

THE MASS MEDIA AND THE UNREALISTIC IMAGES OF WOMEN THAT
CONTRIBUTE TO EATING DISORDERS

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CONTRIBUTE TO EATING DISORDERS

A Project

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Division of Social Work

Abstract

of

THE MASS MEDIA AND THE UNREALISTIC IMAGES OF WOMEN THAT
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This project was a complete collaboration between both researchers. Chapters one through five were completed as a joint effort with each author equally contributing to the final project's completion. The question that the authors presented in this project is as follows; "Does mass media contribute to distorted body images in women; which in turn contributes to eating disorders?" The researchers are assuming that women's perception of their own body is being adversely affected by the unrealistic thinness portrayed in the media, in addition to the adversity to "fat". The researchers believe that those perceptions then contribute to eating disorders by leading women to try to obtain a look that is unattainable and unhealthy. The purpose of the research is to connect the images in the media and how that causes a distorted body image

which in turn contributes to eating disorders. The research design was secondary quantitative data analysis gathered from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), during the years of 2007-2008. The NHANES survey was acquired through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) website. There were 12,946 people selected for the sample, 10,149 of those were interviewed (78.4 percent) and 9,762 (75.4 percent) were examined in the mobile examination centers (MEC). Of the 10,149 persons who were interviewed for NHANES 2007-2008 the researchers only used 5,053 responses or 49.8% of the population that responded with female as their gender. The final findings to this project support and confirm the author's original hypothesis that mass media is a contributing factor and has a correlation to a women's dissatisfaction with their body image. There was a strong, positive correlation between how participants considered their weight and wanting to change their body size, which was statistically significant among ages 17 years and younger ($r = .493$, $n = 154$, $p < .0001$); 51-61 years ($r = .468$, $n = 531$, $p < .0001$); 62-71 years ($r = .616$, $n = 458$, $p < .0001$) and 72 years and older ($r = .516$, $n = 513$, $p < .0001$). Although participants 18 to 50 years (equally distributed among 3 age groupings in the data runs) reflected statistically significant positive relationships, the correlation coefficients were among the lowest in this particular data analysis. The implications to the field of Social Work are that a professional can aid in a variety of settings, for example: mental

health, domestic violence, medical, and community resource agencies. These are all areas that would be dealing with the outside influence that the media has on body image and how it affects the client's daily life. This project will assist in increasing awareness of the impact of mass media and how it influences women. This knowledge will empower Social Workers; who then can use this knowledge to empower the clients to help themselves.

_____, Committee Chair
Dr. Kisun Nam, Ph. D.

Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When you walk into any grocery store across the nation as you wait in line there are messages being sent, most of us miss them or worse don't recognize them. Diet magazines, low-fat cook books, ways to lose 10 lbs in 10 days, diet wonder drugs, and of course the pictures of those who have failed to live up to the social standards of beauty. People who are unfortunate enough to be deemed lacking or failing at obtaining the bar of beauty are splashed over the cover of gossip magazines as reminders to others of what not to do. The magazine stands are choked full of publications brandishing pictures of celebrity bodies blown up to parade what is considered their least flattering assets. These people are being used as public examples of failure and as reminders of what not to be. The captions help reinforce the pictures that are splashed across the magazines by insinuate that those unfortunate enough to be caught and displayed across the covers are unhappy, unhealthy and worst of all unattractive.

Magazines, T.V. shows, billboards, movies, commercials and the internet are inundated with distorted views of beauty and innumerable women are convinced the delusions being sold to them are standers to achieve. It is the researcher's belief that the exposure to mass media is contributing to women's distorted body images. The

researchers believe that those distorted images influence women's perception of their own body negatively and how those perceptions then contribute to eating disorders are the issue that this research is addressing. The researchers question is as follows: Is the exposure to mass media contributing negatively to distorted body imagery; which is a contributing factor to eating disorders? The researchers became interested in this topic because negative body images and the influences of mass media have no boundaries on who can and is being affected. Negative body images and its ramifications have contributed to a pandemic that affects all persons across all walks of life resulting in diseases which are dramatic, very expensive, and life threatening.

Statement of Collaboration

The researcher's are collaborating together to complete this project. In this project they are trying to answer the following question: Is mass media contributing to eating disorders?

Background

The history of the Caucasian women's image has changed over the centuries in western society. In the past the image of the woman was much more curvy and voluptuous then in today's society (Sanford, 2008). Over the years the curvy image of the woman has been replaced by a wispy thin image of today. The societal standard images of beauty have been translated into the toys that young girls play

with, for example, Barbie. The image that Barbie portrays to our society is the ideal image of the women which influences our youth by providing an example of what is acceptable beauty. Media coverage of the perceived and currently accepted woman's ideal body image has a direct correlation with eating disorders (Mozes, 2002). It is reported that those that reported having an eating disorder illness were affected by the age of 20 in 86% of females who reported being affected by an eating disorder illness (ANAD, 2008); 10% of women who have reported having an eating disorder illness reported there was an onset at 10 years or younger but those statistics continue to climb significantly to 33% reported onset between the ages of 11-15 and then 43% between 16-20 (ANAD, 2008). The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders state that there is an epidemic in America where 7-10 million women and 1 million men are being affected by an eating disorder. Eating disorders are affecting people across socio-economic, ethnic and religious, gender and age boundaries alike. The influence that our societal ideology has on woman and the ideal body images has impacted woman throughout the years; the problem is how it is negatively affecting woman today.

Statement

The researchers became interested in this topic because negative body images and the influence of mass media have no boundaries. People of all social, gender,

educational, and cultural statuses can and are being affected by mass media's influences. The negative effects of mass media are not a question but whether how catastrophic and far reaching they have become. Research is showing that girls in preschool between the ages of 3-5 years old are forming ideas regarding thinness. Researchers stated that there were far more negative comments about the fat character shown to the girls and far more positive comments about the thin character. There is a clear indication that "it is quite plausible that a combination of anti-fat messages and pressure to achieve unrealistic beauty standards is related to the development of body-size stereotypes and thin-ideal internalization in girls at a very early age." (Harriger, Calogero & Witherington, 2010).

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to connect the images in the media and how that causes a distorted body image which in turn contributes to eating disorders. The researcher's are reviewing academic journals and secondary data to find if there is any evidence of this connection. The researcher's then will take the information forward into the field of social work to help client's that suffer from poor self image and eating disorders. Furthermore, the researcher's wanted to provide additional avenues of treatment which could provide a more effective outcome. The first focus being preventive care, which at this time is lacking in the social work field; followed

by a more detailed and thorough therapy regiment either in groups or individually. If preventive measures could be implemented in the populations of increased risk then perhaps we can practice preventative care instead of treatments of diseases. Being proactive instead of reactive could save lives and pare down the ballooning costs of treatment.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that can be applied to female body perception and how the media influences women's body image are Social Constructivism Theory. This theory is influenced by how an individual is formed by their environment and social interactions. The media coverage of the ideal shaped woman directly affects those that are exposed to this image.

The exposure to the ideal body image starts early when young girls start playing with Barbie. As parents raise their children they are influencing who that child is going to be and that also applies to the types of toys children play with daily. When watching Disney movies all the princesses of the movies portray what is considered the ideal societal accepted body shape and image. The exposure of an acceptable body image begins early and is present throughout varying aspects of a child's life. The ideal body image continues through the life span of woman and becomes embedded in our society through media influence. The impact this

exposure has is tremendous on woman with self image and self esteem issues that arise from our culture. The exposure to the ideal body image teaches women of our society what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. This is how socio-cultural theory explains the ideal body image influence on the women of our society.

The social constructivism theory suggests that the individual's environment has an impact on the person's perception. This theory supports the idea that a person puts their own meanings and perceptions to the culture that they live in; in our society we have an image of the ideal woman. In the book by Robert Greene, one of the basic assumptions of social constructivism states that people construct meaning over the life span through interaction with others and the environment. (2008, p 244) This assumption supports the researcher's thoughts that images portrayed and supported by mass media have an effect on our society. It is the researchers hypothesis that mass media supports and encourages the perception of what is appealing and the societal standard of beauty to others. This theory also says that it is exposure over time that also influences individuals. This supports the thought that women are exposed to the ideal body image at a very young through mass media, toys and parental influences. This exposure continues throughout a woman's life which influences a woman's self perception and self esteem. This perception then can affect how a woman thinks of herself and can in turn contribute to her to have an

eating disorder. It is the researchers belief that this theory helps explain how social forces can influence how a person can perceive their personal body image which in turn can contribute to eating disorders.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms that the researcher's are using in this research project that need to be defined to help clarify the research and the outcome.

Anorexia Nervosa: As defined by the DSM is characterized by a refusal to maintain a minimally normal body weight.

Bulimia Nervosa: As defined by the DSM is characterized by repeated episodes of binge eating followed by inappropriate compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications; fasting; or excessive exercise.

Eating disorder: As defined by the DSM is a disturbance in perception of body shape and weight is an essential feature of both Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa.

Society: As defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary is a voluntary association of individuals for common ends.

Mass media: As defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary is a medium of communication (as newspapers, radio, or television) that is designed to reach the mass of the people.

Body image: As defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary is a subjective picture of one's own physical appearance established both by self-observation and by noting the reaction of others.

Body image dissatisfaction: links female body image to eating habits (Buunk, Dalley, & Umit, 2009).

These definitions will assist the reader understand the research project and the outcome of the researchers findings.

Assumptions

The researchers current assumption is that mass media is contributing to distorted body images in women; which in turn contributes to eating disorders. The researchers are assuming that women's perception of their own body is being adversely affected by the unrealistic idea of thinness in addition to the adversity to "fat". The researchers believe that those perceptions then contribute to eating disorders by leading women to try to obtain a look that is unreal, unhealthy and often untrue.

Justifications

The researchers believe that social workers can help curb the influential factors that contribute to eating disorders by teaching all genders coping mechanisms. By providing emotional and behavior support, and by supporting and providing positive

body images to counter the effects of the negative images seen in mass media. The researchers believe that through therapy, groups, peer mentoring, and mentoring programs the field of social work could curb and alter the number of women affected by these eating disorder diseases. Strengthening the social fabric by embracing varying body types instead of vilifying others could contribute to lowering the number of those who are affected by the devastation of eating disorders illnesses.

Limitations

The researcher's are examining literature that has researched mass media, eating disorders, and body image perceptions of women. The limitations are being able to fully understand if the media of our society influences a young woman's body image enough to cause eating disorders. The researcher's will fully explore the impact that mass media has on an individual's perception of their own body image. A potential problem with this research is there is limited longitudinally studies that address the researchers hypothesis in addition to the lack of research geared towards ethnical variances There are many reasons an individual may have to cause them to have an eating disorder; this limitation relies on the individual self reporting why they have an eating disorder. The researcher's will further explore these boundaries by examining data to see if the hypothesis: mass media is contributing to distorted body images which influence women's perception of their own body and how those

perceptions then contribute to eating disorders is correct. The researcher's are using secondary analysis for this project but this research may be limited to this project; it may not transfer to others within our society. One the other hand the researcher's may find that the hypothesis is wrong because the data may show that many varying influences that contribute to eating disorders and the hypothesis may not stand true to women throughout the United States.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Is mass media contributing to the rise in eating disorders and if so how? Is mass media's every changing projection of women, cultural, and racial expectations a contributing factor to the rise in eating disorders? Do varying cultural or ethnic differences influence women when it comes to body image and body satisfaction? Does mass medias pretrial of women affect every woman who is exposed but in varying fashions? Are there reasons why there is a higher rate of starvation and restrictive eating disorder illnesses among Caucasian women while over eating and binge eating disorder illnesses seem to be more prevalent among African American women? Through the research the researchers goal is to find articles that would support and help answer these questions.

The ANAD (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, 2008) has reported that eating disorders are reaching epidemic levels in the United States. There is an estimated 24 million individuals in the US who are suffering from an eating disorder illness. Of those estimated 24 million persons suffering from an eating disorder illness seven to ten million are women. Of those seven to ten million women being effected each year with an eating disorder disease,

50% or 3.5 to five million will not be cured. The cost of treatment for eating disorder diseases is being estimated to extend to \$100,000 or more per person over the course of outpatient treatment which includes both therapy and medical monitoring. The cost of inpatient care can reach upwards of \$30,000 or more a month (ANAD, 2008). With the staggering statistics rising showing more people being affected and even more dying, it is very important for the field of Social Worker to explore the root causes of what could be contributing factors to the rise in eating disorder diseases. From a Social Work perspective an improved and more detailed understanding of eating disorders could contribute to more aggressive and competent preventative care and perhaps a greater rate of success during treatment.

Historical Background

Throughout history the images of what a society deems as an ideal women's body image has changed drastically from century to century as well as from culture to culture. The first sets of mass media to broadcast the expectations and trends of beauty began as paintings displayed on walls of caves, painted pottery, and varying carved sculptures. These varying forms of art were displays and records of a culture's expectation of what a female's ideal body shape was expected to be at the time. As societies advanced so did the ability to express their ideas and expectations of beauty. With the help of technological advances the evolution of mass media began

with printing which was followed by magazines, radio and their ads, television and its advertisements, billboards, and finally the internet and its ads.

In a painting dated 1639 by Rubens, Pieter Pauwel, "The Three Graces" is a depiction of three Caucasian women who were of substance in size. (Rubens, 1693) The women in the painting were portrayed as having curvy stomachs, fleshy thighs, and rolls of skin on their backs, and rounded bottoms. None of these women are painted as thin, emaciated or frail; instead they all take on a curvy rounded look. None of the woman are painted with sadness instead they all hold looks of contentment. Another portrayal of a healthy looking woman of less than thin stature, "Portrait of a Woman" depicted a Caucasian woman who has a full almost chubby face, rounded shoulders, and is depicted as carried a full breast line (Kauffmann, 1795).

As time progressed there seemed to be a shift in the cultural standards of beauty. In 1814, a portrait is painted, "The Grand Odalisque". The Caucasian woman in the picture is a markedly thinner than the previous paintings viewed. The trend of the societal standers of displayed beauty of the artist had begun to change slightly during the 1800's. The public display of women and the societal ideal body images would continue to become slimmer as time progressed. This painting depicts a nude woman who is lying across a couch and she is substantially thinner than the

other paintings viewed. Her back has no rolls of flesh and her bottom is lacking the roundness previously noticed. By the early 1900s the ideal Caucasian woman's shape was defined by a tall, narrow-wasted, hour glass figure portrayed as the Gibson Girl Style. In the 1930s women's magazines geared toward Caucasian women begin to run ads "How does she keep so SLIM & Lovely" which was touted as a nightly vegetable pill to help prevent unwanted fat from forming, (Cyber-Heritage, 1930). By the 1940s the war had broken out and women were being seen in pornographic pictures which were being sent to soldiers. These women are markedly thin, with small waist and breast.

During the 1940s to the 1960s women were transforming into what we now know as the super model. This trend of thin, thinner, and supper thin was a growing phenomenon until what was considered popular was a woman of smaller and smaller statures. By the 1980s Christie Brinkley was said to be 5'9" and weighing in at 120 pounds, which is a BMI of 17.7. By the 1990s Kate Moss was a top model and was speculated to have a BMI of 16. The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute National Institutes of Health which is a part of the US Department of Health & Human Services states that a BMI under 18.5 is underweight, 18.5 to 24.9 is a normal weight range, 25 to 29.9 is considered overweight and a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese. (<http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>). In 2006 the model Luisel

Romas is so thin she dies of heart failure after she walks off of a run way in NY during fashion week, (Death of Anorexic Models Eliana and Luisel Ramos, 2007). Luisel Romas death would not be the last nor the first super model to be identified in the news as having an eating disorder and suffering from it even to death.

History for the most part is depicted in main stream America as Caucasian . The earliest forms of advertisements such as ads in magazines, commercials, and billboards were depicted as women of Caucasian ethnicity who were beautiful as early as the 1800's. What is considered modern art in today's museums are again of persons who are Caucasian. Additionally women of color and varying ethnic backgrounds have suffered from lack of exposure because they were not considered main stream. Having acknowledged that fact there is a difference in the depiction women of color verses those that are Caucasian there are also many similarities.

The phenomenon of eating disorders are not new to the world, although Anorexia Nervosus and Bulimia are new titles they are not new diseases., History can trace back eating disorders for ages but the documentation of what we now categorize as Anorexia nervosas was called many different thing in the medical world; feeding disorder, nervous malnutrition or weight phobia to name just a few.

Cultural Differences in Body Imagery

There are varying opinions regarding if and how cultural and ethnic differences influence a woman's likelihood of being affected by an eating disorder disease. Does culture, ethnicity, or race play a role in eating disorders? If so why and how? It's an important question to pose and answer; why are some women more prone or influenced by media and its influences regarding body images? What has been found thus far is that Caucasian women are far more likely to be plagued with an eating disorder than any other woman of any other cultural or ethnic background. With each research paper there were varying opinions as to why culture and ethnic backgrounds influenced why a woman is affected more or less. Despite the varying of opinions there are several similarities that seemed to be shared by most researchers. The first being the lack of research methods and sampling of populations that were not of Caucasian descent. It is reported that until the 1990s women of color were largely neglected as a sampling population in the areas of researching eating disorders. Despite the fact that eating disorders have been on the rise for many years women of color were largely ignored and or underrepresented when it came to sampling.

The second idea is that women who are not Caucasian do not identify with the media's portrayal of beauty. Several studies have theorized that African American

women have a strong maternal why this is so. The idea behind this thought process is that women who are portrayed in the media are greatly represented by a Caucasian image. It is theorized that a Caucasian woman is not what a woman of a different cultural or ethnical background identifies with, therefore there is a sense of disconnect. The women of varying ethnicities do not hold the common Caucasian cultural idea of beauty is what some theorize as the reason why women of non-Caucasian backgrounds are less influenced by media's messages. The third and final idea that has been theorized is that the closer a woman of color is to her ethnicity or culture the less likely she is to internalize an image of beauty that is so far removed from her cultural or ethnic identity (Wood & Petrie, 2010) The most current statistical data from the US Department of Homeland Security reports that there were a total of 1,130,818 persons who came into the United States from other countries as legal permanent residents in the year of 2009. Of those 1,130,818 persons 617,799 were classified as women (Security, 2010). The United States unlike many other countries has a population that is non-homogenized. Instead our social make up is filled with persons of varying ethnicities, backgrounds, cultures and ideas. It could be because of these varying factors that woman of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds are less influenced by mass media's influences.

The researchers reviewed the study Race Weight and Correlations of Bing Eating in Female College Students in which 715 female students were interviewed concerning their eating behaviors. The study interviewed females who were considered overweight due to over eating and binge eating in females of African American and Caucasian decent. Of those females who participated, the researchers of the study found that African American women who participated in the study were less likely to suffer from binge eating disorders and reported less sever binge eating habits then their Caucasian counterparts.

The researchers also noted that study found behavioral triggers such as mood, body image dissatisfaction, and drive for thinness were contributing factors to binge eating disorders which were higher reported in Caucasian females. Furthermore the study point to contributing factors as to why African American females are affected less then Caucasian females and the study suggested that African American girls often underestimate their weight and to inaccurately perceive themselves as being overweight although even if an African American females does consider herself overweight she would still consider herself to be attractive. The study made an interesting connection that perhaps African American mothers are more tolerant of heavier body statures and therefore more accepting and supportive of their daughters who are heavier unlike the Caucasian mothers. The study goes on to state that

because of the African American mothers support of her daughter the daughter then holds a more positive body image which she is willing to share in her peer to peer groups and encounters. Unlike their Caucasian counterparts who felt less accepted in their peer to peer groups and felt more of a judgmentalness, competitiveness, and envy towards body related issues.

In conclusion the influence that media has may be different for Caucasian females and African American females; however, few studies have examined this question with enough depth or longevity why those differences exist between Caucasian females and African American females regarding body image and disordered eating behaviors. Although at this time, there are no definitive explanations there seems to be contributing factors that play a large role; mass media among them.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders diseases such as Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa are a problem within our society and affects many people. There are many types of eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, compulsive overeating, and binge eating disorder. A diet is something completely different than having an eating disorder. A diet is defined; to regulate the food of, esp. in order to improve the physical condition or to lose weight; while the DSM defines an eating disorder as;

characterized by severe disturbances in eating behavior. The individual diagnosed with an eating disorder typically has low self-esteem and the eating disorder is about everything going on in this person's life, for example stress, coping, control, pain, anger, acceptance, and fear. When an individual has an eating disorder their entire lives are consumed by food and their weight. These individuals' emotions are dealt with by food and are seeking attention in a negative way.

An individual struggling with anorexia nervosa will probably feel the need to control their internal feelings by trying to control the outside world surrounding them, in this case with the restriction or over indulgence of food. A person suffering from an eating disorder illness is often extremely sensitive of their weight and appearance. An individual that has a persistent concern with their body image due to an eating disorder illness will often try to control their weight in varying distractive ways: obsessive exercise, calorie counting, starvation or extreme restriction of food, usage of laxatives, self-induced vomiting or purging and the use of diet pills (anorexia nervosa, n.d.). Those with anorexia nervosa may also experience other eating disorder symptoms; these people are struggling with many aspects of their lives that they are trying to get control of. Eating Disorder illnesses are serious psychological disorders that many individuals are not diagnosed and treated for, yet they are still suffering from the debilitating and often life threatening symptoms.

When experiencing bulimia nervosa an individual experiences cycles of binge eating which consists of consumptions of large quantities of food followed by purging which is self-induced vomiting often combined with the usage of laxatives. The individual suffering from an eating disorder illness may purge by self-induced vomiting and/or laxatives to rid their bodies of the extreme amount of calories they have eaten during one sitting. Again an individual suffering from bulimia nervosa does not deal with their emotions instead they binge and purge to deal with environmental factors and varying emotions. It is often the cycles of bingeing and purging with the feeling of guilt that distinguishes the disorder of bulimia nervosa from anorexia nervosa. Quite often the individual suffering from bulimia nervosa is fascinated with food and is aware of having this eating disorder. Again this individual has dissatisfaction with their body and lacks the ability to appropriately handle their emotions that are accompanied by their feelings in an appropriate manner.

The individual suffering from a compulsive eating disorder illness actually has an addiction to food and deals with their emotions by eating. These individuals are typically overweight and are acutely aware that they struggle with eating excessively. They have low self-esteem and shame from their appearance. Those suffering from compulsive eating disorder illness have significant health risks

associated with their disorder: heart attack, high blood pressure and cholesterol, kidney disease, and stroke (compulsive eating, n.d.). The health concerns do not all have to occur for the individual to be in serious unhealthy condition. This individual because they are typically over weight does not fit the ideal image in the media and has extreme dissatisfaction with their looks which affects their emotions directly.

Individuals who are binge eaters frequently consume copious amounts of food in a short amount of time until they are so full that they feel very uncomfortable. Those that suffer from binge eating do not tend to purge after the binging, which in turn makes these individuals overweight. Instead of dealing with their emotions these individuals binge eat and also use food as a form of punishment for life issues. Like the individual suffering from compulsive eating, the binge eater has varying health risks: heart attack, high blood pressure and cholesterol, kidney disease, and stroke due to the excessive weight issues (binge eating, n.d.). This individual has dissatisfaction with themselves; however they do not deal with emotions but instead they eat. There are many similar characteristics that these eating disorders share however there are specific criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) used to officially diagnose an individual.

Eating disorders are diagnosed using varying criteria's found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and are serious mental disorders that our nation faces. According to Caqueo-Urizar, Ferre-Garcia, Gutierrez-Maldonado, and Moreno (2009) they state, that between 0.5% and 1% of young people meet all the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for anorexia nervosa. There are also incidences of this disorder which is between 20 and 30 per 100,000 populations. Between 10% and 15% of people with anorexia will unfortunately die from physical or mental complications of the condition. There is a prevalence of bulimia nervosa which is even higher. It varies between 1% and 3% of adolescents and young adults who suffer from this pathology (2009). The problem with these numbers are those within our society that suffer from an eating disorder that are not officially diagnosed and seeking help with issues concerning their eating. These figures demonstrate how important it is to understand the problems connected with eating disorders and in our society there are many different aspects that contribute to an individual's body image. Within our society, a female's body image dissatisfaction (BID) has been linked to their negative eating habits which have shown a correlation with exposure to the media (Buunk, Dalley & Umit, 2009). Body image dissatisfaction is due to our society having such an emphasis of the ideal thin look portrayed in our media and the pressure to be attractive to the opposite sex

(Crawford, J. & Jones, D, 2006, p 1). The ideal thinness influences the women of our society of what is considered beauty and sexy to the opposite sex. This glorification of thinness starts in our society very young; research demonstrates girls as young as 5 having BID (DeLelle, M., Hughes, T., Hipwell, A., Miller, J., & Theodore, L., 2009, p. 374). Their BID was contributing to their eating disturbances which then progressed as they aged causing them to have weight concerns. The idea suggests that women cognitively take in the unrealistic thin image from various media images then internalize this portrayed ideal image as being appealing and strive to obtain this image for themselves (Morrison, T. & Sheanan, E. 2009, p. 1). Due to this image being unrealistic and unobtainable certain behaviors then develop which is the cause of developing eating disorders. Other studies support this issue that body dissatisfaction can lead to negative emotional thoughts and contribute to unhealthy eating, which can start as early as seven years old (Dittmar, 2009 & Grabe & Hyde, 2009). The norms and values of our society especially those in the media influence women to have BID and eating disorders. More specifically the female image of being small and petite, influences eating disorders by causing body image dissatisfaction (BID) (Kurz & Whitehead, 2008). These articles support the idea that eating disorders are very concerning issues for our nation. Research is needed to help find out what is contributing to this epidemic of eating disorders. The

necessities of those needs have to be addressed before we have more deaths that are caused by complications of eating disorders.

Our society has expectations of the female body image and many develop a dissatisfaction of their bodies and many times this dissatisfaction starts very young. This dissatisfaction of an individual may experience can lead to an eating disorder. The fact that we need to remember is that many that have an eating disorder have not officially been diagnosed and are not seeking help to overcome their struggles they have with food, emotions, and environmental factors contributing to their issues.

The Media

In our nation we have a conglomeration of media exposure that includes: television, newspaper publications, magazines, internet, movies, and video games. With such a large variety of exposure to media it should be no surprise that it influences viewer's image of themselves. Studies confirm that BID is a significant precursor to unhealthy emotional body concerns. This significant connection is reinforced by our sociocultural norms of the mass media. The portrayal of the thin models with the size 0 represents Body Mass Index (BMI) of <16 which is the starvation stage of anorexia (Dittmar, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, Dittmar's research demonstrates empirical evidence that supports that media influences body image; an analysis of 25 experimental studies discovered that the women subjects had worse

feelings regarding their own body image after they were exposed to thin ideal images, identifying an effect size of $d = -.31$ (pp 4-5). A more current investigation into body image included 49 experiments and 28 correlational studies, contributing to the evidence to support that exposure to the thin ideal image in the media is directly linked to women's body image concerns, with effect sizes of $d = -.28$ for body dissatisfaction and $d = -.30$ for eating behaviors and beliefs (Dittmar, 2009, p. 4-5). Therefore, this empirical evidence supports that the unrealistic image portrayed in the media directly has a negative effect on women which contributes to body image dissatisfaction (BID) (Dittmar, 2009, pp 5-6). There is an extreme amount of time spent by our society plugged into some type of entertainment. The images that we are exposed to can be extreme however many of those that are exposed to do not consider it to be entertainment but something to strive to be like.

There are many within our society who spends many hours exposed to the media. In an article from ABC News demonstrates the media's influences by reporting that the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau's Statistical Abstract of the United States reports, that adults and teens will spend approximately 5 months of their lives next year watching television, surfing the internet, reading newspaper, and listening to music (2006). Magazines, newspaper, and Television have influenced our society for many decades. These images that our society has been exposed have had many

effects on our self-image over the decades. The ideal body image has change in the media over the years; however the current image is very thin and unobtainable for many. With the new exposure to the internet has expanded the influence of many different images from around the world to the touch of the mouse. On the internet there is You Tube, blogs, social networking websites, and many other types of websites that all expose different images. On You Tube anyone can post a video to be viewed by the millions of people that log on to watch; this type of exposure does not have any filter available to stop whomever from being exposed to whatever is on You Tube. The social networking pages have a direct exposure to everyone as well. There have been many cases within the last several years of our youth in our society being exposed to predators while others have become predators by being verbally malicious. Their actions can be due in part to the lack of restrictions found on the internet. The internet has opened up the exposure to all kinds of images and influences worldwide to those that have access. With the length of time individuals spend, the availability of access to the internet, and the variety of media the influence in our society is substantial.

The ideal image from the media is not real compared to what the majority of the United States truly looks like. In today's media the image that is considered the ideal look for women is thinner and taller than the majority of our nation's female

population and most women know that it is near to impossible to achieve the look that is portrayed image in the media (Jefferson & Stake, 2009). This media image is also very sexy; the women according to the media image is supposed to be a size zero, tall, with big breast, and long beautiful hair. This image is sexy and will attract men; which is demonstrated in the media in a variety of ways. The problem that occurs due to the image portrayed in the media is that individuals then compare their own body image to what is accepted as the perfect body in the media; which influences individuals to strive for an image that is not obtainable for all and unrealistic (Dittmar, 2009). This supports the thought that the image in the media has an effect on individual's perception. This ideal thin image can impact how individuals feel about their appearance and how the unobtainable perfect body image would lead some developing eating disorders. Barriga and Jhaveri, state, Television entertainment under represents overweight women and over represents thin women, with almost two thirds of the women portrayed on television weighing 15% less than the average American woman. Women in prime time advertising are more likely than men to be physically attractive, thin, and partially clothed; larger women are often depicted negatively—as less attractive and less likely to have romantic relationships (2009). In our society obesity is a serious issue and causes growing

concerns about individual's self-esteem since the ideal image in our media is very thin.

This specifically support that the image that is in the media demonstrates to those that are exposed to this image what is expected of them by our society. Throughout the years many of the research that has been conducted suggests that the exposure to the ideal thin image affects women in three main areas: body dissatisfaction, weight concerns, and eating disorders (Bessenoff, 2006). All these article support that the ideal image that is in the media can have an influence on how individual's view as the acceptable body image for our nation.

Summary

Is there was a connection between mass media and the perception of negative women's body images was the hypotheses the researchers began this project with. This literature review addressed the history of women's body images and how over the years it has changed. The hypothesis we addressed was does mass media influence the perception a women has regarding her body image. Additionally we researched how our society and a woman's perception of beauty has changed and been influenced throughout the years. The themes of rising eating disorders diseases such as over eating, anorexia nervosas, bulimia nervosas, and binge eating trying to help pinpointing what is contributing to the alarming increase in women's negative

perception of their bodies and the increase in eat disorders diseases; cultural and or ethnic variances in eating disorders. Do cultural and ethnic variances influence how media affects the perception of a women's idea of her body and beauty? In addition if there was a connection between mass media and the perception of negative women's body images.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The survey design that the researcher used for this project was secondary quantitative data analysis gathered from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), during the years of 2007-2008. The NHANES survey was acquired through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) website. The study consisted of people who were both male and female; of all ages and non-institutionalized living throughout the United States. The researcher chose to use the information only for the female population within the study but did not exclude any age groups.

This survey was a Quantitative design that was used to help the researcher's with the hypothesis that magazines, T.V. shows, billboards, movies, music videos, commercials and the internet publish a distorted view of beauty and many women are buying what they are selling. The research is to discover if mass media is contributing to distorted body images which influence women's perception of their own body and how those perceptions then contribute to eating disorders in women of all ages and ethnicity. Currently there is an abundance of research regarding eating

disorders among woman but few have discussed the correlation between the varying forms of media and its effect or lack there of on women.

The survey is a Cross-sectional Study. The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) became a continuous, annual survey rather than the periodic survey that it had been in the past in 1999.

Data and Sample

Our mode of data collection was a review of secondary data sources from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 2007-2008. This survey was conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) on a periodic basis throughout 1971 to 1994. Then in 1999 the NHANES was able to become a continuous program with a change in the focus, which gave it variety of health and nutrition measurements which were designed to meet current and emerging concerns within our society. The survey examines a nationally representative sample of approximately 5,000 people each year of all ages. These people are located in counties across the United States, 15 of which are visited each year. For NHANES 2007-2008, there were 12,946 people selected for the sample, 10,149 of those were interviewed (78.4 percent) and 9,762 (75.4 percent) were examined in the mobile examination centers (MEC). Of the 10,149 persons who

were interviewed for NHANES 2007-2008 the researchers only used 5,053 responses or 49.8% of the population that responded with female as their gender.

Measurement Instrument

The researchers reviewed the secondary data and analysis of the information revealed that this information was conducted in the participants home in an in person interview of the population. This was a continuous survey given throughout the United States population by the National Center for Health Statistics. The data was collected specifically by giving the participant answers questions from a survey that was created to accurately retrieve the appropriate information. This process became a continuous program due to the success of the process.

There were different instruments used throughout the survey since it is so extensive and asking many different health and life questions. The information regarding food intake the instrument used is a computer dietary interview program. There is a standard questionnaire about demographics used as an instrument in this survey. The questioned are asked and an example of the choices are always, most of the time, sometime, rarely, and never. The health aspect of the survey is an actual examination that is done the participant which is recorded into the survey. These are the different instruments used throughout the entire survey which relays a lot of information for this secondary data analysis. The specific variables the researchers

are using from the data set are exposure to television and the internet, how often the respondents feel bad about herself or depressed, how the respondent views their weight, and then those respondents that wanted to change their body image what the reasons for that. The researchers are using these variables to show the connection between the ideal image in the media to body image dissatisfaction that leads to eating disorders.

Analysis Plan

The technique the researchers are using to analysis the secondary data is to simply read through the available data and the findings to assist in answering our research question: is mass media causing women's perception of the ideal body. The researchers are using quantitative analysis of the secondary data. The analysis will occur by reading through the information and interpreting it into helpful way to answer our research question.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher's submitted a human subject application to the committee at the division of social work at California State University, Sacramento in October of 2010. In the application the researcher's provided the appropriate information about the survey which the researcher's are using for secondary analysis of this project. There is no harm to any human subjects due to the researcher's using secondary

dataset; therefore the approval came in December of 2010. The researcher's were approved as exempt with a number of 10-11-027.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The previous chapter 3 discussed the methodology of this study including the design and secondary data source. The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the research study. There were 5053 females studied in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 2007-2008. Demographic variables used in the study are age and gender. Due to the nature of secondary data the reader should be aware of large numbers of missing cases illustrated in the proceeding data analysis.

Data was analyzed according to the following themes: age; hours of daily exposure to television and internet activity; body image and efforts to change weight; feelings about oneself; and level of physical activity. This chapter will detail the question asked of each participant. Each response set will be presented using a whole number rounded percentage and frequency of responses from each category.

In order to determine significant associations among certain variables Chi-Square tests were conducted. A significance level of $p < .05$ was used to measure the strength of the relationships. Variables were cross-tabulated from the following

categories: hours of daily television and internet exposure associated with body image perceptions.

Demographics

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 2007-2008 surveyed 5053 ($N = 5053$) females ranging in age of less than 10 years old to more than 80 years old for their national study. The researchers will use responses from the same national survey as a secondary data source to conduct this study. The mean average age of the female respondents is 34 years old.

There are 10% ($n = 534$) between the ages of 18-28 years old; 10% ($n = 564$) between the ages of 29-39 years old; 10% ($n = 545$) between the ages of 40-50 years old; 9% ($n = 537$) between the ages of 51-61 years old; 10% ($n = 461$) between the ages of 62-71 years old; 11% ($n = 519$) are ≥ 72 years old; and the remaining respondents reporting age at ≤ 17 years old are 38% ($n = 1893$).

Table 1
Exposure to Television, Video and Internet

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 hour	127	2.5	13.6	13.6
	1 hour	210	4.2	22.4	36.0
	2 hours	261	5.2	27.9	63.9
	3 hours	157	3.1	16.8	80.7
	4 hours	77	1.5	8.2	88.9
	5 hours or more	87	1.7	9.3	98.2
	None	17	.3	1.8	100.0
	Total	936	18.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4117	81.5		
Total		5053	100.0		

Approximately 2% of respondents (n = 17) report no television or video activity. Respondents reporting less than 1 hour is 13% (n = 127). Respondents reporting 1 to 2 hours is 50% (n = 471). Those reporting 3 to 4 hours is 25% (n = 234) while those reporting 5 or more hours of television or video activity is 9% (n = 87). Approximately 19% (n = 936) of the sample responded to this question.

Table 2
Number of daily hours of computer use in past 30 days

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 hour	329	6.5	35.1	35.1
	1 hour	204	4.0	21.8	56.9
	2 hours	73	1.4	7.8	64.7
	3 hours	29	.6	3.1	67.8
	4 hours	5	.1	.5	68.4
	5 hours or more	18	.4	1.9	70.3
	None	277	5.5	29.6	99.9
	Don't know	1	.0	.1	100.0
	Total	936	18.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4117	81.5		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents reporting no daily computer use is 30% (n = 277). Respondents reporting less than 1 hour is 35% (n = 329). Respondents reporting 1 to 2 hours is 30% (n = 277) while 4% (n = 34) report 3 to 4 hours of daily computer usage. Those reporting 5 or more hours of computer use is 2% (n = 18). Approximately 19% (n = 936) of the sample responded to this question.

Table 3
Body Image and Efforts to Change Weight

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Overweight,	1921	38.0	58.4	58.4
	Underweight, or	158	3.1	4.8	63.2
	About the right weight?	1207	23.9	36.7	99.8
	Refused	1	.0	.0	99.8
	Don't know	5	.1	.2	100.0
	Total	3292	65.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1761	34.9		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents reporting overweight is 59% (n = 1921) while those reporting underweight is 5% (n = 158). Thirty-seven percent (n = 1207) report being at about the right weight while less than 1% (n = 6) either don't know or refused to respond. Approximately 65% (n = 3292) of the sample responded to this question.

Table 4
Like to weigh more, less or the same

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More,	190	3.8	5.8	5.8
	Less, or	2252	44.6	68.4	74.2
	Stay about the same?	849	16.8	25.8	100.0
	Refused	1	.0	.0	100.0
	Total	3292	65.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1761	34.9		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents reporting they would like to weigh more is 6% (n = 190) while 68% (n = 2252) report liking to weigh less. Those who would like to stay about the same weight are 26% (n = 849) and less than 1% (n = 1) refused to answer the question. Approximately 65% (n = 3292) of the sample responded to this question.

Table 5
Tried to lose weight in the past year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	1170	23.2	40.1	40.1
	No	1747	34.6	59.8	99.9
	Refused	1	.0	.0	100.0
	Don't know	1	.0	.0	100.0
	Total	2919	57.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2134	42.2		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents who tried to lose weight in the past year is 40% (n = 1170).

Respondents who did not try to lose weight in the past year is 60% (n = 1747). Less than 1% (n = 2) refused to answer or did not know. Approximately 58% (n = 2919) of the sample responded to this question.

Table 6
Tried not to gain weight in the past year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	272	5.4	15.6	15.6
	No	1476	29.2	84.4	99.9
	Refused	1	.0	.1	100.0
	Total	1749	34.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3304	65.4		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents who tried not to gain weight in the past year is 16% (n = 272).

Respondents who made no effort to not gain weight is 84% (n = 1476). Less than 1% (n = 1) refused to answer this question. Approximately 35% of the sample answered this question.

Table 7
Trying to do anything about weight

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	lose weight,	269	5.3	40.9	40.9
	gain weight,	51	1.0	7.8	48.7
	stay the same weight, or	177	3.5	26.9	75.6
	not trying to do anything about your weight?	160	3.2	24.4	100.0
	Total	657	13.0	100.0	
Missing	System	4396	87.0		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents trying to lose weight is 41% (n = 269). Those trying to gain weight is 8% (n = 51) while 27% (n = 177) are trying to stay at the same weight. Those who are not trying to do anything about their weight is 24% (n = 160). Approximately 13% (n = 657) of the sample responded to this question.

Table 8
Reasons for losing weight

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I want to look better	76	1.5	96.2	96.2
	Don't know	3	.1	3.8	100.0
	Total	79	1.6	100.0	
Missing	System	4974	98.4		
Total		5053	100.0		

Valid	I think my clothes will fit better	46	.9	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	5007	99.1		
Total		5053	100.0		

Valid	I want to be skinny/I don't want to be fat/I'm overweight	34	.7	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	5019	99.3		
Total		5053	100.0		

Valid	I want to feel good/better about myself	5	.1	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	5048	99.9		
Total		5053	100.0		

Valid	I want to be healthier	119	2.4	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	4934	97.6		
Total		Total	5053	100.0	

Valid	A health professional wants me to lose weight	11	.2	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	5042	99.8		
Total		5053	100.0		

Of the respondents who report wanting to lose weight 29% (n = 76) want to look better and 17% (n = 46) think their clothes will fit better. Thirteen percent (n = 34) reported either wanting to be skinny, not wanting to be fat. Those who want to

feel good or better about herself is 2% (n = 5). Those who want to be healthier is 44% (n = 119) while those who have recommended by health professional to lose weight is 4% (n = 11).

There is a significant number of missing responses due to respondents being asked to choose a single reason why they want to change their weight. Much of the sample did not respond to the question. However, nearly half of the respondents who did answer the question “Are you trying to change your weight?”(see prior question) actually wanted to make a change. Their responses are distributed among the six choices above; therefore reflecting an even larger number of missing cases.

Table 9
Frequency of feeling bad about yourself over last two weeks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	2130	42.2	77.7	77.7
	Several days	399	7.9	14.6	92.2
	More than half the days	111	2.2	4.0	96.3
	Nearly every day	97	1.9	3.5	99.8
	Don't know	5	.1	.2	100.0
	Total	2742	54.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2311	45.7		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents reporting several days is 15% (n = 399). Those reporting more than half of the days and nearly everyday is 8% (n = 208) while 78% (n = 2135) reported they don't know or no days at all. Approximately 54% (n = 2742) of the sample answered this question.

Table 10

Frequency of down, depressed or hopeless feelings over last two weeks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	1890	37.4	68.9	68.9
	Several days	580	11.5	21.2	90.1
	More than half the days	130	2.6	4.7	94.8
	Nearly every day	140	2.8	5.1	99.9
	Don't know	2	.0	.1	100.0
	Total	2742	54.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2311	45.7		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents reporting several days is 21% (n = 580). Those reporting more than half of the days and nearly everyday is 10% (n = 270) while 69% (n = 1892) reported they do not know or no days at all. Approximately 54% (n = 2742) of the sample answered this question.

Table 11
Frequency of poor appetite or overeating over last two weeks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	1903	37.7	69.4	69.4
	Several days	506	10.0	18.5	87.9
	More than half the days	156	3.1	5.7	93.5
	Nearly every day	175	3.5	6.4	99.9
	Don't know	2	.0	.1	100.0
	Total	2742	54.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2311	45.7		
Total		5053	100.0		

Respondents reporting several day is 19% (n = 506). Those reporting more than half of the days and nearly everyday is 12% (n = 331) while 69% (n = 1905) reported they do not know or no days at all. Approximately 54% (n= 2742) of the sample answered this question.

Table 12
Access to emotional support from others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	1861	36.8	90.3	90.3
	No	190	3.8	9.2	99.5
	SP doesn't need help	7	.1	.3	99.8
	Refused	1	.0	.0	99.9
	Don't know	3	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	2062	40.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2991	59.2		
Total		5053	100.0		

Ninety percent (n = 1861) of the respondents agree that they do have someone who can help with emotional support while 9% (n = 190) of the respondents do not have anyone they can count on. Less than 1% (n = 11) of the respondents state they do not need help, they do not know or refused to answer the question. Approximately 41% (n = 2062) of the sample answered this question.

Table 13
Hours of daily sedentary activity (sitting or reclining, not counting sleep)

N		Mean	Median	Mode
Valid	Missing			
3536	0	5.8 Hours	5.0 Hours	3.0 Hours

The data is reported in minutes from the original source; however the researchers will convert the data into hours for ease in analyzing the data. Three percent (n = 102) reported less than 1 hour of time per day in sedentary activity. Those reporting 1 to 3 hours per day sedentary is 31% (n = 1112) while 47% (n = 1692) report 4 to 8 hours per day sedentary. There is 9 to 13 hours of sedentary activity reported by 16% (n = 584) of respondents and 2% (n = 69) report 14 to 18 hours of sedentary activity per day. Less than 1% (n = 10) report not knowing the amount of time spent sedentary per day. Approximately 71% (n = 3575) of the sample answered this question.

Table 14

Times per week exercising or playing hard enough to sweat or breathe hard

N		Mean	Median	Mode
Valid	Missing			
964	4089	5.8	7.0	7.0

Five percent (n = 47) report not playing or exercising hard at any time within a week. Respondents reporting 1 to 3 times per week of play or exercise enough to make them sweat or breathe hard is 17% (n = 154). Those reporting 4 to 6 times per week is 26% (n = 239) and those reporting 7 times per week is 50% (n = 476).

Approximately 3% ($n = 29$) report 8 or more times per week. Approximately 19% ($n = 936$) of the sample answered this question.

Pearson Correlation Results

Pearson Correlations were run to determine significant relationships between variables in this study. The most significant of those correlations are those regarding how participants considered their weight and the desire to change their bodies among certain age groups.

There was a strong, positive correlation between how participants considered their weight and wanting to change their body size, which was statistically significant among ages 17 years and younger ($r = .493$, $n = 154$, $p < .0001$); 51-61 years ($r = .468$, $n = 531$, $p < .0001$); 62-71 years ($r = .616$, $n = 458$, $p < .0001$) and 72 years and older ($r = .516$, $n = 513$, $p < .0001$). Although participants 18 to 50 years (equally distributed among 3 age groupings in the data runs) reflected statistically significant positive relationships, the correlation coefficients were among the lowest in this particular data analysis. The researchers noted 33% of the participants in this age group engage in daily television viewing no more than 1 hour and 78% utilize computer internet for 1 hour or less daily. This is suggesting even minimal exposure to mass media can still affect a statistically significant positive

relationship between how participants view their bodies and a desire to change their bodies.

Interesting to note, although not statistically significant ($p > .05$), was a pattern of increasingly positive correlations between participants feeling bad about themselves and how they consider their weight as the participants got older.

Cross-Tabulation Results

A significance level of $p < .05$ was used to measure the strength of the relationships.

Watching TV and videos and wanting to look better

There is no statistically significant relationship between the amount of time respondents watch TV and videos and if they want to look better, $X^2 (5, N = 32) = 4.47, p = .48$.

Computer usage and wanting to look better

There is no statistically significant relationship between the amount of time respondent used the internet and wanting to look better, $X^2 (6, N = 32) = 3.09, p = .79$.

Watching TV and videos and how the respondent considers their weight

There is no statistically significant relationship between the amount of time respondents watch TV and videos and how they consider their weight, $X^2(12, N = 346) = 6.58, p = .88$.

Computer usage and how the respondent considers their weight

There is no statistically significant relationship between the amount of time the respondents used the internet and how they consider their weight, $X^2(12, N = 346) = 5.64, p = .93$.

This chapter was a report of the statistical findings based on the amount of media exposure via TV, video and internet and effects on perception of body image for females. The following chapter 5 will detail major findings from the above data analysis, limitations to the study and recommendations for further research and action.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The researchers began the project by examining literature that researched mass media, eating disorders, and women's perceptions of body image. The limitations at the beginning of this research project was being able to fully understand if the media of our society influences a young woman's body image enough to influence or even cause eating disorders in women of all ages. The researchers explored the impact that mass media has on an individual's perception of their own body image and found that there is a strong correlation. The potential problem with the research was in the limited longitudinally studies that addressed the researchers hypothesis in addition to the lack of research geared towards ethnical variances. There are many reasons an individual may have to cause or contribute to an eating disorder and it has been proven that mass media is one of those contributing factors. Although there were limitations regarding an individual's willingness to self-report why they have an eating disorder there were still strong correlations between the time a woman spent watching TV and the time spent on the internet to how negatively she felt about her body image. The researchers further explored the boundaries by examining data to see if the hypothesis: mass media is contributing to distorted body images which influence women's perception of their

own body and how those perceptions then contribute to eating disorders is correct. The researchers' use of secondary analysis for this project limited this project by using questions and demographics that were not geared towards our projects goal. There were no questions examined nor presented that took into account ethnicity, varying forms of mass media such as magazine exposure, internet advertising, social networking sights and other forms of mass medium.

In conclusion it is at no surprise to the researchers that mass media is a contributing factor but not causation to how women feel negatively about their body images based on their exposure to mass media. The researcher' hypothesis has been confirmed. Mass media is a contributing factor and there is a strong correlation between the negative ways a woman feels about her body image and eating disorders when exposed to mass media. There was a strong, positive correlation between how participants considered their weight and wanting to change their body size in women of all ages but women within the age range of 17 years and younger and women ages 50 years and older seemed to have a stronger correlation then those women of any other age group. The researchers considered this an interesting topic which could use more research to consider why this is happening. The hypothesis the researchers concluded could be that women who are 17 years and younger are highly influenced by peer groups and are looking for external ways validate themselves. While women

in their 20's and 30's are perhaps working towards educational, career, and personal life goals which keep them busy and less focused on external validation. It would be interesting to have further research done on women in the ages of 17 and younger and 50 and older to further pinpoint what could be the extenuating circumstances that find these women affected more than others. The research is suggesting even minimal exposure to mass media can still affect a statistically significant positive relationship between how participants view their bodies and a desire to change their bodies. Interesting to note, although not statistically significant ($p > .05$), was a pattern of increasingly positive correlations between participants feeling bad about themselves and how they consider their weight as the participants got older.

Implications for Social Work

This research project has specific implication on the profession of social work due to the fact that the female population is highly served in various areas of need by social workers. The social worker needs to fully understand what the client's needs are that they are working with; therefore understanding outside influences like the media is very important. The outside influences may be harder to help the client with but it is crucial to still understand that it is there and to acknowledge it with the client. This research project supports that the media does influence the women of our society and how they perceive their own body image;

which in turn will impact a social workers practice when assisting a client with many different issues. A professional of social worker can aid in a variety of settings for example: mental health, domestic violence, medical, and community resource agencies. These are all areas that would be dealing with the outside influence that the media has on body image and how it affects the client's daily life. However, further research needs to be done in this area to better help social workers in the helping process of their practice. More research would help social worker's better identify the outside influences with a client and understand clearer why some client's are affect more than others. The more awareness of the media's influence will empower the social worker; who then can use that knowledge to empower the client to help themselves.

Limitations

The limitations to the researcher's findings are that they were limited to the information provided by the secondary data set from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). The researcher's were limited by time and human subject approval which made it harder to study a large variety of subjects. The researchers would have liked to be able to study the difference the mass media affects women's body image of specific ages then compare how that affect impacts eating disorders. However, to study young girls would have been very hard to get

approved with the human subject committee at the Division of Social Work at California State University, Sacramento. The researchers believe that there would have been such a strong correlation to the images in the media and women/girls having eating disorders that the researcher's would have been able to conclude that the media is a cause of eating disorders if they were able to conduct their own survey to the specific subjects. Therefore, the researchers believe that this project was restricted by the limitation and were not able to prove more than a correlation between female body image in the media and eating disorders.

While searching for information to support the hypothesis that mass media contributes to eating disorders the researchers found several academic journals to support this correlation. The academic journals linked body image dissatisfaction (BID) to the images that women are exposed to daily in the variety of medium. This link in turn has been found to be a contributing factor to women having eating disorder trying to fit in to the ideal thin image. When the information from the statistics only showed a small correlation this surprised the researcher's due to all the academic journals that were found to support the hypothesis. The BID that the women of our society experience is very real and they are exposed to the thin ideal image in the media everyday and until there can be a proved strong correlation the images in the media will not change. The correlation needs to be explored further

and those results then need to be applied to the women of our society therefore, these impossible images do not have an impact on an individual to the extent that causes eating disorders. It is the researchers' beliefs that these unattainable images do impact the women of our society and that it is not discussed enough that these images are truly not realistic for most individuals. The researchers also believe that body images need to be addressed in young girls so they can understand that there body, whatever shape it is, is acceptable. The researchers feel that if the acceptance for who you are is taught more with the young in our society that this BID would not contribute to eating disorders and the images in the media would not have any effect on an individual's self-image.

Recommendations

The researchers recommendations at this time is to have further research done that targets specific groups of women specifically in the ages of 17 and younger and then women ages 50 and older, women of varying ethnic groups, as well as women in varying social economical groups. The research that has been presented can be used to bring greater awareness and perhaps even to begin to provide preventive care through that awareness of the effects that mass media has on women of our society when it comes to their perception of their bodies.

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