



The effect of thin-ideals on body satisfaction and body appreciation across different age groups

Sophie Owen

Supervised by: Dr Gillian Marks

April 2014

The effect of thin-ideals on body satisfaction and body appreciation across different age groups

ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that exposure to thin images has a negative impact on the body image states of women (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). The present study aimed to investigate if the negative effects associated with exposure to thin-ideals differ according to age. Participants were 80 women, categorised as young (N=40) or older (N=40). Participants were required to complete a questionnaire comprised of a body satisfaction scale and a body appreciation scale before and after viewing thin images or neutral images. Differences between pre and post image scores were calculated. Results show there was a significant main effect for image on scores of both body satisfaction and appreciation ($p < .001$), indicating that thin images negatively affect the body image state of women irrespective of age. There was also a significant interaction effect between age and image on scores of body appreciation ($p < .01$). This indicates that there was less of a negative impact on the body appreciation scores of older women compared to the young women following exposure to thin-ideals, suggesting that body appreciation increases with age and body appreciation remains in older women even after exposure to thin-ideals.

KEY WORDS:	BODY SATISFACTION	BODY APPRECIATION	AGE	THIN-IDEALS	BODY IMAGE
------------	-------------------	-------------------	-----	-------------	------------

Introduction

Body image is an individual's own subjective experience of their appearance, incorporating a person's 'body-related self-perceptions and self-attitudes' (Cash, 2004:1). It is not recognized as stable, but a flexible state influenced by distinct contextual events (Cash, 2002), such as the exposure to media images (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Body image and self-esteem are closely tied (Clay et al., 2005) and therefore, worrying about one's own body image can have a negative effect on an individual's wellbeing and can lead to unhealthy body-related behaviours (Bell et al., 2007).

Negative issues concerning body image are common for women of all ages (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004). In the 1900's there was a shift from the plump and voluptuous body ideal to the current standard of female beauty, which is now one of an unattainable thinness (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004). An unrealistic appearance ideal has been suggested as the most likely cause of body dissatisfaction and an unrealistic perception of one's own body (Labre, 2002; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004). The media has helped this ideal to grow, through portraying a westernised, sociocultural standard of female beauty that emphasizes unattainable thinness for the majority of the female population (Tiggemann & Slater, 2004). Magazines, television adverts and billboards greatly reinforce this culturally defined thin-ideal body image for women, glorifying images of ultra-slender models (Thompson & Stice, 2001). This is a cause for concern, as exposure to media images of thin-ideals negatively influences the body image states of young women (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Meta-analysis' by Groesz, Levine, & Murnen (2002) and Grabe, Ward and Hyde (2008) suggest that women are significantly more dissatisfied with their bodies after viewing thin media images, with the dissatisfaction occurring after only a 5-minute exposure time (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Similarly, Tiggemann and Slater (2004) found that when they exposed participants briefly to music videos containing thin and attractive images of women, participants body satisfaction scores decreased, suggesting that viewers are negatively affected by the content presented in the music videos they watch.

However, the media alone is not solely responsible for accentuating the sociocultural ideal. Peers also play a large part in reinforcing body image ideals (Ferguson et al., 2011), particularly in young women. Clark and Tiggemann (2008) found that comments from peers about body image significantly negatively affected body satisfaction. Similarly, Jones et al. (2004) reported that body dissatisfaction was increased when there was direct peer criticism from one peer to another and in addition, dissatisfaction was highest when there was a large amount of discussion regarding attractive body types within a peer group.

Generally, an enhanced body dissatisfaction is common when an individual's own body size or weight is incompatible with the sociocultural ideal (Bell et al., 2007). Numerous studies have attempted to uncover the various individual differences that may be attached to susceptibility to thin-ideals (Stice, 1994; Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Hallsworth et al., 2005). One factor that has been found to influence an individual's vulnerability to thin-ideals is an initial poor body image, predisposing an individual to

decreased body satisfaction following the exposure to thin idealized images (Posavac et al., 1998).

Another predictor of vulnerability to negative effects from viewing idealized females is, the 'social comparison tendency' (Dittmar & Howard, 2004:768). Social comparison tendency refers to an individual's attempt to improve themselves because of an aspiration towards an upward comparison (Festinger, 1954). Clarke (2002) suggests that western women can increase status and value through their appearance and as a result are persistently trying to improve their appearance. One way in which women try to do this is by aspiring towards idealised models and using these models as upward comparisons and inspirational figures for themselves (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2005). As idealised models are now often, 'ultra-slender' (Thompson & Stice, 2001:181) and emphasize an unattainable thinness (Tiggemann & Slater, 2004), the higher the degree of social comparison tendency an individual has, the greater the detrimental effects (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2005). Evidence for social comparison tendency has been shown with women upwardly comparing themselves to models shown in magazines (Milkie, 1999), music videos (Tiggemann and Slater, 2004) and advertisements (Bessenoff, 2006). The former studies all report that the comparisons employed correlated with body dissatisfaction (Milkie, 1999; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004).

Furthermore, Thompson et al. (1999) provides another explanation for vulnerability to thin idealised images. Thompson et al. (1999) refers to a 'thin-ideal internalisation', to describe how an individual participates in behaviours designed to produce an approximation of the socially defined ideal they aspire to (Thompson & Stice, 2001:181). Individuals with the greatest levels of internalisation will be largely susceptible to the negative effects from the idealised images portrayed through the media (Thompson et al., 1999). Studies from Dittmar and Howard (2004) and Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) provide support for this explanation, concluding that those with the highest aspirations to be thin were those that were most negatively affected by the thin idealized images.

Although individual differences and vulnerability factors are now widely recognised in relation to the negative effects associated with exposure to thin-ideals, many of the studies investigating body image have concentrated on younger adults and adolescents, acquiring samples from college or university students (Tiggemann, 2004). There has been very little research into the influence of age in relation to exposure to thin-deals (Pruis & Janowsky, 2010).

With regards to age, a copious amount of research has focused on how body satisfaction alters over time (Cash et al., 1986; Pliner et al., 1990; Webster & Tiggemann, 2003; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004), helping to summarize age across the lifespan into three findings (Tiggemann, 2004). Firstly, an ageing body places men and women further away from the "perfect", young, idealised image they aspire to (Tiggemann, 2004). Secondly, the importance of body appearance reduces with increasing age (Cash et al., 1986; Pliner et al., 1990; Thompson et al., 1998). Thirdly, body satisfaction/dissatisfaction remains fairly stable across the lifespan (Tiggemann, 2004; Grogan, 2008). The latter is surprising, considering the ageing woman typically puts on weight, experiences changes in body shape, develops

wrinkles and may lose hair (Tiggemann, 2004). This can be a difficult and problematic process for many women.

However, Gosselink et al. (2008) provides an explanation as to why body satisfaction may not decline further in older women. Gosselink et al. (2008) suggest that although older women still care about their appearance, they may not feel the same societal pressures as younger women to look like the glorified thin-ideals presented in the media (Bedford & Johnson, 2006). Correspondingly, Tiggemann & Lynch (2001) suggest the ageing woman has less anxiety concerning their appearance and Lewis & Cachelin (2001) found in their sample of older women there was less drive for thinness. Additionally, Reboussin et al. (2000) found greater levels of body satisfaction in their sample of 35-75 year olds and propose that older women value the functions of their bodies rather than the appearance of them. Tiggemann (2004) also highlights that standards of body evaluation change as women age and women do not carry the same importance on body shape and weight, as do their younger counterparts. Therefore, body dissatisfaction may essentially persist throughout an individual's lifetime; however, the negative feelings associated with body dissatisfaction may lessen with age (Peat et al., 2008; Prais & Janowsky, 2010).

Studies by Oberg and Tornstam (1999) and Hetherington and Burnett (1994) provide an exception to the general finding that body satisfaction is stable. Oberg and Tornstam (1999) found a positive correlation between age and body satisfaction, suggesting that as women get older they become less concerned about their appearance. Correspondingly, Hetherington and Burnett (1994) found in their sample of 60-78 year old women, there was less dissatisfaction compared to younger participants. However, the former studies used women of a greater age than the majority of studies reporting stable satisfaction (Tiggemann, 2004).

Nevertheless, there is wealth of evidence suggesting body satisfaction generally, remains fairly stable across the lifespan (Tiggemann, 2004; Grogan, 2008), and as a result, there has been a shift in research from focusing on body dissatisfaction, into a recent development of research into body appreciation. Body appreciation refers to facets of positive body image (Tiggemann & McCourt, 2013), often referring to the 'love, respect, acceptance, and appreciation for one's body' (Tylka, 2011; Tiggemann & McCourt, 2013:624), rather than the negative connotations related to body dissatisfaction.

Tiggemann and Lacey (2009) found there was no relationship between body dissatisfaction and age, consistent with the findings from Grogan (2008) and Tiggemann (2004), but the 'self-evaluative salience component of appearance investment' (Cash, Melnyk & Hrabosky, 2004; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009:286), was linked with age. Cash, Melnyk and Hrabosky (2004) define self-evaluative salience as the extent to which an individual's appearance is a fundamental feature of their self-worth. Tiggemann and Lacey (2009) propose that as women age, their appearance becomes less important to them and as a result, their self-worth no longer depends on their appearance. If levels of self-evaluative salience are high, it can become a detrimental asset that correlates with low self-esteem (Cash et al., 2004) and a poor body image quality of life (Cash, Jakatdar, & Williams, 2004; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Findings from Cash, Melnyk, and Hrabosky (2004) and

Tiggemann and Lacey (2009) lead to the prediction that the self-evaluative salience feature of appearance investment will decline with age and therefore suggest that body appreciation may essentially increase with age.

In a very recent study by Tiggemann and McCourt (2013), age was positively correlated with body appreciation, suggesting that body appreciation improves with age, supporting the prediction of Tiggemann and Lacey (2009). However, Tiggemann and McCourt (2013) acknowledge that a limitation of their study may be that their sample was recruited from a small geographical area, where participants may have shared particular characteristics and this could be problematic for the generalizability of their findings. Additionally, Tiggemann and McCourt (2013) used a correlational method to establish the link between age and body appreciation and as a result, cause and effect cannot be established.

One of the main aims of the present study is to attempt to further develop the findings from Tiggemann and McCourt (2013) by using an experimental method to potentially develop a causal link between age and body appreciation. Another main aim of the study is to identify if the negative effects associated with exposure to thin-ideals differ according to age. Three hypotheses were tested:

H1: The negative effects from exposure to thin-ideals will differ between young and old women.

H2: Body appreciation increases with age.

H3: Exposure to thin images will have a negative impact on the body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores of both younger and older women.

Method

Design

As the aim of the study was to establish if the independent variables (age and image) cause changes in the dependant variables (body satisfaction and body appreciation), an experimental design was appropriate. Questionnaires, in the form of a Likert-scale, were used to measure scores of body satisfaction and body appreciation.

Participants

Participants were 40 women between the ages of 18 and 25 years ($M = 21.33$, $SD = 1.62$) and 40 women aged 40 years and above ($M = 50.67$, $SD = 6.98$), recruited using opportunity sampling. The two groups created the age conditions for the study. Participants aged between 18 and 25 years were obtained from a university in the North West, while the sample of women aged 40 years and above were recruited from an organisation in North Wales. The manager of the organisation acted as the gatekeeper (see appendix 9) for the sample of 40 years and above, providing her permission to allow for the invitation of her employees to participate in the research.

Materials

The 'Body Areas Satisfaction Subscale' (BASS), of the 'Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire' (MBSRQ; Brown, Cash & Mikulka, 1990) was used to measure body dissatisfaction (see appendix 16). Participants indicate their amount of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with nine body areas using a 5-point Likert scale. Cash (2000) concludes that high scorers are in general content with most areas of their body, whereas, low scorers are generally unhappy with the size or appearance of numerous areas. Cash (2000), reported strong reliability and validity, and good internal consistency. Correspondingly, Tiggemann and McCourt (2013) presented good internal reliability in their recent study. Accordingly, the BASS subscale of the MBSRQ, implements as an appropriate measure for the Body Satisfaction component of the present study.

Body appreciation was measured using a modified version of the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) developed by Avalos, Tlyka and Wood-Barcalow (2005) (see appendix 16). Avalos et al. (2005) reported good construct validity and internal reliability of the scale and therefore, this scale provides an ideal measure for the Body Appreciation element of the present study. As the present study is in fact measuring the effects of thin-ideal images on women, permission was given by Dr. Tracy Tlyka to remove the individual item, 'I do not allow unrealistically thin images of women presented in the media to affect my attitudes towards my body' (BAS) (see appendix 8). This item has been removed to eliminate any skewed answers that may arise from this question. Participants select their level of agreement with twelve statements using a 5-point Likert scale. Likert-type scale questionnaires are designed to measure a person's attitudes or knowledge directly from the person (Davies, 2003) and therefore provide an appropriate measure for assessing an individual's attitudes towards their body image in the present study.

Two booklets were constructed for the experiment, both containing twenty images. Booklet 1 included the independent variable (images of thin-ideal models; see appendix 7) and booklet 2 was a control booklet comprised of neutral images (see appendix 6). Grogan (1999) suggests that older women compare themselves to women of their own age rather than youthful ideals and therefore, it was important that the present study included images of women that were of a variety of ages. Half of the participants in each age category were presented with booklet 1 and half of the participants in each age category were presented with booklet 2. Participants were required to look through the booklet of images for a total of five minutes. This is considered an appropriate amount of time as Yamamiya et al. (2005) reported increased body dissatisfaction after only a five-minute exposure to thin-ideals.

An invitation letter, information sheet and consent form (see appendices 2, 3, 4) were constructed for the study and were presented to the potential participant before they took part in the research. A de-brief form (see appendix 5) was also created and was given to the subject after participation, allowing them to form a unique personal code to allow for anonymity of data.

Procedure

Following the completion of the consent form, participants were presented with the first questionnaire. The questionnaire contained the BASS and the BAS. After participants had completed the first questionnaire, they were given a ten-minute break before looking through booklet 1 or booklet 2. Participants were required to look at each image for 15 seconds. The researcher timed this process. Following observation of the images, participants were presented with a second questionnaire, containing both the BASS and the BAS. Participation took place in the participants own environment, without a time constraint, allowing for comfort and ease. A face-to-face method was employed, allowing participants to ask the researcher any questions they may have.

Following complete data collection, the data was entered into SPSS. The difference between scores from exposure to thin images and neutral images was established. There was a significant difference between the scores; therefore, the difference was attributed to the effects of the exposure to thin-ideals, as other extraneous variables were controlled for. Subsequently, body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores pre and post images were averaged to produce body satisfaction total scores 1 and 2 and body appreciation total scores 1 and 2. Higher scores indicated greater levels of body satisfaction and body appreciation. Body satisfaction score 2 was then deducted from score 1 to provide the dependant variable, body satisfaction difference. The same was repeated for body appreciation to provide the dependant variable body appreciation difference.

Two, 2x2 between subjects ANOVA's were used to establish if the age of the participants and their exposure to thin images influenced their levels of body satisfaction and body appreciation. Pallant (2010) highlights the advantage of using a two-way ANOVA is the ability to assess not only the individual effect of two independent variables on the dependant variable but also to examine the possibility of an interaction effect.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with the conduct and ethical guidelines outlined by the British Psychological Society (2009). The four ethical principles, respect, competence, responsibility and integrity were maintained throughout the research. Participants who were not take part in the study were outlined clearly on the invitation letter to avoid any vulnerable individuals that may be sensitive to the topic of body image from partaking. There was no deception involved during the study, as participants were made entirely aware of what the study entailed. In addition, right to withdraw was explained fully. Ethical considerations are discussed in more detail on the ECF and AEF forms of ethical approval (see appendix 1).

Results

An initial reliability analysis was conducted to measure the internal consistency across items on the Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS) and the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS). Cronbach's alpha revealed high internal consistency for the BASS scale, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient value of .90 pre images and .92 post images. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha revealed high internal consistency for the BAS scale with a Cronbach alpha coefficient value of .94 pre images and .95 post

images. An internal reliability above .70 is seen as acceptable (DeVellis, 2003), however, values above .80 are preferable (Pallant, 2010). Therefore the internal reliability values are more than sufficient.

Following the reliability analysis, the overall mean scores were calculated for body satisfaction pre and post images and body appreciation pre and post images. Table's 1 and 2 show the difference between mean scores between the two age groups.

Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations for the young participant's body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores.

Table 1
Means and standard deviations for young participants body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
BS1mean	2.73	.68
BS2mean	2.60	.71
BA1mean	2.86	.65
BA2mean	2.70	.63

Table 2 provides the means and standards deviations for the older participant's body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores.

Table 2
Means and standard deviations for old participants body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
BS1mean	3.68	.44
BS2mean	3.61	.51
BA1mean	3.94	.45
BA2mean	3.86	.51

Table 1 shows the mean scores for the younger participants for both body satisfaction and body appreciation pre and post images, are lower than all of the mean scores for the older participants. As the midpoint on the satisfaction scale was 3, this suggests that the younger participants are on average, less satisfied with their bodies than the older women in all four conditions. Additionally, the mean scores show that body appreciation in the older women is much higher ($M = 3.94$) than the younger women ($M = 2.86$) before exposure to images. Following exposure to images, body appreciation remained higher in the older women ($M = 3.86$) compared

to the younger women ($M=2.70$). There is also greater variation in responses for the younger participants compared to the older participants, as indicated by the higher *SDs*.

The difference between scores 1 and 2 for both body satisfaction and body appreciation were then calculated. Score 2 was deducted from score 1 to give a body satisfaction difference score and a body appreciation difference score for all participants. A test of distribution was subsequently conducted to measure the frequencies of the difference scores for body satisfaction and body appreciation. The distribution test shows if the data is normally distributed and if the appropriate parametric tests should be subsequently used (Langridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2004). Distribution tests revealed that scores were roughly, normally distributed given the small sample size within each condition ($N= 20$). For an illustration of distribution frequencies see appendix 12.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for all groups, for the difference between pre and post body satisfaction scores.

Table 3
Means and standard deviations for all groups for body satisfaction

	Young		Old		Overall	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Thin	.24	.36	.14	.16	.19	.28
Neutral	.02	.75	-.01	.06	.01	.07
Overall	.13	.28	.07	.14		

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for all groups, for the difference between pre and post body appreciation scores.

Table 4
Means and standard deviations for all groups for body appreciation

	Young		Old		Overall	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Thin	.33	.31	.11	.17	.22	.27
Neutral	-.01	.06	.03	.10	.01	.08
Overall	.16	.28	.07	.43		

Descriptive statistics show that the overall difference between pre and post scores for the thin condition for body satisfaction ($M = .19$), is much greater than the overall mean score for the neutral condition ($M = .01$). Descriptive statistics show that this is also the same for body appreciation; overall thin condition ($M = .22$), compared to the overall neutral condition ($M = .01$). This is a coherent finding, as the neutral images were used as a control, so there should only be a small, insignificant difference between pre and post image scores.

As the data was normally distributed and descriptive statistics were coherent, a parametric analysis of results was conducted. A two way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age and image on levels of body satisfaction, as measured by the BASS. The interaction effect between age and image was not statistically significant, $F(1, 76) = .73, p = .40$. However, the ANOVA revealed there was a statistically significant main effect for image, $F(1, 76) = 17.23, p < .001$, with a large effect size (partial eta squared = .19), according to Cohen's (1988) criterion. Table 3 shows that the largest mean difference between pre and post image scores was from exposure to thin images ($M = .19$). Finally, the ANOVA revealed there was no statistically significant main effect for age, $F(1, 76) = 1.80, p = .18$.

Similarly, a two way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age and image on levels of body appreciation, as measured by the BAS. There was a statistically significant main effect for image, $F(1, 76) = 25.45, p < .001$, with a large effect size (partial eta squared = .25). Table 4 shows that the largest mean difference between pre and post image scores was from exposure to thin images ($M = .22$). The means also show that the largest difference in scores following exposure to thin images was in the young age condition ($M = .33$). The ANOVA also found a statistically significant main effect for age, $F(1, 76) = 4.19, p = .04$; however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .05). Additionally, the ANOVA found the interaction effect between age and image was statistically significant, $F(1, 76) = 9.90, p = .002$.

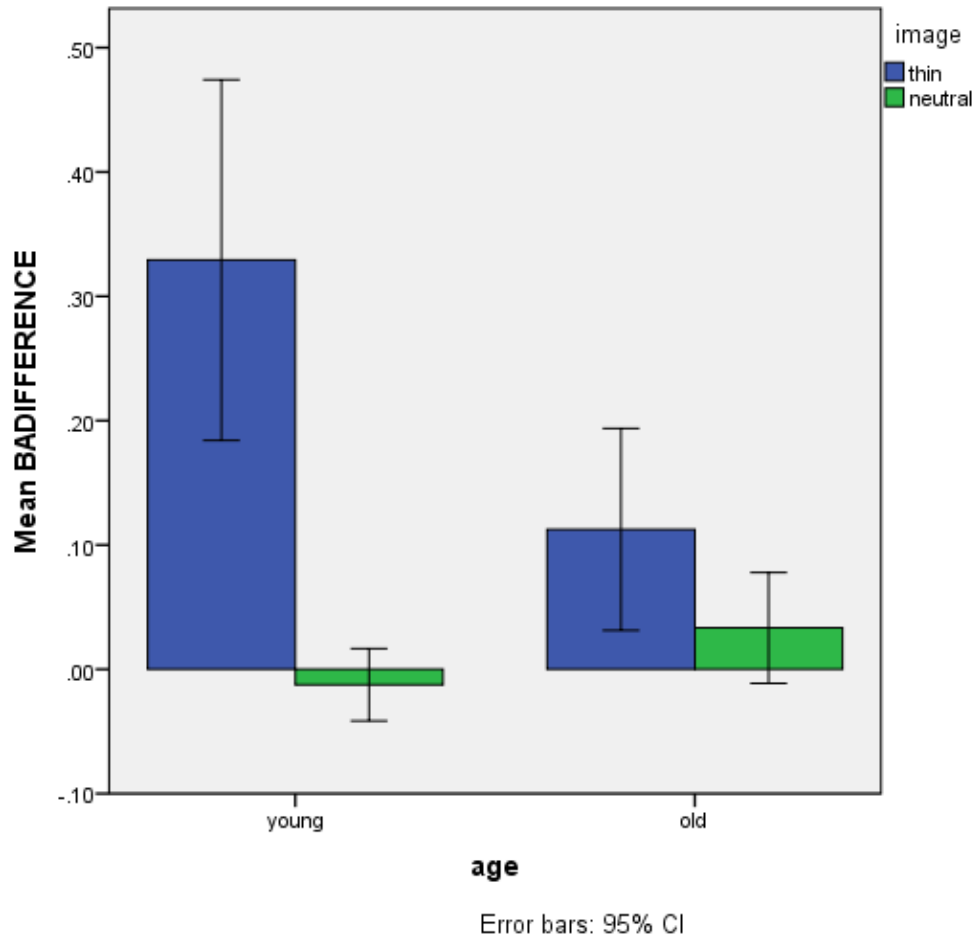


Figure 1: Interaction effect for body appreciation scores and standard error confidence intervals (95%)

Figure 1 shows the interaction effect between the variables age and image on body appreciation scores.

Finally, two-tailed t-tests were conducted to explore the interaction between age and image. T-tests revealed a significant difference between the variables young and old for thin images $t(38) = 2.72, p < .01$, with the largest difference in scores following exposure to thin images in the younger participants. T tests also revealed there was no significant difference between the variables young and old for neutral images $t(38) = -1.80, p > .05$; this was expected as the neutral images represented the control condition for the experiment.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to establish if the negative effects from exposure to thin-ideals differ according to age. The results suggest that the negative effects on an individual's body image state do vary according to age, supporting the first hypothesis. An additional aim of the study was to identify if body appreciation increases with age. Findings provide further support that body appreciation is positively correlated with age (Tiggemann and McCourt, 2013), supporting the second hypothesis.

Overall, it was found that younger women had higher levels of body dissatisfaction than older women, irrespective of exposure to thin images. For both age groups, body satisfaction was negatively influenced by thin images, replicating findings from other studies of body satisfaction and exposure to thin-ideals (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003; Tiggemann and Slater, 2004; Grabe, Ward and Hyde, 2008). Results show that the dissatisfaction occurs after only a five-minute exposure time, consistent with the findings from Yamamiya et al. (2005). Similarly, for both age groups, body appreciation scores were negatively influenced by thin-ideals. Consequently, results show support for the third hypothesis, suggesting that exposure to thin images will have a negative impact on the body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores of both younger and older women.

In addition, results revealed the largest difference between scores pre and post thin images, was found in the younger women and this was apparent for levels of both body satisfaction and body appreciation. However, it is important to note that although there was a difference between age groups and the negative effects on their scores of body satisfaction, the interaction between age and image was not statistically significant as it was for body appreciation.

Accordingly, these findings suggest that the negative effects from exposure to thin-ideals differ according to age. This difference between age groups could be attributed to the idea that older women's appearance becomes less important to them (Cash, Melnyk & Hrabosky, 2004) and they may not feel the same societal pressures as younger women to look like the thin, beautiful, westernised ideal (Bedford & Johnson, 2006). Prais and Janowsky (2010) highlight that as women age they feel less pressure to conform to the media's ideal, which may partly explain why the ideal images had a greater influence on the body satisfaction scores of the younger women.

The greater negative influence on the body satisfaction scores and body appreciation scores of younger women may also be linked to their levels of social comparison tendency (Festinger, 1954). In previous studies, participants who have compared themselves to upward comparisons or thin-images have reported greater body dissatisfaction (Bessenoff, 2006) and a reduced belief of their own physical attractiveness (Martin & Gentry, 1997), compared to controls that did not compare (Bessenoff, 2006). As previous research has shown that young women are largely susceptible to social comparison (Milkie, 1999; Tiggemann and Slater, 2004; Bessenoff, 2006), this may explain why the younger participants were more dissatisfied with their bodies than the older group following exposure to thin images. If the young women are more likely to compare themselves to the images presented, it is logical that it would result in them feeling less satisfaction and appreciation towards their own bodies.

Although numerous studies have examined the relationship between thin ideals and body satisfaction (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004; Yamamiya et al., 2005), this is one of the first studies to examine the effects of thin-ideals on an individual's body appreciation score. Nevertheless, before the study was conducted, it was anticipated that body appreciation would be negatively

affected by exposure to thin models and subsequently, this is what was found. As body appreciation is a measure of positive body image (Avalos, Tlyka and Wood-Barcalow (2005), it would therefore seem appropriate that it would be negatively influenced by exposure to thin-ideals in the same way as body satisfaction is. However, it is important to note that although body satisfaction is a moderately strong predictor of body appreciation (Tiggemann & McCourt, 2013); the two constructs should not be used interchangeably.

Furthermore, results have shown that body appreciation increases with age. Older women had considerably greater levels of body appreciation compared to the younger women regardless of exposure to thin-ideals. There was also a significant interaction between age and image on body appreciation scores. Examination of the interaction shows that there was a significantly greater difference between pre and post scores of the younger women compared to the small difference in scores of the older women. The latter finding suggests that levels of body appreciation remain in older women even after they have been exposed to thin images. As older women have higher levels of body appreciation initially (Tiggemann & McCourt, 2013), and do not carry the same importance for body shape and weight issues as younger women (Tiggemann, 2004), the negative effects associated with exposure to thin images may have less of an impact on the body values of older women. This may provide an explanation for the difference in scores for body appreciation between the younger and older women.

Additionally, findings have revealed that the younger women had higher levels of body dissatisfaction than their older counterparts. Although the general understanding is that body satisfaction/dissatisfaction remains stable across the lifespan (Tiggemann, 2004; Grogan, 2008), a possible reason for the difference between the age groups in the present study could be attributed to the characteristics of the participants in the young condition. Hargreaves & Tiggemann (2004) highlight that during adolescence, a girl's self-esteem largely depends on their perceived body image and as a result, their appearance is highly important to them. Throughout adolescence, girls compete with peers to avoid peer appearance criticism (Lawler & Nixon, 2011). As the young women in the present study were employed from a university and had a mean age of 21 years, body appearance may still be of high importance to these women and competitiveness between peers may remain. As a result, the young women in the present study may have lower body esteem than the older women, resulting in lower body satisfaction.

It is also important to consider the limitations of the present study. One methodological limitation to reflect is the small sample size employed, recruited from a predominantly small geographical area. Older women were recruited from a single organisation in North Wales and younger participants were recruited from a single university. As a result, participants may have shared particular characteristics and traits. This may have implications for the validity of findings of the study and in addition, generalizability may be questionable. Conversely, recruiting participants from a small area may hold the advantage that age was less likely to be confounded with any other extraneous variables. This may be problematic if participants were employed from a variety of locations.

A second limitation to consider is the age conditions employed. Although there was an appropriate age difference between young ($M = 21.33$) and old ($M = 50.67$), the old condition was comprised of a more diverse age group ($SD = 6.98$) compared to the young ($SD = 1.62$). As the young age category was 18-25 years and the older category was 40 years and above, there was no age limit for the older category and this explains the diversity within the older condition. Future studies incorporating age, may want to include three age conditions, rather than simply young and old and could possibly include categories such as 'young', 'middle aged' and 'older'.

A third methodological weakness that could be considered for the present study is the measures that were employed. A scale assessing body satisfaction comprised of nine items and a scale assessing body appreciation containing twelve items were used for the study. Therefore, participants were only required to answer twenty-one questions regarding their body image state. Although the twenty-one items represent the major dimensions of body satisfaction and body appreciation, an individual's body image state is highly complex. Therefore, it may not be possible to fully understand an individual's body image state from these questions alone. However, as the present study aimed to simply test measures of body satisfaction and body appreciation, the scales employed were reasonable. In addition, a longer questionnaire may hold the risk of obtaining superficial responses and is vulnerable to a higher dropout rate.

Finally, the research used a cross-sectional design and consequently the study could not examine changes in age within the same participants. This could be considered as a fourth methodological disadvantage of the study, as age groups are subject to cohort effects because they are bound by historical events. However, as the mean age of the older group was only 51 years, for the majority of participants growing up, the voluptuous ideal figures would have disappeared and the thin-ideal portrayal in the media would have been highly evident. Therefore, portrayal of beauty ideals would have been relatively similar to what they are now. Nevertheless, future studies may want to take a longitudinal approach to examine developmental changes within the same group of participants, rather than investigating differences between different groups of participants.

To conclude, although body satisfaction decreased in both age groups following exposure to thin-ideals, body appreciation remained in the older women. Therefore, this piece of research suggests that the negative effects from exposure to thin-ideals do differ according to age. Furthermore, as body appreciation remained in older women, even after their exposure to thin-ideals, this suggests that older women may be in part, less susceptible to the negative effects from exposure to thin-ideals. The present study provides a greater understanding to the area of body image, contributing to the growing knowledge of body appreciation and supporting the idea that body appreciation increases with age.

References

Avalos, L., Tlyka, T.L. & Wood-Barcalow, N. (2005). The Body Appreciation Scale: Development and psychometric evaluation. *Body Image*. 2(3), 285-297.

- Bedford, J. L., & Johnson, C. S. (2006). Societal influences on body image dissatisfaction in younger and older women. *Journal of Women and Aging*. 18(1), 41-55.
- Bell, B.T., Lawton, R. & Dittmar, H. (2007). The impact of thin models in music videos on adolescent girls' body dissatisfaction. *Body Image*. 4(2), 137-145.
- British Psychological Society. (2009). Code of ethics and conduct. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Bessenoff, G. R. (2006). Can the media affect us? Social comparison, self-discrepancy, and the thin ideal. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 30(3), 239-251.
- Brown, T.A., Cash, T.F. & Mikulka, P.J. (1990). Attitudinal body-image assessment: Factor analysis of the Body-Self Relations Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*. 55 (1-2), 135–144.
- Cash, T. F. (2000). *User's manual for the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire*, Accessed 25 November 2013 <<http://www.body-images.com/>>.
- Cash, T.F. (2002). 'Beyond traits: Assessing body image states', in Cash, T.F and Pruzinsky, T. (ed.) *Body images: A handbook of theory, Research, and Clinical Practice*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Cash, T.F. (2004). Body image: past, present, and future. *Body Image*. 1(1), 1-5.
- 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., Melnyk, S. E., & Hrabosky, J. I. (2004). The assessment of body image investment: An extensive revision of the Appearance Schemas Inventory, *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. 35(3), 305–316.
- Cash, T.F., Winstead, B.A. & Janda L.H. (1986). Body image survey report: The great American shape-up. *Psychology Today*. 20(4), 30-44.
- Clark, L., & Tiggemann, M. (2008). Sociocultural and individual psychological predictors of body image in young girls: A prospective study. *Developmental Psychology*. 44(4), 1124-1134.
- Clarke, L. H. (2002). Older women's perceptions of ideal body weights: The tensions between health and appearance motivations for weight loss. *Ageing and Society*. 22(6), 751-773.
- Clay, D., Vignoles, V.L. & Dittmar, H. (2005). Body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls: testing the influence of sociocultural factors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 15(4), 451-477.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed). Hillsdale. NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Davies, S.F. (2003). *Handbook of research methods in experimental psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- DeVillis, R.F. (2003). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (2nd ed). In Thousand Oaks. California: Sage.
- Dittmar, H. & Howard, S. (2004). Thin-ideal internalisation and social comparison tendency as moderators of media models' impact on women's body-focused anxiety. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. 23(6), 768-791.
- Durkin, S.J. & Paxton, S.J. (2002). Predictors of vulnerability to reduced body image satisfaction and psychological wellbeing in response to exposure to idealized female media images in adolescent girls. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*. 53(5), 995-1005.
- Ferguson, C. J., Munoz, M. E., Contreras, S. & Velasquez, K. (2011). Mirror, mirror on the wall: peer competition, television influences, and body image dissatisfaction. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. 30(5), 458-483.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*. 7(2), 117-140.
- Gosselink, C. A., Cox, D. L., McClure, S. J., & De Jong, M. L. (2008). Ravishing or ravaged: women's relationships with women in the context of aging and Western beauty culture. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. 66(4), 307-327.
- Grabe, S., Ward, L. M. & Hyde, J. S. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin*. 134, 460–476.
- Groesz, L.M., Levine, M.P. & Murnen, S.K. (2002). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. 1, 1-16.
- Grogan, S. (1999). *Body image*. London: Routledge.
- Grogan, S. (2008). *Body image* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Halliwel, E. & Dittmar, H. (2004). Does size matter? The impact of model's body size on advertising effectiveness and women's body-focused anxiety. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. 23(1) 104-122.
- Halliwel, E. & Dittmar, H. (2005). The role of self-improvement and self-evaluation motives in social comparisons with idealised female bodies in the media. *Body Image*. 2(3), 249-261.
- Hallsworth, L., Wade, T. & Tiggemann, M. (2005). Individual differences in male body-image: An examination of self-objectification in recreational body builders. *British journal of health psychology*. 10(3), 453-465.
- Hargreaves, D.A. & Tiggemann, M. (2004). Idealized media images and adolescent body image: "comparing" boys and girls. *Body Image*. 1(4), 351-361.

- Hetherington, M. M., & Burnett, L. (1994). Ageing and the pursuit of slimness: Dietary restraint and weight satisfaction in elderly women. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 33(3), 391-400.
- Jones, D. C., Vigfusdottir, T. H. & Lee, Y. (2004). Body image and the appearance culture among adolescent girls and boys: An examination of friend conversations, peer criticism, appearance magazines, and the internalization of appearance ideals. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 19(3), 323-339.
- Labre, M.P. (2002). Adolescent boys and the muscular male body ideal. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 30(4), 233–242.
- Langridge, D. & Hagger-Johnson, G. (2004). *Introduction to research methods and data analysis in psychology* (2nd ed). Essex : Pearson.
- Lawler, M. & Nixon, E. (2011). Body dissatisfaction among adolescent boys and girls: the effects of body mass, peer appearance culture and internalization of appearance ideals. *Journal of youth and adolescence*. 40(1), 59-71.
- Lewis, D. M., & Cachelin, F. M. (2001). Body image, body dissatisfaction, and eating attitudes in midlife and elderly women. *Eating Disorders*. 9(1), 29–39.
- Martin, M. C. & Gentry, J.W. (1997). Stuck in the model trap: The effects of beautiful models in ads on female pre-adolescents and adolescents. *The Journal of Advertising*. 26(2), 19-33.
- McCabe, M.P. & Ricciardelli, L.A. (2004). Body image dissatisfaction among males across the lifespan: A review of past literature. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 56(6), 675-685.
- Milkie, 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(2), 190-210.
- Öberg, P. & Tornstam, L. (1999). Body images among men and women of different ages. *Ageing & Society*. 19(5), 629-644.
- Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual: a step by step guide to data analysis using IBM SPSS* (4th ed). Berkshire: McGraw Hill.
- Peat, C. M., Peyerl, N. L., & Muehlenkamp, J. J. (2008). Body image and eating disorders in older adults: A review. *Journal of General Psychology*. 135(4), 343-358.
- Pliner, P., Chaiken, S. & Flett, G.L. (1990). Gender differences in concern with body weight and physical appearance over the life span. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 16(2), 263–273
- Posavac, H.D., Posavac, S.S. & Posavac, E.J. (1998). Exposure to media images of female attractiveness and concern with body weight among young women. *Sex Roles*. 38(3-4), 187-201.

- Pruis, T.A. & Janowsky, J.S. (2010). Assessment of Body Image in Younger and Older Women. *The Journal of General Psychology*, 137(3), 225-238.
- Reboussin, B.A., Rejeski, W.J., Martin, K.A., Callahan, K., Dunn, A.L., King, A.C. & Sallis J.F. (2000). Correlates of satisfaction with body function and body appearance in middle- and older aged adults: The activity counselling trial (ACT), *Psychology and Health*, 15(2), 239-254.
- Stice, E. (1994). Review of the evidence for a socio-cultural model of bulimia nervosa and exploration of the mechanisms of action. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 14(7), 633-661.
- Thompson, K.J. & Stice, E. (2001). Thin-ideal internalisation: mounting evidence for a new risk factor for body-image disturbance and eating pathology. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10(5), 181-183.
- Thompson, K.J., Heinberg, L.J., Altabe, M.N. & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (1999). *Exacting beauty: Theory, assessment and treatment of body image disturbance*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Tiggemann, M. (2004). Body image across the adult life span: stability and change. *Body Image*, 1(1), 29-41.
- Tiggemann, M. & Lacey, C. (2009). Shopping for clothes: Body satisfaction, appearance investment, and functions of clothing among female shoppers, *Body Image*, 6, 285-291.
- Tiggemann, M., & Lynch, J. E. (2001). Body image across the life span in adult women: the role of self-objectification. *Developmental Psychology*, 37(2), 243-253.
- Tiggemann, M. & McCourt, A. (2013). Body appreciation in adult women: Relationships with age and body satisfaction. *Body Image*, 10(4), 624-627.
- Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2004). Thin ideals in music television: A source of social comparison and body dissatisfaction. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 35, 48-58.
- Tylka, T.L. (2011). 'Positive psychology perspectives on body image', in Cash, T.F. Smolak, L. (ed.), *Body image: A handbook of science, practice, and prevention*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Webster, J. & Tiggemann, M. (2003). The Relationship Between Women's Body Satisfaction and Self-Image Across the Life Span: The Role of Cognitive Control. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 164(2), 241-252.
- Yamamiya, Y., Cash, T. F., Melnyk, S.E., Posavac, H.D. & Posavac, S.S. (2005). Women's exposure to thin-and-beautiful media images: body image effects of media-ideal internalization and impact-reduction interventions. *Body Image*, 2(1), 74-80.