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SENIOR BODY IMAGE AND MEDIA USE: A STUDY OF
PARTICIPANTS AT THE HUNTSMAN WORLD
SENIOR GAMES

by

Lisa Willis Harding

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Communications

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

BODY IMAGE AND MEDIA USE: A STUDY OF SENIOR PARTICIPANTS AT THE HUNTSMAN WORLD SENIOR GAMES

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Master of Arts

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between media use and body image in senior citizens. This study specifically targeted older people who participate in regular physical activity. Seniors participating in the 2006 Huntsman World Senior Games in St. George, Utah were surveyed concerning current body image and total media use. The sample included 691 participants. Lower body image scores were recorded among seniors who watched greater amounts of television. Magazine readership and body image displayed no relationship among men or women. Total media use did not influence body image scores among seniors. Male participants exhibited a stronger relationship than female participants between television use and low body image scores. Results indicated that males were vulnerable to messages targeting body image in a similar way to that of females. The findings of this study suggest that individuals may still be influenced by ultra thin images prevalent in media well into their older years.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Previous research has established that exposure to media messages celebrating the thin ideal may have deleterious effects on those who view them (Bessenoff, 2006; Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Murray, Touyz, & Beumont, 1996; Pompper, Soto, & Piel, 2007; Tiggemann, Polivy, & Hargreaves, 2009). Current statistics of eating disorder prevalence in developed countries with high media saturation are now at an all time high. Eating disorders are estimated to be grossly misdiagnosed and are reported to affect up to 10 to 20% of all girls and women (O'Dea, 2004). Eating disorders are also affecting men at a significantly increased rate (Pompper et al., 2007). Such messages are increasingly prevalent in today's media. Images celebrating an extremely thin body, referred to as the *thin ideal* (Morrison, Kalin, & Morrison, 2004; Ogden & Munday, 1996; Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994), have been linked to increased rates of body dissatisfaction and the eventual pathological state of eating disorders (Ogden & Munday, 1996; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999).

Researchers currently fear that the celebration of extremely thin bodies in media has created a situation where most individuals are unhappy with their bodies (Hellmich, 2006). Poor body image, or a negative perception of one's body size or shape, has now become so prevalent among individuals that it has been classified as normal or common (Cash & Henry, 1995). Because of this, widespread research has been performed over the last decade to better understand the relationship between body image and media. However, most of this research has been focused on women under the age of 25 (Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a).

An extensive amount of research has been performed concerning the effects of media on female adolescents, yet there is only sparse research that considers how such images affect men and women past the age of 25. However, there is data to support that the media's fixation on unrealistically thin bodies also affects the body image of older people (Hsu & Zimmer, 1988). This suggests that body image may still be a major concern for senior citizens and that body dissatisfaction and eating disorders affect the older population as well as adolescents (Lewis & Cachelin, 2001; Schieman, Purdrowska, & Eccles, 2007). The intent of this paper is to explore the body image of men and women who have entered their senior years, specifically ages 55 and over.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevalence of Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are a psychological disorder (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000) and are closely tied to self-esteem. The prevalence of eating disorders has risen sharply in the last decade, resulting in an “almost ‘epidemic rise’ in the incidence of eating disorders” (Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, & Ahrens, 1992, p. 89). A growing number of the global population is being personally affected with these disorders—the majority (90-95%) being women (Murray, 1999). One of the most common eating disorders is anorexia nervosa, which is described as having an intense fear of gaining weight despite maintaining an abnormally low body weight of 85% or less than what is recommended for a given age and height (APA, 2000). Anorexia nervosa is often misinterpreted as simply being thin or being preoccupied with the desire to become thin. A person with anorexia nervosa or recovering from anorexia nervosa can appear normal but still be suffering from the disease (Ferris, 2003; Tierney, 2001). Bulimia, the second most common eating disorder, is manifested by consuming large amounts of food and then purging the calories by means of vomiting, laxatives, or excessive exercise. This process “can flush the body of vital minerals, causing cardiac arrest. Self-starvation can also lead to heart failure” (Leutwyler, 1998, p. 17).

Although anorexia and bulimia are classified as disorders that affect those in childhood and adolescence (APA, 2000), research has indicated that eating disorders are affecting women later in life (Cosford & Arnold, 1992; Gupta, 1990; Hsu & Zimmer, 1988; Zerbe, 2003). Wills and Olivieri (1998) have found that life events and high amounts of stress can precipitate eating disorders in a predisposed individual, no matter

the age. Hsu and Zimmer (1988) reported that clinical cases of eating disorders among older people closely resembled those of younger patients. Similar to eating disorders in adolescents, adults and older adults were anxious about body image, participated in rigorous dieting, lost significant amounts of weight, excessively exercised, and used various appetite suppressants (Wills & Olivieri, 1998; Zerbe, 2003). Sociocultural pressures originating from the media can influence an individual in midlife with body dissatisfaction just as they would a person entering the teenage years (Zerbe, 2003).

In a group of case studies performed by Wills and Olivieri (1998), six individuals over the age of 65 who had been diagnosed with anorexia nervosa were described in detail. These six individuals, five females and one male, ages 67 to 84, were studied for 10 years in an attempt to better understand the implications of the disease on the senior population. Of the six cases listed, three of the individuals began displaying symptoms in old age. This study suggests that seniors are vulnerable to a disease that many consider a disorder that only affects young females, and that seniors are also still susceptible to the drive for thinness (Robinson & Callister, 2008; Wills & Olivieri, 1998). Furthermore, the initial signs of an eating disorder may not become apparent until well after the adolescent years.

While some older patients begin developing an eating disorder in later life, others never fully recover from an earlier developed disorder and carry it with them throughout their mature years. Research has shown that anorexia nervosa can no longer be looked at as a “disorder of young people” (Cosford & Arnold, 1992). Experts suggest that anorexia nervosa is, on average, a six-year cycle (Honey & Halse, 2006). Most patients maintain sufficient symptoms for diagnosis of the disease for five or more years after initial

treatment (Polivy & Herman, 2002). In a long-term follow-up study of girls who were diagnosed with an eating disorder, results showed that half of the cases displayed “continued abnormal eating attitudes even after many years’ follow-up” (Cosford & Arnold, 1992). In a similar follow-up study, Theander (1985) documented that although some patients displayed signs of recovery 12 years after diagnosis, continued recovery after 12 years was uncommon. Hsu and Zimmer (1988) have stated that unless a dramatic change occurs concerning the current emphasis on slimness, increased rates of eating disorders among seniors are likely to continue. These findings demonstrate that eating disorders affect older people in ways similar to adolescents, and that body image remains a major issue in the mature phase of life (Lewis & Cachelin, 2001).

Body Dissatisfaction and Seniors

Before continuing further on this exploration of the level of body satisfaction within the active senior population, a definition of the construct of body image is required. The term body image can be understood as defined by Henry, Anshel, and Michael (2006) as “the accuracy of the perception of the person’s bodily size and the thoughts and feelings associated with the individual’s view of the body” (p. 281). Body image is currently thought of as an attitude towards one’s body, with particular attention given to one’s appearance (Cash & Henry, 1995), or the mental interpretation of one’s body (Paxton & Phythian, 1999). Body image can be broken into several facets for evaluation. The first dimension of body image could be labeled as evaluation and affect, or the associated emotions one has regarding the way one feels about his or her body. Secondly, body image can be measured by the degree of importance, or investment, one places on his or her appearance (Cash, 1994; Rieves & Cash, 1996). An accurate

understanding of negative body image must also be considered. The term negative body image simply refers to one's negative view and attitude about his or her own body.

Indicators of a negative body image may include "eating disturbances, social anxiety and self-consciousness, depression, sexual difficulties, and poor self-esteem" (Rieves & Cash, 1996; Thompson, 1990).

For years there has been the misconception that body issues decrease in the mature years and that seniors just do not care as much about the way their bodies look compared to their younger counterparts. However, research has shown that this is not the case. "Body weight concerns remain important into late life" (Schieman et al., 2007, p. 421). Schieman et al. reported that "concerns about aging and its effect on body weight and physical appearance are common in late life, particularly among women" (p. 416; see also Halliwell & Dittmar, 2003). Research has indicated that senior males also continue to possess body image concerns. Pompper et al. (2007) stated that males are also concerned with losing weight in their senior years. Schieman et al. (2007) commented "although it is plausible that the cultural ideals associated with female thinness, the stigma associated with being overweight, and traditional gender-role differences in the importance of attractiveness diminish later in life, the evidence...implies the opposite" (p. 421).

Studies of body dissatisfaction among seniors have been shown to produce results which closely replicate similar findings among adolescents. This is especially the case among older white women, who reported similar levels of body dissatisfaction and a low ideal body weight, much like their younger counterparts (Schieman et al., 2007). As the current generation of consumer-driven baby boomers age, it is possible that weight-

related concerns of seniors may become an even more salient issue later in life (Schieman et al.).

While negativity seems to be abundantly reported in terms of body dissatisfaction, there are ways in which individuals are avoiding this trend. Males and females with perceptions of good health and knowledge of fitness often have good self-esteem (Paxton & Phythian, 1999). As adults develop a strong sense of healthy physical and psychological well-being, they enjoy a higher sense of self-worth throughout their life (Paxton & Phythian, 1999).

Physical Activity and Body Image

One possible solution to the problem of body dissatisfaction among older people is to increase the physical activity level of seniors. Physical activity has been shown to be a protective barrier against body dissatisfaction, particularly in women. According to Landers and Arent (2001), participation in physical activity was positively correlated with aspects of psychological well-being related to body image. Findings have also indicated that exercise may be prescribed as an effective treatment for bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorders (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2002). There are several reasons for this connection. As an individual exercises, he or she is more likely to view body weight as something that is within personal control rather than something he or she is powerless to change. This helps combat the perception among seniors that “their current appearances have evolved largely outside of their control” (Hurd, 2000, p. 88). As feelings of self-efficacy increase, so does body image.

In a study by Henry, Ashnel, and Michael (2006), women who participated in a six-week program of both aerobic and anaerobic activity recorded a significantly higher

appearance evaluation and body satisfaction. Evidence has supported that strength training is especially effective in improving body image. This study by Henry and colleagues found that “middle-aged women who engaged in a home strength training program three times per week for 12 weeks markedly improved body cathexis more than women participating in a walking program of the same frequency and duration” (Henry et al., p. 284). These results indicate that resistance exercise augments body image as well as overall feelings of well-being. Data from this study are also especially useful because it utilizes the population of individuals over the age of 30.

Although physical activity has been shown to be positively related to improved body satisfaction, exercise cannot be deemed a panacea to all self-perception of body inadequacy. For example, physical activity has been shown to increase body satisfaction in both men and women, yet it has been shown to have a greater positive effect upon men. This may be due to the fact that strength training increases muscularity, which is a desired trait of the male body. However, “women may find that exercise, without simultaneous calorie reduction, may not yield their desired thinness” (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2002, p. 41). Nevertheless, physical activity serves to boost both physical and psychological well-being to men and women of all ages.

Because higher levels of positive body image and self-perception are linked to physical activity, it is reasonable to assume that seniors participating in regular physical activity would have higher levels of body satisfaction than the average senior. This could possibly have a moderating effect on media celebrating the thin ideal that they are exposed to.

Physical activity and self-esteem. The self-esteem of older people has been shown to decline as their physical dependency increases. As older people must increasingly rely on others for help in carrying out daily household tasks, they experience a drop in self-esteem. Therefore, physical activity becomes doubly paramount because an active lifestyle leads to greater health and physical functioning as one ages. Coleman, Aubin, and Robinson (1993) have proposed that “the findings on activity level confirm the importance of activity in the prevention of depression and maintenance of well-being” (p. 348).

As previously discussed, physical activity can be a method to help seniors feel that they have a proactive role in choosing their physical appearance. In a study of college-age women, Henry et al. (2006) stated “the pursuit of thinness is commonly perceived as an action or goal in which young women can obtain favorable social responses thereby enhancing self-esteem” (p. 283). Because feelings of self-worth and physical attractiveness are important to people of all ages, it is logical to assume that such a pursuit aids in maintaining the self-esteem of older individuals as well.

Physical activity and the older population. Rydeskog, Frändin, and Hansson (2005) performed an in-depth qualitative analysis on elderly attitudes regarding strength training. Subjects recorded that engaging in strength training exercise enhances feelings of self-worth. The increased feelings of self-worth were linked to self-reported perceptions that they were stronger than peers in their age group and still felt capable of performing exercises identified to be activities reserved for those who were young and fit. One older woman who participated in the Rydeskog et al. study described her feelings by saying, “You get better self-confidence, as you know you can manage to do this

(resistance training). Not everybody can, at this age. I never thought it would be possible” (p. 167). Not only does exercise enhance the physical sense of well-being, it also has been shown to have positive effects on the mind.

Physical activity has been linked to aid in easing depressive symptoms and anxiety, as well as bringing one an increased sense of calm, enhanced self-esteem, and an overall greater appetite for life (Rydeskog et al., 2005). As seniors actively participate in sports and exercise, they will have greater feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem, which can lead to greater body satisfaction. This may provide a protective effect against the barrage of media images celebrating ultra thin body types and the onset of eating disorders in old age.

Although physical activity may help moderate feelings of body dissatisfaction related to media exposure, an understanding of the theory behind the harmful effects caused by such images is needed. Festinger’s social comparison theory helps explain the theoretical background for why media exposure affects body image in the manner which it does.

Social Comparison Theory and Body Image

Previous research has linked increased media exposure with increased distortion of body image, based on the theories of social comparison (Tsiantas & King, 2001). The goal of this section to explore how exposure to such images affects the body satisfaction of seniors through the use of social comparison theory.

Social comparison theory defined. In its most simple terms, the theory of social comparison states that individuals make self-evaluations based on how they feel in comparison to those around them (Bessenoff, 2006). People will compare themselves to

groups and individuals with whom they feel similar (Festinger, 1954; Robinson & Callister, 2008). These comparisons come in two basic forms: downward comparisons and upward comparisons.

Downward comparisons occur when individuals make comparisons with those who are believed to be less fortunate than they are. These comparisons generally have a short-term positive effect, as they may increase mood and self-esteem (Bessenoff, 2006; Wills, 1991).

Upward comparisons are made between individuals and those who they perceive to be socially superior in some way. This often leads to decreased self-evaluation (Bessenoff, 2006; Robinson & Callister, 2008). This can cause to feelings of what Bessenoff calls self-discrepancy, or the awareness of the distance between desired and actual self. In terms of self-discrepancy regarding body image, “feelings of self-discrepancy have been linked to various types of emotional distress, including disappointment and dissatisfaction, feelings of shame, low self-esteem, and chronic emotional problems such as depression” (Bessenoff, 2006, p. 240). Bessenoff further states that individuals with high levels of self-discrepancy were twice as likely to participate in social comparison to advertisements with super thin models.

Motives for social comparison. There are several different motives an individual may have in comparing oneself to media images. First, there is the motive of self-evaluation. This motive uses social comparison to evaluate one’s beauty by how it compares to that of the model. This is done in specific areas, such as comparing one’s eyes, stomach, or legs to those of the model. The motive of self-evaluation has been

shown to result in decreased body satisfaction among adolescent females studied (Martin & Gentry, 1997); however, its effects are not as clear among the older population.

A second motive for social comparison is that of self-improvement. In this paradigm, comparisons between self and the model are made with the purpose of improving something. Comparisons such as these have shown to lead to positive mood and behavioral changes, such as deciding to begin an exercise program or abstain from junk food (Martin & Gentry, 1997; Tiggemann et al., 2009). Research has shown that females do not suffer body dissatisfaction when self-improvement is the motive (Martin & Gentry, 1997; Pompper et al., 2007; Tiggemann, et al., 2009).

Finally, sometimes individuals look at images of models with the motive of self-enhancement. Self-enhancement is defined as “an individual’s biased attempt to maintain positive views of him/herself to protect or enhance self-esteem” (Martin & Gentry, 1997, p. 22). The motive of self-enhancement is based on two main strategies by the individual: either a downward social comparison of the model or avoidance of comparisons with the beauty of the model. This motive may actually increase or reinforce body satisfaction because the individual discounts the beauty of the model and finds ways that he or she is more attractive. This has also shown to be a more healthy form of social comparison that does not lead to body dissatisfaction (Martin & Gentry).

Social comparison theory pertaining to body image. Festinger’s social comparison theory is based on several facets which are relevant to the body image debate. First, Festinger (1954) states “there exists, in the human organism, a drive to evaluate his opinions and his abilities” (p. 117). This statement suggests that there lies

within every human being the drive and desire to evaluate his or herself; this references human nature and does not imply an age limit on such a drive.

Secondly, Festinger (1954) states that people will make self-evaluations in comparison with others when objective, non-social means are unavailable. This especially pertains to body image because there is not a definitive test to evaluate one's attractiveness. Therefore, people must use the people and images they see around them to form an evaluation of their body and its level of attractiveness. In terms of older individuals, this could mean that they will look to the younger images they see in media as basis for comparison when images of seniors are unavailable in media. Festinger comments that "any factors which increase the importance of some particular group as a comparison group...will increase the pressure toward uniformity concerning that ability...within the group" (p. 130). What this could mean for body image is that when an individual perceives that the images seen in media represent a superior group to be used for comparison, the pressure to meet that standard increases. Festinger continues, "The stronger the attraction to the group, the stronger will be the pressure toward uniformity concerning opinions and abilities within that group" (p. 130). This shows the intense amount of pressure an individual may feel to meet the impossible standard of such media images.

This facet of Festinger's theory also suggests that no matter an individual's age, he or she will use those who are perceived to be similar as a basis for comparison. Deets (1993) stated "we now have a vast, growing segment of our population looking for images which mirror their new aging experience" (p. 136). This suggests that seniors are looking to the media as a basis for comparison as they gage their own feelings of self-

worth. If the images they encounter are celebrating a youthful, thin body type, seniors will likely be discouraged at the huge discrepancy between themselves and the models encountered in televisions and magazines.

Social comparison theory has been cited extensively in current research exploring media's effect on body image. Levels of body dissatisfaction have been linked to social comparison theory because "body dissatisfaction is associated with the tendency to compare one's body to other bodies" (Bessenoff, 2006, p. 239). In a 1996 study of body image evaluation, Rieves and Cash cited Festinger's 1954 research that "social comparison theory maintains that there is a self-evaluative drive for people to compare themselves to relevant others on psychologically important attributes" (p.65; see also Festinger 1954; Wood, 1989). Furthermore, Tsiantas and King (2001) reported that "females with the greatest degree of responsiveness to media images were those who had the greatest tendency to make social comparisons when appraising themselves overall" (p. 154).

The research connecting body image to social comparison theory helps to explain the psychological reasons that one might experience body dissatisfaction. Feelings of "fatness" and being over a desirable weight might not be caused by simply the way one looks, but also by the way he or she feels in comparison to other similar people encountered each day. Rieves and Cash (1996) stated that the "tendency to compare their own and others' weight correlates with 'feeling fat'" (p. 65).

Social comparison theory gives a conceptual basis for feelings of low self-image and body dissatisfaction caused by media exposure celebrating a thin, youthful appearance. In the pursuit of fully understanding these media images, it is necessary to

take a more in-depth look at the nature of the ideal beauty standard they create—a standard known as the thin ideal.

The Thin Ideal Defined

The celebration and ubiquitous presence of an extremely thin and undernourished body is known as the thin ideal (Morrison et al., 2004; Ogden & Munday, 1996; Stice et al., 1994). Simply put, the thin ideal promotes the message that thinness equals goodness. The thin ideal for a woman's body may be characterized as possessing above average breasts with a small waist and hips, with similar dimensions to the standard of 36-24-36 long touted in advertisements for female underclothing (Harrison, 2003). More recently, males are being increasingly bombarded with their own version of the ideal body, which typically features an extremely muscular body type with slim hips and a full head of hair (Pompper et al., 2007).

These messages have been seen at an increasing rate in today's media, specifically television and magazines (Harrison, 2003; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) commented that "there is little doubt that mass media play a pervasive role in communicating societal ideals of attractiveness" (p. 465). The current sociocultural model of the thin ideal has been communicated to the population through media such as television (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). In addition, individuals in society have consistently looked to magazine advertisements to formulate a definition of the ideal body (Pompper et al., 2007). Most recently, Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2009) commented that "fashion and beauty magazines have been identified as a prime source and disseminator of the (impossibly) thin ideal for women" (p. 74).

It is of concern that the more a person consumes media messages that celebrate the thin ideal, the more he or she will adapt to these standards of beauty and accept them as normal (Stice, et al., 1994; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). An individual who consistently views media images glorifying the thin ideal will see themselves as less beautiful and therefore less good. There is existing evidence to support that individuals use the message of the thin ideal as the basis for their own body image evaluations (Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Morrison et al., 2004). When one falls short of society's unrealistic beauty standard, he or she begins to experience body dissatisfaction. "The promotion of the thin, sexy ideal in our culture has created a situation where the majority of girls and women don't like their bodies" (Hellmich, 2006, p. A1).

In a 2006 study, Bessenoff exposed a group of 112 female undergraduates to advertisements that focused on the thin ideal. Women who possessed high levels of body discrepancy (difference between ideal body and actual body) were more likely to suffer from lower moods and depressive symptoms, as well as decreased self-esteem. These women were also more likely to use the images of the thin ideal as a basis for social comparison. Bessenoff stated that "exposure to thin ideal advertisements led to greater levels of depressive moods and dejection" (p. 246). Additionally, "women exposed to advertising depicting thin ideal women...exhibited significantly greater body dissatisfaction, weight-related thought, weight-regulatory thoughts, levels of depression, and dejection- and agitation-related mood, as well as lower appearance-related and total self-esteem" (p. 246) In summary, an individual's exposure to thin ideal advertisements has a negative effect on mood and self-esteem, and leads to greater concerns about weight and an increased risk of depression (Bessenoff, 2006).

Internalization of the thin ideal. Not all individuals exposed to the thin ideal in the media experience the same level of body dissatisfaction or succumb to an outright eating disorder. The degree to which an individual is affected by exposure to the thin ideal depends on the level to which he or she has internalized its message. Although the thin ideal has been established as damaging to body image (Bessenoff, 2006; Morrison, et al., 2004; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986) *internalization* of the thin ideal is what has been shown to be the true moderator in how exposure to the thin ideal affects body image (Bessenoff, 2006; Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). Internalization of the thin ideal refers to the point when an individual not only accepts the message but also may “overtly agree with the social standards of thinness” (Bessenoff, 2006, p. 239).

Cusumano and Thompson (1997) reported that an awareness of sociocultural pressures, especially the internalization of these standards, is correlated with binge-eating disorder, dysfunctional eating, and self-esteem. In addition, Tsiantas and King (2001) documented that both awareness and internalization of cultural pressures regarding appearance are predictive of unhealthy body image and eating habits, and that such internalization of societal beauty standards is a “strong predictor” (p. 142).

Dangers of the thin ideal. Through such findings, the true danger of exposure to the thin ideal is revealed. The greater an individual’s exposure to media containing a high amount of images celebrating the thin ideal, the more likely he or she is to exhibit attitudes characteristic of a poor body image (Stice et al., 1994). This leads to behaviors linked to eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia (Morrison et al., 2004; Stice et al., 1994). Thus the cycle of eating disorders becomes complete. Messages celebrating the thin ideal are encountered through the intake of mass media. The more

images that are viewed, the greater the importance one places on body weight to evaluate the body. Therefore, an individual becomes more likely to exhibit behaviors linked to eating disorders in an effort to achieve the thin ideal portrayed in print and electronic media.

Relationship between Media Use and Body Image

The thin ideal is said to be extremely prevalent in today's media, yet many researchers fail to assert exactly how prevalent this damaging standard of beauty is. Media are constantly censured for the possible effects they may have concerning the promotion of eating disorders (Harrison, 2000; Polivy & Herman, 2002; Sypeck et al., 2003; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999; Tierney, 2001). The issue of body image in the media is omnipresent. Media messages are shown to be responsible for much of the pressure to achieve the thin ideal. According to Tsiantas and King (2001), one of the strongest messengers of this sociocultural pressure is the mass media (see also Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, & Rodin, 1986). In addition, the consumption of media influences one's perception of the world around them. Media are the vehicles by which members of society interpret messages about their culture. These cultural messages shape the values a person possesses. Cultural messages also communicate to the individual the standards of attraction in his or her culture. "In great part, cultural messages define the images and implications of physical attractiveness and unattractiveness" (Cash 1990; Rieves & Cash 1996). Although individuals can be influenced towards an eating disorder through means other than the media, media have been suggested to be "the most potent and pervasive communicators of sociocultural standards"(Thompson & Heinberg, 1999, p. 340; see also Mazur, 1986).

Senior media consumption. During the postretirement years, seniors have an increased amount of time to intake all forms of media. Current and past research has indicated a heavy spike in media usage during the senior years. In a report by Leibert and Schwartzberg (1977) documenting media usage throughout one's lifespan, media usage, specifically television, was shown to rise dramatically in the mature years. More recently, Paul (2003) reported that 54% of baby boomers list television as their primary source of entertainment. (For the purpose of this paper, baby boomers are classified as individuals born in the U.S. between 1946 and 1965, as defined by the U.S. Census). Retired baby boomers in the Paul report recorded an average of 52.4 half-hour blocks of TV watched per week, more than any other adult age bracket.

Similar results were found in terms of print media. Paul (2003) commented that seniors "consume print media at a voracious rate" (p. 24); specifically, time spent viewing print media was shown to peak in postretirement and fall steeply at very old age. In a study by Pompper et al. (2007) regarding media consumption and effects on male baby boomers, 63% of baby boomers studied classified themselves as heavy users of magazines (reading several times weekly). Most baby boomer males reported reading predominately news and current events magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune* slightly more than sports magazines. Surprisingly, *Modern Maturity* was listed as the number one circulation magazine in the country in 1993, surpassing even *Reader's Digest* (Deets, 1993).

Even Internet use has become an increasingly popular senior pastime, with seniors spending an average of 9 hours and 26 minutes online per week—nearly double that of any other age bracket over 18 years of age (Paul, 2003). *Senior.com*, a website dedicated

to the senior community consistently ranks in the top 100 sites of the *Web 100* each year (Monroy, 2000). In fact, seniors age 65 and older were shown to spend more time online than any other adult age demographic (Paul, 2003).

Seniors represent a sizeable portion of media consumers, yet many people are unaware of the vast portion of the market that older people represent. This segment of mature American consumers continues to expand as the baby boomer generation enters retirement age. In 2006, there were a total of 67.6 million baby boomers considered to be preparing to enter retirement, with a rate of 150,000 boomers turning 65 each month (Wallace, 1996).

The sudden rise of the senior population is creating a new generation of seniors who are redefining the image of the typical senior citizen as an active person with plenty of free time and free capital to spend. Monroy (2000) predicts that this new elderly generation will “plan to continue their current lifestyle of extravagance and self-indulgence” (p. 68). And the mature consumer is spending: The boomer senior citizen population represents 77% of all financial assets in the country and comprises 40% of total consumer demand (Monroy, 2000). In addition, 50% of the credit cards in the United States belong to the nation’s 40 million seniors (Peterson, 1992). Senior citizens were shown to spend more on health and personal care products than any other adult demographic (Monroy, 2000). Products that were originally believed to be marketed to the younger population such as exercise equipment and informal leisure wear are now increasingly being purchased by senior citizens (Deets, 1993). This shows that the mature generation is still very much concerned with their appearance and health and is willing to spend the money to achieve it. Deets (1993) commented that the current generation of

baby boomers is challenging the conventional view of aging. “They want to maintain their youthful vitality for as long as possible, and many have adopted lifestyles to achieve that goal” (p. 135).

The images seniors encounter in today’s media may not be consistent with the way they view themselves. In a report by Wellner (2003), “the majority of today's seniors say that they're in good or excellent health” (p. 3). According to the Wellner report 40% of seniors age 65 or older self-described their health as excellent or good, while only 25% reported their health as poor.

Senior portrayal in media. As advertisers look to appeal to the senior market, the images that seniors are encountering may not accurately reflect a picture of mature health. Deets (1993) argued that the current stereotypes seen in the media are those of seniors who are in poor health, inactive, and senile. Although the portrayal of seniors is becoming more positive in recent years (Robinson & Callister, 2008), marketing to seniors has not followed suit (Pompper et al., 2007). Wellner (2003) remarked that companies market to seniors who need assistance in daily living, not the senior who is physically active and capable. Today’s society reflects a “consumerism-driven, youth-oriented master narrative” (Pompper, et al., 2007, p. 28). Individuals in their twenties are already encountering advertisements for products to reduce the signs of aging. This creates a general anxiety about aging, the natural consequence of which is the perception that to be aged is undesirable (Pompper et al.). These messages create a “negative picture of aging which leads many Americans to view growing older with disdain and dismay” (Deets, 1993, p. 134). Pompper et al. (2007) commented that “Americans fear aging” and predict that these age driven insecurities are “the next great big juicy market” (p. 526). If

this is the case, those seniors who possess fears of aging will possibly be more likely to make negative social comparisons to these images and have reduced body satisfaction.

While this noticeable shift can have positive effects on the way society views seniors, it may also spell an increased amount of pressure on aging men and women who are desperate to maintain the youthful look and appearance they enjoyed in earlier years. This could lead to increased body dissatisfaction as the physical body matures, and in turn lead to an increased risk for eating disorders. The aim of this paper is to specifically look at two of the channels by which seniors may look to view media: magazines and television.

Magazine readership and body image. Two channels that seniors access mass media messages are print and electronic media (Hargreaves and Tiggemann, 2003a; Monroy, 2000; Paul, 2003). Therefore, a more in-depth look will be given to the specific effects of magazine readership and television.

Similar to other studies of media effects, the effects of magazine readership have primarily focused on female adolescents. However, the impact that such harmful images may have on seniors cannot be neglected, as it has been established that they can also be influenced by the advertisements they see. Levine et al. (1994) found that female adolescents who reference fashion magazines as important sources of beauty and fitness were more likely to have high levels of body dissatisfaction than those who felt that fashion magazines were not important to them. This same study by Levine et al. revealed that the same females who placed a great deal of importance on fashion magazines were more likely to practice weight management behaviors such as exercise and skipping

meals than the other group of females. If this holds true for younger females, it is plausible to consider that a similar effect may be found among the mature population.

The majority of magazine studies concerning body image focus on women, yet research also exists concerning the effects of magazine readership on men. Just as an ideal female body has been defined by media (Harrison, 2003), the ideal male body has also been set forth. The “ideal male shape” is reported to be extremely muscular mesomorph or V-shaped “with muscularity being a key component” (Pompper et al., 2007, p. 256). In a study that focuses on effects of magazine readership on the baby boomer male population, Pompper et al. (2007) reported that older males are aware of this ideal and feel dissatisfaction with their bodies in comparison. The message that males encounter “reflects a socially-constructed equation of beauty and goodness, with consequences for those considered ugly and unworthy of happiness, success, and control that comes ‘naturally’ to attractive males” (p. 525). This increased focus on a male’s appearance has had damaging repercussions: A marked rise in eating disorders among males has been noted. “For every 10 to 15 females diagnosed with an eating disorder 20 years ago, there was one male—but now that gap has closed significantly, with one male for every four females.” (p. 525; see also Woodside, Garfinkel, Lin, Goering, & Kaplan, 2001).

Magazine advertisements and seniors. Although the research has reflected that seniors are still very much concerned with their appearance and health, advertising directed at seniors does not seem to follow suit. A study by Peterson (1992) reported that magazine advertisements are dominated by younger people, even the ads that are specifically targeted to the senior population. These ads could potentially isolate the

seniors because the great majority of seniors viewing media will “find it hard to relate to an image of frailty or illness” (Wellner, 2003, p. 4). This suggests that when looking for a model for comparison, seniors will look to images in magazines, even if those images contain models younger than 65 (Festinger, 1954; Rieves & Cash, 1996). As seniors continue to look to advertisements featuring younger models as the basis for their body comparisons, the gap between the body they desire and the body they are able to maintain will continue to widen (Bessenoff, 2006).

Robinson and Callister (2008) set out to determine how seniors were portrayed in magazines, as well as how the body image of such seniors was portrayed. The eight national magazines with the older adult readership were chosen for a content analysis. Ninety-six issues from the time period November 2004 through October 2005 were chosen. The advertisements within each magazine were coded for items suggesting social evidence of aging such as retirement, as well as physical markings like baldness, wrinkles, and use of ambulatory aids. Coders also recorded the body type of each senior portrayed, as well as whether or not the overall portrayal was positive or negative. Robinson and Callister found that 7.1% of all advertisements in the studied magazines featured seniors. Of these ads including seniors, 60.3% of the portrayals featured seniors who were inactive.

One encouraging finding from the 2008 Robinson and Callister analysis was that “the health status of the older characters was overwhelmingly ‘good’ (97.4%)” (p. 12). The older individuals portrayed in these magazines were shown with only “a limited amount of wrinkles (73.1%) and a moderate physical appearance (91.4%)” (p. 13). Although this is encouraging that seniors are receiving positive portrayals in the media, it

also suggests that seniors who view such images could be motivated through social comparison theory to make upward comparisons with these characters and feel discouraged.

In regards to body weight, 80.4% of the characters in the ads Robinson and Callister (2008) analyzed were shown as being of average weight, with only a small percentage (4.8%) being perceived as thin. Robinson and Callister's report showed a small increase in percentage of underweight women, but on the whole most characters were of average weight. Furthermore, the sample of magazines shows that 85.2% of the seniors coded were of average to thin body composition, with only 14.8% being overweight. In reality, 65% of American adults are overweight (Robinson & Callister, 2008, p.18; see also He, Sengupta, Velkoff, & DeBarros, 2005).

There has been some concern in the past that seniors have been underrepresented in the media and that existing portrayals within advertising are negative (Haudsorf, Levy, & Wei, 1999). Robinson and Callister (2008) found that although "the percent of advertisements featuring older characters has increased...their representation within the population of advertised characters is still relatively low" (p. 16). Robinson and Callister stated "the overall portrayal of the older characters in national magazine advertisements is one of seniors who are living vibrant, healthy, content, socially active lives and doing so in a fit and functioning body" (p. 16).

The findings from the 2008 Robinson and Callister study show a positive portrayal of seniors within advertisements, although they are heavily underrepresented. These findings suggest that positive portrayals of seniors in media can have a positive impact on the general population's perception of senior citizens. However, such images

may also negatively impact the body image of seniors if seniors feel they do not measure up to the standard portrayed. The magazines used in the Robinson and Callister study did not contain a single advertisement of a senior citizen pictured in poor health. This is once again a positive mark for the representation of senior citizens but could be discouraging for the senior citizen who struggles with such limitations. “There is still a concern that recurring images that are overly positive may invite harmful comparisons for those who do not enjoy such health or that these images may create unrealistic expectations for how the aging process will or should progress” (Robinson & Callister, p. 17).

The messages from fashion magazines not only come through visual images, written articles can also fuel the pressure to be thin. In a 2003 study of the six leading women’s magazines of 1959-1988, there was an increase in the number of articles devoted to diet, exercise, and weight loss (Sypeck et al., 2003).

The thin ideal in magazines: Changes over time. In addition to current media exposure that threatens body image, seniors have been exposed to and have watched the increasing thinness of these models over several decades. This long-term exposure to increasingly thin media image may have detrimental effects on an individual’s body image. To properly assess the exposure that a senior has been exposed to images celebrating a thin body in his or her lifetime requires consideration of the changing beauty ideal portrayed in magazines throughout the years. A longitudinal examination of models appearing in the magazines *Ladies Home Journal* and *Vogue* performed by Silverstein et al. (1986) found that the hip to waist ratios of the models have been consistently declining since 1949. Morris, Cooper, and Cooper (1989) found that in the years 1967-1987, English fashion models continued to become more tubular, meaning

that hip and bust size decreased while height and waist size increased. In a similar study in 1992, Wiseman et al. reported that from 1959 to 1978 “there was a decrease in the average weights of *Playboy* centerfolds and *Miss America* Contestants” (p. 86). This trend continued at an increased pace during the years 1979-1988. Interestingly, the Wiseman et al. study also recorded that 69% of *Playboy* centerfolds and 60% of the *Miss America* contestants recorded weights that were 15% or more below the average for their age and height. This percentage is the exact standard for the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (*DSM-III*) criterion for anorexia: maintaining a body weight of 15% below expected weight (APA, 2000). However, it is important to note that the aforementioned studies focus on younger models and do not specifically address seniors.

Television use and body image. Television usage has increased markedly over the lifetime of today’s senior. As seniors retire and enjoy more leisure time, they have more time to watch television. This is especially true as physical dependency increases. According to Paul (2003), seniors used television for the purpose of entertainment more than any other medium. This could prove unhealthy for the body image of seniors, as such high amounts of television viewing would increase exposure to the thin ideal as they age.

In 1996 Tiggemann and Pickering stated “television is arguably the most prominent and influential form of the mass media” (p. 200). High amounts of television viewing have been reported to be “associated with greater belief in the cultural and social stereotypes fostered by television” (Leibert & Schwartzberg, 1977, p. 151). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) stated that “ongoing exposure to these media-portrayed

'unrealistic' beauty ideals is generally thought to be one important factor responsible for the high level of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance in Western society" (p. 465). Correlational research has consistently shown that high amounts of media consumption containing appearance related content, particularly channels such as fashion magazines, soap operas, and music videos are related to higher rates of body dissatisfaction (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Harrison, 2000; Levine et al., 1994; Stice et al., 1994).

Seniors spending more time with the TV could be led to more fully subscribe to the acceptance of the thin ideal and feel more pressure to achieve it. Repeated exposure to advertisements on television with thin ideals over time has been linked to negative effects on body image and a greater desire to be thin (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a). In a study by Harrison (2003) "exposure to ideal-body images on television predicted the choice of a smaller waist and hips" (p. 255) and is "linked to the idealization of female thinness" (p. 264). In addition, Harrison found a "positive correlation between television viewing and young women's and men's belief that they were overweight, regardless of actual weight" (p. 256). Harrison did not specify if such results would be found when testing the senior population. However, if seniors are as susceptible to media images celebrating the thin ideal as their collegiate counterparts, dangerous implications exist for what may occur as an aged body makes extreme attempts to achieve the goal of extreme thinness.

Seniors who are active and healthy may be forced to compare themselves with the younger models they see even though those images represent an unrealistic ideal for an older person. Peterson (1992) warns that such advertisements featuring younger models or portraying seniors in an unfavorable light could "reinforce the negative self-images of

many seniors” (p. 705). These comparisons could create a feeling of discrepancy between model and self, and lead to the dangerous upward comparisons referenced in social comparison theory that lead to body dissatisfaction.

Presence of the thin ideal in television. Messages containing the thin ideal dominate television, with a myriad of programs such as “*Baywatch* and Comedy Central’s *The Man Show* which are just two of the many outlets that broadcast or illustrate body ideals” (Harrison, 2003, p. 256). Research concerning media’s focus on this beauty ideal for has been conducted for several decades. The true prevalence of the ideal may not only be manifested in how many times it is seen, but also how rarely it is not portrayed (Morrison et al., 2004). Morrison et al. have stated that “this message may be subtly conveyed by the absence of females who deviate from the thin ideal in electronic and print media” (p. 573). In a study conducted concerning the changing shape of the ideal body featured on television, Wiseman et al. (1992) found that 69.1% of female actors appearing in popular television programs were classified as thin, in comparison to 17.5% of male actors. Similarly Silverstein et al. (1986) found that a mere 5% of actresses appearing in recurring roles on television were classified as heavy in comparison to 25.5% of actors. Results also indicated that the body shape ideal for women is slimmer than the ideal for men. In a more recent study, Harrison (2003) recorded that thin females on television shows received more positive comments from male characters than heavier females. Additionally, heavier set females on television programs received more negative comments from male characters.

The thin ideal in television: Changes over time. The image of young, thin people dominating the television set, though becoming more extreme, is not new to society.

Ideals for the young, extremely thin woman have been long present since the beginnings of programs as *Charlie's Angels*, *Miss America*, and *Playboy* centerfolds (Wiseman et al., 1992). Even the concept of the "supermale" has been present for several decades with muscular and masculine ideals appearing "in television programs and films with heroes ranging from John Wayne to Arnold Schwarzenegger" (Pompper et al., 2007, p. 526). Individuals who are now seniors have been exposed to this ideal and watched its evolution during the course of their lives. Ongoing exposure to the thin ideal over time could lead to a well-ingrained belief within an individual that a beautiful body is a thin body and create feelings of body dissatisfaction. Tiggemann (2002) proposed that repeated viewing of idealized media images serves to "consistently maintain and reinforce levels of insecurity and concern about appearance, shape, and weight" (p. 466). Researchers have suggested that "one possible link between individual reactive 'episodes' of dissatisfaction in response to specific media images and the development of body image is that enduring attitudes, beliefs and feelings about bodies and appearance accumulate over time through repeated exposure to ideals of attractiveness in the media" (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a, p. 466; see also Levine et al., 1994).

Senior presence and portrayal in prime time television. Seniors may be forced to make comparisons with younger, thinner models and characters on television because that is all they see. Although seniors represent a growing number of individuals in society (Wellner, 2003), they are largely absent from prime time television. In a study of senior presence in prime time television programs by Kessler, Rakoczy, and Staudinger (2004), older individuals were shown to be "heavily underrepresented" (p. 531).

Seniors are also missing from advertising in prime time television. In a 2001 content analysis of television commercials aired during prime time, Williamson found that seniors were only shown in 16% of advertisements. In a similar study, Swayne and Greco (1987) performed a content analysis of 814 advertisements from three of the major television networks to examine the portrayal of senior citizens in television advertising. Seniors were only represented in 7% of the advertisements, although they represent 12% of the population. In addition seniors were rarely given major roles in the ads, and most commonly (65% of the time) appeared as advisors and within a home setting. Seniors were shown to be feeble or confused only 6% of the time, while they were portrayed as humorous characters 12% of the time. This data indicated that “clearly elderly Americans were underrepresented in television advertising” (Swayne & Greco, p. 53). In addition, Swayne and Greco report that there is a lack of advertisements being developed to appeal to the senior market.

Robinson, Duet, and Smith (1995) reported seniors are not adequately represented in prime time television advertising and a great need exists to appeal to this demographic. In their study of 120 prime time television advertisements, not one directly targeted the senior market. Robinson et al. reported that older individuals in advertisements were most often seen as background individuals or as part of the set. Of the advertisements included in the Robinson et al. study, men appeared more often than women. Older women were shown to be most often used in background roles and rarely featured in major roles. This not only highlights the possible negative effect such images may have on seniors, it especially brings out the fact that women may be more negatively affected than men (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003b; Silverstein et al., 1986).

In a more recent study, Lee, Kim, and Han (2006) performed a cross-cultural study of senior portrayal in prime time television. The researchers performed a content analysis of 859 prime time television advertisements from the United States and 1,436 ads from South Korea. Lee and colleagues found that “older people are underrepresented in both countries’ prime time television ads” (p. 290). In addition, it was found that the “total number of older females in the ads was conspicuously less than that of older males,” with older males appearing in 77% of U.S. ads containing seniors and older females appearing in only 22% of the U.S. ads (p. 290). Similar to the findings in the Robinson et al. study, seniors only appeared in major roles of U.S. advertisements 36.5% of the time and appeared more often in background or minor roles. Interestingly, the researchers concluded that American prime time advertisements were more likely to depict senior citizens in a negative light than South Korean prime time television ads.

Cash and Henry (1995) performed a representative survey of the body images of 803 adult women. Using subscales of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire, Cash and Henry reported “substantial levels of body dissatisfaction” (p.19) and also noted a rise in the percentage of women with body dissatisfaction from a similar study performed eight years prior. The effects of age on feelings of low body satisfaction were only shown to be minimal in these results. Sadly, 51% of the women Cash and Henry surveyed displayed body dissatisfaction or preoccupation with weight and physical appearance. The results of this study also support research by Rieves and Cash (1996) that has noted an increase in body dissatisfaction among women in the last 20 years. Because development is a continual process, it is reasonable to conclude that a woman’s dissatisfaction with her body would not end just because she has reached a

certain age. Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) found that older women have less anxiety related to weight and fewer eating disorder symptoms than younger women, but they still possess equal levels of body dissatisfaction. Cash and Henry (1995) revealed that 18 to 24-year-old women had a more favorable body image than those ages 25 to 70.

Male and Female Body Image: Differences in Effects

While a women's self-esteem increases slightly with age (Paxton & Phythian, 1999), research has suggested that the ideas and attitudes that a woman establishes towards her body in her youth will become a stable facet of her identity as she ages (Paxton & Phythian, 1999). If a woman develops a negative body image in her youth, that negativity is likely to stay with her throughout adulthood. Women surveyed across all ages reported a negative body image in response to the values reflected in the media where an extremely thin body and self-criticism of the body in women of all ages is all too common (Paxton & Phythian, 1999). The average woman's dissatisfaction with her body is nearly considered normal in today's society (Hellmich, 2006). Cash and Henry (1995) commented that the decrease in women's positive body image has become so common that it can be labeled a *normative discontent*.

Media Use and Desired Body Size

As previously described, body dissatisfaction may be thought of as a discrepancy between the actual and the ideal self. Bessenoff (2006) described body dissatisfaction as the "negative evaluation of one's body (either specific body parts or the body as a whole)" (p. 239). High levels of body dissatisfaction have been found to play a moderating role in the effect of media exposure to the thin ideal on body esteem and weight satisfaction (Bessenoff, 2006). The chasm between one's current body size and

ideal body size seems to widen with increased media exposure (Bessenoff, 2006; Hellmich, 2006). This discrepancy may be even greater as the body ages and falls farther and farther away from the youthful, svelte ideal.

Seniors are at an increased disadvantage in this respect because it becomes more difficult for a mature body to reach the already unrealistic standard of beauty portrayed in popular media. In a series of interviews conducted with 1,164 older adults ages 65 and older, Schieman et al. (2007) examined perceptions of body weight and satisfaction within the mature population. Participants over 65, particularly white women and those of higher socioeconomic status, reported feelings of dissatisfaction in relation to their current body size and their ideal. Schieman et al. also reported that weight-related issues are a major source of dissatisfaction among the aging population, ranking only second behind memory loss. The reason behind this frustration is the increased difficulty of weight loss in the older years, especially among women (Schieman et al., 2007). According to a 2005 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], an estimated 19.5% of seniors 65 and older are obese—up from 12% in 1990 (as cited in Schieman et al., 2007). This can be extremely frustrating for those mature adults attempting to conform to the thin models seen in the media they consume.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

In summary, seniors cannot be negated in body image research. Cited data has shown that adults in their mature years continue to care about maintaining a healthy, thin body, not only to delay morbidity but to achieve physical attractiveness (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2003; Schieman et al., 2007). As seniors are consuming more media in comparison to the general population, they may begin to feel increased body

dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between their aged bodies and those encountered in print and electronic media.

The primary intent of this study is to further understand the relationship between media consumption and body image in seniors. This population may further be specified by focusing on only physically active men and women over the age of 55. This population of special interest was selected because of the moderating effect exercise has shown in regards to low body image (Henry et al., 2006; Rydeskog et al., 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how media consumption influences the body image of seniors who are physically active.

A greater understanding of how media consumption influences the body image of older people will be of great value as the active generation of baby boomers continues to move into the senior category.

The following four research questions will guide this study:

- RQ₁: What is the relationship between general television viewing and senior body image?
- RQ₂: What is the relationship between magazine readership and senior body image?
- RQ₃: What is the correlation between the amount of media usage and desired body size among active seniors?

RQ₄: Is there a stronger relationship between the body image of senior females and media consumption vs. the body image of senior males and media consumption?

The researcher is guided by two main hypotheses:

- H₁: The body image of seniors who intake a greater amount of media, namely through television and magazine use, will have lower body image scores than those seniors who record lower media consumption.
- H₂: There will be a stronger negative relationship between media consumption and body image of female participants than male participants.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

To further understand the relationship between media consumption and body image in seniors, the following methods were used in this study.

Participants

Population sample. Data was collected from seniors who were participating in or attending the World Senior Games in St. George, Utah in October 2006. The World Senior Games is an international sports competition open to men and women over the age of 55. The Senior Games originated in 1987 and now includes participants from over 53 countries. Participants compete in over 14 events, ranging from highly athletic activities such as swimming, track and field, and cycling to more recreational activities such as square dancing and bridge (Huntsman Senior Games, 2009). In addition, participants and attendees of the World Senior Games are offered a health screening free of charge each year.

The senior population of World Senior Games participants was of particular interest to the original researchers. They felt that the Senior Games represented an excellent opportunity to sample a population of seniors who are physically active and value physical activity.

Uniqueness of sample population. At this time, it is important to note the unique population of seniors that this study focuses on. Data was not gathered from a general population of men and women over the age of 55, but rather seniors who were actively participating in physical activity through recreational activities or sports. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the senior population as a whole. That is not the aim of

this paper. However, findings will be of use in considering the population of active men and women in the senior population who value and participate in physical activity.

Procedure

A free health screening is offered by the Huntsman World Senior Games each year. The Games strives to promote good health among senior citizens (Huntsman Senior Games, 2009); as part of that commitment, senior participants and attendees are offered a health screening free of charge. This screening tests for serious health threats such as cancer, heart disease, and elevated blood pressure. Age-related illnesses such as glaucoma, diabetes, and osteoporosis risk are also evaluated. Screenings are performed by volunteer medical students of local universities, and diagnostic equipment is provided by contributions from sponsors (Huntsman Senior Games, 2009).

Seniors were standing in line awaiting the free health screening for the purpose of evaluating their current health and possible health risks. Participants were selected through a convenience sample of the seniors in line. These seniors were approached by the researchers and asked if they would like to participate in a short survey concerning their perceived body image. They were told it would not take them more than seven minutes to complete; as an added incentive, those who completed the survey were offered a \$5.00 Subway gift card for their help.

Over 700 seniors agreed to participate in the survey. Of these participants, 691 ($N = 691$) completed the survey to satisfactory levels. (Satisfactory completion meaning that the subject filled out all of the questions in the survey that were used in the study.)

Survey instrument. The survey contained 64 total questions and was broken up into six separate parts (see Appendix A). The first four segments asked questions that

pertain to body image and self-esteem, while the latter sections gathered data concerning media use and demographics. The first segment consisted of 28 questions that pertain to how the individual feels about his or her own body. These questions were formulated into Likert scale statements such as “I’m proud of my body” and “I like what I see when I look in the mirror.” The second segment asked seniors to rate (from very dissatisfied to very satisfied) how they felt about their weight during different decades (e. g. 20s, 30s, etc.) of their lives. Seniors were also asked to report their current efforts at weight loss or weight maintenance, as well as questions to determine how important they believed it was for them to be at an ideal weight.

Parts 3 contained a series of nine drawings, ranging from extremely thin to highly overweight body types. These drawings are based on the Contour Drawing Rating Scale (Thompson & Gray, 1995). Each body shape increased by half-step increments from the thinnest figure to the heaviest. To reduce bias, figures were shown without facial features or styled hair. A set of male body shapes and female body shapes were offered within the survey for the purpose of accuracy between the sexes. Subjects were asked in Part 3 to circle the body size that best described their current weight.

The 4th section contained the same nine figures (both male and female), but the participant was asked to circle the drawing that best represented his or her ideal body shape.

In Part 5 subjects reported the amount of time spent using different forms of media on a typical day. Subjects circled the amount of hours that they spend doing such activities as surfing the Internet, reading the newspaper, and listening to the radio. In

three open-ended questions at the end of Part 5 subjects listed the names of the magazines, television programs, and websites that they spend the most time viewing.

Finally, basic demographic information was gathered in Part 6. This included questions regarding age, gender, ethnic origin, and country of citizenship. Current height and weight was self-reported. Seniors also listed if they were a participant of the Games and which sport they were competing in. Alcohol and cigarette habits, as well as education level and marital status, were also recorded.

This survey instrument of 64 questions provided a wide field of data that could be used to explore several different associations between body image and media use, as well as relationships between the perceived body image of seniors and demographic factors such as marital status and education level. However, the scope of this paper will be limited to the specific areas of media use among seniors and their perceived body image.

Scales and measures. The primary concern of this study was to examine three different aspects of media use: (a) general television viewing, (b) magazine readership, and (c) total media use. The measure for each aspect listed was retrieved from participants' self-reported media use habits contained in Part 5 of the survey. These three measures were compared with each participant's ratings on body image scores.

Three separate scales were created to rate the subject's body image. These scales included body image scale, current body size, and ideal body size. The scale of body image was created by using 15 selected questions from Part 1 of the survey instrument that pertained to one's body image (see Appendix B). Cronbach's alpha was used as a test for reliability for the creation of the body image scale, and internal consistency was shown to be .89. High scores on the body image scale meant the individual received a

more positive body image score, while low scores on the scale indicated a less positive body image. Measures of current body size and ideal body size were acquired through answers to survey questions 38 and 39 respectively (see Appendix A: Part 3, question 38). These questions of the survey included the nine drawings of different body shapes from the Contour Drawing Rating Scale (Thompson & Gray, 1995).

Data analysis. Relationships between subjects' reported media use and body image scores were calculated through the means of statistical software (SPSS). Comparisons were made between each facet of media use (general television viewing, magazine readership, and total media use) and each of the three measures of body image (body image, current body size, and ideal body size) through the performance of zero-order correlations.

Following initial analysis, the sample was separated into men and women and descriptive statistics were calculated for each group separately. Two-tailed Pearson correlations were examined between media use variables and body image scales for both men and women. Results from each group were then compared to further explore the differences between the scores for men and for women.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Data were collected from 691 participants at the Huntsman Senior Games in October 2006; of this group, 516 (74.7%) were athletes, 130 (18.8%) were spectators, and 45 (6.5%) did not indicate their participation status. The average age for the participants in the sample was 65 ($SD = 7.56$) and 356 (51.5%) were male and 289 (41.8%) were female (46 of the respondents did not indicate their gender). Slightly more than 85% ($n = 589$) of the study participants were from the US. Of this group, 549 (79.5%) were white, 16 (2.3%) were African American, and 11 (1.6%) were Hispanic. The study participants' media habits were typical of most adults: they reported watching between 3 to 4 hours of television a day ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.26$) and reading magazines for nearly 2 hours a day ($M = 1.80$, $SD = .79$).

RQ₁: What is the relationship between television use and senior body image?

The initial research question had to do with the impact of television viewing on the body image of senior-age adults. As can be seen in Table 1, an inverse association was found between body image and general television viewing for the entire group ($r = -.113$, $p = .003$). To measure perceptions of current and ideal body size, a 9-image silhouette scale was used (see Figure 1). The nine images reflect a progressive range of body sizes from very skinny to very obese. Participants were asked to select the image that best represented their current body size. Next, they were asked to select the image that best represented their ideal, or desired, body size. The data in Table 1 indicate a weak, yet significant positive association ($r = .078$, $p = .045$) between general television viewing and current body size. A positive association also was found between ideal body size and general television viewing ($r = .213$, $p = 0.00$).

As television viewing increased, overall body image declined, suggesting that television has an overall negative impact on the physical self-concept of senior-aged adults. However, the data also suggest that television viewing frequency is associated with the acceptance of larger body sizes. In the case of the current data, ideal body sizes actually increased as television viewing times increased. This implies that while they might accept the reality of larger body sizes they may not be happy with them.

Table 1
Correlations For All Subjects

	1	2	3	4	5
1	---	.008	-.113**	.078*	.214**
2		---	.010	.049	.040
3			---	-.272**	-.116**
4				---	.309**
5					---

* $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$

- 1 = General TV Viewing
- 2 = General Magazine Reading
- 3 = Overall Body Image
- 4 = Current Body Size
- 5 = Ideal Body Size

RQ₂: What is the relationship between magazine readership and senior body image?

As can be seen in Table 1, no statistically significant associations were found between magazine readership and body image. For the participants in the current study, the amount of time spent reading magazines does not impact overall body image or body satisfaction.

RQ₃: What is the correlation between amount of media usage and desired body size among active seniors?

To measure total media usage among seniors, a variable of total media use was created by combining the questions within the survey regarding both television viewing and magazine use (see Appendix A). When these responses were combined into a single variable of total media use, no significant relationship was found between body image and total media use ($r = -.66, p = .082$). In addition no relationship was found between total media use and current body size ($r = .029, p = .451$). There was a very weak relationship ($r = .100, p = .011$) between ideal body size and total media use. This indicates that the more combined hours a senior spends watching television and reading magazines, the more likely he or she is to report a larger ideal body size. However, it is important to note that this is a very small correlation that would only account for 1% of the variability between total media use and ideal body size.

RQ₄: Is there a stronger relationship between body image of senior females and media consumption vs. the body image of senior males and media consumption?

To find the differences in associations between men and women, the data file was split and separate analyses were run for both men and women. The results of this analysis suggest that gender may in fact have some moderating effect on the relationship between television viewing and the body image variables. The results indicate, however, that magazine reading frequency has no impact on body image and body perceptions among our participants, even when accounting for gender. The results for the male subjects are reported in Table 2 and the results for the female subjects are reported in Table 3.

Results for men. For the male participants ($n = 356$), general television viewing was inversely associated with body image ($r = -.224, p = 0.00$). Television viewing was also positively associated with current body size ($r = .239, p = 0.00$). Finally, there was a positive association between general television viewing and ideal body size ($r = 0.120, p = .026$) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Correlations For Male Subjects

	1	2	3	4	5
1	---	-.044	-.224**	.239**	.120**
2		---	-.006	-.063	-.019
3			---	-.484**	-.237**
4				---	.598**
5					---

* $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$

- 1 = General TV Viewing
- 2 = General Magazine Reading
- 3 = Overall Body Image
- 4 = Current Body Size
- 5 = Ideal Body Size

Results for women. As can be seen in Table 3, only one statistically significant association was found between the media variables (television viewing frequency and magazine reading frequency) and the body image and body size variables for the female participants ($n = 289$). The data indicate that general television viewing was not associated with body image/satisfaction nor was general television viewing associated with current body size.

However, general television viewing was positively associated with ideal body size ($r = .234, p = .000$).

Table 3

Correlations For Female Subjects

	1	2	3	4	5
1	---	.063	-.092	.003	.234**
2		---	.009	.104	.063
3			---	-.253**	-.294**
4				---	.256**
5					---

* $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$

- 1 = General TV Viewing
- 2 = General Magazine Reading
- 3 = Overall Body Image
- 4 = Current Body Size
- 5 = Ideal Body Size

The data presented in Tables 1-3 suggest a general specification effect. In other words, gender appears to mediate the relationship between television viewing and body image and body perception. Specifically, television viewing appears to have its strongest influence on men. The more television a man watches the more negative his overall body image becomes and the larger his perception of his overall body size becomes. This finding may seem somewhat intuitive. The data collected for this study indicate that television viewing and weight are positively associated for the men ($r = .180, p = .001$). Those who watch the most television also weigh the most and, not surprisingly, are the least happy with their physical size, as indicated by the inverse association between weight and body image ($r = -.405, p = 0.00$).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Current research has left little doubt that mass media play a powerful role in communicating societal ideals of attractiveness (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a). The present study set out to find if media consumption was related to the body image of senior citizens. Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) stated that “ongoing exposure to these media-portrayed ‘unrealistic’ beauty ideals is generally thought to be one important factor responsible for the high level of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance in Western society” (p. 465). The consumption of media that frequently highlights appearance-related content, such as certain magazines and television shows, has been labeled as especially harmful to an individual’s body image (Harrison, 2003). Therefore it was the researcher’s expectation that increased time spent watching television and reading magazines would be related to lower body image among senior participants.

Television Viewing and Body Image

Mass media, particularly television use, has been shown to influence the development of body image disturbances such as body dissatisfaction among males and females (Hargreaves and Tiggemann, 2003b). This is due to the current sociocultural model of the thin ideal, which is transmitted through media such as television (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996, p. 202). This research supports the statement by Tiggemann and Pickering that “television is arguably the most prominent and influential form of the mass media” (p. 200).

Television advertisements have also been linked to body dissatisfaction among older adults (Swayne & Greco, 1987). One reason for this is the absence of senior citizens in television advertisements. Robinson et al. (1995) have found that seniors most

often appear as background characters in television advertisements and are rarely featured in major roles. The lack of senior portrayals in prime time television and advertising, combined with the disparity between the body size of the average American and the models on television, has been found to create feelings of body discrepancy within an individual, or a gap between current and ideal body size. These individuals were found to be twice as likely to make upward social comparisons with models in media (Bessenoff, 2006). This means that seniors who view large amounts of television may not be making harmful social comparisons with the models they see on television.

Body image scale. Due to these findings, it was expected in the current study that male and female seniors who self-reported high media consumption would receive lower scores on measures of body image. In the current study, general television use was found to have an inverse association with body image scores for the group of seniors as a whole ($r = -.113$). Individuals who reported higher amounts of hours of television watched per week were shown to have a more negative body image. This meant that the more television that participants watched, the less satisfied they were with their body. This data supports previous findings that link television consumption to body dissatisfaction (Harrison, 2003; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) have stated that “ongoing exposure to naturally-occurring idealized media images serves to continually maintain and reinforce levels of insecurity and concern about appearance, shape, and weight” (p. 466). Television use has been cited as a major factor for the high amount of body dissatisfaction among individuals in society (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a).

This finding within the current study adds to the body of research that suggests television viewing can play a part in the progression of body dissatisfaction within an individual. In consideration of the senior population, this is especially ominous because seniors have been shown to report more television use per week than any other adult age bracket (Paul, 2003). Therefore, seniors should be aware of the type of programming they expose themselves to, as well as the amount of time they spend watching programming that contains the thin ideal. Seniors would also benefit from an increased awareness that there is a lack of programming and advertising on television that features seniors (Robinson et al., 1995; Swayne & Greco, 1987). This greater awareness could help seniors be better protected against making social comparisons with a younger, thinner stereotype (Deets, 1993).

Current body size. Participants' self-reported current body size, which was based on their selection of body shape figures in Part 3 of the survey instrument, was shown to have a very weak positive correlation with general television viewing ($r = .078$). This means that participants who watched more hours of television per week were more likely to report a slightly larger body size. This could be attributed to the reality that watching television is a sedentary activity, and high amounts of television viewing are related to a larger body size (Jeffery & French, 1998). In addition, Coakley, Rimm, Colditz, Kawachi, and Willet (1998) have found that high amounts of television viewing and low amounts of physical activity are associated with long-term weight gain.

However, a larger self-reported body size could also indicate that individuals who watch greater amounts of television are more likely to perceive themselves as overweight. This would reinforce the previous research that has found that individuals

who watch more television were more likely to believe that they were too large, regardless of actual body size (Harrison, 2003). Such an explanation would also support the research by Harrison that greater time spent watching television was linked to greater acceptance and internalization of the thin ideal.

Implications of this finding are twofold: If it is correct that seniors watching more television actually do have a larger body size, the value of regular activity among seniors is reinforced. Seniors spending more time participating in regular physical activity would have less time to devote to watching television, and they would be preventing unwanted weight gain that is associated with high amounts of television viewing and other sedentary activities (Coakley et al., 1998; Jeffery & French, 1998). Physical activity has been shown to be a protective barrier against body dissatisfaction, even in old age (Landers & Arent, 2001). Increased feelings of body satisfaction and self-esteem have been noted when seniors participated in consistent cardiovascular activity, as well as a regular strength training program (Henry et al., 2006; Rydeskog et al., 2005). However, if the reason for a larger self-reported body size was due to acceptance of the thin ideal in television as Harrison (2003) has suggested, this would support the data that has linked television use with a larger perceived body size and feelings of being overweight. Further examination is needed to unravel this issue. This would require future studies that explore the accuracy of self-reporting body weight when participating in body image sensitive studies.

It is also important at this time to note that the correlation between current body size and television viewing indicated a very weak relationship. When the coefficient of determination (r^2) is calculated for this measure, only 6% of the variability of seniors

current body size can be explained by the variable of television viewing. Because this does account for some of the variability, I have addressed it in this study. However, the weakness of the relationship must be noted.

Ideal body size. Another finding that was not expected was the positive relationship between general television use and ideal body size. Seniors who watched greater amounts of television were shown to report a larger ideal body size ($r = .213$). This finding is not consistent with previous research that suggests television viewing leads to a lower ideal body size. Leibert and Schwartzberg (1977) reported that high amounts of television exposure are associated with a greater belief in the standards and ideals portrayed in television. Previous research has established that the standard seen in media is the thin ideal, a celebration of an extremely thin body type that is consistently seen in prime time television programming (Morrison et al., 2004; Ogden & Munday, 1996; Wiseman et al., 1992). This ultra thin body type is especially pervasive in the programming genres of serials and soap operas (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a), and exposure to such “ideal-body television images is linked to the idealization of female thinness” in both males and females (Harrison, 2003, p. 264).

The discrepancy between the findings of the current and previous research has significant implications. Seniors exposed to greater amounts of television, a medium which has been established as a powerful communicator of the standard of the thin ideal (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996), did not report a desire for a smaller ideal body type. This could be explained by the fact that seniors want to appear active, able, and healthy as opposed to aged and deteriorating (Deets, 1993). Media has created a negative view of aging that has led to a society that fears becoming older (Deets, 1993). Pompper et al.

(2007) commented that currently Americans fear aging and the body changes that accompany the aging process (p. 528). Seniors in the Pompper et al. study also reported that their ideal body was 20 years younger with a greater amount of stamina. Wellner (2003) has reported that seniors do not want to appear unhealthy, nor do they want to relate to a portrayal of a frail, weak older person. Therefore, these results suggest that seniors are more concerned with maintaining a healthy, capable body, rather than reaching an extremely thin standard of beauty. This would support findings by Pompper et al. (2007) that older participants reported that their emphasis for an ideal body shifted from wanted an attractive body to a greater desire to be in good health and feeling good.

If this is the case, body image studies for seniors take on an entirely new dimension. The construct of body image has been traditionally associated with a linear relation to body weight (Cash, 1990; Friedman & Brownell, 1995). However, Kotanski, Fisher, and Gullone (2004) have stated “it is time to reframe our conceptualization of this construct” (p. 1,317). The concept of body image is shown to vary among different age groups, sexes, and body weights (Kotanski et al., 2004). Instead of assuming that negative body image automatically means an individual wants to be thinner, body image for seniors would have to be thought of in the context of the satisfaction of the ability of one’s body to perform certain tasks. Rydeskog (2005) noted that feelings of self-worth among seniors were related to the ability to perform physical exercises. A 2008 study revealed that body image satisfaction among the older population is related to additional issues such as “the feeling of not being useful to the family owing to physical limitations; or the worry and anxiety stemming from the limitations imposed by excess weight on care-givers when helping the elderly perform activities of daily life, such as getting out of

bed, bathing or going out” (Lopez-Garcia et al., p. 707). Future research examining body image among the older population would now have to consider a new paradigm of body image that involves more than just satisfaction with weight or appearance. This shows a need for further research that explores how body satisfaction is defined for the senior population.

This new outlook on what body image means to seniors would also support the case for exercise among the older people. Feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem have been shown to increase when seniors participate in structured physical activity (Rydeskog et al., 2005). Seniors who currently participate or begin a new exercise program have self-reported greater satisfaction with their body and its physical capabilities (Rydeskog et al.) Activities that include physical activity, such as the sports and activities included in the World Senior Games, can help seniors feel that they have a degree of control over their bodies and their appearance (Hurd, 2000). This satisfaction with the body’s physical ability in advanced age could lead to greater body satisfaction, not because one has met the thin ideal portrayed in media but because he or she feels capable and healthy.

Magazine Readership

In the past decade, a multitude of studies have addressed the negative impact that magazines have on body image (Hellmich, 2006; Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994). Images and articles in magazines that celebrate the thin ideal have been shown to be detrimental to the body satisfaction of both men and women (Harrison, 2003; Pompper et al., 2007). In addition, individuals have reported that they use magazines as a source for defining the ideal body (Pompper et al., 2007). Magazines consistently portray this ideal

body type as extremely thin and young; such messages have become increasingly prevalent in magazines and now saturate media content (Hellmich, 2006, p. 3).

More specific research indicates that certain types of magazines are more harmful to body image than others. Beauty and fashion magazines have been specifically named as the most damaging forms of print media (Bissell, 2006). This is due to the high prevalence of extremely thin models in these categories (Bessenoff, 2006).

Previous research has found that magazine readership is more strongly associated with eating disorders than other forms of media (Gunter & Wykes, 2005). Because magazines have been consistently linked with body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in previous research, the researcher expected that magazine readership would show a strong relationship to negative body image and high levels of body dissatisfaction, as well as a lower ideal body size among participants. However, the results showed no association between magazine readership and the body image measures in the current study. This was true for all measures of body satisfaction within the study, specifically body image and ideal body size. Additionally, no relationship was found between current body size and magazine readership. Therefore, senior participants of the survey who reported high magazine readership did not display a more negative body image than those participants who rarely or never read magazines.

At this time it is worth considering out that seniors who reported low magazine readership may be watching more hours of television, which may affect results. Such a situation is a possibility, as fewer hours spent consuming media through reading magazines leaves more time during the day to watch television. This could potentially

explain why magazine readership did not show as strong of a relationship to body image scales as television use.

Influence of type of magazine publication. This unexpected association between magazine readership and body image can be explained by a more in-depth consideration of the role that category of magazine plays in influencing body image. Although research has linked magazines to body image disturbance, magazines with a beauty and fashion theme have been listed as the most detrimental (Bissell, 2006). This is due to the extreme prevalence of ultra thin models in pictures and advertisements of such magazines (Reaves, Hitchon, Park, & Yun, 2004). According to research by Reaves and colleagues, beauty and fashion magazines have been labeled as a major culprit in the development of body dissatisfaction. Research concerning general magazine readership within these studies has not been as conclusive. Reaves et al. (2004) have stated that the thin ideal is commonly portrayed in the ultra thin models of fashion magazines. Even brief exposure of these unrealistic beauty images presented in fashion magazines has been shown in experimental studies to increase negative mood and state body dissatisfaction (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a). Bissell (2006) observed “there is certainly no shortage of tips for dieting, fitness and fashion all related to weight loss in fashion and entertainment magazines” (Bissell, 2006, p. 4). Teen magazines have also been listed as powerful communicators of the standard of the thin ideal (McRobbie, 1991).

To understand why the current study did not find a relationship between seniors’ magazine readership and their body image, it is necessary to more closely examine the type of magazines seniors read. In the current study, open-ended responses for senior magazine readership included publications such as *AARP* and *Golf Digest*, which do not

focus as heavily on the body aesthetic as fashion magazines. In a study by Pompper, et al. (2007) most baby boomer males studied cited themselves as “heavy” magazine readers, yet they reported reading predominately news and current events magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune*, slightly more than sports magazines, with very low reports of fashion-related material (Pompper et al., 2007). Robinson and Callister (2008) performed a content analysis of the eight magazines in the nation with the most adult readership, based on circulation numbers from the 2004 Mediamark Research Inc. (MRI) report. In the time period occurring between November 2004 to October 2005, the eight magazines with the most adult readership were found to be *Reader’s Digest*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *People*, *National Geographic*, *AARP The Magazine*, *TV Guide*, *Family Circle*, and *Time* (Robinson & Callister, 2008). In this content analysis by Robinson and Callister, the portrayal of seniors rarely included the thin ideal. Eighty percent of seniors in magazine advertisements were of average weight, with only 4.8% of seniors coded as thin. This shows that the thin ideal is not as prevalent among the magazines that adults most commonly read. However, it is important to note that none of the 2004 magazines with the highest circulation rates listed in the Robinson and Callister study were in the category of fashion or beauty magazines. In a body image study by Cusumano and Thompson (1997), 33 magazines from the year 1994 with the highest subscription levels were analyzed to assess the mean body shape of images that appear in each magazine. Of the 33 magazines coded, all of the top 23 magazines with the lowest mean body shape rating were those with an entertainment or beauty theme. Interestingly, the remaining ten magazines coded in the Cusumano and Thompson study included several of the same titles that seniors in the current study and previously cited

research (see Pompper et al., 2007; Robinson & Callister, 2008) listed as those most read by older Americans, namely *Family Circle*, *People*, *Time*, *Reader's Digest*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. Individuals appearing in these magazines, both in advertisements and in photographs, were coded to have a greater mean body shape rating, meaning that the average body size of individuals in these magazines was larger than those of the entertainment and beauty magazines. In addition, *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* were listed as not having a sufficient number of appearance-related images to even receive a mean body shape rating. This shows that magazines that seniors have been shown to read most often do not contain as many appearance-related images celebrating the thin ideal as fashion and beauty magazines. Therefore, these magazines will provide less exposure to the thin ideal, resulting in a lesser likelihood of contributing to body satisfaction.

Inferences for eating disorder patients. The research listed and findings of the current study indicate that magazines outside the category of the fashion and beauty domain do not give such a heavy focus on the thin ideal and are not shown to have a strong relationship to negative body image. The implications of these findings are that the link between magazine readership and body satisfaction most accurately applies to the category of beauty and fashion magazines. However, since media images can influence individuals in midlife with feelings of body satisfaction just as they would a person in the teen years (Zerbe, 2003), seniors who regularly read fashion and beauty magazines would still be vulnerable to those harmful effects (Schieman et al., 2007). Yet in terms of magazines that seniors have most commonly reported reading in past and present findings

where the thin ideal is not the main focus of content, the relationship to magazine readership and negative body image does not appear to be present.

Although the present study is correlational in nature and cause and effect relationships cannot be established, this knowledge could aid health professionals as they look for risk factors of eating disorders among their older patients. If they note that their senior patient is a regular reader of fashion magazines, they may become more alert to signs of a potential eating disorder. This information can also help future researchers and professionals to understand that not all magazines are created equal in terms of threat to body image (Bissell, 2006; Tiggemann et al., 2009).

Total Media Exposure

Past correlational studies have demonstrated that greater media consumption is related to higher body dissatisfaction (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Levine et al., 1994). Media has been labeled as the vehicle by which members of society become aware of what is valued in their culture (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986). Media messages are flooded with images of extremely thin people, communicating the message that the characteristics of thinness and beauty are highly valued. Freedman (1984) has stated that the prevalence of body dissatisfaction in society is related to beauty norms perpetuated in mass media. Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) commented that body satisfaction suffers as an individual is exposed to appearance-related images in media over time. Television and magazines have been listed as two of the major media sources of this exposure (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a; Harrison, 2003).

Body image. Due to these findings, it was originally anticipated that greater total media use among seniors would be correlated with lower scores on body image scales. In

the current study, no association was found between a senior's total media use and scores on the body image scale. A very weak positive association was found between participants ideal size and total media use ($r = .100$). This means that seniors who reported a higher amount of total media use also reported a larger body size as their ideal figure. There was no correlation between total media use and current body size of participants.

These results display that the combined amount of hours spent watching television and reading magazines per week did not influence the body image of seniors, nor did it contribute to discrepancies between seniors' actual and ideal body size. This finding does not mirror results from past research linking media use to body dissatisfaction (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) stated "correlational research demonstrates that greater media consumption is related to higher body dissatisfaction" (p. 466). Freedman (1984) remarked that due to the technological nature of today's society, body image is highly influenced by the portrayal of ideal body types. Furthermore, Engeln-Maddox (2005) found that "social comparison processes play an important mediating role in the relationship between exposure to idealized media images of women and body image disturbance" (p. 1,130). However, the majority of studies performed have been correlational in nature (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996) and have not been able to establish cause and effect relationships between media use and body image. Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) stated that "the causal direction of correlations between body dissatisfaction and media use remains a challenge" (p. 466). Part of the reason for this is that experimental research concerning body image does not capture the full nature of the

effects on an individual's long-term attitudes and lacks validity in a real world environment (Levine & Smolak, 1996).

The implications of the present finding that total media use is not related to body image are that a greater understanding of media's influence of body image is gained. This research helps reinforce the idea that specific types of media content play a greater role in body dissatisfaction than others. Therefore, it is possible that general total media use and body image do not show strong correlations because media influence on body image is related to a specific type of genre that focuses on appearance, especially fashion magazines and television programming such as soap operas and music videos (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). This means that greater awareness of the general public is needed to educate society on the possible harmful consequences that exposure to appearance-related media can bring. This caveat would apply not only to the much-studied adolescent and college-age female population, but to older generations—including seniors—as well. As a greater understanding is gained by members of society, it is hoped that individuals will limit their exposure to such images to avoid detrimental social comparisons with the images contained therein (Engeln-Maddox, 2005).

Ideal body size. The findings of the present study that found a weak positive relationship between total media use and ideal body size were also unexpected. This was due to previous research that has linked media exposure with the idealization of thinness (Harrison, 2003). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003a) also noted that participants exposed to the thin ideal through media reported a great desire for thinness, or in other words, preference for a smaller body. The implications of the present findings reiterate the finding that seniors who watch a greater amount of television define a larger body

size as their ideal. Therefore this helps support the premise that seniors do not want to appear old and aged with a deteriorating body; they want to appear youthful and functioning (see Deets 1993; Rydeskog et al., 2005). Once again, these findings should impact the way that marketers try to appeal to seniors. If seniors do not want to be viewed as old or weak, media advertisements directed at the older population that contain the thin ideal will likely not be as appealing to the older population. Therefore, to appeal to the new generation of the senior market, advertisers should portray seniors as a normal body weight and doing activities in a healthful, active body. According to findings from Robinson and Callister (2008) the overall portrayal of seniors in media is of older individuals who are active, healthy, functioning seniors. However, Robinson and Callister also found that seniors are heavily underrepresented in today's media. Therefore, a greater presence of healthy seniors in media is needed.

Differences in Findings between Men and Women

It was the hypothesis of the researcher that there would be a stronger relationship found between media consumption and body image of female participants than male participants. The researcher anticipated that female participants with high levels of media intake would suffer lower scores of body image than male participants with similar levels of exposure. The reason behind this expectation is the great amount of body image research that focuses on women (Hellmich, 2006). The majority of women celebrated in society today are recognized for their appearance and beauty, while less focus is given to those who are not as attractive (Brashich, 2006). Engeln-Maddox (2005) has stated that "it is clear from this study and from previous research that women are quite adept at critiquing the beauty standard created by these images, while simultaneously feeling

bound by this standard and motivated to abide by it.” (p. 1,131). While more recent research has shed light on the harmful effects of the ideal body for males (see Pompper et al., 2007), other studies have found that males did not respond as negatively to exposure of the thin ideal as their female counterparts (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003b; Harrison, 2003). Therefore, it was assumed that the present study would show similar results to previous research and females would be more influenced than males.

General television viewing. One of the most surprising findings in the current study was what happened when results for male and female participants were separated for the variable of general television viewing. When the sample was split and results were analyzed based on gender, new relationships appeared. Senior male participants who watched greater amounts of television were shown to have lower scores on the scale of body image ($r = -.224$). This means that the more television male participants reported watching, the less satisfied they were with their bodies. As previously stated, it was anticipated that results among female participants of the study would show an even greater negative relationship between television viewing and body image. However, general television viewing was not associated with body image among women of the study. This phenomenon is known as a *specification effect*, when zero-order correlations for the entire group show a significant relationship ($r = -.113$), yet when data is examined separately by gender, the relationship of television viewing is significant for only male participants ($r = -.224$). Furthermore, this relationship between television use and body image among males was shown to be stronger than for the group as a whole. This shows that the body image of male participants was clearly more influenced by television than that of women.

The relationships found between television use and body satisfaction among male participants were completely unexpected, especially in consideration of the lack of association between these variables among females. These results are in fact directly opposite to the original hypothesis that there would be a stronger relationship between media consumption and body image of female participants than male participants. In addition, present findings are contrary to previous data that females are more affected by appearance-related media than males. In a 2003 study by Hargreaves and Tiggemann comparing body dissatisfaction rates among males and females following exposure to television containing the thin ideal, males were not shown to be negatively affected (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003b). In addition, Harrison (2003) found that male exposure to the thin ideal in television did not predict idealization of thinness, even though this was the case among female subjects.

Implications for such findings are substantial. This study shows that males, specifically mature adult males, are responding to appearance-related images they see in media. This gives a direct call for more research, and a greater focus, to be given to how the thin ideal affects the male population. Traditionally in body image studies, females—specifically adolescent and college-age females—have been the main focus (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). However, Paxton and Phythian (1999) found that “the body image of males is more affected by the aging process” than females (p. 119). The present study provides data that indicates that body image is an issue for both sexes and people of all ages, and it indicates that males may become more at risk for body image disorders as they age. Awareness of this fact creates a greater need to understand how images of the thin ideal affect males, and how it differs from its effect on females. Therefore, males

should not be counted out of body image studies, nor should they be overlooked as an at-risk population for eating disorders, no matter their age. This could also help to explain the rising rates of anorexia among males from one to every 10 to 15 females in the 1980's to one male to every four females in the last decade (Woodside et al., 2001).

Finally, associations between television use and current body size were different for men and women. Higher amounts of television viewing among senior male participants correlated with a larger self-reported body size ($r = .239$), while the current body size among female participants was not related to their television habits. In terms of ideal body size, both sexes showed a positive relationship between television use and their ideal body size. This means that both genders desired a larger body type when they watched more amounts of television per week. This finding is unexpected, as television use has been identified as a contributing factor to the internalization of the thin ideal and a greater desire for thinness (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). Yet as previously noted, seniors may feel more threatened by the possibility of appearing frail than meeting the thin ideal (Deets, 1993). Another possible explanation for this can be found when one examines specifically how appearance-related television has been shown to impact males. In a 2003 study, boys exposed to television commercials with appearance-related themes were not shown to have an increased desire for thinness, though their body satisfaction decreased (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a). In a follow-up study of these same subjects, boys were shown to have greater amounts of weight dissatisfaction after watching commercials that depicted a muscular ideal (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003b). Similar patterns may be at work among the older population, as the male ideal body in media has been described as “to be thin and muscular, with a “V-Shape,” resulting from

large arm and chest muscles, and slim hips (Pompper, et al., 2007). Henry et al. (2006) reported that adults who participated in a regular strength training program displayed increased body satisfaction. Therefore, in consideration of all of the above results, it is possible that seniors desire to increase their body size through gaining healthy weight such as muscle. However, these findings are just the beginning of understanding the concept of body image among seniors, and more specific research concerning the active older population is sorely needed.

Magazine use. Similar to results for the total group of seniors, neither men nor women showed an association between magazine readership and any of the body image scales within the current study (body image, current body size, and ideal body size). These results are surprising, as magazines have been consistently identified as one of the factors linked to the development of body dissatisfaction. Messages of the thin ideal in magazines have been shown to be “targeted toward adolescent girls and young women” (Ogden & Munday, 1996, p. 2). Wills and Olivieri (1991) have stated that “seniors are indeed vulnerable to a disease (eating disorders) that many consider purely a disorder that only affects young females” (p. 239). Therefore, it was expected that seniors, particular senior women, would be influenced by these messages.

To further understand why this relationship did not manifest itself in the current study, two considerations need to be contemplated. First, one must look at the type of magazine seniors are reading. As previously noted, seniors in the study most often reported news and special interest magazines as opposed to fashion and entertainment magazines, which have been shown to be related to body dissatisfaction (Bissell, 2006). The highest subscription and readership rates for magazines among the adult population

have been found to be for publications such as *Time*, *AARP*, and *Reader's Digest* (Pompper et al., 2007; Robinson & Callister, 2008). These magazines have been shown to have less appearance-related images and prevalence of the thin ideal than fashion and beauty magazines (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). Therefore magazine readership of the magazines outside the categories of fashion and entertainment are less likely to influence a senior's feelings about his or her body. This finding reinforces research by Tiggemann and Pickering (1996) that specific types of media content are linked to body satisfaction levels, namely those with an appearance-related theme.

Secondly, it is necessary to understand how seniors are being portrayed in the magazines that adults read the most. Robinson and Callister (2008) found that "the health status of the older characters was overwhelmingly 'good' (97.4%)" (p. 12). In addition, 80.4% of the seniors in the ads were shown as being of average weight, with only a small percentage (4.8%) being perceived as thin. This shows that the thin ideal for seniors is not highly prevalent in magazines that seniors are most often exposed to. This could help explain why male or female seniors in the current study did not show a relationship between body image scales and total magazine readership. Although this finding has positive implications for portrayal of the senior body in media, Robinson and Callister also found that seniors were heavily underrepresented in magazines. Seniors appeared in magazine advertisements just 7.1% of the time. This brings to light the possibility that seniors may be forced to compare themselves with younger, less aged models that appear more frequently in magazine images (Bissell, 2006). This could lead to negative social comparisons for those seniors who are not as healthy, possibly creating unattainable expectations among seniors for the process of aging (Robinson & Callister, 2008).

Therefore, this shows a need for advertisers of all categories of magazines to portray seniors in a variety of body types and fitness levels, and to do so more often.

Total media use. Stice and colleagues (1994) found that greater exposure to media (television and magazines) was directly associated with increased eating disorder symptoms. Greater internalization of the thin ideal stereotype has also been shown to indirectly lead to greater body dissatisfaction (Lin & Kulik, 2002, p. 115). A study by Reaves et al. (2004) found that “women cite media as the most important source of pressure to be thin” (p. 58). Due to these findings, it was expected that total media use would be associated with lower ideal body size among senior women. The data of the current study found that total media use was not related to any of the measures of body image for male participants. Total media use among females was not associated with body image or current body size. However, total media use among females was positively associated with ideal body size ($r = .122$). Senior women of the current study who spent more hours per week consuming media reported a larger ideal body size. This is at odds with previous research that exposure to the thin ideal through magazines and television leads to greater desires for thinness among women (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003a). Such data is also contrary to research by Hsu and Zimmer (1988) that older women are vulnerable to pressure from the media to be thin.

The findings of the current study regarding a desired body size among senior females may indicate a greater desire among women to feel strong and healthy as they age. Robinson and Callister (2008) have stated that the drive for the ideal body can be just as powerful in older women as it can in younger females. However, what constitutes an ideal body may be different for an older woman. A woman in her fifties may still feel

pressures from society to be beautiful (Tsiantas & King, 2001). However, these pressures may be to appear youthful, wrinkle-free, and attractive (Robinson and Callister, 2008), as opposed to the dangerously thin ideal that younger females strive for (Hellmich, 2006). Implications of this finding once again highlight a greater need to understand the concept of body image among the older population—both males and females. Current results have indicated that body image in old age does not have a linear correlation to weight (Cash, 1990; Friedman & Brownell, 1995). Rather, it is affected by many other factors of well-being, such as health status and the ability to perform certain tasks (Lopez-Garcia et al., 2008; Rydeskog, 2005). This greater understanding of the concept of body image in old age can be gained by more studies that focus on what body image means for seniors.

Limitations of the Study

The current study presents limitations which must be considered. Just as the study is distinctive for looking at a specific segment of the older adult population, the results cannot be induced to the senior population as a whole. Participants at the World Senior Games do not represent the average senior citizen. First, they are able to participate and compete in regular physical activity. This is not consistent with the daily routine of an average senior, especially those suffering from age related illness and injury. According to Wellner (2003), an individual who is “75-years-old and running marathons is absolutely different and in a much younger state than a 60-year-old who has emphysema” (p. 4). Just as physical activity has been shown to help reduce body dissatisfaction (Landers & Arent, 2001), these active seniors may not be as affected by the images of the thin ideal they see in the media. Secondly, the World Senior Games includes participants from 53 countries; however, the socioeconomic status of these seniors is unknown. One

would guess that individuals who are able to travel such a great distance out of their own expense to compete earn an above average income. Third, “self-report measures rely entirely on the understanding and honesty of the participant” (Withers-Hansen, 2008, p.36). Participants’ personal reports of current body size and responses to sensitive questions concerning how they feel about their body may not accurately reflect reality. This is common for most research on the topic of body image and may be controlled in more systematic forms of study.

Many in-depth studies answer research questions as well as perform content analyses to measure the content of the material they are using in their study. For example, this may be done on the magazines that a researcher is using in his or her study of the effects of the thin ideal in magazines. In the current study, content analyses performed by previous researchers were used to assess the prevalence of the thin ideal in different magazines and television programming (see Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Robinson & Callister, 2008; Wiseman et al., 1992). Therefore, the implications and discussion of the current study were based in part on the data gathered from previous related studies.

One final significant limitation is the correlational nature of the study. Although the findings suggest certain associations between media use and body image, these results cannot conclude cause and effect relationships. To further understand the relationship between body image and media use in seniors, more research is needed. There is a scarce amount of information concerning the specific relationship between specific mediums and body image within the senior population. More studies, specifically more longitudinal studies, are needed that focus primarily on senior citizens and how the concept of body image differs for the older population.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between media use and body image in the senior population. This was done for the purpose of understanding how seniors are affected by media images celebrating the thin ideal that they consume.

This study is valuable because it covers new ground in the exploration of the body image of seniors in regards to media effects. The senior population will continue to grow and represent a greater part of society. Yet most studies concerning body image and media effects focus primarily on college-age women and adolescents. Little research is being done concerning these same issues in the life of a senior citizen. The present study is unique because it dissects a distinct population segment of seniors: those who are physically active. These findings will be of great value as baby boomers continue to enter their senior years and maintain an active lifestyle (Deets, 1993; Monroy, 2000; Wellner, 2003).

As a greater understanding of senior citizens' responses to appearance-related media is achieved, there will be a greater focus by advertisers to target the older population. Hopefully when the senior market is reached at a larger scale, such images would include positive portrayals that do not lead comparisons that diminish body image. Such media images might more successfully tap into the burgeoning senior market. However, the main goal of understanding how media images affect seniors is to ultimately decrease episodes of harmful social comparisons that lead to unhealthy body image, and to reduce the damaging behaviors associated with it.

This study shows that seniors are impacted differently by the media than their younger counterparts. Although body satisfaction does still remain an issue for adults as

they age, the concept of body image appears to change through the years. Individuals who are presently in or entering old age still desire to change their bodies and be satisfied with their physical appearance, yet they do not appear to have the same desire to achieve society's standard of the thin ideal. Rather, the concept of body image among the older population appears to be more heavily tied to feelings of health, self-efficacy, and capability. As more research is performed that is aimed toward the older population it is hoped that a greater understanding of the concept of body image among seniors will be gained. This increased knowledge will aid health professionals and gerontologists as they care for the older population and enable these professionals to better treat episodes of eating disorders caused by a negative body image. In addition, they will be better able to understand the role that physical activity and exercise play in moderating feelings of body dissatisfaction among seniors.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument Used in Study

Part 1. Instructions: Using the scale below, please circle the number that best matches your agreement with the following statements.

Definitely disagree 1	Mostly disagree 2	Neither agree Nor disagree 3	Mostly agree 4	Definitely agree 5	
1. My body is sexually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I like my looks just the way they are.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most people would consider me good looking.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Most people <i>my age</i> would consider me good looking.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I like the way I look without my clothes.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I like the way my clothes fit me.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I dislike my physique.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I'm physically unattractive.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like what I look like in pictures/photographs.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am proud of my body.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am currently trying to change my body weight.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I like what I see when I look in the mirror.	1	2	3	4	5
13. There are lots of things I would change about my looks if I could.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am satisfied with my weight.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I wish I looked better.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel I weigh about the right amount for my height.	1	2	3	4	5

Definitely disagree 1	Mostly disagree 2	Neither agree Nor disagree 3	Mostly agree 4	Definitely agree 5	
17. My weight makes me unhappy.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I'm looking as nice as I'd like to.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I'm not as good looking as I used to be.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The aging process makes me unhappy.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am a person of worth at least equal to other people.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I take a positive attitude toward my self.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I am concerned about what other people think of my appearance.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I don't care about other people's opinion of my appearance.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I am afraid that other people will notice my physical appearance flaws.	1	2	3	4	5

Part. 2. Instructions: Please answer the following questions by circling answer that best corresponds to how you really feel.

29. I would like to weigh...

A lot less	A little less	About what I weigh now	A little more	A lot more
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30. How satisfied were you with your weight and shape when you were in your **teens**?

Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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31. How satisfied were you with your weight and shape when you were in your **20s**?

Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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32. How satisfied were you with your weight and shape when you were in your **30s**?

Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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33. How satisfied were you with your weight and shape when you were in your **40s**?

Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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34. How satisfied have you been with your weight and shape since your **50s**?

Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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35. Are you actively trying to change or maintain your weight?

No	Trying to lose	Trying to maintain	Trying to gain
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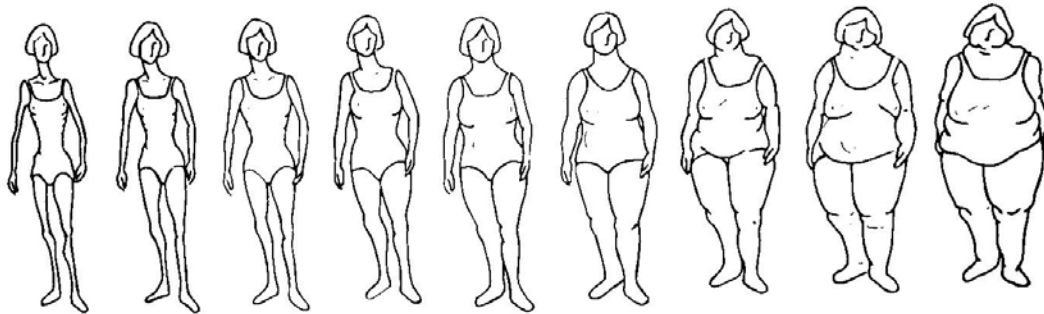
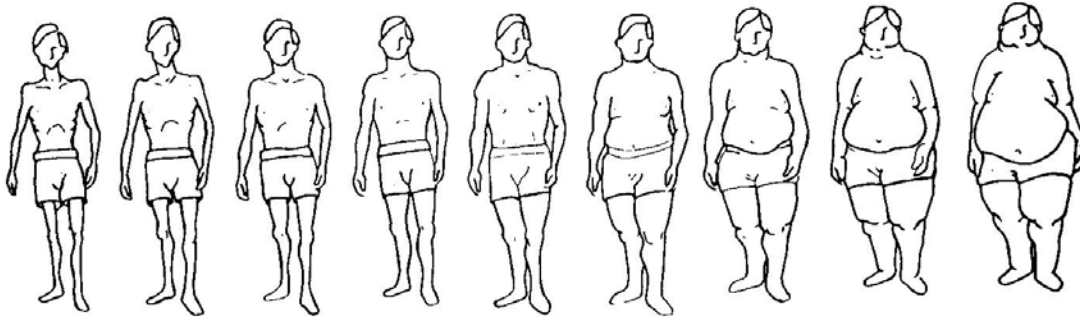
36. How important is it to you to be at your ideal weight?

Not Important	Somewhat Important	Moderately Important	Very Important
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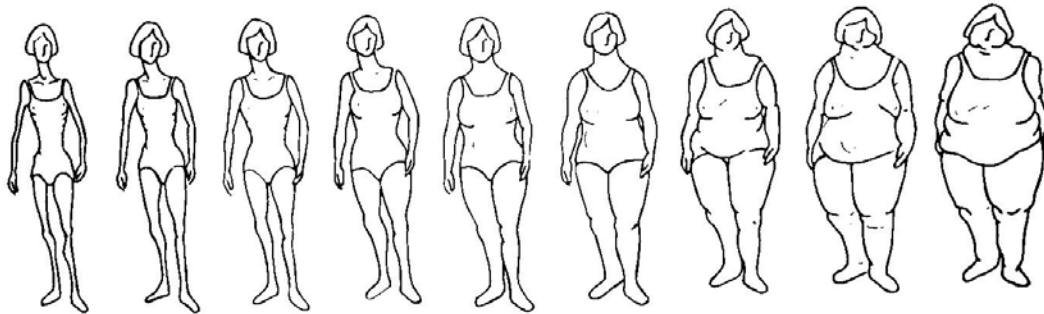
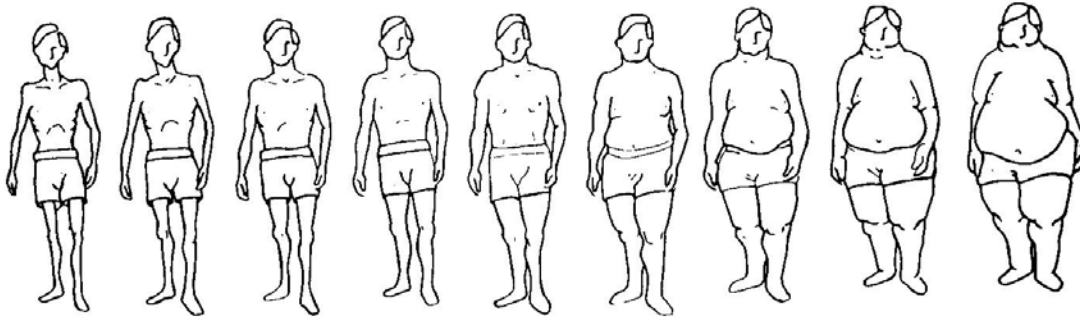
37. How important is your overall physical appearance to you?

Not Important	Somewhat Important	Moderately Important	Very Important
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Part 3. Below are contour drawings representing a range of female and male body sizes. Please circle the body that you think best represents your **current** body size (women will circle a female figure and men will circle a male figure). Your **current** body size represents how you think you look now.



Part 4. Below are contour drawings representing a range of female and male body sizes. This time, please circle the body that you think best represents your **ideal** body size (women will circle a female figure and men will circle a male figure). Your **ideal** body size, for example, represents the body size you would most like to have.



Part 5. Please answer each question as honestly and accurately as possible. Circle your answer choice using the scale below:

Less than 30 minutes 1	30 minutes to one hour 2	One to two hours 3	Two to three hours 4	Three to four hours 5	More than four hours 6
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During a **typical day** how much time do you spend...

39. Watching television in general? 1 2 3 4 5 6

40. Watching the evening news on television? 1 2 3 4 5 6

41. Watching rented movies or DVDs? 1 2 3 4 5 6

41. Sending and reading e-mails? 1 2 3 4 5 6

42. Chatting/Instant messaging with others on the Internet? 1 2 3 4 5 6

43. Surfing the Internet? 1 2 3 4 5 6

44. Reading a national newspaper? 1 2 3 4 5 6

45. Reading a local newspaper? 1 2 3 4 5 6

46. Listening to the radio? 1 2 3 4 5 6

47. Reading magazines? 1 2 3 4 5 6

48. Please list the names of any magazines you have read or looked at in the past week?

49. Please list your two favorite television programs?

Part 6. Demographics. Please circle the appropriate answer or provide the information in the blank as requested.

50. What is your age?

Less than 50 50-55 56-60 61-65 66 or older

51. What is your gender?

Male Female

52. What is your ethnic origin?

White Hispanic
 Asian Native American
 African American Polynesian/Pacific Islands
 Arabic Other _____

53. What is your marital status?

Single Married Divorced Widow/Widower

54. Current weight _____

55. Current height _____

56. What is your highest level of educational attainment?

Some High School High School Graduate
 Some College Associates' Degree
 Bachelor's Degree Some Grad School
 Master's Degree Professional Graduate Degree
 Doctorate

57. What is your current household income?

Less than \$25,000 \$25,001-\$50,000
 \$50,001-\$75,000 \$75,001-\$100,000
 \$100,001-\$125,000 \$125,001-\$150,000 More than \$150,000

Thank you for your assistance!

Appendix B

List of Questions Used in Body Image Scale

1. I like my looks just the way they are.
2. Most people would consider me good looking.
3. Most people my age would consider me good looking.
4. I like the way my clothes fit me.
5. I dislike my physique.
6. I'm physically unattractive.
7. I like what I look like in pictures/photographs.
8. I'm proud of my body.
9. I like what I see when I look in the mirror.
10. I'm satisfied with my weight.
11. I wish I looked better.
12. I feel I weigh about the right amount for my height.
13. I'm looking as nice as I'd like to.
14. I like the way I look without my clothes.
15. My body is sexually appealing.