

**ABSTRACTS and EXCERPTS of PRE-INTERNET SCHOLARLY ARTICLES  
THAT HYPOTHESIZED THAT READING MAGAZINES CAUSED BODY DISATISFICATION  
AMONG WOMAN AND GIRLS**

Kaiser Family Foundation (2004). Tweens, teens, and magazines. *Key Facts*. <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/tweens-teens-and-magazines-fact-sheet.pdf>

Ever since *Seventeen* magazine made its debut in the 1940s, teen magazines have been one of the most successful genres of magazines. ... Up until the late 1990s, *Seventeen*, *Teen*, and *YM* were the top three teen magazines, with **a total of 6.3 million readers** ... A 1997 analysis of articles in leading teen magazines — *Seventeen*, *YM*, *Sassy*, and *Teen* — found themes relating to **appearance (37%), dating (35%), and clothes and fashion (32%) were most prevalent**. ... Studies of teen magazine readers indicate that they turn to these magazines as a valued source of advice about their personal lives. According to a focus group of 7<sup>th</sup> through 11th-grade girls, conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited for *YM*, **teen readers want the content in their magazines to reflect their lives, and they rely on magazines as a sounding board, fashion and beauty consultant, and close confidant**. Another survey conducted by Taylor Research & Consulting Group indicated that **12- to 15-year-old girls look to magazines (42%) almost as much as their friends (45%) for the coolest trends**.

Levine, M. P., Smolak, L., & Hayden, H. (1994). The relation of sociocultural factors to eating attitudes and behaviors among middle school girls. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 14(4), 471-490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431694014004004>

Two to 5 million girls 12 through 19 years of age read magazines such as *Sassy* and *Young Miss*; ***Seventeen* magazine alone reaches approximately 40% of American girls of those ages** (Teen-Age Research Unlimited [TRU], 1989). **Psychological research has indicated that at least one half of high school girls of various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds from the United States** (Desmond, Price, Gray, & O'Connell, 1986) and Australia (Paxton et al., 1991) **use such magazines as sources of information about weight control**. In fact, in a study by Paxton et al. (1991) of Australian high school students, 41 % of the girls reported that magazines were their single most important source of information on diet and health.

Levine, M. P., & Smolak, L. (1996). Media as a context for the development of disordered eating. In L. Smolak, M. P. Levine, & R. Striegel-Moore (Eds.), *The developmental psychopathology of eating disorders: Implications for research, prevention, and treatment* (pp. 235-257). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

**In a recent study adolescent girls described the "ideal girl" as being 5'7", 100 pounds, size 5, with long blonde hair and blue eyes** (Nichter & Nichter, 1991). **The girls related this ideal to the 'model look' found in teen magazines.** ...

Models Appearing in Magazines. There is ample evidence that the prototypical female model appearing in fashion layouts and advertisements in women's magazines during the past 20 to 25 years is young (under 30 years old), tall, long-legged, and very slender. For example, by our count **the 106 pages of the April 1994 issue of *Teen* magazine contain full-body or face plus part-body images of approximately 95 girls or women. None is the least bit heavy, only two are African Americans, and only two could be construed as having moderately substantial waists or hips**. Silverstein, Peterson, and Perdue (1986) measured the curvaceousness of models appearing in *Ladies Home Journal* and *Vogue* from 1901 through 1980. The curvaceousness of these models declined sharply during the period between 1910 and 1930, rose again between 1930 and 1950, and then declined sharply during the 1960s to a steady low level at the end of that decade and throughout the 1970s.

Cusumano, D. L., & Thompson, J. K. (1997). Body image and body shape ideals in magazines: Exposure, awareness, and internalization. *Sex Roles*, 37(9/10), 701-721. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02936336>

Three aspects of a sociocultural influence on appearance—media exposure, awareness of societal ideals, and internalization of sociocultural messages—were assessed in college females (75% White, 7% Black, 10% Hispanic, 7% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1% other) and related to measures of body image disturbance, eating

dysfunction, and overall self-esteem. **The exposure variable consisted of an empirically derived index of coded body shape images from magazines specifically selected because of their high readership in the tested sample of females.** Awareness of societal pressures regarding appearance and internalization of these messages were measured with the two subscales of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire. **Correlational and regression analyses failed to find any relationship between simple exposure and indices of body image, eating dysfunction, and self-esteem.** Awareness of societal pressures was a significant predictor in regression analyses; however, internalization of social standards of appearance accounted for significant and substantial levels of variance beyond that explained by awareness. The findings are discussed in light of recent cognitive-behavioral and psychoeducational interventions for body image disturbance.

Englis, B. G., Solomon, M. R., & Ashmore, R. D. (1994). Beauty before the eyes of beholders: The cultural encoding of beauty types in magazine advertising and music television. *Journal of Advertising*, 22(2), 49-64.

Although researchers have conceptualized beauty as unidimensional, modern-day cultural definitions of beauty are multidimensional. **This paper focuses on two forms of mass media that play an important role in transmitting information about multiple and diverse cultural ideals of beauty-fashion magazine advertising and music videos shown on music television.** We examine the overall prevalence of different beauty ideals and how these are distributed across specific vehicles within each medium. We also compare the emphasis placed on different ideals of beauty across these two communications media (print vs. television) and formats (advertising vs. entertainment). The implications of the findings for understanding the cultural construction of beauty ideals and for understanding how advertising and other mass media communications contribute to them are discussed. Several extensions of the present research are proposed.

Holmstrom, A. J. (2004). The effects of the media on body image: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 48(2), 196-217. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4802\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4802_3)

NB: Although this article was published a bit after the onset of the Internet, the studies analyzed dated from 1990 to 2002 and focused on media representations in magazines and television.

The media have been criticized for depicting the thin woman as ideal. Some argue these images create unrealistic expectations for young women and cause body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. This study cumulates findings of empirical studies that examine the effects of media on body image. An estimate of overall effect size, trends in the research, and the influence of moderating variables are examined and reported. **Results suggest depictions of thin women may have little to no effect on viewers.** However, images of overweight women seem to have a positive effect on women's body image. Suggestions for future research are offered.

Martin, M. C., & Kennedy, P. F. (1993). Advertising and social comparison: Consequences for female preadolescents and adolescents. *Psychology & Marketing*, 10(6), 513-530. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220100605>

**The authors investigate the impact of [magazine] beauty images on female pre-adolescents and adolescents.** An experiment using 4th, 8th, and 12th graders demonstrated that **exposure to [magazine] advertisements with highly attractive models raises comparison standards for physical attractiveness, but does not affect self-perceptions of physical attractiveness.** The findings also suggest that the tendency of female pre-adolescents and adolescents to compare themselves to models in [magazine] ads increases with age, and this tendency is greater for those with lower self-perceptions of physical attractiveness and/or self-esteem.

Mintz, L. B., & Betz, N. E. (1986). Sex differences in the nature, realism, and correlates of body image. *Sex Roles*, 15(3/4), 185-195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287483>

**Disturbances in body image are not unexpected, particularly for women in a society that emphasizes a cultural ideal of female slenderness.** For example, Garner and Garfinkel (1980) examined data from *Playboy* centerfolds and Miss America pageants over a 20-year period and found a significant trend toward a thinner standard. The ideal for women appears to be small, thin, and childlike, and in fact, adolescent girls often model

women's clothing for popular magazines (Chernin, 1981). At the same time that the cultural ideal for women has been getting thinner, women in general have been getting heavier (Garner & Garfinkel, 1980). **Such societal pressures to be thin are probably at least partly to blame for widespread body-image disturbance and dissatisfaction among underweight and normal weight, as well as overweight, women.** In a study of college women, Miller et al. (1980) found that approximately 70% of the women studied thought of themselves as slightly overweight or overweight, although only 39% could be so classified from their actual weight and skinfold measurements. **Similarly, in a survey of 33,000 women conducted by Glamour magazine ("Feeling Fat in a Thin Society," 1984), 75% of the respondents reported feeling overweight, although only 25% could be classified as overweight on the basis of their actual weight.** And although 30% of the sample were underweight according to the 1984 Metropolitan Life Insurance Tables, 45% of these underweight women viewed themselves as being too fat, and 66070 of them reported wanting to diet because they were too fat.

Malkin, A. R., Wornian, K., & Chrisler, J. C. (1997). Women and weight: Gendered messages on magazine covers. *Sex Roles, 40*(7/8), 647-655. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018848332464>

In this content analysis, the covers of 21 popular women's and men's magazines were examined for gendered messages related to bodily appearance. Magazine covers were divided according to gender of readers and each cover was reviewed using a checklist designed to analyze visual images and text as well as the placement of each on the covers. **Analyses showed that 78% of the covers of the women's magazines contained a message regarding bodily appearance, whereas none of the covers of the men's magazines did so.** Twenty-five percent of the women's magazine covers contained conflicting messages regarding weight loss and dietary habits. **In addition, the positioning of weight-related messages on the covers often implied that losing weight may lead to a better life.** Men's magazines focus on providing entertainment and expanding knowledge, hobbies, and activities; women's magazines continue to focus on improving one's life by changing one's appearance

Posavac, H. D., Posavac, S. S., & Posavac, E. J. (1998). Exposure to media images of female attractiveness and concern with body weight among young women. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 38*(3-4), 187-201. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018729015490>

**Despite the popular belief that the thin standard of female attractiveness currently presented in the media is a primary contributor to the high level of concern with body weight among women, experimental studies have not shown that exposure to media images increases women's weight concern.** Three experiments are reported demonstrating that exposure to media images does often result in increased weight concern among women, but that **body dissatisfaction, a stable personality characteristic, is a moderator of vulnerability to this effect.** Although most women reported higher weight concern when exposed to media vs. neutral images, **women with low initial body dissatisfaction did not.** In addition, this research suggests that negative effects on weight concern may result from even passive exposure to media images, but that exposure to realistic attractiveness is less likely to cause increased weight concern.

Field, A. E., Cheung, L., Wolf, A. M., Herzog, D. B., Gortmaker, S. L., & Colditz, G. A. (1999). Exposure to the mass media and weight concerns among girls. *Pediatrics, 103* (3): e36. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.103.3.e36>

Objective. To assess the influence of the media on girls' weight concerns, weight control/loss behaviors, and perceptions of body weight and shape.

Design. Cross-sectional survey completed in school. **The questionnaire assessed body weight, dissatisfaction with body weight and shape, exposure to fashion magazines,** the impact of media on feelings about weight and shape, attributes of and preferences for body types, and whether subjects had gone on a diet to lose weight or initiated exercise because of an article in a magazine.

Setting. Mandatory physical education class in public elementary, junior high, and high schools.

Participants. Subjects included 548 5th- through 12th-grade girls in a working-class suburb in the north-eastern United States.

Outcome Measures. **Perceived influence of fashion magazines on body dissatisfaction, idea of the perfect body shape, dieting to lose weight, and initiating an exercise program.**

Results. **Pictures in magazines had a strong impact on girls' perceptions of their weight and shape.** Of the girls, **69% reported that magazine pictures influence their idea of the perfect body shape,** and 47%

reported wanting to lose weight because of magazine pictures. There was a linear association between the **frequency of reading women's magazines and the prevalence of having dieted to lose weight because of a magazine article, initiating an exercise program because of a magazine article, wanting to lose weight because of pictures in magazines, and feeling that pictures in magazines influence their idea of the perfect body shape.**

Turner, S. L., Hamilton, H., Jacobs, M., Angood, L. M., & Dwyer, D. H. (1997). The influence of fashion magazines on the body image satisfaction of college women: An exploratory analysis. *Adolescence*, 32(127), 603-614.

This study examined the impact of exposure to fashion magazines on women's body image satisfaction. Participants were 39 undergraduate women, randomly assigned to two experimental conditions: half viewed fashion magazines prior to completing a body image satisfaction survey, and the remaining half, news magazines. Mean height and weight did not differ for the two groups. **As hypothesized, women who viewed fashion magazines preferred to weigh less, were less satisfied with their bodies, were more frustrated about their weight, were more preoccupied with the desire to be thin, and were more afraid of getting fat than were their peers who viewed news magazines.**