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Dr. Michael Plasay, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Media Literacy Education Exposure related to Self-Esteem, Body Esteem, and

Sociocultural Ideals in College Students and Graduates

by

Tammy Stargardt

MS, Walden University, 2010

BS, Edgewood College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

September 2015

Abstract

The prevalence of eating disorders (ED) in the United States has increased while the media consistently presents thinner representations of the body. Scholars have found media to negatively influence factors associated with the development of EDs. The purpose of this quantitative nonexperimental cross-sectional survey design study was to explore relationships between exposure levels to MLE and self-esteem, body esteem, and the internalization societal appearance ideals. Participants included undergraduate students or recent graduates majoring in either communications or an alternative major with comparatively less MLE curriculum. The Body Esteem Scale, Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Surveys were administered online to examine the variance of 3 dependent variables (self-esteem, body esteem, internalization of societal appearance norms) with 2 independent variables (exposure levels to media literacy curriculum and gender), and a multivariate analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. Results displayed statistically significant differences between all 3 dependent variables with MLE levels. Research in MLE benefits both adults and children by way of providing the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to be able to fully benefit from various media sources. MLE provides an opportunity to better understand media messages, as well as its influences therein, this way rather than being vulnerable and easily manipulated, one becomes a more knowledgeable and aware media consumer. The results to this study can promote, advocate, and bring awareness to media consumers and today's educators of the importance and need of MLE curriculum beginning at a young age.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my amazing family, for without their love, support, and ongoing encouragement this accomplishment would not have been possible. To my husband, Josh – Words cannot express how grateful I am for all the sacrifices that you've made on my behalf. Thank you for always having believed in me. To my children, Jaden and Avery – I hope to be an inspiration to you – know that you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction and Background

The use of media and exposure to its messages is consistently increasing, and in response it is important that consumers develop a greater knowledge and understanding in order to avoid some of negative influences media has been known to have on its consumers. It is estimated that at least 14 million people in the United States suffer from an eating disorder (ED; Debate , Blunt & Becker, 2010). More specifically, 10 million females and 1 million males suffer from bulimia nervosa (BN) and anorexia nervosa (AN), with millions more from binge eating disorder (BED; Debate et al., 2010; Fairburn, Hay, & Welch, 1993; Gordon, 2000; Hoek & Van Hoeken, 2003; Shisslak, Crago, & Estes, 1995). The mental distress of an ED persists beyond the medical consequences; for example, depression and anxiety are commonly reported. Individuals suffering from AN are 57 times more likely to die of suicide than their fellow peers (Eating Disorder Coalition [EDC], 2012). Children 12 years of age and younger hospitalized for EDs increased by 119 % in less than a decade's time, and because of the stigmas associated with EDs, this number may become higher as many cases go unreported (EDC, 2012). In addition, many individuals struggle with low body- esteem and disordered eating attitudes and behaviors. It has been reported that 80 % of women in the United States are dissatisfied with their appearance (Smolak, 1996). This chapter includes the background of this study, problem statement, and nature and purpose of the study. In this chapter, the theoretical base of this study, limitations associated with this specific study, and definition of the terms are also presented.

Background of the Study

Developing and implementing ED prevention interventions has proven to be difficult. Factors to consider when developing such interventions include addressing common ED risk factor variables. One of these risk factors is considered to be media internalization, defined by Thompson and Stice (2001) as "the extent to which an individual cognitively buys into" societal ideals of size and appearance (thin ideal for girls and muscular ideal for boys), to the point that they become guiding principles, and subsequently modifying behaviors in an attempt to achieve these standards (p. 181). Media internalization is considered to be a variable related to BN symptoms and a causal risk factor for binge-eating, body dissatisfaction, extreme dieting, and an increase in behaviors and attitudes associated with EDs (Field et al., 1999; Stice, 2001; Stice, 2002; Stice, Nemeroff, & Shaw, 1996; Stice, Presnell, & Spangler, 2002; Wichstrom, 2002).

Media literacy education (MLE), as a prevention intervention, aims to decrease media internalization, and the risk factors commonly associated with developing an ED. It uses the cognitive -behavioral approach, working to reduce risk factors for EDs by building necessary skills to resist social persuasion through learning activities. The goal of this approach is to empower individuals to evaluate media content to where they can identify, analyze, challenge, and propose alternatives in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of societal ideals illustrated in the media (Bergsma & Carney, 2008).

The prevalence of EDs in the United States has more than doubled over the past 4 decades, while during this same time period mass media has been showing thinner representations of the female body. Scholars have commonly found that media exposure

negatively influences both self-esteem and body image satisfaction, two factors regularly associated with the development of an ED. MLE education can prevent the media's negative influence on self-esteem and body esteem by incorporating it into core academic curricula, specifically for high risk populations, such as adolescents.

In response to the growing use of and exposure to media, incorporating MLE as part of the primary curricula in academic settings can act as a prevention intervention to those negative influences associated with disordered eating attitudes and behaviors beginning at a young age. Researchers have suggested an increase in body dissatisfaction among males (Sanne , Doeschka, Thao, & Rutger, 2012). Scholars have reported a positive correlation between peer teasing about appearance and body dissatisfaction in both male and female students (Barker & Galambos, 2003; Thompson et al. 2007b). Similarly, Jones, Vigfusdottir, and Lee (2004) discovered a positive correlation between peer appearance criticism and body dissatisfaction. Peer appearance criticism was the strongest direct predictor of body dissatisfaction in boys but not in girls. Just as media influences female body ideals and body esteem, it also influences the degree to which male peers judge and criticize their fellow female peers in regards to their appearance compared to societal appearance ideals. Male peers have an important role in their female peers' environments (Lawler & Nixon, 2011).

Media has a negative influence on self-esteem, body esteem, while promoting the endorsement of societal appearance norms. Furthermore, while scholars have indicated such subsequent risk factors to be commonly associated with the development of EDs, it remains unclear if by increasing a person's exposure to MLE, he or she is at a decreased

risk to experience the negative influence of media (decreased self-esteem, decreased body -esteem, and increased internalization of societal appearance ideals) commonly associated with EDs. Limited literature exists on the effectiveness of incorporating MLE into primary curricula as an intervention to prevent the development of EDs for adolescents. In this study, I addressed this gap in the literature as I investigated the relationship between exposure levels to MLE and the risk factors commonly associated with the development of EDs. It is hoped that the results will be used to advance ED prevention and treatment and to further elucidate the social cognitive and social comparison theories.

Problem Statement

Regardless of media's increasing dominant role in the world, there continues to be a lack of education being provided to consumers. It is impossible for people to control what they do not understand. By developing the skills necessary to understand the media influences that permeate our culture, consumers become empowered to make wise media choices that lead to physical, mental, and emotional health and safety. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), in 2012 adults and teenagers were anticipated to spend nearly 5 months, equivalent to 3,518 hours, watching television, surfing the internet, reading daily newspapers, reading magazines, and listening to personal music devices. The average adult spends 4 hours every day watching television, whereas the average youth, between 8 and 18 years of age, spends almost 7 hours every day using some form of media (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Nearly half of elementary school children and more than 60 % of adolescents have access to watching television in their bedrooms. As

the use of and daily exposure to media increases, so does the potential negative influences associated with such.

Body esteem and self-esteem are influenced by advertising and programming in the media. Researchers have suggested that media content and messages pertaining to body may influence self-esteem development in adolescents (Thomsen, McCoy, & Williams, 2001). Television, movies, magazines, and advertisements present images that promote unrealistic expectations of beauty, body weight, and overall physical appearance. Efforts to sell an image that endorses certain standards of body weight and size may be a factor in the development of EDs in some adolescents. When adolescents fall short of their own expectations based on the body appearance ideals presented in the media, their self-esteem suffers (Thomsen et al., 2001).

Furthermore, exposure to media portraying unrealistic body images and thin-ideal advertisements promote body image dissatisfaction and negative mood (Arnett, 1995; Thomsen et al., 2001). In a survey administered to females, ranging from 11 to 17 years of age, participants were asked if given three magic wishes, what they would choose, and the primary wish indicated was to lose weight and keep it off (Kilbourne, 1994). The survey was also administered to a random sample of middle-aged women; participants were asked what they would most like to change about their lives. In response, more than half the participants indicated their weight (Kilbourne, 1994). Body dissatisfaction and an overall concern in weight has become a part of the female experience in the United States that "psychologists have coined the term 'normative discontent' to explain the idea that it is normal if you are a female to be unhappy with your weight" (Oliver-Pyatt, 2003,

p. 40). These findings identify a strong internalization of societal appearance ideals by females of all ages, however, can be addressed as well as prevented by way incorporating MLE into the education curriculum offered to adolescents and teens.

Media glorifies the thin ideal and stresses the importance of beauty and appearances and has disempowered women by holding them prisoner to excessive dieting, an increased drive for thinness, and repeated attempts to attain the unattainable beauty and thin ideal. Over 50 % of teenage girls use unhealthy weight control behaviors, such as vomiting, skipping meals, smoking cigarettes, fasting, and taking laxatives (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Perry, 2005). Girls who diet frequently are 12 times more likely to binge as those who do not diet (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Forty-two percent of girls between first and second grade want to be thinner (Collins, 1991), while 81 % of 10-year-olds fear becoming fat (Mellin et al., 1991). Forty-five percent of women are on a diet on any given day (Smolak, 1996).

Body image concerns in males have gained the attention of researchers over the past decade (Ferguson, 2013; Lawler & Nixon, 2011; Nikkelen & Sanne, 2012). Males are becoming increasingly concerned with the appearance of their bodies as well. College men are also increasingly reporting greater levels of body image dissatisfaction. Men associate their attractiveness with increased muscle mass and definition and are concerned about body shape, as opposed to weight, and increasing their overall muscle mass (University of Iowa Health Care, 2002; Weltzin, 2012).

Young men with low body esteem and a high drive for muscularity often also have feelings of low self-esteem and symptoms of anxiety and depression. In addition,

they are more at risk for abusing anabolic steroids, the health consequences of which include a greater risk for high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, liver and kidney damage, liver cancer, and reduced immune system functioning (National Institute of Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2005). Side effects specific to men include increased risk for prostate cancer, shrinking of the testicles, reduced sperm count and infertility, baldness, and development of breasts (NIDA, 2005). Historically discussions about EDs typically focused on teenage girls and young women; however, research now suggests that males are affected more often than initially suspected.

People who compare themselves to unrealistic body images are more likely to experience low body esteem, mental health issues, and threats to their health and overall physical functioning (Baker, Sivyer, & Towell, 1998; Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005; Holmstrom, 2004). Teenage boys and adolescents also report greater levels of body image dissatisfaction and concern for body appearance. An estimated one-third of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors, such as vomiting, skipping meals, smoking cigarettes, fasting, and taking laxatives (Eisenberg et al., 2005), while 25 % of men are on a diet on any given day. Lastly, between males and females combined, 40 billion dollars is spent on dieting and diet-related products each year in the United States (Smolak, 1996). Media exposure provides an opportunity for people to compare themselves to others on a more frequent basis, while MLE fosters attitudes and behaviors that promote positive self-esteem. If teenage boys and adolescents were greater aware of the fact that many of the body images they compare themselves to are in fact unrealistic, the tendency to do so may decrease naturally.

The promotion of thinness as the ideal body type, and the importance given to appearance, are two cultural sources of ED development in women (Stice, Shupak-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994). Because mass media is a communicator of cultural values and viewpoints, one of the social norms it sends is the thin ideal (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Research findings such as these provide evidence of media being an active promoter of the thin ideal. In addition, without adequate media literacy the consumption of media can result in the development of EDs through its predictors including body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

An individual who can use media and technology is not necessarily effective at analyzing and evaluating the messages he or she receives. Readers and viewers need a set of skills to ask questions about what they watch, listen to, see and read. Often referred to as media literacy, these skills include the ability to analyze media messages and to use different kinds of communication technologies for self-expression and communication, while encouraging critical thinking and taking an active role media culture (Bergsma, 2004; Lapayese, 2012). Media is interwoven into some people's daily life, and a child who lacks media literacy is more vulnerable to being influenced by the images and messages in all sources of media.

Purpose of the Study

In this quantitative study, I addressed the issue of media literacy in response to media's increasing negative influences on self-esteem, body esteem, and the awareness of societal appearance ideals as primary risk factors to the development of EDs. I further examined the concept of media literacy, explored current competency levels in the

general population, and the considered characteristics of media literate individuals.

Scholars have noted seven key factors in the successful development and advancement of

media literacy in educational institutes, including hiring initiative professionals to

provide curriculums; making media literacy curriculum required in schools; using media

literacy professionals to train future educators; training educators to implement, such

programs of media literacy; hiring media literacy consultants in schools; developing

communities to support media literacy activities; and holding workshops to encourage

and educate parents and families on how to engage in media literacy activities (Vahid,

Aqili, & Nasiri , 2010).

Research Questions

The goal of this study was to begin determining how media literacy is related to

risk factors commonly associated with the development of EDs. I explored the following

research questions:

a. Is there a relationship between a student's level of exposure to MLE as part of the

primary curricula and his or her self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of

societal appearance ideals?

b. Is there a relationship between gender and the influences of media literacy on

self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals?

c. Are there significant interaction effects between gender and any of the other

variables?

Hypotheses and Variables

$H_0 1$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

$H_1 1$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) are related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with reduced negative influences of media, as demonstrated by higher self-esteem.

$H_0 2$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to body esteem as measured by the Body Esteem Scale (BES).

$H_1 2$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to body esteem as measured by the Body Esteem Scale (BES). Specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with reduced lower influences of media, as demonstrated by increased body esteem.

$H_0 3$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to the internalization of societal appearance ideals as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3).

$H_1$3: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to the internalization of societal appearance ideals as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3). More specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with lower negative influences of media, as demonstrated by a decrease in the endorsement of societal appearance ideals.

There is an increasing dominance of mass media and the consumption of image-based electronic and digital media in society; therefore, it is vital that students be educated on how to better manage in media-consumed environments and to become wise media consumers. MLE first involves the development of students' critical thinking and reasoning skills to more accurately understand media language. Beyond that, students must learn to become critical viewers of aware of mass media influences and their hidden agendas (Alvermann & Reinking, 2005; Babad, Peer, & Hobbs, 2012; Buckingham, 2003; Hassett & Curwood (2009); Hobbs, 1998, 2006, 2007; Kress, 2003; Lavender, Tufte, & Lemish, 2003; Lemish, 1997; Tidhar & Lemish, 2003). Media education courses are different from conventional content-oriented courses because the level of literacy needed in media involves affective and attitudinal changes, a new frame of mind, and the ability to implement newly acquired skills for becoming effective consumers of media.

In this study, I aimed to explore the media's role in the development of EDs and the potential use of MLE as a preventative method to such. A variety of professionals acknowledge the importance of MLE and its potential benefits to a wide range of

problem areas, including bullying and violence; racism and other forms of discrimination; alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use; obesity and EDs; life skills; and gender and sexuality identities. However regardless of such knowledge, many educational institutes do not include such education as part the core curriculum, often times reportedly due to budgeting. The findings of this study can promote a greater endorsement of incorporating MLE in primary curricula as an intervention to prevent the development of EDs for adolescents.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

Media is often categorized as either being print or electronic. Some examples of print include, but are not limited to, newspapers, magazines, and books. Some examples of electronics include CDs, films, radio, television, and computer. Furthermore, media allows the technological means to distribute messages by creating vehicles. For example, the newspaper is a medium, whereas USA Today is a vehicle. Television is considered another medium, whereas sitcoms such as Everybody Loves Raymond and Good Morning America are vehicles (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, & Iacobucci, 1998; Potter, 2001).

Mass and nonmass are the two primary types of media. Despite the common misunderstanding, the difference between these two types of media has little to do with the audience size. It also has little to do with the experiences reported by the audiences receiving such messages, also a common misunderstanding of mass media (Potter, 2001). Instead, the term mass is in relation to the media sender's motives. More specifically, when a sender uses a mass medium, the aim is typically "to condition audiences into a ritualistic mode of exposure" (Potter, 2001, p. 44). The media senders are not all focused

on getting people exposed to the message at once, but are rather more focused on getting them to a position where they are exposed to the message regularly.

In addition to distinctions between types of media, there are also various types of information to consider, including message, social information, and factual information. Instruments that distribute information are referred to as messages, while the content of those messages is referred to as information. Messages are made up of two different types of information: factual and social. Facts are considered raw, uninterpreted, and context-free information, whereas social information is made up of previously accepted beliefs or standards that authorities are unable to verify in the way factual information can be (Potter, 2001).

Media, regardless of the type, has three different types of messages, each with their own primary purpose and intention, including news, entertainment, and ads. News messages aim to produce a sense of being informed in audience members (Potter, 2001). Entertainment messages aim to produce a feeling of having a pleasant emotional experience, including laughter, attraction, and fear in audience members (Potter, 2001). Lastly, advertising messages aim to make those paying for such advertisements feel successful in altering cognitions, behaviors, and attitudes in targeted audience members (Potter, 2001). The media has blended these various types of messages and their intentions to achieve each of their primary aims more effectively. Audience members have increased difficulties in understanding the nature of messages.

Default Model

The default model provides an understanding of what occurs when an individual's lack of media literacy influences his or her self-perceptions and overall thought process (Potter, 2004). The concept of default processing puts media in control. Message senders have an influence on people's awareness of and response to media exposure by conditioning them to accept and normalize being constantly exposed to an abundance of media. The majority of exposures are automatic with little thought or preparation. According to this model, individuals are left with no choice but to accept the more evident message meanings rather than exploring underlying meanings or developing an individual's own meanings through analyzing the context. According to Potter (2004), a majority of individuals, whether they realize it or not, are consistent with the default process. Over time people are investing more time in regular mindless activities, increasing the probability of media conditioning.

Technological innovations have been developed to assist individuals in gaining more control over their media exposures. For example, the editing features on an MP3 player allows for a person to control his or her audio messages, as well as search information. However, using these technologies requires effort in determining their limits and, therefore, most will continue with their media-shaped habits of exposure.

In the Western culture, it is difficult for someone to physically avoid the abundance of attention demanding information. Nonetheless, with a quality understanding of media messages and its impact on various audiences, individuals are better able to identify misperceptions of their world. Many researchers warn that

individuals who do not develop their media literacy will get taken advantage of by media messages.

Social Comparison Theory

A theoretical model using social comparison processes assists in understanding how the exposure to thin and attractive ideals leads to body image dissatisfaction (Jones, 2001; Smolak, Levine, & Gralen, 1993; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999b). Proponents of the social comparison theory compare people to those who possess highly valued attributes and characteristics to establish a personal identity (Festinger, 1954). According to this theory, a person's level of vulnerability to sociocultural pressures is determined by his or her tendencies to compare his or her own body shape or appearance to others, as well as choose to select inappropriate comparisons. For example, women who tend to compare their own weight with others also tend to display greater body dissatisfaction (Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, & Rodin, 1986).

One individual difference in regards to a person's response to various media models is gender. Regardless of age, male viewers are not exposed to the same volume of attractiveness-related media messages as females are (Ogletrere, Wiliams, Raffield, Mason, & Fricke, 1990). Idealized images of men in advertising have been found to be different from those of women, as well as their reactions to these images. For example, men are less likely to make upward social comparisons with male models as their bodies have less sociocultural importance than the bodies of female models (Elliott & Elliott, 2005).

An individual difference in relation to the social comparison process is a person's body esteem. Women with lower body esteem may be regarded by advertisers as more vulnerable targets (Stephens, Hill, & Hanson, 1994). For example, female college students who reported dissatisfaction with their bodies were more likely to agree that meeting societal appearance ideals as featured in the media brings with it certain social advantages (Mintz & Betz, 1988). Advertisers use attractive and thin actors and actresses in commercial messages, as these individuals serve as a desired reference group (Richins, 1995). Advertising tactics such as these may explain why researchers have indicated that many preteenage and teenage girls wanted to become models (Martin & Kennedy, 1993).

The social comparison model also assumes that individuals make comparisons between their own body shape and size with other sources of appearance (Goethals, 1986). Unlike the notion of social comparisons, upward comparisons are not made with another person in the individual's social environment, but an ideal formulated in her or his own mind. People are motivated to have their internalized ideal equally compare to their actual self-concept (Cash & Szymanski, 1995). Rather than an individual comparing his or her body size and shape to another person's body size and shape, this individual would compare his or her body size and shape to an internalized ideal. Unlike comparing an individual's body size and shape to a specific person's body size and shape, the internalized ideal is developed gradually compiled of various sources.

This theory is used to compare people's perceived appearance with a formulated ideal (Thompson, 1992). Such a comparison process may result in discrepancies between the perceived self and the ideal self (Thompson, 1990, 1992). The greater the

discrepancy between an individual's perceived self and ideal self, the greater dissatisfaction he or she has with his or her own body.

Nature of the Study

Although the relationships that were investigated were bi-directional, and having acknowledged that self-esteem and body esteem are influenced by a wide and complex set of factors (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2006), in this quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional study, I examined the variance of three dependent variables, self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization levels of sociocultural appearance ideals with two independent variables, exposure levels to media literacy curriculum and gender. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the data. The following instruments were used to measure three domains of EDs, including self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals: Body Esteem Scale (BES; Franzoi & Shields, 1984), Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004), and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965).

In this study, a convenience sample was drawn from both the Walden Research Participant Pool and through community-wide recruiting using social networking sites (SNS), including Facebook and LinkedIn, more specifically of undergraduate students near degree completion or of individuals whom have recently earned their degree. No community partners were required to recruit participants for this study. Furthermore, in order to obtain two student populations exposed to two different levels of media literacy curriculum, one sample consisted of students majoring in communications (COMM) and

the other of students earning a major with less MLE curriculum included in their required courses. Based on the required curriculum and course descriptions for both majors, COMM majors were found to be regularly exposed to high levels of MLE, while alternative majors, such as English (ENG) and accounting (ACCT), were exposed to significantly less MLE as part of their primary curriculum. Both groups were further assessed using the assessment tools previously noted. The data from this study provides insight into the relationship between MLE and risk factors associated with EDs.

Definitions of Terms

Body esteem: A person's positive or negative feelings toward his or hers body, how he or she cares for and views his or her body, and how he or she believes he or she appears to others (Franzoi & Shields, 1984; Mendelson, Mendelson, &White, 2001).

Drive for thinness: An intense pursuit of thinness as well as fear of being overweight (Thompson et al., 2004; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010).

Eating disorders: Disorders characterized by extreme disturbances in eating attitudes and behaviors (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000), and are among the most common psychological disorders. There are a number of physical and emotional complications associated with eating distortion, which have the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder (Thompson, Roehrig, & Kinder, 2007a).

Exposure levels to media literacy education curriculum: In obtaining various levels of exposure to MLE, this study included two samples of participants. More specifically, Sample 1 consisted of students who have majored in COMM and Sample 2 of students with an alternative major. The undergraduate students making up both

participant samples had to have completed a degree or be near degree completion. Furthermore, based on the required education curriculum for each degree, COMM majors are exposed to significantly higher levels of MLE curriculum compared to other majors, such as ENG or ACCT. This was one of the independent variables examined in this study.

Gender: The social and cultural characteristics associated with being male or female. This was one of the independent variables examined in this study.

Literacy: "The ability to locate, evaluate, use, and communicate using a wide range of resources including text, visual, audio, and video sources" (Stripling, 2003, p. 9). The National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy defined literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a variety of forms" (as cited in Aufderheide, 1997, p. 80).

Media: Communication channels through which news, entertainment, education, or promotional messages are transmitted (López-Guimerà, Levine, Sánchez-Carracedo & Fauquet, 2010). There are two categories of media to consider. The first is traditional media which include television, newspapers, magazines, and other print publications. The second is social media, often referred to as new media of digital, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies (Festoon Media, 2010). These can include Internet forums; music, picture, and video sharing; podcasts; blogs; and wikis. Social media outlets, for example, include Wikipedia, YouTube, LinkedIN, Facebook, Flickr, MySpace, Twitter, Google groups.

Media literacy: The ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages of all kinds. Media literacy includes understanding media messages as well as media's role in society (Gray, 2005; Masterman, 1997; Media Literacy Project, 2013).

Media literacy education: The development of skills to understand media language, by becoming critical viewers, aware of the various influences of the media to protect against influences of advertisements and hidden agendas. Media literacy education is intended to change a person's mode of thinking in the management of the media. Such a desired literacy involves affective and attitudinal changes, a new frame of mind, and acquired skills for becoming effective consumers of media (Babad, et al., 2012).

Self-esteem: A positive or negative orientation toward an individual and overall evaluation of a person's worth or value (Rosenberg, 1965; Silbur & Tippett, 1965). This was one of the dependent variables examined in this study.

Social media: Internet-based modes of communication that allow users to interact with the medium (typically a website).

Social networking sites: A form of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Sociocultural attitudes towards appearance: Internalization levels of sociocultural appearance ideals presented in the media (Thompson et al., 2004). This was one of the dependent variables examined in this study.

Four categories of EDs are currently listed in the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR): anorexia nervosa (AN) –

characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight-loss; bulimia nervosa (BN) – characterized by a cycle of bingeing and compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting designed to compensate for the effects of binge-eating; binge eating disorder (BED) – recurrent binge eating without regular use of compensatory measures to counter the binge eating; and eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS) – characterized by a combination of signs and symptoms but not meeting the full criteria (APA, 2000).

Assumptions

Scholars have confirmed that the use of and exposure to media has a negative influence on a person's self-esteem and body esteem, as well as promotes the endorsement of societal appearance ideals, subsequently increasing the risk to developing an ED (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Stice & Shaw, 1994). In addition to the use of findings based on previous research literature, for this study the following five assumptions were made. The first assumption was that the variables under investigation would be measurable with the appropriately chosen instruments. The second assumption was that individuals exposed to high levels of MLE as part of their required curriculum would be more mindful in their management of media, thus less susceptible to media's negative influences. Based on the required curriculum and course descriptions, this sample group is represented by undergraduate students majoring in COMM near degree completion or graduates having recently earned their degrees. The third assumption was that media literacy curriculum in schools can better address and prevent various negative influences of media and act as a preventative intervention for EDs, with the underlying assumption that the more media literate an individual is the less

likely he or she will experience risk factors associated with the development of EDs. The fourth assumption was that the study participants would respond to survey items honestly and accurately. The fifth assumption was that, although the sample population was not representative of the adolescent population, the findings would provide support to incorporating MLE into adolescent curriculum as a prevention intervention to media's negative influences, including common predictors to the development of EDs.

Scope and Delimitations

The results of this study were not generalizable to the U.S. adult population as several groups were underrepresented in the sample population used. The sample predominantly represented individuals who were both educated and of a middle to upper socioeconomic status. Individuals of lower socioeconomic status, and those with less formal education, were likely underrepresented due to the sample population being limited to undergraduate college students at and recent graduates of a 4-year university. Adolescents and teens were also underrepresented, as students of this age are naturally not in attendance. In addition, the recruitment of participants using SNS can be associated with the sampling frame, which contained only students or recent graduates who had access to the Internet and who have an account with one of the SNS used. The narrow characteristics of the participants in this study prevented the results from being generalizable to individuals who do not also possess these same characteristics. Additional studies are needed across populations with various characteristics and from a wide range of settings to determine if the same results would occur as in this initial setting and population.

Limitations

The data gathered in this study were dependent on self-reports of common predictors to EDs. Self-report data are known to provide responses that are subject to biases and inaccuracies. In addition, sampling procedures used in this study may be called into question. The behaviors and attitudes were limited to those measured by the BES, RSES, and SATAQ-3; alternative variables could potentially be equally or more influenced by media, as well as correlate with predictors to the development of EDs, but were beyond the scope of this study. All possible predictors to EDs were not addressed, but rather limited to self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals. I used an inferential statistical analysis to compare COMM majors to alternative majors with limited MLE as part of their required curriculum and did not attempt to determine causation. Due to the use of inferential statistics, in addition to the nature of this study, no treatment was given.

The sampling procedures used in this study may also be called into question. I used a convenience sample. However, the use of stratified random sampling could have allowed for reflections to true proportions of a population with similar characteristics (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, participants were not matched to each sample group, but rather remained in their naturally formed groups (COMM majors and alternative majors). One limitation of recruiting participants via SNS is using the information/characteristics users have provided upon making their accounts. For example, some individuals who have an account may not have indicated their location or provided accurate information about their locations, ages, and educational backgrounds. This limitation was addressed

by using the information participants were later asked to provide on the demographic form prior to completing a series of self-report surveys and questionnaires. In spite of this limitation, recruitment via SNS has its advantages in terms of fast response speeds and a wide reach, especially when the conduct of a study encounters difficulties that limit access to a particular population.

Also serving as a limitation in this study was the present need to develop, refine, and validate objective measures of media literacy (Bergsma, 2004; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Primack et al., 2006). With no measurement of media literacy available at this time, the ability to directly measure the media literacy levels of both sample groups to better support an existing difference in the literacy levels between COMM majors and those majors with significantly less of a focus on MLE was limited. Qualitative analyses are used to measure media literacy skills based on the media literacy definition previously described, and although these measurement instruments seem to appropriately measure various conceptual models of media literacy, psychometric properties of the measures are not available (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Quin & McMahon, 1993; Scharrer, 2002). In this study, media literacy levels were assessed and determined based on the primary curriculum and subsequent course descriptions. Specifically, COMM majors were expected to be comparatively more media literate than alternative majors and, therefore, were accurate in representing the sample group differences necessary for this study.

The nature of the study was cross-sectional and neglected the threats from relevant differences, such as current overall media exposure. Yet another limitation was

attempting to account for individual differences among the participants in two distinct ways. Primarily, the responses of individuals who have a history of dieting, low self-esteem, disordered eating attitudes, or mental illness may be influentially different from participants who do not have such in their history. For example, if a COMM major participant suffered from a mental illness or an ED prior to his or her exposure to media literacy curriculum as an undergraduate student, he or she may not equally demonstrate the potential benefits to media literacy in comparison to a participant who had not. Because questions specific to these characteristics were limited, in order to minimize the risk associated with their participation, it was not possible to make connections among those variables. Additionally, because the demographic nature of the population to be sampled was fairly homogeneous, the findings are likely to not extend to more diverse populations. The limitations to this study provided reason to conduct further research to not only confirm the results of this study, but to determine a possible causal relationship between the variables.

Significance of the Study

Eating disorders or severe disturbances in eating attitudes and behaviors are becoming common in the United States (APA, 2000). The National Eating Disorder Association (2010) reported that in the past 70 years, incidences of EDs have increased across all types. According to Kovar (2009), the cause of this increase remains undetermined, but body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem place women more at risk to developing EDs. Furthermore, suicidal behavior makes the problem of EDs especially concerning, as it is common in individuals diagnosed with an ED (Apter et al., 1995;

Bulik, Sullivan, & Joyce, 1999; Pompili, Mancinelli, Girardi, Ruberto, & Taterelli, 2004),

with rates for at least one attempted suicide ranging from 6 % (in AN) to 28 % (in BN;

Corcos et al., 2002; Favaro & Santonastaso, 1997; Pryor, Wiederman, & McGilley,

1996). Furthermore, the prevalence of suicidal ideation is also high (Milos, Spindler,

Hepp, & Schnyder, 2004; Ruuska, Kaltiala-Heino, Rantanen, & Koivisto, 2005).

Completed suicide is the second most common cause of death in AN, and it accounts for

more than 25 % of all fatalities in those diagnosed with AN (Herzog, Nussbaum, &

Marmor, 1996; Sullivan, 1995), although lower in individuals diagnosed with BN (Keel,

Mitchell, Miller, Davis, & Crow, 1999). The rate of suicidal behaviors in people

diagnosed with an ED exceeds that in people diagnosed with other psychiatric disorders.

Patton (1988) found that the growing overall mortality rate for EDs across populations,

regardless of varying demographics, was primarily related to an increase in suicides.

EDs most commonly develop during adolescent years; therefore, focusing on applying

MLE to the curricula for this particular high risk population should be further explored.

The thin ideal is portrayed in every avenue of the media. Television shows,

commercials, movies, and magazines depict attractive women as being thin. It is difficult

to escape the influence of the media, and children are being exposed to these portrayals

earlier and earlier in life. In this era in which information and technology develops

rapidly, it is important for children and adolescents to gain consciousness against the

bombardment of mass media, to understand the messages in media correctly, and to

develop critical thinking skills. It is a life-long skill not only for young generations, but

also for adults and elderly people, parents, teachers, and other professionals (Christ &

Potter, 1998; Thoman & Jolls, 2004; Wade, Davidson, & O'Dea, 2003). It is becoming increasingly important that media literacy programs be provided to children and teens to protect them from the negative sides of the media.

Given media's presence in people's lives, it is essential that further knowledge be generated to contribute to the limited existing literature regarding its negative influences and the prevention of such. In this study, I aimed to contribute to the treatment and prevention of EDs by way of obtaining a greater understanding of media's influence on risk factors and predictors to EDs, including low self-esteem, body esteem, and the internalization of societal appearance ideals (Bell & Dittmar, 2011; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999b; Thompson & Stice, 2001).

The present research design can not only inform but also promote implications for change. Specifically, the results of similar research in this field can encourage positive social change in the realm of MLE and the establishment of guidelines for adolescent exposure to media. By building a stronger foundation for future knowledge and growth, this study contributed to the informational needs required to better understand and promote the importance of incorporating MLE in academic curriculum.

A final element in the significance of this study was its ability to create positive social change by better identifying MLE as a prevention intervention to EDs. Incorporating MLE into academic curriculum provides the opportunity for media literate adolescents to use their knowledge to escape the negative influences of media and subsequently lower their risk of experiencing common predictors to the development of EDs. In this study, MLE was perceived and reframed as a fundamental tool that can be

effective in reducing or eliminating negative influences of media on youth and promote greater success in the prevention and treatment of disordered eating attitudes and behaviors.

Summary

The development and widespread implementation of a standardized curriculum to provide MLE to those of all age ranges is overdue. Adults and adolescents of both genders should be educated on analyzing advertisements not only for content, but also for the sometimes hidden and underlying meanings to the messages. As suggested by Ramos (2001), young learners are rarely instructed how to acquire the skills needed for examination of today's representations. They need to have an avenue where they can exchange ideas and views on this issue and collectively resist potentially harmful messages dictating conformity to unhealthy and unrealistic appearance ideals. Female adolescents require additional guidance in their development and establishment of feminine identity so that they do not self-impose limitations based on advised gender roles as reinforced by the mass media. Developing such a curriculum can be implemented in educational settings and be effective with students of all ages. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature regarding the topics on MLE curriculum exposure and common contributors to the development of EDs, including body esteem, self-esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals. Supportive evidence for the significance of this study and gaps in the existing literature are further discussed, providing a rationale for the proposed research study and its design.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Eating disorders are medical and psychological complications that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males of all ages. Ranked as a serious public health concern in the United States, EDs have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness (Birmingham, Su, Hlynsky, Goldner, & Gao, 2005). An estimated 20 million women and 10 million men have suffered or continue to suffer from a clinically significant ED (Wade, Keski-Rahkonen, & Hudson, 2011). Media literacy education can help address this growing concern, as one of the most significant areas in which the media has demonstrated a negative influence is on body image.

Researchers suspect that, for various reasons, many cases never get reported (Smolak, 2011; Stice, 2002; Wade et al., 2011). Many individuals struggle with body dissatisfaction and subclinical disordered eating attitudes and behaviors. The best-known contributor to the development of AN and BN is low body esteem, otherwise referred to as body dissatisfaction, while poor body image and low self-esteem contribute to body dissatisfaction (Borzekowski & Bayer, 2005; Stice, 2002). It is no longer uncommon for girls to express concerns about their own body weight or shape by the age of 6. In fact, 40 to 60 % of elementary school girls, between the ages 6 and 12, are concerned about their weight or about becoming too fat (Smolak, 2011). According to Smolak (2011), this concern often remains present throughout their lives. With children not only acknowledging sociocultural ideals, but also being influenced by them, the need for MLE

beginning at a young age becomes apparent in order to counteract any misperceptions provided by the media.

The development rate of new ED cases has been increasing since 1950 (Hudson, Hiripi, Pope, & Kessler, 2007; Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2003; Wade et al., 2011). Since 1930, there has been a consistent rise of AN cases in young women between the ages of 15 and 19 (Hoek & van Hoeken, 2003). The cases of BN in women between the ages of 10 and 30 more than tripled between 1988 and 1993 (Hoek & Van Hoeken, 2003). The prevalence of EDs is similar among Non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians in the United States, with the exception of AN being more common among Non-Hispanic Whites (Hudson et al., 2007; Wade et al., 2011).

During adolescence poor body image is especially harmful because of the rapid changes both physically and mentally occurring during puberty (Kovar, 2009). It is also during this stage in development that children are exposed to especially high levels of media, and the concern is that young girls and boys are looking to women and men with unrealistic body shapes as role models (Borzekowski & Bayer, 2005). A similar study 42 % of first and third grade student participants reported the desire to be thinner (Collins, 1991). Furthermore, in a study exploring media image influences on elementary school girls, of those who read magazines, 69 % reported that the pictures influenced their perception of the ideal body size and shape. Forty-seven percent reported media images making them want to lose weight (Martin, 2010). According to the National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA, 2010), 70 % of respondents believed that using more average sized people in advertising campaigns would effectively reduce or prevent EDs.

In spite of societal pressures to be thin and the unprecedented growth of EDs in the past 2 decades, ED research continues to be limited.

The purpose of this literature review is to introduce and discuss the social cognitive and social comparison theories and their concepts, which underpin this research study; highlight associations between exposure to MLE and common contributors to the development of EDs (e.g., low self-esteem, low body esteem, and high internalization levels of societal appearance ideals); and provide rationale for investigating the relationship of media literacy curriculum to contributors to the development of EDs in exploration of effective ED prevention interventions. Research strategies are discussed followed by a comprehensive review of related research and literature, including the use of MLE in relation to risk factors and predictors to EDs. Also presented are results and findings of past research studies, influential factors, and literature in support of the research methodology used in this study. Lastly, I present supportive evidence for the significance of this study and identify gaps in the field and literature, followed by an explanation of the need for further research.

It was anticipated that the results of this study would be supportive to the importance of incorporating MLE in the academic setting as part of a student's core curriculum beginning at a young age. It was expected that the outcome of this study would also support the use of MLE in school curriculum as an effective prevention intervention for EDs, as evidenced by a decrease in media's negative influences on self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization levels of societal appearance ideals. The results may be used to decrease a person's vulnerability to ED contributors; increase the

effectiveness and accessibility of ED treatment and prevention options; expand on the social cognitive and social comparison theories, including how these concepts underpin this research study; and expand on the overall knowledge pertaining to this phenomena.

This chapter includes literature and research findings pertaining to negative influences of media, media exposure and media pressures, and the use of MLE as a prevention intervention to such negative influences. This chapter begins with a discussion on existing supportive evidence for the relevance of social cognitive and social comparison theories and their concepts. Findings pertaining to the mental health risks associated with low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and the desire to be thin are also discussed. A summary analysis of the methodology used in related and similar studies is also included, as well as recommendations for future studies.

Research Strategy

The literature examined in this review consisted of peer-reviewed journals and dissertations published from 1965 to 2012 and were collected searching the following databases: Academic Search Premiere, Google Scholar, Medline, the Mental Measurements Yearbook, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PubMed, Medline, ERIC, Science Direct, and Communication & Mass Media Complete. The Internet was used to obtain statistical information reported on websites, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Mental Health, the National Eating Disorder Association, and the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders. Care was taken to highlight studies with adolescent and college student participants and the relationship between media literacy education and the development of EDs. Studies on the impact of mass

media on how men and women portray each other are also included. Social comparison mediates the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction and eating attitudes and behaviors specific to EDs (Durkin & Paxton, 2002; van den Berg, Thompson, Obremski-Brandon, & Coovert, 2002). The literature in this review contains studies that are quantitative in nature. The following search terms were used in locating pertinent research: *body image*, *self-esteem*, *societal appearance norms*, *sociocultural attitudes towards appearance*, *societal appearance ideals*, *BES*, *RSES*, *SATAQ-3*, *media literacy*, *social cognitive theory*, *social comparison theory and the media*, *third person effects*, *social cognitive theory*, *default model*, *media influences*, *media*, *eating disorders*, *media education*, *core curriculum*, *adolescent*, and *college students*.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Comparison Theory

Studies on the social comparison theory regarding body image are generally categorized as either descriptive correlational studies or controlled experiments. A correlational study is used to measure the relationship between body dissatisfaction and individual differences in a person's tendency to compare his or hers body with other bodies. Scholars have found a positive correlation between social comparison tendencies and body image dissatisfaction, thereby indicating the more an individual tends to compare the more he or she may experience body dissatisfaction (Heinberg & Thompson, 1992; Thompson, Heinberg, & Tantleff, 1991).

Social comparisons can be made with a range of role model types from both an individual's personal life as well as from mass media. Comparisons with family

members, for example, can be sources of influence. More specifically, young girls may make comparisons with their mothers or sisters (Rieves & Cash, 1996). Rieves and Cash (1996) predicted that the way women feel about themselves as adults can be shaped by the comparisons made between them and their siblings as children and adolescents. An individual having a sibling who was regularly perceived as more attractive then she could develop a negative self-image (Rieves & Cash, 1996).

Based on the social comparison theory, a person's perception of another's individual concerns can result in doubt regarding his or her own appearance and weight. Historically, researchers have assumed that although women with EDs are preoccupied with weight and shape, they do not place prime importance on these aspects of physique when evaluating others (Heinberg & Thompson, 1992; Thompson et al., 1991). However, according to Beebe, Hornbeck, Schober, Lane, and Rosa (1996), female undergraduates were presented with a series of photographs of other women and asked to indicate what aspects of each photograph they first noticed and to predict how each woman felt about herself. Participants then read scenarios in which women either overate or dieted and were asked to assess each woman's feelings and likely weight fluctuation. Beebe et al. showed that those participants who placed an emphasis on their own body weight and shape also placed an emphasis on these aspects when evaluating others. Furthermore, women with concerns regarding their own body image engaged in more social comparisons with others and believed that others were equally preoccupied with their body images as well (Beebe et al., 1996). Making regular social comparisons may not only perpetuate low body esteem (Stormer & Thompson, 1996), but also encourage

women to believe that their degree of concerns over their physical shape is a normal preoccupation common to most people (Beebe et al., 1996).

In people making comparisons between themselves and others, further evidence has indicated how perceptual judgments can vary depending upon an individual's initial self-concept. Female undergraduate students, ranging from 17 to 34 years of age, were shown photographs of celebrities in a number of different versions (King et al., 2000). There were seven photographs of each celebrity shown; however, six of the seven had been progressively digitally distorted, while one was left accurate and true. Participants were asked to select the photograph of each celebrity they felt portrayed his or hers true body shape. Those participants who reported dissatisfaction with their own body shape, tended to judge the celebrities as being thinner than in actuality, whereas participants who were satisfied with their own body shape tended to judge the celebrity body shapes more accurately (King et al., 2000).

The self-ideal discrepancy model, a concept consistent with the social comparison theory, is supported by a number of research studies indicating that when self-ideal discrepancies are present, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating is at an increased likelihood to also be present, regardless of gender (Altabe & Thompson, 1992; Fallen & Rozin, 1985; Jacobi & Cash, 1994; Thompson & Psaltis, 1988). Strauman, Vookles, Berenstein, Chaiken, and Higgins (1991) found a positive correlation between self-discrepancies in general and both body dissatisfaction and ED symptomology. Forston and Stanton (1992) reported that actual- and ideal-self discrepancies in people's appearances are commonly associated with symptoms associated with BN.

The self-ideal discrepancy model provides a greater understanding as to how situational cues can trigger symptoms. This model proposes that if an event activates any aspect of a self-discrepancy the emotions associated with that particular discrepancy become aroused. In a study by Strauman and Higgins (1987), participants were asked to complete sentences about others, using the descriptive terms they previously identified as discrepant for themselves, such as intelligent and thin. This task was found to accurately trigger the emotions most commonly associated with each particular discrepancy. In a similar way, discrepancy-related emotions can be triggered by magazine pictures illustrating different body image characteristics (Altabe & Thompson, 1996). For example, the self-discrepancy model would generally assume that an individual insecure about his or her nose would be likely to trigger negative emotions associated with that feature when watching a news segment about noses.

Third-Person Effects

Davison (1983) defines the third-person effect hypothesis as the likelihood that "individuals who are members of an audience that is exposed to a persuasive communication (whether or not this communication is intended to be persuasive) will expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than on themselves" (p. 3). When applied to the influences of media, the third-person effect is the perceptual distinction that the media will not be influential to oneself, but rather will be influential to others (Conners, 2005). This perception distinction may be a contributing factor in the overall lack of support for the need of MLE curriculum in educational settings.

The measurement of the third-person effect involves asking individuals two different types of questions, one being focused on the perceptions of the influence of media on oneself, and the other on the perceptions of media influences (Brosius & Engel, 1996; Conners, 2005). Scholars have documented people perceiving others as more vulnerable to negative media influences than themselves (Gunther, 1995). Brosius and Engel (1996) explored the concept of unrealistic optimism as an underlying psychological mechanism for this effect and found that media content perceived as negative produced large third-person effects, as individuals wanted to preserve a positive self. In general, such an optimistic bias predicts that people will estimate greater media effects on others than on themselves for messages with harmful outcomes, but no difference in effects for beneficial messages (Henriksen & Flora, 1999; Huh & Langteau, 2007; Lo & Wei, 2002; Salwen & Dupagne, 1999).

Social desirability also acts as a predictor to the third-person effect (Sun, Pan & Shen, 2008). When media messages are negative or considered socially undesirable, people tend to believe that they are less vulnerable than others to such messages, whereas when message are considered desirable, people tend to not endorse this perception, but rather under these circumstances perceive themselves to be more easily influenced by the media messages than others (David & Johnson, 1998; Duck & Mullin, 1995; Gunther & Thorson, 1992).

Social distance between people and their comparison groups can also be a factor in the extent to which others are regarded as being more vulnerable to media influences then others. The third-person effect increases when the social relationship between the

person and whom they tend to compare them self to is more distant. Therefore, the greater the social dissimilarity between people and their comparison groups, the greater likelihood they will regard others as more vulnerable to media influences (Cohen, 2006; Gunther, 1991). More specifically, research findings suggest that people will commonly perceive the general public to be more easily influenced by media than their close friends (Meirick, 2005).

David and Johnson (2006) examined the effects of idealized media images in relation to ideal body weight, self-esteem and level of risk to developing an ED. In an experimental study, female college students were allocated to either view or not view a video discussing the ideal female body images found in popular media and thereby discussed the potential influences of such images on body weight, self-esteem, and ED symptomology. The purpose of the video was to bring attention to the standards of thinness and attractiveness portrayed in the media. Participants were asked to indicate the effects of such media images on themselves, female classmates, women on campus and women in general.

Researchers found a social distance effect pertaining to the strength of perceived media effects, with the third-person effect widening with social distance (David & Johnson, 2006). Consistent with other research findings, the third-person effect was found to be greater among those participants who endorsed high self-esteems. In addition, participants with high self-esteems tended to perceive others to be more easily influenced by media messages than themselves (David & Johnson, 1998).

In general, the third-person effect is considered to be particularly strong with children and teenagers who believe that younger viewers are more susceptible to the influences of media, in comparison to their ages in which they believe media has already stopped having such influences.   For example, 14-year-olds will explain how media influences 10-year-olds, while 10-year-olds may voice concern about 6-year-olds who are worried about their 3-year-old siblings. Buckingham (1998) states, "There is a kind of infinite regression here, as children at each age claim to have already attained the age of reason some years previously" (p. 29).

The third-person effect should be investigated as a potential obstacle in the ability to become media literate, and has been documented as such in many studies where people described media's influence on others as powerful, but believed they were immune (Buckingham, 1998; David & Johnson, 2006; Peiser & Peter, 2006; Salwen & Dupagne, 1999). The effect is based on the idea of one's superiority to others. "Given the norm that it is not smart to be influenced by mass media, it therefore seems not surprising that people tend to perceive greater media effects on others" (Peiser & Peter, 2006, p. 27). The third-person effect hypothesis may impact how others perceive the need for MLE due to the fact that most consider themselves as "smarter" than television, while considering others to be more vulnerable to potential negative influences (Golan & Banning, 2008). It is important to acknowledge the third-person effect when advocating the importance of MLE, as well as to explore and establish approaches to effectively overcome this obstacle.

Overview of Media Literacy Education

There are many definitions to MLE. Some focus on what media literate individuals should think or do, while others focus on what the purpose of the educational experiences is in terms of helping people, especially children. Additional process definitions focus on personal activism, some on what a person should do to become more media literate or help others become more media literate,and others on how thinking about media literacy has changed over time or how it ought to change. Nonetheless, the one thing these definitions have in common is that MLE focuses on "improving individuals" in some way (Potter, 2004, p. 37). Masterman (1997) defined the concept of improving individuals by explaining that the objective of media literacy is to

> produce well-informed citizens who can make their own judgments on the basis
> of the available evidence. In so far as media education deals with value
> judgments, it does so in the ways which encourage students to explore the range
> of value judgments made about a give media text and to examine the sources of
> such judgments (including their own) and their effects. It does not seek to impose
> ideas on what constitutes "good" or "bad" television, newspapers, or films. (p. 41)

Individuals must be empowered to make better constructions of meaning from media messages. Researchers must begin to find effective techniques for people to improve their filtering of media messages and their experiences with encountered information. However, effective techniques must be accompanied by rationale. Without rationales many of the suggested techniques appear promising and effective on the surface, but may not have any results, or even worse, may cause harm. For example,

most would agree that it is a good for parents to watch television or movies with their children. Schmitt (2000) and Kunkel et al. (2002) demonstrated that only a small minority of parents are aware of the meanings of the labels on the V-chip. The V-chip is an electronic chip that provides parents with the ability to control the viewing of program content. Those who are familiar with it often find it to be misapplied or even missing altogether from shows (Kunkel et al., 2002). Parents, as adults, have more experience with the media and with life than do their children; however, it is debatable that experience automatically implies knowledge about how to educate children to reduce their risks of negative effects.

Many of the negative effects associated with media use can take years to show up, so it is likely that parents are actually experiencing some of these effects, such as desensitization and false beliefs about the real world (Bushman & Anderson, 2009; Ennemoser & Schneider, 2007). These parents may not be aware that they have been desensitized and do not understand which of their beliefs are false and have been conditioned by the media without their permission or awareness. When these parents try to guide their children to be like them, the endorsement of societal appearance ideals can be amplified (Potter, 2004). Children may not benefit from the guidance their parents can provide.

The importance of belief in an individual's own body shape is underpinned by the link between body image dissatisfaction and satisfaction (Berscheid, Walster, & Bohrnstedt, 1973; Catikkas, 2011; Lerner & Karabenick, 1973; Mahoney & Finch, 1976). The correlation between body image dissatisfaction and holding positive views about it is

established during childhood (Mendelson & White, 1982). Furthermore, body satisfaction is determined by a person's satisfaction with his or her own body parts. In a study exploring self-concept, self-esteem and body attitudes, female participants identified a greater number of body parts to be associated with their overall body satisfaction. For example, male participants most commonly identified feelings about their noses and faces to be associated with their overall body satisfaction, whereas female participants identified feelings about their thighs, leg shape, waist shape, facial profiles, and necks to be associated with such (Lerner & Karabenick, 1974).

Influence of Media

Body shapes are often classified into three principal types. Psychologists have observed for at least half a century how these different types of physical build associate with stereotyped behavioral and personality traits (Lerner & Gellert, 1969; Sheldon & Stevens, 1942; Staffieri, 1972; Wells & Siegel, 1961; Yates & Taylor, 1978). Sheldon and Stevens (1942) distinguished between ectomorphic, better known as thin build; endomorphic, better known as fat build; and mesomorphic, better known as muscular build. The most preferred characteristics have customarily been assigned to the mesomorphic body build and the least preferred to the ectomorphic and endomorphic builds. More recently, however, while an endomorph build continues to be viewed in a more negative light, an ectomorph build has attracted more positive comments and subsequently is viewed in a more positive light, similar to that of the mesomorph build (Beck, Ward-Hull, & McLear, 1976). Mesomorphic body builds are associated with strength, happiness, and dominance, whereas endomorphic builds are associated with one

being socially aggressive, lazy, and unattractive. Ectomorphic builds are associated with one being nervous, submissive, and socially detached (Dibiase & Hjelle, 1968).

The significance of body shape remains, however not only in terms of how others judge or determine attractiveness, but also in how one perceives him or herself. The extent to which an individual is satisfied with his or her weight and body shape is a significant determinant of self-esteem. As a general rule, women are found to be more dissatisfied with their weight and body shape than are men (Berscheid et al., 1973; Clifford, 1971; Lerner, Stuart, & Karabenick, 1974). In a study exploring female perceptions related to body image, women indicated a common desire to be thinner because it was considered to be the most preferred female body build reported by men. More specifically, female interviewees wanted to conform to the thin ideal because they believed it would make them sexier, as evidenced by reported increased sexual desires in correlation with increased satisfaction of their body image. The more women were satisfied with their bodies, the higher their sex drives were (Charles & Kerr, 1986; Werlinger, King, Clark, Pera, & Wincze, 1997).

The thin ideal as a predictor of physical attractiveness has been recorded in various research studies. For example, by analyzing line drawings collected from more than 200 men and 200 women, Fallon and Rozin (1985) explored the perceptions of current body builds compared to ideal body builds; the most common body build expected to attract the opposite sex compared to the body build they were most attracted to. For women, the scale position they chose for their current body build was heavier than their ideal build, with the body build expected to be most attractive to men being in

between (Fallon & Razon, 1985). For men, there were no differences between these perceptions. However, both men and women miscalculated the body build the opposite sex would find most attractive. Women expected that men would favor a thinner body build than they actually indicated, and men expected that women would favor a heavier body build than they actually indicated. From these findings, Fallon and Rozin further determined that the perceptions men possess actually serve in maintaining body satisfaction, while the perceptions women possess do not. These research findings suggest the presence of misperceptions and understandings by both males and females regarding how the opposite gender perceives appearance ideals. Media literacy education would also provide opportunity for discussion promoting a greater overall understanding of perceptions pertaining to body image endorsed by both genders.

Researchers have found that women, more often than men, prefer a thinner body build than men actually indicate. In fact, a woman's own body ideal is often thinner than the size thought to be preferred by men. While women are sensitive to pressures from men to be thin, more general cultural pressures are influencing their ideal body shape beyond the perceived preferences of the opposite sex (Lamb, Jackson, Cassidy, & Priest, 1993).

Numerous theoretical models have been used in an attempt to better understand body image issues, but social factors have been observed to exert an influence on both developing and maintaining body image disturbances in Western societies (Fallon, 1990; Heinberg, 1996). Society's current beauty standards are focused on a person's thinness in addition to other extreme beauty standards (Tiggeman & Pickering, 1996). According

to the sociocultural model, society's current standards for thinness, primarily in women, are present in all places at all times and remain unachievable for the average woman. Even though the average woman has become larger, the body image ideal being consistently thinner (Wiesman, Gunning, & Gray, 1993). Kim and Lennon (2007) examined whether the level of mass media consumption is related to self-esteem, body esteem, and ED tendencies based on the social comparison theory. Conducted in a nonexperimental setting, a convenience sample of 114 female undergraduate students participated in this study. Kim and Lennon found a positive correlation between exposure to fashion or beauty magazines and both overall appearance dissatisfaction and ED tendencies. Eating disorder tendencies were further associated with high body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

Statistical Support and Findings

According to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health (2012), 30 % of parents with children between 6 and 14 years of age reported their children displaying one or more behaviors commonly associated with the development of an ED (e.g., inappropriate dieting, excessive worry about fat content in foods, being overly occupied with nutritional content or labels, and refusing main meals). Prevalence rates are reportedly affecting between 11 and 27 % of children and adolescents (Ogden, Carroll, & Flegal, 2008). Similarly, Austin et al. (2008) estimated that 30 % of girls and 16 % of high school boys in the United States suffer from disordered eating. AN and BN are 10 times more likely to develop in females than males and have a strong correlation with the drive for thinness (EDC, 2014). AN has the highest mortality rate than any other

mental illness, with 10 to 20 % resulting in death, and is the third most common chronic illness among adolescents (EDC, 2014).

The development rate of new ED cases has been increasing since 1950 (Hudson et al., 2007; Streigel-Moor & Franko, 2003; Wade et al., 2011). During this same time period, mass media increasingly portrayed progressively thinner representations of the female body and became a prime source for promoting thin ideals exceeding reasonable limits (Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986). The body dissatisfaction and disordered eating experienced by many women and men is generally attributed to sociocultural factors, and in particular, to years of exposure to the persistent influences of mass media (Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999b). Although these ideals are impossible for most to achieve by healthy means, they are internalized by many often resulting in increased levels of depression and negative mood, as well as body dissatisfaction, extreme dieting (Krah´e & Krause, 2010), and disordered eating behaviors (Thompson & Stice, 2001). An extensive body of supporting correlational evidence links naturally occurring media exposure to body dissatisfaction, internalization of societal appearance ideals, and eating disorder symptomology (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Stice & Shaw, 1994)

Literature Review

Media Exposure and Body Image Ideals

Historically, a primary methodology approach used to research media's influences on public conceptions of body image has been that of large scale surveys designed to explore and discover underlying links and relationships between reported exposures to

relevant media messages and content and body image perceptions, body esteem, and disordered eating attitudes and behaviors (Botta, 2000; Grogan, 1999; Harrison, 2000; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Tiggeman & Pickering, 1996). These studies also primarily consisted of female participants, however, included a wide range of ages (e.g., elementary, high school, and college school-age students). The correlations found suggested relationships between specific patterns of media exposure and perceptions, relevant attitudes, and reported behaviors, however, does not prove causal links.

Modern media features role models endorsing thin body shapes, and it is these body shapes that readers and viewers are invited to match or even surpass (Mazur, 1986). Historical media, on the other hand, often in the form of visual art, featured 'voluptuous' female body shapes as the perfect example of feminine beauty and in fact was at the time viewed as unrealistic and unattainable (Mazur, 1986; Wykes & Gunter, 2005). Media sources (e.g., television programs, films, and magazines) present at first glance realistic representations of role models, while hiding that such representations have more often than not been artificially altered and developed. For example, computer technology has provided enhancing capabilities, allowing actors, actresses and models to portray a blemish free, nearly perfect body while still looking natural (Heinberg & Thompson, 1992; Wykes & Gunter, 2005). Media literacy education provides readers and viewers with the knowledge and awareness necessary to recognize these enhancement tools being used, and thereby allowing them a greater opportunity to recognize when the

representations of their role models are unrealistic, regardless of how natural they may look.

As indicated in previously discussed research studies, an important psychological mechanism that may support mediated influences on body self-perceptions is the tendency for people to compare themselves to their role models. Regardless of some role models existing in a person's everyday life and known on a personal level, mass media increasingly provides a prominent source of comparison points (Wyker & Gunter, 2005). Heinberg and Thompson (1992) had both male and female undergraduate students rate the importance of six reference groups (family, friends, classmates, other university students, celebrities, and average U.S. citizen) as comparison targets for seven attributes (attractiveness, athletic ability, figure physique, intelligence, confidence, fashion clothes, and popularity). Friends were identified as the most important reference group for attractiveness, followed by celebrities. Across all attributes, males attached more importance to the influence of celebrities than did female college students.

In general, research evidence strongly indicates that body image concerns are most prevalent within Western societies. Canada, Australia and England are the worldwide leaders in media education, primarily because starting in the 1950's or 1960's they were the first countries to experience the cultural and societal results of importing English-language visual media (films and TV programs) from the United States (Hayes et al., 2007; Kellner & Share, 2005). Despite the increasing eating and body image disturbances, MLE is still only reaching a small percentage of U.S. schools serving kindergarten through twelfth grade students (Kellner & Share, 2005; Thevenin, 2012).

Levine and Piren (2004) suggest that it is the lack of MLE in the United States that has resulted in the prevalence of body image concerns and subsequent EDs. Kubey (1998) identified the United States as the world's leading exporter of media products, while behind every other major English-speaking country in the world in delivering media education in its schools (Kubey, 1998).

Psychology Today conducted several surveys to track over time the prevalence of body dissatisfaction among both men and women. Participants were regular readers of the magazine, and although not representative of the general population, indicative of how far-reaching concerns are in regards to a person's physique and attractiveness.

These surveys were administered in 1972, 1985, and 1996. Participants were asked to indicate their satisfaction with different aspects of their body (e.g., mid torso, lower torso, upper torso, weight, muscle tone, height, and face) and overall appearance. Over this time period, dissatisfaction with appearance increased from 23 % to 56 % for women and from 15 % to 43 % for men. Women reported being least satisfied with their mid torso, lower torso, and body weight, while men reported their mid torso and weight (Cash, 1997).

As people progress through life, whether they realize it or not, they are increasingly exposed to media messages. It is these media messages that research studies increasingly find to have a negative impact on self-esteem and body esteem (Arnett, 1995; Harrison 2000; Thomsen et al., 2001; Tiggemann, 2003). Including MLE as part of the required curriculum for students in the academic setting may result in fewer body

image disturbances similar to those presented throughout this literature review (Cash, 1997; Thompson et al., 1999b).

Surveys administered in the 1990's to both adult and youth populations found young females to be most commonly unhappy with their weight and actively pursuing at least one form of dieting (Serdula et al., 1993). In a survey administered to more than 60,000 adults, nearly four in ten women (38%) had attempted to lose weight (Serdula et al., 1993). In addition, a comparison study of more than 1,000 high school students found that more than four in ten females (44%) were trying to lose weight (Grogan, 1999).

Although a majority of research studies have focused on the body image concerns of young females, research evidence has emerged suggesting that boys and young men are not as immune to such preoccupations as previously thought. In general, the cultural ideal body shape promoted for females is one of thinness and for males is one of exaggerated masculinity (Pope, Olivardia, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2001; Lynch & Zellner, 1999). Mills and D'Alfonso (2007) further explained that although for males the focus is placed on the cultural drive towards increased muscularity it can, however, have equally significant health implications in regards to dietary habits. More specifically, while females tend to take laxatives, binge and purge or restrict their food intake, males tend to take steroids, dietary supplements or practice high protein diets (Mills & D'Alfonso, 2007), all of which can be equally harmful when carried out to extremes.

In a study exploring media's influence on body image disturbances and eating pathology in women, Thompson and Heinberg (1999a) found that women exposed to thin

body images were more likely to internalize and idealize such body types, and subsequently reported increased body image concerns. In a similar study, levels of media exposure were consistent predictors to body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating behaviors (Stice et al., 1994).

Media Exposure

Media consumption and exposure contributes to the development of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating attitudes and behaviors (Harrison, 2000) as illustrated by a number of research studies using cross-sectional (Harrison, 2000; Jones et al., 2004; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010), prospective (Schooler & Trinh, 2011), and experimental (Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002) designs. However, the extent to which body dissatisfaction emerges following media exposure varies (Durkin & Paxton, 2002). For example, preexisting factors can impact the ways in which media images are processed internally and, therefore, can influence the degree in impact of media exposure on body esteem and disordered eating, including exposure to MLE and subsequent media literacy levels.

Mass media provides influential context for people to learn about body ideals and the value placed on being attractive and achieving these ideals (NEDA, 2010). According to Tudor-Locke, Johnson, and Katzmarzyk (2010), over 80 % of Americans watch television on a daily basis, and on average are watching over 3 hours per day. Children and teenagers engage in increasing amounts of media use, a trend according to Tudor-Locke et al. (2010) that is fueled largely by the growing accessibility to the internet. For example, mobile technology has made a much greater reach of the internet,

increasing the number of users as well as ways to access the internet (e.g., smart phones, iPads, iPods, and iPhones, tablets, and laptops). In fact those between the ages of 8 and 18 are estimated to engage in some form of media use 7.5 hours per day. These hours are spent primarily watching television, with the exception of computers and video games also accounting for some of these hours (Tudor-Locke et al., 2010; Tudor-Locke, Washington, Ainsworth, & Troiano, 2009).

Moreover, even the media content geared for elementary school age children, such as animated cartoons and children's videos emphasizes the importance of being attractive (Klein & Shiffman, 2005, 2006; Villani, Olson, & Jellinek, 2005). Sexually objectified images of girls and women in advertising are most likely to appear in magazines geared for men; however, the second most common source of such images is in the advertising used in teen magazines directed at adolescent girls (Field et al., 2001; Villani et al., 2005). There is no single cause for body dissatisfaction or disordered eating attitudes and behaviors; however, researchers have increasingly found media exposure and the pressures it exerts to have a positive correlation with both (Field et al., 2005; Garfinkel, 2002; Grabe, Hyde, & Ward, 2008; Hill, 2006; Stice, 2002). Similarly, numerous correlational and experimental studies have provided evidence for a causal link between media consumption, poor body image, disordered eating, and internalization of the thin ideal among females (Clark & Tiggemann, 2008; Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004; Juarascio et al., 2011; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003b; Moriarty & Harrison, 2008; Murnen & Smolak, 2009).

Scholars have historically suggested the effects of media consumption to be more pronounced in females over males (Cohen, 2006); nonetheless the negative effects can be equally severe. In fact, for males, many of the negative feelings and thoughts related to viewing muscular body image ideals result in negative behaviors, some of which can result in health problems later in life. These negative behaviors may include an increase in steroid use (Blouin & Goldfield, 1995), an increase in food supplement intake (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003b), excessive exercising, and an increased probability to developing an ED, such as BN or AN (Botta, 2000).

Media Influences

The media is a powerful societal tool for expressing expectations of appearance. Media images of the ideal body can have a profound negative influence on both males and females. As a result, over the past several years an increase in body dissatisfaction has been seen in both women and men (Cash, Morrow, Hrabosky, & Perry, 2004). Wright and Pritchard (2009) suggested that images in the media may be an important predictor of disordered eating behaviors. This literature review examined research studies pertaining to the negative influences media can have on a person's self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals.

Past research studies have found the degree to which magazines feature thin "ideal" representations to significantly correlate with, and even predict negative body image perceptions and unhealthy eating patterns of young readers (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Fister & Smith, 2004). Data derived from a comprehensive survey administered to 196 adolescent boys and girls found a number of positive correlations. For the female

participants, the following three positive correlations were found: (a) greater reported reading of fashion magazines and increased bulimic tendencies, (b) greater reported reading of health and fitness magazines and increased bulimia, anorexia, and drive to be thin, and (c) greater reading of sports magazines and increased desire for muscularity. Whereas for the male participants, the following two positive correlations were found: (a) greater reported reading of health and fitness magazines and increased desire for greater muscularity and (b) greater reading of fashion magazines and increased body image dissatisfaction (Botta, 2000).

Harrison and Cantor (1997) hypothesized that when people compare themselves to the body ideals portrayed in the media, body dissatisfaction levels increase, while this increase in body dissatisfaction further encourages continued comparison tendencies. This can make for a dangerous cycle and a difficult one to get away from. Luff and Gray (2009) further hypothesized that current research findings are due to the increasing amount of written content related to diet and exercise in magazines. For example, an analysis of the content in women's magazines found that 40 % of main headlines included objectifying phrases (Aubrey, 2010). Objectifying media has been shown to have a number of negative influences on both women and men, including body dissatisfaction (Cash et al., 2004; Hamilton, Mintz, & Kashubeck-West, 2007) and attitudes towards appearance (Aubrey, 2007). While media is pressuring women to be thin, media is also pressuring men to be lean, toned, and muscular (Ricciardelli, Clow & White, 2010). For example, Harrison and Cantor (1997) found men exposed to magazines or websites featuring muscular men reported greater negative feelings toward their bodies including

an increased drive for thinness and muscularity. In a similar study, men reported greater

disordered eating symptomology (Giles & Close, 2008; Morry & Staska, 2001). Male

participants viewing images of muscular men also reported a decrease in body esteem

and self-esteem, an increase in body dissatisfaction, and an overall greater concern in

fitness, weight, and muscularity (Hobza & Rochlen, 2009; Hobza, Walker, Yakushko, &

Peugh, 2007). Overall, for females, thin ideal media has had the greatest influence on

their drive for thinness (Ahern et al., 2008; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003; Tucci &

Peters, 2008) and for males, on their drive for muscularity (Giles & Close, 2008;

Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Hobza & Rochlen, 2009; Hobza et al., 2007).

Although researchers cannot prove a definite causal connection between

magazine exposure and body image perceptions amongst adolescents, many research

findings have indicated associative links and, therefore, are suggestive of causal

connections. If in fact causal connections do exist, such causality appears to be

dependent on the way adolescents perceive magazine images as points of comparison.

Research findings such as these indicate a need for MLE to be implemented as a means to

address such comparison tendencies by way of educating media consumers on helping

them become better able to recognize unrealistic messages and ideal body image

representations.

Correlational studies have found the frequency of television exposure to be linked

to body image disturbances (Martin & Kennedy, 1993). Using a two-item measure,

Thompson et al. (1999b) found a negative correlation between the tendency to compare

with advertising models and self-reported physical attractiveness by participants ranging

from 9 to 17 years of age. They found the amount of television viewing to be unrelated to dieting and disordered eating behaviors in girls between the ages of 9 and 13. However, girls who watched more than 8 hours of television per week reported greater body image dissatisfaction than those who reported consuming fewer than 8 hours of weekly television viewing. Thompson and Heinberg (1999a) hypothesized that these findings were due to the fact that girls who watch more than 8 hours of television per week, regardless of the programming, are naturally exposed to increased advertising models through previews and commercials. Moreover, Kunkel and Gantz (1992) indicated that television programs geared for children are largely made up of advertisements with a motive.

Survey studies administered to teenage girls also found little association between body dissatisfaction and the frequency of television viewing, but revealed certain media content (e.g., music videos and soap operas) to have greater negative influences on body self-perceptions, more specifically a significant correlation with body dissatisfaction (Borzekowski, Robinson, & Killen, 2000; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996).

Harrison and Hefner (2006) found magazine reading to be primarily linked to ED symptomology regardless of the readers' reported interest in fitness and dieting. In fact, women who read fitness magazines for reasons other than having an interest in fitness and dieting had higher levels of reported ED symptoms than those who rarely read such magazines but have a reported interest in fitness and dieting. These findings again further demonstrate the significance of media content.

These research findings alike demonstrate a need for researchers to focus equally as much on the types of programs and television content, rather than only the amount of television viewing, when examining the negative influences of media. These research findings combined also indirectly suggests that reducing a child's exposure to media alone will likely not effectively prevent or reduce its negative influences, such as body dissatisfaction and internalization of societal appearance ideals (Borzekowski et al., 2000; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999a; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). Implementing MLE on the other hand not only allows the opportunity to encourage people to limit their overall media use, but brings a new awareness to how the types of programs and media content can be equally as important when considering media's negative influences.

In examining the relationships between media exposure and ED symptomology, Stice et al. (1994) found a positive correlation between media exposure and gender-role endorsement, defined as the degree to which participants agreed with various stereotyped views about women and men. These findings further suggested gender-role endorsements to be associated with heightened ideal body stereotypes and were considered supportive to the hypothesis that "internalization of sociocultural pressures mediates the relation between media exposure and eating pathology" (Stice et al., 1994, p. 837). In other words, theoretically, the more a person internalizes sociocultural body ideals, the more likely he or she will experience body dissatisfaction, heightening the risk of ED symptomology.

Harrison and Cantor (1997) examined the relationships between media exposure (e.g., television viewing and magazine reading), ED symptomology and specifically body

dissatisfaction among college women. They found that for women, media use was the strongest predictor to both ED symptomology and body dissatisfaction, but that for men media use rather predicted the endorsement of personal thinness and dieting, as well as select attitudes in support of thinness and dieting for women. Media consumption in general was found to be a stronger predictor to ED symptomology when based on magazine reading compared to television viewing (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

A number of past research studies implicated varying degrees of connections between media exposure (e.g., television and magazines) and body dissatisfaction and disordered eating amongst both the adult and youth populations. This is especially true for females regardless of their age, as they have historically been considered most susceptible to preoccupations of body image and disordered eating patterns (Cash et al., 2004; Cohen, 2006).

Although there is a great deal of research on both media exposure and its negative influences, there has been a lack of discussion in regards to media exposure through the use of social media websites and other SNS and online communities. These forms of media are also relevant sources of body representations, and should be considered equally dangerous and influential, especially for young and vulnerable populations.

Research studies conducted to explore the influence of online media featuring the thin-ideal have found it to be equally, and in some cases more influential than the more traditional sources of media. A number of studies found a positive correlation between frequencies of online media exposure and body dissatisfaction (Ahern et al., 2008; Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2007; Tucci & Peters, 2008). Bardone-Cone and Cass (2007)

further found a positive correlation between online media exposure and lower levels of self-esteem in both males and females. Similarly, women who reported high levels of online media exposure reported lower levels of social confidence and greater body dissatisfaction (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007).

In addition, Botta (1999) noted how little attention has been given to the information relevance from specific types of media content to the developing and shaping of particular body image perceptions. It is not enough to know the amount of media or specific type of content people are being exposed to. Additional information and knowledge is needed in regards to whether particular body representations strike a special cord for media consumers, and to what degree both males and females make direct comparisons between themselves and those observed in the media.

Based on the social comparison theory, media can provide sources of influence on body image that operate through incidental learning. According to Botta (2000) and Goethals (1986), incidental learning increases one's vulnerability to negative media influences without the need to pay special attention to specific role models. In other words, media may present a series of images that endorse thin or muscular body ideals that encourage automatic comparing between oneself and those observed in the media. Botta (2000) made the following observations:

The social comparison theory connects television viewing with attitudes and behaviors. When the comparison process results in a discrepancy for the viewer, the more motivated he or she is to close the gap on that comparison (Wood, 1989; Wood & Taylor, 1991). It is further hypothesized that this connection could account for an increase in

motivation, drive and willingness to pursue disordered eating behaviors, in addition to body dissatisfaction and internalization of societal appearance ideals (Botta, 2000; Wood, 1989; Wood & Taylor, 1991). In other words, comparisons help to confirm or validate people's belief in being thin and the need to act on that belief, especially when highly motivated and driven to obtain that goal (Wood & Taylor, 1991).

In an additional study by Grogan (1999), college students and their friends, ranging from 16 to 48 years of age, were asked to nominate someone they would most like to look like from one of the following categories: (a) actor/actress, (b) model, (c) sports personnel, and (d) family member. A content analysis of responses found that both male and female participants, regardless of their age, named media figures or celebrities as their top reference point.

Social comparison analyses underline the need for future research studies to consider media consumption in more detail rather than use gross measures of generalized media consumption. There is also a need to establish whether body image perceptions are particularly vulnerable to specific role models or types of social acceptance attainment that can only be found in certain magazine publications or television programs. It would also be useful to know whether people are consciously aware of making comparisons between themselves and media images, as well as the degree to which they compare others to appearance ideals portrayed in the media.   Based on the research literature, and with the aim being to prevent comparisons of self to images in the media, Wright and Pritchard (2009) have been persistent in their recommendation to include MLE as part of the core curricula in academic settings beginning at a young age.

Fewer research studies have explored media influences on body image, eating patterns, and thin idealization in younger children. Harrison (2000) surveyed sixth, ninth, and twelfth grade students and found the negative influences of thin ideal media to be intensified for those female participants transitioning into high school. Harrison (2000) also surveyed first, second and third grade students and found a positive correlation between media exposure, namely television viewing, and ED symptomology in both male and female students. Supportive of the stereotypes associated with body image, male students who reported a greater amount of television viewing were more likely to label overweight females as "lazy" or "greedy". These findings suggest that younger populations not only learn to endorse dieting and exercise behaviors from television, but also to naturally label fat as "bad" because thin is learned as "good". Furthermore, although how a male perceives an overweight female cannot be determined as a case for disordered eating behaviors, this correlation can however better represent the extent to which the thin ideal exists in society (Monteath & McCabe, 1997). A more recent study revealed an indirect effect of media on the female body image through its ability to influence male expectations of the female body and appearance (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003).

By providing individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to critically evaluate media content and thereby decrease the risks of internalizing media messages and content, MLE can decrease the stereotypes and attitudes being endorsed by males in regards to female body images. In other words, MLE can better educate adolescent boys by increasing their awareness of the unrealistic body images portrayed in the media and,

therefore, reduce some of the subsequent pressures experienced by adolescent girls to achieve unrealistic ideals.

The social comparison theory, as previously discussed, involves making a judgment about a person's appearance based on comparing him or her to somebody else's appearance. McLean, Paxton, and Wertheim (2013) proposed that when people internalize the thin, and often times unattainable, body ideals presented in the media, they are often repeatedly comparing themselves to unattainable bodies. As a result body dissatisfaction develops. Both the internalization of sociocultural ideals and the tendency to compare appearances were found to mediate the influence thin ideal media has on body esteem and body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls (Durkin, Paxton, & Sorbello, 2007; Jones et al., 2004; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; van den Berg et al., 2007). Consistent with the social comparison theory, these findings suggest that the negative evaluation of appearance following media exposure is likely the consequence of comparing oneself to others, which could include unattainable media images and the internalization of sociocultural attitudes towards appearance (McLean et al., 2013).

Media Literacy Education

According to Hobbs (1998), there is a wide range of interpretations of the objectives and approaches to MLE. Some define the primary objective to be teaching consumers of media how to create their own media images (e.g., create one's own message using print, video, audio, and/or multimedia), while others develop media literacy programs with the primary objective to reverse unhealthy interpretations of media messages. Although there is a wide range of approaches, theories, and goals to

MLE, the central concept remains the same. Media literacy education allows individuals to actively respond to images by critically examining and analyzing, rather than viewing passively and, therefore, has the ability to reduce the extent to which media exposure contributes to body dissatisfaction (McLean et al., 2013). MLE promotes active and critical interpretations of media content (Bergsma & Carney, 2008), with the assumption that media images are then viewed and interpreted as inappropriate and unrealistic for appearance related comparisons and less as acceptable standards of beauty. When critical and more accurate interpretations of media occur, the persuasive impact and negative influences of media become limited (Berel & Irving, 1998; Halliwell, Easun, & Harcourt, 2011).

Media literacy programs and experimental interventions represent a promising approach in the prevention of body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and the endorsement of sociocultural appearance ideals. Educational programs and workshops that include media literacy components have produced positive effects for body dissatisfaction, appearance comparisons, and internalization of societal appearance ideals in both boys and girls (Richardson Thomspn, & Paxton, 2009; Wilksch & Wade, 2009). Studies have indicated that brief media literacy interventions have the ability to prevent negative influences from media exposure, including body dissatisfaction and harmful body image consequences (Halliwell et al., 2011; Quigg & Want, 2011). In fact, according to Coughlin and Kalodner (2006) media literacy programs can promote positive body image by way of reducing appearance comparison tendencies and the internalization of sociocultural body ideals.

Over the past 30 years, a small body of research on the effectiveness of MLE has emerged; however, these studies have been conducted with varying degrees of MLE (e.g., target age, setting, involvement, topic, and demographics), as well as differ in their reported results (Bergsma & Carney, 2008). In general, many questions about the effectiveness of media literacy programs remain to be unanswered. Scholars most commonly perceive MLE as a multi-dimensional construct (Aufderheide, 1997; Hobbs, 1998; Kellner & Share, 2005; Meyrowitz, 1998; Potter, 2004; Rubin, 1998). Many of the central principles of media literacy are articulated by the Center for Media Literacy (2009), including the idea that "all media messages are constructed" (p. 50) is based on the assumption that media does not represent reality, but rather media messages are produced, edited and strategically arranged through a social production process. Also, the idea that "media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules" (p. 51) suggests that it is essential for media consumers to be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to understand, analyze, and evaluate the language and strategies of media messages from various sources. In addition, both the ideas that "the media have embedded values and points of view" (p. 53) and the idea that "most media messages are organized to gain profit and power" (p. 54) imply that media consumers need to be aware of the contexts and underlying motives guiding the development of media messages.

The main principal to media literacy is the ability to understand and comprehend the various forms of media more critically (Aufderheide, 1997; Rubin, 1998). Critical media literacy is an empowering process that "gives individuals power over their culture

and thus enables people to create their own meanings and identities" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 374). With this, breaking down media messages through critical analyses should be the first element to media literacy (Kellner & Share, 2005).

The extent to which MLE involves the target group can also play a role in determining the effectiveness of the intervention in question. Banerjee and Greene (2006) found MLE that involved the production and process of media to be more effective than MLE that focused primarily on the analysis and interpretation of messages. These results suggest that the use of media literacy curriculum involving active media productions or discussions will likely be more effective compared to curriculum made up of more passive lessons. In this study, this theory was explored by examining undergraduate students majoring in COMM who are exposed to high levels of MLE as part of their required curriculum including the development and active production of media, in comparison to undergraduate students with alternative majors who are exposed to significantly less MLE as part of their required curriculum.

The quantitative aspect of media literacy programs, such as the frequency of lessons, can also produce differences in effectiveness. Some studies evaluated media literacy programs designed to only be a single session (Irving, DuPen, & Berel, 1998; Ridolfi & Vander Wal, 2008), with others designed to have multiple sessions (Coughlin & Kalodner, 2006). In a meta-analysis by Jeong, Cho, and Hwang (2012), the effectiveness of these media literacy programs on outcomes including perceived realism, influence, criticism, beliefs, attitudes, norms, efficacy and behaviors varying in length were reviewed and compared. This meta-analysis of 32 primary studies showed media

literacy programs to be generally effective. Each program reviewed in this particular study demonstrated positive effects on all previously listed outcomes. Specific to this study, MLE successfully increased both criticism as well as awareness of influences, while reducing perceived realism of media messages. In addition, Jeong et al. (2012) found that MLE decreased the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, such as extreme dieting, and increased negative thoughts and normative pressure (e.g., most people are thin, I should get that thin too) regarding those behaviors, while increasing the self-efficacy (e.g., consumers being able to counter information) for not engaging in behaviors. Lastly, a combined analysis of correlations further identified media literacy programs with multiple sessions as being more effective than those with a single session.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter literature related to ED symptomology, risk factors commonly associated with the development of EDs, negative influences of media, and the use of MLE to prevent such influences and risk factors to EDs was examined. While its origin is not conclusive, ED symptomology is relatively complex and can affect a wide range of populations and can potentially lead to more serious mental and physical health conditions. An overview of the negative influences of media associated with ED symptomology, including risk factors associated with the development of EDs was explored and reviewed.

Gaps in the literature pertaining to the use and effectiveness of media literacy programs to prevent media's negative influences were also examined, in addition to the concept of incorporating MLE as part of the core curricula in academic settings. Social

comparison theories were reviewed in depth to assist in better explaining how appearance ideal media images and messages can influence people's attitudes and behaviors. This chapter also discussed the selection and use of research strategies and presented literature supportive of the research methodology used in this study. In addition, an overview of current gaps in the literature and identified future research needs relevant to this topic were also provided.

As discussed throughout this chapter, the social comparison theory underlines the need for future research studies to consider media consumption in more detail rather than use gross measures of generalized media consumption. There is also a need to establish whether body image perceptions are particularly vulnerable to specific role models or societal appearance ideals, including thin ideals that can only be found in specific magazine publications or television programs. It would further be useful to know whether people are consciously aware of making comparisons between themselves and media images, in addition to whether or not they also tend to compare others to media images. It is this lack of knowledge and awareness that can also be addressed with more exposure to media literacy curriculum.

Previous research studies found media to have a negative influence on self-esteem, body esteem, and the degree to which people internalize societal appearance ideals. Nonetheless while existing literature has identified such risk factors as being commonly associated with the development of EDs, it remains unclear as to whether or not increasing a person's exposure to MLE will effectively decrease their risk in experience the those negative influences to media exposure (e.g., decreased self-esteem,

decreased body esteem, and internalization of societal ideals) commonly associated with EDs.

In summation, those who accept media's standards of thinness as their own may be at greater risk for developing problematic eating behaviors (Murray, Touyz, & Beumont, 1996; Stice et al., 1994; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Furthermore, it is expected that receiving repeated messages of not being thin enough would result in feelings of discontent with physical appearance. Similarly, researchers have found social environment pressures to be thin to foster body dissatisfaction (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986; Thompson et al., 1999). The internalization of societal standards of thinness is commonly considered a risk factor to body dissatisfaction. For example, researchers have found that people who evaluate themselves based on standards of thinness established by society are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Irving et al., 1998; Stice, 2002; Stice et al., 1994; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Furthermore, people making social and appearance comparisons with media images portraying the thin body ideal are more likely to attempt achieving such body ideals without the knowledge or awareness of the how unrealistic, and often times unattainable such images are (Berel & Irving, 1998; Brownell, 1991).

In general, scholars have referenced MLE as an effective approach in providing information about the tactics used by the media to create the unrealistic standards that often times media consumers aspire to achieve (Berel & Irving, 1998; Irving et al., 1998; Levine et al., 1994; Steiner-Adair & Purcell, 1996; Stormer & Thompson, 1996). Over the course of recent decades, educators and researchers have made advancements to

advocate and address these new educational needs (Semali, 2005). Media literacy programs have been developed in a wide range of forms, most commonly depending on the subject area, theoretical approach, and level of the educational system with which they are affiliated.

In this study, I investigated the relationships between exposure levels to MLE and those risk factors commonly associated with the development of EDs. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology used in this study and further outlines the research design and methods of sampling, including demographic characteristics of the sample populations. Procedures outlining the research process, including data collection and analyses, in addition to statistical properties and general information pertaining to the instruments used in the design are also presented. Limitations to the study, ethical concerns, and issues related to informed consent are also discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if relationships exist between levels of exposure to media literacy curriculum and risk factors associated with the development of EDs (e.g., low self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals). In this chapter, the research design, sample populations, instrumentation and materials, and the measures will be described. The research questions and hypothesis are also presented, and the data collection and analysis procedures will be discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

A quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional survey design administered online was used in this study to examine the variance of three dependent variables (self-esteem, body image dissatisfaction, internalization of societal appearance norms) with two independent variables (exposure levels to media literacy curriculum and gender). The quantitative method is a systematic approach with the purpose of defining and measuring variables to define relationships between variables (Patton, 2002); the quantitative method has been tested and implemented in many research studies to date (Gay & Airasian, 2000). This method also allows the opportunity for comparison between the two groups in reference to ED risk factors.

This study was considered nonexperimental because variables, including exposure levels to media literacy curriculum, were not subject to manipulation by the researcher (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This study was also considered cross-sectional, as the data were collected from participants only at a single point in time, and subsequent

comparisons were made across the variables of interest. The survey design is a commonly used method, as it allows inferences determined about a sample population to be generalized to a larger population, provided that the characteristics of both the sample and larger population are similar. Although a survey design was selected for this dissertation, as discussed in Chapter 1, the results of this study were not expected to be generalizable to the U.S. population due to an underrepresentation of adolescents and teens, individuals of lower socioeconomic status, and people with less formal education. The survey design did, however, allow for a large amount of information to be collected over a short period of time and made it possible to generalize from the sample to the vulnerable population in regards to the impact MLE may have on ED risk factors. Additional advantages to using a survey design included being both cost and time efficient and maximizing sample population size.

With the advancements in Internet technology, online surveys are becoming a viable method of data collection in research (Sue & Ritter, 2007). The participants for this study were recruited using SNS. While there are studies on using online surveys, not many studies were found which used SNS as a method of recruiting participants. In one such study reviewed, Howell, Rodzon, Kurai, and Sanchez (2010) administered a well-being and happiness survey to participants recruited from a college and from the SNS. The completion rate was lower for those recruited using SNS (68.5%) than from the college (93.6%). However, the quality of data obtained were comparable using both methods.

The data for this study was collected using self-report questionnaires that were made available to participants using the Internet survey tool, SurveyMonkey. Using the Internet to collect data aimed to eliminate geographical barriers and increase exposure; optimize demographic diversity within the population sample, maximize the accuracy of the raw data collection; reduce or eliminate expenses; allow data to be collected over a relatively short period of time; and be convenient for both the participants and me. These advantages of online surveys were expected to assist with ensuring both the quality and accuracy of the collected data for maximum credibility.

In consideration of other research methods, the lack of control and experimental groups eliminated the option to use an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Furthermore, qualitative research methods were also not fit for this study as qualitative approaches are often selected when the body of knowledge in a given field is limited and when constructs are not understood, defined, or measured (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). According to Eisner (1991), there are six core characteristics to a qualitative study. They are as follows: (a) is field focused; (b) employs the self as an instrument; (c) has an interpretive character; (d) makes use of expressive language and the presence of voice in text; (e) pays attention to particulars; and (f) is believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrumental utility. Mixed methods research, as described by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), is the "class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study" (p. 17). Based on these descriptions, neither qualitative nor mixed method

research strategies accurately aligned with the research questions and hypotheses of this study.

Methodology

Population

A convenience sample of undergraduate college students nearing the completion of their degrees, majoring in either COMM or an alternative major with less MLE as part of the required curriculum, or of individuals whom have recently earned their degree were used for this study. The participants were initially drawn from the Walden Research Participant Pool, which is accessible to individuals across the United States. The following population and demographic data specific to undergraduate students was provided by Walden University's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and was based only on those students who provided the information to the university (8,274 students reported gender, 7,961 students reported ethnicity, and 8,469 reported age). Walden University reported a student gender ratio of 72 % females and 23 % males (8,274). The majority of Walden University students identified as Caucasian (43%), Black (39%), and Hispanic/Latino (13%), with the remaining students identifying as multiracial (2%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2%), and American Indian/Alaskan (1%). Walden University further reported 35 % of students being between the ages of 30 and 39, 24 % being between 40 and 49, 19 % being between 24 and 29, 11 % between 50 and 59, and 11 % of students being under the age of 23 or over the age of 60 (Walden University, 2012). Additional participants were drawn from SNS, including Facebook

and LinkedIn and through the use of community wide postings, without the establishment of community partners for this study.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The student sample used in this study was divided into two groups: COMM majors and alternative majors. These two groups represented two different exposure levels to MLE. This was based on the required curriculum and course descriptions for COMM majors and reported alternative majors offered by Walden University and local universities. For example, Walden University's online bachelors program in communication helps students

> become an effective communicator who can engage audiences, build relationships, and drive results in today's fast-paced, consumer-driven global economy. By focusing on the latest industry techniques and strategies, this bachelor's degree in communication online can prepare you to create targeted social media messaging, develop marketing campaigns, write compelling communications, deliver engaging presentations, and promote ideas that inspire others to take action (Walden University, 2013, para. 2).

According to Walden University (2013), graduates with communication skills in emerging media may pursue career options in a variety of roles that include social media specialists, online marketing managers, Web coordinators, e-commerce specialists, copywriters, and more. Furthermore, graduates of this program are prepared to do the following:

- Demonstrate effective written communication skills for multicultural and diverse audiences.

- Assess awareness of their own values, dispositions, and communication styles as evident in their interpersonal, group, and mass communications.

- Critically analyze contextual needs to select appropriate communication strategies.

- Successfully collaborate with others in ways that promote personal accountability and mutual respect.

- Competently employ use of digital communication in professional settings.

- Use a systems perspective to optimize organizational, community, and global communication.

- Demonstrate ethical, socially aware strategies in their communications with both local and far-reaching audiences.

Some of the core courses for COMM majors include

- Introduction to Mass Communication

- Interpersonal Communication

- Dynamics of Group Communications

- Fundamentals for Public Speaking

- Writing for the Digital Age

- Communicating Through Media and Technology

- Negotiation and Persuasion

- Intercultural Communication

- Leveraging Emerging Media for Mass Communication

- Emerging Media and Global Communication

- Emerging Media Design

Because additional participants for this study were drawn from SNS, including Facebook and LinkedIn and through the use of community wide postings, a local university also offering a Communications program was further explored in reference to the required curriculum for COMM majors. Communication students explore a "wide range of communication behaviors that occur within and across mediated channels. Students take courses in several areas falling under a media emphasis including journalism, radio, television, film, and other media" (UWSP, 2013). According to UWSP's Division of Communication, this major prepares students for careers in broadcasting, management, sales, corporate video, and print journalism (UWSP, 2012). Some of the required courses for COMM majors in the area of journalism include:

- Evaluation of Media

- Constructing Media Narratives

- Basic Journalism: Newswriting and Reporting

- Multimedia for Journalists

- Intermediate Journalism

- Media Studies Capstone

- Communication Ethics

Some of the required courses for COMM majors in the area of media production include:

- Evolution of Media

- Constructing Media Narratives

- Media Production I

- Media Law

- Media Production II

- Media Production Workshop

In comparison, alternative majors that include significantly less MLE in the required curriculum were also explored, for example ACCT and ENG majors.

Walden University's online bachelors program in accounting helps students develop "a strong foundation in accounting theory, principles, and practice, as well as insight into accounting's strategic role in broader business, organizational, and ethical issues. Walden's online bachelors program in accounting provides students with the technical accounting skills required to enter the accounting profession and the business, marketing, and communication skills needed to advance your career." (Walden University, 2013). According to Walden University (2013), graduates with the necessary accounting skills may pursue career options in a variety of roles that include business or financial analyst, public accountant or auditor, risk manager, tax specialist, assurance specialist and more. Furthermore graduates of this program are prepared to do the following:

- Apply problem-solving skills to multiple accounting situations, including those occurring in the international setting.

- Communicate effectively about accounting and business practices within the context of larger organizational frameworks.

- Access relevant accounting/financial guidance and apply it in their accounting practice.

- Demonstrate well-developed competency in their accounting techniques.

- Demonstrate collaborative skills across accounting and functional business areas.

- Analyze sources of organizational risk.

- Apply knowledge of the legal and regulatory environment in which the accounting profession operates.

- Apply ethical reasoning in accounting practices.

Some of the core courses for ACCT majors include:

- Statistics

- Microeconomics

- Business Law

- Financial Management

- Accounting Information Systems

- Government and Nonprofit Accounting

- Ethical Leadership

- Organizational Communication

- Marketing

Furthermore, because additional participants for this study were drawn from SNS (including Facebook and LinkedIn), a local university offering an bachelors program in English was also explored in reference to the required curriculum for ENG majors. This major includes courses in literature, the study of language, and the practical skills of writing (UWSP, 2013).

Some of the required courses of ENG majors include:

- English Literature

- Survey of British Literature

- Survey of American Literature

- Ethnic Literature

- Literature Theory

- Language

- Creative Writing

- Contemporary Poetry

- History of English Language

Based on the information provided by each academic division, department, and university, and the required courses for each and descriptions therein, students with COMM majors are exposed to high levels of MLE as part of their primary curriculum, while alternative majors such as ACCT and ENG, by comparison, are exposed to significantly less.

The data collected for this study provided insight into the relationship between MLE and risk factors associated with the development of EDs. These insights derived

from the data were supportive to the need for MLE as part of the primary curricula in education settings. Implementing MLE curriculum allows the opportunity to prevent media's negative influences beginning at a young age.

The results of this study were not generalizable to the U.S. adult population as several groups were underrepresented in the sample population. The sample consisted of both students nearing degree completion and individuals who have recently earned their degrees from either Walden University and within the community. Individuals of lower socioeconomic status and those with less formal education are likely underrepresented due to limiting the sample population to undergraduate college students and graduates. Adolescents and teens are also underrepresented, as students of this age are naturally not in attendance. Because of the narrow characteristics of participants in this study, the results cannot be generalized to individuals who do not also possess these same characteristics. Future studies are needed across populations with various characteristics and from additional settings in order to determine if the findings from this study can be appropriately applied to a wider range of populations.

The inclusion criteria for this study included: (a) undergraduate college students nearing degree completion and individuals who have recently earned their degrees; (b) undergraduate college students majoring in COMM; (c) undergraduate college students majoring in an alternative major with less MLE as part of the core curriculum; (d) able to give informed consent; (e) able to speak and understand English well enough to give informed consent and complete the study; and (f) over the age of 18. In contrast, the exclusion criteria for this study included: (a) under the age of 18; (b) men or women who

self-reported having been professionally diagnosed with an ED; and (c) individuals

unable to speak or understand English well enough to give informed consent and

complete the survey. A professionally diagnosed clinical ED, according to the *DSM-IV-*

TR (2000) includes AN, BN, and BED. Because the scope of this study was to research

the relationships between exposure levels to MLE and ED risk factors and not pre-

existing EDs, individuals who have been professionally diagnosed with an ED were

omitted from this study.

Power Analysis

A power analysis was conducted using GPower3 software in order to establish the

appropriate sample size for the proposed study. An a priori power analysis, assuming a

small effect size (f = .25), α = .05, determined that the minimum sample size required in

order for this study to achieve a statistical power of .80 to be 88 participants (Gravetter &

Wallnau, 2007).

For effect size, Cohen's *d* has two advantages over other effect size

measurements. First, its popularity has made it the standard in research, as its calculation

enabled immediate comparison to increasingly larger numbers of published studies.

Second, Cohen's (1992) suggestion that effect sizes of .20 are small, .50 are medium, and

.80 are large, enables the researcher to compare the study's effect-size results to known

benchmarks (Kelley, 2007). Although the minimum sample size needed for this study

was set at 88 participants, achieving a power of .80, increasing the sample size to 132

would achieve a power of .95. Therefore, the aim was to recruit between 88 and 132

participants for the proposed study. The use of a small effect size (f = .25) was

appropriate for this proposed study. In reference to measuring effects of media exposure in relation to disordered eating attitudes and behaviors, according to Levine and Harrison (2004), a wide range of measures, scales, and methods have been used in various past studies. Because there is no set standard for media measures it is considerably difficult to frame results of differing studies in context and analyze them therein (Levine & Harrison, 2004).   According to Cohen (1988), in new areas of research inquiry, effect sizes are likely to be small because the phenomena under study is typically not under good experimental or measurement control or both.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to conducting this study, approval from Walden University's "Committee on Ethical Standards in Research" had been obtained. Once granted approval by the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), an application to place this study on the Walden Research Participant Pool website was submitted. Approval by the IRB was obtained prior to conducting the study, and any potential ethical issues disclosed by the IRB were addressed therein. In addition, procedural changes made thereafter were submitted to the IRB for approval.

Data Collection

Once approved and permission was granted by the Walden Research Participant Pool and the study was entered into the website, a request was made for the study to become active. Participant inclusion and exclusion was listed under the study's description, and made available on the participant pool website. Participants recruited

within the community through SNS, in addition to those recruited through the use of the

Walden Research Participant Pool, all went through the same data collection process.

Because an online survey had already been developed using SurveyMonkey, a

Facebook advertisement was created and displayed to target users whose profiles

matched the inclusion criteria. Facebook offers a self-service model for displaying

advertisements and also allows people to target their audiences specifically, including

traditional demographic models (e.g., age, gender, and sex). In addition, when using

Facebook's automatic advertising system no user information is made available to the

advertiser. For this study, city-level and geographic radius targeting was also used to

locate potential participants within a 50-mile radius, hence the use of local university core

curriculum and program descriptions for both COMM majors and alternative majors such

as ENG and ACCT majors both of which are considered to have less MLE included in

the curriculum. Information regarding participation in this study was not posted on

school public pages, but rather displayed within group pages that matched the targeted

search criteria and were originated by users.

After clicking on the advertisement, Facebook users were automatically directed

to the study's webpage, allowing for the remaining study procedures to take place outside

of Facebook. The SurveyMonkey website allowed for survey responses to be collected

over secured and encrypted connections. This approach minimized the amount of

information exchanged via the Facebook website and, therefore, not only further ensured

the privacy and security of all participant information, but also that user data in transit is

safe, secure, and available only to the intended recipient. Upon visiting the study's

webpage, before proceeding to complete the survey, participants were strongly advised to complete the survey on a private computer in order to better protect their privacy. In addition, the participants' internet protocol addresses were not stored in the survey results.

To ensure all data was securely stored and confidentiality had been maintained, separate new Facebook and LinkedIn accounts were made solely to be used for the purpose of this study. Study specific information communicated using the social network webpages made for this study were limited to educational or general information, such as the title and purpose of the study. These accounts had no friends or other connections. More specifically, all relevant information made available on the study's webpages had been taken directly from the introduction message (Appendix A). In the effort to recruit additional participants, a search was also done to screen for users who met the inclusion criteria.

When participants volunteered for this study they were shown a brief introduction message to the study. This message included information regarding the purpose of the study and how to participate (Appendix A). Informed consent was provided electronically by way of agreeing to the consent statement and proceeding beyond the informed consent webpage, of which discusses the background of the study, approximately how long it was expected to take for participants to complete the study, issues of confidentiality and sensitive topics, whether there is compensation for participation, and participant rights to end their participation at any time (Appendix B).

After reading and reviewing the study's brief introduction message and informed

consent, agreeing to the consent statement, and proceeding beyond the page of consent,

participants were asked to complete a demographic form. This information was used to

determine whether individuals meet the inclusion criteria, which included (a) being

undergraduate college students nearing degree completion or those who have recently

earned their degree; (b) graduates and undergraduate college students majoring in

COMM; and (c) graduates and undergraduate college students majoring in an alternative

major with less MLE as part of the core curriculum. Ethnicity and race information was

also collected to describe participants with the intent to generalize.

As the researcher, both my contact information and my dissertation advisor's

university contact information were provided to participants upon survey completion.

The information in this study and any data collected were kept strictly confidential.

Participants' names or other identifying information were not recorded, and in some

cases remained unknown. To further maintain confidentiality, all participant information

and data collected were protected by way of being stored on a password protected private

computer and on a password protected flash drive. All hard copy research records were

kept in a locked file of which only I had access to. Furthermore, no references were

made in oral or written reports that could potentially link any participants to this study.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Demographic Form

General demographic information was obtained by asking participants descriptive

questions, including information on ethnicity, gender, and age, as well as verification of

his or her academic major, year of enrollment, and whether or not he or she has received

a professional diagnosis of an eating disorder. (Appendix C).

Body Esteem Scale (BES)

Permission had been obtained by the author of the Body Esteem Scale (BES;

Franzoi & Shields, 1984; Appendix G). The BES (Franzoi & Shields, 1984; Appendix

D) measures characteristics in young men and women related to body esteem. It is a

revision of Secord and Jourard's (1953) Body Cathexis Scale, defined as "the degree of

feeling satisfaction or dissatisfaction with various parts or processes of the body" (Secord

& Jourard, 1953, p. 343). The Body-Cathexis Scale consisted of 40 questions on body

parts and functions on a 5-point Likert-scale. Items are then summed and divided by 40 to

produce a total score ranging from one to five. Higher scores indicated a higher degree

of satisfaction with one's body. The BES amended this by adding three gender-specific

subscales. For the men, these subscales include physical attractiveness, upper body

strength and physical condition, while for women these subscales include sexual

attractiveness, weight concern, and physical condition. (Franzoi & Shields, 1984). This

scale is designed to measure a specific aspect of self-concept: how one feels about his or

her body and appearance.

The BES contains 35 items using 17 items from the Body-Cathexis Scale and 16

new items. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (have strong

negative feelings) to 5 (have strong positive feelings). Likert scores are summed across

all items to yield a total score, and across subsets of items to produce subscale scores.

Total scores range from 32 to 160, with higher scores indicating greater esteem for one's

body. Subscale score ranges are consistent with the number of subscale items. The BES

has shown adequate internal consistency with subscale values ranging from .78 to .87 and

correlates with the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale to support convergent validity

(Franzoi, 1994; Franzoi & Shields, 1984; Rosenberg, 1965). Reports have indicated test-

retest reliability coefficients of .75, .81, and .87 for subscales, as well as adequate

convergent and discriminant validity over a three month period (Franzoi & Herzog,

1986). Internal consistencies in this study were .93 at post-1, and .94 at post-2. In

Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman's (1991) review of personality and social

psychological attitude measures, they report both validity and reliability in the data of the

BES. Based on their analysis, they recommend the use of the BES over other body

attitude measures. Additional past research studies have also found the BES to be valid

in its measure of male and female body esteem. (e.g., Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, Timko,

& Rodin, 1988; Thomas & Freeman, 1990).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) can be used without explicit

permission for educational and professional research purposes. Dr. Rosenberg's family,

including his wife Dr. Florence Rosenberg, however, have asked to be kept informed of

its use; therefore, in respect to this request, an informative letter was sent via postal mail

to the address provided by the University of Maryland (University of Maryland, 2013;

Appendix H). The RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; Appendix E) measures global self-worth by

measuring both positive and negative feelings about self. It includes 10 items, scored

using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Low self-esteem responses are 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' on items 1, 3, 4, 7, 10

and 'strongly agree' or 'agree' on items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are

reverse scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Likert scores are summed

across all items to yield a total score, with higher scores indicating greater self-esteem.

There is a significant amount of research using the RSES, making it the most widely used

self-report instrument for measuring global self-esteem (Gray-Little et al., 1997; Marsh,

1996). It has shown high ratings in reliability areas, including an internal consistency of

.77 and a coefficient of reproducibility of .90 (Rosenberg, 1965). Additional selected

independent studies each using different sample populations, such as parents, men over

60, high school students, and college students showed alpha coefficients ranging from

0.72 to 0.87, all of which are fairly high. Test-retest reliability for 2-week intervals were

calculated at 0.85, and for 7-month intervals calculated at 0.63 (Silber & Tippett, 1965;

Whiteman & Shorkey, 1978). In general, internal consistency estimates for the RSES

typically fall in a range from .77 to .88, indicating acceptable internal reliability. In

addition, test-retest estimates range from .85 to .82, revealing that the RSES demonstrates

excellent test-retest reliability (Bagley, Bolitho, & Bertrand, 1997; Blascovich &

Tomaka, 1991).

Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance (SATAQ-3)

Permission was obtained by the author of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards

Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-3, Thompson et al., 2004; Appendix I). The

SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004; Appendix F) measures the endorsement of societal

appearance norms. It measures multiple aspects of a societal influence upon body image

and appearance in the role of both media messages and images. The questionnaire contains 30 items, and is rated on a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree). Likert scores are summed across all items to yield a total score. Total scores range from 32 to 160, with higher scores relating to greater internalization and pressure felt by media to have the ideal body type. The 4-item subscales include: information, pressures, internationalization-general, and internalization-athletes.

A number of research studies have found high internal consistency between the four SATAQ-3 scales and good construct validity (e.g., Madanat, Hawks, & Brown, 2006; Markland & Oliver, 2008; Wilksch & Wade, 2012). For example, high internal consistency has been shown for the four SATAQ-3 scales in nonclinical populations ranging from .92 to .96, and in eating disordered populations ranging from .77 to .97, as well as good construct validity using simultaneous multiple regression and correlation analyses with the Eating Disorder Inventory—Body Dissatisfaction scale (EDI-BD; Garner, 1991) (Calogero, Davis, & Thompson, 2004; Thompson et al., 2004).

Furthermore, in a more recent study by Warren, Gleaves, and Rakhkovskaya (2013), score reliability and equivalence of factor structure of the SATAQ-3 was evaluated in a sample of female college students from the four largest ethnic groups in the United States. Participants were 1245 women who self-identified as European American/White (n = 543), African American/Black (n = 137), Asian American (n = 317), or Latina/Hispanic (n = 248). Using an exploratory factor analysis to test the factor similarity and score reliability across groups, reliability scores and overall consistency in

factor equivalence were found to be high across all groups, supporting the use of

SATAQ-3. An additional study using a sample of undergraduate males also reported

high internal consistency scores ranging from .85 to .95. All four factors demonstrated

excellent concurrent and discriminant validity also supporting the use of the SATAQ-3

with males (Karazsia & Crowther, 2008.

Data Analysis

This quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional study examined the variance

of three dependent variables (self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal

appearance norms) with two independent variables (exposure levels to media literacy

curriculum, represented by the participants academic major and gender).

Based on the required curriculum and course descriptions for both COMM and

alternative majors, it can be determined that COMM majors are exposed to higher levels

of MLE compared to those majoring in ACCT or ENG for example. The data from this

study allows insights into the relationship between MLE and common risk factors

associated with the development of EDs.

Once collected, the data was compiled and downloaded into an SPSS database for

statistical analysis. The data was studied and the hypotheses tested using a correlation

and MANOVA design with a significance level of $p < .05$. The instruments used in this

study allowed for the analysis to be conducted through a both a correlational design and

MANOVA.

According to Carey (1998), there are two major circumstances in which a

MANOVA is used. The first being when there are several correlated dependent variables,

and the researcher desires a single overall statistical test on this set of variables instead of performing multiple individual tests. The second being, in some studies, the more important purpose is to explore how independent variables influence some patterning of response on the dependent variables. In this circumstance the MANOVA has the ability to account for any correlations between the dependent variables, as well as test hypotheses about how the independent variables differentially predict the dependent variables, both of which cannot be done with separate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests (Carey, 1998).

The decision to use a MANOVA design instead of a series of one-at-a-time ANOVAs was based on a number of reasons. The first being a MANOVA can examine all of the dependent variables simultaneously while still providing Type 1 error (the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true) control across all of the dependent variables in the study (Cole, Maxwell, Arvey, & Salas, 1994).   In addition, unlike conducting multiple ANOVAs, a MANOVA accounts for the covariances of the other dependent variables which might increase statistical power. In other words, a MANOVA has the potential to be a more powerful test than univariate ANOVA because it considers both the variances and covariances of the dependent measures (Cole et al., 1994).

Preliminary Analysis: Participants were asked to complete a demographic form at the start of their participation. This information was then used to determine whether individuals meet the inclusion criteria. The participants' ethnicity and race was also

collected in order to describe participants with the intent to generalize, and a preliminary analysis was completed to determine any impact they may have on the variables.

$H_0 1$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

$H_1 1$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) are related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with reduced negative influences of media, as demonstrated by higher self-esteem.

$H_0 2$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to body-esteem (as measured by the BES).

$H_1 2$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to body esteem (as measured by the BES). Specifically, increased exposure to MLE will be associated with lower negative influences of media, as demonstrated by increased body esteem.

$H_0 3$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to the internalization of societal appearance ideals (as measured by SATAQ-3).

$H_1 3$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to the internalization of

societal appearance ideals (as measured by the SATAQ-3). Specifically, increased exposure to MLE will be associated with lower negative influences of media, as demonstrated by a decrease in the endorsement of societal appearance ideals.

A MANOVA was used to assess each hypothesis. All instruments were then scored and entered into the SPSS version 16 for data analysis.

Threats to Validity

All instruments used in this study have been previously tested for validity and reliability. The sample populations for this study consisted of both students nearing degree completion, and individuals whom have recently earned their degree. The results of this study are not generalizable to the U.S. adult population as several groups are underrepresented in the sample population. Additional studies are needed across populations with various characteristics and from a wide range of settings to determine if the same results occur as in this initial setting and population. Furthermore, the participants' ethnicity and race were also collected to describe participants with the intent to generalize in this regard, and a preliminary analysis was done to determine any impact they may have on the variables.

Furthermore, participants were assigned to each sample group based on their academic major; therefore, additional differences in the core curriculum could also be influential to the results. It is difficult to ensure that both groups were initially comparable at the start of their undergraduate careers. In addition, with no measurement of media literacy available at this time, the ability to directly measure the media literacy levels of both sample groups to better support an existing difference in the literacy levels

between COMM majors and the alternative majors with significantly less MLE as part of the core curriculum was limited. Subsequently in this study media literacy levels were assessed based on the primary curriculum and subsequent course descriptions for each major. Specifically, it is assumed that COMM majors are comparatively more media literate than alternative majors and, therefore, were accurate in representing the sample group differences that were necessary for this study.

Ethical Procedures

I submitted a formal request on behalf of this study, and obtained approval from Walden University's Ethics Committee and eligibility from the Walden Research Participant Pool for placement on the website accordingly. Once IRB approval from Walden University was obtained, the application to place this study on the Walden Research Participant Pool website was submitted, and all policies regarding conducting student research were followed accordingly. Approval by the IRB was also obtained prior to conducting the study, and any potential ethical issues disclosed by the IRB were addressed therein. In addition, procedural changes made thereafter will be submitted to the IRB for approval. The introduction letter provided to participants emphasized that their participation was entirely voluntary; and that they were free to discontinue participation at any time; and that confidentiality and anonymity would maintained at all times. Furthermore, once all necessary approval was obtained additional participants for this study were recruited through the use of SNS. Social Networking Sites, including Facebook and LinkedIn allow for local searches specific to individuals with certain education backgrounds and student enrollment status, including COMM majors.

Summary

This chapter focused on the research design, setting, and the sample population used to explore the relationship between exposure levels to MLE and self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance norms. The sample groups, sizes, and populations were all described throughout this chapter, while the research design, setting, data collection, and analysis used in this study were presented and examined in greater depth. The participants in both sample groups completed a demographic form and a series of self-report surveys and questionnaires. A summary of the research questions and three hypotheses were also presented, along with the instrumentation, protection of participants, and the inferential statistical analysis used to examine the variance of three dependent variables (self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance norms) with two independent variables (exposure levels to media literacy curriculum, represented by the participant's academic major and gender) using a MANOVA design. In Chapter 4 the results between the sample groups, preliminary testing results, significant findings, and their applications will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between levels of

exposure to media literacy curriculum and risk factors associated with the development of

EDs (e.g., low self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of sociocultural body ideals).

In this study, I employed a nonexperimental, quantitative, cross-sectional survey design.

The study consisted of a convenience sample of 90 individuals, including both

undergraduate students near degree completion and individuals who have recently earned

their degree. Three previously validated instruments were used in the study, the BES

(Franzoi & Shields, 1984), SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004), RSES (Rosenberg, 1965),

and a self-designed questionnaire that gathered demographic information.

In this chapter, I report results from the research design as outlined in Chapter 3,

including the data collection, analysis procedures, and statistical findings. Demographic

information and data regarding reliability are also presented. Statistical analyses

involving a correlational design and multivariate analysis of variance were reported and

placed in the context of the research questions and hypotheses. The final section

provides a summary of key findings that were drawn from this study.

Data Collection Process

Original recruitment plans (including an announcement via a local university's

student list-serv about the research study) failed to be initiated, as regardless of the

numerous attempts made both via e-mail and phone over the course of 5 weeks to contact

the facility member who oversaw student research, no acknowledgement or response to

such attempts was made. As an alternative, an approved change was made to use the

Walden Participant Pool, rather than the previous plan to solely recruit students from a

local university. These recruitment plans (including making this research study available

to Walden University students), however, failed to result in an adequate sample size.

Over the course of 4 weeks, this recruitment plan did not generate any student

participants, and in addition to using the Walden University Participant Pool, another

approved change was made to also recruit participants from SNS, including Facebook

and LinkedIn, and through the use of community-wide postings without the establishment

of community partners for this study. This recruitment plan included a Facebook

advertisement displayed to Facebook users whose profiles matched the inclusion criteria.

Aside from the deviation from the original recruitment plan, remaining factors in the data

collection procedure remained the same.

Demographic and Descriptive Data

Table 1 displays participant demographics and descriptive statistics. Ninety

participants (n=41 exposed to MLE curriculum and n=49 not exposed to MLE

curriculum) had complete data and were retained for analyses. The sample population

had more females (66.7%) than males (33.3%). Of the 90 participants, the majority of

participants were between 25 and 29 years of age (43.3%), followed by participants

between 18 and 24 years of age (38.9%). The sample was comprised least of

participants between 30 and 49 years of age (17.8%). There was limited ethnic diversity

among the participants with the vast majority identifying as being White (88.9%),

followed by Black or African American (10.0%) and only a 1.1% representation for

Filipino and Latin. About half (55.6%) of the sample population reported having recently

graduated, one-fourth (24.4%) described themselves as being enrolled in their fourth year

of college, 17.8% in their third year, and only a 1.1% representation each for both first

year and second year undergraduate students. All participants denied ever having

received a professional diagnosis of an ED.

The results of this study will not be generalizable to the U.S. adult population as

several groups are underrepresented in the sample population, including individuals of

lower socioeconomic status and those with less formal education, as well as adolescents

and teens.

Table 1

Demographic and Descriptive Statistics for Categorical Variables (N = 90)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	30	66.7
	Female	60	33.3
	Total	90	100.0
Age	18-24	35	38.9
	25-29	39	43.3
	30-49	16	17.8
	Total	90	100.0
Ethnicity	White	79	97.8
	Black or African American	9	10.0
	Filipino	1	1.1
	Other	1	1.1
	Total	90	100.0
Academic Major	Communications	41	45.6
	Other	49	54.4
	Total	90	100.0
Year of Enrollment	First	1	1.1
	Second	1	1.1
	Third	16	17.8
	Fourth	22	24.4
	Graduated	50	55.6
	Total	90	100.0
Eating Disorder Diagnosis	Yes	0	0.0
	No	90	100.0
	Total	90	100.0

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study was designed to investigate the following research questions:

a. Is there a relationship between a student's level of exposure to MLE as part of the primary curricula and his or her self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals?

b. Is there a relationship between gender and the influences of media literacy on self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals?

c. Are there significant interaction effects between gender and any of the other

variables?

To investigate these questions, the following hypotheses were tested:

$H_0 1$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

$H_1 1$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) are related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with reduced negative influences of media, as demonstrated by higher self-esteem.

$H_0 2$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to body esteem as measured by the Body Esteem Scale (BES).

$H_1 2$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to body esteem as measured by the Body Esteem Scale (BES). Specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with reduced lower influences of media, as demonstrated by increased body esteem.

$H_0 3$: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to the

internalization of societal appearance ideals as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3).

$H_1$3*:* Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to the internalization of societal appearance ideals as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3). More specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with lower negative influences of media, as demonstrated by a decrease in the endorsement of societal appearance ideals.

Data Analysis

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables. For each exposure level to MLE, the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency are listed.

Table 2

Mean scores and frequencies for RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 per Gender and Exposure to Media Literacy Education

	MLE Exposure Level	Mean	SD	N
RSES				
Female	Communication Majors	31	5.06	29
	Alternative Majors	29.32	5.18	31
	Total	30.13	5.15	60
Male	Communication Majors	34.92	2.35	12
	Alternative Majors	29.72	4.7	18
	Total	31.8	4.66	30
Totals	Communication Majors	32.15	4.76	41
	Alternative Majors	29.47	4.96	49
	Total	30.69	5.03	90
BES				
Female	Communication Majors	117.38	21.60	29
	Alternative Majors	106.26	23.35	31
	Total	111.63	23.02	60
Male	Communication Majors	133.17	22.57	12
	Alternative Majors	116.5	16.74	18
	Total	123.17	20.65	30
Totals	Communication Majors	122	22.8	41
	Alternative Majors	110.02	21.56	49
	Total	115.48	22.81	90
SATAQ-3				
Female	Communication Majors	27.10	8.54	29
	Alternative Majors	30.23	8.78	31
	Total	28.72	8.73	60
Male	Communication Majors	22.5	6.52	12
	Alternative Majors	27.11	8.16	18
	Total	25.27	7.77	30
Totals	Communication Majors	25.76	8.2	41
	Alternative Majors	29.08	8.60	49
	Total	27.57	8.54	90

A 2 x 2 between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance was performed on three dependent variables: self-esteem, body esteem, and the internalization of societal appearance idealizations. Independent variables were exposure levels to media literacy curriculum (represented by the participant's academic major) and gender. To test the

hypotheses and respond to the primary research questions of this study a MANOVA approach was selected, and IBM SPSS MANOVA was used for the analyses. This approach is able to describe the effects of multiple level independent variables (i.e. exposure levels to media literacy curriculum and gender) on three dependent variables (self-esteem, body image dissatisfaction, internalization of societal appearance norms) simultaneously. The MANOVA conducted for this study involved the following steps and components: Addressing the normal distribution of assumption, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices, and Wilks' Lambda. There were no univariate or multivariate within-cell outliers at p < .001. The following results of the evaluation of assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity were satisfactory.

Normal Distribution Assumption

An assumption for the MANOVA procedure is that the dependent variables are normally distributed for each level of independent variables (Green & Salkind, 2008). According to StatSoft, Inc. (2013), valid results may be obtained with nonnormal population distributions because the F statistic (see Table 3), used in assessing homogeneity in MANOVA procedures, is extremely robust to nonnormal populations. Providing that the sample sizes per level are fairly large, deviations from normality may have a benign effect because of the central limit theorem which states that "the sampling distribution of the mean approximates the normal distribution, regardless of the distribution of the variable in the population" (StatSoft, n.p.). In general, if the samples are sufficiently large then the multivariate central limit theorem holds and it can be

assumed the multivariate normality assumption holds. MANOVA is not very sensitive to

violations of multivariate normality. Additionally Green and Salkind (2008) point out

that even with nonnormal populations, "a sample size of 15 cases per group might be

sufficiently large to yield fairly accurate p values" (p.184). In this study, all factor levels

had 41 or more participants per group.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances (see Table 3) addresses the

assumption that the variances of each dependent variable are the same (George &

Mallory, 2008). For this study, Levene's Test results showed the following dependent

variables as nonsignificant: RSES, $F(3, 86)=.2.32$, $p=.08$; BES, $F(3, 86)=.41$, $p=.75$; and

SATAQ-3, $F(3,86)=.72$, $p=.54$. Levene's Test should be nonsignificant for all dependent

variables if the assumption of homogeneity of variance has been met. Because all

dependent variables were nonsignificant the assumption of homogeneity of variance has

been met.

Table 3

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Dependent Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
RSES	2.32	3	86	.08
BES	.41	3	86	.75
SATAQ-3	.72	3	86	.543

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance

The MANOVA approach assumes that the dependent variable variances and

covariances (their intercorrelations) are the same for all factor levels (Green & Salkind,

2008). The Box's Test of Equality of Covariances Matrices is a multivariate test for

homogeneity used to determine if, in this case, the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 variances

and covariances are the same for both exposure levels to media literacy curriculum

(Green & Salkind, 2008, p. 226). Therefore, if the matrices are equal and the assumption

homogeneity is met, this statistic should be nonsignificant. Box's Test results for this

study were nonsignificant, $F(18, 9222)=1.31$, $p > .05$, indicating no differences in

dependent variable variances and/or covariances among the two exposure levels to media

literacy curriculum (see Table 4).

Table 4

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	25.508
F	1.308
df1	18.000
df2	9222.108
Significance	>.05

Wilk's Lambda

Table 5 displays the results of the MANOVA in terms of the Wilk's Lambda, the

ratio of the within-groups sum of squares to the total sum of squares (George & Mallrey,

2008, p. 312). Significant differences were found among the two exposure levels to

media literacy curriculum for the dependent variables, Wilks' Lambda = .86, $F(3,$

$84)=4.55$, $p < .05$. Given that the means for the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 were

significantly different among the two exposure levels to MLE curriculum, the null

hypothesis is rejected. Furthermore, the multivariate η^2 based on Wilk's Lambda,

indicates a moderate effect size of .14 which suggests 14% of the multivariate variance of

the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 was associated with the two exposure levels to MLE

curriculum (Green & Salkind, p. 227).

Table 5

Wilk's Lambda – Media Literacy Education Exposure levels

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	η^2
Wilk's Lambda	.860	4.55	3.00	84.00	.005	.140

Table 6 also displays the results of the MANOVA in terms of the Wilk's Lambda,

the ratio of the within-groups sum of squares to the total sum of squares (George &

Mallrey, 2008, p. 312). Significant differences were found between genders for the

dependent variables, Wilks' Lambda = .91, $F(3, 84)=2.95$, $p < .05$. Again, because that

the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 were significantly different between genders, the null

hypothesis is rejected. The multivariate η^2 based on Wilk's Lambda, indicates a

moderate effect size of .10 which suggests 10% of the multivariate variance of the RSES,

BES, and SATAQ-3 was associated with gender (Green & Salkind, p. 227).

Table 6

Wilk's Lambda – Gender

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	η^2
Wilk's Lambda	.91	2.95	3.00	84.00	.037	.0.95

The comparison of the three self-report surveys and questionnaires scores (RSES,

BES, SATAQ-3) on the exposure level to MLE curriculum variables was statistically

significant, $F(3, 84)=4.55$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .14$. In addition, this comparison between gender

variables was also statistically significant, $F(3, 84)=2.95$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .10$. To determine

which of the self-report surveys and questionnaire scores and participant gender

contributed to the statistically significant results, the between subjects effects were

interpreted. Table 7 presents the results of the between subjects effects.

Table 7

Between-Subjects Effects – RSES, BES, SATAQ-3 scores per Gender and Exposure to Media Literacy Education

	Sum of Squares	*DF*	Mean Squares	*F* ratio	*P*	η^2
MLE Exposure Levels						
RSES	229.65	1	229.65	10.09	.002	.11
BES	3755.14	1	3755.14	8.12	.005	.09
SATAQ-3	290.85	1	290.85	4.20	.043	.05
Gender						
RSES	90.60	1	90.60	3.98	.049	.04
BES	3294.87	1	3294.87	7.12	.009	.08
SATAQ-3	289.69	1	289.69	4.19	.044	.05

Statistically significant differences were found for all three of the self-report

surveys and questionnaires related to self-esteem (RSES), body esteem (BES), and the

internalization societal appearance norms (SATAQ-3).

Test of the Research Hypotheses

Three research questions and associated hypotheses were developed for the study.

Each of these questions was addressed, and the hypotheses tested using inferential

statistical analysis. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings were made

using a criterion alpha level of .05.

$H_0$1*:* Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus

alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to self-esteem as

measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

$H_1$1: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) are related to self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Specifically, increased exposure to media literacy education will be associated with reduced negative influences of media, as demonstrated by higher self-esteem.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to determine if self-esteem differed by exposure levels to MLE curriculum, either high exposure levels (represented by COMM majors) or low exposure levels (represented by alternative majors). The dependent variable was self-esteem (as determined by scores on the RSES), with the participants undergraduate major used as the independent variable (see Table 7).

The comparison of RSES scores differed significantly by exposure levels to MLE curriculum, $F(1, 86)=10.09$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .11$. The effect size of .11 indicates not only is the result statistically significant, but that it also has practical significance.   This finding provided evidence that the extent to which one is exposed to MLE as part of his or hers curriculum did in fact differ relative to self-esteem (e.g. participants exposed to MLE curriculum scored higher on the RSES)

$H_0$2: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to body esteem as measured by the Body Esteem Scale (BES).

$H_1$2: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to body esteem as measured by the Body Esteem Scale (BES). Specifically, increased exposure to media

literacy education will be associated with reduced lower influences of media, as demonstrated by increased body esteem.

This same MANOVA was further performed to determine if body esteem differed by exposure levels to MLE curriculum, either high exposure levels (represented by COMM majors) or low exposure levels (represented by alternative majors). The dependent variable was body esteem (as determined by scores on the BES), with the participants undergraduate major used as the independent variable (see Table 7).

A statistically significant difference was found in BES scores, $F(1, 86)=8.12$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .09$. This result indicates that BES scores differed by level of exposure to MLE curriculum. This finding provided evidence that the extent to which one is exposed to MLE as part of his or hers curriculum did in fact differ relative to body esteem (i.e. participants exposed to MLE curriculum scored higher on the BES). Specifically, increased exposure to MLE may be associated with reduced influences of media, as demonstrated by increased body esteem.

H_03: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will not be related to the internalization of societal appearance ideals as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3).

H_13: Levels of exposure to media literacy education (COMM majors versus alternative majors as indicated by the participants) will be related to the internalization of societal appearance ideals as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3). Specifically, increased exposure to media

literacy education will be associated with lower negative influences of media, as demonstrated by a decrease in the endorsement of societal appearance ideals.

The multivariate analysis of variance was also performed to determine if internalization of societal appearance ideals differed by exposure levels to MLE curriculum, either high exposure levels (represented by COMM majors) or low exposure levels (represented by alternative majors). The dependent variable was internalization of societal appearance ideals (as determined by scores on the SATAQ-3), with the participants undergraduate major used as the independent variable (see Table 7).

The comparison of the SATAQ-3 scores among the two exposure levels to MLE curriculum produced a statistically significant result, $F(1, 86)=4.20$, $p = .043$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The small effect size indicates that although the result is statistically significant, the finding has little practical significance. This finding suggests that the extent to which one internalized societal appearance ideals differed by his or hers level of exposure to MLE curriculum (e.g. participants exposed to MLE curriculum scored lower on internalization, as measured by the SATAQ-3).

In addition, multivariate tests for gender are also statistically significant. In fact statistically significant differences were found between the gender of participants for all three self-report surveys and questionnaires. The comparison of RSES scores differed significantly by gender, $F(1, 86)=3.98$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2 = .04$. The effect size of .04 indicates that while the result is statistically significant, the result has little practical significance. A statistically significant difference was found in BES scores, $F(1, 86)=7.12$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = .08$. A statistically significant difference was found in the comparison of SATAQ-3

scores by gender, $F(1, 86)=4.19$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The interaction between gender and levels of exposure to MLE, however, was not significant $F(3, 84)=.86$, $p > .05$.

The descriptive statistics (see Table 2) were further examined for significant differences in the scores of each of the three self-report surveys and questionnaires by gender and education. A statistically significant difference was found in RSES scores between participants having majored in communications, exposed to MLE curriculum ($M = 32.15$, $SD = 4.76$) and those with alternative majors, less exposed to MLE curriculum ($M = 29.47$, $SD = 4.96$). That is, participants exposed to MLE curriculum obtained self-esteem scores that were higher than those exposed to less MLE. Comparison of exposure levels to MLE curriculum for BES scores indicated that participants exposed to MLE curriculum ($M = 122$, $SD = 22.8$) differed significantly from those who have had less exposure to MLE curriculum ($M = 100.02$, $SD = 21.56$). That is, participants exposed to MLE curriculum obtained body esteem scores that were significantly higher than those exposed to less MLE. Lastly, the difference in SATAQ-3 scores between participants exposed to MLE curriculum ($M = 25.76$, $SD = 8.2$) and those having been exposed to less MLE curriculum ($M = 29.08$, $SD = 8.60$) was also statistically significant. That is, participants exposed to MLE curriculum obtained lower scores on the internalization scale than those exposed to less MLE.

In addition, differences in the scores for each of the three self-report surveys and questionnaires by gender are also statistically significant. A statistically significant difference was found in RSES scores between male participants ($M = 31.8$, $SD = 4.66$) and female participants ($M = 30.13$, $SD = 5.15$). That is, male participants obtained self-

esteem scores that were higher than those scores obtained by female participants.

Comparison of gender for BES scores indicated that male participants ($M = 123.17$, $SD =$

20.65) differed significantly from female participants ($M = 111.63$, $SD = 23.02$). That is,

male participants obtained body esteem scores that were significantly higher than those

scores obtained by female participants. Lastly the difference in SATAQ-3 scores

between male participants ($M = 25.27$, $SD = 7.77$) and female participants ($M = 28.72$,

$SD = 8.73$) was also statistically significant. That is, male participants, when compared to

female participants scored lower on the internalization scale, demonstrating less

internalization of sociocultural attitudes towards appearance. In summation, the

multivariate tests for both gender and education are statistically significant, indicating

that men ($M=60.65$), when compared to women ($M = 56.88$), and those exposed to MLE

($M = 61.01$), when compared to those less exposed to MLE ($M = 56.52$) differed

significantly in their scale scores related to self-esteem, body esteem, and the

internalization of societal appearance ideals.

In order to evaluate the validity of this research study and to further determine

whether or not the relationship between exposure levels to MLE and dependent variables

(self-esteem, body image dissatisfaction, and awareness of societal appearance norms) is

being influenced by any other factors, participant demographics were considered and also

analyzed with all dependent variables. The demographic variables collected that were

not part of the main analyses were run individually to ensure they were not confounding

the results. No confounders were found, concluding that the statistically significant

results are in fact clinically meaningful.

Summary

This study was designed to determine whether relationships exist between levels of exposure to MLE curriculum and risk factors associated with the development of EDs (e.g. low self-esteem, body esteem, internalization of sociocultural appearance norms and ideals). In this study, I employed a nonexperimental, quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, and was administered online to both undergraduate college students nearing the completion of their degrees and to individuals whom have recently earned their degree in order to examine the variance of self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals with exposure levels to MLE curriculum and gender. It was anticipated that the results of this study would assist in answering the proposed research questions and define relationships between variables for future empirical research.

Because the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 are all previously validated instruments, it was not necessary to conduct readability analysis on these measurements. The demographic questionnaire that gathered information on ethnicity, gender, and age, as well as verification of his or her academic major, year of enrollment, and whether or not he or she has received a professional diagnosis of an ED. The participants' ethnicity and race was collected using the US census categories to describe participants with the intent to generalize.

Research Question 1

Question 1, "Is there a relationship between a student's level of exposure to MLE as part of the primary curricula and his or hers self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals?", was broken down into three categories to

first individually evaluate relationships between each independent variables with the dependent variables (self-esteem, body esteem, internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals). Findings showed there were statistically significant relationships between the three self-report surveys and questionnaires scores (RSES, BES, SATAQ-3) on the exposure levels to MLE curriculum variables .

Research Question 2

Research question two considered the following: "Is there a relationship between gender and the influences of media literacy on self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals?" When examining the relationship between gender and the three self-report surveys and questionnaires scores (RSES, BES, SATAQ-3), there were significant differences in the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 scores between genders. The multivariate η^2 based on Wilk's Lambda, indicated that 10% of the multivariate variance of the RSES, BES, and SATAQ-3 was associated with gender (Green & Salkind, p. 227).

Research Question 3

"Are there significant interaction effects between gender and any of the other variables?" Specifically which combination of the exposure levels to MLE and gender contributes most significantly to the dependent variables? Statistical analyses determined the interaction between gender and levels of exposure to MLE to be nonsignificant $F(3, 84)=.86$, $p >.05$.

These findings between exposure levels to MLE curriculum, gender, self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals provided empirical

evidence of what relationships do exist and a baseline for future studies.   This study

helps in building a stronger foundation for knowledge and growth. The results of similar

research studies that meet current informational needs associated with EDs and MLE will

help in building a better understanding of the importance in incorporating MLE as part of

academic curriculum.

Chapter 5 expands and discusses the results from these findings, identifies

limitations of the study, and offers a conclusion to the study. Additionally, the

implications and social significance of this study are further explored and discussed.

Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

With technology allowing for nearly all day media access as children and teens go about their day-to-day lives, the amount of time young people spend on media devices and consuming messages from various sources of media has risen. According to a 2010 survey, participants between the ages of 8 and 18 devoted on any given day an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes to using a source of media. This increased by 1 hour and 17 minutes a day, from the 6 hours and 21 minutes reported in the same 2004 survey (Kaiser Family Foundation Study, 2010). Furthermore, because so much of this time was spent media multi-tasking, defined as using more than one medium at a time, a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media content was considered to be packed within those 7 hours and 38 minutes reported (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Based on these results, time spent consuming media exceeds that of a full-time job (more than 53 hours a week). When used correctly, media sources can entertain and inform youth in many positive ways. However, because many are not educated as to how to think critically when using or viewing media or critically analyze its messages, many of these messages are said to contribute to health risks, including low self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction. Media literacy education is vital in preparing children to critically think and analyze media messages and is critical to the health and well-being of youth.

Considering the increasing access and exposure to a wide range of media devices and content therein, there is a lack of focus and limited progression in media education implementation within the United States. Specific to this particular study, MLE aims to

decrease media internalization of societal appearance ideals and thereby risk factors associated with EDs. MLE has become institutionalized in many countries around world. Canada, Australia, and Great Britain have taught media literacy for several decades. Countries such as Sweden, Finland, South Africa, and the United Kingdom also have some form of MLE included in school curriculums for primary and secondary students (Kellner & Share, 2005). While the United States remains the world's leading producer of media, it also remains behind in terms of media education. Consistent with the United States' ongoing neglect for this issue, body image concerns continue to be most prevalent within Western societies (Kubey, 1998, 2003). The prevalence of EDs in the United States has more than doubled over the past 4 decades (Arcelus, Mitchell, Wales, & Nielson, 2011). It was also during this time period that the standards of appearance presented in the media became more unrealistic (Kellner & Share, 2005).

Given the amount of time children are spending with media, it is important to know how it is affecting them. In this study, I aimed to provide new insights and a greater understanding of media's influence on risk factors and common predictors to the development of EDs, including low self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals (Bell & Dittmar, 2011; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999b; Thompson & Stice, 2001).

I posed the following research questions: Is there a relationship between a student's level of exposure to MLE as part of the primary curricula and his or her self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals? Is there a relationship between gender and his or her self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization

of societal appearance ideals? Are there significant interaction effects between gender

and any of the other variables? A nonexperimental, quantitative, cross-sectional survey

design was employed to examine the variance of self-esteem, body image dissatisfaction,

and internalization of societal appearance ideals with exposure levels to MLE curriculum

and gender.

In this chapter, the conclusions of analysis and the interpretation of findings are

described. A brief summary of the purpose and nature of this study is presented in

reference to the literature that generated the above research questions, along with an

additional summary of key findings. This chapter further includes a detailed

interpretation of the results with theoretical applications. This is followed by a discussion

of the social change implications of the study along with recommendations. Limitations

of the study and future research suggestions are also offered.

Background Summary

The goal of this study was to further determine how media literacy is related to

risk factors commonly associated with the development of EDs, including self-esteem,

body esteem, and the internalization of societal appearance ideals. Researchers have

found media to have negative influences on self-esteem, body esteem, and the

internalization of societal appearance ideals; however, it remains unclear as to whether or

not by increasing people's exposure to MLE, they are less vulnerable to the negative

aspects of media exposure (Brown, 1991; Huston, Donnerstein, & Fairchild, 1992;

Singer, Zuckerman, & Singer, 1980). I attempted to address this gap in the literature by

investigating the relationship between exposure levels to MLE and self-esteem, body

esteem, and the internalization of societal appearance ideals, all of which are commonly associated with the development of EDs. It is hoped that by gaining a greater understanding of media education as a multifaceted approach to understanding and eliminating the negative impact of media content on children and adolescents, the results of this study will be used to advocate for media education to be incorporated into school curricula as a prevention intervention to negative aspects of media exposure (Brown, 1991; Huston et al., 1992; Singer et al., 1980).

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

Key Findings

The collected data was analyzed using a MANOVA approach. Results displayed statistically significant differences in the comparison of three self-report survey and questionnaire scores related to self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals among the two exposure levels to MLE curriculum. Results further displayed statistically significant differences in the comparison of these same three self-report survey and questionnaire scores by gender. Combined with the mean data, the statistically significant scores, arranged from highest to lowest, were as follows: (a) MLE with self-esteem scores, (b) MLE with body esteem scores, (c) gender with body esteem scores, (d) MLE with scores of internalization to societal appearance ideals, (e) gender with scores of internalization of societal appearance ideals, and (f) gender with scores of internalization to societal appearance ideals. However, although the above relationships were all found to be statistically significant, when taking into consideration

the effect sizes, only the relationships between MLE and RSES, MLE and BES, gender and BES, and gender and SATAQ-3 scores demonstrated practical significance.

Based on the findings, female participants who reported alternative undergraduate level majors, from a communications major, scored the highest SATAQ-3 scores, as evidenced by the calculated mean score. These comparatively high SATAQ-3 scores suggest a high level of internalization to sociocultural appearance ideals. In addition, it is these participants with the highest SATAQ-3 scores who also most commonly reported an alternative undergraduate level major and, therefore, were considered to be exposed to less MLE curriculum. The participants who scored the lowest mean score on the SATAQ-3 were found to be the male participants with COMM undergraduate level majors. In addition, it was also the male participants with COMM undergraduate majors who had the highest mean score on the BES; whereas, female participants with alternative majors achieved a comparatively lower mean score. Lastly, the same was found for mean scores on the RSES. Male participants with COMM majors achieved the highest mean score; whereas, female participants with alternative majors achieved the lowest mean score.

In terms of exposure levels to MLE, regardless of gender, higher self-esteems and body esteems were found in those exposed to media literacy curriculum versus those participants exposed to comparatively less. However, the tendency to internalize sociocultural ideals was found to be most common in female participants regardless of their reported exposure levels to media literacy curriculum.

Interpretation of Findings

Scholars have attested to the negative effects caused by body dissatisfaction in both females and males of all ages, including its association with low-self-esteem (Keery, van den Berf, & Thompson, 2004; Paxton, Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, & Eisenberg, 2006; Wichstrom, 1999) and the development of disordered eating attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, Hannan, Haines, & Story, 2006; Stice, 2002). In addition to low-self-esteem, sociocultural pressures, such as the exposure to body-ideals portrayed in the media, often resulting in the pressure to meet such ideals have shown to be one of the risk factors for increased body dissatisfaction (e.g., Field et al., 2001; Paxton, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006; Presnell, Bearman, & Stice, 2004).

Attention has more turned to examining cognitive processes in relation to the development of body dissatisfaction. More specifically, the cognitive process believed to mediate the relationships between individual and sociocultural factors in the development of body dissatisfaction (Cash, 2002; Williamson, Stewart, White, & York-Crowe, 2002). Body comparison is the process of comparing a person's body with that of another, and researchers have suggested there is individual variation on this attribute (Schultz, Paxton, & Wertheim, 2002). The frequency of body appearance comparisons in girls has been associated with negative self-evaluation outcomes. It is these body comparison tendencies that are correlated with body dissatisfaction (e.g., Jones, 2004; Keery et al., 2004; Schultz et al., 2002). In adolescent girls and young adult women and men, the most frequent targets for body and appearance comparisons are to peers and media images (Schultz et al., 2002). In this study, I aimed to address the appearance

comparisons being made with media images, by expressing the importance of educating media consumers on the inaccuracies and tactics being used in media often resulting in negative influences therein.

The idea is that if people are educated on the content of media and how it is used to influence the general population, they will be better equipped and prepared to defend themselves and, therefore, be less susceptible to experiencing the negative influences that can come along with media use and exposure. There are numerous reasons to propose that body and appearance comparisons, especially when to media images, may mediate sociocultural variables and body dissatisfaction; however, if people are educated on how to critically think and view media, they will be less likely to engage in such comparisons and, therefore, reduce risks of body dissatisfaction, as well as the potential for more severe physical and mental health issues.

Past research findings suggest that media has less of a role in transmitting sociocultural messages regarding the ideal body to males than females. This is due to the fact that males are more likely to use peers and sporting heroes as targets of comparison over images in the media (Vincent & McCabe, 2000; Jones, 2004). This is consistent with the findings from this study, as limited internalization of sociocultural ideals was found in male participants.

The findings from this study have implications for early interventions to prevent and reduce body dissatisfaction and improve self-esteems in teenagers and young adults. Similarly, past research findings have also provided support for the use of MLE as a prevention effort that has been recommended by a number of authors (e.g., Levine &

Harrison, 2004; Levine, Piran & Stoddard, 1999; Neumark-Sztainer, Sherwood, Coller, & Hannan, 2000). More specifically, these scholars have recommended MLE approaches that include raising awareness of the negative relationship between media body comparison and healthy body image, increasing knowledge about manipulation of images in the media, and enhancing skills to recognize comparisons as they occur and to counteract them. Although research into the social comparison theory as it applies to males has not yet been extensive, based on the data from this study, interventions focused on reducing media body and appearance comparison are likely to be less effective in enhancing levels of body esteem and self-esteem in males.

This study lends support to the idea that standardized curriculum in schools to teach critical media literacy can have immediate benefits. More specifically, that it can effectively prevent media's negative influences on self-esteem, body esteem, and the internalization of societal appearance ideals. In support of this, findings based on BES, RSES, and SATAQ-3 scores indicated that participants exposed to MLE curriculum reported higher self-esteem than those exposed to less MLE. In addition, participants exposed to MLE curriculum reported significantly higher body esteem than those exposed to less MLE, while participants exposed to MLE curriculum reported less of a tendency to internalize sociocultural appearance norms than those exposed to less MLE. Lastly, male participants reported higher self-esteem and body esteem than females, as well as a reduced tendency to internalize sociocultural appearance norms.

Limitations

The data gathered for this study having been strictly dependent on self-reports served as a primary limitation for this study. Self-report data is known to provide responses subject to biases and inaccuracies. Furthermore, the behaviors and attitudes were limited to those measured by the BES, RSES, and SATAQ-3; therefore, any alternative variables equally or more influenced by media that also correlate with predictors to the development of EDs were beyond the scope of this study. In other words, all possible predictors to EDs were not addressed, but rather limited to self-esteem, body esteem, and the internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals.

The inability to directly measure media literacy levels was also a limitation of this study, as there is a present need to develop, refine, and validate objective measures of media literacy (Bergsma, 2004; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Primack, et al., 2006). With no measurement of media literacy available during the time of this study, the ability to directly measure the media literacy levels of both sample groups in order to better support an existing difference in the literacy levels between COMM majors and those alternative majors with significantly less curriculum focused on MLE was limited. It is because measures of media literacy with psychometric properties were unavailable (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Quin & McMahon, 1993; Scharrer, 2002), that media literacy levels were instead assessed and determined for this study based on the primary curriculum and subsequent course descriptions. Namely, COMM majors were expected to be comparatively more media literate than alternative majors and, therefore, were accurate in representing the sample group differences necessary for this study.

An additional limitation of this study was related to the sample population which predominately represented individuals who were both educated and of the middle to upper socioeconomic status. Because several groups were underrepresented in the sample population used for this study, the results were not generalizable to the U.S. adult population. Individuals of lower socioeconomic status and those with less formal education were likely underrepresented due to the sample population being limited to undergraduate college students at or graduates from a four year university. Adolescents and teens were also underrepresented, as students of this age are naturally not in attendance. In addition, the recruitment of participants using SNS can be associated with the sampling frame, which contains only those who have access to the internet and have an account with one of the SNS used. Overall, the demographic nature of the population sampled was fairly homogenous; therefore, the findings did not accurately extend to more diverse populations.

<div align="center">**Recommendations**</div>

Given media's presence and increasingly important role in people's lives, it is essential that further knowledge be generated to contribute to the limited existing literature regarding its negative influences coupled with the proposed prevention interventions. Specific to the present study, additional research pertaining to media consumption practices of adolescent females may be helpful in lending insight to the impact of internalizing media messages. Additional probing into the various types of media exposure and consumption practices is also recommended in order to determine if certain media vehicles are more powerful in its influences than others. Such research

would be helpful in determining important key focus areas to be included in MLE curriculum, as well as provide guidance in developing research-based media literacy curriculum standards. Exploration of the differences among internalization processes relative to the duration of media exposure would also be helpful. Related to the present study and the recommendation to incorporate media literacy as part of the standard curricula in academic settings, further research is needed on the effectiveness of this approach in comparison to independent media literacy programs.

To date, little attention has been given to the information relevance from specific types of media content to the developing and shaping of particular body image perceptions (Botta, 2000). It is not enough to know the amount of media or specific type of content people are being exposed to. Furthermore, research exploring whether or not certain body representations have a stronger impact on media consumers over others, and to what degree both males and females make direct comparisons between themselves and those observed in the media. For example, social comparison analyses underline the need for future research studies to consider media consumption in more detail rather than just the gross measures of generalized media consumption.

Also serving as a limitation in this study was the need to develop, refine, and validate objective measures of media literacy. Future research in this area should attempt to control for such methodological flaws. With no measurement of media literacy available at the time of this study, the ability to directly measure media literacy levels of participant groups remained limited. Qualitative analyses have historically been and continue to be used to measure media literacy skills, and although these measurement

instruments seem to appropriately measure various conceptual models of media literacy, extensive psychometric properties of the measures remain unavailable.

Furthermore, although there is a great deal of research on media exposure and its negative influences, there has been a lack of discussion in regards to media exposure through the use of social media websites and other SNS and online communities. Future research is needed in this regard, as these forms of media are also relevant sources of body representations, and should be considered equally influential, especially for young and vulnerable populations.

Given that the sample in this study was homogenous and similar to sample groups found in related studies, researchers should strive to seek diverse samples in order to explore differences among individuals, including those related to age, race/ethnicity, family background, religion, and socioeconomic status. The determination of any additional influential variables would also be noteworthy in this area of research. Similarly, and as an extension of the present study, research in this field should consider additional extraneous variables related to individual differences in future research, such as history of ED behaviors, dieting, low self-esteem, family history of eating disorders, and mental illnesses. Being able to identify and control such variables would assist in further isolating factors contributing to either resiliency or vulnerability. In addition, few research studies have explored media influences on body image, eating patterns, and thin idealization in younger children. Because EDs most often develop during adolescent years, it is important to expand on the literature in this regard. In general, focusing on

including MLE to the standard curriculum in schools prior to and throughout adolescent years should be considered and further researched accordingly.

Lastly, gaining greater insights into the experiences of those who have been successful in maintaining healthy body esteems and self-esteems, as well as resiliency to societal and cultural appearance ideals, despite the bombardment of negative messages from media, has the potential to be a significant learning opportunity in this field of research.

Implications for Social Change

High levels of body dissatisfaction are reported by adolescent girls (Levine & Smolak, 2002). For example, research in the United States suggests that around 40% of adolescent girls are dissatisfied with their bodies and struggle with their self-esteems (Presnell, Bearman, & Stice, 2004). This is a serious concern as low body esteem is associated with negative self-esteem, depressed mood, and disordered eating (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999); whereas, low body esteem is said to originate from repeated exposure to unrealistic and unhealthy body image ideals displayed in media (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). In general, scholars have confirmed that the use of and exposure to media can have a negative influence on self-esteem, body esteem, as well as promote the endorsement of societal appearance ideals, subsequently increasing risks to developing an ED (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Stice & Shaw, 1994).

The social change implications of this study included an increased understanding as to whether or not the appearance of MLE in standard curriculum can influence self-

esteem, body esteem, and the internalization of societal appearance ideals, all of which have been previously established by scholars as primary risk factors associated with the development of EDs. By examining the relationships between exposure levels to media literacy curriculum and the risk factors associated with disordered eating attitudes and behaviors, this study was not only able to inform, but also advocate for change by of way of presenting findings supportive to MLE. By providing people with the skills and knowledge necessary to critically evaluate media content and thereby decrease the risk of media internalization, MLE can also play role in the effort to decrease stereotypes and attitudes being endorsed by males in regards to female body images. In other words, an additional benefit to MLE is able to better educate and inform adolescent boys by way of increasing their general awareness of the unrealistic body images often being portrayed in the media. Doing so may reduce some of the pressures being experienced by adolescent females to achieve such appearance ideals. This is consistent with the previously discussed social comparison theory, in that a person tends to make judgements about his or her own appearance based on the comparison made to another's appearance.

Similar research studies in this field can further encourage positive social change in the realm of MLE and the establishment of curriculum in the academic setting. In an effort to advocate for this change, as well as to promote resiliency, the need for widespread development and media literacy curriculum beginning at a young age is presented. By building a stronger foundation for future knowledge and growth, the presented research design assisted in meeting the information needs required to better

understand and bring awareness to the importance of incorporating MLE in academic curriculum.

Body image dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, although a source of distress in and of itself, may relate to deeper psychological disturbances, including ED diagnoses. The need for MLE as a prevention intervention plays an important role in the effort to decrease the onset and incidence of EDs. Media literacy education in the school setting can also further assist with diminishing the extensive physical, psychological, and emotional problems that arise with being diagnosed with an ED. In summation, incorporating MLE into academic curriculum allows the opportunity for media literate viewers to use their knowledge and critical thinking skills to escape the negative influences of media, and subsequently lower their risks to experiencing those contributors associate with disordered eating attitudes and behaviors. This study further endorsed and reframed MLE as an important fundamental tool that can be effective in reducing or eliminating negative influences of media beginning at a young age, and as a result promotes greater success in the prevention and treatment of disordered eating attitudes and behaviors.

Conclusion

The reality is that media literacy is more urgent now than ever before. Media literacy education focuses on educating people to possess the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. It is about improving people's lives by way of enabling them to make better constructions of meaning from media messages. When individuals internalize the thin, and often times unattainable, body ideals presented in the

media, they often compare themselves to unattainable bodies, resulting in various negative influences and outcomes. This assumption served as a primary focus in this study. In a world of technology and the growing use of media, it is vital that research begin to find effective techniques for people to improve their filtering of media messages and their interpretations of encountered information. Rather than thinking about how adults can protect children and teens from the abundance of potentially harmful content in the media, efforts would be much better served if the focus was on how to better equip everyone, regardless of age and gender, with the tools necessary to not safely navigate and use various media sources, but to fully benefit from its advantages. By examining the relationships between exposure levels to MLE and risk factors associated with the development of EDs, including low self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of societal appearance ideals, this research study did just that.

Eating disorders represent an ever-increasing and deadly psychiatric illness that warrants both time and attention to finding effective prevention tools. This includes the idea that educating and providing young people with the necessary tools to prevent media's negative influences on those risk factors associated with EDs (e.g., self-esteem, body esteem, and internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals) could result in decreased occurrences of EDs. In an article discussing the importance of media literacy, Considine (2002) states, "while young people have more access to the internet and other media than any generation in history, they do not necessarily possess the ethics, intellectual skills, or predisposition to critically analyzes and evaluate their relationship with these technologies or the information they encounter" (p. 5).

In acknowledging that the use of media by those of all ages continues to increase, incorporating MLE as part of standard academic curriculum can potentially assist with preventing those negative influences commonly associated with body dissatisfaction and the development of EDs. Consider the weight loss industry, which in 2014 was worth a reported 586.3 billion dollars. The National Eating Disorder Association reports that 35% of normal dieters progress to pathological dieting, and of these dieters 20-25% of those individuals will develop EDs (Clemmer, 2014). Acknowledging and preparing people by way of educating them of the various tactics used and messages in the media by the weight loss industry is a vital step in preventing various negative influences, including disordered eating attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, by incorporating MLE into academic curriculum beginning at a young age, students are allowed the opportunity to understand both how and why media message are constructed, and for what purposes, as well as develop and apply a greater fundamental understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding the access and use of media. It is not only about protecting people from the known negative impacts of media, but about empowerment and lifelong education so they can take full advantage of all that media has to offer.

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Appendix A: Introduction Message

This is an invitation to take part in a research study of media literacy. This researcher is inviting undergraduate college students majoring in either Communication or an alternative major nearing degree completion to be in this study. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Tammy Stargardt M.S., who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time. Before deciding whether to participate, please read the information provided below.

If you are willing to participate, please click the link below provided by SurveyMonkey and review the information and consent form that follows. You will then be prompted to complete a brief demographic questionnaire, followed by a series of self-report surveys and questionnaires.

Appendix B: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of media literacy. This researcher is inviting undergraduate college students majoring in either communications or an alternative major nearing degree completion. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Tammy Stargardt M.S., who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to evaluate characteristics of media literate individuals and the potential influence of media literacy curriculum.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Indicate that you agree to the consent statement and to participate in the study by selecting your response to the statement and proceeding beyond this page.
- Complete a brief demographic questionnaire including ethnicity, gender and age, as well as verification of academic major, year of enrollment, and whether or not you have received a professional diagnosis of an eating disorder. This will take approximately 3 minutes of your time to complete.
- Complete a series of self-report surveys and questionnaires related to self-esteem, body-esteem, and internalization of societal appearance norms. This will take approximately 30 minutes to complete (10 minutes for each).

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to take part in the study, it will not affect your current relationship with Walden University. If you decide to take part, you are free to discontinue participation at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Although there are no anticipated risks to participating in this study beyond those encountered in day-to-day life, being in this type of study does involve the potential for minor discomforts, including becoming self-aware of any dormant issues. If you are a Walden student and feel you feel that participating in this study has resulted in emotional distress and you need further assistance you may contact Walden's Student Assistance Program for free, confidential counseling, available 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 1-866-464-8942 (TDD: 1-800-697-0353). If you are not a Walden student and feel that participating in this study has resulted in emotional distress and you need further assistance you may contact your University's Counseling Center. There are no costs for participating. Participating in this study may not benefit you directly, but it will help further research and promote positive social change. By building a stronger foundation

for future knowledge and growth, this study can meet the information needs required to better understand and potentially promote the importance of incorporating MLE in today's academic curriculum. This study endorses and reframes MLE as an important fundamental tool that can be effective in reducing or eliminating negative influences of media on today's youth, and as a result promote greater success in the prevention and treatment of disordered eating and EDs.

Payment:
No compensation will be provided for participating in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect participant confidentiality this researcher will not be collecting your name or anything else that could identify participants in the study reports, while none of the information will be used for any purpose out of this research project. The collected information and data will be kept secure on a password protected private computer and on a password protected flash drive. All hard copy research records will be kept in a locked file that only this researcher will have access to. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. Participants as well as university contacts involved in the completion of this research study will have the opportunity to receive study results upon request. If you are interested in receiving the results to this study please send a separate request via email to tammy.stargardt@waldenu.edu. Study findings will be presented only in summary form and will not include any information that could make it possible to identify you. Any personal information accompanying this request will also be kept confidential.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or email: (715) 305-0547 or at tammy.stargardt@waldenu.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Walden University representative, Dr. Leilani Endicott at (612) 312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.** Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can discontinue participation from the study at any time without prejudice by simply closing the browser. Proceeding beyond this page does not waive any of my legal rights.

Appendix C: Demographic Form

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What is your age?

☐ 18-24 years old
☐ 25-29 years old
☐ 30-49 years old
☐ 50 years and over

3. What is your current student status?

☐ First Year
☐ Second Year
☐ Third Year
☐ Fourth Year
☐ Other (please specify):

4. What is your undergraduate major?

☐ Communications
☐ Communications with an emphasis in media studies
☐ Other (please specify)

5. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? NOTE: Please answer both Question 5 about Hispanic origin and Question 6 about race.

☐ No, not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
☐ Yes, Cuban
☐ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin - print origin, in example, Argentinean, Columbian, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard:

6. What is your race? Check ☒ one or more boxes

☐ White
☐ Black or African American
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (print name of enrolled or principal tribe):

☐ Asian Indian
☐ Chinese
☐ Filipino
☐ Japanese
☐ Korean
☐ Vietnamese
☐ Native Hawaiian
☐ Guamanian or Chamorro
☐ Samoan
☐ Other Asian - print race, in example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian:
☐ Other Pacific Islander - print race, in example, Fijian, Tongan:

☐ Some Other Race - print race:

7. Do you currently have an eating disorder or have you ever been diagnosed with one in the past?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Appendix D: Body Esteem Scale

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:

1 = Have strong negative feelings

2 = Have moderate negative feelings

3 = Have no feeling one way or the other

4 = Have moderate positive feelings

5 = Have strong positive feelings

1. body scent   _____

2. appetite   _____

3. nose   _____

4. physical stamina   _____

5. reflexes   _____

6. lips   _____

7. muscular strength   _____

8. waist   _____

9. energy level   _____

10. thighs   _____

11. ears   _____

12. biceps   _____

13. chin   _____

14. body build   _____

15. physical coordination _____

16. buttocks _____

17. agility _____

18. width of shoulders _____

19. arms _____

20. chest or breasts _____

21. appearance of eyes _____

22. cheeks/cheekbones _____

23. hips _____

24. legs _____

25. figure or physique _____

26. sex drive _____

27. feet _____

28. sex organs _____

29. appearance of stomach _____

30. health _____

31. sex activities _____

32. body hair _____

33. physical condition _____

34. face _____

35. weight _____

Appendix E: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with general feelings about yourself.
Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

Appendix F: Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire – 3

Instructions: Please read each of the following items carefully and indicate the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

1 = Definitely Disagree

2 = Mostly Disagree

3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree

4 = Mostly Agree

5 = Definitely 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 do not care if my body looks like the body of people who are on TV. _____

4. I compare my body to the bodies of people who are on TV. _____

5. TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." _____

6. I do not feel 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 not 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 the people who are in movies. _____

12. I <u>do not</u> compare my body to the bodies of people who appear in magazines. _____

13. Magazine articles are <u>not</u> an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." _____

14. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to have a perfect body. _____

15. I wish I looked like the 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 or magazines to diet. _____

19. I <u>do not</u> wish to look as 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 or 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 <u>do not</u> try to look like the people on TV.   _____

28. Movie starts are <u>not</u> 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.   _____

Appendix G: Permission to use the BES

Appendix G: Permission to use the BES

Permission was granted by Dr. Franzoi in his email before research commenced.

Tammy Stargardt <tammy.stargardt@waldenu.edu> Sun, Sept 22, 2013 at 5:21 PM

To: "Franzoi, Stephen" <stephen.franzoi@marquette.edu>

Hello Dr. Franzoi,

I am writing to request permission to use/reproduce/send electronically your Body Esteem Scale in my dissertation research on "Exposure Levels to Media Literacy Education and its Relationship to Self-esteem, Body-esteem, and Sociocultural Ideals in Fourth Year Communication and English Majoring Undergraduate Students."

May I trouble you to send permission to use the BES. I would be truly grateful.

Thank you,

Tammy L. Stargardt (Stuart)

Walden University
PhD Clinical Psychology Program

Franzoi, Stephen<stephen.franzoi@marquette.edu>Sun, Sept 22, 2013 at 8:58 PM

To: Tammy Stargardt <tammy.stargardt@waldenu.edu>

Hi Tammy,

You have my permission to use the Body Esteem Scale in your research.

Take care,

Steve

Appendix H: Informative Letter of use of RSES

An informative letter about how the RSES was sent to Dr. Rosenberg's family before

research commenced.

September 24, 2013

The Morris Rosenberg Foundation
c/o Sociology Dept.
2112 Art-Sociology Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742-1315

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Tammy Stargardt and I am doctorate student enrolled in the Clinical
Psychology Ph.D. program at Walden University. I am currently completing my
dissertation research on "Exposure Levels to Media Literacy Education and its
Relationship to Self-esteem, Body-esteem, and Sociocultural Ideals in Fourth Year
Communication and English Majoring Undergraduate Students." I am writing this letter
to inform the family of Dr. Morris Rosenberg, my use of the highly respected Rosenberg
Self-Esteem Scale.

I admire Dr. Rosenberg's work on the self-concept, particularly the dimension of self-
esteem, and appreciate being able to use this Self-Esteem Scale in my own research.
Please be assured that credit will be given to Dr. Rosenberg, by citing his work in my
dissertation. In addition, as requested, upon completion of this dissertation study, a copy
of the work and results will also be sent to the University of Maryland using the address
listed above.

Thank you,

Tammy L. Stargardt (Stuart)

Walden University
PhD Clinical Psychology Program

Appendix I: Permission to use the SATAQ-3

Permission was granted by Dr. Thompson in this email before research commenced.

Tammy Stargardt <tammy.stargardt@waldenu.edu> Sun, Sept 22, 2013 at 5:58 PM

To: Thompson, J. Kevin <jkthompson@usf.edu>

Hello Dr. Thompson,

I am writing to request permission to use your SATAQ-3 in my dissertation research on "Exposure Levels to Media Literacy Education and its Relationship to Self-esteem, Body-esteem, and Sociocultural Ideals in Fourth Year Communication and English Majoring Undergraduate Students."

May I trouble you to send permission to use the SATAQ-3. I would be truly grateful.

Thank you,

Tammy L. Stargardt (Stuart)

Walden University
PhD Clinical Psychology Program

Thompson, J. Kevin <jkthompson@usf.edu> Sun, Sept 24, 2013 at 2:19 PM

To: Tammy Stargardt <tammy.stargardt@waldenu.edu>

No problem, you have my permission.

Kevin