AS SEEN ON TV: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

BODY IMAGE AND CULTIVATION

By

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AS SEEN ON TV: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE AND CULTIVATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Society today is mass mediated. Television, radio, newspapers, and magazines are constantly bombarding us with information. Frequently, we invite the information by turning on the television, subscribing to cable, and listening to the radio when we run errands in our vehicles. Sometimes, however, the information comes from uninvited sources; there are magazines in waiting rooms, radios in elevators, and even television sets at the gas pumps. This continued viewing in the mass mediated world causes several questions to arise: What does this continued viewing tell us about the world? Are there any effects of media viewing on the audience? Does media viewing have a cumulative effect? Mass Communication and Psychology researchers have been asking these same questions since television became a “regular” part of individual’s lives.

Almost all homes in the United States have televisions. By 1980, approximately 98% of homes in the United States had at least one television. Currently, the majority of families have two or more television sets. According to audience ratings, families have the television turned on an average of seven hours per day, and somewhat longer if they have subscription services. Adults spend more time watching television than doing any other leisure activity. In fact, the only activities adults do more often than watch television are work and sleep. Clearly, a significant portion of the day for most
Americans is spent watching television (Harris, 1999; Huston et al., 1992; Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988).

The role of television in children’s lives is of considerable concern to developmental psychologists. One reason for this concern is the abundance of television availability in the United States. According to Kotler, Wright and Huston (2001), 60% of adolescents and 30% of preschoolers had a television set in their bedrooms. Some children spend more time watching television than doing any other activity except sleeping. The average American child watches between 2 and 4 hours of television per day, including weekends. Many households now have multiple television sets and many of the second or third televisions are located in the children’s bedroom. Because many children have their own television set in their own bedroom, they are able to make unsupervised program choices (Huston et al., 1992, Harris, 2004).

From the time we are about 18 months old we begin to know who we are (Cole, Cole, & Lightfoot, 2005). We understand what belongs to us and what does not belong. In other words, we are aware of ourselves and that awareness is a foundation for how we feel about ourselves. General feelings about our bodies, known as body image, begin to form during childhood and may affect us throughout life (Cole, Cole, & Lightfoot, 2005). Understanding one’s body (e.g., physical location in space, physical sensations) is likely an essential skill that developed during human evolution. Logically, if one did not understand one’s body, one would not know where one’s body began or ended, how to hide from predators, shield sensitive skin from the harmful sun, or when to begin or stop eating. Focusing on the body is probably adaptive; however, too much focus can become maladaptive, such as when people develop body image disturbance(s) and/or eating
disorders. Prevalence of eating disorders, such as bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa, are reported to be between 0.5% and 4% of the general population (Rosen, 1990; DSM, 2000).

The relationship between media and body image will be explored here. Specifically, the cumulative influences of television and how it may cultivate ideas concerning one’s own body will be investigated.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Media

Children are exposed to television very early in life. Many parents report putting their infants in front of the television to quiet them (Huston et al., 1992, Kotler, Wright & Huston, 2001). The lifespan pattern of television viewing can begin slowly, with as little as 15 minutes a day in infancy but increases rapidly during the preschool years to about 2.5 hours per day. Viewing time then drops slightly when children begin school, but increases to a peak in early adolescence of approximately 4 hours of viewing per day. Beginning in late adolescence and continuing through early adulthood, television viewing declines as individuals are gaining independence from their parents, studying, working, and spending more time away from the home; however, this decline in television viewing is only temporary. It resumes to approximately 4 hours per day until retirement and then increases slightly for most retirees until the age of 70. During retirement, television viewing often takes the place of a job, child rearing, and/or a lost spouse (Harris, 2004; Huston et al., 1992).

Researchers are concerned with the influence of this cornucopia of television viewing. What, if any, relationship does television viewing have on an individual’s interactions with society (e.g. peer relationships, intimate relationships, professional relationships, etc.) and on an individual’s perception of self (e.g. self-esteem, body
image, self efficacy, etc.). The focus of the current paper will be the relationship between television media and body image.

**Body Image**

At first glance, it seems as though body image would be a relatively simple construct to define. Intuitively, body image would simply entail one’s feelings about one’s own body; however, when researching body image, it becomes clear that an operational definition for body image is somewhat illusive. While some definitions do exist, they are mainly found in theoretical and historical texts but they are rarely included in empirical studies. One such definition can be found in Pruzinsky and Cash (2002) when they broadly define body image as, “the profoundly human experience of embodiment” (p. 3). An empirical approach can be found in Ridge Wolszon (1998), where she takes a more concrete approach to her definition of body image, stating that, “body image refers to an individual’s subjective evaluation of her size, weight, or any other aspect of physical appearance” (p. 546). Some theoretical text, such as, McCabe and Ricciardelli (2004), acknowledge the multiple components of body image. These state that body image can involve, “perceptual, affective, cognitive or behavioral disturbances” (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004, p. 675). Other empirical authors, such as Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, and Tantleff-Dunn (1998), are forthright in admitting using multiple terms to describe the components of body image, without actually pin-pointing one specific definition. Those specific authors, among others, are acutely aware that, “many researchers and clinicians use these terms interchangeably when perhaps they
should not” (Thompson, et al. 1998, p. 10). Given this conundrum, the current author pools several definitions and refers to body image as a construct involving appearance, perception and evaluation about one’s body.

In addition to being a difficult construct to define, the discussion of body image is complicated further by the notion of satisfaction. That is, many researchers discuss their findings about body image in terms of body image satisfaction and/or body image dissatisfaction, often using them interchangeably. For example, in a comparison between boys and girls, an author may state that boys have lower body image dissatisfaction than girls in one paragraph and boys have higher body image satisfaction than girls in the next paragraph. Those comments are, in fact, referencing the exact same results obtained by the exact same measure. The current author will adopt the idea that satisfaction and dissatisfaction of body image are two sides of the same coin and will therefore be used interchangeably.

**Body Image Development in Early Childhood.**

Body image development in childhood is complicated by the fact that two of the three major components of the body image construct (i.e., perception and evaluation) are cognitive processes. The cognitive abilities of children are much different than the cognitive abilities of adults. In order to investigate the development of body image, one must begin by assessing the development of body knowledge and body awareness. The point in one’s life when body image develops is difficult to answer, but there are several
important developmental components essential to the construct. Those components include infants’ body knowledge and children’s self-awareness.

**Body knowledge.**

The cognitive components of body image (perception and evaluation) are particularly important to address because of the rapid cognitive development in childhood; therefore, the cognitive development of body knowledge is discussed here. Slaughter and Heron (2004) discuss body knowledge development at three levels: sensori-motor body knowledge, visuo-spatial body knowledge, and lexical-semantic body knowledge.

The first level is the most basic level and is innate. They argue that evidence for sensori-motor body knowledge can be found in newborns when they “coordinate inputs from their different senses, and control their motor behavior accordingly” (p. 7). Evidence for sensori-motor body knowledge in infants is found in reflexes (e.g., coordinated hand to mouth movement and coordinated head movement to sound). Further evidence is found in kinesthetic-visual matching (e.g., prolonged gaze at images of same-aged infants’ leg movement compared to watching their own movement and discrimination of congruent limb movement with seen movement and incongruent limb-seen movement). Finally, evidence of infant’s sensori-motor body knowledge is found in movement of self-images (e.g., discrimination of images of infant’s own legs moving in a standard view versus a reversed view).
The second level of body knowledge, visuo-spatial knowledge, is slightly more complex than the first level but quickly develops with the developing brain. Evidence for visuo-spatial body knowledge can be found in both infants and toddlers. There has been much research on infants’ ability to recognize faces (Fantz, 1961, 1963; Turati, Simion, Milani, & Umilta, 2002). Very young infants have a preference for the face of their primary caregiver as opposed to the face of a stranger (Slaughter & Heron, 2004). Similarly, Quinn and Eimas (1998) have conducted a series of studies demonstrating infants’ ability to distinguish humans from animals. Moreover, toddlers are able to distinguish typical human figures from scrambled human figures. They demonstrate body part localization, and they express body knowledge by drawing the toddler-version of human bodies (i.e. some trunk, appendages, and typically an enlarged head) (Slaughter & Heron, 2004).

The third level of body knowledge is the lexical-semantic body representations. Although this level is the most developmentally complex, it is perhaps the easiest level of knowledge to assess, as well as the easiest to grasp because adults have mastered and use this level of knowledge. The lexical-semantic level is the latest to develop and is typically not seen in children until around the age of 2 years. Evidence for this level can be easily seen in toddlers’ ability to name the structure and functions of human body parts. For example, this type of body knowledge follows a bottom-up approach beginning with simple facial features (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth), followed by increasingly complex limbs and flange, joints (e.g., arm, toe, knee), and finally includes terms that are the most
complex because they encompass a number of body parts (e.g., head, torso, limbs) (Slaughter & Heron, 2004).

Body knowledge can be divided into 3 developmentally significant levels. The innate level of body knowledge is evidenced by reflexes, interest in movement, and knowledge of self-image. The second level of body knowledge is evidenced by facial recognition, the ability to distinguish between humans and animals, and the ability to distinguish between typical and scrambled human figures. The third level of body knowledge is evidenced by the naming of body parts beginning with simple structure but increasing complexity. When one has developed knowledge of one’s body, the cognitive aspects of body image construct (perception and evaluation) are possible.

**Self-awareness during childhood**

Body image development during childhood begins with basic body knowledge, as discussed above, but must continue with basic self-awareness. Self-awareness is one’s understanding of who he/she is and what does and does not belong to him/her. Children do not overtly express this until around the age of 2 years. The assessment for such awareness is simple and widely known in the field of psychology. It is commonly illustrated by the mirror and rouge task. During this task, a parent and a child are situated together in an experimental setting where there are mirrors surrounding them. The parent places a small amount of make-up (typically blush or lipstick) onto the face of his or her child under the guise of wiping the child’s nose or mouth. Because the parent and child are surrounded with mirrors, the child will inevitably get a glance at him or herself in the
mirror. A child who has self-awareness will reach for the rouge knowing it does not belong or is not typically present. A child without self-awareness will continue with his or her play without any attention directed at the rouge. During these early years of self-awareness, a child’s limited understanding is focused around his or her own egocentrism. That is, during these ages, a child is aware of what belongs to him or herself and what does not belong. He or she is aware of the end of body and the beginning of anything that is not body.

*Body image development in middle childhood.*

The empirical literature involving body image as a stated construct begins in middle childhood (around 6 years old). Prior to middle childhood, researchers conduct studies that involve one aspect of the body image construct (defined in this paper involving appearance, perception, and evaluation), but not necessarily all thee components (see the previous section for a discussion of the research involving the literature on those components). The focus in the body image literature begins to shift from “normal” body image (e.g., body knowledge, self-awareness) to body dissatisfaction. In other words, the examination of body image is couched in terms of body dissatisfaction and factors that contribute to abnormal behavior related to body image, namely bulimia, anorexia, and binge eating disorder. This pattern in the literature suggests that body dissatisfaction may in fact be normal (at least in western women). According to Rodin, Silberstein, and Striegel-Moore (1984), this pattern of body image dissatisfaction is in fact “a normative discontent”. Although the clinical issues related to
body image dissatisfaction are beyond the scope of the current paper, the author will still
discuss body image dissatisfaction. Indeed, the literature is presented in a way that
elevates the evaluative component of the body image construct to the point of being the
sole focus of a majority of the literature.

Researchers suggest that children as young as 6 years old express dissatisfaction
with their bodies (Smolak, 2002). In fact, studies have shown that 30% to 65% of girls
and 17% to 35% of boys ages 8 to 12 years have been dissatisfied with their bodies
(Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992; Mellin, Irwin, & Scully, 1992; Wood, Becker, &
Thompson, 1996). Additionally, for girls ages 6 to 12 years old, body dissatisfaction
increases with age, with older girls expressing as much as 35% more dissatisfaction than
younger girls (Gardner, Sorter & Friedman, 1997; Mellin et al., 1992). Another study
examined figure ratings for children between the ages of 7 and 12 years (Tiggeman &
Wilson-Barrette, 1998). Researchers asked the children to rate their current size, their
ideal size, and the size that the opposite gender would find most attractive. Results
indicated that girls displayed statistically significant body dissatisfaction for their current
size while boys did not. Finally, in a 16 month longitudinal study of children aged 8-12
years, researchers found a statistically significant gender difference in body image
satisfaction (as measured with four questions: satisfaction with weight and muscles and
importance of weight and muscles; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2005a). Specifically, they
found that boys rated the importance of muscle size much higher than girls. Factors that
influence body image development will be discussed later in this paper.
A summary of body image research during childhood.

During middle childhood, researchers are beginning to see gender differences in body image satisfaction that are not seen in early childhood. Perhaps these differences can be seen beginning in middle childhood due to the growing cognitive sophistication that occurs during these years. The trend during middle childhood is marked by an increase in body dissatisfaction which continues to grow throughout this developmental period. That is, early in middle childhood (ages 6-9), there is less body image dissatisfaction than there is later in middle childhood (ages 10-12). Additionally, girls are experiencing more overall body image dissatisfaction than boys while boys are beginning to place more importance on muscle size than girls.

Body image development in adolescence.

Adolescence is a time of visible bodily changes in one’s lifespan and is often accompanied by emotional stress. The onset of puberty causes a change in appearance of both boys and girls (Feldman, 2006). The changes that adolescents are experiencing are not private, they are on open display. Girls develop breasts and curving hips while boys’ voices change and they have a rapid growth spurt. This time can be very stressful for both boys and girls. The developmental milestone in adolescence is puberty. This major milestone plays a role in body image. During adolescence, one’s body changes and matures. These changes also greatly impact one’s body image (appearance, perception and evaluation).
Girls typically grow 3.5 inches a year during early adolescence, and boys typically grow 4.1 inches a year (Feldman, 2006). In addition to getting taller, boys tend to lose fat and appear more muscular while girls tend to gain fat and appear rounder. These physical growth spurts are accompanied by sexual maturation, which can be confusing and uncomfortable to an adolescent. In addition to the physical changes that occur during adolescence, there are also cognitive changes. Adolescence is a period of growing independence from parents and a period of self-discovery. The developmental process of self-discovery may lead to an increase of self-focus during this life-span period.

As in middle childhood, the focus of body image in the literature is on body image dissatisfaction. Researchers report that many adolescent girls are dissatisfied with their body shape and weight despite being normal or underweight (Levine & Smolak, 2002). A longitudinal study of adolescent girls and boys found that body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls and boys is high and remains high in both genders during adolescence (Carlson Jones, 2004). That is, during the adolescent years, body dissatisfaction can be found uniformly in both boys and girls. Although stability can be found in both boys and girls there are also gender differences. McCabe, Ricciardelli, Mellor, and Ball (2005) found that adolescent girls expressed significantly more dissatisfaction than adolescent boys.

Frost and McKelvie (2004) suggest that a pattern of body satisfaction from elementary school students to university students can be clearly discerned. These authors
suggest that body satisfaction is lower for high school students than it is for elementary school and university students. Additionally, it is lower for girls/young women than it is for boys/young men. This study suggests that body image is relatively stable from elementary school through college, with the exception of a dip in adolescence (high school).

The research presented in this section suggests that body image dissatisfaction during adolescence clearly exists. Moreover, body image satisfaction during adolescence may be slightly lower than in childhood. This dip in satisfaction could be due to rapid physical maturity during puberty and/or the self-focus of adolescents (e.g., feelings of being watched by everyone).

**Body Image Development in Adulthood**

Significant physical life changes occur in adulthood as they do in adolescence; however, the physical appearance of these changes is often much more subtle and gradual than those during childhood and adolescence. Adults lose strength and aerobic capacity at a rate of about 1% per year during adulthood. Similarly, weight maintenance can be a challenge during this period of life (Krauss Whitbourne & Skultety, 2002). In addition to functional changes, physical changes include a decrease in skin elasticity, developing wrinkles, and graying hair. These physical changes represent a potential for shift in body image (e.g., not feeling sexy, feeling old/undesirable, feeling unsatisfied with bodily functions, etc.).
Ziebland, Robertson, Jay, and Neil (2002) reported that nearly all of their middle-aged adult participants experienced some weight gain (although most of the participants were still within their ideal weight range), yet less than half of them reported that weight gain was inevitable during middle age. These results suggest that some participants may be experiencing dissonance because their beliefs about middle age do not match their own experiences. This potential dissonance could lead to a decrease in their own body satisfaction. Similarly, Palladino Green and Pritchard (2003) found that in their sample of middle aged adults, both men and women were dissatisfied with their bodies. Thus, during middle age, people become aware that their body does not function in the same manner that it did just a few years before.

Looking at adulthood from another angle, a retrospective study asked middle-aged women to recall body-related comments from others directed at them during their lifespan (Mclaren, Kuh, Hardy, & Gauvin, 2004). The researchers found that reception of negative comments while growing up had an adverse impact on current body satisfaction. This adverse impact was not lessened by the reception of positive comments from one’s current partner. This study suggests long-term effects of comments received early in life. This clearly emphasizes the importance of the perceptual aspect of body image. Here, comments are recalled retrospectively and may, in fact, be inaccurate yet perceived as accurate by the individual remembering. Those misremembered comments may therefore be just as hurtful as if the comments were real.
Although research on the older adult population is becoming more popular, few body image studies using an older population exist. There are some studies, however, that indicated some body dissatisfaction among older adults. Oberg and Tornstam (1999) asked 1000 Swedish women a single item question about body satisfaction and found that women aged 65-85 years were as dissatisfied as those aged 45-54 years. Similarly, Hetherington and Burnett (1994) found body image dissatisfaction in their elderly sample (aged 60-78 years) of women, but not as much dissatisfaction as in their young women (aged 18-31 years). Another study conducted by Reboussin et al. (2000) found that an increase in age was associated with an increase in body satisfaction (sample aged 35-75 years); however, Franzoi and Koehler (1998) found that their sample of elderly adults (mean age 74 years) was less satisfied with body functioning and facial attractiveness than their young adults (mean age 19 years) but more satisfied with weight-related items. These studies indicate that, at a minimum, more attention should be given to older adult’s body image. Certainly these results indicate that body image continues to change throughout the lifespan.

**Body Image Continuity across the Lifespan**

Research involving body image across the lifespan is sparse. Most body image research has been done on a specific age group (e.g., middle childhood or adolescence). This section will review the small cache of literature involving body image continuity.

A cross sectional study by Rand and Wright (2000) examined ideal and acceptable body sizes across the lifespan. They used the silhouette drawing method for
assessing preferences. One unique aspect of their study was that they had all of their participants (elementary school students, high school students, university students, and middle-aged adults) rate all of the silhouette sequences (babies, children, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults). In addition, not only did they assess which body size was preferred, but also the acceptability of each body size. Participants in this study showed a great deal of congruence with respect to choosing the ideal body size for each age range regardless of their own age. Similarly, participants had high levels of agreement regarding the acceptability of each body size. Interestingly, university students and middle-aged adults were slightly more tolerant of all body sizes than high school and elementary students. This indicates that at that time, ideas about the ideal body size were somewhat congruent throughout life, but that we begin to recognize with age that more than one (or two) body sizes are acceptable (Rand & Wright, 2000).

Tiggemann and Stevens (1999) examined weight concern (specifically concern about being overweight), self-esteem, and feminist attitudes in a cross-sectional design in women across the lifespan (age range 18-60 years). They found that weight concern among women was consistently high across the lifespan, although there is a slight decline in weight concern after 40 years of age. Additionally, there were statistically significant negative correlations between weight concern and self-esteem, as well as weight concern and feminist attitudes in women between the ages of 30-49 years. Those correlations indicate that for middle aged women, higher self-esteem and strong feminist attitudes is associated with less weight concern.
There is clearly a gap in the literature concerning body image development throughout the lifespan. Specifically, there are no true longitudinal studies, rather all of the studies are cross-sectional. Focusing on only one period during the lifespan (e.g., adolescence) may be ignoring an important factor (change) during one’s lifespan. In addition to understanding developmental change in body image, it is also important to understand the influence of external forces such as media, society, and culture.

**Media and Body Image**

One major empirical question that is important in any discussion of media and body image is how is the perception the media’s portrayal of body image for men and women different? This concept was empirically investigated by McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001). They found that the media was perceived to be more influential on adolescent girls than boys. In other words, girls cited the media as an influence on their body image more than boys. Similarly, McCabe, Ricciardelli, Morell et al. (2005) found that adolescent girls reported more perceived pressure from the media to lose weight, while adolescent boys reported more perceived pressure from the media to gain muscle. Additional researchers found that the media was a factor in body image satisfaction for adult women, but not for adult men (Palladino Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Another study that supported gender differences was by Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003). They conducted an experimental study, using a within subjects repeated measures design, in which they showed adolescent boys and girls television commercials. Participants viewed commercials with idealized female thin images or non-
appearance related images. Girls in the appearance condition reported significant body dissatisfaction immediately following the viewing and 15 minutes later compared to the non-appearance related viewers. Boys in the appearance condition did not have significant body dissatisfaction, perhaps due to the use of female-only stimuli.

McCabe and Ricciardelli (2003) conducted a study that involved many sociocultural influences on body image, including media for boys and girls in grades 7-10. They found that with all of the variables entered into the regression equation to predict global body image (including five subscales: two involving parents and peers, one involving media), that media was not a significant predictor. However, media was a significant predictor of actual decreasing weight in girls, but not for boys. Palladino Green and Pritchard (2003) used media as one of their four predictors of body image satisfaction in adults (age 19-68 years old). They found that all four factors (age, family pressure, self-esteem, and media influence) were important in prediction for women’s body image dissatisfaction, and all but media were important in predicting men’s dissatisfaction. This study illuminates the need to assess men and women separately when discussing media’s influence. These two studies examine different age groups, different sociocultural variables, and different ways of assessing media’s influence. Therefore, it is not surprising that their conclusions about media’s influence on body satisfaction are different; however, both studies seem to demonstrate gender differences in media’s influence of body image and perhaps a muted effect of media when other socio-cultural factors are investigated.
A recent meta-analysis of media and body image concerns among women found small to moderate effect sizes (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). The authors examined both experimental and correlational studies in their meta-analysis and divided the construct of body image into 3 distinct dependent variables: body dissatisfaction, internalization of the thin ideal, and eating behaviors and beliefs. Their meta analysis included 77 studies and yielded a total of 141 effect sizes. The mean effect size for body dissatisfaction was – .28, for internalization of the thin ideal it was – .39, and for eating behaviors and beliefs it was – .30 (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). This meta-analysis demonstrates the negative relationship between media and body image among women.

A similar meta-analysis of media and body image concerns among men found slightly smaller effect sizes (Barlett, Vowels, & Saucier, 2008). The authors of this meta-analysis separated correlational and experimental studies. The effect size for the correlational studies was -.19 and for the experimental studies it was -.22. There were a total of 25 studies and 93 effect sizes used in this meta-analysis (Barlett, Vowels, & Saucier, 2008). Results from this meta-analysis demonstrate the negative relationship between media and body image in men.

Research has demonstrated a link between media and body image (see above) and there are several theories that attempt to explain this link. One such theory is the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). This theory posits that individuals form their own identity by making comparisons between themselves and others. Social comparison theory is applied to the topic of media and body image when individuals compare
themselves to people they see in the media (see Wykes & Gunter, 2005 for a review). Another theory used to explain the relationship between media and body image is schema theory. According to the schema theory, our body image is a part of a mental construct that represents who we are (Markus, 1977). This construct is formed over time based on our individual experiences. One experience that may influence this schema is images of body in the media (see Wykes & Gunter, 2005 for a review). A third theory that attempts to explain the link between media and body image is cultivation theory. Unlike the other two theories discussed here, cultivation theory considers the cumulative effects of television on one’s body image. It takes into account the amount of television watched as an influencing factor in body image. The theory of cultivation has been used to examine several socio-cultural perceptions, however, it has not been used directly for examining body image. For these reasons, the current author will use the theory of cultivation to examine the link between media and body image. A review of the theory of cultivation can be found below.

**Cultivation**

Cultivation theory became popular in the late 1960’s and the early 1970’s when George Gerbner and his colleagues secured funding for the Cultural Indicators Project. This project had three components; the third of which involved cultivation analysis. The cultivation component of the Cultural Indicators Project aimed to examine the relationship between television’s messages and the audience’s beliefs and behaviors (Morgan & Singorielli, 1990). The Cultural Indicators Project was the beginning of
decades of empirical research on the theory of cultivation. This theory postulates that television’s “…stable, repetitive, pervasive and virtually inescapable patterns of images and ideologies…” has a cumulative effect over long periods of time (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 5). In other words, cultivation theory does not aim to explain how a particular product’s advertisement influences purchasing behavior or how watching a scary movie may cause nightmares, but is rather about examining “…television as a system of messages – a system whose elements are not invariant or uniform, but complementary, organic and coherent…” and the consequences of that system of messages for television audiences (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 5).

The cultivation approach to television’s messages has five important constructs. These constructs as a whole make up the cultivation theory. The first construct can be explained with a definition of cultivation. When cultivation is applied to mass communication, specifically television, it can be said that the repetitive and pervasive messages on television will begin to be reflected in the audiences’ beliefs and behaviors. The second construct essential to the cultivation hypothesis is that people who watch a lot of television differ from people who do not watch a lot of television. It is common in cultivation analysis to divide participant samples into light, medium, and heavy viewers to examine television’s effects. Moreover, those viewers who fall into the light viewing category tend to be exposed to a greater variety of media sources, in other words, light viewers are not solely relying on television for information. Heavy viewers, on the other hand, tend to rely mostly on television for their information. Thus heavy television
viewing leaves little time for a variety of information sources (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990). Cultivation is further explained by the third concept: the “magic window”. The idea behind the magic window is that some television viewers believe that watching television is equivalent to watching a “magic window” into the world. That is, they believe television accurately portrays the real world. The fourth concept of mainstreaming posits that different people with different perceptions of social reality converge into a more cohesive perception of social reality as the amount of television viewing increases. In other words, the more television one watches the more likely his or her perceptions will be similar to others who also watch a lot of television (Harris, 2004). Finally, the fifth component of cultivation is resonance, or an amplified cultivation effect (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990). The amplification of the cultivation effect occurs when an individual is both a heavy television viewer AND matches the exaggerated circumstances on television (e.g., women who are heavy viewers are more likely to fear victimization due to the exaggerated number of women victims on television). Each of the five aspects of the cultivation come together in a gestalt, whereas the whole (cultivation theory) is greater than the sum of its parts (the components explained above).

Most of the cultivation research, to date, has focused on the cultivation of violence (see Signorielli & Morgan, 1990 for a review). Historically speaking, the effects of television on audiences has been of great concern since the late of the 1950’s when continuous streaming broadcasts became the norm in households across the United States. Bandura and his colleagues (1963) used Bobo Dolls, in their now classic studies,
to demonstrate children’s imitation of aggressive behaviors seen on film. Gerbner (1969) posited that heavy television viewers fall victim to the “mean world syndrome”. In other words, heavy viewers believe that the real world is a mean and scary place because they see so many mean and scary (i.e., violent) things on television. Moreover, the number of violent acts, crime and victimization seen on television far out numbers the actual occurrences according to records kept by law enforcement.

Although a majority of cultivation research has been conducted on violence, violence and victimization other topics include attitudes about racism and gender stereotyping, feelings of alienation, affluence, the aged, anxiety, civil liberties, quality of life, etc. (see Potter, 1993 for a brief review and additional references). The theory of cultivation has been the topic of spirited criticisms and academic debate since the first publications came out of the Cultural Indicators Project (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Among the earliest critics was the television industry whose researchers thought that the definition of violence was too unclear and too broad. They argued that cartoon/humorous violence should not be included in the violence index, or in the examination of cultivation of violence.

Another criticism of the cultivation theory is that there are non-linear cultivation patterns. As previously mentioned, it is typical in cultivation research to divide participants into viewing categories by the amount of viewing (e.g., light, medium, and heavy viewers) and examine the differences between the groups on measures of cultivation (e.g., mean world syndrome). Researchers have demonstrated that heavy
television viewers tend to give the “television” answer (e.g. the % of women who work outside their home on television is about 43%, in reality it’s closer to 66%) to questions more often than medium viewers, who give the television answer more often than light viewers (a clear linear trend). However, Hirsch (1980) criticized early cultivation analysis by Gerbner et al. (1976, 1977, 1978) for categorizing viewers into light, medium, and heavy, “…with no theoretical or statistical rationale” (p. 418). Hirsch (1980) conducted a reanalysis of the publically available National Opinion Research Center’s (NORC) general social surveys data collected in 1975, 1977, and 1978 and expanded the viewing categories into non-viewers (0 hours of television watched per day), light viewers (1 hour; formally 0-2 hours), medium viewers (2-3 hours; formally 3 hours), heavy viewers (4-7 hours; formally 4+ hours), and extreme viewers (8+ hours). In addition to expanding the viewing categories, Hirsch’s (1980) distribution allowed the median amount of television watched per day (2 hours) to be shifted from the light viewing category into the medium viewing category. His redistribution uncovered non-viewers and extreme viewers (aka super fans) are somewhat unique. Non-viewers tend to be more socially isolated and more fearful than light viewers while extreme viewers are less perturbed than heavy viewers. Thus, non-viewers tend to be worse off than light viewers while extreme viewers tend to be better off than heavy viewers (Hirsch, 1980). Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1981) noted that non-viewers and extreme viewers account for a small amount of the population (less than 10% combined in the NORC sample). They further argue that the linear relationship between cultivation and the amount of television
viewing holds up for 90% of the population. Another issue with non-viewers was highlighted by Shanahan and Morgan (1999). In an examination of 61 non-viewers, they found 16% watch dramas or sitcoms on several days a month, 14% watch PBS several days a week, and 13% watch the news daily. Similarly, the marginal groups of non and extreme viewers probably differ from other viewers on relevant third variables (Gerbner, et al., 1981). A decade later, Potter (1991) revisited issue of non-linearity in cultivation with a study of 308 middle and high school students. Potter (1991) examined four cultivation indexes: crime and law enforcement (measured with 6 items), working women, affluence, and health (each measured with 3 items). He then categorized viewers using 4 different techniques: an even 3-way split (the method preferred by Gerbner et al.), a 3-way split based on standard deviation, an even 5-way split, and an even 9-way split. Examination of the means of the cultivation indexes indicate linearity among both of the 3-way splits, but not among the 5 or 9-way split. Shanahan and Morgan (1999) argue that the 5 and 9-way splits cause the sample size to fall below a level that would produce stable results (62 [20%] and 34 [11%] participants respectively). The critique that the relationship between cultivation and television viewing is non-linear, but rather curvilinear, should be further explored without negating the entire cultivation theory (Hawkins & Pingree, 1982).

Another criticism of cultivation comes from the failure to replicate the cultivation effect in a large British sample (Wober, 1978). This failed replication of the cultivation effect was one of the first widely cited empirical disconfirmations of cultivation
(Shanahan & Mogran, 1999). However, there are some fundamental differences between British and US viewers. First, British television is far less violent than US television. In fact, a heavy British viewer sees less violence than a light US viewer (Pingree & Hawkins, 1981). Second, British television is more diversified and balanced than US television (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Other researchers have found cultivation effects in non-US samples. One example is Pingree and Hawkins’ (1981) study of 1200 Australians. They found that the cultivation effect was a function of how much US crime dramas participants watched, but not the total amount of television.

Although controversial at times, the theory of cultivation has withstood the tests of time and scientific inquiry. Repeated, pervasive, stereotyped and homogeneous television messages cultivate audience’s perceptions of social reality. The social reality reflected in television’s messages is distorted and does not accurately reflect society. Prevalent aspects of cultivation theory include a difference between heavy television viewers and light television viewers, mainstreaming, the magic window, and resonance. Significant research has been conducted on the cultivation of violence, stereotypes, political affiliation, occupations, and other aspects of social reality.

Cultivation theory posits that television’s messages are used to cultivate perceptions of social reality over time. One aspect of social reality that cultivation may influence is body image (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). In other words, repeated, pervasive, stereotyped, and homogeneous television images of specific types of body shapes over time may influence an individual’s own body image. Specifically, the theory of
cultivation would predict a mainstreaming effect of body image and perhaps a resonance effect.

**Current Study**

The current study will examine the relationship between television media and body image. Specifically, it will apply the theory of cultivation to the construct of body image. In other words, this study will examine the cumulative effects of television’s messages on an individual’s body image. The author will conduct a survey asking participants to respond to a series of questions that include demographic information, television consumption, body image, perceptions about television’s realism, and perceptions about society (cultivation).

Hypothesis 1: There will be a linear relationship between the amount of television viewing and cultivation. That is, participants identified as “heavy” television viewers will give the “television” answers on the cultivation questions more often than those participants identified as “medium” television viewers who will give the “television” answers more often than those participants identified as “light” television viewers.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a television viewing effect on body image. Those participants who are “heavy” television viewers will have the lowest body image, meaning that people who watch the greatest amount of television will score high on a measure of body dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a relationship between body image and cultivation. Specifically, participants with high scores on cultivation will have poor body image.
Hypothesis 4: There will be a resonance effect of television and body image. There will be body-related television viewing effect on body image. Specifically, those participants who are “heavy” body-related television viewers will have the lowest body image.

Hypothesis 5: Because body-image is a trait, the cumulative effects of television exposure on television will be examined. Specifically, there will resonance effect of body-related programs from 10 years ago.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

There were 310 participants (79.35% women, 19.03% men, the remainder chose not to answer) who were recruited using both the snowball data collection technique via email and social networking sites (e.g. facebook) and through psychology classes, students were given extra credit points to participate. Participants’ ages ranged from 19-84 years old ($M = 39.50, SD = 13.05$).

Measures

Demographics. Demographic questions assessing participant’s ethnicity, age, marital status, income, BMI and other factors were used.

Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS) conceptualizes body image as an attitudinal disposition and measures its evaluative, cognitive, and behavioral components. The 34-item measure consists of 5 subscales: Appearance Evaluation (AE), Appearance Orientation (AO), Overweight Preoccupation (OWP), Self-Classified Weight (SCW), and the Body Area Satisfaction Scale (BASS) (Cash, 2002). The AE asks 7 questions about an individual’s appearance and attractiveness based on a 5 point likert-type scale. The BASS asks participants to rate 9 areas of the body (e.g. face, hair, muscularity, etc.) on a 5 point likert-type scale. The AO scale uses 12 items to assess one’s degree of investment in one’s own appearance. OWP assess fat anxiety using 4 questions. SCW reflects how one classifies one’s own weight from very underweight to very overweight using 2 questions. Reliability
coefficients for each subscale range from .60 to .96 (Cash, Morrow, Harbosky, and Perry, 2004). High scores indicate body satisfaction.

Media consumption. Measures of media consumption habits were completed by the participants. Participants were asked to document their typical media consumption. A media consumption rubric was given to participants (i.e., “How many hours of television do you watch on a typical weekday?” [that number can be multiplied by 5] “How many hours of television do you watch on a typical weekend day?” [That number can be multiplied by 2] and “How many movies do you typically watch in a week? [That number can be multiplied by 2]. This measure served as the basis for separating participants into “heavy”, “medium”, and “light” viewers. In addition to a television consumption rubric, participants were given a list of television programs and ask to rate their frequency of viewing on a 5-point Likert-type scale (never watched, rarely watched, occasionally watched, watched much of the time, never missed it). Participants rated programs that have a high degree of body focus (e.g. America’s Next Top Model and Biggest Loser), programs with a cast of thin characters (e.g. Desperate Housewives and Beverly Hills 90210), and programs used as “fillers” or “distracters” (e.g. Family Guy and Lie to me).

Cultivation. Cultivation was measured using both first order measures and second order measures. First order measures asked participants to estimate correct responses for examples of things that occur in the real-world and that featured on television at a rate that differs from the real world. For example, “what percentage of the population are doctors? Is it closer to 5% or 10%; or What percent of the population suffers from an eating disorder? Is it closer to 3% or 6%” Twelve first order questions were asked.
Second order questions asked participants about the perceptions and feelings about the world. Rubin, Perse, and Taylor (1988) complied and factor analyzed common cultivation questions used by other researchers in the previous 20 years. Their final measure asked participants to agree-disagree (on a 5 point Likert-type scale) with 27 statements on 5 subscales. The first subscale, Faith in Others, had 9 statements like, “Most people can be trusted”. The second subscale, “Life Control”, had 6 statements like, “I am very content and satisfied with my life”. The third subscale, “Interpersonal Connection”, had 5 statements like, “I feel like I am part of a circle of friends”. The fourth subscale, “Political Efficacy”, had 4 statements like, “The people in the government have the interests of people like me at heart.” The fifth subscale, Safety, had 3 statements like, “I often walk outside around my neighborhood at night.” Overall their 5 factor solution accounted for 62.4% of the variance.

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited using the snowball method using email and social networking sites and through Psychology classes. They were given a web site address or a link directly to the survey. Participants accessed the survey online at their own convince. Participants began with giving their informed consent followed by filling out the survey questions. Finally, participants read a debriefing form and were given a certificate of completion for their participation.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

_Hypothesis 1: There will be a Linear Relationship Between the Amount of Television Viewing and Cultivation_

For the analyses of Hypothesis 1, participants were divided into light, medium, and heavy television viewing using an even 3-way split (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). There were 94 (30.2%) “light” viewers, there were 85 (27.3%) “medium” viewers, and 96 (30.9%) “heavy” viewers. There were 36 (11.6%) participants with missing data. During the data clean-up, the author chose mid-points for participants who answered this question with a range (e.g. if a participant indicated they watched 2-4 hours of television on a “typical” weekday, the author used 3 for the analysis). Additionally, some participants answered with an impossible number (e.g. on a typical weekday they watch 46 hours of television). Those participants were re-coded as missing data. For first-order cultivation, participants were given a sum score (1 point for each “television” answer given). Scores ranged for 0 (i.e. no television answers given) to 10 (out of 12 possible television answers). See Table 1 for the frequency of each television answer given. For the second-order cultivation questions, participants were given a subscale score (the mean on the items involved in that subscale, subscale score could range from 1-5 and each subscale did range from 1-5, except PE which ranged from 1.75-5). The faith in others subscale yielded a mean score of 2.59 (SD=.66), the life control subscale yielded a mean score of 2.64 (SD=.78), the interpersonal connection subscale yielded a mean score of 2.02 (SD=.78), the political efficacy subscale yielded a mean score of 3.17 (SD=.77), and the safety subscale yielded a mean score of 2.87 (SD=.84). Low scores indicate positive
attitudes for each subscale. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to see if the participants at different levels of television viewing differed on cultivation. First-order cultivation was not related to viewing level. Of the second-order cultivation subscales, only the faith in others subscale was significantly related to viewing level, $F(2, 266) = 3.52, p = .03$. Post-hoc tests indicated that the difference between light and heavy viewers was statistically significant ($p = .048$). See Table 2 for the F scores, means and standard deviations of the cultivation scores by viewing level. The linear trend hypothesized was not supported, however some evidence of cultivation was seen.

Table 1
Frequency of First-Order Cultivation Television Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># TV Answers</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Summary of Cultivation by Viewing Level: Means, Standard Deviations, and F tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivation</th>
<th>Low ($n = 84$)</th>
<th>Medium ($n = 73$)</th>
<th>Heavy ($n = 82$)</th>
<th>F ($p$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Order</td>
<td>3.85 (.72)</td>
<td>4.01 (.63)</td>
<td>4.37 (.70)</td>
<td>2.35 (.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in Others</td>
<td>2.46 (.50)</td>
<td>2.48 (.66)</td>
<td>2.71 (.70)</td>
<td>3.52 (.031)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Control</td>
<td>2.55 (.76)</td>
<td>2.63 (.79)</td>
<td>2.61 (.79)</td>
<td>.084 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>2.04 (.88)</td>
<td>1.95 (.65)</td>
<td>2.07 (.74)</td>
<td>.51 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy</td>
<td>3.06 (.66)</td>
<td>3.12 (.85)</td>
<td>3.16 (.77)</td>
<td>.49 (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>2.76 (.88)</td>
<td>2.74 (.77)</td>
<td>2.96 (.87)</td>
<td>1.06 (.35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; R^2=.03
---

**Hypothesis 2: There will be a television viewing effect on body image.**

To test hypothesis 2, participants were divided into light, medium, and heavy television viewing using an even 3-way split, as in hypothesis 1, with the same split. Subscale scores were calculated for the body-image questionnaire. Research indicates some gender differences in body-image, so an initial t-test was conducted to see if there was a gender difference in body-image for the current sample of participants. T-tests indicated that for all 5 subscales, there was a statistically significant gender difference on body image. Given this result, it would be inappropriate to analyze the body-image data across the sample as a whole without taking gender into effect. Therefore, a 2-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted testing for the effects of viewing level (3 levels) and gender (2 levels) on each body-image subscale. The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant interaction between viewing level and gender for any body image subscale. Similarly, the main effect of viewing level yielded no statistically significant effect on body-image. The main effect of gender on body-image was statistically significant for 3 of the 5 subscales (appearance evaluation [AE], appearance orientation [AO], and overweight preoccupation [OWP]). See Table 3 for means, standard deviations, and F test results. For the AE subscale, men feel more positive about their appearance than women feel; for the AO subscale men are more apathetic about their appearance than women are; for the OWP subscale men feel less fat anxiety and weight vigilance than women.

---
Table 3
Summary of Body Image by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MBSRQ Subscale</th>
<th>Female Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Male Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F (p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Evaluation</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>9.32 (.003)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Orientation</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>8.79 (.003)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Area Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>3.06 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight Preoccupation</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>17.20 (.000)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Classified Weight</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>2.45 (.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, R²=.04** p < .001, R²=.07

Hypothesis 3: There will be a relationship between body image and cultivation.

To test Hypothesis 3, participants were given a sum-score of the cultivation measure and the body image measure, according to the manuals. The relationship between cultivation and body image was measured with a correlation coefficient. Recall that low scores on the second-order cultivation measure indicate positive attitudes on each subscale. For the body-image measure, on 3 of the 5 subscales (AE, AO, and BAS) high scores indicate positive attitudes but on 2 of the subscales (OWP and SCW) high scores indicate negative attitudes. There was not a statistically significant relationship between body image and first-order cultivation.

There were, however, several statistically significant correlations between body image and second-order cultivation. Specifically, there were moderate significant negative correlations between the life control subscale on the second-order cultivation measure and appearance evaluation and body area satisfaction. The more life control one feels they have, the more satisfied with their appearance and the more content with areas of their bodies they appear to be. Additionally, there were small to moderate significant positive correlations with life control and overweight preoccupation and self-classified weight. In other words, the less life control one has the more fat anxiety, weight
vigilance, and labeling one's self as overweight. The second-order cultivation subscale
faith in others had a small significant negative correlation with body area satisfaction;
this means as faith in others increased, satisfaction with areas of the body decreased.

There was also a small significant positive correlation between faith in others and
overweight preoccupation; as faith in others decreased, overweight preoccupation also
decreased. Finally, there were small negative correlations between body area satisfaction
and political efficacy and safety. This means that body area satisfaction increased with
feelings of political efficacy and safety. All correlations can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Correlation Between Body Image and Cultivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivation</th>
<th>Appearance Evaluation</th>
<th>Appearance Orientation</th>
<th>Body Area Satisfaction</th>
<th>Overweight Preoccupation</th>
<th>Selfclassified Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Order</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in Others</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.172**</td>
<td>.204**</td>
<td>-.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Control</td>
<td>-.309**</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.362**</td>
<td>.235**</td>
<td>.162**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Connection</td>
<td>-.117</td>
<td>-.114</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>.162**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy Safety</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.144*</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>-.158**</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01

Hypothesis 4: There will be a resonance effect of television and body image.

To test Hypothesis 4, participants were given a sum-score of body-related
television programs. Participants were then divided into heavy (n=74), medium (n=73),
and light (n=114) body-related program viewers. An ANOVA was conducted to examine
the effect of the 3 body-related viewing groups and the 2 levels of gender on the
subscales of body image. The interaction was not statistically significant and the main
effects of gender were discussed above. Analysis indicated for the main effect of viewing
level that for 2 of the 5 subscales (AO and OWP) there was a significant relationship between viewing level and body image, $F(2, 240) = 5.06, p = .007$ and $F(2, 240) = 8.94, p = .000$, respectively. Post hoc tests indicated heavy viewers scored higher than light viewers on AO and heavy viewers scored higher than medium viewers who scored higher than light viewers on OWP. See Table 5 for the F-test and mean scores.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewers</th>
<th>Appearance Evaluation</th>
<th>Appearance Orientation</th>
<th>Body Area Satisfaction</th>
<th>Overweight Preoccupation</th>
<th>Selfclassified Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>3.23 (.91)</td>
<td>3.18 (.65)</td>
<td>3.21 (.65)</td>
<td>2.39 (.88)</td>
<td>3.62 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.08 (.65)</td>
<td>3.29 (.62)</td>
<td>3.12 (.58)</td>
<td>2.70 (.83)</td>
<td>3.81 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>3.00 (.77)</td>
<td>3.46 (.60)</td>
<td>3.02 (.70)</td>
<td>2.99 (.86)</td>
<td>3.64 (.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-test</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>5.06**</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>8.94**</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .01$

The first analysis for this hypothesis included 17 programs that were body related, including 13 reality television programs. The theory of cultivation became popular during a time when the only types of “reality” television programming were the news and game shows. Today, however, reality programming has become a genre in and of itself. To further test the resonance hypothesis, an additional analysis was conducted using only the scripted body-related programs (e.g., House, Desperate Housewives, Beverly Hills 90210, and Drop Dead Diva). Participants were divided into heavy (n=103) scripted body-related viewers, medium (n=110) scripted body-related viewers, and light (n=90) scripted body-related viewers. An ANOVA was conducted on the scripted body image program viewing levels (low, medium, and heavy) and gender. There was not a statistically significant interaction between gender and viewing level on body image. Main effects indicated that 3 out of 5 body image subscales were significantly influenced by viewing level and by gender. BAS and SCW were the only subscales that were not
statistically significant for either gender or viewing level. See Table 6 for means and F-scores. Both analyses indicate that this hypothesis was partially supported.
Table 6 The Resonance Effect of Scripted Body Image by Viewing Level and Gender.  
Mean Scores for Body Image by Viewing Level and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Image</th>
<th>Viewing Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>F-test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Evaluation</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.87*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Orientation</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.62*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Area Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight Preoccupation</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>7.34**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfclassified Weight</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, ** p < .01
Hypothesis 5: Because body-image is a trait, the cumulative effects of television exposure on television will be examined.

To test Hypothesis 5, participants were given a sum-score of body-related television programs from the 1998-1999 television season. Participants were then divided into heavy (n=93), medium (n=75), and light (n=84) body-related program viewers. A gender by viewing level (light, medium, heavy) ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of gender and viewing groups on the subscales of body image. The interaction was not statistically significant. The main effect of viewing level was significant for two subscales of the body image measure (AO and OWP, \(F(2, 246) = 5.54, p = .004\) and \(F(2, 246) = 4.68, p = .011\), respectively. The main effect of gender was significant for three subscales of the body image measure (AE, AO and OWP, \(F(1, 246) = 7.66, p = .006\); \(F(1, 246) = 5.67, p = .018\); \(F(1, 246) = 9.30, p = .003\), respectively). Post hoc tests indicated heavy viewers scored higher than light viewers on all 3 significant subscales. See Table 7 for mean scores.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Image</th>
<th>Viewing Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Evaluation</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Orientation</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Area Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight Preoccupation</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfclassified Weight</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The theory of cultivation has been applied to many areas including violence, political affiliation, and social roles. Prior to the current study, it had not been applied to body image. Although not all of the hypotheses in the current study were supported, the information learned in this study provides a structure for future research.

Cultivation was only moderately demonstrated in the current study with television viewing levels being related to second-order cultivation questions, specifically faith in others. As expected, light viewers have more faith in others than heavy viewers. The negative attitude of heavy viewers is consistent with previous research (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982). Gerbner et al. (1982) found that cultivation studies continued to confirm heavy television viewers have an “exaggerated sense of mistrust” (p. 107). However, the hypothesized support for cultivation across all subscales was not found. One possible reason the cultivation effect was not demonstrated strongly is the way television viewing has changed over time. That is to say, people today are able to be more selective about when and how they watch television with the availability of technology. The use of technology may, in fact, be a mediating variable in the cultivation effect. Heavy viewers are still getting the same content, but perhaps the control over the content allows for more intentional viewing. This “active” heavy viewing could be decreasing the cultivation effect. Moreover, a more complex model of television viewing may be more appropriate to capture today’s viewer and the long-term effects of television.
The hypothesized relationship between overall viewing level and body image was not observed. Rather, there was a relationship between gender and body-image. This is consistent with previous research (see Smolak, 2002 for a review). In the current sample, women were more dissatisfied with their appearance than men, which is also consistent with norms on this scale. Appearance orientation involves preoccupation with looking good. Men are slightly less concerned with their appearance than women. Overweight preoccupation is concerned with fat anxiety and weight vigilance. Women are slightly more concerned than men in this sample with their weight. This consistent research supports the evolutionary explanation of attraction. Specifically, in order to attract a mate, women must adorn, groom, and beautify themselves while men must obtain more resources or be able to defend their territory. This study demonstrates that men are more apathetic about their appearance than women illustrating the evolutionary perspective.

The resonance effect of cultivation means that for a particular group of people, the cultivation effect is particularly strong. This was demonstrated in the current research. That is, the participants who were heavy body-related program viewers had greater body-image dissatisfaction than those who were light body-related program viewers. Moreover, heavy viewers of scripted programs that had very thin characters felt worse about themselves than light views of those programs. This is where the biggest impact of cultivation can be seen in the current study. It is of importance to note that heavy viewers of the scripted body-related programs did have the worst body image and that the scripted body-related programs were the most watched programs of all the programs measured in this study. Not only do these programs have an impact on their heavy viewers, but they have the largest potential to have an impact because of their massive appeal and audience
size. Cultivation is a slow process. It is about the cumulative effect of television viewing over time. When it comes to body image, this cumulative effect is enhanced when scripted programs with thin characters are examined.

This research is just a base for examining body image and cultivation. More research should be conducted on first-order measures of cultivation, especially first-order questions related to body image. Second-order cultivation questions regarding body-image attitudes may be a basis for further methodological research. Another area of particular interest is the resonance effect. Future researchers should focus more body-related programming. One interesting study may be examining body-related programming on network television, cable television, and premium cable television. Similarly, it would be interesting to investigate which comes first, body image or program choice. In other words, does one’s body image lead us to choose a particular type of program to watch or do the programs we watch influence our body image? Is this a static relationship or a dynamic relationship? One study could involve individuals making a choice about a program to watch while they wait for a fictional appointment.

This research is not without its limitations. One major limitation is the viewing level missing data. Additional data should be collected and analyzed examining the viewing level and cultivation question. Another limitation may be the age of the sample. Research has demonstrated that as people age some aspects of body image become less important. Finally, a limitation of the current study is that the use of technology was not measured. Specifically, how people use technology for viewing television and movies (e.g. using a DVR system to record television, watching television via the internet, and/or television rentals) may be a variable that mediates the cultivation effect. As people have
more control over how and what they watch they may be self-selecting into particular types of programs. Given television’s ubiquitous and homogeneous messages, this may not be an issue, but it is certainly worth further examination.

This study highlights the need to examine the relationship between the long term effects of television viewing on body image. One strength of this study is the transdisciplinary approach to the constructs which pulls major theories from the fields of mass communication and psychology. Examining strong theories from more than one discipline in concert can yield a better understanding of complex human behavior, personality, and cognitions. Additionally, this research may suggest that individuals who struggle with a poor body image should be more intentional about the television programming that he or she views. Perhaps avoiding certain types of programming (e.g. programs with a very thin cast and/or programs that have a body-related content) will have a positive effect on that individual’s body-esteem. Finally, the current research opens doors for cultivation researchers. There is a natural connection between the long-term or cultivating effects of television viewing and the long-term formation of body image and other personality traits. Cultivation researchers may need to re-focus their energies on the resonance effect, especially when it comes to body-image.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

THE MBSRQ-AS
INSTRUCTIONS--PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The following pages contain a series of statements about how people might think, feel, or behave. You are asked to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to you personally.

Your answers to the items in the questionnaire are anonymous, so please do not write your name on any of the materials. In order to complete the questionnaire, read each statement carefully and decide how much it pertains to you personally.

Using a scale like the one below, indicate your answer by entering it to the left of the number of the statement.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just give the answer that is most accurate for you. Remember, your responses are confidential, so please be completely honest and answer all items.

*(Duplication and use of the MBSRQ-AS only by permission of Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529)*

**EXAMPLE:**

___ 1. I am usually in a good mood.

In the blank space,

enter a **1** if you **definitely disagree** with the statement;
enter a **2** if you **mostly disagree**;
enter a **3** if you **neither agree nor disagree**;
enter a **4** if you **mostly agree**;
or enter a **5** if you **definitely agree** with the statement.

___ 2. I am careful to buy clothes that will make me look my best.
___ 3. My body is sexually appealing.
___ 4. I constantly worry about being or becoming fat.
___ 5. I like my looks just the way they are.
___ 6. I check my appearance in a mirror whenever I can.
___ 7. Before going out, I usually spend a lot of time getting ready.
___ 8. I am very conscious of even small changes in my weight.
___ 9. Most people would consider me good-looking.
___ 10. It is important that I always look good.
___ 11. I use very few grooming products.
___ 12. I like the way I look without my clothes on.
___ 13. I am self-conscious if my grooming isn't right.
___ 14. I usually wear whatever is handy without caring how it looks.
15. I like the way my clothes fit me.
16. I don't care what people think about my appearance.
17. I take special care with my hair grooming.
18. I dislike my physique.
19. I am physically unattractive.
20. I never think about my appearance.
21. I am always trying to improve my physical appearance.
22. I am on a weight-loss diet.

For the remainder of the items use the response scale given with the item, and enter your answer in the space beside the item.

23. I have tried to lose weight by fasting or going on crash diets.
   1. Never
   2. Rarely
   3. Sometimes
   4. Often
   5. Very Often

24. I think I am:
   1. Very Underweight
   2. Somewhat Underweight
   3. Normal Weight
   4. Somewhat Overweight
   5. Very Overweight

25. From looking at me, most other people would think I am:
   1. Very Underweight
   2. Somewhat Underweight
   3. Normal Weight
   4. Somewhat Overweight
   5. Very Overweight

26-34. Use this 1 to 5 scale to indicate how dissatisfied or satisfied you are with each of the following areas or aspects of your body:

26. Face (facial features, complexion)
27. Hair (color, thickness, texture)
28. Lower torso (buttocks, hips, thighs, legs)
29. Mid torso (waist, stomach)
30. Upper torso (chest or breasts, shoulders, arms)
31. Muscle tone
32. Weight
33. Height
34. Overall appearance

MBSRQ-AS © Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D.
Cultivation Questions

I.  First-order questions forced choice format (the answer with the * is the “tv” answer)
   a.  What is the medium household income in the US?
      i.  Is it closer to $50,000 or closer to $75,000*
   b.  What percent of the population is in poverty?
      i.  Is it closer to 6%* or closer to 12%
   c.  What percent of the population becomes the victim of murder in the US annually?
      i.  Is it less than 1% or closer to 5%* (this question could also be changed to how many and the answers would be 15,000 or 30,000*)
   d.  How many robberies are committed in the US annually?
      i.  Is it closer to 250,000* or closer to 450,000?
   e.  What percent of the population is a law enforcement officer?
      i.  Is it less than 1% or closer to 5%*
   f.  What percent of the population is a doctor/medical practitioner?
      i.  Is it closer to 5% or closer to 10%*
   g.  What percent of the population is a teacher?
      i.  Is it closer to 2%* or 6%
   h.  What percent of the population is in office support?
      i.  Is it closer to 8%* or 18%
   i.  What percent of the population is in management?
      i.  Is it closer to 5% or 10%*
   j.  How many cosmetic surgical procedures are performed annually in the US?
      i.  Is it closer to 2 million or closer to 4 million*
   k.  What size dress does the average woman in the US wear?
      i.  Is it closer to 8* or closer to 14?
   l.  What percent of the population in the US suffer from an eating disorder?
      i.  Is it closer to 3% or closer to 6%*

II. Second-Order questions. Items with * are reversed scored.
   a.  Faith in others
      i.  Most people can be trusted.
      ii.  Most people are charitable if the situation calls for it.
      iii. Most people can be depended upon to come through in a pinch.
      iv.  Most people are basically honest.
      v.  Most people are concerned about the welfare of others.
vi. Most people will keep a promise.

vii. Most people will go out of their way to help someone.

viii. Most people try to be fair.

ix. Most people will lend a helping hand if given the chance.

b. Life Control
   i. My life could be happier than it is now.*
   ii. I am very content and satisfied with my life.
   iii. Compared to other people, I get down in the dumps too often.*
   iv. I often feel that I lack control over the direction my life is taking.*
   v. I’ve been successful in achieving my aims or goals in life.
   vi. Many times I feel I have little influence over the things that happen to me.*

c. Interpersonal connection
   i. It is important for me to visit with friends, relatives or neighbors.
   ii. I feel like I am part of a circle of friends.
   iii. I am interested in what happens to people I know.
   iv. It’s important for me to participate in activities with other people.
   v. Being able to help others is part of the joy of living.

d. Political efficacy
   i. The people in government have the interests of people like me at heart.
   ii. People in the government care about what people like me think.
   iii. What I say or do can make a difference with what my government does.
   iv. I can make my opinion known to my government representatives if I make the effort.

e. Safety
   i. I would feel safe if I leave the doors to my home unlocked.
   ii. My neighborhood is a safe place to live.
   iii. I often walk outside around my neighborhood at night.

Television Program Lists

Current

America's Next Top Model
Beverly Hills 90210
Dance your ass off*

Dating in the Dark
Desperate House Wives
DietTribe*
Drop Dead Diva*
Family Guy
Fringe
Heroes
House
Lie to Me
Lost
Make Me a Supermodel*
Models of the Runway*
More to love
Real House Wives of New Jersey*
Real House Wives of Atlanta*
Real House Wives of Orange County*
The biggest loser
The swan

Ten Years Ago

Ally McBeal
Beverly Hills 90210
Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Charmed
Chicago Hope
Dawson's Creek
Dharma & Greg
ER
Everybody Loves Raymond
Frasier
Friends
Melrose Place
Party of Five
Providence
the X-files
Veronica's Closet
Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2009
IRB Application No: A00970
Proposal Title: Cultivation and Characteristics

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved  Protocol Expires: 10/13/2010

Principal Investigator(s):
Angela Belden  Melanie Page
431 E. Verdugo Ave. #B  116 North Murray
Burbank, CA 91501  Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the
rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that
the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45
CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval
  stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol
   must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar
   year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are
   unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the
authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions
about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219
Cordell North (phone: 405-744-8700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Sandra Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board
VITA

Angela Kay Belden

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

Dissertation:  AS SEEN ON TV: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE AND CULTIVATION

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Visiting Instructor at Woodbury University, 4 sections of Social Psychology, 2 sections of Media Psychology, 2 sections of Advanced Research Methods, 2 sections of Environmental Psychology, 2 sections of Life-Span Development, From “Psycho” to Psychology, and 3 sections of Introduction to Psychology; 2008-2010.
Visiting Instructor at Eckerd College, 3 sections of Introduction to Psychology, Childhood Development, From “Psycho” to Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Advanced Personality Research; 2007-2008.
Adjunct Instructor: Polk Community College, 3 sections of General Psychology, 3 sections of Human Development; Florida Southern College, Introduction to Psychology, Social Psychology, Animal Behavior, Personality Psychology, Capstone course for Psychology Majors; 2006-2007

Professional Memberships:
Association for Psychological Science
In our mass mediated society, television’s messages are often pervasive, ubiquitous, and homogeneous. Heavy television viewers often have characteristics that differ from light television viewers (Gerbner et al. 1980 & 1981). The cultivation effect of television on body image was examined in 310 participants (79.35% women). Participants’ ages ranged from 19-84 years old ($M = 39.50, SD = 13.05$).

Findings and Conclusions:

First-order cultivation had no effect on body image and second-order cultivation was only partially related to body image. There was, however, a resonance effect such that heavy viewers of body-image related television programs had more body image dissatisfaction that light viewers of body-image related television programs. This relationship held true for current viewing and viewing 10 years prior.