters in television (Fouts & Burggaff, 2000). Tiggemann and Gardiner (2000) observed the body concerns in adolescent girls in an attempt to recognize the basic motivations for their wish to be thin. It was found that 44% of adolescent girls believed they were overweight and 60% were actively trying to lose weight although majority of these girls were within normal weight range (Ozer & Brindis, 1998). Analysis of 25 studies found that the effects of exposure to thin ideal body images were negative and stronger on female adolescents, in creating social pressure compared to images of average size or plus size female adolescents models (Groesz & Levine, 2002).

Social pressure to be thin is experienced by many young girls and women especially who are overweight. They are teased about being overweight. Low self-esteem is linked with body dissatisfaction. For example Van-den-Berg, PA, Mond, J, Eisenberg, M, Ackard, D and Neumark-Sztainer, (2010) found strong and significant relationship between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem fluctuating across weight, race, and socio economic status. They found that body dissatisfaction was significant in overweight girls as well as those who were thin. Women who were less satisfied with their physical appearance had a lower self-image and a lower self-esteem as compared to women who were satisfied with their physical appearance.

Body Image

Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) defined body image as a person's perception, feelings and thoughts about their body; head to toe. The way a person perceives their body is how they perceive themselves. The body image being multidimensional consists of cognitive (beliefs and self-statements about the one's body) and emotional dimensions (body related comfortable or uncomfortable experiences). Body image is a subjective experience; it depends on how the individual see and interprets one self and the way a person feels about his or her body, feelings from facial features to body size (Hinds, 2002). Body image related issues and problems leading to the feelings of dissatisfaction. Body image problems and issues seems to be a combination of psychological, physical, and social factors. However, Davis (1999) states that body image is not just how the body is like but how one feels it and also what one believes others see as well. Moreover, body image fluctuates constantly and is shaped by physical sensations, perceptions, emotions and can change in relation to mood, physical and societal experiences, life

circumstances etc. involving pleasure or pain. The image of one's body is considered a reflection on the self. Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) explained that the idea of having a body image that is beautiful fits society's image of the ideal body. It enforces "what is beautiful is good" stereotype. Furthermore, those who are beautiful or attractive are viewed as being happier, smarter, active, more sociable, more interesting, and even more successful. In other words, all the positive qualities are attributed to beautiful and smart person.

Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) found that watching television could change a person's body image by influencing them to think about their weight, attractiveness, or appearance. Grogan (1999) concluded from several studies that body image is influenced by many factors such as family, friends, teacher, peer and society and as a person gets older the influences on body image change and may become stronger or weaker, thus creating flux in body image over the life-span. Cash, Ancis, and Strachan (1997) found that the negative feelings that some women have about their bodies are only minor annoyances, but for other women these can cause great distress that interferes with their everyday life. When a negative body image gets severe, it may contribute to several disorder, including body dysmorphic disorder, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia nervosa. A negative body image could also lead to anxiety, depression and lowered self-esteem. sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction.

Body Mass Index

In the UK, BMI is also known as Quetelet's index, considered as the most widely used measure for calculating healthy and unhealthiness of a person (Zaninotto et al., 2006). BMI is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by squared height in meters. The normal range of

BMI is considered as 20–25. Persons with BMI of 25–30 may be classified as overweight and those over 30 as obese. BMI has been found as a major factor to predict the increased body image concerns among college-aged females. Even adolescents whose BMI are in normal range are dissatisfied with their bodies and still have a strong desire to lose weight (Frederick et al., 2007). In order to check the BMI contribution towards body dissatisfaction, Cash, Jakatdar and Williams (2004) found that increasing levels of BMI were related to a poorer body image/quality of life among females, Tiggemann (2003) used BMI as a moderator variable between internalization of thin ideal images, eating disorders and body dissatisfaction and found that there is a significant relationship among these variables. Zain-Ul-Abideen, Farooq, Latif and Khan (2010), conducted study on the females of Lahore and found that there is a positive relationship between the participants' BMI and body dissatisfaction. Hence increased BMI results into increased body dissatisfaction.

Some Theoretical Perspectives

There are some theories which describe how media portrayed make people vulnerable to thin-ideal images.

Self-Discrepancy Theory.

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) proposes that emotional vulnerabilities in peoples result from discrepancies in their patterns of beliefs about themselves. This theory constructs self into three domains: an actual self (what person in reality is), an ideal self (the person one would ideally like to be) and an ought self (attributes the person believes one should possess). Individuals are motivated to match their perceived actual self with an ideal self and

an ought self. Higgins proposes that a discrepancy between the actual and ideal/ought selves leads to anxiety, discomfort and body dissatisfaction. Media images is conceptualized as part of the range of influences that can mold the ideal self, along with the influence of romantic partners, peers, parents, and other significant others in the person's social world (Cash and Szymanski, 1995; Tantleff-Dunn and Thompson, 1995). Marika Tiggemann and Barbara Pennington (1990) administered questionnaires to undergraduate women that contained drawing of different body shapes. Participants were asked to mention the figure that match most closely to their current figure, the one they want to look like, and the one that they thought would be most attractive and appealing to the opposite sex. Most of the the women rated their actual figure as significantly larger than their ideal figure and the figure that they thought would be most attractive to men. This shows that there was discrepancy in size/shape between how women perceive themselves and how they would ideally want to look like. The main focus of self-discrepancy theory is the emotional reaction caused by lack of match between a person's perceived actual self. However, some studies have looked at body dissatisfaction in relation to self discrepancy framework and have suggested that media images may form some part of the information that is used to formulate the ideal self in relation to appearance, and that lack of match with this ideal may cause distress and feelings of discomfort. Altabe and Thompson (1996) have shown that media images can produce emotional reactions in people with greater perceived discrepancies between actual and ideal body image characteristics. The actual-ideal discrepancies are correlated with body dissatisfaction as well as eating disorder symptoms (Forston & Stanton, 1992), and that women with high levels of body image self-discrepancy are most likely to engage in social comparison

with media images (Bessenoff, 2006). Self-discrepancy theory is useful in helping us to understand how and why particular body-related and body focused media images may activate emotional reactions such as distress, discomfort and body concerns, and how this in some cases lead to appearance-fixing behaviors to try to repair the perceived difference between people's perceived current bodies and their ideals.

Self-Schema Theory.

Self-schema theory was developed by Markus in 1977 and is a kind of cognition in one's mind that makes him/ her distinctive from others and forms a sense of "me." People develop their sense of self by observing and reflecting their own behaviors, observing reactions of others to their behaviors and through processing social information in general as to what aspects of the self are most valued. According to this theory people who were schematic for appearance would be particularly sensitive to body-related media messages (Markus *et al.*, 1987) and are more likely to internalize the slender body as ideal.

According to self-schema theory when body image can become a central and most important defining feature of self-concept for some people, they become extremely sensitive to additional incoming information about weight, shape, and size. Cash and Labarge's (1996), Appearance Schema Inventory (ASI) enables researchers to assess the degree of centrality of appearance to people's self-concepts, including items such as "What I look like is an important part of who I am." People who are high on appearance schematicity have been found to be particularly sensitive to media imagery relating to the body. Persons are more negatively

affected by exposure to appearance-related media images than those lower in this trait (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002).

Social Comparison Theory

Leon Festinger (1954) contented that individuals have psychological tendency to rate and evaluate themselves in comparisons with others. Such comparison-based evaluations and ratings increase with the perception of similarity and closeness. When one downwardly compares, or compares oneself to those seen or perceived as inferior, one exhibits heightened self-esteem and decreased anger (Festinger, 1954). However, when one upwardly compares, or compares oneself to those seen as being superior, results in increased depression and anger, as well as a decrease in feelings of self-worth. Because celebrities' images are easily visible to the public, they become social references for many individuals. For the average person, an upward comparison would be a comparison of one's self with a highly thin and attractive media-depicted model, that's why many women with eating disorders express drive for thinness (Cattarin, 2000). This theory helps to explain a likely correlation and link between media exposure and its possible effects on one's body image and drive for thinness. If people see individuals on television or in magazines that are having qualities that are highly discrepant from their own self-image, they are increasingly motivated to close the gap (Botta, 2000). Our upward social comparisons could compel us to strive to be thin to well compare and compete with others (Botta, 2000), thus causing negative effects on body satisfaction.

Socio-Cultural Theory

Socio-cultural theory combines the ideas and concepts learned from social and cultural factors such as the media, family, peers and history. Both cultural and social factors influence people what to eat, how to get dressed. Schwartz (1986) said that our slimming and weight-watching culture has instilled upon society the notion that the physical body is the true person and the true self, if the body is good (thin-ideal) then the person is good otherwise the person is bad. Society pressures people, especially women, to be the thin ideal. Women who are thin are praised for being thin and the overweight are shown disrespect and disapproval. Stice (2002) reported that socio-cultural pressures coming from the family promote body image disturbances. Stice (2002) found that not only do familial pressures promote body image disturbance, the peer teasing about weight and perceived pressure from peers to be thin predicts body dissatisfaction. Girls are taught, through culture and society, that to be thin is to be happy. According to Berg (2000), historically women were defined by the culture's feminine ideal which dictated the way women should physically and behaviorally present herself. In the 19th century women wore tight corsets to cinch their waist's as small as 14 inches; the smaller her waist was the better she would marry. In accordance, if a person is thin, he or she will marry the right person, have more powerful job, and fit into "model size" clothes. Girls are also taught that if they are not thin, then they are lazy, will marry the wrong person, or be in an unhealthy relationship, work in a bad job, and never be happy. Pollack-Seid (1989) reported that the thought of never being thin enough, leads women to believe that they are not good enough for marriages, their jobs, their families, and their lives. It is like a downward spiral: not thin enough leads to not good enough in specifics, which leads to not good enough in all

aspects of womanhood, and the final outcome is depression, decreased self-esteem, decreased body image, and self-hate. Pollack-Seid (1989) also found that some women have made important life-changing decisions based on their obsession with becoming thin, i.e. for example, hesitating to have children because of the weight that is gained during pregnancy.

Link between Body Image, Self-Esteem, Peers, Family, Culture and Adolescents

Adolescents experience significant body changes during puberty. Body image is learned perception that influences self-esteem. More likely adolescents' bodies are evaluated by others and is strongly influenced and affected by the cultural messages and societal standards of attractiveness and appearance. Due to overwhelming pressure and prevalence of lean teen images, body image concerns have become widespread among adolescents. Cash, Ancis and Strachan (1997) supported the finding that body image is related to self-esteem and concluded that a negative body image leads to diminished or low self-esteem. Cash, Ancis and Strachan (1997) stated that a person's early socialization about physical appearance and their experience of their body during childhood and adolescence influences how they will view their body as they get older. People who are overweight or obese can have an especially damaged body image and self-concept. Lightstone (2001) stated that body image is psychological in nature, and is more about a person's self perception and less about their actual physical appearance/attractiveness as judged by others. Lightstone (2001) reported that the biggest influence on body image is the culture from which a person comes and his experiences with his family and peers. Cash (1999) concurred with the idea that family, peers and society influence

body image. Self-esteem begins to develop in childhood, but it starts getting mature during the years of adolescence. In one way, teenage years are considered essential “make it or break it” period regarding self-esteem, as it is this time when teenagers are searching for an identity. If this process goes bad, then the teen may develop negative feelings about the self, which can lead to low self-esteem. Harter (1990) found that satisfaction with the physical appearance is the larger and important component of self-esteem, and adolescent girls have greater body dissatisfaction as compared to adolescent boys. Researchers have found that one-third to one-half of adolescents struggle with low self-esteem. (Harter, 1990; Hirsch & DuBois, 1991). Some of the self-concept traits that are typical of low self-esteem include negative mood, poor body image, insecurity, depression, social and personal withdrawal, and unrealistically high aspirations. The consequences of low self-esteem can be temporary, but in serious cases can lead to various problems including depression, anorexia nervosa, delinquency, self-inflicted injuries and even suicide. People who do not conform to the slender ideal face prejudice throughout their life span. Thomas Cash argues that overweight people are treated differently from childhood. Children prefer not to play with their overweight peers, and assign negative adjectives to drawings of overweight people. This prejudice continues into adulthood, when overweight people tend to be rated as less happy, active, intelligent, hardworking, successful, athletic, and popular than slim people. People who are overweight, find more difficulty in renting property, being accepted by “good” US colleges, and getting jobs than their slimmer peers (Cash, 1990). Family, friends and peers can also affect body image development and a person can learn image dissatisfaction by watching family and peers emphasize his/her appearance. Familial pressure and concerns also leads to body image dissatisfaction and

concerns, which forces females to make their body beautiful and if they were succeed to achieve that specific target, they face criticism and damaged self-esteem. Parents tend to become less positive and more critical regarding their children's appearance, eating and physical activity as they move into and through adolescence. Peer teasing and comments about adolescent body and parental over-concern with children being thin or encouragement to avoid being fat can influence young people to become constant dieters and use unhealthy weight control methods.

The Media's Portrayal of Women and Its Effects

Media has always been a very strong influence on the society in many ways. It decides what the audience watch and how it is portrayed. Media constructs reality for its audience. Media presents ideologies and value messages. The media portrays women in an unrealistic manner; mostly as slender and perfect. Images of thin models are everywhere in the media though they come in all shapes and sizes in reality. A woman's body is used as a tool to sell almost everything from food, cosmetics to automobiles, showing "thin" women as being always successful, happy and respected, this leaves a negative effect on women who do not support a thin frame. It's hard to ignore when these thin women are plastered every where in the society from billboards to magazines, TV, music videos, even video games and toys subjected towards little girls show images of impeccable beauty, which causes more damage to those fragile brains that they develop an inferiority complex to thinner girls from a very young age. These perfectly portrayed women however are not our girls next door. They do not portray our friends or

family. They are images of women which is almost impossible for all of the society to attain. These are professional models and actresses who make a living out of their perfect body image, even then it takes a lot of highly paid physical trainers, stylists and make up artists to make them as perfect as they are portrayed. And still it takes a lot of editing to make these images seem flawless. Their bodies are photo-shopped and their faces airbrushed to create the perfect illusion of flawless beauty. An average woman cannot compete with these images as she does not have all the luxuries that these professionals have.

According to Paff and Buckley- Lakner (1997), historically advertising has included stereotypical and unrealistic images of women. These ideal images encourage women and men to focus their attention on a woman's physical appearance. It implies a very negative cultural message. The popular media portrays women as an object which should be kept polished and in good shape. The media thus ignores or sidelines the heavier people, and may even present them as socially ridiculed and unaccepted. According to Pollack-Seid (1989) the popular media does not show heavy women leading normal and happy social lives. They are usually shown as people not deserving love let alone be desired sexually. Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) found that slim women are seen as glamorous people leading glamorous lives and heavy people are seen as lazy, unhappy people not worthy or able to lead a glamorous lifestyle. Any average Hollywood teenage flick is a visual example of that. In almost every movie, the thin, stylish girls are shown as queen bees who are worshiped by the whole school while heavier girls are always categorized as nerds, undesired by all. Pollack - Seid (1989) also stated that most women think that they are never thin enough or taught enough to believe that they are not fat. (do not understand this statement completely so leaving it as it is). This "new religion" to attain the

ideal body is painful and a long road to travel. Most women become anorexic or bulimic along the way. According to a study done by Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, and Kelly (1986) (cited in Unger and Crawford, 1996) women are exposed to more media messages about their bodies than are men. They found that in forty-eight issues of magazines there were sixty-three ads for diet foods in women's magazines and only one in men's magazines. Interestingly, it was also found that women's magazines had many more ads for sweets and snack foods. They came to a conclusion from their study that women receive more messages about food and how to keep themselves thin while at the same time thinking about food. Sadly enough our society values the thin ideal and holds it as a measure for being beautiful. It is set to be the idea that every woman should strive to achieve if she wants to lead a happy life. Every society decides what is desirable and that happens to be the sticks and bones figure splashed across every billboard and magazine.

The media affects women in numerous ways. In a body image and media study by Heinberg and Thompson (1995), it was concluded that media-presented images of the thin ideal and attractiveness might negatively affect a woman's mood and body satisfaction. King, Touyz, and Charles (2000) supported these findings, stating that media exposure causes some women to feel more dissatisfaction with their body weight and shape. They then resort to extreme measures to reach the thin ideal such as dieting to attain the thin ideal body, smoking more to control weight and putting themselves through reconstructive surgeries. Rabak-Wagner, Eichhoff-Shemek, and Kelly-Vance (1998) found that the mass marketing of body images has been a powerful force in creating the 1990s thin ideal standard for women. Furthermore, Garner (1994), found that as the number of magazine articles on weight loss diets and exercise

increased, the occurrence of eating disorders also increased. Grogan (1999) agreed that women are encouraged to undergo pain to change their bodies. Women experience negative feelings about themselves when they are exposed to the media's image of ideal woman. Stice and Shaw (1994) found that exposure to the thin ideal resulted in subjects feeling unhappy, shameful, guilty, depressed, and stressed, which lead to low self-esteem and loss of confidence. It was also noted that the ideal thin body images presented in many popular magazines has negative impacts on the affective state and body satisfaction of their female readers. Unger & Crawford (1996) that many women and adolescent females develop distorted body perceptions. They believe themselves to be bigger, fatter, and wider than they really are. This negative view of their bodies leads to decreased self-esteem. Grogan (1999) stated that women viewers of the media engage critically with the imagery, using it to inform their body image. Bloom, Gitter, Gutwill, Kogel, and Zaphiropoulos (1999) reported that the media tells woman that they are nothing without their looks. As media is very convincing in its ways these women begin to believe what the media tells them is true, thus increasing their negative body image. The media presents women's bodies to be objects for men to look at and lust after. Women's bodies become objects to be admired. Sometimes women's bodies even become objects to themselves, objects to be criticized when standing in front of a mirror. In a study done by Cash, Ancis, and Strachan (1997), it was concluded that the messages women receive about the importance of their appearance are so socially reinforced that the attainment of feminist ideology has little importance to them. The messages that the media and society send women about the importance of their physical appearance is also supported by women and tends to be ingrained in their core beliefs about themselves. The media very openly implies that being

beautiful has its social benefits and advantages. Cash and Lavin (2001) studied the effects of exposure to prior research about appearance and stereotyping. They found that a woman's body image is adversely affected when she is exposed to the prior research findings that beauty equals social benefits. For example they are told that beauty has its benefits and attractive people are privileged to these social benefits while unattractive people are discriminated against. Some women may assume that they are not attractive and therefore would not receive any benefits from society. This type of negative opinions about oneself leads to decreased self-esteem.

Where does it all start? According to Berg (2000) young girls (age two) are watching television and are exposed to messages that show successful women are thin. They hear and see their siblings, mother, aunts, and cousins battle their bodies to achieve the thin acceptable body. They may hear their father and other male figures comment on a woman's body in a judgmental manner in regards to her weight and/or looks. Broughton and Cleveland (1999) agree that at a young age girls worry about their appearance, body shape and body size. Girls get the message that their appearance is important, be it from a parent or the media. The messages are out there and affecting young girls/children in a negative manner. Broughton and Cleveland (1999) believe that perceptions regarding the body are influenced by the following: messages received from others about the body, an understanding or lack of understanding of the body as the core of being, and feelings about the body as influenced by these factors. They concluded that if external messages about the features of the body are negative the individual begins to understand that having this color of skin, height, weight, etc. is not valued by society, thus perhaps decreasing the self-esteem and body image of the person. Unger and Crawford

(1996) stated that it is characteristic of female adolescents to be confused between thinness and the perfect life. If women are not thin they will not achieve the perfect life. Ellis-Ordway (1999) concluded that it is no longer acceptable to discriminate against people because of race, socioeconomic class, age, sex, or religion. However it is okay and acceptable to discriminate against overweight people. Society teaches people that everyone can be thin if they would just exercise more, take diet pills, buy workout videos and equipment, or get surgery. Society tells people that they can always change their body shape and size by losing weight. What society doesn't emphasize is that sometimes genetics is what causes a person to be overweight. Society puts people who are obese into a negative category. They are being discriminated against and this discrimination is being accepted. Societal gender-roles also influence body image. Cash, Ancis, and Strachan (1997) did a study to investigate the relationship between body-image attitudes and gender attitudes. They concluded that women who held traditional preferences about gender roles when in male-female social relations were more invested in their looks and tended to internalize society standards of beauty. The internalization of societal standards on beauty is what leads to a negative body image and decreased self-esteem. Rudd and Lennon (1991) discussed social power and appearance management among women. They stated that women create their appearance in accordance with society's ideas of beauty. Women evaluate their appearance based on cultural factors which feed into how they evaluate their self-worth and social power. Freedman (as cited in Rudd & Lennon, 1991) found a close connection between feeling socially powerful and feeling good about oneself.

Women who feel dissatisfied with their bodies may feel powerless in social situations. If they can gain a sense of power over their bodies by dieting and activity level, they may gain a

sense of power and control in social situations. Negative body image is prevalent in most cultures influencing body image in how women eat, dress, do their hair, and how they present their bodies. Women engage in behaviors to reach the body shape and size of the culture's thin ideal. Lastly, and most significant for this study, the media contributes to negative body image by displaying the thin ideal as a realistic and necessary means to live a happy life, forcing some women to take drastic measures to reach the thin ideal and infecting other women with a negative body image and lowered body esteem .

Rationale of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine if women's exposure to media images of the thin ideal negatively affects how body image perception and increase body dissatisfaction. Stice and Shaw (1994) stated that one of the strongest transmitters of the pressure to look like the thin ideal may well be the mass media. It is hypothesized that the more images of the "thin ideal" body a woman is exposed to through the media, the more her body image is affected negatively. Thus the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between exposure of thin-ideal images of media and its effects on the body image, self-esteem and mood of adolescents' girls. In the present study the focus is on self-esteem and body dissatisfaction because there is a link between vulnerability to body dissatisfaction and self-esteem in adolescent girls, by internalizing media models they have particularly low self-esteem (Clay et al., 2005). Self-esteem also emerged as a significant moderator of young women's body

dissatisfaction after exposure to a highly attractive female target, where women with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to increased body dissatisfaction, especially, if one also tends to follow upward social comparison with others (Jones & Buckingham, 2005).

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Participants with discrepancy between their ideal self and actual self will have lower self-esteem and lower body satisfaction than those with no discrepancy.
2. Exposure to thin-ideal images will affect negative mood greater in the case of overweight participants than those who are close to thin or average body weight BMI.
3. Exposure to thin-ideal images will increase the feelings of body dissatisfaction among overweight participants more than the thin and normal group of participants.
4. Participants with low self esteem will get more affected, when exposed to thin-ideal images showing negative mood and body dissatisfaction more than the high self-esteem participants.