

**“This is definitely a wake-up call for our generation”: A Discussion on Self-Esteem
and Body Image in Sororities**

by

Joni Tyson Richards

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Auburn, Alabama
May 9, 2011

Key Words: self-esteem, body image, media, focus groups,
familial issues, peer pressure

Copyright 2011 by Joni Tyson Richards

Approved by

Jennifer Wood Adams, Chair, Associate Professor of Communication and Journalism
Brigitta R. Brunner, Associate Professor of Communication and Journalism
Mary Helen Brown, Associate Professor of Communication and Journalism

Abstract

This study was conducted using a thematic analysis of four focus groups. The goal of this study was to better understand the issues of self-esteem and body image from the perspective of sorority women and determine the factors underlying these constructs. Brief videos from the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty were shown to focus groups, and discussions followed. The results emerging from a thematic analysis of these discussions demonstrate that the sorority women perceive the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty to be effective in supporting a positive self-esteem and body image. However, the results also illustrate that the subjects believe that women in the mainstream media are not an accurate depiction of what women really look like. Also, the focus group members indicate that parents and peers play a large role in creating norms on body esteem. This factor may contribute to positive or negative self-esteem and body image. Implications for these and other results in this study are discussed, and future directions in these areas are presented.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Review of Literature.....	5
Cultivation Theory.....	6
Self-Esteem and Body Image: “Family Communications and the Media”.....	10
Self-Esteem and Body Image: “The Thin Ideal and the Media.....	14
The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty The Real Truth about Beauty: A Global Report.....	19
Research Questions.....	22
Methodology.....	24
Focus Groups.....	24
Sample.....	25
Design.....	26
Recruitment: Consent Procedures.....	26
Recruitment.....	27
Focus Group Process.....	27
The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty.....	28
Interview Guide.....	30
Thematic Analysis.....	31

Research Question Results.....	34
Implications and Conclusion.....	46
Implications.....	46
Limitations.....	49
Future Directions.....	51
Conclusion.....	52
References.....	56
Appendix/Interview Guide.....	65

INTRODUCTION

Sundeen, Stuart, Rankin, and Cohen (1981) define body image as “the sum of the conscious and unconscious attitudes the individual has toward his/her body. It includes present and past perceptions, as well as feelings about size, function, appearance, and potential” (p. 51). Body image is a dynamic process and is created by a person’s relationships with him/herself and society. Body image is built on socially constructed standards that are reinforced by the media and other social concepts (Souto & Garcia, 2002). Price (1990) posits that body image is maintained through three factors which include body appearance, body beliefs, and body reality. Body image is established by cultural standards and norms formed by humans in their childhood.

Guindon (2002) defines self-esteem as “an overall estimate of general self-worth; a level of self-acceptance or respect for oneself; a trait or tendency relatively stable and enduring, composed of all subordinate traits and characteristics within the self” (p. 207). According to Rosenberg (1979), reactions, opinions and criticisms from significant others are significant factors of self-esteem, and an individual’s sense of self-esteem is based “not solely on an assessment of his constituent qualities but on an assessment of the qualities that count” (p. 18).

According to a program called Reflections: Body Image Program, developed by the Delta Delta Delta college social sorority, body image describes the mental image that we as humans have formed that affects how we see our physical self (<http://www.bodyimageprogram.org/issue/>). Self-esteem, generally speaking, is a feeling

of confidence and well-being of one's self. Defining what a positive body image in our present culture is overwhelmingly correlated to body weight, "thin ideal" (<http://www.bodyimageprogram.org/issue/>). The program also suggests that women everywhere are constantly barraged with images in the media of what the ideal body should be: tall, thin, and beautiful. Retailers, runway models, television commercials, and magazine articles promote this "ideal body type."

The theme of body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in women has been confirmed in numerous studies across the country (Hopkins & Lee, 2008). Derenne & Beresin (2006) note that women are overwhelmed with the existing media culture and find it difficult to challenge the ideal female form. For some women, the images may have little or no effect. But for others, research has found that the role of mass media in endorsing the thin ideal has resulted in many women's tendencies to internalize the pressure that society applies on them to be thin, thus leading to eating disorders (Harrison, 2000).

The HealthyPlace website contends that an important factor in college-aged women's decisions to use decidedly unhealthy and potentially life-threatening methods to control and manage their weight is their preoccupation with being thin (<http://www.healthyplace.com/eating-disorders/main/eating-disorders-in-college-women-overview>). Being thin, in our society, is perceived necessary in order to be attractive. Methods to do so include excessive exercise, fasting, the eating and purging of food, laxative abuse, and skipping meals. Moreover, this phenomenon often begins early in life (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

A national report commissioned in June 2008 by the Dove® Self-Esteem Fund (Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty) points out that a self-esteem crisis associated with appearance encompasses every phase of an American girl's life. The study revealed that seven out of 10 girls consider themselves as not good enough or not measuring up to society's standards. Further, girls' general feelings about their own attractiveness or beauty considerably influenced their level of self-esteem (<http://www.dove.us>).

Body image and self-esteem among young women have been the subject of an increasing number of studies which focus on the detrimental effect that the media may have on young women. For example, the use of very thin models in media advertising has been shown to have an unfavorable effect on women's self esteem and body image (British Medical Association, 2000). The thin ideal is communicated through the over-representation of thin female models in television and magazines. The representation of a woman's ideal body weight has decreased in the last four decades. The current average model is now more than 20 percent underweight (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004).

More specifically, college campuses and in particular, social sororities, may provide many opportunities for analysis in the area of communication and the study of media advertising and self-esteem as it relates to body image. In our media saturated society, young women are bombarded by images which promote a potentially damaging standard of slimness for women.

This study will use Gerbner's cultivation theory as a framework to examine the inherent connection between body image and the effects that media exposure has upon it in our society. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli (1994) contend that people who watch a lot of television and media images actually believe that television life is real – the

images in fact are a reality. They posit that because desirable and “normal” women in the media are represented as being thin and attractive, women who view these media images hold these beliefs as social reality.

This study examines the topic of self-esteem as it relates to body image through discussions with college-age sorority women in a series of focus groups. These focus groups were designed to allow free and open communication about issues of self-esteem and body image. The Dove® Campaign for Beauty television commercials were used as a tool to begin the focus group discussions. The Dove® Campaign stresses the ideal of beauty in all women without regard to their shape or size.

This thesis will begin by reviewing the literature pertaining to the topic. This review will include the theoretical foundation of a communication theory. Research questions that direct the study will then be presented. The methodology used to conduct the study will follow. The results will then be presented and evaluated to discuss the findings of the study. To conclude this study, the researcher will provide conclusions and offer suggestions for further research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Body image is based on a person's assessment and experiences pertaining to her or his own physical features. Three characteristics of body image exist: (a) one's capability to distinguish size, weight, and shape, or the physiological component; (b) the mental picture that one has in his or her mind of her or his own body, also known as the conceptual image; (c) the emotional aspect, which includes what one feels about her or his size, shape, and weight (Brouwers, 1990).

Self-esteem, simply defined, is concentrated on feelings of individual worth and the degree of satisfaction regarding one's self. There are three elements of self-esteem. First, the classification of the self in descriptive terms is called the cognitive component. The second is the emotional component or the degree of high or low self-esteem. The third is a normative component that is associated with some ideal standard (Mecca, Smelser & Vasconcello, 1989).

The self-evaluation of one's appearance or body is called body esteem. Body esteem incorporates three factors: (a) satisfaction with one's weight, (b) one's general opinions about his or her appearance, and (c) judgments ascribed to others about one's appearance and body (Mendelson, White & Mendelson, 1996-1997).

These constructs have been the focus of many studies as a way to understand the overwhelming number of college women who have high degrees of body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Boundy, 2008). The obstacles that prevent women from having positive or high levels of self-esteem, body image, and body esteem included images in the media

and reinforcement of negative communication from family and their peers (Hopkins & Lee, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions related to self-esteem and body image among sorority women. This study may hold insights that could be beneficial to researchers who are interested in the self-esteem issues faced by female college students. This study is informed by research on body image and self-esteem as it relates to media images and the impact they have on women, disordered eating, and body distortion among college students. Cultivation theory, a sociopsychological communication theory, will be used to direct our understanding of media and its effect on body image and self-esteem. . This theory focuses on the impact that television has on our culture over time. Also, previous literature will be examined to find the correlation between self-esteem, body image, family and sorority communication, and the “thin ideal and the media.” The literature review will conclude with the research questions to be examined.

Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner’s cultivation theory began in the 1960s as a method of studying mass communication using cultivation analysis. Cultivation analysis looks at the role that television viewing has on the public’s perception of social reality. Communication researchers develop notions about what the television viewing audience would perceive as true social reality if everything the audience believes to be true is based on dominant representations on television. Gerbner and associates went so far as to argue that television is “*the* primary source of socialization and everyday information of an

otherwise heterogeneous population” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986, p. 18).

Cultivation theory was one of the three most-cited theories from 1956 to 2000 (Bryant & Miron, 2004). The research examined the cultivation of attitudes of many issues, including attitudes toward family, work, sexuality, minorities, and self-image and body image. For instance, Ward (2002) conducted a study of 259 college undergraduates and found those students who frequently watched daytime soap operas and primetime dramas and comedies more readily accepted the usual sexual stereotypes which included females as sexual objects (specifically those who were young, thin, and attractive).

Milkie (1999) conducted extensive interviews with 60 young women and hypothesized that essentially three theoretical systems are the basis of the effect that television has on self-esteem and body image discontentment. The first system is the third-person effect, which is the tendency for people to believe that others are much more affected by the media than they are. People are likely to take into account what effects that the media has on the people who make up their social network. Human beings will then be influenced by their assessment of how others perceive the world around them. The second system involves the ever-present media images that extol thinness which causes young women to compare themselves with these unattainable media ideals. Young people are continually comparing themselves to the thin ideal images in the media. Thirdly, young women believe that messages in the media mirror what society values and they are being judged by their peers according to how similar they are to those media representations. The media is all-important in terms of what the women in Milkie’s study describe as an overwhelming desire to *be* those images.

Thus, television has had an impact on body image of young women. Hendriks (2002) discusses this impact and points out women who watch television programs that emphasize thin body images will be affected more when they perceive the content to be realistic in nature. Furthermore, she suggests that because television presents attractive, thin women as successful, desirable and “normal,” young women who watch a lot of television programming are more likely to believe that most women’s bodies are consistent to the images shown on television. Cultivation theory predicts who will be affected by television and the method in which people accept the societal norms which are played out on television every day. Hendriks also points out that television executives, in order to make as much money as they possibly can, use models with “thin, straight, child-like bodies” (p. 118). As a result, some young women believe these bodies are desirable and will inevitably strive to conform to those standards.

The effect of cultivation theory on young women and cosmetic surgery makeover programs was the focus of a study by Nabi (2009). These programs have been criticized for suggesting that cosmetic surgical procedures are of low risk to the patient and inherently a universal and acceptable way of improving one’s body, thus creating a satisfying life. A study of 120 undergraduates at UC-Santa Barbara revealed that participants who admitted higher dissatisfaction with their bodies compared themselves with the program’s participants. This comparison in turn motivated them to want some of the procedures, which Nabi likens to social modeling. The women see the positive results from these cosmetic procedures and believe they can have the same results.

Nabi (2009) applies cultivation theory in describing four pathways that these effects take: action potential, information about the external world, social interaction,

and accessibility. *Action potential* is related to the cognitive components involved in making the actual decision to undergo cosmetic surgery such as emotional arousal and feelings of self-worth. *Information about the external world* deals with issues such as how much information about the actual costs versus benefits can be used in the decision-making process. *Social interaction* takes into account matters of social norms, identification, and social similarity in society. Finally, *accessibility* describes how much the audience already knows about the subject of cosmetic surgery and what it believes to be true with respect to the amount of exposure that the media makes available.

A study conducted by Gonzales-Lavin and Smolak (1995) found that young women who watched more than eight hours of television a week experienced more body image issues than those who watched less television. The content of the television programs, specifically soap operas, MTV, or Vh1, had more effect on body dissatisfaction. Harrison and Hefner (2006) conducted research which demonstrated that adolescent girls who merely watched television had an increased need to have a slim figure.

A point to consider is whether cultivation theory will still be as important in the age of Hulu, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. According to Nielsen, in November 2009, an all-time high was reached by television viewers (Nielsen Wire, 2009). Bohn and Short (2009) argue that television is still the dominant form of media used by consumers and new websites such as Hulu enable us to conveniently watch television shows where and when we want to watch. This thesis now looks at research on self-esteem and body image, familial communication and the media.

Self Esteem and Body Image: “Familial Communication and the Media”

Body image and self-esteem issues have also been studied from a familial standpoint. A study guided by Sira and White (2010) looked at the role of mother/daughter communication in terms of body image and self-esteem in relation to body weight and variables such as parental control or parental care were examined. They posit that the family is the principal social foundation influencing young people growing up and suggest that anxiety over body issues such as obesity or excessive weight control originate within the family framework. Parents have been observed pressuring their children to be thin or lose weight. Sira and White’s study used the Parental Bonding Instrument, a questionnaire designed to measure each participant’s perception of her mother. The results were clear: mothers have a great deal of control over the amount of self-esteem as it relates to body image in their daughters. The results demonstrated that extreme maternal control is a major contributing factor to young women’s negative body image, which could lead to eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa.

Nathanson and Botta (2003) studied the effects of television on young college students’ body image from the role of parental mediation. The focus was primarily to look at the effectiveness of two types of television content. The first is *mediation of central content*, the messages pertaining to the plot, actions and behaviors of the actors on the program. They also looked at *mediation of incidental content*, messages about the “thinness-depicting images.” When parents discussed the plot of the television program in generalized terms, little to no negative effects of perceived body image dissatisfaction were observed. However, in terms of incidental content, they found that parents who made comments about a character’s appearance, such as positive ones about thin,

attractive actresses, served to encourage body dissatisfaction among their adolescent daughters, even after several years (Nathanson & Botta, 2003).

Also, Green and Pritchard (2003) conducted a study which found that pressure from family members regarding weight issues was a significant factor to low body image satisfaction in young women. Krcmar, Giles, and Helme (2008) examined the role that peers and families have on young women's body esteem. They discuss that extremely thin norms for female thinness play a large role in eating disorders and body dissatisfaction. College women were more likely to engage in dangerous dieting techniques and disordered eating when they perceived that they did not fit the 'thin ideal' standards set by peers and family members.

Sheldon (2010) examined how familial pressure, peers, and the media play a role in the level of perfectionism exhibited in college students which may have an effect on body esteem. Sheldon's results demonstrated that family and friends are the most significant predictor of low self-esteem and body image. They contend that peer pressure tends to be the salient force on perfectionism and family members (mainly mothers) have the larger authority or control on weight concerns. Adolescents and women tend to talk about weight issues with each other. Perfectionism is often equated with thinness. According to Sheldon, "Women view personal concerns as appropriate topics of conversation. Because connection is important, women tend to talk about people – what they think and what they feel" (p. 292.)

College students participated in a study to explore the relationship that the media, communication and parental influence have on weight issues and body satisfaction (Fritz & Carnett, 2007). This study found that the father had the most impact on women's self-

esteem in terms of body satisfaction. A father's attitude is also a strong indicator of how much the mother criticizes her daughter as related to her appearance and weight.

However, in terms of the actual pressure to be thin, the media has the most profound effect on the influence of dieting among these college students. The media is a constant reminder that puts forward the notion that in order to be accepted and admired, one must be thin and beautiful.

Along these lines, a social sorority may act as a family for students attending a college or university. In many ways, a social sorority's informal structure resembles a family structure. When a student pledges the sorority, she becomes a "little sister" with a "big sister" designated to foster and socialize her. As such, the "sisterhood" may act as a surrogate family to many women. Members spend a great deal of time together whether it's living on the same hall in the dormitory or being roommates, taking classes with one another, or socializing together.

This observation is related to the present research which will involve sorority women. Martha Irvine, AP National Writer, writes about the fixation that young college women have on outward appearance based on the obsession with young celebrities and the media. In the Associated Press Newswire, she describes an incident involving a sorority at a Midwestern university. This particular sorority had a reputation of stressing intelligence over beauty and their chapter had become the source of unkind nicknames such as the "dog house." Sorority leaders took radical measures that included expelling twenty-three members, alleging that those women's looks and weight did not fit the sorority's image. One member who left the sorority in protest of this action accredited

her level of self-esteem as her justification for leaving, saying that she just could not be part of “the new racism.” (Irvine, 2007).

Another association between low self-esteem and body image is the emerging evidence of depression and eating disorders. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) point out that young women in college are particularly vulnerable to social pressure related to physical appearance, citing that this period of development is crucial for the structure of positive self-esteem.

According to Allison and Park (2004), extreme weight-loss behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, dieting, and excessive exercise have continued to increase in recent years and focus has increasingly been placed on particular aspects of the college experience that may facilitate or promote these behaviors. They write, “One factor particularly salient to the college environment is the emphasis on joining sororities and fraternities for socialization, leadership opportunities, and philanthropy” (p. 354).

They also point out that membership in a sorority can develop into an essential part of these women’s identities and used this premise to conduct a longitudinal study of eating disorders among sorority and non-sorority women. Although they did not find a disproportional difference in levels of disordered eating, they found that those persons not in sororities tended to decrease their attention to dieting over the period of time in the study whereas the sorority women did not.

Schulken, Pinciario, Sawyer, Jensen, and Hoban (1997), found that sorority women reported intense fears of becoming fat. They contend that when sorority members imitated each other’s disordered eating behaviors, they came to believe these behaviors were normal.

Self-Esteem and Body Image: “The Thin Ideal and the Media”

Most of the research which will be presented posits that high self-esteem goes hand-in-hand with satisfactory body image. Satisfactory body image can be correlated with beauty and what was referred to earlier: the “thin ideal.” According to Jones and Buckingham (2005), research proposes that effects of beauty and/or slenderness comparisons on beauty image are judged by the degree to which women internalize norms that are prescribed by society and the degree to which women have concerns about weight and body image issues. They further suggest that a large number of women struggle to obtain what they consider to be the ultimate body.

Interestingly, according to the National Center for Health Statistics (1997), the average woman in the United States is 5’3 ³/₄” tall and weighs 152 pounds, whereas the female body that is idealized as suitable is 5’7” tall and weighs 110 pounds, which indicates that these social comparisons are a significant determinant to body image. Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) argue that body image is a multifarious concept that includes attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts basically face-to-face with one’s own body ideal, which is primarily associated with one’s own physical appearance and what others think of it. Research devoted to body image and self-esteem has recently expanded to include the construct of body image *evaluation/affect* and body image *investment*. Evaluation/affect refers to one’s contentment or disappointment with her/his appearance, including correlated beliefs and emotions. Investment refers to what one is feeling based on behavioral patterns of one’s appearance and what it means to her/his sense of self-

worth. Assessments have been developed, such as the Body Image Quality of Life Inventory to enumerate the effects of body image on a person's quality of life and self-esteem.

Because one of the major focuses of the campaign is to educate women that the media are not what is real in our society, a study by Bissell (2004) sought to discover the extent in which women and adolescents realize that images in many women's fashion magazines are digitally created and enhanced by a computer. Bissell's study had two objectives: First, to examine the difference between women's attitudes of those who had knowledge that the images were manipulated and those who did not know of the manipulation. Secondly, they studied the differences between the women's attitudes when they viewed a fashion model as opposed to a sports model. The results of the first examination were that women who knew the model had been enhanced and manipulated had considerably less desire to look like that model and expressed a more positive personal body image. In terms of viewing the athletic model (without digital manipulation), the data in this study proposed that the respondents did not find as many inconsistencies between themselves and the athletic model, and were less intimidated by the model's actual body type, which was muscular in nature (Bissell 2004).

Payton (2010) conducted a study which sought to understand the perception college students have of the mass media's representation of the idealistic adult female. Payton's study asked the question: Are college females more influenced by the images in the mainstream media or by comparison to their peers? Would the media images have a negative effect on the way the women viewed their own bodies? The study revealed that social comparison, for instance, in the form of peer pressure, plays a larger role in

creating negative influences than the media. In our culture, there is considerable influence placed on a woman's size, weight, and appearance. Results gathered from the current study revealed that the women were aware of the intense pressure that the media places on women because of the stereotypical ways that women are portrayed. Peer pressure in regards to looks (weight and appearance) seemed to be more of an issue when the women were in high school than the present time. Some of the junior and senior class women expressed anxiety their freshman year because of the desire to "fit in" with other dorm mates and classmates.

A study authored by Hopkins and Lee (2008) studied the link between self-esteem and body image using focus groups. The research questions for their study included three areas: behaviors, attitudes and beliefs, and knowledge. Behaviors include the maintenance of weight which included engaging in physical activity and eating a healthy diet. Attitudes and beliefs refer to the prevailing attitudes that college students possess concerning a healthy lifestyle while in college. Knowledge signifies the amount of information available to the women concerning healthy eating and exercise standards of living. The results of the focus group study yielded a myriad of responses from the participants. The students indulged in potentially harmful approaches to weight loss and conveyed negative feelings about their body. They felt that the media emphasize an unachievable body ideal. A theme discussed in this study included the participants' credence that maintaining a healthy body image involves more than dieting. They included the necessity for a healthy diet, getting the necessary sleep, and having an exercise program are essential for wellness. Another major argument is that money and

time are obstacles for healthy daily routines. The fear of gaining weight was a major concern for the women and the ideal appearance was to be thin and beautiful.

Cash, Jakatdar, and Williams (2004) conducted a study of men and women college students using the Body Image Quality of Life Inventory and discovered that men had a significantly higher body image than women. In addition to this finding, the research team found that a higher body image in terms of quality of life can be related to more optimism among women when there is social encouragement, which ultimately would lead to less eating disturbances among these women.

According to Schooler, Ward, Merriweather, and Caruthers (2004), college females use the media as a basis of overall positive body image. The images that women see of women on television who they deem to be perfect are those who are extremely thin, blond, and tall. Our culture places a considerable emphasis on women's height, weight, body composition, and general appearance. Women who are more affluent can afford to "buy" the perfect body, making the standard of what is considered real beauty unattainable to the average woman. College women are no exception to this rule.

Derenne and Beresin (2006) aptly point out that ordinarily women who are extremely thin are not going to have large breasts, but the development of the Barbie doll, whose body measurements are 39-18-33, has caused girls to have unrealistic expectations of what *their* body should look like.

In a study by Grabe, Hyde and Ward (2008), 123 women participated to explore how the media directly affects body image and self-esteem. They were asked how they felt they looked in comparison to the images shown of fashion models and well-known television personalities. They found that the subjects internalized the idealized thin body

shape. Findings offer support for the idea that repeated exposure to the mass media portraying the ideal body as thin is associated with low self-esteem and body image.

Groesz, Levine and Murnen (2001) assert that the media, including advertisers, are the “loudest and most aggressive purveyors” of body image ideals, using them to promote and sell their products to target audiences (p. 2). Advertising and the mass media are responsible for body dissatisfaction among females because of the comparison made with irrational body ideals which are constantly advertised in television and magazines. Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) contend that the industry itself is disinclined to change even though there has been widespread criticism of the utilization of pencil-thin models in advertising and market research, citing that “the argument against using larger models is that ‘thinness’ sells, whereas ‘fatness’ does not” (p. 105).

In relation to sports advertising and body image, Smith, Wright, Ross and Warmington (2006) studied 224 women aged 18-24 to explore the effects that sports advertising has on body image and anxiety in those who exercise as well as those who do not. The women were divided into four groups: (a) those who exercised regularly who were exposed to advertising using models; (b) those who didn't exercise regularly who were exposed to advertising using models; (c) those who exercised regularly who were exposed to advertising using products only; and (d), those who didn't exercise regularly who were exposed to advertising using products only. In this pre-test/post-test experiment, the Social Anxiety Scale (Martin, Rejesti, Leary, McAuley & Bane, 1997), the Reasons for Exercise Inventory (Silberstein, Striegel, Timbo & Rodin, 1988), and the Attitude Toward Sports Advertising Scale (Sabiston & Monroe, 2001) were used. These tests were administered and the participants were then shown either the model

advertisements or the product advertisement. They were given five minutes and asked to take the questionnaires again. The results showed that the use of the toned, very physically fit models had a negative effect on the participants' perceived body image.

This result supported the findings by Stice, Schupak-Newburg, Shaw and Stein (1994) that the more our culture is exposed to television and other forms of media, the higher the levels of low body satisfaction and self-esteem. Further, the changes in the participants' perceptions of body image took place quickly after being exposed to the models in the advertisements. Another observation was that those who exercised more were much more negatively affected by the models than the ones who were less active.

The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty

“THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT BEAUTY: A GLOBAL REPORT”

The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty was introduced in 2004 as a worldwide campaign devoted to celebrate the natural beauty *all* women possess and to inspire all women to be comfortable with themselves. It began with a global study commissioned by Dove®, a Unilever Beauty Brand, to explore the relationship among women, well-being and beauty. The company's concern was that popular culture, which portrays a standard of female beauty that they felt was not achievable or authentic, was possibly a channel preventing women from acknowledging and enjoying their own beauty. They also recognized that in our society female attractiveness is greatly valued, so much so that there could be far-reaching ramifications in women's self-esteem, self-worth, and general well-being (<http://www.dove.us/>).

“THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT BEAUTY: A GLOBAL REPORT”: Findings of the Global Study on Women, Beauty and Well-Being, was lead by Dr. Nancy Etcoff of

Harvard University, Dr. Susie Orbach of the London School of Economics, and Dr. Jennifer Scott and Heidi D'Agostino of the media analysis and marketing research group StrategyOne. The study included more than 3000 women, ages 18 to 64, in 10 countries and sought to discover essentially what beauty means to women (www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper__finalpdf) . According to Sylvia Lagnado, Global Brand Director, Dove®, “Dove wanted to understand how women define beauty, how satisfied they are with their beauty, how they feel about female beauty’s portrayal in society, and how beauty affects their well-being” (p. 3). The methodology used in the study was a series of telephone interviews lasting 20-25 minutes. The first set of questions explored women’s relationships with their own beauty to find out how comfortable they were with the word “beautiful.” They found that women were very uncomfortable with associating themselves with the word. In fact, only 2% of the women interviewed would even consider themselves beautiful, but only at certain times. They also found in this section of the study that only 13% of the respondents were satisfied with their beauty. The majority of the women were “only satisfied” with their body and women frequently felt less attractive than their peers.

The second part of the study delved into popular culture and the perceptions women had on beauty and the media and popular culture. Almost half of the women agreed that the more beautiful you are, the more opportunities you have in life. More than half also asserted that women are expected to enhance their appearance in order to become more attractive in society. Seventy percent of the women claimed that “the media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty that most women can’t ever achieve” (p. 27).

The study further examined exactly what makes women feel beautiful and found that women rely on internal or personal experiences. They contend that having a satisfying romantic relationship, taking proper care of one's self, and finding something that interests them go hand in hand with positive self-esteem and body image.

Cosmetic surgery and the role of personal grooming were the subjects of the next section of the study. Almost four in 10 women, particularly in the United States, have seriously considered plastic surgery. Younger women reported using deodorant as the most important grooming item, followed by makeup and perfume. Older women tended to use more hair coloring products

[\(\[http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_final.pdf\]\(http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_final.pdf\)\)](http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_final.pdf).

The last two sections of the study focused on what women consider is the real truth and beauty, and finally, what role the mass media should play in communicating the real picture of beauty. Almost two-thirds of the women view beauty as who they are as a person and being attractive physically is strictly about external personal appearance. The researchers point out, however, that women do not reject the notion of physical beauty, but rather that women see “beauty” as a complex construct that is much more multifaceted than what is understood by popular culture. The final component of the study involved an assessment of mass media and its role in communicating the “real beauty” ideal. The respondents overwhelmingly expressed the desire for two changes: the media should portray beauty as more than just physical attractiveness, and it should do a much better job of representing women in advertising and the media using women of various ages, shapes, weights, and sizes with the emphasis being on the everyday women

[\(\[http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_final.pdf\]\(http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_final.pdf\)\)](http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_final.pdf).

This literature review began with studies involving cultivation theory, which helps us understand media and its effect on body image and self-esteem. The research examined the effects that the media has on people in terms of self-esteem and body image. It was found that television has an influence on body image of women. The “thin ideal” is defined as the media’s representation of what women should look like. The media sets the standards and women struggle to obtain what they consider to be the ultimate body. The review also examined self-esteem and body image from a familial perspective. It was found that communication, especially between mothers and daughters, is a key factor guiding the correlation between self-esteem and body image. Studies involving college sororities were also used to examine the association between the women’s self-evaluation of their bodies and positive self-esteem. Finally, the global study, which launched the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty, was examined. This study explored the relationship between popular culture and women’s high levels of body dissatisfaction.

Based on the preceding review of the literature pertaining to self-esteem and body issue, the following research questions have been developed and tested.

Research Questions

- RQ1: How do sorority women describe the body images being shown by the mainstream media?
- RQ2: How do sorority women explain the relationship between self-esteem and body image?
- RQ3: How effective do sorority women believe the images/messages of the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty are as a tool for promoting a positive

sense of self-esteem for college sorority women?

RQ 4: How do sorority women perceive family and peers have influenced them in terms of self-esteem and body image?

RQ 5: How does sorority life shape self-esteem and body image?

METHODOLOGY

Focus Groups

The researcher used focus groups in this study to gather the data necessary for this study. A focus group is a guided conversation with a reliance on interaction within a group of people. Morgan (1996) defines focus groups as “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (p. 145). Focus groups are group interactions that produce data with the researcher’s interest providing the focus. According to Lindloff and Taylor (2002), “Fundamentally, qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations” (p. 18). Qualitative researchers strive to demonstrate and establish credible data. The interpretation of qualitative research conveys the researcher’s analysis that she/he finds credible, insightful, and constructive. In terms of validity and quality of interpretations of qualitative research, a study is valid when the researcher’s results are accurately described in the observation and the results can be used in a wide range of interpretations.

The goal of focus group research is to acquire insight and knowledge into the participants’ beliefs and their perceptions in relation to the subject at hand (Ansay, Perkins & Nelson, 2004). An advantage to using focus groups as the research method is the face-to-face interaction among the members of the group. A disadvantage is the results cannot be generalized due to low external validity

This thesis used a thematic analysis to explore the overarching themes that were prevalent in the focus group discussions among the participants. This section will include a definition and discussion of thematic analysis. In addition to this, an interview guide used in the focus groups and the entire focus group procedure which includes sampling and recruiting procedures will be outlined.

Focus Group Procedures

Sample:

The population identified for this thesis consists of four of the 18 social sororities at a Southeastern university. Cole and McCroskey (2003) note the use of college students in studies is easier because subjects are located in one specific area and data collection is simpler. However, the researcher chose this population for a different reason.

An unnamed junior in a Southern university wrote, “You have a group of women there to support and love you, cheering you on at anything you do or be your shoulder to cry on.” (<http://thesororitylife.com/The-Real-Deal/index.aspx>). The researcher believed that this camaraderie would be important from a communication standpoint. The researcher believed that an open air of communication would occur among the women, given their close relationships and the amount of time spent with each other. Many of the members live in the same building and on the sorority hall which may lead to an increased bond in terms of trust and communicative interaction and promote a familial relationship. Additionally, the women are also involved in many on-campus activities which also places them in close proximity with one another in these environments.

Morgan (1997) contends that “the safest advice is to determine a target number of focus groups in the planning stage but to have a flexible alternative available if more groups are needed” (p. 45). The target goal was to have nine groups planned with six to 10 participants in each group.

The sample consisted of volunteers from social sororities. Ages of subjects ranged from 19 to 22. All volunteers were female and Caucasian.

Design:

Recruitment – Consent Procedures:

The researcher attained approval for this study from three different sources. The first plan of action was to get authorization using the Research Protocol Review Form from the university’s Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB). This process involved an expedited review and included a project overview, purpose statement, role of key personnel, location of research, participant project design, and participant population chosen for the study. An interview guide and the proposed informed consent letter were provided.

The researcher’s next step in the procedure involved obtaining approval from the National Panhellenic Conference Research Committee (NPCRC), which oversees all research project proposals and submittals of studies of the sorority population on college campuses in the United States. The memorandum submitted for review involved the submission and several criteria and requirements. These requirements included a research proposal, the purpose and goals of the research, and benefits to the stakeholders. The methodology and limitations to the study and predicted benefits of the research were provided. Verification of the internal review board from the researcher’s university and

informed consent document was attached to the memorandum. The final requirements included all instruments and scripts to be used and compensation details.

The NPCRC, after reviewing and approving the memorandum, sent authorization to the Panhellenic director of the university and the advisors of the four sororities chosen by the researcher. The four sororities then had to gain approval from their national board in each sorority. This completion of the approval process allowed the researcher to move forward.

Recruitment of Participants

The presidents of the four sororities were contacted by e-mail. The researcher sent the contact information and asked that the individual participants contact the researcher by e-mail with any interest to participate in the study. The participants were told it would be a series of focus groups to be held in the conference room in the researcher's department. They were also told that they would not be compensated for their participation. Participants then e-mailed the researcher with available times, and the focus groups were set up accordingly. One of the sororities never returned any e-mails or phone calls to the advisor, so the researcher was not able to use any of the women from that sorority in the study.

Focus Group Process:

The moderator of the focus groups (who was also the researcher) used a conference room with ample lighting and seating with a large screen television to show the video presentations. The seating arrangement was circular to ensure eye contact with all those participating. The moderator positioned herself among the participants. The standard consent form was distributed and thoroughly explained to the 26 participants.

The participants were also given information concerning the availability of university counseling that would be readily accessible to them if they should need it.

The focus groups were audio-taped on a tape recorder placed in the middle of the table. Lindloff and Taylor advise building rapport with the participants (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002). Thus, before turning on the tape recorder, the moderator gave the participants some personal information and talked in general about the semester and the football season. The researcher then reminded the participants that they were welcome to leave at any time if they became uncomfortable with the conversation. Confidentiality of all that was said was stressed to the group. They were reminded that the focus groups were to be an enjoyable and interesting experience.

The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty

The focus groups lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. They began with the participants watching the videos and images from the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty website. The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty promotion videos and shots were used. This Web-based campaign features short films involving body image and self-esteem. The goal was to use a series of these films and related material as the introduction to the series of focus groups that were conducted.

In order to generate conversation in the focus groups, the participants were shown excerpts from the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty. The focus of the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty was for women to give considerable thought to many issues associated with beauty, including the pursuit of perfection, the role that media plays in beauty, our culture's characterization of beauty, and the difference between physical beauty and attractiveness.

According to PR Newswire (2004), the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty uses a variety of communication tools to bring about a worldwide discussion about beauty. One of the tools used is a global advertising campaign with ads that feature models that are completely anti-stereotypical. Here are some of the advertisements used in the campaign:

1. “Flawed? Flawless?” which features a model with freckles which challenges the myth that beauty means that everyone should look the same.

2. “Oversized? Outstanding?” which features a plus size model which challenges the myth that size 6 is the optimum dress size.

3. “Gray? Gorgeous?” which features a woman, 45, with gray hair which challenges the myth that women should color their hair if they begin to have gray hair.

4. “Wrinkled? Wonderful?” which features a woman, 95, with wrinkles on her face which challenges the notion that only smooth, flawless skin is beautiful.

5. “Half empty? Half full?” which features a woman with small breasts which challenges the notion that sexiness is measured by the size of a woman’s breasts.

Women were asked to go to the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty website and voice their opinions of the advertisements using discussion boards and beauty research studies. (<http://www.prnewswire.com>).

After watching the videos and images, open-ended questions were asked with an emphasis on each person talking individually but freely on all questions. The researcher reminded the participants that they were welcome to answer any and all questions but were free to abstain from any question(s) they wanted.

Interview Guide:

The researcher posed a series of questions in the focus groups. A complete list of those questions is included in the Appendix. The questions were open-ended in nature and sought to bring out a full discussion and communication of candid and straight-forward dialogue. Each focus group was individual in nature and that allowed the researcher to vary the order of questions asked. As a general rule, however, each focus group began with asking the participants their impressions of the Dove® advertisements just offered. For example, were they credible? If so, what made them credible – what impressions were formed by the campaign? If the models shown in the campaign are an accurate representation of whom the “real woman” of today is, why is that so?

Other questions focused on self-esteem and body issue questions in terms of weight and beauty. What ways do the media put too much emphasis on weight and beauty? What messages do reality shows send in regards to what a woman should look like? What are some shows that promote healthy body image and beauty? What kind of effect do you think they have on our society? Do you think that Hollywood is going “curvier”?

The focus groups also delved into the question of possible personal weight issues and the strategies and coping mechanisms used by college women to counteract negative body image. Questions concerning familial communication and weight issues were posed about the possible positive or negative correlation it had with those relationships. Participants were asked to compare their feelings of self-esteem and body image to those they felt in adolescence.

Potential consideration in terms of weight-management and/or coping strategies among women with low self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction was also discussed. What would the participant recommend to a friend who may be suffering from weight issues? What do you think are some strategies that college women use to gain, maintain or lose weight? What are some strategies that college women use to counteract negative body image?

The conclusion of the focus groups generally brought up communication about how the participants define healthy lifestyle and what their perceptions are in terms of positive sources for health information (for instance diet and exercise) in the media. In what ways does having a healthy lifestyle improve or maintain a positive self-esteem and body image? As a member of a social sorority, what are some ways that a sorority helps promote and build self-esteem and positive body images among its members?

Thematic Analysis:

Grudens-Schuck, Allen, and Larson (2004) contend that in focus groups, conversation among the group members results in data that are essentially “talk.” When analyzing the data, focus groups rely on the words spoken by those participating and are qualitative in nature (Creswell, 1998). The research report uses specific methods to examine patterns in the spoken language. The analysis is not limited to merely recording the participants’ responses to questions that the moderator poses. Focus groups are unique in nature because they allow the participants to reshape and restructure the questions as the participants move the conversation in various ways in a free flow of conversation. This process results in data which may offer new insights not considered in the original interview guide (Flores & Alonso, 1995).

Several qualitative methods can be used to analyze the data from focus groups. These include phenomenological methods, grounded theory, and thematic analysis. Phenomenological methods focus on several interviews with the participants with the goal of sharing experiences in an effort of empowerment (Andonian, 2008). Grounded theory involves a process of feedback loop, where the analysis on one set of data manipulates the interview guide of the next focus group (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher chose the thematic analysis for this study.

Thematic analysis presents an alternative to those just described because the researcher uses the data to understand overlapping themes that become apparent from the open air of communication among the members (Krueger & Casey, 2000). According to Massey (2011), the data transcribed from focus groups can be grouped into three levels: articulated, attributional, and emergent. Articulated data is simply the data that specifically answers the moderator's questions. It is the discussion of the specific questions posed by the moderator. Attributional data is the data elicited by communication that is not necessarily a direct response to a question, but dialogue that analyzes using themes that emerge. An example of this could be the use of "if-then" analogies (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, emergent themes involve themes or notions that are indiscernible before the study begins but emerge in the group dynamic. The strength of emergent data, according to Massey (2011), is the "capacity it has to allow us to come to a greater understanding of those often unspoken social and normative values that underlie our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (p. 26)."

Thematic analysis offered the researcher an opportunity to see the overlapping and prevalent themes which materialized after reading the transcribed data. After the

focus group tapes were transcribed, the researcher and a professor on her thesis committee analyzed the data individually to find overlapping themes and patterns. They then met to discuss each of their findings and found common themes throughout the data. The next section provides the results of the thematic analysis.

RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The qualitative method used for the study was thematic analysis of focus group discussions.

Research Questions Results

RQ1: How do sorority women describe the body images shown by the mainstream media?

Data related to the first research question uncovered two themes: the media is not the real world and the disproportionate size and weight of those in the media industry.

Media is not the real world

A general theme with the participants in all of the focus groups was that the media are not representative of what is authentic. Currently, the average woman, and in this case, college student, does not have the time, energy, or money to spend to work on her appearance. For example:

Respondent 1 (senior): Yeah, and I think that a lot of it is advertisement 'cause models ARE fourteen or fifteen in a lot of the advertisements.

Respondent 2 (senior): And your idols are on television and in advertisement like Proactiv. And the actresses are so unreal looking. They are *all* gorgeous.

Respondent 1 (senior): I don't look like that.. Most girls don't look like that. And, I think ...another thing...you probably learn this the older you get, but there are people who have nothing to do but work on their body or work out for five hours a day. That's their job to look like that. You know, most ordinary people that have a 9 to 5 or are in college and things don't have time to work out for five hours a day.

A shared theme emerged that the media *do* set the standard of what women should look like. Respondent 13 (sophomore) said, “It goes back to what we see on television, like a bunch of us get together and watch *Gossip Girls* and you know how *those* girls look. I know I will never look like that, like that’s a joke, but some of my friends really stress about it.”

The fictionalized drama *Gossip Girls* was mentioned several times during the focus groups. Almost everyone in the groups watched the show. Participants believe that even though it is an unrealistic view of the real world, hidden messages make younger women aspire to become those on the show. The expensive clothing worn, including low-cut shirts and short skirts, is appealing to younger women, they said. Respondent 16 (junior) said, ‘The show does a good job of making it, like, unrealistic, but at the same time these girls who are supposed to be in high school ARE going out and drinking. It makes it look *so cool*...’

“Size Two is the new Size Four...Size Six is the new Size 14...”

Another theme discussed by the participants was the disproportionate size and weight of those in the mainstream, whether on television or on the movie screen. The researcher posed a question that had been covered on a morning news program. The question was ‘Do you think that Hollywood is going curvier?’ That elicited a barrage of comments, such as these:

Respondent 8 (sophomore): I don’t think Hollywood is going curvier at all. Kim, maybe but...

Respondent 5 (junior): Beyonce, maybe?

Respondent 8 (sophomore): No way, I mean, I was watching *Angels on E...* top ten swimsuit bodies... She was one of them...said she was *curvy*...but you’re looking at her...no way...I mean she’s a size 2 or 4?

Respondent 7 (junior): She's a 2. You know she gets up and runs 5 miles a day. She eats, like nothing at all and she was about to pass out!

Respondent 8 (sophomore): Yeah, she's a size 2 and the average woman is, what, size 8 to 10 and is like 5'4". It's ridiculous.

The discussions revealed a level of frustration surrounding the issue of size and weight. Participant 6 (senior) stated that although she thought the modeling industry had moved away from the waif-like types such as Kate Moss, it still presents an unattainable image for the average American women. She said, "You know, they may be more healthy, but it doesn't demonstrate the average woman, or just a healthy American woman."

When asked if the participants could think of any positive role models in the television industry, some of the respondents mentioned the lead actress on the television show Glee. But other participants pointed out that a dramatic weight loss in the actress has been observed between season one and season two. Respondent 12 (sophomore), who admitted to being a "huge fan of hers," said that she read that the actress is now on a strict diet and gets a vitamin B-12 shot daily.

RQ 2: How do sorority women explain the relationship between self-esteem and body image?

Thematic analysis related to the second research question revealed two themes: the difficulty in finding a healthy balance in college and the fear of the "Freshman Fifteen."

It's very hard to find a healthy balance in college

A theme emerged among the participants in the four focus groups was that going to college was a major step in finding one's own method for maintaining a healthy body

image. One respondent identified a “funny cycle” on her campus food plan because she has to spend a certain amount of money per month or waste it, and the food choices offered on campus were not necessarily healthy ones. Other participants believe that because of the healthy food choices that were made earlier in life, for instance with their parents at home, they were able to maintain that sense of a positive routine in terms of diet and exercise. However, several participants expressed that it is difficult to maintain a healthy diet when in college. Here are some of their comments:

Respondent 16 (junior): Healthy diet? It’s just whatever is the quickest, right, especially in the dorm, so I had Chef Boyardee every night. I mean, you can’t help it. You can’t cook anything in the microwave.

Respondent 20 (senior): I had peanut butter and cereal every day.

Respondent 16 (junior): A bowl of Cheerios is like a meal...

Respondent 15 (sophomore): That Earthfare is good but it’s so expensive...

Respondent 18 (junior): ...the car’s not there. I mean, I had to park in completely off-campus last year. It’s too far to walk with a lot of groceries.

Fear of the “Freshman Fifteen”

The participants generally did feel the pressure to look good, especially their freshman year. One participant said she was ‘Terrified, terrified, of the freshman fifteen.’ She lost 10 pounds her freshman year, but then gained it back her sophomore year, and, in her words, distributed the weight differently. Participant 1 (senior) was very candid about her struggle with weight including an eating disorder that began in high school and continued until her junior year. She expressed it this way:

“I think that, within the dorm you’re surrounded by all these girls, some smaller than you, some bigger than you. But it’s a constant comparison. It’s a constant ‘What’s she doing that I need to be doing.’ It’s constant, especially living in a sorority. It’s pressure. I personally struggled with an eating disorder in high school because of that pressure, and then that carries into college.”

A number of the respondents admitted that they struggle with their weight and a way to counteract this and maintain positive self-esteem and body image is to be honest with one's self and keep a positive outlook. They felt they needed to adopt healthy behavior patterns within their sororities. They mentioned yoga classes after chapter meetings and regular Zumba classes. One sorority has a nutritionist come in once a semester to talk about wellness and proper diet and exercise. The key for many of the respondents to healthy self-esteem was a balance of exercise and diet.

RQ3: How effective are the images/message of the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty in garnering a positive sense of self-esteem for college sorority women?

Thematic analysis related to the third research question explored two themes: things are not always as they seem and exposure makes you think about things you normally wouldn't.

Things are not always as they seem

One of the video clips from the campaign that was shown to the participants before the focus groups began presented the image of a model who was very natural. Her hair hung around her face and she was completely devoid of makeup, which gave her a very natural appearance. The camera started rolling as the make-up artists and hair stylists began to fix her face and hair. That process went on and then the graphic artists went into the finished image of the model and actually changed her facial features. Her eyes were made larger and more elongated, her mouth was plumped to make her lips fuller, and her nose was slimmed down, a common practice in print advertising. This video was very disturbing to many of the participants who had never seen what the media

can accomplish in changing models appearance and size. Participant 17 (senior) shared this with the group:

“Yeah, I’m in a visual comm class right now and I’m really learning it (photo-shopping) to do more advertising and such. I don’t want to skew what’s natural and I think that’s the essence of this is saying, you know, every time that a person or even a landscape is edited and changed it’s saying it’s not good enough to be in the public eye and you know that alone is a subtle message that says, Okay, you’re good enough if you are flawless. Who is? And so yeah I think it’s just kind of become a little bit of idolatry like what we are elevating in our society but something that is false.”

The general feeling among the participants was that something is inherently wrong with the images of models being shown in advertisements that have been enhanced and the Dove® Campaign was definitely a step in the right direction in changing the way models are being perceived. Respondent 23 (senior) said she liked the campaign because “it shows that girls can feel good about themselves because these models on the billboards really do not naturally look like that...I think that helps.”

Exposure makes you think about things you normally wouldn't

All of the participants in this study agreed that the Dove® campaign was very effective for promoting positive self-esteem and working to promote a healthy body image in women. Participant 1 (senior) brought up the point that she felt that the company was not trying to push their products, but rather the campaign is saying, “Here is our wakeup call for this generation.”

The campaign was also viewed as a benchmark for adolescents and women to view as a positive voice for what beauty should truly be in today’s society. It also stresses the point that almost all women have insecurities and that sense that they are alone when having body image issues. The Dove® Campaign, in a sense, is thought of

by most of the participants as a positive force in allowing girls and women to be themselves and know that they are all right just the way they are and the media present an unrealistic view of the real world.

Another positive aspect of the campaign expressed by the participants was the message that practically almost every adolescent and college woman struggles with insecurities and believes she is the only one with those insecurities. Participant 16 (junior) said this about the campaign:

“And I think it does a good job of allowing individuals to identify and say that they’re not alone; that they may be struggling with the same thing, but it’s OK to be able to adjust those insecurities and just know that you’re not the only one that feels that way, but at the same time it brings out that it’s okay to be just who you are.”

RQ4: How do sorority women perceive family and peers have influenced them in terms of self-esteem and body image?

Thematic analysis related to the fourth research question uncovered three themes: mothers’ preoccupation with their daughters’ weight, high school is about struggle and college is about acceptance, and the eating disorder factor.

Mother knows best...The pressure to be thin

One of the predominant issues brought up in these focus groups was the correlation between a mother’s concerns with her child’s thinness and body image issues, which included eating disorders. One of the factors brought up by Participant 14 (junior) was that some of her friends had struggled with eating disorders because to them it was a control issue. She said, “They feel like they need to control what they eat because their mom controls every other aspect of their life.” Another factor was the girl’s need or desire to please or be loved by her mother. Participant 9 (senior) said, “It’s like why I

needed to stop eating so I can be what my mom is wanting me to be.” Respondent 11 (sophomore) revealed this to the group:

“My mother was very critical of...I went through puberty at a very young age. I was in the third grade and growing boobs. It was really weird and I was confused and then, you know, my mom saw how upset I was, so she like thought, ‘To solve this, I’ll tell her that she can’t have any fries, or cake...’ Then I shot up in the seventh grade so it was ok then.”

It was interesting that none of the participants mentioned any issues that their fathers may have had with their weight or appearance. One participant’s father actually joked that she and her mother never ate. The participant said her mother was “real small” and she wanted to look like her.

High school is about struggle, college is about acceptance

A common theme throughout the conversation was the struggle that the women had with self-esteem and body image in adolescence. The participants universally agreed that the pressure to look like what the media portrays as beautiful and acceptable is ever-present. The common statement was that when the participants were younger, they felt they were supposed to automatically look like models and actresses on television because that was what everyone looked like. Participant 25 (junior) pointed out that the media representations are what the average 12-year-old girl believes she is supposed to look like and wrestles with the feeling of negative body image. Participant 15 (sophomore) shared with the group that she had plastic surgery on her nose for a high school graduation present.

Another common theme with reference to self-esteem and body issues had to do with the overwhelming concern in adolescence in regards to outward appearance. High

school, according to one woman, was more about looking nice for other people and their opinions. This is Participant 13's struggle in high school:

"I remember when I was younger 'cause I could sit in front of a mirror for like an hour and think, 'Ugh, ugh, ugh!' You know? And then it's like people don't notice because they are more concerned about what THEY look like. Like one day you get this huge pimple, no one probably notices, but *you* do."

The women considered age, personal growth, and maturity as some of the prevalent reasons for more positive self-esteem and body issues in college. Being in college for most participants was about taking pride in who they are, not belittling themselves. Here's an exchange on that subject:

Respondent 23 (senior): I think when you're younger and less mature, you're more susceptible to have unrealistic beliefs of what you are supposed to be and will do anything. When you're older, there are more important things, and you feel more accepted. And we've all found who we are.

Respondent 25 (junior): Yeah, like by the time you've evolved into the person you are, so now for the most part you're confident in yourself.

Respondent 23 (senior): Usually by now you've accepted, 'This is my womanly figure.' (Laughter) Now you've accepted it and once you realize what your other merits are and grown into who you want to be, you just realize that it's not important on the grand scale.

The eating disorder factor...

Throughout the focus groups, much was communicated about the prevalence of unhealthy dieting practices exhibited by the participants themselves, family members, classmates, and roommates. According to the participants, the causes of the disordered eating and overabundance of extreme exercise practices were the media's effect on our culture in terms of what we should look like and the enormous amount of parental and

peer pressure exerted on adolescent and college women today. Participant 11

(sophomore) shared her experience of a roommate with an eating disorder:

“I lived with a girl with an eating disorder. It was tough, it was bad. She looked like she came from a concentration camp. She thought she was FAT! She watched all these fitness shows and everything. She was always talking about *cleansing* her body. I’d be like, ‘Oh, my gosh! What does she think of me?’ And maybe I look like a whale. It affected me bad.”

Appearance and self-esteem go hand-in-hand. The desire to look one’s best is so overwhelmingly desired that some women will go to extreme measures to keep their weight to what is acceptable in today’s society. Here is what Participant 10 (junior) told the group about a new friend she made in her dorm, who she described as “really cute and skinny and little”:

“We all went to CiCi’s one and night and we were eating our food. So we ate like four pieces each. The one who was bulimic, she ate like eight and I was like, ‘Ooh, girl! Get it!’ When we got back to the dorm, and I went in her room and hear [retching sounds]. And I like ran to the door and like, ‘Oh, my God! Are you okay?’ Like I had no clue. And (name) was like, [whispered] ‘It’s normal for her,’ and I’m like ‘Oh, my gosh, what have I gotten myself into?’ But now she’s not bulimic anymore, like she saw that I love my body, so she was like, ‘I should, too.’

Over-exercising was also a topic of discussion among the participants. The participants agreed that although over-exercising is considered a form of disordered weight management, it is more accepted than excessive dieting. Several participants admitted to over-exercising, although not obsessively, but have people they know who do. Here is part of a conversation concerning this issue:

Respondent 5 (junior): She just thinks like...My friend thinks that if she doesn’t like go to the gym every day, then she is not like, I don’t know, *well*. It’s like her day...that’s how she has to start her day. It’s like two hours. And then sometimes she goes through classes, too.

Respondent 8 (sophomore): My roommate does that. She thinks she has to, I guess, to maintain her image. I mean, she's gorgeous, and she has a really like a really good body.

Respondent 5 (junior): I think we all know of people who do that. I think it goes back to what we see on TV every day. Like a bunch of us get together every week and watch Gossip Girls and you know how those girls look. I know I will never look like that, like that's a joke, but some of my friends really want that. One of my friends like runs like 5 miles a day at the track.

RQ 5: How does sorority life shape self-esteem and body image?

The fifth research question examined two themes: the sorority rush process and the hazing techniques used by some sororities.

The Sorority Rush process...

A few of the participants noted that the beginning process of joining a sorority, called rush, is in itself "a pressure thing." Respondent 16 (junior) said, "A lot of girls go through, I mean it's very quick, it's really a headache. I mean, they're judging definitely on your looks for the most part." The process is so quick that the rushees have 10 minutes to make their first impressions. Several respondents expressed being very nervous with the entire process because of the whole stereotype of what a sorority women is. Participant 11 (sophomore) had this to say about those stereotypes:

"...every sorority has their stereotypes and there are some who are known as the blondes and the frizzies and the rich girls and kind of gaudy or whatever. I mean, it's true and maybe the whole process starts from recruitment as far as which girls we even let into the Greek dynasty. They are naturally going to be more fit and usually like their lives are more organized and assertive and leaders versus overweight." *Sorority hazing only happens at other schools, not ours...*

Another hot-button issue was the topic of improper treatment within sororities with regard to appearance, body size, and body weight. One of the methods used during rush in one sorority, according to a participant, was to unobtrusively look at the rushee's clothing tags and see the brand name and size it is, and if it doesn't meet the sorority's "thin ideal" standards, the person is dropped from consideration. That same sorority allegedly has a policy of dropping a woman from consideration if her thighs touch when she walks. According to Respondent 13 (sophomore), a sorority from "up north" kicked out some of the sisters because they gained weight. A few of the participants maintained the prevalence of improper actions taking place in sororities in this part of the conversation:

Respondent 14 (junior): ...they do that in a lot of schools.

Respondent 17 (senior): Yeah.

Respondent 10 (junior): A few of my friends from high school and went to (name of school) and pledged and came back so skinny. It was really just...different.

Respondent 14 (junior): I know that rush at (name of school) is a lot different from rush here as in like, for example, a girl rushes a sorority at (name of school) and on their bid night they had all the girls lay down on the floor in just their bra and panties, and girls walked around and marked on their bodies what they needed to fix.

Respondent 13 (sophomore): Yeah, the beautiful thing about sororities at (name of school) is like it's so diverse. Nobody thinks about weight really.

Respondent 9 (senior): I don't know about *that*.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our world is inundated with images in the media which disseminate the standard of what women should look like: thin. The standards for beauty lay emphasis on thinness, which was termed earlier in this study as the “thin ideal.”

The following section concentrates on possible implications that have been drawn from the thematic analysis and its relevance as well as limitations and suggestions for future research possibilities.

Implications

The goal of this study was to better understand the issues of self-esteem and body image from the perspective of sorority women and what factors determine these constructs. This study examined the influence parents, peers, and the media has on self-esteem and body image of sorority women. The discussions in the focus groups always began with a discussion of the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty and its positive message of acceptance of all types of women including weight, appearance, body shape, and body size. The conversations evolved into a dialogue about the current mainstream media, other variables such as familial and peer pressure and their effect on body image and self-esteem, and the link between body image and self esteem.

An important finding was the theme that campaigns such as the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty are necessary to attempt to dispel the false illusion that the media projects, which is “thin and beautiful” are the only way to be. Although the mainstream

media perhaps will never diversify and celebrate what real women look like, the women in this study were happy that it was studied.

The women in this study revealed that women in most of the mainstream media do not accurately depict what most women look like. Another theme was the disproportionate size and weight of women present in the mainstream media. The women also communicated that it is hard to find a healthy balance in college in terms of diet and exercise given the busy and hectic life they lead. High school for most of them meant being involved in sports which made exercising a recurrent way of life for them. The pressure and fear of gaining weight was a common topic and a way of alleviating this was to find healthy approaches to diet and exercise through their affiliation with their sororities. The sorority life itself was a topic of discussion with comments about the pressure of the rush process and hazing techniques sororities use to exclude women who don't fit the weight or appearance standards set by them.

With the focus on the thin ideal in the media and everyday life, it is not surprising that so many women are facing poor self-esteem and body image. The influence that parents and peers play in terms of creating norms on body esteem was shown to have a significant effect on the women in the study. The universal feeling was that self-esteem and body image, whether it is positive or negative, is shaped in a girl's high school years. This finding relates to research presenting evidence of the high levels of body dissatisfaction among adolescents. This dissatisfaction may lead to abnormal dieting and eating behaviors. Other research posits from a practical viewpoint that exposure of images from the media and negative messages from family and peers create an

atmosphere that contribute to low esteem in many adolescents, which in turn could lead to eating disorders.

The researcher believes that bringing this issue out of the clinical and psychological realm and into the communication sphere is useful. Through this research our culture can begin to explore how to communicate the importance of strength (and not conventional beauty) and health (and not thinness) as important attributes and the prescribed standards.

This study can be used to create a dialogue for women to appreciate positive, healthy role models and establish a positive self-esteem and body image based on those constructive attributes. One such dialogue could be in the form of small-group forums held in high schools that could be offered by the guidance counselor of the school to address the issues faced by adolescents. The forums should include a seminar developed for parents to assist in their understanding of what they may be communicating to their daughter, positively or negatively, consciously or unconsciously. The focus could be on realistic insights of what is actually a healthy body size and work to improve body image by emphasizing some of the important inner characteristics such as intelligence and compassion. These forums could also be held in dormitories in universities coordinated by the mental health/counseling office at the university.

Another way to communicate the need for positive body image might be to provide an elective college course designed to encourage healthy dieting and exercise lifestyles and healthy weight management. Because issues of self-esteem and body image and dissatisfaction are such pervasive issues with college women, perhaps college

professors should be educated to perhaps be more cognizant of the problem and aware of the warning signs that women have when struggling with these issues.

Limitations

One of the limitations was the difficulty in getting the necessary authorization to use sorority women as participants of the study. The university's institutional review board expedited the matter in a timely fashion but there were definitely issues with the Panhellenic approval.

The National Panhellenic Conference Research Committee did not meet regularly in the summer that the research proposal was submitted for approval so it took the entire summer to gain approval. This delay posed a problem because the researcher's plans were to begin the process of eliciting participants at the beginning of the fall semester, which was in August. If the research had begun during another time of the year, the problem may have been averted.

After gaining approval to carry on with the research, the researcher had to then gain approval of the National Panhellenic Offices of the four individual sororities chosen for the study. This process took away valuable time that could have been devoted to soliciting the necessary participants. This process was finally completed and the researcher then had to gain access in some way to the women to explain the study and obtain the required amount of participants for the focus groups.

Gaining access to the chapter meetings proved to be impossible for the researcher, due to the sorority chapter meeting's time restraints. The gatekeepers for the organizations were the sorority presidents, and it was extremely hard to contact them and get reciprocal communication. The three sorority presidents gave the members the

researcher's e-mail address as the way to communicate the process of setting up the focus groups. Getting enough participants at any given time was difficult due to the particularly busy schedules that the women have fall semester. When contact was made and meetings were scheduled, the participants would often not show up for the focus groups. The process of obtaining enough data for the thematic analysis takes much longer than originally planned.

In addition, conducting a larger number of focus groups may have generated more data. According to Lindloff and Taylor (2002), focus groups that are centered on a system that is bounded, such as a sorority, can allow the researcher to concentrate on the group as a whole rather than extract a sample. They continue by pointing out in this type of analysis there is no definitive sample size, but rather an estimation made by the researcher when considering time management and accessibility of participants who are willing to participate. The researcher conducted four focus groups and found that subsequent to those four meetings, obtaining the support of any more groups was not likely.

The participants were not offered any compensation for their time in participating in the research project. The researcher also felt that if some form of compensation had been offered, more respondents may have participated. Perhaps if those taking courses in the researcher's communication department had been offered some form of extra credit by their instructors, the response may have been enhanced. Using college women in general, for instance in specific dormitories, might have garnered more support.

Further, all of the participants in this study were Caucasian. This limited the study to only one ethnicity. Other ethnicities and cultures may understand the issues of body image and self-esteem in different ways.

Finally, as noted above, another limitation to focus group methodology is that the results cannot be generalized and are limited to that one study.

Future Directions

Although the researcher chose to test self-esteem and body issues utilizing the qualitative method of thematic analysis, the study could be conducted quantitatively using a Web-based questionnaire. This method could counteract the limitation mentioned previously about the number of participants. Going on-line to participate in a survey might be more convenient for those taking part in the study. Some participants might be more willing to express their genuine feelings about issues such as self-esteem, body image, and disordered eating anonymously.

The Dove® Campaign for Beauty's primary focus this year is on teen self-esteem and body image. The results of this study demonstrated that indeed issues of body dissatisfaction *do* begin many times in adolescence, but also *do* affect college women. Perhaps the campaign needs to project more focus on women who are in post adolescent years or what is commonly known as "college aged women." Therefore, this study could also be expanded to explore the difference between levels of self-esteem and body image with mothers, fathers, siblings, or a combination of them.

Research on self-esteem and body image as it relates to the media could also extend to male college students. Oehlhof, Musher-Eizenmann, Neufeld and Hauser (2009) found in a body image study involving men that men are not unaffected by the

potentially harmful effects of the media on body esteem and body satisfaction – on the contrary. For men who participated in the Oehlhof et. al study, self-objectification had a direct correlation with the desire to have a more muscular body.

Still another possibility for future research could be a longitudinal study that tests the media's effects on adolescent girls (perhaps in junior high school), then again when these females are in college (perhaps their junior or senior year), and finally in their early 30s. Seeing how perhaps the role that maturity has in perhaps inoculating the participants against the images ritualizing the "thin ideal" could prove interesting.

Conclusion

A disturbing statistic, released by the Globe Newswire in 2008, affirmed that "Today in the U.S., more than 10 million women are battling an eating disorder, which is more than four times the number of women suffering from breast cancer" ("Friends Don't Let Friends," 2008). The media set the criteria for what is considered to be the proper image using the "thin ideal" as its benchmark. As evidenced in the discussions in this study, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating is somewhat of a common occurrence. The women expressed that this "thin ideal" has been communicated over the years in the media to family members and peers who use this as their basis for what is considered to be the proper body image. The focus groups discussions made it clear that the women believed that females on television do not depict what is real in our lives. But even so, the images have an enormous effect of how these young women view themselves when comparing themselves to those images.

In our current age of television, which is accessible practically everywhere including our phones and laptops, it is obvious that cultivation theory is still as important

to consider as when it was developed in the 1960s. The results of this study are a reminder of how much the media controls the message. Young girls and women should strive to be what is mirrored in the media, which is thin, tall, and beautiful. Those who don't fit into that category just don't measure up. This observation has been known to have a devastating effect on the self-esteem and body image of many women and it often begins when they are very young.

The women who participated in the study reported being impressed by the Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty and its message that true beauty comes in all sizes, shapes, and packages. The findings of this study stress the importance of further campaigns which emphasize an open dialogue and communication which will foster a sense of self-worth and develop image-related confidence building in young girls. This finding is particularly important as we face a barrage of marketing and advertising techniques that can essentially create the "perfect woman" in all forms of media. This process includes Photoshopping and airbrushing techniques designed to exhibit the "perfect woman."

In the discussions, the women in the focus groups made it clear that most of them had an overwhelming desire to be what the media prescribes as beautiful at an early age. A surprising point discovered in the study was the level of body dissatisfaction that these ladies were challenged with as adolescents and the reasons they discussed, which included the media, parental pressure, and peer pressure to be perfect. Many of the participants revealed that their mother was the driving force for their need and desire to look good, whether it was to look like her or live up to her definition of beauty.

Even though the participants currently felt some pressure to be what the media and society prescribes, they knew that the media is not the "real world" or an accurate

depiction of what the average woman looks like today. Some of the women mentioned a maturity that had been developed in college and being part of their sorority. This theme stresses the importance of *early* communication among younger girls, parents, and peers. This communication could be in the form of programs being developed at the middle school and junior high school level to foster a sense of positive body image.

Because “thinness sells,” society will likely not see a change in the way that networks, movie producers and advertising executives market and sell their products and services. An unrealistic portrayal of women in will continue in all forms of media. The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty was developed to challenge this perspective and provide solutions for future generations of young women. Many young women have low self-esteem caused by what they consider to be unattainable beauty created by images shown in the media.

The participants expressed the desire to look good, but pointed out that the famous women in the media have the means to look the way they do. They have personal trainers for body fitness, nutritionists for weight management, and personal assistants for the wardrobe and make-up regime. Much of the communication focused on the unrealistic standards that the media puts on women today and the fact that the media doesn’t project the “real world.” Another point made was the barrage of advertisements touting weight loss products.

Young girls and women should be given the information and tools necessary to gain positive self-esteem and body image by accepting and loving who they are and not trying to adopt the “thin ideal” projected in the media. Any additions to these studies and this study in particular in order to gather additional information about self-esteem and

body image dissatisfaction might be beneficial to gain greater knowledge and understanding of the issues facing adolescent and college women in a society saturated with media which promotes the “thin ideal.”

REFERENCES

- Allison, K.C., & Park, C.L. (2004). A prospective study of disordered eating among sorority and nonsorority women. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 35(3), 354-358.
- Andonian, J.M. (2008). Building bridges between parents and researchers in children's mental health evaluation using focus groups. *Best Practices in Mental Health*, 4(2), 15-33.
- Ansary, S.J., Perkins, D.F., & Nelson, C.J. (2004). Interpreting outcomes: Using focus groups in evaluation research. *Family Relations*, 53(3), 310-316.
- Becker, C. (n.d.) The Issue: The Struggle with the "Thin Ideal". Retrieved January 30, 2010, from <http://www.bodyimageprogram.org/issue>
- Bissell, K. (2004). The Virtual Model: College Women's Knowledge of Digital Manipulation in Fashion Photographs and Body Image Distortion. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New Orleans Sheraton, New Orleans, LA*, 1-33.
- Bohn, R.E., & Short, J.E. (2009). How much information? 2009 report on American consumers. Retrieved on October 15, 2010, from http://hmi.ucsd.edu/pdf/HMI_2009_ConsumerReport_Dec9_2009.pdf
- Brouwers, M. (1990). Treatment of body image among women with bulimia nervosa. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 69(2), 144-147.

- Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication, 54*(4), 662-704.
- Calogero, R.M. (2004). A test of objectification theory: The effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 28*, 16-21.
- Cash, T.F., Jakatdar, T.A., & Williams, E.F. (2004). The body image quality of life inventory: further validation with college men and women. *Body Image, 1*, 279-287.
- Cash, T.F., & Pruzinsky, T. (2002). *Body image: A handbook of theory, research, and clinical practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Cole, J.G., & McCroskey, J. C. (2003). The association of perceived communication apprehension, shyness and verbal aggression with perceptions of source credibility and affect in organizational and interpersonal contexts. *Communication Quarterly, 51*(1), 101-110.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design, choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crocker, J., & Wolfe, C.T. (2001). Contingencies of self-worth. *Psychological Review, 108*, 593-623.
- D'Agostino, H., Etcoff, N., Orbach, S., & Scott, J. (2004). "The real truth about beauty: A global report" Findings of the global study on women, beauty and well-being. Retrieved on October 15, 2010, from Dove®, a Unilever Beauty Brand, website: [http:// www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_finalpdf](http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/.../dove_white_paper_finalpdf).

- Derenne, J., & Beresin, E. (2006). Body image, media, and eating disorders. *Academic Psychiatry, 30*, 257-261.
- Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty. Retrieved April 22, 2009, from <http://www.dove.us>
- Eating Disorders in College Women – Overview. Retrieved January 14, 2010, from <http://www.healthyplace.com/eating-disorders/main/eating-disorders-in-college-women-overview>
- Facts for Features/Back to School: 2006-2007. Retrieved March 2007 from <http://www.census.gov>
- Flores, J. G., & Alonso, C. G. (1995). Using focus groups in educational research. *Evaluation Review, 19*(1), 84-101.
- Friends don't let friends 'fat talk'; Tri-Delta tackles women's body image issues with 'Fat Talk Free Week' and Reflections. (2008, October 13). *GLOBE NEWSWIRE*.
- Fritz, S., & Carnett, S. (2007). "Mom, Dad, Am I Fat?": The Effects of Physique, Parental Body Image, and Parental Communication on Satisfaction with one's Body. *Conference Papers-International Communication Association 2007 Annual Meeting*, 1-23.
- Gentles, K.A., & Harrison, K. (2006). Television and perceived peer expectations of body size among African American adolescent girls. *The Howard Journal of Communication, 55*, 17-39.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with Television. In J. Bryant and D. Zillman (Eds.), *Perspectives on media effects* (p. 18). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1994). Growing up with television: The cultivation perspective. In J. Bryant and D. Zillman (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 61-90). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gonzalez-Lavin, A., & Smolak, L. (1995). *Relationship between television and eating problems in middle school girls*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Indianapolis, IN.
- Grabe, S., Hyde, J., & Ward, L. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin, 134*(3), 460-476.
- Green, S.P., & Pritchard, M.E. (2003). Predictors of body image dissatisfaction in adult men and women. *Social Behavior and Personality, 31*, 215-222.
- Groesz, L.M., Levine, M.P., & Murnen, S.K. (2001). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 31*(1), 1-16.
- Grudens-Schuck, N., Allen, B.L., & Larson, K. (2004). Focus Group Fundamentals. Retrieved January 27, 2010, from <http://www.extensioniastate.edu/Publication/PM1969B.pdf>
- Guindon, M.H. (2002). Toward accountability in the use of the self-esteem construct. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 80*, 204-214.
- Halliwell, E., & Dittmar, H. (2004). Does size matter? The impact of model's body size on women's body-focused anxiety and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23*(1), 104-122.

- Harrison, K. (2000). The body electric: Thin ideal media and eating disorders in adolescents. *Journal of Communication, 50*, 119-143.
- Harrison, K., & Hefner, V. (2006). Media exposure, current and future body ideals, and disordered eating among preadolescent girls. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 35*, 153-163.
- Hendriks, A. (2002). Examining the effects of hegemonic depictions of female bodies on television: A call for theory and programmatic research. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 10(1)*, 106-123.
- Hopkins, E., & Lee, A.H. (2008). Formative Research for UCLA EATask Force's Body Image Social Marketing Campaign. Retrieved February 19, 2010, from ucla.edu
- Irvine, M. (2007, March 11). Sorority shake up puts focus on image. *Associated Press Newswire*.
- Jones, A.M., & Buckingham, J.T. (2005). Self-esteem as a moderator of the effect of social comparison on women's body image. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 24(8)*, 1164-1187.
- Krcmar, M., Giles, S., & Helme, D. (2008). Understanding the process: How mediated and peer norms affect young women's body esteem. *Communication Quarterly, 56(2)*, 111-130.
- Krueger, R., & Casey, M. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Lindlof, T.R., & Taylor, B.C. (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.

- Martin, K.A., Rejeski, W.J., Leary, M.R., McAuley, E., & Bane, S. (1997). Is the social physique anxiety scale really multidimensional? Conceptual and statistical arguments for a unidimensional model. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 19*, 359-367.
- Massey, O. T. (2011). A proposed model for the analysis and interpretation of focus groups in evaluation research. *Evaluation and Program Planning (34)*, 21-28.
- Mecca, A.M., Smelser, N.J., & Vasconcellos, J. (1989). *The social importance of self-esteem*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Mendelson, B.K., White, D.R., & Mendelson, M.J. (1996-1997). Self-esteem and body esteem: Effects of sex, age, and weight. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 17*, 321-346.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source-book* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Milke, M. (1999). Social comparisons, reflected appraisals, and mass media: The impact of pervasive beauty images on Black and White girls' self-concepts. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 62*, 190-210.
- Morgan, D.L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Morgan, D.L. (1996). Focus groups. In J. Hagan & K.S. Cook (Eds.), *Annual review of sociology* (pp. 129-152). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews.
- Nabi, R.L. (2009). Cosmetic surgery makeover programs and intentions to undergo cosmetic enhancements: A consideration of three models of media effects. *Human Communication Research 35(1)*, 1-27.

- Nathanson, A.I., & Botta, R.A. (2003). Shaping the effects of television on adolescents' body image disturbance: The role of parental mediation. *Communication Research, 30*(3), 304-331.
- National Center for Health Statistics (1997). *Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1988-94* (NHANES III) (NTS No. NTIS PB97-502959). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- New Global Study Uncovers Desire for Broader Definition of Beauty. Retrieved October 15, 2010 from <http://www.prnewswire.com>
- Nielsen Wire. (2009, Nov. 10). Average TV watching for 2008-2009 TV season at all time high. Retrieved on October 15, 2010, from http://blognielsen.com/nielsenwire/media_entertainment/average-tv-viewing-for-2008-09-tv-season-at-all-time-high/
- Only 2% of women think they're beautiful (n.a.). Retrieved October 15, 2010, from <http://www.dove.us>
- Payton, L.C. (n.d.) The Social Comparison of Fashion Print Advertisements and Female College Students Body Image. Retrieved September 28, 2010, from <http://www.kon.org/urc/v9/payton.html>
- Price, B. (1990). A model for body- image care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 15*, 585-593.
- Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sabiston, C.M., & Munroe, K.J. (2001). *The Effect of Sport and Fitness Advertising on Social Physique Anxiety among Females*. Proceedings of the annual meeting of

the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology. Denton, Texas: RonJon Publishing.

Schooler, D., Ward, L.M., Merriwether, A., & Caruthers, A. (2004). Who's that girl: Television's role in the body image development of young white and black women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(1), 38-47.

Schulken, E.D., Pinciaro, P.J., Sawyer, R.G., Jensen, J.G., & Hoban, M.T. (1997). Sorority women's body size perceptions and their weight-related attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of American College Health*, 46, 69-74.

Sheldon, P. (2010). Pressure to be perfect: Influences on college students' body esteem. *Southern Communication Journal*, 75(3), 277-298.

Silberstein, L.R., Striegel-Moore, R.H., Timko, C., & Rodin, J. (1988). Behavioural and psychological implications of body attractiveness for women. *Sex Roles*, 14, 519-532.

Sira, N., & White, C.P. (2010). Individual and familial correlates of body satisfaction in male and female college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 58(6), 507-514.

Smith, D., Wright, C., Ross, N., & Warmington, S. (2006). Sports advertising and body image. In M.V. Kines (Ed.), *Body Image: New Research* (pp. 63-77). New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Souto, C.M., & Garcia, T.R. (2002). Construction and validation of a body image rating scale: A preliminary study. *International Journal of Nursing Terminologies and Classifications*, 13(4), 117-126.

- Stice, E., Schupak-Neuberg, E., Shaw, H.E., & Stein, R. (1994). Relation of media exposure to eating disorder symptomatology: An examination of mediating mechanisms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 103*, 836-840.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. (2nd.ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Stuart, R. (2008). The next best thing to family. *Issues of Higher Learning, 25(16)*, 14-15.
- Sundeen, S.J., Stuart, G.W., Rankin, E.D., & Cohen, S.A. (1981). *Nurse-client interaction: Implementing the nurse process*. St. Louis: Mosby.
- The real deal (n.a.). Retrieved October 18, 2010, from <http://www.thesororitylife.com/The-Real-Deal/index.aspx>
- Ward, L.M. (2002). Does television exposure affect emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships? Correlational and experimental confirmation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 31(1)*, 1-15.

Appendix/Interview Guide

What are your impressions of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty just shown?

In what ways do you find the Dove Campaign for Beauty a credible campaign?

Do you believe that the models shown on the campaign are an accurate representation of what the “real woman” is in today’s society? Yes or No? Why or why not?

If you ever have had weight issues, how did you cope with them?

What do your parents think about weight and health? Has that ever been a problem in your relationship with your parents?

What are some ways that you think the media puts too much emphasis on weight and beauty?

What do you think is the social norm regarding body image?

What do you think are some strategies that college women use to gain, maintain or lose weight?

What are some strategies that college women can use to counteract negative body image?

What television programs do you generally watch in a week?

Does your television viewing include reality shows like “The Hills” or “Gossip Girls”?

What messages do you think these shows are sending out?

A recent segment on NBC’s Today Show reported that Hollywood is going “curvier” with actresses/personalities such as Kim Kardashian and Scarlet Johansson in the forefront. What do you think?

What are some television shows that you believe promote a healthy body image and why did you choose those shows?

What would you recommend to a friend who may be suffering from weight issues?

How would you define a healthy lifestyle (for instance diet and exercise) and what type of sources do you use for health information?

As a member of a social sorority, what are some ways that your sorority helps build self-esteem and positive image among the sisters?