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# Societal stereotypes affecting one's body image

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**SOCIETAL STEREOTYPES AFFECTING ONE'S BODY IMAGE**

by  
Angela Gwathney

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Psychology  
College of Science and Mathematics  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
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## **Abstract**

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SOCIETAL STEREOTYPES AFFECTING ONE'S BODY IMAGE  
2013/14  
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Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not undergraduate students allow societal stereotypes within the media to affect their self-image. Existing literature will be reviewed to show influential factors within previous studies that affect people's self-image. Relevant data extracted from the literature review will then be examined and discussed to show the existing relationship between media and self-image. Data was then collected through a Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3), a questionnaire developed by Thompson & Heinberg. In examining the independent sample t-test no significant difference was found between the experimental and non-experimental group. Correlational analyses did show significant correlations amongst the four subscales, as well as within one of the survey questions on the SATAQ-3. A One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also performed and revealed that score differed significantly amongst the four subscales within the SATAQ-3. Explanations of these results are discussed later within the limitations. Ways to improve further research when examining the media and self-image is also discussed.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

There are many impeding factors that influence how people perceive themselves. Social comparison, societal stereotypes, and the media are exceedingly influential variables in how people develop preconceived notions about their bodies. The way in which people develop their self-image is exceedingly important. Social media is very influential to not only today's youth but also our society as a whole (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). Maintaining a healthy self-image contributes to one's overall mental and emotional health. Impeding factors on one's self-image have been thoroughly investigated (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999; Thompson & Stice, 2001; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004; Klaczynski, Goold & Mudry, 2004; Warren, Gleaves & Rakhkovskaya, 2013). A major aspect of the impeding factors that influence self-image is the media. Such influential factors in relation to self-image are examined through existing literature that investigates how body image is defined, the origin of eating disorders, stereotypes, media, and the relationship between male body image and the media. I propose that undergraduate students will enable societal stereotypes to affect their self-images and as a result will develop a negative self-image of themselves. The results of this study may have consequences in how undergraduates perceive their self-image and body. This study will touch on many of the negative aspects of the media and how they influences people's perceptions of themselves. The study was conducted and conclusions were made in relationship to the following operational definitions:

Body image: Two components, perceptual and evaluation, are part of the

diagnostic criteria for the clinical eating disorder anorexia and bulimia nervosa (APA, 1994).

Body Image Disturbance: used as a umbrella term encompassing perceptions, cognition, affect, behaviors, and subjective evaluation related to body image (Thompson et al., 1999).

In summary, this study will examine the way in which people internalize societal stereotypes and how they enable such stereotypes to affect their self-image. Existing literature will first be reviewed and discussed to support the existing relationship between media and self-image. Undergraduates perceptions in relation to self-image maybe affected by the experience of viewing a short video clip pertaining to ones body image. How they interpreted a short film clip pertaining to one's body image was the way in which data was collected. It was hypothesized that if students enable societal stereotypes to affect their self-image, then they will develop a negative self-image of themselves.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Social constructs originate and are increasingly maintained through today's social media. The way in which both men and women perceive their bodies raises relevancy to this study. Theorists agree that, "perceptions such as body image distortion and dissatisfaction play a crucial role in the development of disordered eating" (Henriques, Calhoun & Cann, 1996). Television shows, magazines, newspapers, the internet, fashion fads and social networking sites are where these social structures are built. Some people allow famous celebrities to dictate what they purchase and follow high market trends. High fashion runways inform young women as to how they should dress and look like. As summarized by Scheier & Carver (1988), when a standard is made pertinent, those who deem the standard as relevant will use it as a basis for self-judgment, inducing self-comparison. Some people model their behavior and choices after social standards.

Unfortunately not all of the subliminal and not so subliminal messages sent via social media are positive. Social media is exceedingly influential to not only today's youth but also our society as a whole (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). A review of the following literature will first work to address operational definitions that pose relevance to this study such as body image and body disturbance. It will then highlight the importance of understanding the origin of eating disorders. Next, it will explore the way in which the thin body ideal is pervasive through stereotypes and the media. Lastly it will examine the media and how it affects male's body perception.

## **Definition of body image**

Various definitions are used as a way to characterize deficiencies in people's personal body image perceptions. Two components of body image are generally found when eating disorders occur; there is a perceptual and evaluative component (Gardner, 2001). Both types of body image disturbances are part of the diagnostic criteria for the clinical eating disorders anorexia and bulimia nervosa (APA, 1994). Eating disorders themselves are generally characterized by a drastic change in eating behavior and one's body image (APA, 1994).

Body image disturbance specifically has been used as an umbrella term encompassing perceptions, cognition, affect, behaviors, and subjective evaluation related to body image (Thompson et al., 1999). In a more simplistic definition found within a intervention study in women with eating disorders (Bhatnaga, Wisniewski, Solomon & Heinberg, 2013) body image disturbance was defined as the poorly internalized representation of one's weight, shape, and/or appearance.

Body image and body image disturbance may be associated with upward social comparison, as defined as comparing oneself to others who we feel to be socially better than ourselves (Gibbons & Gerald, 1989). Body image has also been classified as a variable risk factor that precedes eating disorders (Jacobi, Hayward, de Zwaan, Kraemer, & Agras, 2004). Social comparison can be associated with one of the reasons why body image and body image disturbance develops in certain people.

## **Origin of Eating Disorders**

Understanding the origin of eating disorders poses relevancy in that research (Harrison, 2001; Harrison & Cantor, 1997) has shown that exposure to thin-ideal media is related to eating disorder symptomology. Baker, Sivyer, and Towell (1998) found that visually impaired women have fewer body image and eating problems than sighted women, suggesting that exposure to visual images of thinness as ideal may play a role in the development of eating disorders. Bhatnaga, Wisniewski, Solomon, and Heinberg (2013) examined the effectiveness and feasibility of a cognitive-behavioral group intervention for body image disturbance in women with eating disorders. Within this study there were thirty-eight participants with different eating disorders. Psychoeducation, self-monitoring, systematic desensitization, and cognitive restructuring were used during the intervention to target attitudinal and behavioral components of body image disturbance (Bhatnaga, et al., 2013). Results show that those who received manualized treatment reported significantly less body image disturbance opposed to participants randomized to a waitlist control condition (Bhatnaga, et al., 2013). The literature found differentiated in the moderators emplaced within each study.

In relation to the development of eating disorders and the media, Harrison (2001) hypothesized that body-specific self-discrepancies would mediate the relationship between thin-ideal media exposure and disordered eating. To further investigate his theory a sample of one hundred and thirty participants were taken from the sixth, ninth, and twelfth grade (Harrison, 2001). Participants were first given a questionnaire that generated adjectives describing themselves. Then at random participants were assigned to view one of three videos (Harrison, 2001). Afterwards participants were given a checklist

and a questionnaire. The questionnaire measured their interpretation of the videos they viewed (Harrison, 2001, p. 312). The results showed that, “activation of both types of discrepancies is associated with an increase in negative affect whose chronic presence is predictive of disordered eating” (Harrison, 2001, p. 318). The study expresses the importance of, “self-discrepancies as mediators in the relationship between thin-ideal television exposure and eating disorder symptomatology” (Harrison, 2001, p.318).

### **Stereotypes**

In assessing the information previously presented within this paper one can conclude there are various mediating factors that influence one’s perception of their body image. Mass media is the most influential in forming, strengthening, and activating stereotypes (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992; Lavine, Sweeney & Wagner, 1999). Research suggests that children are more susceptible to media and stereotyped messages because they are more likely to view content on television surrounding thinness and fatness as real opposed to artificial (Van Ezra, 1990). An emphasis on muscularity has been placed on young boys who play with action figures (Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, & Borowiecki, 1999).

Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose, and Thompson (2004) employed a content analysis that was used to examine body image-related messages in popular children’s videos and books. Results show that the specific books and videos emphasized physical appearance and the portrayal of body stereotypes (Herbozo et al., 2004). This may give us greater insight into how children develop their stereotyped ideologies. Even earlier Staffieri (1967) found that when children were presented with a picture

representing obese children, it was one of the least liked and least likely to be considered a potential playmate by the children in the study. Stereotypes can be influential to people's behavior and the relationships they create with others (Hill & Silver, 1995).

In examining how people progressively internalize body ideal stereotypes, adolescence marks a crucial age in which teens express their beliefs. In moving from one's childhood into adolescence children's choice of role models expand beyond parents, often to media figures (Campbell, 1962). Adolescence is also a period in life when, "changing bodies and increasing awareness of social standards make body image particularly salient" (Stice, Mazotti, Krebs & Martin, 1998, p. 196).

It has been shown that anti-fat stereotypes have adverse consequences for obese adolescents (Falkner, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, Jeffery, Beuhring & Resnick, 2001). A study (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger & Wright, 2001) examined correlates of weight status in the adolescent population. Obese girls and boys, reported adverse social correlates (Anderson et al., 2001). Results also show that the thin boys are sometimes negatively stereotyped (Wardle, Volz & Golding, 1995). In interpreting these findings it shows us how adolescent experiences vary by weight status and how stereotypes affect adolescents (Anderson et al., 2001).

Research supports the idea that there are generally negative stereotypes associated with people who are obese (Klaczynski et al., 2004). There are stereotypes about those who are overweight that depicts them as lazy, lacking in self-control, physically unattractive, and mentally slow (Allon. 1982). It is said that such negative connotation is associated with being heavy because weight is seen as a attribute that people have control

over (Allon, 1982; Weiner, Perry & Magnusson, 1988; Rittenbaugh, 1982). The topic of obese people being stigmatized was further examined (Klaczynski et al., 2004) when researchers hypothesized that, “the relationship between perceptions of control over one’s weight and self-esteem would be mediated by valuation of the thin ideal and evaluation of obese persons” (Klaczynski et al., 2004, p.307). Participants were recruited from an undergraduate introductory psychology course in a northeastern university (Klaczynski et al., 2004). The participant’s were administered a number of questionnaires to complete as well as participant’s BMI’s were taken. The following questionnaires were administered: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, an Attitudes Toward and Stereotypes of Obese People Questionnaire, and the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ) (Klaczynski et al., 2004). Results showed that, “self-esteem was correlated negatively with anti-fat attitudes, negative stereotypes of the obese and this idealization” (Klaczynski et al., 2004, p.307).

There are various impeding factors in how the mass media forms, strengthens, and activates stereotypes (Andersen et al., 1999). Beginning early in life and progressing slow into adulthood, research suggests that stereotypes can affect the relationship people form with others. The previous literature reviewed shows how people progressively internalized stereotypes.

## **Media**

Media exposure can lead to internalization of a slender ideal body shape, which in turn can lead to body dissatisfaction and eating-disordered symptoms (Stice et al., 1994). Body dissatisfaction is so common among women and adolescent girls that are described

as “normative discontent” (Rodin, Silberstein & Striegel-Moore, 1985). Such media exposure has been proven to lead to body stereotype internalization (Stice & Shaw, 1994). The media can be used to communicate deglamorized messages about eating and shape related disorders (Thompson et al., 1999). In an analysis (Kilbourne, 1994) concluded only 5% of women in a normal weight distribution approximate the media ideal. The media is exceedingly influential in our society in how people internalize their body image. It serves as a realistic target for people to formulate personal comparisons (Botta, 1999; Jasper, 1993). Advertisements of products associate the idea of success and attractiveness to people who look like models portrayed within the media (Pierce & Wardle, 1997; Quinn & Crocker, 1999; Thompson & Stice, 2001). We as a society receive messages from the media, parents, and peers that the ideal body is one that is almost impossible to attain (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Although much of the literature compiled support this notion, it is oriented around women, the ideal male body of the new millennium is also increasingly unattainable (Pope et al., 1999). Research conducted thus far is crucial in helping us understand potential links between weight status and weight-related beliefs to numerous psychosocial phenomena (Klaczynski et al., 2004).

People engage in social comparison at young ages, Martin & Kennedy (1993) measured 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade females’ tendency to compare themselves with models in advertisements. Results showed that, “comparison raised participants’ standards of attractiveness and that the tendency to compare was strongest in participants with lower initial perceived personal physical attractiveness self-esteem” (Martin & Kennedy, 1993, p. 513). Bessenoff (2006) explored body image self-discrepancy as moderator and social comparison as mediator in the effects on women from thin-ideal images in the media.

Participants of the study were female undergraduates who had high and low body image self-discrepancies. The subjects were exposed to advertisements with and without thin women. Results showed that, “women with high levels of body image self-discrepancy were more likely to engage in social comparison from exposure to thin-ideal advertisements and more likely to have such comparisons process induce self-directed negative consequences” (Bessenoff, 2006, p. 242). This shows how women engage in social comparison within the media and the potential negative effects it can cause.

As a result of mass media depicting the ideal body size thinner, women overestimate their actual body size (Garner, Garfinkel, Stancer & Moldofsky, 1976; Halmi, Goldberg & Cunningham, 1977; Casper, Halmi, Goldberg, Eckert & Davis, 1979; Silverstein, Perdue & Peterson, 1986; Birtchnell, Dolan & Lacey, 1987). In association with social comparison, one study examined, “the role of the mass media in social construction of reality: how television advertising and programming affect a young woman’s perception of her own body” (Myers & Biocca, 1992, p.108). Theories pertaining to the, “roles of television in the lives of children and adolescents fall under two broad classes: those that emphasize the content presented and those that focus on amount of exposure to the medium irrespective of its content” (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger & Wright, 2001, p. 2). Results within the study showed that, “watching a minimal of thirty minutes of television and advertising can alter a woman’s perception of the shape of her body” (Myers & Biocca, 1992, p 126). This may suggest that in women internalizing such advertisements while watching television, it can cause them to become goal oriented to attain the thin ideal (Banner, 1986; Spitzack, 1990). Although media isn’t the only agent that causes poor self-esteem, eating disorders, and

body image disturbance, it has been proven that it can be a negative influence on people (Commerci, 1988).

### **Male body image and the media**

A majority of the previous literature reviewed focused on women and their body perceptions. Although attention to males' body image (Cash, 2002) and their awareness to body ideals (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000) have been rising, there is a lack of information provided on males. One study (Agliata & Tanteleff-Dunn, 2004) examined media exposure and male's body image, examining 158 male television advertisements containing either ideal male images or neutral images inserted between segments of a television program. The participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups, either the appearance advertisement or a nonappearance advertisement (Agliata & Tanteleff-Dunn, 2004). The first thirty-minute segment video created, contained appearance-loaded advertisements and the second containing nonappearance-related advertisements (Agliata & Tanteleff-Dunn, 2004). A number of scales and questionnaires were used to assess the following: body satisfaction, appearance satisfaction, and a visual analogue scale. Results showed that those exposed to ideal advertisements had higher levels of muscle dissatisfaction and were more depressed than those that saw the neutral advertisements (Agliata & Tanteleff-Dunn, 2004). Parallels can be found between these results and previous studies predominantly focused around women in the media negatively influencing one's body image (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

The thin body ideal is pervasive through stereotypes and the media. There is a relationship between people and their body esteem. They are mediated by both beliefs

that one's weight is controlled and by the degree of internalization of cultural ideas about thinness (Dohnut & Tiggermann, 2006). In reviewing body dissatisfaction, the origin of eating disorders, stereotypes, and the media it shows us how people's experiences vary by weight. It also gives us insight into how stereotypes within the media affect people and how they are internalized.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

The participants within this study were undergraduate students that attend Rowan University. Recruitment of undergraduate student subjects was done through the psychology department at Rowan University. Subjects that participated within this study did so on a volunteer basis.

Those considered ineligible for this study included students who did not attend Rowan University and or those who were not undergraduate students. This limited the number of participants. Due to subject participation being voluntary, the resulting sample is self-selected.

The examiner permitted undergraduate students to sign up for the study through the Rowan University Psychology Subject Pool Sona System. Twelve time slots were provided for participants to sign up, allowing the potential for a total of 300 participants. Of the potential participants a total of 39 subjects partook in the study. The survey inquired about participant's personal body image. It should be noted that the sample size contained undergraduate students who differ in background and personal experiences. The survey prompted participants in the following areas regarding their personal body image: Information, Pressures, Internalization-General, and Internalization-Athlete" (Warren, Gleaves & Rakhkovskaya, 2013).

## Materials

The Sociocultural Attitudes Appearance Questionnaire 3 is a revision of the first two scales Heinberg and Thompson (1995) developed. It is a, “30- item self-report measure that provided four subscales: Information, Pressures, Internalization-General, and Internalization-Athlete” (Wilksch & Wade, 2012, p. 353). Information has, “nine items that indicate different types of media that are considered to be an important source for obtaining information about being attractive” (Calogero, Davis & Thompson, 2004, p. 194). The Pressure subscale has, “items that index a subjective sense of feeling pressure from exposure to media images and messages to modify one’s appearance” (Calogero et al., 2004, p.194). The Internalization-General contains nine items that compare one’s body to the bodies of people in the media (Wilksch & Wade, 2012). Lastly, the Internalization-Athlete section contains five items, e.g. “I try to look like sports athletes” (Wilksch & Wade, 2012, p. 353).

The participant, on a 5-point scale, rates each item on the subscale; five points indicated one strongly agreed and 1-point indicating one disagreed (Thompson & Stice, 2001; Wilksch & Wade, 2012; Calogero et al., 2004). The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire 3 (SATAQ; Heinberg et.al 1995), which was used to measure, “levels of internalizations of culturally ideal body types presented in the media” (Wilksch & Wade, 2012, p. 353). Internalization is a significant correlate of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance, it predicted variance beyond that associated with simple awareness of pressures and other risk factors, such as negative feedback about appearance (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). The higher the score the higher the level of internalization is (Thompson et al., 2004). As a result, certain survey items were reverse

scored so that scores could be calculated appropriately. For example, those who responded to the survey question, “I do not care if my body looks like the body of people who are on TV” were reversed scored prior to analysis so that data could be averaged with the other responses correctly. The questionnaires referenced positive and negative perceptions of stereotypical body image ideals.

The examiner distributed paper copies of the questionnaire to the participants upon their arrival to the testing room. Pens were also provided for participants that needed them. Those within the experimental group that viewed the short video clip did so via a computer and projection screen.

## **Design**

This study examined the way in which people internalize societal social stereotypes and how they enable such stereotypes to affect their self-image. The undergraduate student population at Rowan University and how they interpreted a short film clip pertaining to one’s body image was the main focus of this study. The following gave insight into the statistical procedures used to analyze the data gathered.

The questionnaire implemented within the study was reviewed with another of its kind (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Researchers found that the questionnaire has undergone, extensive examination and demonstrated strong internal consistencies, test-retest reliabilities, predictive validity, and convergent validity” (Heinber et al. 1995; Stice, 2001; Thompson, 2001). Wilksch and Wade (2012) found that, “internal consistencies for the four SATAQ-3 scales have been found to be high, the Internalization-Athlete scale has been found to be lower but still has acceptable reliability” (Wilksch & Wade, 2012, p.

355). Studies have also found that, “internal reliability scores range from .96 (Internalization-General and Information) to .89 (Internalization-Athlete)” (Thompson, et al., 2004; Thompson et al., 2004). Internal consistencies ranged from .90 (Internalization-General) to .85 (Internalization Athlete and Pressures) (Thompson et al., 2004; Thompson et al., 2003). Overall within the four subscales, adequate reliability and validity have been established amongst other studies performed.

### **Procedures**

There was an experimental and non-experimental group within the study conducted. The results of the survey for both the experimental and non-experimental group served as the dependent variable. The SATAQ-3 served as the independent variable. Subjects completed the measure within a classroom on Rowan University’s campus and receive extra credit for their efforts. Participants within the experimental group upon entering the room were first asked to write their names on a sign in sheet. Once participants were seated they were given an alternate consent form and the SATQ-3. They were then instructed to first read the alternate consent form, then view the video clip, and then complete the SATQ-3. After subjects read the alternate consent form the examiner began a short video clip pertaining to the media and it’s influence upon people’s body image. The experimental group was then asked to fill out the SATAQ-3. Once the experimental group completed the surveys the researcher collected them. A debriefing statement was then distributed and the participants were thanked for participating in the study.

Those subjects that were in the non-experimental group upon arrival were asked to write their names on a sign in sheet. Once seated the examiner administered an alternate consent form and the SATQ-3. Subjects were then instructed to first read the alternate consent form and then complete the SATQ-3. Once the non-experimental group completed the surveys the researcher collected them. Finally, a debriefing statement was disbursed and the subjects were thanked for participating in the study.

The data collected from the Sociocultural Attitudes Appearance Questionnaire 3 was assessed through a process of scoring and reverse scoring. The Likert scale was also used as a way to calculate individual participant's scores. Each response was accredited with a positive number: *Definitely Disagree* (1), *Mostly Disagree* (2), *Neither Agree Nor Disagree* (3), *Mostly Agree* (4), *Definitely Agree* (5). The data was analyzed utilizing a independent sample t-test. The independent sample t-test determined if the experimental and non-experimental group differed significantly from one and other. A One- Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the following: the mean sum of the four subgroups (Information, Pressures, Internalization-General, and Internalization-Athlete), significant correlations amongst subscales, and significant correlations between questions.

## Chapter 4

### Results

Before interpreting the results, there must be an understanding of the numerical scores used in the analysis procedure and how they relate to the responses were recorded on a Likert scale. The participant's responses in the following way: *Definitely Disagree* (1), *Mostly Disagree* (2), *Neither Agree Nor Disagree* (3), *Mostly Agree* (4), *Definitely Agree* (5). In assessing the Likert scale, any question given a response of 4 or greater implicates the participant agrees that social media may and can influence one's body image. Any score of 3 signifies that participant takes a neutral position towards the survey item. Survey items reverse scored were ones that conveyed a negative attitude of media stereotypes. There was no significance found when comparing the experimental and non-experimental group. Due to the initial investigation not bringing forth any significant data, the overall population was examined. Significant results were within the following areas were found: the mean sum of the four subscales, correlations amongst subscales, and correlations between questions. The results within the significant correlations can be generalized to a greater undergraduate population.

#### **Independent Sample T-Test**

The examiner hypothesized that, "if students enable societal stereotypes to affect their self-images, then they will develop a negative self-image of themselves". An independent sample t-test was utilized to examine whether the results from the video showed to the experimental group impacted their answers. The independent sample t-test indicated that no significant differences between the experimental and non-experimental groups were found when examining the sum subscale scores. Scores on the summed

Internalization-General subscale did not differ significantly according to whether or not participants viewed the video,  $t(37) = -.892, p = .378$ . Scores on the summed Internalization-Athlete subscale did not differ significantly according to whether or not participants viewed the video,  $t(37) = .815, p = .420$ . Scores on the summed Pressure subscale did not differ significantly according to whether or not participants viewed the video,  $t(37) = -1.856, p = .070$ . Scores on the summed Information subscale did not differ significantly according to whether or not participants viewed the video,  $t(37) = -.520, p = .606$ . The results indicate that the hypothesis was not proven.

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to determine whether watching the video influenced scores on each individual survey item. Except for one item, the scores did not vary significantly upon examining the independent sample t-test results. The mean score on question 6 “I do not feel pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty” for those who did not watch the video ( $M = 2.5789, SD = 1.46499$ ) differed significantly from the mean score of those who did watch the video ( $M = 3.9000, SD = .91191$ ). Those who did not watch the video, their level of agreement fell between “Mostly Disagree” and “Neither Agree Nor Disagree”. Those who did watch the video, their level of agreement fell between “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” and “Mostly Agree”.

### **One Way Analysis of Variance Comparing Subscales**

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether participant’s level of agreement varied significantly according to the topic of the subscale. Results show that these scores differed significantly,  $F(3,39) = 32.822, p = .000$ . As indicated by Table 2, the Internalization-General subscale has a mean score of 25.7949 ( $SD = 7.560$ ). Undergraduate students who scored highly within the

Internalization General subscale compare their bodies to people within the media. The Internalization-Athlete sub scale has a mean score of 16.8718 (SD=3.693).

Undergraduate students who scored highly within the Internalization-Athlete subscale enable athlete’s portrayal within the media to influence their body-image. The Pressure subscale has a mean score of 19.4103 (SD=7.051). Those who scored highly within the Pressure subscale allow pressure from exposure to the media images and message influence their appearance. The last subscale, Information, had a mean score of 27.3333 (SD=6.914). Undergraduates who scored high within the Information subscale consider different types of media an important source of information about how to be attractive and good-looking.

Table 1

*One Way ANOVA*

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Within Groups	2938.788	3	979.596	32.822	.000**

*Note.* \*\*Finding is significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 2

*Significant Differences Found Between Mean SATAQ-3 Subscale Scores*

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Intern.-General	39	25.79**	7.560
Intern-Athlete	39	16.87**	3.693
Pressure	39	19.41**	7.051
Information	39	27.33**	6.914

*Note.*\*\* Differences between means is significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

**Analyses of Significant Correlations Among Subscales**

There were significant correlations found among the four subscales. The correlation between the General Internalization subscale and the Pressures subscale was found to be statistically significant,  $r(39) = .679$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed. Results may be generalized to a greater undergraduate population in that; those who score highly within the Internalization-General subscale may also score highly within the Pressure subscale. The correlation between the General-Internalization subscale and the Athlete subscale was also found to be statistically significant,  $r(39) = .371$ ,  $p = .020$ , two-tailed. These results may suggest that undergraduate students who score highly within the General-Internalization subscale may also score highly within the Athlete subscale.

**Analyses of Significant Correlations Between SATAQ Questions**

To address the hypotheses that if students enable societal stereotypes to affect their self-image, then they will develop a negative self-image of themselves, correlations were computed. The participant's responses were scored on a Likert scale in the

following way: *Definitely Disagree* (1), *Mostly Disagree* (2), *Neither Agree Nor Disagree* (3), *Mostly Agree* (4), *Definitely Agree* (5). In assessing the Likert scale, any question given a response of 4 or greater implicates the participant agrees that social media may and can influence one's body image. Any score of 3 signifies that a participant takes a neutral position towards the survey item. Survey items reverse scored were ones that conveyed a negative attitude of societal media stereotypes. While many items within the survey were correlated, correlations specifically related to the hypothesis will be discussed. Table 3 displays the significant correlations that relate to the hypothesis on individual questions as well as correlations found between subscales.

The correlation between question 21 "pictures in magazines are a important source of information about fashion and being attractive" and question 22 "I felt pressure from TV or magazines to exercise" is statistically significant,  $r(39)=.270$ ,  $p=.044$ , two-tailed. There was also a correlation that was found between questions 25 "movies are an important source of information about fashion and being attractive" and question 26, "I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance" that proved to be significant  $r(39)=.437$ ,  $p=.001$ , two-tailed. These findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Correlations of Interest Among Subscale Measures and Individual Survey Items*

		Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Overall General Internalization	Overall Pressures	.679	.000
Overall General Internalization	Overall Athlete	.371	.020
Question 21	Question 22	.270	.004
Question 25	Question 26	.437	.001

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Assessing the Influence of Video on SATAQ-3 Scores**

As hypothesized, the examiner presumed that the conferred information would reveal that the experimental group would highly internalize societal stereotypes within the media regarding self-image. The results of the questionnaire, the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire 3 (SATAQ-3), indicated that there was no differences found within the summed scores of the subscales. This may be due to the video that was viewed by the experimental group. The video used had never previously been implemented within a study and there was no prior knowledge as to how participants would react. In using the video, the video may not have been a strong enough tool in influencing participant's views on societal stereotypes regarding self-image and body image. Also, those participants who are not susceptible to messages within the media may have remained unaffected by the video. In opposition, the video may have affected those who are vulnerable to media influence.

When examining the differences between mean scores of those who watched and did not watch the video on individual SATAQ-3 questions, a significant difference was found within a single survey item, question 6. Question 6 assessed level of agreement to this statement, "I do not feel pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty". Those within the experimental group may have been more sensitive to the impact of media. The significant difference found within questions 6 may be viewed as a spurious finding. Further research is suggested.

## **Conclusion About the Sample Population**

The undergraduate population represented through survey participation was very small. In calculating the mean sum score of the subscales, participants scored highest on the Information subscale 27.3333 (SD=6.914). There was also a high level agreement found within the Internalization-General subscale 25.7949 (SD=7.560), having the second highest mean sum score. Participants also identified with the Pressure subscale, it had a mean sum score of 19.4103 (SD=7.051). Lastly, participants least identified with the Internalization-Athlete subscale 16.8718 (SD=3.693). These scores may indicate that the undergraduate sample population highly internalizes information from the media to influence their self-image. These findings also show that the undergraduate sample population is less likely to allow athletes within the media to affect their self-image.

These results should be reviewed as pertinent when investigating the relationship between the media and one's body image.

## **Examining Correlations Within Subscales**

According to the results there were also significant correlations found within the subscales, specifically between the General-Internalization subscale and the Pressures subscale and the General-Internalization subscale and the Athlete subscale. Previous research has also shown high correlations of .54 (Pressures and Internalization-General) indicating a moderate degree of overlap (Thompson et al., 2004). This research illustrates those participants who score highly within the General Internalization subscale are likely to score highly within the Pressure subscale. One may anticipated such correlations in examining the content areas of the three subscales noted previously. The General-

Internalization (Wilksch & Wade, 2012) subscale contains items that compare one's body to the bodies of people in the media where the Pressure subscale contains items oriented around the exposure of pressures provoked by media images in changing one's appearance (Calogero, Davis & Thompson, 2004). When comparing the two, both subscales heavily correspond to one and other.

The same may also be said when comparing the General-Internalization subscale and the Athlete subscale. Again, the General-Internalization subscale (Wilksch & Wade, 2012) is oriented around body-image comparison of figures within the media and the Athlete subscale focuses comparing oneself to sport athletes within the media. Body image and body image disturbance may be associated with upward social comparison, as defined as comparing oneself to others who we feel to be socially better than ourselves (Gibbons & Gerald, 1989). Social comparison can be associated with one of the reasons why body image and body image disturbance develops in certain people, intern leading to a student's having negative self-image.

### **Examining Correlations Found Within Questions**

According to the results within the questionnaire, specific questions within the subscales also proved to be advantageous when probing for significant data. The level of agreement on question 21 "pictures in magazines are a important source of information about fashion and being attractive" and question 22 "I felt pressure from TV or magazines to exercise" was found to statistically correlate. Variables that have been hypothesized or found to moderate the pernicious effects of internalization include self-

esteem (Thompson & Stice, 2001). One can see, in relation to the hypothesis, media images do evoke pressures and can be influential to student's self-image.

There was also a significant correlation found between questions 25 "movies are an important source of information about fashion and being attractive" and question 26, "I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance". These results speak to the hypothesis in that two different forms of media are identified to potentially influence one's self-image. Both questions provoke change in one's appearance to adhere to societal media standards of attractiveness as well as their personal perception of themselves. The correlations discussed raise relevancy when working to decrease the influence media has on self-image.

### **Limitations**

The nature of this study opens it self to a number of different limitations. One limitation of the study was that the survey was voluntary. Undergraduate students may have participated in the study as a result of interest in the content area. Additionally, those more interested and or ever affected by the media may pose a bias. In opposition, it is possible those who have a negative perception of their body may be unwilling to share their honest opinion of themselves, therefor skewing the results. Those who are indifferent may feel disinterested in sharing their feelings about the media. Furthermore, as a result of the undergraduate population having a broad age range, these results cannot be generalized to a specific age group.

The video used within this study also contributes to the limitations of this study. Lack of reliability within the video may have been a contributing factor to the lack of

significance found within the subscales. As a result of viewing the video participants may have been influenced to respond to the SATAQ-3 with high levels of internalization. Participants may also have been remained unaffected by the video, more studies would need to use the video to increase its reliability.

Lastly, the sample size of participants taken within the undergraduate population was very small. The small sample size taken could have inhibited the results from a subscale being appropriately represented. In conducting future studies the examiner could open it to graduate students as opposed to only allowing undergraduate to partake in the study. This could generate more participants as well as improve the validity of the study's findings.

### **Further Directions**

The limited scope of this study affords itself to further direction. As previously mentioned a small sample size limited the possible results within the subscales and significance found within the results. Using a larger sample size could improve the study's reliability and validity. Also, opening the study to the graduate population could allow for more participants.

If this study were to be replicated in the future it is recommended that the new version of the SATAQ be used. The SATAQ-4 is currently being published and said to have only two subscales (Internalization and Pressure subscale) (Warren, Gleaves & Rakhkovskay, 2013). It is predicted that the SATAQ-3 will still be used as a tool in assessing body satisfaction due to the reliability and validity proven by previous studies.

Examining self-image is a relevant topic to the undergraduate population who encompasses a large amount of today's young adults. The current study should be altered to have participants record their age and gender when taking the SATAQ-3. A more precise understanding of the background of participants lends itself greater insight into potential contributing factors of poor self-image brought about by the media. In one way teenagers or young adults may possess or be more susceptible to acquiring insecurities. Older adults may be less susceptible to succumb to media pressures. In examining gender differences it may also give a better representation of whether the female or male population is more vulnerable to media. Media is noted to reinforce the thin-ideal body image for women (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Furthermore, by including more variables within the study it allows for the isolation of specific variables, intern giving the examiner better insight into the population.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether societal stereotypes within the media impact undergraduate students self-image. The correlations found within the results lend support to the SATAQ-3 when examining self-image, as evidence by significant correlations found within the subscales (Internalization-General, Pressures, Internalization- Athlete, and Information). Further directions consist of broadening the participant scope and using the SATAQ-4.

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