THE ROLE OF GENERAL AND MEDIA-SPECIFIC SOCIAL COMPARISONS
ON BODY DISSATISFACTION: A MEDATION MODEL

THESIS

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By

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that women are adversely affected by the media portrayals of extremely thin women. Exposure to these images often leads to body dissatisfaction which is often a precursor to the development of eating disorders. Research has used social comparison as a framework for why only some women are affected more negatively than others from this media exposure. This study was intended to extend this research by investigating the relationship between general social comparison and media-specific social comparison and their effects on body dissatisfaction using a mediation model. In a survey of 279 college-age women from a large Midwestern university, the data indicated that both general social comparison and media-specific social comparison play a role in body dissatisfaction. In fact, general social comparison was still significant after controlling for both media-specific social comparisons with glamour and athletic media images. What this study has shown is that social comparison seems to work both through the general and media-specific paths in predicting body dissatisfaction and that research should continue to investigate this relationship.
Dedicated to my family
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that about 7 million women in the United States suffer from an eating disorder such as Anorexia, Bulimia, or Binge eating (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, 2000). Research has also shown that 86% of people affected report the onset of the disorder by the age of 20 years old. According to Stice and Shaw (2002) body dissatisfaction is a leading risk factor for developing an eating disorder. A person’s body image has been defined as a construct with many facets and is comprised of the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about one’s own body (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, Tantleff-Dunn, 1999).

Body dissatisfaction occurs when the person begins to have negative feelings and attitudes about his or her own body thus leading to behaviors detrimental to ones health (Botta, 2003). These behaviors often include excessive dieting, purging, binge eating, or throwing up food. It is important to keep in mind that many dangerous behaviors are not diagnosed as eating disorders, but could be threatening to ones health (Botta, 1999). These negative feelings about one’s body, resulting in disordered eating behaviors have been related to media use. In fact, past research has shown that exposure to portrayals of the thin-ideal image leads to body dissatisfaction (Park, 2005, Harrison, 2000, Botta, 1999).
Media portrayals of the thin ideal have evolved over time. In the past, women presented in the media were not the thin images that we are accustomed to seeing. In fact, content analyses of the media’s portrayal of women throughout history have shown that the images of women used in the media have become increasingly thin (Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, Ahrens, 1992). Past research has shown that the media are often a channel for people to learn what is expected in the society in which they live. People often see these images and believe that this image is what they should appear to be (Stice & Shaw, 2002, Dittmar & Howard, 2002), which can be explained as the type of modeling that is presented by Bandura (1986) in Social Cognitive Theory. Modeling plays an important role in the creation of these thin-ideals. Women are exposed to the thin-ideal images through television and magazines and in turn begin to internalize the media ideals as self-ideals (Botta, 1999, Engeln-Maddox, 2005). Although thin-ideal women are only a small part of the population, through repeated exposure and modeling, unrealistic media ideals become concrete self-ideals.

This mismatch between self-image and media ideals leads to body dissatisfaction (Stice & Shaw, 2002.) This dissatisfaction does not affect all women equally and many researchers have used different moderating variables such as internalization, pressure to be thin, and social comparison, to explain the differential effects on women. Many studies have found that that the women affected by the media portrayal, are those who internalize this thin-ideal, feel pressure to be thin or compare themselves to the media (Stormer & Thompson, 1996).

In addition to serving as a moderator, social comparison also functions as a mediator or underlying mechanism leading to body dissatisfaction. For the most part,
social comparisons in the body image literature have focused on appearance comparison when in reality social comparison is a very complex construct that can be extended to various areas of life. In fact, people compare themselves to others on abilities and opinion in a variety of areas (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). It is possible, then, that individuals with greater desire for general social comparisons may be more vulnerable to body image dissatisfaction. For example, women who compare themselves on attributes such as ability and opinion could also be more likely to compare themselves to media figures. Do women who are high in general social comparison have a higher level of body dissatisfaction? The answer to this question could shed light on what role social comparison plays in body dissatisfaction specifically.

Since general social comparison is a general phenomenon that goes beyond just body dissatisfaction, one could examine whether general social comparison predicts body dissatisfaction or if social comparison works specifically through more media-specific body comparisons to celebrities, fashion models, and sports stars. Past research has found that these specific media-related constructs are significant predictors of body dissatisfaction.

The purpose of this thesis is to focus on the role of general social comparison on body dissatisfaction and its association to constructs such as pressure to be thin and internalization. A mediation model will be constructed using the constructs presented above. Each portion of the model will be presented as a separate hypothesis. Before presenting the research questions, a brief literature review that focuses on the relationships among body dissatisfaction, media use, general social comparison, and body-image specific comparisons is provided.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Body Dissatisfaction

Research has shown that body dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of eating disorders in women (Herman & Polivy, 2002). Body dissatisfaction is defined as a person having negative feelings about the appearance of their own body (Botta, 2003). These feelings of dissatisfaction with ones appearance are often the result of women feeling they do not fit the societal expectations of thinness and attractiveness. In Westernized countries, there is great value placed on being considered physically attractive (Jackson, 2002). Women, especially, are evaluated based on their physical features and are led to believe that those that are physically attractive are more popular, more successful, and socially accepted (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). If women do not feel they fit what is considered physically attractive they become dissatisfied with their bodies.

For women, physical attractiveness is often directly connected to their weight and body dissatisfaction is a result of them not being the ideal size based on their perceptions of societal expectations (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). Past research has shown that a majority of women in Westernized culture are apprehensive about their weight and are often motivated to lose weight. Garner (1997) found that a majority of the women in America wish to lose weight and that a small percentage would actually give up 3 years of their life to reach their ideal weight. A woman’s dissatisfaction with her body can arise
from a variety of factors in her life. These factors include biological, psychological, and societal factors. These factors have varying levels of effect on women. At some level, research has shown that most women have some level of body dissatisfaction. The level of this body dissatisfaction can dictate how a woman responds. At the highest levels, body dissatisfaction can lead a woman to develop eating disorders such as Anorexia and Bulimia (Herman & Polivy, 2002). However, body image is a complex construct that is affected by a number of factors including biological and personality differences. Some biological and personality factors will be presented but are beyond the scope of this research. The media's effect on body dissatisfaction will be the focus of this research.

2.2 Biological Factors of Body Dissatisfaction

Research has shown that normal biological changes in women often lead to body dissatisfaction. These changes in the body often move the women’s body shape away from what is considered the thin-ideal which creates dissatisfaction. In a longitudinal study of seventh and eighth grade girls, Stice and Whitenton (2002) asked the girls to fill out a survey and to have their weight and height measured at two different times, one year apart. The purpose of the research was to investigate if an increase in body mass would lead to increased body dissatisfaction. Stice and Whitenton found that an increase in body mass was a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction. Stice and Whitenton argued that this was because during puberty girls gain more adipose tissue in places such as the hips, buttocks, and stomach moving them away from the ideal-thin frame that is preferred. This movement away from the thin-ideal leads to body dissatisfaction.

The body continues to change as one ages, for women their body will redistribute their body fat from extremities to their midsection as well as develop sagging skin and
wrinkles. These changes similar to the effects of puberty on adolescents can cause body dissatisfaction (Whitbourne & Skultety, 2002). These women feel less attractive and become unhappy with their appearance. Research has shown that these older women are less affected by these changes when they are able to keep a consistent sense of self over time. This consistent sense of self allows them to better adjust to their changing bodies and leads to lower levels of body dissatisfaction (Whitbourne & Skultety, 2002). One could argue that this sense of self is the reason why younger women are more susceptible to developing high levels of body dissatisfaction because these younger women are still developing their self and are unable to adjust to these changes. Research has also looked at possible hormonal and glandular problems that could lead to body image disturbance. Herman and Polivy (2002), in a review of the literature, talked about possible genetic issues, hormonal problems, some addictive behaviors, and a lack of internal awareness.

2.3 Personality Factors and Body Dissatisfaction

Many psychological factors, such as self-esteem, perfectionism, a need for social approval could lead to body dissatisfaction. Research has shown that people who are low in self-esteem are often likely to develop body dissatisfaction because it makes them vulnerable to outside influences such as teasing or comments about their body (Cash, 2002). Perfectionism is another personality feature that can lead to body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction occurs when the woman becomes cognizant that her body is not the thin-ideal, thus leading her to become obsessed with trying to make her body match the thin-ideal through often unhealthy measures (Herman & Polivy, 2002). Women with a high need for social approval also can develop body dissatisfaction because these women are often very invested in society’s appearance standards. Research has also shown that
attachment style can be a factor predicting body dissatisfaction (Cash & Fleming, 2002). Specifically, insecure attached women are more likely to be concerned about thinness and body shape (Cash & Fleming, 2002).

Another factor that has been shown to affect body dissatisfaction is "the cognitive structures concerning appearance that organize and determine the processing of self-relevant materials" (Tiggeman, 2002, p. 95) called appearance schemas. Research has shown that women who place a great emphasis on appearance and make it an extremely important portion of their self-concept pay more attention to appearance-related content when exposed to any material (Tiggeman, 2002). In particular, these women have "more complex and highly developed appearance schemas" (Tiggeman, 2002, p. 95). These appearance schemas are easily activated when exposed to the idealized images in the media. In fact research has shown that women who are appearance schematic women had a more negative response to media exposure (Tiggeman, 2002).

2.4 Social Factors and Body Dissatisfaction

2.4.1 Family Factor. Women are socialized by the family from birth. From their families, they begin to learn what they should look like, how they should act, and what is expected of them based on societal norms (Smolak, 2002). Women begin to form their self-concept based upon their interactions with their families (Cash & Fleming, 2002). Parents can have a large impact on their daughters. For example, if a mother has body dissatisfaction and is preoccupied with physical appearance and losing weight, the daughter may model these behaviors (Levine & Smolak, 2002). Parents who are overly concerned with the appearance of their children can cause the child to also become concerned thus leading to body dissatisfaction. Family can also cause body dissatisfaction
by complementing their daughter less than before about her appearance or making comments about how the daughter looks (Levine & Smolak, 2002). Another illustration of the impact of the family is a survey of sisters conducted by Tsiantzas and King (2001), who found that sisters were very similar in their body images. Tsiantzas and King argued that it was because of the transmission of sociocultural values within the families and that an older sister maybe a significant contributor to this transmission to the younger sister.

Another action that could lead to body dissatisfaction is if the parents compliment a sibling all the time. In result to the parent’s actions, the daughter may begin to compare herself with her sibling thus becoming cognizant of how she differs which may result in body dissatisfaction (Levine & Smolak, 2002). These may not be intended effects but nonetheless they can cause body dissatisfaction. A parent could also cause body dissatisfaction by being overly controlling of what their children eat and voicing concerns of the children becoming obese (Smolak, 2002). All of these actions by parents or family members can lead the daughter to become overly worried about her appearance and can result in body dissatisfaction.

2.4.2 Peer Factor. Peer groups also can impact body dissatisfaction. The peer group often serves as a reference point of appearance (Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). Girls compare themselves to each other based on looks, weight, how popular they are. For example, if a girl receives attention from a lot of boys other girls may compare the popular girl’s appearance to hers. When their appearance is found to be different, the girl begins to become dissatisfied with their appearance because she believes that to be attractive she must look like the popular girl. Body dissatisfaction can also arise from peers teasing about a body feature or that someone is overweight (Tantleff-Dunn &
Boys and girls both are known to make disparaging comments about other peer's appearances especially having to do with weight (Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). This can lead to the person becoming concerned with weight leading to dieting and other sometimes unhealthy behaviors. Girls are especially affected by peer groups. Often girls talk about weight issues, their anxiety about gaining weight, and about what dieting techniques they are using (Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). Girls often have conversations about what is considered attractive what types of clothes are in style. It has been found that within a peer group, girls often have similar body images and dieting habits (Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). With regards to both the family and peers social factor, research has shown that girls that feel unaccepted in their social network are more likely to have body dissatisfaction. Their need for acceptance makes them more suspective to societal pressures to be thin (Stice and Whitenton, 2002).

2.4.3 Media Factor. The media has been known to transmit what is considered attractive by presenting these images to the public. Over the years what is considered the ideal has changed. Women have become increasingly thin which is often connected to increasing body dissatisfaction. Past research has shown that these images portrayed in the media affect on how women feel about their own bodies (Stice & Shaw, 2002, Dittmar & Howard, 2002). The exposure to the current thin media images often leads females to become dissatisfied with their appearance thus leading to body dissatisfaction (Botta, 1999, Engeln-Maddox, 2005). These images are presented predominantly in magazines (Botta, 2003) and television (Botta, 1999). Posavac and Posavac (2002) argue that the presentation of these thin models presents a standard which females begin to believe is the ideal. This belief leads women to attempt to change their appearance by
taking part in detrimental behaviors such as not eating or abusing laxatives (Stice & Shaw, 2002, Dittmar & Howard, 2002, Botta, 1999, Kilbourne, 1999). This assertion is further supported by Groesz's (2002) meta-analysis results which suggest that exposure to these thin-ideal promoting media cause women to be more dissatisfied with their bodies.

Specifically research has shown that beauty and fashion magazines have a very negative effect on women's body image (Park, 2005, Harrison, 2000). In a survey of high school and college females, Botta's (2003) results suggest that reading beauty and fashion as well as fitness magazines led to an increased drive to be thin. Harrison and Cantor (1997) found similar results in their survey of college females. In a survey of middle school girls, Levine, Smolack, and Hayden (1994) argued the effect was because health and fitness magazines carried articles explaining how one can lose weight.

In fact Harrison, Taylor, and Marske (2006) did an experiment in which they exposed the participants to magazine ads of women. Some of the images had congruent text, some had no text and other images had unrelated text. The purpose of the study was to see if the image alone, the image with congruent text, or the image with the unrelated text would have a more negative effect on the participants eating habits. The participants were then observed while completing the post test questionnaire where pretzels were offered. Harrison, Taylor, and Marske argued that the images with the text would not have as large of an effect. The results suggest that those exposed to the images with the congruent text or just the images ate fewer pretzels than those exposed to the images and unrelated text.
Munro and Huon (2005) conducted an experiment that looked at the effects of the media portrayal of idealized images in women's body satisfaction. Munro and Huon exposed the participants to either non-body related advertisements or body related advertisements. The participant's body image was assessed before and after the exposure. The results suggest that women who were exposed to the body related advertisements were more critical of their own body than those who were not exposed to the body related advertisements.

Television has also been found to be a medium that this thin-ideal image has been presented. In a survey of high school females, Botta (1999) looked at the effect of media images from television on the participant’s body image. Botta asked the females about their exposure to specific televisions shows that were popular at the time, how often they compared themselves to media figures, whether the females believed the media images were a realistic presentation, and various body dissatisfaction measures. Botta’s results indicate that media exposure via television alone did not have a significant impact but that in conjunction with social comparison, television did have a significant effect. This conclusion led Botta to argue that television’s biggest impact on body image was to provide images for women to compare themselves to and aspire to emulate.

In contrast to the above described study by Botta (1999), Bissell and Zhou (2004) found in their survey of college women that women exposed to what was considered thin-ideal television mostly found in primetime dramas were more likely to engage in dangerous eating behaviors. Myers and Biocca (1992) found that women who watched as little as a 30-minute video program were more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies. Because for the most part the causal relationship between media exposure and body
dissatisfaction cannot be established, media exposure will be controlled for in the model for this project.

2.5 General Social Comparison

Research has shown that not all women are adversely affected by the images presented in the media (Tiggeman, 2002). Social comparison has been used as an underlying mechanism to explain these differences; however most research has only addressed appearance-related comparisons. Social comparison is a complex idea and extends far beyond just appearance and body dissatisfaction. Past research has shown that people compare themselves to others on a regular basis on such attributes as work success or school achievements and that this comparison can be both intentional and unintentional (Gilbert, Geisler, Morris, 1995).

Social Comparison Theory posits that a person will engage in comparisons with others whom they feel are similar for the purpose of self-evaluation, self-enhancement, and self-improvement (Festinger, 1954). Festinger (1954) based his argument of self-evaluation on the constructs of ability and opinion. The ability construct asks the question “how am I doing?” and the opinion construct is based on the question “What should I think or feel?” (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) Researchers have extended the research to include such things as accomplishments, traits, or possessions (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Another reason for self-comparison is for self-enhancement which is a comparison made to enhance a person’s self-esteem or self-concept. The last purpose is self-improvement which occurs when a person uses social information found in everyday life to foster self-improvement (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999).
Social comparisons can also be categorized into two groups which are upward comparisons and downward comparisons. A downward comparison would be categorized as being a form of self-enhancement and upward comparisons would be a process used for self-evaluation and self-improvement. The negative consequences of social comparison arises when people make upward social comparisons to those that are seen as socially superior, a person’s self-concept can be threatened and ultimately will force the individual to attempt to assimilate themselves to the object of their comparison in order to alleviate the threat (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992).

Past research has shown that certain individuals are more prone to participate in social comparison than others (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Research has shown that individual dispositions mostly related to self-concept are predictive of the tendency to compare socially. In fact, research has shown that people who have low self-esteem, are depressed, or whose self-concept is particularly unstable are more prone to compare themselves to others (Wayment & Taylor, 1995). These traits could be linked to body dissatisfaction because often when people have low self-esteem or have an unstable self-concept they could compare themselves to others based on ability and opinion. The ability construct could range from comparing oneself to others on work success to comparing oneself on one’s social ability. Social ability could mean how popular you are or how many friends you have. This comparison could lead to body dissatisfaction because the woman becomes cognizant of how her appearance differs from the popular woman’s because of the initial tendency to compare on the basis of ability. Based on the above argument and since the ability construct will be the focus of this research, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H₁: Women who generally compare their abilities to others will be higher in body dissatisfaction.

2.6 Appearance-related Social Comparison

Since the link between social comparison and body dissatisfaction has been made, let us take a closer look at research that has investigated this relationship. Research has shown that women compare themselves to a variety of other women such as their peers, siblings, and media images based on appearance.

2.6.1 Peer. Research has shown that people compare themselves to their peers which often results in body dissatisfaction (Stormer & Thompson, 1996). Women specifically will compare themselves based on appearance as well as many other things such as work success or achievements. Trottier, Polivy, and Herman (2007) conducted an experiment in which they first split their participants into two groups. One was restrained eaters and the other was unrestrained eaters. Upon this grouping, the participants were randomly assigned to three comparison conditions which were an average-weight peer condition, an overweight peer condition, and a thin peer condition. Each condition consists of a different description for each type of peer.

After the assignment, participants were exposed to the description of each condition. The results indicated that the restrained eaters who read the descriptions about the thin peer reported more body dissatisfaction than the restrained eaters in the average peer condition. As has been shown only some women are prone to make upward comparisons. This was illustrated by the results because unrestrained eaters were not affected by the exposure to the thin peer condition but interestingly enough they were more satisfied with their bodies when exposed to the overweight peer condition. One
could argue that some comparisons do actually have a positive effect on a person’s self-concept.

In another experiment, Lin and Kulik randomly assigned their participants to three comparison conditions. The conditions were a thin peer, and overweight peer, and a control. The participants were college age females who were told they were taking part in a mock dating game in which a guy would pick who he wanted to date. While the female was waiting they were given picks either of a thin peer, an overweight peer, or no picture at all. The female was told that the picture was the other girl in the game. Upon exposure to the pictures the girls filled out various self-report measures. The results indicated that the females that were exposed to thin-peer comparison condition were more dissatisfied with their bodies.

Another example of that social comparison was found an experiment conducted by Krones, Stice, Batres, and Orjada (2005). Krones et al. recruited college age females to take part in the experiment in which the participants were told it was to study the dating process. For the experiment, two different conditions were created which were a thin peer and an average size peer condition and the participants were randomly assigned to these conditions. Upon appearing for the experiment, the participant was placed in a private room and hooked to a heart monitor and was told that two men in another room would be rating the two girls. The participant then watched a short video and completed the pre-test. After the pre-test was completed the confederate being either the thin peer or the average weight peer would come from behind the divider. The participant would then be informed that this was the other girl that she was being rated against. The results of the
study indicated that the girls in the thin-peer condition reported higher levels of body
dissatisfaction in comparison to those in the control or the average weight condition.

2.6.2 Sibling. Research has also shown that women compare themselves to their
same-sex siblings. For the most part, the harmful comparisons occur when a younger
sister is socially comparing herself to an older sister. In a survey of sisters, Tsiantas and
King (2001) found that a younger sister was more likely to make upward social
comparisons to the older sister particularly during adolescence. Tsiantas and King argued
that these upward comparisons occurred when the younger sister viewed the older sister
as more physically attractive. The results indicated that increased levels of upward social
comparisons resulted in elevated levels of body dissatisfaction. Tsiantas and King also
found that the older sister did engage in social comparisons with the younger sister but
often it was a downward comparison that often enhanced their body satisfaction. Tsiantas
and King said that one reason for the lower levels of social comparison with younger
sisters was because the older sister may have been more apt to compare herself to peers.

2.6.3 Media Image. The peers and sibling comparisons are easily explained by
Festinger’s original theory that people are prone to socially compare themselves to people
who are similar. A curious relationship is that research has shown that women
specifically will compare themselves to media images of thin-models. These thin-models
are actually an outlier compared to the average size of women and only make up a small
portion of the population of women. Festinger (1954) found that people will sometimes
compare themselves to an outside group because that group is seen as very appealing to
the person. It could be argued that women view media images as an outside social group
for which to compare themselves because these women see this outside group as
appealing. Women see these outside groups as appealing because of the sociocultural value placed on beauty and to be considered beautiful women are expected to be thin (Herman & Polivy, 2002). This results in body dissatisfaction because these women become cognizant of how different they are from these thin-models. Moreover, the body dissatisfaction can lead to the use of dangerous and unhealthful behaviors (Botta, 1999).

Engeln-Maddox (2005) conducted an experiment in which participants were exposed to 3 advertisements from a magazine. Each participant was asked to write their thoughts about the advertisements. Upon completing this part of the study, the participants were asked to complete a series of self-report measures. Results suggest that higher levels of social comparison led to less satisfaction with the person’s appearance and a greater internalization of the thin-ideal. Engeln-Maddox (2005) results indicate that upward social comparison is the most detrimental to a women’s body satisfaction thus leading her to engage in certain behaviors. Botta (2003) conducted a study that looked at the level of magazine reading, social comparison, and body dissatisfaction. According to Botta’s results, girls who compare themselves to the models in these magazines were more likely to be dissatisfied with their body and would engage in such behaviors as fasting and abusing laxatives more frequently. Halliwell and Dittmar (2005) found that when social comparisons to media figures are for the purpose of self-evaluation, the level of body dissatisfaction increases.

A different assessment of the relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction was illustrated by Trampe, Seirro, and Stapel (2007). This was the first study that looked at how body dissatisfaction might affect social comparison. Trampe, Seirro, and Stapel conducted 6 different studies to assess how body dissatisfaction affects
the level at which a person partakes in social comparisons with the media. Trampe, Seirro, and Stapel found almost overwhelmingly that women who were already high in body dissatisfaction were more likely to compare themselves with both attractive models and non-models.

2.7 Media-Specific Social Comparison

Research has found that a number of aspects moderate this relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction such as individual differences, and the two media-specific comparison factors of internalization of the thin-ideal and pressure to be thin. These two factors are the focus for this research.

2.7.1 Internalization of the Thin-Ideal. Internalization of the thin ideal can be defined as the belief that the thin-ideal presented in the media is what women should look like. This belief leads women to try and attain the appearance through sometimes harmful measures (Dittmar & Howard, 2002). Past research has shown that women, who internalize this thin-ideal are more likely to feel dissatisfied with themselves (Stice & Shaw, 2002, Dittmar & Howard, 2002). According to Dittmar and Howard (2002), women differ on the level of internalization which in turn leads to different degrees of effect when exposed to images of the thin-ideal. In Dittmar and Howard’s (2002) experiment, participants were exposed to images of thin models, average-size models, or no models. The results indicated that women high in the internalization of the thin-ideal were more dissatisfied with their bodies after exposure to the thin models. The results also indicated that internalization and social comparison act as moderators of media effects but that internalization was a more specific predictor of body dissatisfaction than social comparisons. Miller and Halberstadt (2005) conducted an experiment that tested
the correlation between media use and internalization. The results indicated that the amount of media consumed by the individual, specifically magazine exposure, was significantly correlated to the level of the internalization of the thin-ideal. As illustrated above, the portrayal of the thin ideal in the media does have a negative impact on the body image of some women. Internalization of this thin-ideal has been shown to be a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction (Stice & Shaw, 2002). Based on the above findings in the literature the following hypothesis is proposed.

\[ H_2a: \] Women with a higher internalization of the thin-ideal will be higher in body dissatisfaction.

2.7.2 Pressure to be Thin. Stice and Shaw (2002) argue that pressure to be thin is also a formidable predictor of body dissatisfaction but little research has been conducted testing the effect on perceived pressure from the media. Perceived pressure is “defined as comments or actions by others that may serve to perpetuate the thin ideal (e.g., critical comments regarding weight, encouragement to diet, and exposure to media containing thin ideal images)” (Blowers, Loxton, Grady-Flesser, Occhipinti, and Dawe, 2003, p. 230). Cafri, Yamamiya, Brannick, and Thompson (2005) argue in a meta-analysis that pressure did have an effect on body image but because of a lack of research the extent of the effect could not be determined until further research has been conducted. Stice (1998) found in a survey of college women that perceived pressure to be thin by the media was positively correlated with bulimic symptoms associated with body dissatisfaction. Since only a few studies have investigated the relationship between body dissatisfaction and pressure to be thin the following hypothesis is proposed.
$H_{2b}$: Women who feel more pressure to be thin from the media will be higher in body dissatisfaction.

Engeln-Maddox (2005) found that increased levels of appearance related comparison led to increased levels of internalization but no research has investigated if this extends to the general social comparison construct of ability. According to Gibbons and Buunk (1999), people who are more prone to socially compare themselves generally on something like ability are more likely to internalize the sociocultural ideals of the society. This tendency to socially compare would extend to internalization of the thin-ideal and feeling pressure to be thin since both are related to sociocultural ideals. Based on the above connections the following hypotheses are proposed.

$H_{3a}$: Women who generally compare their abilities to others will be higher in the internalization of the thin-ideal.

$H_{3b}$: Women who generally compare their abilities to others will feel more pressure to be thin from the media.

Research has shown that people socially compare themselves to others. It would make sense to say that people who are prone to comparing themselves to others would also be more likely to compare themselves to media images. Research has not investigated if it is actually the tendency to socially compare on the basis of ability that leads to body dissatisfaction or if the relationship works through the media-specific comparison factors of internalization and pressure to be thin that lead to increased levels of body dissatisfaction. Based on the lack of research in this area the following research question is proposed.
RQ1: Does internalization and pressure to be thin mediate the relationship between the general social comparison construct of ability and body dissatisfaction after controlling for media use?
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1 Participants

Participants were undergraduate women recruited from undergraduate communication classes at a large Midwestern university. The participants were offered extra credit for completing the survey. Only female participants were sought for this project because research has shown that females are more likely to be negatively affected by body dissatisfaction. Participants for this study consisted of 279 females. The age range for the participants was 18 to 47 with a mean of 20.64 and the sample consisted of 57 freshman, 57 sophomores, 85 juniors, and 80 seniors. The ethnic breakdown of the participants was 25 African Americans, 235 Caucasians, 2 American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, 11 Hispanic/Latino, and 6 classified themselves as other.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Demographics. Participants were asked their age, class rank, ethnicity, height, and weight. From the height and weight, the participants BMI was computed using the formula weight (lb) / [height (in)]² x 703 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007).

3.2.2 Social Comparison. The eleven-item Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM, Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) was used to assess the participant’s tendency to compare themselves to others. The scale’s items are grouped
into two separate dimensions. The first being an ability dimension which asked questions such as “I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.” The second dimension was an opinion dimension which asked questions like “I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face.” The scale has been found to be reliable in previous studies and was found to be reliable in this study with a Cronbach alpha of .84 for the Ability dimension and a Cronbach alpha of .71 for the Opinion dimension. The answers ranged from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. In this case, higher scores reflect higher levels of social comparison with others.

3.2.3 Internalization of Thin Ideal. The nine-item Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3: Internalization scale (SATAQ-3, Thompson et al., 2003) was used to assess the level of internalization of the thin ideal for the participants. Participants were asked questions such as “I would like my body to look like the people who are on TV” or “I wish I looked like the models in music videos.” The answers ranged from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. In this case, higher scores reflect higher levels of internalization of the thin ideal. The scale proved to be reliable with a Cronbach alpha of .941.

3.2.4 Pressure to be Thin. The seven-item Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3: Pressure scale (SATAQ-3, Thompson et al., 2003) was used to assess the level of the participant’s perceived pressure to be thin from the media. Participants were asked questions such as “I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty” and “I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to be thin.” The answers ranged from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. In this case higher scores reflect
higher levels of perceived pressure from the media. The scale proved to be reliable with a Cronbach alpha of .948.

3.2.5 Athletic Internalization. The 5-item Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3: Athletic Internalization scale (SATAQ-3, Thompson et al., 2003) was used to assess how much people use the media for information. Participants were asked questions such as “I wish I looked as athletic as sports stars” and “I compare my body to that of people who are athletic.” The answers ranged from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. In this case higher scores reflect higher levels of perceived pressure from the media. The scale proved to be reliable with a Cronbach alpha of .833.

3.2.6 Information. The 9-item Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3: Information scale (SATAQ-3, Thompson et al., 2003) was used to assess how much people use the media for information. Participants were asked questions such as “TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.” and “TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.” The answers ranged from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. In this case higher scores reflect higher levels of perceived pressure from the media. The scale proved to be reliable with a Cronbach alpha of .946.

3.2.7 Body Dissatisfaction. A subscale from the Eating Disorder Survey (Garner, Olmstead, & Polivy, 1983) was used to assess body image mind-set and factors. That subscale was the Body Dissatisfaction subscale which has been found to be reliable in previous studies. The scale was also found to be reliable in this study with a Cronbach alpha of .861. The nine-item Body Dissatisfaction scale consists of questions such as “I think that my stomach is too big,” and “I think that my thighs are too large.” Answers
ranged from 1-Never to 6-Always. For this scale, higher scores were associated with more body dissatisfaction. See Appendix A for the complete list of scales.

3.2.8 Media Exposure. Media exposure for television was assessed using basic questions. Participants were asked how many hours in an average day they watched television and how many hours in an average weekend they watched television. In order to get information about specific types of shows watched, the participants were asked how often they watch certain types of shows such as entertainment and drama or reality television. Examples of these types of shows were given below the category. Answers ranged from 1-Never to 5-Always. This scale is similar to those used by Bissell and Zhou (2004) and Botta (1999).

Media exposure for magazines was assessed using basic questions. Participants were asked how many hours in an average week they read magazines. In order to get information about specific types of magazines read, the participants were asked how often they read certain types of magazines such as entertainment and gossip, beauty and fashion, or health and fitness. Examples of these types of magazines were given below the category. Answers ranged from 1-Never to 5-Always.

3.3 Procedure.

Female undergraduates were recruited from general Communication courses. Those interested in completing the survey were given a web address that took them to the consent page of the survey. In order to check for order effects, two versions of the survey were created. The participants were then randomly assigned to different versions. The first version began with demographic questions and then went on to the other measures in the survey and the second condition began with the body dissatisfaction scales and ended
with the demographic questions. Analysis of the two groups showed that there was not a significant difference between the groups on how they answered the questions, \( t(277) = -0.658, p = .511 \).
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Summary Statistics.

Basic descriptive statistics were examined to investigate if the separate scales were comparable to each other. (Refer to Table 4.1) The data indicated that all four of the SATAQ subscales were comparable to each other. The means ranged from 3.24 to 3.51, indicating that there were no outliers skewing the data.

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Table 4.1: Summary Statistics for Key Variables N = 279

The Social Comparison subscales were also comparable with the means ranging from 3.26 to 3.77 also indicating no outliers. All of these scales’ answers could only range from 1 to 5. The Eating Disorder Inventory Body Dissatisfaction subscale mean was 3.93 with a standard deviation of 1.04. The Body Dissatisfaction scale’s answer’s ranged from
1 to 6. The women’s Body Mass Index (BMI) was also calculated and the mean was
23.73 with a standard deviation of 4.79.

4.2 Correlations.

Bivariate correlations were conducted to ensure that key variables were related to
each other. The data indicated that the EDI-Body Dissatisfaction subscale correlated with
all four of the SATAQ Measures; Internalization ($r = .443$, $p < .001$), Athletic
Internalization ($r = .384$, $p < 0.01$), Pressure to be Thin ($r = .431$, $p < .001$), and
Information ($r = .266$, $p < 0.001$). The Body Dissatisfaction subscale also correlated
significantly with the SC Ability scale ($r = .328$, $p < .001$), the SC Opinion scale ($r = .193$
$p < .001$), and BMI ($r = .397$, $p < .001$). In addition, all four of the SATAQ measure
correlated significantly to each other thus replicating the original scale paper (Thompson
et al., 2003).

Lastly, the social comparison factors of ability and opinion correlated
significantly to the SATAQ measures. Specifically the ability component correlated more
strongly to the SATAQ measures of Internalization ($r = .372$, $p < .001$), Athletic
Internalization ($r = .221$, $p < .001$), Pressure to be Thin ($r = .338$, $p < .001$), and
Information ($r = .332$, $p < .001$) however, the opinion component only correlated to
Internalization ($r = .183$, $p < .01$), Information ($r = .211$, $p < .001$), and Pressure to be
Thin ($r = .166$, $p < .01$). Refer to Table 4.2.
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** p < .01
* p < .05

Table 4.2: Correlations for Key Variables

Int = Internalization  A = Ability
A. Int = Athletic Internalization  O = Opinion
P = Pressure to be Thin  EDI = Eating Disorder Inventory
Inf = Information  BD = Body Dissatisfaction
SC = Social Comparison  BMI = Body Mass Index
4.3 Models.

In order to assess the predictive capabilities of the key variables on body dissatisfaction, three different regression models were conducted and the final model was chosen on the basis of significant predictors of body dissatisfaction. (Refer to Table 4.3) The first model consisted of only the four SATAQ subdivisions predicting body dissatisfaction. The model fit was significant, $F(4, 274) = 22.34, p < .001$, Adjusted $R^2 = .23$, and accounted for about 23% of the variance. The data indicated that Pressure to be Thin, $\beta = .22, t(274) = 2.48, p < .05$, Internalization, $\beta = .24, t(274) = 2.46, p < .05$, and Athletic Internalization, $\beta = .19, t(274) = 2.96, p < .05$, significantly predicted body dissatisfaction. The second model differed from the first model because BMI was added. The data indicated that the model fit improved significantly, $F(5, 273) = 36.86, p < .001$, Adjusted $R^2 = .39$ thus accounting for about 39% of the variance in body dissatisfaction. The data also indicated fit was better than the first with a significant change in $R^2$ of .16 and was significant to the .001 level with the addition of BMI. A notable difference between model 1 and 2 was that the new variable BMI was a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction, $\beta = .41, t(273) = 8.48, p < .001$, and the Pressure to be thin dimension was no longer a significant predictor, $\beta = .08, t(273) = 94, p = .349$.

For the third model the dimensions of ability and opinion for social comparison were added to the model. The data indicated that the model fit was significant, $F(7, 271) = 27.77, p < .001$, Adjusted $R^2 = .40$ and about 40% of the variance of body dissatisfaction was accounted for by this model. This improved the model fit by .015 and was significant at the .05 level. Of the two new variables added to the model, only the SC
Ability dimension was a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction, $\beta = .109$, $t(271) = .191$, $p < .05$.

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Adjusted $R^2$  
$df$  
$F$ Statistic  
$\Delta (df), \Delta R^2$  

** $p < .01$  
* $p < .05$

Table 4.3: Regression Models for Key Factors predicting Body Dissatisfaction

Upon examining the three models, the final model consisted of the two Satakian sub-dimensions of Internalization and Athletic Internalization, SC Ability, and BMI. A final regression was conducted to investigate the model fit. The data indicated the variables significantly predicted body dissatisfaction, $F(4, 274) = 47.88, p < .001$, Adjusted $R^2 = .40$ and about 40% of the variance of body dissatisfaction was accounted for by this model. The final model was created because it was the most adequate and parsimonious.

4.4 Mediation Model.

The following analyses explored the relationship between general social comparison on the basis of ability, the two media-specific comparisons, and body
dissatisfaction after controlling for Body Mass Index. The purpose was to see if social comparisons as a general construct led to body dissatisfaction or if body dissatisfaction occurs through the media-specific social comparisons. A mediation model was proposed and each direct effect was considered a separate hypothesis. A series of multiple regressions were conducted to investigate this relationship.

The first hypothesis posited that women who compare their ability to that of others would be higher in body dissatisfaction. A multiple regression was conducted to investigate the relationship. The data indicated that women who were more likely to compare their own abilities to others did indeed have higher body dissatisfaction after controlling for BMI, $\beta = .122$, $t(274) = 2.41$, $p < .05$.

The first part of the second hypothesis posited that women who had internalized the thin-ideal would be higher in body dissatisfaction. A multiple regression was conducted to investigate the relationship. The data indicated that women who were higher in the internalization of the thin ideal were indeed more dissatisfied with their bodies, $\beta = .34$, $t(274) = 5.88$, $p < .001$. The second part of hypothesis two was that women that felt more pressure from the media to be thin would be more dissatisfied with their bodies. The data indicated that pressure was not a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction, ($\beta = .08$, $t(273) = .94$, $p = .349$) and was removed from the model. Athletic internalization was a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction, $\beta = .16$, $t(274) = 2.91$, $p < .01$, which was retained for subsequent analysis.

Third hypothesis was again split into two separate parts. The first part of hypothesis three posited that women who compare their ability to others were more likely to internalize the thin-ideal presented in the media. A multiple regression was conducted
to look at the relationship. The data indicated that women who were more likely to compare their abilities to that of others were more likely to internalize the thin-ideal, $\beta = .37, t(277) = 6.68, p < .001$. The second part of the third hypothesis predicted that women compare their abilities to others would feel more pressure from the media to be thin. A multiple regression was conducted to see if this was the case. The data indicated that women who compare their ability to others were more likely to feel pressure from the media to be thin, $\beta = .34, t(277) = 5.86, p < .001$. Since Pressure was removed and Athletic Internalization was added to the model, a multiple regression was conducted to see if Ability Social Comparison was a significant predictor. The data indicated that Ability Social Comparison did significantly predict Athletic Internalization, $\beta = .22, t(277) = 3.77, p < .001$.

Research question 1 asked the question of whether the relationship between a women’s tendency to compare her ability to others and body dissatisfaction was mediated by the two media-specific comparisons of internalization of the ideal and pressure to be thin from the media. Upon doing data analysis, pressure to be thin was found to not be a significant predictor and so it was removed from the model and the Athletic-Specific social comparison media measure was included.

In order to assess the mediation relationship, the Sobel test was conducted. The test revealed that the indirect effect for the ability social comparison working through the Internalization or Media-Image specific mediator was indeed significant, $z = 4.412, p < .001$. The test also revealed the significant indirect effect of the ability social comparison working though Athletic Internalization or Media-Athletic image specific social comparison mediator variable, $z = 2.30, p < .05$. An argument for partial mediation can
be made. The data indicated that the total effect for social comparison on ability was significant, $\beta = .288, t(276) = 5.447, p < .001$. As was shown by hypothesis 1, the direct effect for social comparison on ability was significant, $\beta = .122, t(274) = 2.41, p < .05$, but had a smaller effect size when the mediation variables were added to the model. Refer to Figure 4.1 for the mediation model.

![Mediation Model Diagram]

* $p < .05$
** $p < .001$

Figure 4.1: Mediation Model
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary Statistics.

Before discussing the hypotheses and mediation model, preliminary data analysis was conducted to see how the key variables in the study were related. As the results section showed, the scales were highly correlated. Particularly of interest was that the study was able to replicate the original findings of the SATAQ scale article and the INCOM scale article. This was encouraging for the validity of the study.

5.2 Mediation Model

Based on the literature on social comparison and body dissatisfaction, a number of hypotheses were predicted were advanced as part of a mediation model. It was first predicted that ability social comparison would be predictive of higher body dissatisfaction. The results indicated that women who socially compare on the component of ability did have higher body dissatisfaction. An explanation for this is that women who show a higher propensity to socially compare on abilities are those who have low self-esteem, depression, or those that are high in neuroticism (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). This is because these women likely have an unstable self-concept and are seeking information about themselves. By socially comparing their abilities to others they are more likely to gain this information. Since the ability dimension extends to social ability where appearance is often a key factor, it is feasible that ability comparisons lead to appearance
comparisons and result in body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction results when the comparisons are dissimilar.

The second hypothesis was in two parts and was based off the literature. For the first part, it was predicted that women who compared themselves to media images or internalized the thin-ideal were more likely to be higher in body dissatisfaction. The results indicated that this prediction was correct and it replicated previous findings for internalization. This finding was similar to previous research, which shows support for the negative effects of the media, but only through social comparison to these media figures. Once the comparison occurs women are likely to find themselves different and women become dissatisfied with their appearance.

The second portion of the hypothesis 2 was that women who feel pressure to be thin from the media would be higher in body dissatisfaction. The results indicated that those women who felt more pressure from the media did have higher body dissatisfaction as reported in the literature. Upon building this model, pressure to be thin from the media was found to not predictive of body dissatisfaction when Body Mass Index was entered into the model. Since pressure to be thin was no longer predictive of body dissatisfaction, it was removed from the mediation model. BMI was placed in the model because it was found to be highly predictive of body dissatisfaction and it was determined that it should be controlled for in the mediation model.

On the contrary, Athletic Media Image social comparisons or Athletic Internalization stayed predictive of body dissatisfaction after the addition of BMI so this variable replaced pressure to be thin. All in all, the Athletic Media Image social comparison dimension is a better fit for the model and gave a better indication of the role
of the general versus media-specific social comparisons and should have been included in
the model from the beginning. Another note is that using media for Information was
never predictive of body dissatisfaction which also stayed in line with past research.

The third hypothesis was also in two parts. Since no research looked at the
relationship between general social comparisons and in this case and media-specific
social comparisons, it was predicted that those women who are prone to socially compare
their abilities to others would also be more likely to compare themselves to media-
specific images. The first part posited that women who socially compare their abilities to
others would also be higher in media image comparison or internalization. The results
indicated that women who socially compared their abilities to others were also more
likely to compare themselves to media-images. This makes sense because women who
compare to others may compare to anything such as the media in order to gather
information about themselves.

The second part of hypothesis 3 posited that women high in the ability social
cmparison would also be more likely to feel pressure to be thin from the media. The
results showed that women who socially compared their abilities to others were also more
likely to feel pressure to be thin from the media. This finding also makes sense because
one could argue that pressure to be thin might be the result of social comparison because
once the women finds herself different from the comparison object she likely places
pressure on herself to assimilate herself to the object. However, pressure to be thin was
not significantly predictive of body dissatisfaction when BMI was introduced. This is the
reason that pressure to be thin was replaced in the model by media athletic image
comparisons.
Since media athletic image social comparisons replaced Pressure to be thin, the predictive relationship between athletic image social comparisons and ability social comparisons had to be assessed. The results indicated that women who were prone to socially compare their abilities to those of others were also more likely to compare themselves to the Athletic images portrayed in the media. This result is similar to the relationship between media image comparison and general social comparison in that people just have an overall tendency to socially compare themselves to people and also exhibit a more specific behavior.

The first research question asked if social comparison to media images and pressure to be thin would mediate the relationship between Ability social comparison and body dissatisfaction. As was stated, the pressure to be thin dimension was removed and was replaced by the more comparison oriented dimension of social comparison to Athletic media images. As was shown by the hypotheses, the causal steps were indeed significant as well as the indirect effects of the mediators. The comparison of the total effect to the direct effect of ability social comparison showed that there was a partial mediation effect. This shows that people who compare on the basis of ability are more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies even after controlling for the mediators. What the partial mediation means is that social comparison has three different components which are a general tendency to socially compare to others, as well as socially comparing to both glamour media figures and athletic media images.

What these results imply is that both general and media-specific social comparisons are very important in understanding body dissatisfaction. Social comparison appears to work through 3 different processes. The results imply that its not how much
TV we watch or what types of shows we watch but how likely we are to compare ourselves to these media images and others in general that leads to body dissatisfaction. It is now important to investigate each process in order to learn how to alleviate the potentially negative effects of these social comparisons.

It was examined whether reporting ones weight before the body dissatisfaction measures or after them would have an effect on the weight assessment. The results indicated that the order of the measure did not have an effect on the women’s assessment of their weight. One could argue from this finding that the order that someone answers questions does not affect how a woman reports her weight. One limitation for this would be that we obtained their weight information through a self-report measure and there is no way to know if they reported their weight accurately in either of the conditions. From a methodological standpoint, this offers additional information that might be useful to body image researchers.

5.3 Limitations.

One limitation is that self-report data was used. Self-report data makes it hard to make the argument that the participants are being truthful in their answers. In some cases respondents many not even be aware they are doing something such as socially comparing themselves to others. Another limitation was that the survey online was offered online so there is no way to be aware of what the participants were doing while completing the survey. It is possible that the participants were watching television while completing the survey. The issue here is that exposure to the media could not be controlled and exposure could lead to inflated results, There was not a lot of control within this study so possibly by conducting an experiment in which most things can be
controlled for could provide more concrete results for social comparison, however most
experiments conducted using social comparison uses exposure to the comparison object
to elicit an effect. The purpose for this research was to investigate if the penchant for
people to socially compare in their everyday lives to others as well as to the media leads
to body dissatisfaction. Another limitation is that other measures such as self-esteem and
perfectionism were not included within this study. These measures may have contributed
to the study of social comparison significantly. Lastly the sample was a convenience
sample.

5.4 Strengths.

Some strengths of the study were that the scales were all found to be very reliable
with high alphas. The study replicated the findings in the original scale articles and all
factors loaded into the correct place. This helps to show the credibility of the scales.
Another strength was that a large number of participants were took part in the study. This
large sample enhanced the generalizability of the study. Although the sample was one of
convenience, a strength of the study was that the participants are of the target audience
since most women that are at risk of developing eating disorders fall in the age range of
18-24.

5.5 Practical Applications.

This study had some practical applicability too. The fact that the women that were
more likely to socially compare themselves had higher body dissatisfaction shows that it
is a viable antecedent to the development of eating disorders in both the general and
media specific arena. With media images continually becoming thinner, one route that
should be taken is to enhance the amount of media literacy information being presented
to young girls. Another application is interventions may want to not only address the negative aspects of comparing yourself to the media but also to comparing yourself to others. This is because research has found that those who are prone to socially compare themselves are those who often have low self-esteem and an unstable self-concept. Interventions could improve effectiveness by incorporating things that will build someone’s self esteem as well as promoting better ways to evaluate themselves and learn about themselves. As far as the media comparisons, interventions could be made more effective if they encourage girls to become skeptical of the media images by informing them that these women are only a small part of the populations and that they are often unhealthy.

5.6 Conclusion.

In conclusion, this study shows support for both general and media-specific social comparisons significantly predicting body dissatisfaction in women. This has extended the research by showing that people who socially compare themselves to others are also more likely to compare themselves to both glamour and athletic figures. Although the research on athletic comparisons is still rather sparse and inconclusive, this study has shown that this comparison can lead to body dissatisfaction. Future research should investigate this relationship further.

Some directions for future research would be to more thoroughly investigate the possible relationship between ethnicity and both general and media-specific social comparisons. Another area would be to look at the relationship between age and social comparisons and body dissatisfaction since younger women tend to be the ones most likely to develop eating disorders. It could be helpful to know what makes the older
women less susceptible to body image disturbance in comparison to younger women. Another area for future research is to investigate relationship between general social comparison and body dissatisfaction more thoroughly since it is a significant predictor even after the addition of the media-specific social comparisons. Little research has looked at its effects and at the possibility that women who compare themselves to others often are just more unhappy with their appearance than those that do not compare themselves with others.
APPENDIX A

SCALES
The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3)

1 = Completely Disagree
2 = Somewhat Disagree
3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree
4 = Somewhat Agree
5 = Completely Agree

1. TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

2. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight.

3. I would like my body to look like the people who are on TV.

4. I compare my body to the bodies of TV and movie stars.

5. TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

6. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty.

7. I would like my body to look like the models who appear in magazines.

8. I compare my appearance to the appearance of TV and movie stars.

9. Music videos on TV are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

10. I’ve felt pressure from TV and magazines to be thin.

11. I would like my body to look like people who are in movies.

12. I compare my body to the bodies of people who appear in magazines.

13. Magazine articles are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

14. I’ve felt pressure from TV and magazines to have a perfect body.

15. I wish I looked like models in music videos.

16. I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in magazines.
17. Magazine advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

18. I’ve felt pressure from TV and magazines to diet.

19. I wish I looked athletic as the people in magazines.

20. I compare my body to that of people in “good shape.”

21. Pictures in magazines are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

22. I’ve felt pressure from TV and magazines to exercise.

23. I wish I looked as athletic as sports stars.

24. I compare my body to that of people who are athletic.

25. Movies are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

26. I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance.

27. I try to look like people on TV.

28. Movie stars are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

29. Famous people are an important source of information about fashion and “being attractive.”

30. I try to look like sports athletes.

Drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction subscales of the Eating Disorder Inventory

1 = Always
2 = Usually
3 = Often
4 = Sometimes
5 = rarely
6 = never

1. I eat sweets and carbohydrates without feeling nervous

2. I think that my stomach is too big.

3. I think about dieting.

4. I think that my thighs are too large.

5. I feel extremely guilty about overeating.

6. I think that my stomach is just the right size.

7. I am terrified of gaining weight.

8. I feel satisfied with the shape of my body.

9. I exaggerate or magnify the importance of weight.

10. I like the shape of my buttocks.

11. I am preoccupied with the desire to be thinner.

12. I think my hips are too large.

13. I think my thighs are just the right size.

14. If I gain a pound, I worry I will keep gaining.

15. I think my buttocks are too large.

16. I think that my hips are just the right size.

Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM)

1 = Completely Disagree
2 = Somewhat Disagree
3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree
4 = Somewhat Agree
5 = Completely Agree

1. I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing.
2. I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things.
3. If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others have done.
4. I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people.
5. I am not the type of person who compares often with others (reversed).
6. I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.
7. I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences.
8. I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face.
9. I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do.
10. If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what other think about it.
11. I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people (reversed).

**Media Use Scale**

Please answer the following questions regarding your use of media.

**Television**

1a. How many hours of television do you watch on an average weekday?

____ hours a day

1b. How many hours of television do you watch during the weekend (Saturday and Sunday combined)?

____ hours

2. How often do you watch the following genres of TV shows?

1 = never
2 = rarely
3 = sometimes
4 = often
5 = always

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<th>Genre</th>
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<td>Entertainment Drama</td>
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<td>News &amp; Current Events</td>
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<td>Beauty &amp; Fashion</td>
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<td>(Example: Project Runway, What Not to Wear)</td>
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<td>Health, Fitness &amp; Dieting</td>
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<td>(Example: The Biggest Loser, Extreme Makeover)</td>
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<td>Music Videos</td>
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<td>Reality Television</td>
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<td>(Example: Survivor, The Real World)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment Comedy</td>
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<td>(Example: Friends, Jon Stewart, Office, 30 Rock)</td>
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Sports
(Example: ESPN, College football, NFL, Sunday night football)

Magazine
1. How many hours do you spend reading magazines in an average week?

   hours per week

2. How often do you read the following types of magazines?

   1 = never
   2 = rarely
   3 = sometimes
   4 = often
   5 = always

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<td>(Example: Cosmo, Elle, Vogue)</td>
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<td>Sports</td>
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<td>(Example: Sports Illustrated, ESPN Magazine)</td>
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</table>
LIST OF REFERENCES


