Stellar

Oklahoma City University’s Undergraduate Research Journal

Inside are 2017-18 research papers spanning the disciplines at OCU, including science, costuming, mass communications, biology, dance, literature, and honors composition, representing the exceptional undergraduate research happening at Oklahoma City University.

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Contents

Sex Trafficking and its Representation in Crime TV
Anna Delony.................................................................3

Methadone: Past, Present, & Future
Madison Snow.............................................................8

Revolution of Stage Lighting due to Electricity
Katherine Reller..........................................................17

Vapor Rub Can Stop a Cough?
Taylor Horton............................................................20

Instagram Usage and Young Women’s Body Images
Sophia Babb...............................................................22

Immunological Efficacy of Large Dose Vitamin C Supplementation
Blake Woosley..........................................................65

Atkins and Paleo Diets: High Risk and Low Reward
Madison Snow............................................................68

Expressions of Modesty in Costume
Emily Haan...............................................................75

The Word “Genocide” as a Means of Cultural Acknowledgment
Rachel Weisbart........................................................87

Appetite, Hunger, and Desire in The Morgesons
Natalie Gregg............................................................94

Credits and Thanks.....................................................98
Sex Trafficking and its Representation in Crime TV  
Anna Delony

In crime TV shows, there are often certain episode plots that are common across a large variety of shows. These basic plotlines can be used to create a silly, lighthearted episode like a crime involving a famous actor or writer that takes the cast to Hollywood. Or they can take a more serious tone, to develop characters by showing their beliefs on things like religion or the paranormal. One of these common tropes is an episode about sex trafficking. Because of the lack of general education about sex trafficking, episodes like this in the media could be the only education that a lot of people receive about the subject. Therefore, it is important to see how sex trafficking is being represented, or misrepresented, in the media.

While I am familiar with many crime shows that have episodes about sex trafficking, solely investigating TV shows that I am familiar with excludes those that may be more popular with a larger amount of people. Because I want to look specifically at programs that would could promote misinformation on a large scale, I looked at the 50 most popular crime TV series on IMDB, the Internet Movie Database. I excluded shows from the point of view of criminals, to ensure the crime is viewed in a negative light, as well as shows about superheroes, so that the victims and traffickers are guaranteed to be human and I could accurately record age and race. From the shows left, I searched to find which ones had episodes about sex trafficking, yielding six TV series, with a combined total of nine episodes.

As I progressed through these episodes, I began by recording simply the age, race, and gender of the victims and the scenario that led them to be trafficked and that lead the police or detectives to discover them. At first glance, these shows were surprisingly accurate with their information. 89.6% of sex trafficking victims are female (National Human Trafficking Hotline), and only one show included a male victim (Merchandise). The shows typically portrayed victims entering the sex trafficking industry from ages 12-16, the only outliers being victims whose ages were not specified and whose actors looked older but had no canonical age; data from Polaris, a U.S. Department of Health & Human Services funded project to collect data and raise awareness about human trafficking, showed that 49% of recorded survivors entered the industry at 12-17 years old (Polaris). While only 65% of the total survivors reported their race to a Bureau of Justice Statistics report, 77% of those victims were people of color (Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents), and each episode showed a majority of the overall victims to be in accordance with this statistic as well. However, I soon began to notice a pattern in how the episodes were set up and the roles each victim played. In each episode, the main group of detectives did not set out with the goal to bust a trafficking ring but were pulled into the bigger case through a different one about prostitution or kidnapping. The
seemingly unrelated case had only one victim, who I will refer to as the “pull” victim, and then the other victims were introduced when the trafficking ring was found. Many of the episodes also portrayed a “bottom,” described by Shared Hope International as “A female appointed by the trafficker/pimp to supervise the others and report rule violations. Operating as his “right hand,” the bottom may help instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishments on other girls” (Common Sex Trafficking Language), but not all of them did this, and only one directly confirmed her to be a bottom, while the others let her position stay ambiguous. While these women are involved in the trafficking of the others, they are victims of trafficking themselves, and while there is a serious lack of research about how trauma bonding applies in this situation and to what extent (Raghavan), these women deserve help for the situation they have been through.

In these shows, pull victims have the most lines and screen time as they are naturally introduced before the other victims and used as a focal point for the crime. This means they often get some sort of background information, occasionally someone like a family member is still looking for them. These victims were usually the outliers to the otherwise majorly correct sex trafficking representation in the show. They may have been inducted into sex trafficking later than most and have a life outside of the industry, while a lot of actual sex trafficking victims are brought into the industry so young that it is all they know (What are the statistics on human trafficking of children?). The pull victims are usually the ones to verbalize their desire to leave the industry if given the opportunity by the main detectives, while the other victims, when they have any lines at all, say they don’t want help, that this is better for them than other scenarios, or that it’s too late for them. This desire to be helped by the police, who are portrayed in the show as the saviors and the “good side,” garners sympathy for the pull victims at the expense of the others by an interesting use of victim blaming that implies that it is too late for the others to be saved because they “want to go back.” In reality, these victims are traumatized and being constantly manipulated, and they do not trust the cops not to arrest them for prostitution instead of their traffickers (Anderson). Although the pull victims are the outliers to an otherwise correct portrayal of sex trafficking, the fact that they get so much more focus makes the actual face of sex trafficking presented by these shows that of the pull victim.

While the pull victims are used to draw the audience in and garner sympathy for the cause against sex trafficking, the other victims are primarily there for shock value and contrast. The other victims have little to no lines, and if any backstory is given, it’s in a passing remark or a general remark about the entire group of girls. The focus of the episode remains on the pull victim and finding the ring with her in it. In one episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit, “Undercover Mother,” the group busts two brothels, arresting a pimp, two madams, and several sex trafficking victims, solving the original case, but continuing until they find the pull victim, even while putting another undercover investigation in jeopardy and being told to back off by their supervisor. Then,
once the pull victim has been recovered, they quit looking into the matter, even though it is made aware to them that there is another pimp they could follow (Undercover Mother). Typically, however, there were not multiple stages of finding victims, but one dramatic bust at the end where the team all rushes into a house with a cramped room or a storage container and gets into a shoot-out with the traffickers as they run through the area. In the chaos of this action scene, we usually see our other victims, a series of blurry pan shots where you can just approximate the age, gender, and race of the victims. Then the focus is back on the pull victim as the detectives call her by name or one runs over to hug her. In an episode of Blue Bloods called “Bad Company,” the pull victim even gets an extra scene after the bust where she talks to the detectives about seeing her family again (Bad Company). This highlights the narrative’s extreme focus on the pull victim, because her rescue is the real objective of the team and the only thing that can close up the episode.

At first, I was not even looking for the last group, the bottoms, because I didn’t expect any of the shows to include that role. Not all of the shows had one, and one of them actually showed a woman in the episode as if she were a bottom, and then arrested her for being the head trafficker at the end. This indicates to me that they did not actually understand sex trafficking as well as some of the other series. Though, at first, I was pleasantly surprised by the inclusion of this more complex component to sex trafficking in these shows, seeing the episode where they arrest the woman that appeared to me to be a bottom as an actual trafficker showed me how the inclusion of bottoms could actually be extremely misleading to the general public, and that a lot of the other information I had reviewed could be misinterpreted as well.

When I watched these episodes, I viewed everything with a background knowledge of sex trafficking. Consequently, I immediately recognized the trafficked women working with the traffickers as what they were: bottoms. But the shows never acknowledged what they were. Someone watching without any context of sex trafficking dynamics, trauma, abuse, or Stockholm syndrome, would just see a woman working against the victims. The bottoms were occasionally offered help by the police, but not often, and they always responded negatively and somewhat hostilely. When arrests were being made, the bottoms were usually shown to be arrested too, alongside the traffickers, and the one bottom who was asked to turn on her trafficker refused to do so. All of this paints these women as villains, as just a step better than the traffickers, but still bad guys and not victims. Technically, their behavior is relatively accurate, as bottoms do help to control the other victims. But without any explanation of these women’s background as trauma and trafficking victims, most people watching the episode (the ones whose only exposure to sex trafficking is from these series) will get a completely inaccurate idea of what is going on.

With no prior knowledge of sex trafficking, the pull victims become the primary example victim of sex trafficking, even though they are actually the statistical outlier. The other victims are essentially ignored if you are not counting bodies for demographics like I was, and the bottoms go from victim to
trafficker in the eyes of the uneducated. These shows have obviously researched sex trafficking enough to hit the nail on the head for every demographic, to go so far as to include bottoms and madams. Then they throw that accuracy away so that they can pick a white actor to get screen time.

In every episode but two, the pull victim was white. In one of these episodes (Déjà Vu), the original pull victim is a Latina woman who dies before the episode begins, and then a white Serbian woman is introduced as the new pull victim. The second is an episode of Hawaii Five-0, “Puka ‘Ana,” set in Hawaii, and even here the pull victim has much lighter skin than the other victims (Puka ‘Ana). These other victims, the ones who are screened over and vilified, the ones who actually fit the racial demographic of sex trafficking victims, are not shown enough to even be told their ethnicity, but most are obviously not white. The bottoms, the group even more vilified than the other victims, were never white. There is no way that this is an accidental occurrence. It is not an accident that all of these shows, which, overall, show an amazing knowledge of sex trafficking, happen to cast the main victim, the sympathetic victim, the face that they give to face trafficking, as a white woman.

These series do an amazing job at telling someone who knows about sex trafficking what they already know about sex trafficking. But the people who do not know about sex trafficking and happen to learn from these series are not counting background victims for age, are not searching online to try and find the characters’ race, and don’t know the difference between a manipulated woman trying to survive a lifetime of abuse and the man that trafficked her and many others like her. These people take the shows at face value, the face that is given to them by the narrative as the main victim, the face of the pull victim. It doesn’t matter how accurately a series technically portrays trafficking when it hides the truth in blurry two-second shots behind a racist, inaccurate typecast.

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Methadone: Past, Present, & Future
Madison Snow

This essay provides an investigation of the drug development of methadone from a historical perspective, discusses the bilateral relationship between the drug and economy, and examines the evolution of testing models used in methadone research.

DRUG DEVELOPMENT

According to Brownstein, opium (structure 1a) was first brought from India and China to Europe between the 10th and 13th centuries, resulting in rampant spread of addiction (1933). The active ingredient of opium, morphine (structure 1b), was isolated in 1806 and the invention of hypodermic needles and syringes followed, facilitating its use in surgery. However, the ease of administration also increased morphine abuse and addiction, leading to the renewed search for a safer derivative, and the discovery of heroin (structure 1c) in 1898 (Brownstein 1933). Initially thought to be “not abusable,” heroin was used as an analgesic, particularly in cases of terminal disease (Freemantle 2005). However, the search for synthetic opioids continued when heroin was deemed unsafe and addictive (Brownstein 1993).

During World War II, Germany lost access to opium supplies. Because of this, it has been proposed that Adolf Hitler ordered investigations into analgesic alternatives, resulting in the development of the synthetic opioid known today as methadone (structure 1d) (Strang et al. 2003). Its discovery is attributed to German scientists Bockmühl and Ehrhart in 1938 (Frame et al. 2019; Strang et al. 2003). However, commercial production never occurred because of fatal side effects. Following the war, previously secret discoveries by German scientists were distributed and companies around the world began clinical trials using German data, including Isbell et al., working for the Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical company in the United States (Strang et al. 2003). Isbell et al. 1947 determined that methadone maintains similar pharmacological properties to morphine, despite apparent structural differences.

Eli Lilly received FDA approval for methadone in 1947 as an analgesic and antitussive (Yarmolinsky et al. 1995). However, with the continuing influence of the Harrison Act of 1914 and ongoing war on drugs, its use for pain relief remained controversial (Musto 1999). In the 1960s, Dole et al. investigated morphine as a therapy for heroin addiction, but because patients needed increasing doses of the drug and its euphoric effects, they were eventually led to methadone (Yarmolinsky et al. 1955). Their research found methadone to have long-acting properties which curbs hunger for narcotics, even with small doses administered only once daily (Dole et al. 1965). Another notable effect of methadone, shown in figure 2, depicts the effect one dose of
methadone has on a patient’s state of mind. At point H, heroin is introduced into the body, but because methadone already occupies those receptors, the patient does not experience euphoria (Kreek 1997).

The use of methadone as a withdrawal treatment has been controversial since its conception and continues to be today (Marks 1974; Mattick 2008). It is identified as a schedule II drug with high risk of abuse and potential for dependence by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Association (Anon.). Short-term side effects of methadone include nausea, vomiting, pruritis, diaphoresis, constipation, and sexual dysfunction (CESAR 2016). For those chronically using methadone, there are increased respiratory risks, potential for fatally prolonged QT intervals, and the possibility of developing a “disease state similar to type 2 diabetes” (CESAR 2016; Frame et al. 2017; Gaertner et al. 2008). Supporters of methadone argue that the risks are outweighed by the benefits, such as increased retention in treatment programs, improved overall health, ability to function in society, decreased illicit drug use, and decreased risk of HIV (Garcia-Portilla et al. 2014). Opponents argue, from a philosophical standpoint, that prescribing methadone in place of a substance, such as heroin, is exchanging one addiction for another and perpetuating drug abuse instead of ending it (Garcia-Portilla et al. 2014; Primm 1974). These arguments and various U.S. policies regarding methadone administration have resulted in criticisms which blame the government for failing to treat opiate and heroin addicts (Johnson 2005).

Thus far, the primary focus has been methadone in the capacity as treatment for opiate withdrawal. However, it should be noted that it is also an analgesic. Methadone is the only opioid active at the mu and NMDA aspartate receptors, which are responsible for neuropathic pain (Frame et al. 2017). Because of these features, it is increasingly used in patients experiencing oncologic pain (Muñoz et al. 2017).

METHADONE AND ECONOMY

Methadone and the economy have an intermingled relationship. The rising rates of heroin abuse in the 1960s, which was associated with the return of Vietnam War veterans, resulted in the 1969 declaration of a “war on drugs” by President Nixon (Smith 2017; Yarmolinsky 1995). The federal government began spending increasingly large amounts of money on the prosecution of illegal drug and narcotic activity with $115,822,000 being spent in 1972 (Machado 2005; Marks 1974). At that time, there were an estimated 500,000 opiate addicts in the United States. Using estimates of median income and income tax figures, Marks suggests that the average opiate addict contributed $700 in taxes but cost the government $2,500 per year (1974). Marks then examined 120,000 patients participating in methadone maintenance (MM) programs, of which 26% were employed prior to the program and 78% were employed following induction into the program (Primm 1974). Using these figures, he estimated an average increase of $350 per addict to tax revenue. In
addition to effectively decreasing opiate abuse, MM reduces the spread of 
HIV and the amount of money that the federal government spends on HIV 
management (Zaric et al. 2000).

Another area in which methadone has the opportunity to positively 
impact the economy is reduction of crime rates and amount of money spent on 
law enforcement, property damage, and prisons. However, when examining 
the substantial decrease of crime in the 1990s, it is unlikely that MM played a role. 
Initial examination of figure 3, which indicates that MM has a high magnitude 
of impact on drug-related behaviors, would ideally also indicate a decrease in 
crime rates (Marsch 1998). However, Rothbard et al. suggests that many patients 
were only involved in MM for 4 months and often experienced reversion to 
risky behaviors, such as crime (1999). Therefore, methadone overall has had a 
minimal effect on this aspect of economy.

In the last 20 years, there have been increases in rates of prescription 
opiod and heroin abuse, with 4 of 5 heroin addicts reporting that their substance 
abuse began with prescription opioids (Smith 2017). This trend is particularly 
apparent when looking at figure 4, displaying the findings of Cicero et al. in 
2014. With the quadruple of drug overdose rates between 2002 and 2013, 
implementation of the Affordable Care Act in 2014, and the current state of 
emergency as declared by President Trump regarding the opioid epidemic, the 
United States is seeing larger amounts of money poured into substance abuse 
treatment programs (Marie et al. 2018; Smith 2017; Vestal 2015). With the 
increasing amounts of evidence indicating that provision of treatment programs 
will ultimately decrease health care costs that are associated with substance 
abuse patients, it can be inferred that if the United States continues to invest in 
this epidemic, methadone will be of high demand, continue to generate revenue, 
and support people who previously monopolized federal funding stay employed 
and contribute positively to the economy (Smith 2017).

TESTING MODELS

Because of the evasive nature of the methods used by Bockmühl and 
Ehrhart as well as Isbell et al. during initial methadone testing, it is difficult to 
compare the efficacy of those procedures to Dole et al. and current methadone 
research. However, it is possible to make inferences based on the information 
available. Brockmühl and Ehrhart primarily investigated methadone using 
animal testing models, which helped them classify it as an analgesic and 
spasmolytic (Yarmolinsky 1955). However, subsequent testing resulted in the 
discontinuation of the drug’s development. It has been presumed that because 
the long-acting qualities of methadone were unknown, the trials involved 
excessively high doses which were administered too often, resulting in cases of 
overdose (Strang et al. 2003). Later testing by Isbell et al. and Isbell in 1948 
utilized human subjects who were addicted to morphine and serving federal 
sentences. Other information regarding their studies could not be found. Dole et 
al. initially used rodents to investigate the effects of methadone but was
unsuccessful because of differing pharmacokinetics (Yarmolinsky 1995). Following the incomplete testing with rodents was human testing which involved small, frequent doses of methadone (Dole et al. 1965). This was likely similar to the unsuccessful testing that was done by the German scientists in the 1940s, however, Dole et al. eventually realized the longer half-life of methadone and adjusted dosing protocols. In the 1970s, pharmacology was more developed and pharmacokinetics better understood (Yarmolinsky 1955). Dole continued to research the effects of methadone, particularly oral tablets, which were noted for slow action and low, steady-state peaks over 24-hour periods (1970).

Today, the investigations of methadone are very different. The effects of racemic methadone, the most common form, have been compared to R-methadone and S-methadone, with the R enantiomer being more active than S (Eap et al. 2007; Gaertner 2008). These studies have used whole cell patch clamp experiments, a method developed in the late 1970s and therefore not available to either Bockmühl and Ehrhart or Isbell et al. (Leica Microsystems). While methadone is primarily prescribed in tablet form, it is also available for injection and in solution. However, Muñoz et al. 2017 has suggested that a transdermal patch would benefit patients receiving methadone as therapy for both opiate withdrawal and chronic pain. Studies regarding transdermal methadone have used in vivo and ex vivo techniques as opposed to animal methods, which are more ethical.

**CONCLUSION**

Overall, while the side effects and controversy of methadone should not be ignored, the drug remains important in a world of scientific progress and opiate addiction. It has played a role in history, impacted economies of the past, continues to impact the economy of the present and most importantly, the lives of many people.
Figure 1: Structural Development from Morphine to Methadone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure 1a. Opium</th>
<th>Structure 1b. Morphine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Opium structure" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Morphine structure" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure 1c. Heroin</td>
<td>Structure 1d. Methadone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Heroin structure" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Methadone structure" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Stabilization of a patient in normal functional state by a daily dose of methadone (M), which prevents symptoms of withdrawal (sick) or euphoria (high), despite a shot of heroin (H) (Kreek 1997)

Figure 3: Magnitude of effect (r) of MM on behavioral outcomes (Marsch 1998)
Figure 4: “Percentage of heroin users that used heroin or a prescription opioid as their first opioid. Data are plotted as a function of the decade in which respondents initiated their first opioid abuse (Cicero et al. 2014).

References


Revolution of Stage Lighting due to Electricity
Katherine Reller

For centuries, people have flocked to the theatre to be mesmerized by ballerinas or entranced by dramas and musicals. The setting in which audiences view these performances has vastly evolved. Visibility of the performers is a large factor that used to limit the grandeur of a production. This research paper is written to answer the question of how the invention of electricity has impacted today’s American entertainment industry. From sunlight, candles, gas lighting, and eventually electric lights, the stage-lighting world has vastly evolved and expanded due to the revolutionary invention of electrical engineering.

The performing artists that grace the stage are not the only contributing factors to the creation of a production. Costumers, set designers, and lighting designers are the visual artists that work with directors and choreographers to create a cohesive experience for the audience (Kassing 18). When appreciation is given to the lighting of a show and it is thought of as more than just visibility, aspects of art begin to enter the realm of light. “It is not merely the seeing, but what is seen, how it is seen, and how much of it is seen that are important” (Bellman 5).

The progression of stage lighting has been hundreds of years in the making and continues today. Before methods of artificial lighting were utilized, natural sunlight was used in the earliest productions. Open Greek theatres were built to take advantage of the directional sunlight. The capability of manipulating light to create desired aesthetics had not yet been discovered. Although lighting was not part of the production value, a sense of lighting was suggested either verbally or by action (Penzel 3-4). Sir Walter Raleigh analyzed Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar and described this use of implied lighting: “The whole scene is heavy with the sense of night and the darkness of conspiracy, yet the effect is produced by nothing but the spoken words and the gestures of the players” (Penzel 4).

Eighteenth century lighting largely consisted of grand chandeliers that hung over the center of the stage. This method of lighting was weak and undesirable as hot wax would drip on the artists below. On the wings of the stage, reflectors were hung to aid in illuminating the performance area (Kassing 120).

Productions of this time relied heavily upon the theatre architect, a man responsible for scenery and lighting. Sebastiano Serlio worked this position in a theatre and he wrote about the uses for scenery and lighting in his Second Book of Architecture. He describes a device known as a “bozze” that was “made of glass, of special shapes with flat and rounded side to hold the water.” This water could be dyed to create colored effects on stage. These early developments in stage lighting were highly influential to the creations of the next century (Penzel 5).
The introduction of gas lighting was revolutionary, and it was only a matter of time before gas lighting’s usefulness was recognized in the theatre. Prior to the use of gas lighting for the stage, it was used to light theatres’ grand halls and stairwells. Even as the use of gas lighting reached the actual stage, it was only for small effects and not for the visibility of the stage as a whole. Theatres made it a point to appeal to their audiences and advertise if their facility had any use of gas lighting in order to appear as a superior theatre (Penzel 35).

Gas lights along the rim of the stage, known as footlights, created a serious danger to performers and audience members. Clara Webster and Emma Livry were both dancers that perished after their tulle skirts came too close to the open flames and they were engulfed in fire (Kassing 140). In 1790, George Saunders proposed that mirrors near the edge of the stage could be used to reflect light back onto the stage instead of the dangerous footlights. Also, this remedied the harsh and garish lighting the footlights created on the performers, as light is not usually projected from below a subject (Penzel 39-39).

As technology furthered and electricity became more common, electric lights began to replace gas lights. This application of science in the theatre was met with much approval (Bellman 123). Experimental dance choreography was created and inspired by the new light medium. The electric lights permitted a concentrated area of light. Loie Fuller choreographed The Butterfly on a stage that was lit by one shaft of light. Costumed as a butterfly, Fuller fluttered and frolicked through the light. She was one of the first to experiment with the new possible lighting techniques (Kassing 188).

The direct control of lighting led to a brighter stage and a darker house. This new illumination of the performance space led to a shift in the dreary scene settings that appeared pale and fake under the bright lights (Otto).

The response to the electric light was similar to that of the gas light. Theatres would promote their use of the technology to draw in audiences and seem superior. Actors and dancers also felt the effects of the electric lights on the stage. After the installment of electrical lights, upstage portions of the stage that were once unavailable due to poor visibility were now open. With the intensity of the lighting, the performers had to withdraw partially behind the proscenium (Penzel 54).

The controlling of gas lights in the theatre by use of the gas valves caused the lights to gradually extinguish. The term “dimming” came naturally and was easily applied to the electric lights’ intensity. In some ways, electricity hindered the control that was once held over the theatre lighting. Where gas lighting was handled by a valve that served as an on/off mechanism and an intensity control, the first electrical boards unfortunately had a separation in these necessary functions. This resulted in the use of two boards to control the lighting instruments (Bellman 170).

As electricity entered the everyday lives of people, it became a topic of the avant-garde and pop-culture works of the time. Public places such as malls and theatres were important endorsers of electricity and the power supply
companies. Electric lights were so important and revolutionary that “electricity” even appeared on the stage as a production. At the International Electrotechnical Exhibition a ballet-pantomime entitled *Pandora oder Götter-Funken* (*Pandora or Sparks of Divinity*) premiered. The production is centered around the institutionalization of electricity and even concluded with the final dance: “the Epiphany of Electricity.”

People were so enamored with electricity that they created entire productions to artistically represent how the invention had infiltrated the aspects of all parts of life. Early audiences that did not experience stage lighting of any sort would watch in amazement at the technology that is available today. Modern audiences have grown so accustomed to the luxury of advanced stage lighting that they would be lost without it (Bellman 4). Although lighting may not be necessary for the telling of a story, it is certainly more desirable to create a unified production. The revolution of the methods of illuminating the stage is dedicated to the invention of electricity. This technology shone a figurative and a literal light on what the stage has to offer its audiences.

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Vapor Rub Can Stop a Cough?
Taylor Horton

A health topic that is especially prominent during flu season right now is the claim that applying vapor rub on the soles of the feet can help stop a cough. A cough occurs when any debris or fumes are inhaled, as well as an accumulation of mucus in the bronchioles. These same factors when affecting the trachea or bronchi can also produce a cough (Marieb). Coughing is a protective mechanism to rid of anything that has entered your airways, providing relief and making sure none of these factors accumulate and negatively alter respiration.

The trending claim is stating that when someone has a cough, smearing vapor rub on the soles of the feet and putting a pair of socks on will help cease any persistent coughing. There is very little evidence proven for this claim. According to a study done at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center by Dr. Bruce Rubin, M.D., the ingredients found in vapor rub can be irritants to the airways, causing an increase in mucus production (ScienceDaily). Since the goal is to clear any mucus that may be trapped in the airways, this is counterproductive and ultimately not providing any relief to someone trying to stop coughing.

Another side to the claim is that “the menthol in the vapor rub dilates the blood vessels in the feet causing reflexes that soothe the cough” (New Health Guide). Vasodilation is due to the relaxation of the smooth muscle, causing the lumen of the blood vessels to dilate increasing blood flow. It has been proven in a study conducted by Murat Oz that menthol has been demonstrated to induce relaxation while suppressing contraction in coronary and mesenteric arteries (Oz). Two facts disprove this claim based on this study. The first fact is that the study was conducted by ingesting menthol, not rubbing it on the soles of the feet. This means that the menthol was able to impact the voltage-gated calcium channels directly, not outside the body unable to cross the skin’s protective barrier. The second fact is that this does not have a direct impact on the pulmonary irritant reflexes. Increased blood flow does mean proficient oxygen flow, but the receptors that respond to irritants and stimulate coughing communicate with the respiratory centers through vagal nerve afferents (Marieb). This proves that even ingesting menthol does not directly correlate to stopping a cough, let alone rubbing it outside the body.

Another statement Dr. Rubin makes is that this claim is purely a placebo effect. He states that the vapor rub tricks the brain into thinking that it is easier to breathe based on the cold sensation that is triggered by the menthol, which is processed by the body as feeling like there is more airflow. This makes people feel better, but physiologically does not affect the breathing (ScienceDaily). This situation is caused by the influence of the higher brain centers, specifically the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus can send emotions and pleasure signals to the respiratory centers, which can modify respiratory
rates and depth (Marieb). This deeper breathing can make us think we feel better, even if our symptoms are still persistent.

The claim that vapor rub on the soles of the feet can stop a cough is one that has not been proven. Researchers have found that it can cause adverse effects rather than alleviate the problem. It is more of a placebo effect than anything and should not be attempted until research proves it is helpful.

Works Cited


CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH TOPIC

Instagram was first created in October 2010. I registered my first Instagram account in December of 2010 and have maintained an account ever since. Instagram was ever present in my journey through adolescence and in the adolescent journeys of my peers. Younger adolescents and preteens are notoriously insecure and easily influenced by the media they consume. Thus, I am interested in studying the effects Instagram has on body image because of its wide presence in the lives of young women.

Research question: What are the effects of regular Instagram usage on young women’s body images?

Operational definitions:
- Regular Instagram usage: checking, posting, or browsing on Instagram at least twice a day.
- Young women: women between the ages of 13-21
- Body image: the way an individual’s physical appearance is judged or perceived by themselves

Reasons for choosing this research topic:
Our social media accounts are now extensions of ourselves — they carry us through our daily lives, intermingle within our social groups, and have effects on our relationships, well-being, and mental processes. Because I am a young woman who uses social media and I have many friends and family members who fit the same demographic, I have grown an interest in studying the effects social media has on young women like me.

I created my first social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram just after turning thirteen. At fourteen, less than two years later, I discovered what “thinspiration” and “pro-ana” was on Instagram. By the age of fifteen, I was involved and engaged in a community full of eating-disordered teen girls who had secret Instagram accounts. As I grew older, I ended my participation in the community and worked towards a healthier and non-disordered approach to eating and body image. However, I still felt dissatisfaction in myself when seeing women on Instagram who I deemed as “perfect.”

Of my current friend group, four out of five close friends have dealt with disordered eating habits (purging, starving, cyclical dieting) and low self-
esteem regarding body image. Several have cited seeing “perfect women” on Instagram as fueling their negative body images.

Because I care about these women but can’t rely on anecdotal evidence to find any correlation, I am very interested in studying the connection between use of Instagram in young females and its effects on body image.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chicken or the egg?

In a cross-sectional survey, Sidani et al. (2016) surveyed 1,765 young adults (19 to 32 years) with an eating disorder screening tool and a questionnaire on social media usage. Using logistic regressions with the data collected, the authors found that participants in the highest quartiles for social media usage, in terms of volume of frequency, had “significantly greater odds of having eating concerns.” (Pg. 2)

The study indicated that there was a “strong and consistent association between social media use and eating concerns was found in a nationally-representative sample of young adults. This association was apparent regardless of whether social media use was operationalized as volume or frequency.” (Pg. 8)

However, the study did not review the kind of content consumed in the participant’s social media usage. Their study is important in terms of signifying a relationship between high social media use and eating concerns, but it brings us to the “chicken or the egg” question. Does high social media usage come along with eating concerns, or do eating concerns come along with high social media usage?

Ferguson et al. (2014) conducted a study with 237 adolescent Hispanic girls, assessing how television and social media exposure related to peer competition and body dissatisfaction. They found that neither television or social media exposure to “thin ideal media” predicted negative outcomes, but that social media use was found to be a facet within the realm of peer competition. Their study suggested that signs of peer competition in young girls may relate to higher social media use, but that general social media use did not necessarily relate to peer competition. The researchers highlighted the potential negative outcomes of social media use in their study but found no direct relationship. In the Ferguson et al. study, it was concluded that “negative influences of social comparison are focused on peers rather than television or social media exposure.” (Pg. 12) Their findings hint that social comparison and competition may exist before social media exposure is introduced, answering back to the question presented by the 2016 study.

Hendrickse et al.’s 2017 study investigated the role of peer-competition and appearance-comparisons in relation to college women’s body image and Instagram usage. Their findings similarly nudge the idea that eating concerns, comparisons, and peer-competition come before social media use. Their results
suggested that Instagram demonstrated “a strong association between appearance-related comparisons made on Instagram and body image concerns, particularly drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction. These results suggest that Instagram use could be potentially harmful to individuals who find themselves constantly engaging in comparisons with others.” (pg. 98)

In a study of 746 undergraduate females ages 18-30, there was only a small indication of a relationship between social media use and body dissatisfaction (Supplee, 2017). However, there was no relationship found between social media use and eating disorders, which follows the same narrative presented in Ferguson’s et al. research (2014). Supplee’s study called for studying the prevention of negative body image associated with social media use, which may also prevent eating disorders in the long term.

**Defining the demographic**

In an attempt to create an updated and modern attitudes scale regarding media and technology usage, Rosen et al. (2013) surveyed more than 900 participants, assessing their frequency of social media use, employment status, gender, education level, age, living situation, and median income. Their study found that those who are single/unmarried, living alone, or part-time employed have more anxiety related to social media usage. This group of social media anxiety-prone individuals may describe the young adult female sample (who are not yet married and not full-time employed) used in many of the studies within this literature review.

**#Fitspiration**

In a sample of Australian social media users ages 15-29 years, Carrotte et al. (2015) found that “consumers of health and fitness–related social media content were predominantly teenage girls.” Though these posts were centered on sending “healthy messages,” the researchers were concerned that the fitness and health-themed posts had a negative influence on body image and healthy behaviors for their audience. After Carrotte et al. found that the audience for health and fitness related social media content was made up of teenage girls, Carrotte et al. called for further study into the role of “fitspiration pages, detox pages, and diet/fitness plan pages in influencing body image and health behaviors.”

Fardouly et al. (2017) indirectly answered Carrotte et al.’s call, examining the relationship between Instagram use and body image concerns among young women ages 18-25 in the United States and Australia. Fardouly et al. also looked at the relationship of viewing fitspiration images on Instagram and body image concerns. After conducting their study, Fardouly et al. found greater Instagram use was associated with greater self-objectification, and more frequently viewing fitspiration images was associated with greater body image concerns. Fardouly et al.’s results touched on the concerns found in the Carrotte et al. study but did not align with the Ferguson et al. study (2014). Because Ferguson et al.’s study primarily consisted of Hispanic girls, there may be a
cultural variance in the populations of Fardouly et al.’s and Carrotte et al.’s samples. Fardouly et al. concluded that their results suggest that Instagram may have a negative influence on women’s body image.

Nancy Clark, in an article in American Fitness, described the misleading nature of “#fitspiration” and “#fitspo” posts on Instagram, commenting that individuals who frequent these posts may feel “inadequate, anxious and preoccupied with perceived body flaws” after viewing them (Clark, pg. 67). Clark suggested that the negative feelings associated with fitspiration posts “can pave the path to exercising too much and/or eating too little.” Clark also noted that many fitspiration and health-oriented posts are not backed by science, making it hard to find truly healthy tips, advice, and messages on Instagram.

In a survey of 600 Instagram images posted with the hashtag “#fitspiration,” it was found that the great majority of “#fitspiration” posts showed only one body type, which was thin and toned (Tiggemann, 2016). This is concerning for the young women who consume fitspiration-centered content (Carrotte et al.), because thin and toned bodies are only one example of the body types young women may have.

Prevention

Media literacy interventions are strategies that intend to enhance participant’s ability to comprehend and analyze media, develop critical thinking, and reduce vulnerability to emotional messages seen in social media. Thinking in terms of body image dissatisfaction prevention, McLean et al. studied media literacy interventions’ potential impact on body image and social media (2016). McLean et al.’s study found that existing media literacy interventions showed improvements in body-related variables, but not in disordered eating. McLean et al.’s study shows that more concentration is needed for media literacy-based eating disorder prevention.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

My population consisted of young women ages 13-21 years old. My sample was six young women including a 13-year-old, two 19 year olds, a 20-year-old, and two 21-year-olds selected through purposive sampling. I knew some of the women personally, and other women volunteered to participate after I posted about my project on Facebook. I met the women in places where they were comfortable speaking about their body image.

Before conducting the interview, I had them answer “The Body Esteem Scale” by Frost, Franzoi, Oswald, & Shields, and the “Social Media Disorder Test” by Eijnden, Lemmens, and Valkenburg. Higher scores on the Body Esteem Scale indicate positive body image, while lower scores indicate a lower body image. The Social Media Disorder Test determines whether a participant is addicted to social media in an unhealthy manner. If a participant answers “yes”
to five or more questions, they use social media unhealthily according to the 
DSM-5 definition. The answers participants give to these surveys indicate their 
current body image status and attitudes towards social media, which is relevant 
to the nature of this study.

When the interview commenced, I asked the participants various 
questions about how they use Instagram, personal feelings about their body 
image, and how the two interrelate in their lives. After conducting the interviews 
and reviewing the survey data collected, I analyzed the information and made 
inferences and conclusions based on my findings. Names were changed to 
protect the respondent’s identities and sensitive responses.

**RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

**Social Media Disorder Test**

**YES/NO ANSWERS**

*During the past year have you...*

... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?

... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?

... often felt bad when you could not use social media?

*During the past year have you...*

... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?

... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?

... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?

... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?

... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?

… had serious conflict with your partner, parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use?
The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:
1 = Have strong negative feelings
2 = Have moderate negative feelings
3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
4 = Have moderate positive feelings
5 = Have strong positive feelings

--------------------------------------------------------
1. body scent _____
2. appetite _____
3. nose _____
4. physical stamina _____
5. reflexes _____
6. lips _____
7. muscular strength _____
8. waist _____
9. energy level _____
10. thighs _____
11. ears _____
12. biceps _____
13. chin _____
14. body build _____
15. physical coordination _____
16. buttocks _____
17. agility _____
18. width of shoulders _____
19. arms _____
20. chest or breasts _____
21. appearance of eyes _____
22. cheeks/cheekbones _____
23. hips _____
24. legs _____
25. figure or physique _____
26. sex drive _____
27. feet _____
28. sex organs _____
29. appearance of stomach _____
30. health _____
31. sex activities _____
32. body hair _____
33. physical condition _____
34. face _____
35. weight _____
Interview Questions

How old are you?

How long have you had an Instagram?

How often do you use Instagram?

Has using Instagram ever made you feel better about your body image?

Has using Instagram ever made you feel worse about your body image?

What kinds of accounts other than your friends or family do you generally follow?

Do you ever see “fitspiration” posts on Instagram? How do they make you feel?

What kinds of body types do you usually see when you see fitspiration posts?
How does that make you feel?

Do you often compare yourself to others in general?

Have you ever dealt with body image issues?

Do you find yourself making self comparisons with the images you see on Instagram?

Whenever you’re using Instagram, how do you expect it to make you feel? Do those expectations come true?

Do you ever post selfies? What kinds of feelings are you expecting when you post a selfie?

How does the kind of feedback you get make you feel? Do more likes or less likes affect the way you perceive “how good” a selfie is?

How do you usually cope with days where your body image is lower than usual?
What do you do to feel better?

If you were giving advice to your younger self about body image, what would you say?
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Figure 1.0 - Scores from the Body Esteem Scale

The average body image score of this sample was 3.3, which qualifies as a slightly positive-leaning neutral in terms of body image. Anna had the highest body image score of 3.7, meaning she has strong positive-leaning neutral perception of her own body image, while Kelsey had the lowest with 2.7.
In this sample, only Addison and Danica qualified for unhealthy social media use according to the Social Media Disorder Test. However, each participant met at least three criteria on the test, indicating some degree of unhealthy social media use with each participant.

When discussing Instagram usage during the interview, several participants mentioned its constant presence in their daily lives. These comments included:

- “I use Instagram all the time, I’m always looking at it. In between taking orders at work, when I’m at a red light, it’s just all the time.” - Ray
- “Instagram is one of my only social medias, so I use it pretty regularly. I use it probably a few hours a day. If I’m in bed, or I’m in the car I use it. I don’t use it when I’m socializing with other people, but if there’s a lull in my day I’ll be on it.” - Danica
- “I probably check it a lot in the morning when I wake up, and definitely at night I’ll get on it. If I’m bored or trying to avoid homework, I’ll probably get on it three or four times during a day, but at night I can definitely be on it awhile.” - Kelsey
- “I post on Instagram four to five times a week, and I probably check Instagram whenever I’m bored or whenever I can. Probably every 15 to 30 minutes.” - Tory

If Instagram is constantly present in the participant’s life, and they are negatively affected by the content they see on Instagram, there is a never ending
opportunity for Instagram to negatively influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the participants who are consuming it.
The top three topics that were discussed were defined under “Instagram Harming,” “Views on Fitspiration,” and “Views on Body Positivity.” Instagram harming participant’s body images and behaviors was the most discussed topic, with each participant lamenting that Instagram has made their body image worse. These comments include:

- “Looking at Instagram has not made me feel better about my body image. Absolutely not. Instagram has definitely made me feel worse about my body image.” - Danica
- “It’s pretty common for instagram to make me feel bad about my body image. I know especially because Instagram is very unique, you can just follow anyone. A lot of the people I follow are models and artists, so you watch their lives every single day. I am comfortable watching stranger’s stuff. Most of the time, it prompts you to compare yourself to them.” - Kelsey
- “Instagram has also made me feel worse about my body image. It’s easy to get caught up in looking at your feed constantly, because it’s like you’re seeing everybody’s best of the best. Everybody posts the best parts of themselves, so you’re constantly seeing that. You start comparing yourself and say, well, her body looks this way and mine doesn’t, and that leads to comparison in real life. That can have a really negative impact on your life. Especially for younger girls who are growing and developing.” - Tory
“The pictures I see on my feed have played a part on what I look like and what I want to look like.” - Addison

“Oh yeah, there have been a lot of times on Instagram where it made my body image worse. Well, you’ll see pictures of people where they’ve been clearly photo shopped, but you’ll think, oh, I actually like that, I want to look like that.” - Addison

“Instagram has 100% made my body image worse. I’ve never received negative feedback on Instagram, I’ve never been cyberbullied, but just playing the comparison game gets me. When you see someone who posts similar content to you and people like them way more, or when you have the people in your life that seem perfect so you scroll through their page, you just think, why can’t I look like that, why can’t my body look like that. It’s unhealthy, but I think that everybody can fall into that.” - Anna

“I 100% compare myself to the people I see on social media, it’s pretty much unavoidable.” – Anna

In contrast, there were only three comments mentioning Instagram’s positive effect on the participant’s body images. These comments include:

- “Instagram has definitely made me feel better about my body image. It depends on what accounts you follow, but I follow a lot of body positivity accounts, and Native American positivity accounts. Those kind of make you feel good about yourself and promote body positivity. It helps a lot.” - Ray

- “I think Instagram has made me feel better about my body image a little bit. Whenever I post a picture, it’s like a self-validating thing, or it used to be. I’ve kind of grown to post pictures that I want to post, like it doesn’t really matter about what other people think. In a way, we post for reactions from people, like how many likes or comments we’re getting. Those are all reactions you’re getting about yourself, like a validation system.”
  - Tory

- “I wouldn’t say social media has necessarily improved my body image, but it’s definitely given me more a platform from which I can express my perception of myself. It’s like, the ability to express myself makes me feel good.” - Anna

The stark contrast suggests that as a rule, Instagram negatively has affected my sample. Between the six women I interviewed, the effects of Instagram on the body images of young women ages 13-21 are primarily negative. However, if participants use Instagram in a proactive and expressive manner, Instagram can provide healthy benefits to its users, but only secondary to the negative effects it has on the user.
In terms of views on fitspiration and body positivity, participants had negative and positive views on each. Negative views on both “fitspiration” and “body positivity” posts outnumbered the positive views. Negative comments on “fitspiration” posts include:

- “It kind of makes me mad to see fitspiration, because they’re portraying this ideal body image in a way that says everybody needs to look like that.” - Ray
- “If I was going to work out, it would not be because someone on the explore page inspired me to. They don’t inspire me at all. If I wanted real advice about a weight training plan, I’d probably research it myself rather than follow whatever someone on Instagram said. Since things are so different from person to person, I think fitspiration accounts are useless and uninspiring.” - Danica
- “When I see fitspiration pictures it makes me feel bad when I compare myself to them. Because you can cater your Instagram to exactly what you want to see, you can end up having 80% of the people you follow looking a certain way and having the certain body you want. I follow some models who are constantly working out, and I’m just looking at their pictures while I’m in bed. Because you can follow exactly who you want to follow, it can make it seem like everyone has a perfect body except for you.” - Kelsey
- “I see thinspiration posts on Instagram pretty regularly. I follow some too. I usually see anorexic people, so very skinny people. Or, it’s like, on the verge of becoming super skinny, but you can tell it’s not normal. Thinspiration accounts kind of give me a goal. It doesn’t necessarily make me feel better about my body image but it does inspire me. You know, there are some people who can wrap their hand around their wrist. That’s pretty normal. But, once you can get your two hands around your thigh, then that’s pretty.” - Addison
- “Thinspiration accounts are negatively affecting me, definitely. I know a lot of facts about it in the medical field, I know when you look at it, it worsens and worsens. Because it’s like, oh that’s what I want to look like, that’s what I ought to be.” - Addison
- “I’ve seen fitspiration accounts, and they’ve inspired me to be more active, but probably not in a super healthy way. In the times where I’ve looked up fitspo, I’ll usually see really muscular, thin, tall athletic girls, and I’ll think I’m never going to look like that if I’m just sitting on my butt checking Instagram. I don’t know if that’s super healthy motivation as opposed to being like, an incentive.” - Anna

The prevailing view on fitspiration is that it does not healthily encourage viewers to be fit, work out, or pursue a healthy lifestyle. The
consensus of this sample was that fitspiration is not only uninspiring but damaging to the body image of the viewer.

The lone positive view on fitspiration came from Tory, saying “I see fitspiration posts on the explore page on Instagram. I think it’s great that people are challenging themselves to make a healthy lifestyle, and they’re exploiting that a little bit, but what gets tricky is the angles people use in pictures of their bodies.”

Tory’s positive sentiment still ended on a note that suggests fitspiration posts are not always realistic.

When it comes to body positivity, several participants noted that body positivity posts do not necessarily help them to be more positive about themselves. For example:

- “I see body positive posts, but they don’t really affect me too much. I just think, good, I’m happy for you, but I don’t feel the same way. Their captions may be body positive, but 90% of what they’re actually showing me isn’t inspiring and actually makes me feel bad.” - Danica
- “I might follow a few body positive accounts, but not too many. It’s not that I disagree with their body positivity, but it just doesn’t stick with me super well. Body positivity means being positive about your own body, uplifting women who don’t look traditionally perfect, you know. Body positivity is kind of geared towards people who are more curvy, which is important, but for me it just feels kind of futile. There are so few body positive accounts but there are so many more conventionally attractive models with good content. I mean, if I’m constantly unfollowing body positive accounts and following the models instead, it’s because my brain finds that more pleasing to see.” - Kelsey
- “I see some body positivity accounts. They’re a lot more positive than the thinspiration accounts. Sometimes the thinspiration accounts have really aesthetically pleasing pictures.” – Addison

These answers suggested that body positivity accounts may not be as attractive, seductive, or inviting as other accounts, such as fitspiration or celebrity accounts.

The positive responses received for body positivity came from Ray and Tory.

Ray commented, “Since I’m a bigger person, I’ve had a different experience with body positivity. For me, body positivity is learning how to accept myself, and not only accept myself, but love myself. Not just be okay with how my body looks right now, but really love myself.”

Tory took a similar approach. “Body positivity is being comfortable and confident in your own skin, but also knowing you’re not going to feel 100% every single day and that is okay. You can’t be too hard on yourself, and have to love yourself anyway,” Tory said.
For those who have struggled to learn body positivity and have been successful, body positivity has become a cornerstone in living a happier life. Participants who do not identify with body positivity may benefit from finding a way to embrace body positivity for their own bodies before they can be body positive about others.

Each participant mentioned that they got their first Instagram account before or during adolescence.

- “I’ve had Instagram for five years. I was fifteen when I first got an Instagram.” - Ray
- “I got Instagram in 2013, so I was 13 or 14.” - Danica
- “I’ve had an Instagram for at least eight years. I made it when it first came out, and started using it more when I started my sophomore year of high school.” - Kelsey
- “I’ve had an Instagram since I was 13 years old.” - Tory
- “I’ve had Instagram for four years, so since I was 9 years old. My cousin and I got in trouble when we made the first one.” - Addison
- “I’ve had an Instagram since sophomore year of high school, so about five years I’d say.” – Anna

Because Instagram has been present in each participant’s lives for several years now, it had played a role in shaping their journey through adolescence.

Ray, Danica, and Kelsey each mentioned how Instagram usage may harm younger girls or may have harmed them in their younger years. Their comments included:

- “My cousin is 10 years old and she has an Instagram, and she’s all over social media. And that’s where she gets the influence on her body image. It makes me mad that that’s what she is having to grow up with. It’s a perpetual cycle of having body image issues, and it’s never going to stop if those accounts don’t change their motives.” - Ray
- “If I was younger and using Instagram the way I am now, I would be very unhappy.” - Danica
- “I think social media opened the door towards body image issues more, especially because we all started on social media when we were impressionable and young.” – Kelsey

Nearly all of the participants offered advice to younger girls on Instagram, wishing them a different fate than their own.

- “If I were giving advice to 13-year-old girls, I’d tell them to unfollow all the accounts that made them feel bad about themselves and follow accounts that do make you feel good about yourself.” - Ray
- “The advice I would give to a 13-year-old is to encourage them to follow body positive accounts while they’re still impressionable. Fitspo accounts can be fine sometimes, but there are a lot of accounts that are eating disorder recovery accounts that can be positive but end up being very very negative. Like when anorexic people post before and after pictures, it can make young girls look at the pictures and think it’s desirable and attainable.” - Danica

- “I’d tell a younger kid on instagram that comparison is the worst thing you can do, and even if you follow people who aren’t showing off their body, people only post what they want other people to see. You only see the best parts of people. I’d remind them that instagram is curated, and that they need to be careful with the media. The world is trying to tell us how we should look and behave, so we should be careful what we consume. If someone would have told me when I was 14 that so much of the stuff we see on Instagram was bullshit, maybe it would have made a difference on me.” - Kelsey

- “If was giving advice to my younger self, the biggest thing I would tell myself would be to stay true to who you are and try your best to not compare yourself to other people. I mean, go ahead and experiment with some crazy makeup or crazy hair but know that no matter what you do, it’s going to be okay.” - Tory

The comments on coping mechanisms included the following:

- “Truthfully, I’m not good at getting past negative body image feelings easily. It usually takes me a couple days to get out of that funk when I’m in it. I don’t really have any specific coping mechanisms right now, but it usually takes me a couple days to talk myself out of it and tell myself it’s just temporary. So usually I just wait it out.” - Ray

- “There are some times where I’ll see someone and the only reason I’m looking at their body is to make myself feel bad. When that happens, I just go somewhere else and look at something else. I’ve learned how to avoid looking at people that make me feel bad, especially when I know it’s not real.” - Danica

- “I’ve learned to not look at things that make me upset. I’ve also had to learn how to get rid of guilt. With eating disorder type behaviors or body image in general, there’s a lot of self shaming that goes on, and that will create a cycle that continually makes you feel worse about yourself. I’ve had to learn a lot of self reassurance and let go of an image that cannot or will not exist for me. It’s been a lot of mental training for me.” - Danica

- “I don’t have very many ways to cope with negative body image, but usually I just try to take my mind off of it however I can. I don’t really question myself when I’ve gone all day thinking shitty things about myself. It’s almost like you don’t even notice sometimes that you’re being negative towards yourself because you’re used to thinking that way. Because of that, I don’t really take the time to cope.” - Kelsey
“On bad body image days, I try to eat better so I feel better and feel more hopeful. On days where I don’t feel super positive about myself, sometimes I run the risk of going down the comparison hole and looking at other people’s pictures just to feel worse about myself. Or other times, I’ll try harder with my appearance and put makeup on or whatever. But usually, I just try to ride things out and wait it out.” - Anna

Nearly every participant also shared what their coping mechanisms are on bad body image days. Unfortunately, several participants have not developed robust or healthy coping mechanisms to combat low self-esteem or low body image. Several participants mentioned how easy it is to compare themselves to images on Instagram that are unattainable on bad body image days. This indicates a use of Instagram to match emotions, rather than emotions matching what is seen on Instagram. This also suggests that more work is needed for young women to have access to literature, training, or tools that help them combat low body image and grow positive perceptions of themselves.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After collecting a sample of young women, gathering surveys, and conducting interviews, I learned a great amount about the process of research. I learned that it is a long process – one that should be carefully executed and continually updated. I took my time on this project, making sure I was contributing to the project in some small way every week since it was assigned. That was to my benefit, and paid off in the end. In the past, I approached large projects more last minute. Research projects cannot be last minute ordeals.

I also learned that I definitely want to do more research and data analysis. This project was bittersweet, because I really enjoyed doing it, but hated to hear the effects Instagram had on my participants. I can’t wait until my next opportunity to do a research project like this.

I believe I answered my research question as well as I could with this sample. Between the six women I interviewed, the effects of Instagram on the body images of young women ages 13-21 are primarily negative. There can be some positive effects, if Instagram is used as a tool of self-expression. However, as a base rule, Instagram use is not inclined towards positive benefits for the user.

Future research should be done to determine how to decrease the negative effects presented by Instagram usage. It should include a bigger pool of participants, and should look into how Instagram affects the behaviors and attitudes of younger girls.

My study has several limitations. First, it was done with a very small pool of women. I can make as many inferences as I want about my sample, but my sample does not necessarily translate to the whole of women using Instagram.
Instagram. I would be very curious to see what a study on a random sample of women using Instagram would look like. Secondly, I did not ask my participants their BMI, nor ask them whether they had an eating disorder on my survey forms. I knew personally that they had or had not, but I forgot to include it as a question in my surveys and interview questions. Knowing this data may have been helpful in quantifying certain risks or tendencies for women with specific characteristics.

If I did this study again, I would revise it by asking for the BMI of my participants, giving an option for them to disclose disordered eating or an eating disorder, I would quantify how many fitspiration/thinspiration/body positivity/celebrity model accounts they follow, and look deeper into how Instagram specifically affects the body image of girls ages 9-17.

CHAPTER 6: REFERENCE LIST & APPENDICES


APPENDIX

Ray
Social Media Disorder Test
YES/NO ANSWERS

During the past year have you…
... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?
  yes
... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?
  yes
... often felt bad when you could not use social media?
  yes
During the past year have you…
... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?
  no
... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?
  no
... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?
  no
... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?
  no
... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?
  yes
… had serious conflict with your parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use?
  No
The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:

1 = Have strong negative feelings
2 = Have moderate negative feelings
3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
4 = Have moderate positive feelings
5 = Have strong positive feelings

---------------------------------------------

1. body scent _____ 2
2. appetite _____ 3
3. nose _____ 4
4. physical stamina _____ 1
5. reflexes _____ 3
6. lips _____ 4
7. muscular strength _____ 4
8. waist _____ 2
9. energy level _____ 3
10. thighs _____ 3
11. ears _____ 3
12. biceps _____ 3
13. chin _____ 2
14. body build _____ 2
15. physical coordination _____ 3
16. buttocks _____ 5
17. agility _____ 3
18. width of shoulders _____ 2
19. arms _____ 3
20. chest or breasts _____ 5
21. appearance of eyes _____ 5
22. cheeks/cheekbones _____ 4
23. hips _____ 4
24. legs _____ 4
25. figure or physique _____ 4
26. sex drive _____ 4
27. feet _____ 2
28. sex organs _____ 5
29. appearance of stomach _____ 2
30. health _____ 2
31. sex activities _____ 2
32. body hair _____ 5
33. physical condition _____ 2
34. face _____ 2
35. weight _____ 1
RAY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT:

I am 20 years old.

I’ve had instagram for five years

I was fifteen when I first got an instagram

I use instagram all the time, I’m always looking at it. In between taking orders at work, when I’m at a red light, it’s just all the time.

Instagram has definitely made me feel better about my body image. It depends on what accounts you follow, but I follow a lot of body positivity accounts, and Native American positivity accounts. Those kind of make you feel good about yourself and promote body positivity. It helps a lot.

Since I’m a bigger person, so I’ve had a different experience with body positivity. For me, body positivity is learning how to accept myself, and not only accept myself, but love myself. Not just be okay with how my body looks right now, but really love myself.

Instagram probably made my body image worse in high school, because I didn’t have the best coping skills then.

I’ve realized that somebody else’s life is something I shouldn’t try to replicate. It’s not just with thin people, there are accounts all over instagram where these beautiful and gorgeous model image women are everywhere. Learning how to differentiate that that’s not my reality has helped a lot.

It’s harder to separate the two when you’re younger. Especially when I was in high school, everybody kinda did sports at my high school, so everyone was really athletic. I stopped playing volleyball my sophomore year, and that’s when I started struggling with my body image really bad. I’ve always struggled with my body image, but after I quit doing sports, I kind of quit doing anything and started working instead. Those were probably harder times than anything.

It kind of makes me mad to see fitspiration, because they’re portraying this ideal body image in a way that says everybody needs to look like that. I don’t take personal offense to it, but it does make me mad that young kids are all over instagram and seeing that. My cousin is 10 years old and she has an instagram, and she’s all over social media. And that’s where she gets the influence on her body image. It makes me mad that that’s what she is having to grow up with. It’s a perpetual cycle of having body image issues, and it’s never going to stop if those accounts don’t change their motives.
On fitspiration posts, I usually see hourglass figures, very tan, very tall.

I’ve gotten pretty good at not making comparisons, because when I was doing things like that, those were times where I felt the worst about myself. I’ve gotten pretty good at steering clear of those thoughts.

If I were giving advice to thirteen-year-old girls, I’d tell them to unfollow all the accounts that made them feel bad about themselves, and follow accounts that do make you feel good about yourself.

For me, I like to follow a lot of Native American accounts. I follow a lady who posts workout posts, but they’re in a very positive light. She just had a baby and she’s working on getting her physique back, but she’s doing it in a very positive manner that doesn’t make me feel like I should be doing that or have to be doing that.

So, I think following accounts that make you feel good about yourself are really important.

When I look on Instagram, it’s kind of just a mindless, something to do.

There are some accounts I always specifically look for, like my friend Josie who always has something positive to say on her posts. I always look for positive accounts.

I don’t take selfies a lot, and when I don’t take them it’s usually a time where I’m struggling with my body image. But when I do have a really good day and feel really good about myself, I make sure to take as many pictures of myself as I can and kind of force myself to feel good about myself. When I do post selfies I always feel really confident about it.

The feedback I get from posting a selfie kind of reinforces it. I don’t really post something unless I feel really confident about it. I try not to internalize negative thoughts about myself, so when I post something it’s always going to be positive. When I get positive reinforcement in that, it makes me feel more affirmed.

Truthfully, I’m not good at getting past negative body image feelings easily. It usually takes me a couple days to get out of that funk when I’m in it. I don’t really have any specific coping mechanisms right now, but it usually takes me a couple days to talk myself out of it and tell myself it’s just temporary. So usually I just wait it out.
Danica
Social Media Disorder Test
YES/NO ANSWERS

During the past year have you...
... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?
  yes
... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?
  no
... often felt bad when you could not use social media?
  no
During the past year have you...
... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?
  yes
... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?
  yes
... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?
  No
... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?
  Yes
... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?
  Yes
... had serious conflict with your partner, parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use?
  No
The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:

1 = Have strong negative feelings
2 = Have moderate negative feelings
3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
4 = Have moderate positive feelings
5 = Have strong positive feelings

1. body scent ___5___
2. appetite ___2___
3. nose ___5___
4. physical stamina ___1___
5. reflexes ___3___
6. lips ___4___
7. muscular strength ___1___
8. waist ___1___
9. energy level ___1___
10. thighs ___5___
11. ears ___5___
12. biceps ___1___
13. chin ___3___
14. body build ___2___
15. physical coordination ___2___
16. buttocks ___2___
17. agility ___2___
18. width of shoulders ___2___
19. arms ___1___
20. chest or breasts ___3___
21. appearance of eyes ___4___
22. cheeks/cheekbones ___4___
23. hips ___4___
24. legs ___4___
25. figure or physique ___3___
26. sex drive ___5___
27. feet ___5___
28. sex organs ___5___
29. appearance of stomach ___4___
30. health ___2___
31. sex activities ___5___
32. body hair ___5___
33. physical condition ___3___
34. face ___4___
35. weight ___2___
DANICA INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

I am 19 years old.

I got Instagram in 2013, so I was 13 or 14.

Instagram is one of my only social medias, so I use it pretty regularly. I use it probably a few hours a day. If I’m in bed, or I’m in the car I use it. I don’t use it when I’m socializing with other people, but if there’s a lull in my day I’ll be on it.

I don’t really look at the posts from people I follow, but I do go on the explore page and find people who look really interesting. I also look at memes.

Looking at Instagram has not made me feel better about my body image. Absolutely not.

Instagram has definitely made me feel worse about my body image.

I see body positive posts, but they don’t really affect me too much. I just think, good, I’m happy for you, but I don’t feel the same way. There are some times where I’ll see someone and the only reason I’m looking at their body is to make myself feel bad. When that happens, I just go somewhere else and look at something else. I’ve learned how to avoid looking at people that make me feel bad, especially when I know it’s not real.

People can edit their pictures to look better really easily, or just pose a certain way. I might be able to make myself look like that if I tried hard enough, but it just takes a whole lot of effort.

When I was younger I never looked at the explore page. The explore page was probably the worst thing to happen to Instagram ever. I see a lot of fitness accounts being recommended on the explore page. I see a lot of pictures of people who used to be extremely overweight, or pictures of people who constantly go to the gym. I also see a lot of people who post about clean eating, exercise, or bodybuilding. There’s a ton of those. My explore page is specifically centered around weight or body image.

I wouldn’t say that Instagram has prolonged negative effects on my mood, but I can make myself feel really bad if I want to. I try to look at people who are really interesting, but I find myself getting sucked into fitness posts. You know, the ones where people are like, “I’ve gone to the gym every day for two years. I’m not perfect, but I did only eat avocado and quinoa and chicken...
breast today! You should be healthy like me!” After seeing that, I’m like, “Well shit.”

Their captions may be body positive, but 90% of what they’re actually showing me isn’t inspiring and actually makes me feel bad.

If I was going to work out, it would not be because someone on the explore page inspired me to. They don’t inspire me at all. If I wanted real advice about a weight training plan, I’d probably research it myself rather than follow whatever someone on Instagram said. Since things are so different from person to person, I think fitspiration accounts are useless and uninspiring.

Other than my friends and family, I follow a lot of accounts of people with really good feeds and pictures. I am kind of inspired by really good Instagrams where people spend a lot of time outside or find beautiful things. I used to follow fitspo accounts, but I have since unfollowed them.

I don’t take a lot of pictures anymore, or do that much other than school, music, and work, so sometimes following interesting Instagram accounts can make me really sad. I know they’re not doing cool things all the time, but for them to be able to take beautiful pictures, they’re obviously doing at least something. It can make me sad to know that my life isn’t as colorful as other people’s lives.

Social media was not a part of my personal body image issues until recently. I’ve mostly overcome my body image issues. I think I missed the gap where social media could be the most contributing factor to how I feel about myself. Most of my issues consisted of comparing myself to people I actually knew in person, or an idealized image I personally held about ideal body types. I didn’t use social media when I was in the depths of my eating problems, but since I have pretty solid coping mechanisms in place now, I think that’s the reason social media hasn’t really affected me like it could other people.

If I was younger and using Instagram the way I am now, I would be very unhappy. I’ve learned to not look at things that make me upset. I’ve also had to learn how to get rid of guilt. With eating disorder type behaviors or body image in general, there’s a lot of self shaming that goes on, and that will create a cycle that continually makes you feel worse about yourself. I’ve had to learn a lot of self reassurance and let go of an image that cannot or will not exist for me. It’s been a lot of mental training for me.

I’ve also had to learn physical things, like eat healthy, be kind to yourself, and don’t look at yourself in the mirror for hours. It’s kind of like a fake it until you make it in a physical sense, and as dumb as it sounds, you have
to be kind and patient to yourself in the same way you would to a little kid. Surrounding yourself with positivity is also a huge part of it.

As I’ve gotten healthier, the less selfies I’ve posted. I don’t really post selfies now, but when I did it was me looking for outside validation.

The advice I would give to a 13 year old is to encourage them to follow body positive accounts while they’re still impressionable. Fitspo accounts can be fine sometimes, but there are a lot of accounts that are eating disorder recovery accounts that can be positive but end up being very very negative. Like when anorexic people post before and after pictures, it can make young girls look at the pictures and think it’s desirable and attainable.

Kelsey
Social Media Disorder Test
YES/NO ANSWERS

During the past year have you...
... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?
no
... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?
no
... often felt bad when you could not use social media?
no
During the past year have you...
... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?
yes
... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?
yes
... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?
No
... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?
no
... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?
yes
… had serious conflict with your parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use?
No
The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)
Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:
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<tr>
<th>Body Part</th>
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<td>3. nose</td>
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<td>4. physical stamina</td>
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<td>5. reflexes</td>
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<td>9. energy level</td>
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<td>10. thighs</td>
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KELSEY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

I am 21 years old.

I’ve had an Instagram for at least eight years. I made it when it first came out and started using it more when I started my sophomore year of high school.

I use Instagram a lot, but I recently deactivated it. I go through bouts of deactivating it and starting up again. Sometimes because of school, sometimes because I don’t like it’s effect on me.

I probably check it a lot in the morning when I wake up, and definitely at night I’ll get on it. If I’m bored or trying to avoid homework, I’ll probably get on it three or four times during a day, but at night I can definitely be on it awhile.

If I have a free moment I’ll get on, I regularly get on in the morning and at night because those are always free moments, but if I’m waiting in line or something I’ll get on Instagram.

Using Instagram hasn’t really made me feel better about my body image. If not positive, it’s made me somewhat neutral, maybe if I’ve posted a selfie it has made me feel a little better.

It’s pretty common for Instagram to make me feel bad about my body image. I know especially because Instagram is very unique, you can just follow anyone. A lot of the people I follow are models and artists, so you watch their lives every single day. I am comfortable watching stranger’s stuff. Most of the time, it prompts you to compare yourself to them.

During my freshman year of college, when I was working out more, I’d follow a lot more fitspo blogs. In the last few years though, I mainly follow models and artists.

When I see fitspiration pictures it makes me feel bad when I compare myself to them. Because you can cater your Instagram to exactly what you want to see, you can end up having 80% of the people you follow looking a certain way and having the certain body you want.

I follow some models who are constantly working out, and I’m just looking at their pictures while I’m in bed. Because you can follow exactly who you want to follow, it can make it seem like everyone has a perfect body except for you.
It can be a vicious cycle of comparing yourself and going through bouts of “this is complete bullshit, I should spend more of my mental energy on something else.” Then eventually, the cycle starts back up again and you’re back to comparing yourself.

I might follow a few body positive accounts, but not too many. It’s not that I disagree with their body positivity, but it just doesn’t stick with me super well.

Body positivity means being positive about your own body, uplifting women who don’t look a traditionally perfect, you know.

Body positivity is kind of geared towards people who are more curvy, which is important, but for me it just feels kind of futile. There are so few body positive accounts but there are so many more conventionally attractive models with good content. I mean, if I’m constantly unfollowing body positive accounts and following the models instead, it’s because my brain finds that more pleasing to see.

I generally get more likes on selfies than any other selfies I take, but I barely ever post them.

I don’t have very many ways to cope with negative body image, but usually I just try to take my mind off of it however I can. I don’t really question myself when I’ve gone all day thinking shitty things about myself. It’s almost like you don’t even notice sometimes that you’re being negative towards yourself because you’re used to thinking that way. Because of that, I don’t really take the time to cope.

I think social media opened the door towards body image issues more, especially because we all started on social media when we were impressionable and young.

When I was younger, 14 or 15, I had a friend with an eating disorder, and it really changed how I thought about myself. ’d see her losing weight and her telling me how I wanted to look, and she’d show me pictures of people who were anorexic and say, “This is what I want to look like.”

At the time, I remember thinking that was unhealthy and crazy, but three or four years later I was looking at the same pictures thinking, “yeah, I want to look like that.”

I’d tell a younger kid oninstagram that comparison is the worst thing you can do, and even if you follow people who aren’t showing off their body, people only post what they want other people to see. You only see the best parts of people. I would tell them not to trust everything they say and don’t get pulled
too deeply into it. You can only do your best and that’s all you can hope to do, there’s always going to be somebody better than you but you have to be yourself. I’d remind them that Instagram is curated, and that they need to be careful with the media. The world is trying to tell us how we should look and behave, so we should be careful what we consume. If someone would have told me when I was 14 that so much of the stuff we see on Instagram was bullshit, maybe it would have made a difference on me.

Tory
Social Media Disorder Test
YES/NO ANSWERS
During the past year have you…
... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?
  no
... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?
  no
... often felt bad when you could not use social media?
  yes
During the past year have you…
... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?
  no
... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?
  no
... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?
  no
... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?
  yes
... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?
  yes
... had serious conflict with your parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use?
  No
The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

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TORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

I am 19 years old.

I’ve had an Instagram since I was 13 years old.

I post on Instagram four to five times a week, and I probably check Instagram whenever I’m bored or whenever I can. Probably every 15 to 30 minutes.

I think Instagram has made me feel better about my body image a little bit. Whenever I post a picture, it’s like a self-validating thing, or it used to be. I’ve kind of grown to post pictures that I want to post, like it doesn’t really matter about what other people think. In a way, we post for reactions from people, like how many likes or comments we’re getting. Those are all reactions you’re getting about yourself, like a validation system.

The kind of feedback I get on a post can kind of change the way I feel about a post, because if you look at it from an emotional standpoint and think, “well maybe I shouldn’t post pictures like this,” or maybe “I should change what kinds of things I’m posting”.

For me, I’m trying to create a brand for myself and my music career, and I’m also having a great time in Germany and I want to post about it.

If I get more likes on a post, I usually feel better about that posts than others that might have gotten less. It makes you feel like you’re making more of an impact on social media and like more people are paying attention to you.

Everybody wants to stand out and be paid attention to.

Instagram has also made me feel worse about my body image. It’s easy to get caught up in looking at your feed constantly, because it’s like you’re seeing everybody’s best of the best. Everybody posts the best parts of themselves, so you’re constantly seeing that. You start comparing yourself and say, well, her body looks this way and mine doesn’t, and that leads to comparison in real life. That can have a really negative impact on your life. Especially for younger girls who are growing and developing.

I’m in the music industry, and I’m also really interested in photography and modeling.

I think you can’t compare yourself to people because there’s only one version of yourself, and that’s a hard lesson I’ve been learning. When you’re
constantly comparing, which is something that I’ve been dealing with, it makes you want to shape yourself into a certain way. When you’re constantly seeing that over and over through the posts and feed, you think maybe I shouldn’t do this, or maybe I shouldn’t eat that, or maybe I should work out more so I look a certain way.

I haven’t talked about it a lot, but I’ve been recovering from somewhat of an eating disorder the past year. It’s been a little bit of a struggle, and I’ve had to learn how to let go and not let other people impact the way I view myself.

As you grow older, you grow a little bit wiser. You learn to be more comfortable in your own skin. You accept that this is your body, this is your shape, and this is who you are a person. Your body is just going to change over time, that’s how it is. I think you grow in yourself as you get older, and it’s important for other people to see that growth. Hopefully you can inspire people so they know it’s okay to be comfortable in their own skin.

I see fitspiration posts on the explore page on Instagram. I think it’s great that people are challenging themselves to make a healthy lifestyle, and they’re exploiting that a little bit, but what gets tricky is the angles people use in pictures of their bodies.

I follow other musicians, I follow models, I follow people in the entertainment industry, I follow travel and food blogs. I definitely think that following models like Taylor Hill or Kendall Jenner can make it hard to not compare yourself to them.

Body positivity is being comfortable and confident in your own skin, but also knowing you’re not going to feel 100% every single day and that is okay. You can’t be too hard on yourself and have to love yourself anyway.

If was giving advice to my younger self, the biggest thing I would tell myself would be to stay true to who you are and try your best to not compare yourself to other people. I mean, go ahead and experiment with some crazy makeup or crazy hair but know that no matter what you do, it’s going to be okay.

Addison
Social Media Disorder Test
YES/NO ANSWERS
During the past year have you…
... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again? yes
... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?
no
... often felt bad when you could not use social media?
no
During the past year have you...
... tried to spend less time on social media, butfailed?
yes
... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?
no
... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?
no
... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?
yes
... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?
yes
... had serious conflict with your partner, parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use?
yes
The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:
- 1 = Have strong negative feelings
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- 3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
- 4 = Have moderate positive feelings
- 5 = Have strong positive feelings

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Item</th>
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<td>2. appetite</td>
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<td>3. nose</td>
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<td>4. physical stamina</td>
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<td>5. reflexes</td>
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<td>6. lips</td>
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<td>7. muscular strength</td>
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<td>9. energy level</td>
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<td>15. physical coordination</td>
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<td>16. buttocks</td>
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<td>17. agility</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>18. width of shoulders</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>33. physical condition</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. face</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. weight</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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ADDISON INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT:

I’m 13 years old.

I’ve had Instagram for four years, so since I was 9 years old. My cousin and I got in trouble when we made the first one.

I don’t use Instagram often…maybe like 5 times a week. Maybe once a day.

Instagram hasn’t necessarily made me feel better about my body image, because most of the pictures I post are of landscapes. So my Instagram isn’t, like, ‘me’.

The pictures I see on my feed have played a part on what I look like and what I want to look like.

Oh yeah, there have been a lot of times on Instagram where it made my body image worse.

Well, you’ll see pictures of people where they’ve been clearly photo shopped, but you’ll think, oh, I actually like that, I want to look like that.

I follow a lot of local companies, a lot of fashion companies. There’s celebrities of course, too.

I see thinspiration posts on Instagram pretty regularly. I follow some too. I usually see anorexic people, so very skinny people. Or, it’s like, on the verge of becoming super skinny, but you can tell it’s not normal.

Thinspiration accounts kind of give me a goal. It doesn’t necessarily make me feel better about my body image but it does inspire me.

You know, there are some people who can wrap their hand around their wrist. That’s pretty normal. But, once you can get your two hands around your thigh, then that’s pretty.

I feel like if you’re not skinny you’re not beautiful. Somedays I feel like I’m skinny.

On good body image days I feel like I’m skinny. I wake up and I’m in a good mood, and like, the rest of the day I’m happy. I’m not quiet those days.
My friends can tell when I’m having bad days, and they won’t ask about it, but they’ll bring me up and support me.

I kind of just sit and do whatever on days I don’t feel good about myself.

Whenever I get on Instagram, I’m expecting it to make me feel hungry. I follow a lot of food accounts.
I don’t want to be embarrassed when I post on Instagram, so it can’t be too weird, but I also don’t want it to be perfection weird. I’m just trying to present a good image of myself.

I posted a selfie once, then I deleted it. I didn’t like it.

I have dance pictures that I love, and they look good, but it’s just my face. I feel like pictures of my face are awkward.

Thinspiration accounts are negatively affecting me, definitely. I know a lot of facts about it in the medical field, I know when you look at it, it worsens and worsens. Because it’s like, oh that’s what I want to look like, that’s what I ought to be.

It’s hard to get out of that. If you don’t look at it, you have nothing to judge yourself upon, so you don’t know what to do.

I see some body positivity accounts. They’re a lot more positive than the thinspiration accounts.

Sometimes the thinspiration accounts have really aesthetically pleasing pictures.

I follow more thinspiration accounts than recovery accounts.

Anna
Social Media Disorder Test
YES/NO ANSWERS
During the past year have you...
... regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?
no
... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?
no
... often felt bad when you could not use social media?
no

During the past year have you…
... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?
yes
... regularly neglected other activities (e.g. hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?
yes
... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?
no
... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?
no
... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?
yes
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The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

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1. body scent _4
2. appetite _4
3. nose __2
4. physical stamina _5
5. reflexes ___3
6. lips ___4
7. muscular strength __4
8. waist __5
9. energy level ___4
10. thighs __1
11. ears __3
12. biceps __4
13. chin ___3
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21. appearance of eyes _5
22. cheeks/cheekbones __2
23. hips ___3
24. legs __2
25. figure or physique _5
26. sex drive __5
27. feet _3
28. sex organs ___3
29. appearance of stomach ____4
30. health __5
31. sex activities __5
32. body hair __5
33. physical condition __5
34. face __4
35. weight _2
ANNA INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT:

I’m 21 years old.

I’ve had an Instagram since sophomore year of high school, so about five years I’d say.

I probably check Instagram regularly if I’ve recently posted a picture, but if I haven’t recently posted, I’ll probably check it every two days or something like that. It’s not super constant.

I wouldn’t say social media has necessarily improved my body image, but it’s definitely given me more a platform from which I can express my perception of myself. It’s like, the ability to express myself makes me feel good.

Oh, Instagram has 100% made my body image worse. I’ve never received negative feedback on Instagram, I’ve never been cyberbullied, but just playing the comparison game gets me. When you see someone who posts similar content to you and people like them way more, or when you have the people in your life that seem perfect so you scroll through their page, you just think, why can’t I look like that, why can’t my body look like that. It’s unhealthy, but I think that everybody can fall into that.

I follow a lot of accounts centered around rock climbing, or hiking, or van life people. I find that inspiring. I also follow a lot of outdoor gear and clothing accounts.

I’ve seen fitspiration accounts, and they’ve inspired me to be more active, but probably not in a super healthy way. In the times where I’ve looked up fitspo, I’ll usually see really muscular, thin, tall athletic girls, and I’ll think I’m never going to look like that if I’m just sitting on my butt checking Instagram. I don’t know if that’s super healthy motivation as opposed to being like, an incentive.

I know that I’m fit, and I know that I’m athletic, and I know that I’m strong, but I don’t think other people will perceive that about me unless I look a certain way. Those pages give me anxiety about other people not knowing that I’m healthy and fit.

I see a lot of tall girls in fitspiration. Typically I see skinny or really lean women. There’s really nobody else other than super lean cross country type women or super muscular cross fit women on the fitspiration spectrum.
I 100% compare myself to the people I see on social media, it’s pretty much unavoidable.

In middle school I had really bad body image issues because I had an awful haircut and glasses, and I was just an ugly, hormonal little thing. That’s probably when I had the worst body image.

There was a lot of pressure to look like the girls who were older and more attractive.

If I feel like I don’t look the way I wish I did, I automatically assume that reflects something poorly about me or my character, even if it doesn’t necessarily.

Usually when I get on Instagram I’m looking for gratification, so I know other people are seeing and liking my content.

I do a lot of hashtag searching, so like a lot of looking at different people’s posts.

I used to post selfies more frequently than I do now, but probably 1 out of every 8 posts are a selfie.

On bad body image days, I try to eat better so I feel better and feel more hopeful. On days where I don’t feel super positive about myself, sometimes I run the risk of going down the comparison hole and looking at other people’s pictures just to feel worse about myself. Or other times, I’ll try harder with my appearance and put makeup on or whatever. But usually, I just try to ride things out and wait it out
For years now, one of the most ubiquitous claims in nutrition, proffered by both laypeople and the marketing arms of multinational corporations alike, has been the idea that large doses of Vitamin C can acutely enhance the immune system and prevent or cure illness. Makers of products like Airborne and Emergen-C, which both offer 1000 mg doses of Vitamin C (sometimes along with other vitamins and nutrients), claim to “support [the] immune system,” “enhance immune function,” “inactivate free radicals,” and more. In the case of Airborne, advertising phrases like these have replaced original, more specific assertions—such as preventing the common cold—in an attempt to comply with legal settlements resulting from a lack of empirical proof for the product’s alleged benefits. Still, the belief persists that ingesting these types of supplements can effectively preempt or neutralize infection. The most current medical and scientific literature suggests that the picture is more complicated.

Human immunity is produced by a functional system of organs and cells that include physical barriers like the skin, various leukocytes such as B and T cells, and lymphatic organs like the spleen and thymus, among other defenses. These mechanisms, which are generally categorized as either innate (present from the beginning) or adaptive (utilizing developed “memory” to target known threats) serve to both keep pathogens and disease out of the body and extinguish them once they penetrate its borders. With a network so multifaceted and complex, it is unlikely that a single nutrient like Vitamin C could function as the magic bullet that many believe it to be. However, there is solid evidence to support Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, as an important piece in the larger puzzle of the human immune system.

Proponents of high dosage Vitamin C intake, including the makers of Airborne and Emergen-C, often point to the compound’s antioxidant status as proof of the benefit in exceeding the recommended daily value. The National Institutes of Health agrees with at least part of this assessment, calling Vitamin C “an important physiological antioxidant” and adding that it “regenerate[s] other antioxidants within the body, including alpha-tocopherol (vitamin E).” A 2015 review by the European Food Safety Authority also characterized the micronutrient as an efficacious helper in terms of “normal immune function” across the lifespan. Thus, it appears the mainstream scientific consensus is that Vitamin C does contribute to human immunity. However, this fact alone does not prove a causal or even indirect link between consuming ascorbic acid in excess of established guidelines and generating an acute immune response.

A 2002 study published by Tufts University acknowledges the antioxidative nature of Vitamin C, but concludes that amounts beyond the recommended dietary allowance of 75-90 mg have no proven benefit. According
to the Mayo Clinic, taking Vitamin C supplements will not stave off a cold but may, in some cases, reduce the length and intensity of infection. The NIH agrees, citing a Cochrane meta-analysis of trials examining the preventative use of at least 200 mg of Vitamin C to support its position that, for most people, large doses of the nutrient do not stop the common cold—though in some cases it may provide such an effect for those who are exceptionally active. The organization also notes that, at amounts greater than 1000 mg per day, less than half of the amount consumed is actually absorbed, with a majority being washed out in urine.

In light of the fact that Airborne advertises the option for a 3000 mg daily regimen—which would not even account for Vitamin C absorbed from actual food—whatever acute immunological function that doses this large might have in theory, it would be substantially tempered by the body’s metabolic capacity. Although it is well-established that Vitamin C has anti-oxidative effects and appears to help the human immune system in various ways, there is little scientific evidence indicating the rapid consumption of doses beyond the recommended intake will initiate a quick, strengthened immune defense and protect against infection for most people. Consuming ascorbic acid in moderation is likely necessary for optimal immune function, but the more provocative claims made by supplement manufacturers and their consumers remain unsubstantiated.

Bibliography


A person is considered to be obese when they have a body mass that is 20% higher than recommended for their height and gender (The MNT Editorial Team 2016). In 2017, over one-third of U.S. adults were considered to have obesity while the U.K. followed with one-fourth of its adult population having the diagnosis (NHS 2015; CDC 2018). The increased prevalence of obesity is associated with rising rates of heart disease, diabetes mellitus, respiratory disease, cancer, and other chronic illnesses (Jeor et al. 2005). The association of weight loss with a decrease in risk factors for these diseases has resulted in an increased demand for new diets, most of which are just fads (Jeor et al. 2005; Steffen et al. 2006). Unfortunately, many of today’s popular diet plans tend to be extreme and hastily fashioned, particularly those based on carbohydrate restriction and increases in fat and protein intake (Astrup et al. 2004; Pitt 2016).

Two diets that boast increased weight loss and health benefits as a result of these modifications are the Atkins Diet (AD) and the Paleo Diet (PD).

According to the Atkins website, the Atkins Diet was developed by Dr. Robert Atkins, a cardiologist, in the early 1970s. Dr. Atkins claims that his methodology allows participants to “eat right, not less” by “creating greater energy, higher metabolism, and less stored fat” (Atkins Nutritionals, b). This diet has four phases during which the dieter eats meats, fatty fish and seafood, eggs, vegetables low in carbohydrates, full-fat dairy, nuts, seeds, and healthy fats such as extra virgin olive oil and avocados (Gunnars 2017). Foods that are avoided include sugars, grains, vegetable oils, high carbohydrate vegetables and fruits, legumes, and starches (Gunnars 2017). The first phase has a length of two weeks and recommends that the participant’s diet consist of 70% fat, 25% protein, and 5% carbohydrates (Atkins Nutritionals, a). During the subsequent phases, dieters gradually increase carbohydrate intake until their goal weight is reached (Atkins Nutritionals, a). The caloric intake of the fourth phase, or the lifestyle phase, should consist of 50% fat, 25% protein, and 25% carbohydrates (Atkins Nutritionals, a). The high amounts of protein and low amounts of carbohydrates cause the body to burn fat as fuel, a process called ketosis (Beisswenger et al. 2005). It is suggested by Atkins literature that participants should use dipstick urine tests to monitor the amounts of ketones in urine and ensure the occurrence of ketosis (Chen et al. 2006). Supporters of the AD claim faster and better weight loss results than fat-reduction diets as well as decreasing risk factors for cardiovascular disease (Atkins Nutritionals, b).

The Paleo diet was first discussed in a book by Walter Voegtlin in 1975 with exponential growth of its popularity following the release of Dr. Loren Cordain’s book, The Paleo Diet, in 2002 (Paleo Living). The PD is based on seven characteristics which are marketed as the diet of our “pre-agricultural, hunter-gatherer ancestors” (The Paleo Diet). This premise is based on the idea
that humans have not evolved since the Paleolithic Era and the best diet for humans is the same as that of the first Homo sapiens (Eaton, Konner 1985; Pitt 2016). According to the PD website, caloric intake should consist of 30-40% fat, 19-35% protein, 35-45% carbohydrates, high fiber content, and overall alkaline foods. In comparison to the AD, Paleo dieters only eat “lean meat, fish, leafy/green vegetables, and fruit” while avoiding all “dairy products, margarine, oils, refined sugars, and cereals” (Lindeberg et al. 2003). The PD is advertised as a mechanism of rapid weight loss while maintaining normal caloric intake, improving cholesterol levels, lowering blood pressure, and reducing risk of diabetes (Lindeberg et al. 2003; Paleo Living; The Paleo Diet). Similar to the AD, the PD is also marketed as a lifestyle choice and encourages participants to continue following the diet guidelines after one’s goal weight has been reached (The Paleo Diet).

Issues with the nutritional values of both of these diet plans have been widely discussed and researched. When comparing published recommended dietary allowance values to the recommended intake of the two diets, there are some aspects that don’t change while others vary greatly. The overall caloric intake of someone on a normal diet in comparison to someone on the AD or PD are similar (Harper, Astrup 2004; Fleming et al. 2005). However, with 70% of daily intake coming from fat on the AD and 30-40% fat on the PD, there is a large discrepancy in comparison to the government recommended 20-35% fat intake (Institute of Medicine 2005). In a 2016 study by Guess, heightened fat intake usually consisted of high amounts of saturated fats such as red meats, butter, and cream. This would have a greater effect on those participating in the AD diet as opposed to the PD, but the content of these foods has been associated with increased hepatic lipid content and decreased lipid sensitivity (Guess 2016). There have also been studies to investigate the effects of increased protein values in each of these diets. Protein overload in the kidneys has been shown to disrupt acid-balance in the body and loss of minerals from bone stores (Steffen, Nettleton 2006). Additionally, a link between high animal protein diets and “increased risk of morbidity, including inflammatory bowel disease and type 2 diabetes” has been explored (Guess 2016). Both the AD and PD are considered to be reduced-carbohydrate diets, with participants consuming less than the recommended 45-65% of carbohydrates per day (Institute of Medicine 2005). This lack of carbohydrates is advertised as causing ketosis, which is the proposed mechanism of rapid weight loss (The Paleo Diet). However, studies show that weight loss actually stems from diet duration, restriction of energy intake, and fluid loss as opposed to a decrease in carbohydrate consumption (Igawa, Takamura 2017; Jeor et al. 2005; Astrup et al. 2004). There has been no significant relationship found between ketosis and weight loss (Foster et al. 2003). Alterations in carbohydrate, fat, and protein intake trickle down to affect the amounts of micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals that dieters consume. The lack of fruits, vegetables, and grains in both diets has raised concerns for possible depletion of calcium, B1, B6, folate, and other essential nutrients (Jeor et al. 2005; Lean, Lara 2004; Steffen, Nettleton 2006; Fleming et al. 2005;
According to Pitt, those who participate in the PD consume, on average, 50% of the recommended daily amount of calcium. The initial lack of calcium in conjunction with the aforementioned loss of bone minerals can lead to profound effects on overall bone health and increased risk of osteoporosis.

Thus far, the adverse effects of low-carbohydrate diets on lipid content and sensitivity, risk of chronic disease, bone health, and lack of essential nutrients have been discussed. Unfortunately, this is not the extent of the potential health implications that these diets may cause. Those who participate in either the PD or AD often report side effects of constipation, diarrhea, halitosis, headache, and general fatigue. These side effects as well as the extreme requirements of the diets result in low adherence by dieters, decreasing effectiveness as a treatment for obesity. Those who do complete the diet have been shown to have marked increases in HDL cholesterol and triglycerides as well as a reduction in diastolic blood pressure, which improve cardiac risk factors. When compared the effects of reduced-fat diets and reduced-carbohydrate diets on intrahepatic fat, they concluded that those on a reduced-fat diet experienced greater decreases in LDL-C than those on a reduced-carbohydrate diet.

Another aspect of low-carbohydrate diets that has been explored is ketosis itself and whether or not the process is safe to undergo for an extended period of time. Methyglyoxal (MG), a toxin associated with cytotoxicity of certain cell types, is a by-product of the glycolytic pathway and is produced by ketone bodies. The association of MG with ketogenic diets led to investigate the effects of increased levels of MG in a cohort of people who had chosen to participate in the Atkins Diet. The study found a correlation between those with ongoing ketosis and abnormally high values of MG. In another study, by Philips et al. explored the vascular and endothelial health of those utilizing a low-carbohydrate diet. They found that there was a significant reduction of flow-mediated dilation in brachial arteries, while those on a low-fat diet had significant improvement. The changes in dilation are a result of changes in endothelial function, which is a determining factor for atherosclerosis.
cardio-related chronic disease as a result of the low-carbohydrate diets continue to accumulate as further studies are conducted.

Low-carbohydrate diets have been shown to result in a 4% greater weight loss than a low-fat diet for the first 3-6 months (Bueno et al. 2013; Foster et al. 2003; Astrup et al. 2004). However, the significant difference between the two diets disappears after a 12-month period, indicating that the increased rate of weight loss is not sustainable on the AD or PD (Bueno et al. 2013; Foster et al. 2003; Astrup et al. 2004). These findings are thought to be related to the fact that low-carbohydrate diets result in weight loss as opposed to fat loss (Igawa, Takamura 2017). For those that choose to participate in these controversial diets despite the health risks, it has been suggested that participation in the diets with their current guidelines are suitable for 6 months at most (Harper, Astrup 2004; Astrup et al. 2004). Guess has recommended that one way to improve the PD would be replacement of carbohydrates with unsaturated fats such as olive and vegetable oils, as they have been shown to have a neutral or beneficial effect on risk factors in comparison to saturated fats (2016). While this would slightly decrease accumulation of HDL-C, it most likely would not significantly reduce risk factors (Guess 2016). Other changes that could be made to the diets, such as greater intake of fruits and vegetables, would increase carbohydrate intake too much for the diet to be considered low-carbohydrate.

Although obesity does ultimately lead to chronic disease, before committing to a weight loss plan, it should be considered that the manner in which the weight is lost could have as much of an impact on one’s health as having lost the weight (Phillips et al. 2008; Steffen, Nettleton 2006). The increased probability of cardiovascular disease, depleted essential nutrients, and unknown long-term effects of these diets leads to the conclusion that they should not be used as methods of weight loss (Astrup et al. 2004). These diets remain “over-hyped and under-researched” as they are endorsed on social media by non-professionals who have been misled by scientific studies completed with small sample sizes and for short periods of time (Nordmann et al. 2006; Lean, Lara 2004, Pitt 2016). Instead, a better alternative is to continue using the conventional weight loss methods of low-fat diet and exercise, which have been proven repeatedly to be successful and have fewer health implications.

Bibliography


Expressions of Modesty in Costume
Emily Haan

Throughout history, cultural ideas of “modesty” and “purity” have repeatedly inserted themselves into the social hierarchy through various modes of expression, regulation, and interaction. Costume serves as one of the most obvious methods of expressing this idea—and as a way to control or shame entire classes of people. Several factors play into what defines modesty in different civilizations, as well as what influences its perception among the populace. Standards have changed over time as well due to shifts in thinking, especially in regard to religion and politics. Clearly, culture not only influences costume, but also the connotative interpretation of the moral values expressed through one’s garb. The term modesty in particular illustrates a communal standard of virtue or expectation as communicated through dress.

There is no universally accepted definition for modesty (although Julia Driver’s self-effacing approach is often used as a starting point for discussion by ethics experts). Due to the social implications of any parameters set out by delineation of the trait, the nature of the quality itself can be rather elusive (Woodcock, 2). According to John-Mark Miravalle, professor of theology at Mount St. Mary’s University, “the virtue of modesty has been reduced to an almost exclusively sexual virtue,” both in popular works and in scholarly analysis (166). Dr. Alan T Wilson, ethics lecturer and professor of philosophy at University of Bristol, however, takes an almost contradictory position: instead of focusing on the physical expression of modesty, he chooses to define it by the virtue of kindness through action (78). Irene McMullin, professor of philosophy at University of Arkansas, takes a third view. She says that modesty is actually a state of self-understanding in regard to the value of one’s accomplishments (783) and that the historical view of modesty as “sexual bashfulness” is perceived as one’s understanding that appearance and garb may cause offense to others or violate moral standards (785-786). Although societal sensitivity certainly plays a role in the bounds of modesty as defined by each unique culture, it is important to note that whether viewed as strictly physical appearance or as a behavioral mode, modesty involves how one portrays oneself to other members of the community.

However, the debate over what modesty encompasses is hardly a modern issue. As far back as classical Greece, wealthy women were expected to wear veils in public. Clothing expressed social status, and their sexuality and honor was of greater consequence than lower class women; thus, they covered their hair to shield themselves from others (Tariq, 494). In the Middle Ages, both law and literature (such as Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer) continued to encourage women to dress in a way to discourage male attention. Female honor was attached to the ability for her to be physically violated, and thus, garb was selected in order to discourage this idea (Flannery, 342). German literature in particular associated the idea of partial undress with eroticism.
Nudity inevitably leads to romance, and courtly lovers in this specific genre consistently (Malczyk, 178-180). Centuries later, modest dress continued to be associated with female virtue in literature, as many Jane Austen books analyzed the idea as well. Women were expected to take a passive role in courtship. Modesty was seen as an attractive virtue, an “erotic promise” of suppressed sexual feeling. The quality continued to be focused on the “fairer gender” and was not viewed as particularly seemly in men (Crozier, 505-507). Although many historical sources analyze dress in the context of courtship, with a special focus on its applications to women, the underlying idea continues to illustrate the power of costume in the perception of one’s behavior and internal desires. Physical appearance incites both cognitive and emotional reactions from others, creating a system in which dress both creates and communicates the social norms and expectations for community members (Hirsch, 614).

Group affiliations certainly impact the standard for individual modesty and expectations of dress, especially within religious circles. Stefan Streit, writing for Theta Alpha Kappa, a theological honor society, notes several Biblical passages used in the Roman Catholic understanding of proper garb. In the quotations he uses, women in particular are instructed more in regard to displays of wealth and adornment rather than devoting attention to specific body parts (34). Thomas Aquinas, influential philosopher and friar in the 13th century Catholic church, approaches the concept of modesty as a more holistic idea as well, only a small part of it involving costume itself (167). Yet the Apostle Paul in an early letter to the Corinthians instructed women to wear veils within the church but suggested that men should not. This is perhaps an expression of authority, a result of social traditions of the time, a market of morality, or a suppression of improper sexuality (Tariq, 499-501). In the latter illustration, physical appearance becomes essential to the manifestation of virtue.

Historically, as with the Greeks, ancient Jewish women often covered their hair, as it was considered inherently sexual and therefore belonging only to her husband. The custom of parah occurred when rabbis would publically unveil the head of a woman accused of adultery, humiliating her (Tariq, 497). In the modern day, conservative Jewish women in particular have expressed that one aspect of their perception of modesty relates to aging, as “what was once a comfortable and acceptable way of dressing became less acceptable” after their bodies matured, though this is perhaps more closely related to personal image than spiritual beliefs. Orthodox women, who are generally stricter with their interpretation of religious rules, conveyed that dress was not the most important aspect of making personal choices associated with intrinsic modesty. However, all the women surveyed consistently clothed themselves in such a way as to cover most of their bodies. They also ranked self-respect highly, after religion, in their motivations for doing so (Andrews, 826-827).

As with the other Abrahamic traditions, the Qu’ran contains instructions for proper Islamic dress and behavior in regard to modesty and social values. Both men and women are taught to be mindful of their gaze and to cover their bodies to avoid flaunting their physical vehicles (Hassan, 86). In the
mid-2000s, the Islamic Republic of Iran began a campaign to restore strict veiling among Muslim women. However, some of the biggest proponents of the movement, the Sisters’ Basij, are not highly regarded within their society (Sadeghi, 51, 54). Although certain standards are explicitly stated within their holy text, many practices are rooted in cultural tradition as well. For example, women in the presence of males who are not family are to cover their bodies except for their hands; yet even within these guidelines, there is much debate as to the stringency required. While a head covering is mandatory, the amount of flesh exposed varies geographically, depending on the cultural context (Mujallad, 170). In some locales, quite diverse products are available for women to dress modestly while still retaining a sense of personal style and fashion, in contrast the Western stereotype of loose, black garb. Online retailers in particular offer options for a variety of colors, fabrics, and patterns (Bovier, 364, 366).

Religion is not the only influencing factor in the social standards for modest garb. Lauren Shields, film editor and journalist, began to dress more modestly as a rebellion against social standards for women. She found the practice aided her self-esteem and liberated her from unwanted attention (Lichtman). Likewise, Lilit Marcus, CNN writer and travel editor, found that costuming herself modestly gave her more freedom to be comfortable and practical throughout her day (Marcus). Researchers at the University of Macau found that compliance with the modesty norm possessed lower explicit self-esteem but higher implicit self-esteem than those who did not conform (Du, 87).

Despite the pressure to match social models through one’s physical appearance, there have been notable shifts in fashion emphases throughout history. The theory of shifting erogenous zones hypothesizes that certain body parts are highlighted to the point of overexposure before attention is transferred elsewhere (Laver, Fashion, Art, and Beauty, 119). Some go so far as to say, “There is no natural body, but only a cultural body” (Bruna). Part of the cycle results from social stratification. Those of lower classes adopt the styles of upper classes, who quickly change their dressing strategies to differentiate themselves from the rest of the populace (Acerbi, 1). In haute couture, the reverse has also been seen, as those with status adopt street styles (Podaru, 100).

The 1890s serve as a great example of this evolving nature of costume emphases. The decade began with a deflated look, before shifting to a full, hourglass shape that showed off an artificially rounded rear, tiny waist, and pronounced bosom (Cole, 60). These cycles could be marked by the use of color as well as shape. In the 1970s, women’s tailored suits came into the spotlight, marking a transition from colorful frivolity to somber professional wear (Majima, 80). Even children’s clothes illustrate this idea, as girls began to abandon corsets, which accentuated their waists, for simpler garb in lighter colors (Laver, Children’s Fashions, 6).

In addition to the various elements of an outfit directing the observers’ focus toward specific areas, different textiles also have definite implications on the perception of the wearer. While fabric weight can have practical applications
depending on geographical climate, heavier clothes also have the benefit of a more conservative aesthetic while lightweight items have a more elegant, contemporary connotation (Bouvier, 375-376). The Tai-speaking people of Southeastern Asia also use elaborate colors and patterns to portray religious themes and social relationships through their garments. Young monks on the verge of being ordained, for example, wear cotton head coverings with brocade borders and beaded fringes, the plain center reminding of the shaven scalp underneath (Malarcher).

Pressures to conform to social standards come in a variety of mediums. In India, cinema is used to reinforce strict ideas for female behavior and garb. Laj, a concept related to modesty, chastity, and honor, is often used to reinforce discriminatory stigmas surrounding the perception of women’s appearances and the expectation for their role within the community. Indian media explicitly utilizes the ideas of Laj to perpetuate such ideals. While most of Laj centers around behavior, especially in the presence of strangers, it also incorporates the practice of veiling, or Purdha (Qamar, 65-66, 69).

But not all media messages have to be focused on forced propriety: marketing strategies by online stores such as The Hijab Shop and Silk Route Hijabs enable Muslim women to find forms of self-expression while still adhering to their religious beliefs and cover their bodies as they see fit (Bouvier, 366). Islamic lifestyle blogs have promoted a similar message, showing the daily fashions of Muslim women while retaining their individual identities. While the issue can become quite political, especially given the religious context and the potential for controversy, such platforms aid believers in reconciling their faith with their unique personal tastes and chosen modes of self-representation (Lewis, 59).

In the West, modest fashion has come to have more media coverage. Bloggers, online personalities, and journalists have begun to pay more attention to those who cover their bodies. Magazines like Vogue and design collaborations such as Uniqlo have adopted garments associated with certain faiths, such as Islam, Christianity, and Sikh, as part of the modesty movement. In 2017, London even hosted a Modest Fashion Week (Singh, 161). Pure Fashion, a modelling and etiquette program for teen goals, has hosted fashion shows in the past decade to advocate for less revealing clothes for adolescents and women. They have also set out guidelines to aid in the selection of appropriate clothing for those who do not wish to purchase oversexualized or suggestive clothing (Yabroff). Wendy Shalit, author of Girls Gone Mild, points towards girls like Ella Gunderson, who wrote Nordstrom to ask for more concealing garments, and tweens who protested the products of a Philadelphia Abercrombie and Fitch, as examples of a trend toward modesty in present fashion culture (Hahner, 1).

Media is not the only method used to influence people’s clothing choices; on occasion, modesty has become a legal issue as well as a moral one. Sumptuary laws regulate extravagance in dress, consumption, and living style, dating as far back as ancient Greece and Rome (“Sumptuary Laws”). In the
Middle Ages, clothing restrictions and taxation on luxury goods helped state authorities retain power over the populace and establish socio-economic and political divisions among inhabitants. Few violations are recorded as having been prosecuted, implying broad compliance (Doda, 171-172). Colonists tried to share their ideals to other nations as well. Portuguese sumptuary laws were integral to daily life. The Portuguese attempted to spread these principles to their colonies, especially India, though with little success. They viewed the widespread luxury seen in India through extravagant apparel and adornments as sinful and contrary to their strongly entrenched social values (Chaturvedula, 356).

In Montepellier, France, the bourgeoisie consumption of luxury goods prompted the government to regulate silk, gold, silver, pearls, and shiny fur. They discouraged expensive ornamentation to display wealth (Widmayer, 132). During the Han dynasty in China, approximately 200 BCE, statesman Jia Yi designed a sumptuary system to designate and differentiate various members of the emperor’s administration by their forms of dress (Miller, 108). Sumptuary laws were so commonplace that references to 16th century Tudor code centering on apparel even appeared in the play Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay (Melnikoff, 227).

In the present day, many Western clothing regulations center around the sexualization of children in the media. Former French minister Chantal Jouanno recently called for the child versions of adult garments (i.e. padded bras) and youth beauty competitions be banned. Other European nations have echoed these sentiments, namely the Dutch government with its Emancipation Strategy policies and the research into the commercial sexualization of girl funded by the Scottish and British governments (Bragg, 407).

While much of the historic discourse and current dialogue about modesty in costume centers on female expression of values through garb and the cultural interpretations of these various modes, a few sources do analyze men’s dress as a form of modesty as well. Medieval Muslims, for example, prohibited boys from wearing silk, linen, or gold after the age of understanding, around six or seven years old. Some were even barred from the color white, as it was associated with women and the androgynous, to prevent potentially homosexual behavior. They would also cover the pubis of both genders once children reached a certain age. This is theorized to be a protective measure preventing sexual abuse; it did not apply to the youngest members of society, infants were regarded as sexless (Hirsch, 617, 619).

At the same time, medieval English sumptuary laws regulated men’s apparel in the Western world. Although Italian city-states attempted to control women’s wear through similar means, English courts were lenient on female garb until the 1800s, mostly due to their relative disregard for female power. Clothing restrictions regulated the types of material various classes could use and limited options for wear based on social class, with exceptions for professional positions, such as royal servants, clergymen, and men-at-arms (Phillips, 22-23, 25).
In the modern age, men’s fashion is a fast-growing industry, with in-person sales increasing by 4% each year and by over 10% online annually. Menswear has begun to branch out into its own fashion shows, including New York Men’s Fashion Week (Lyden). It accounts for 35% of the clothing market, compared to women’s 41% (Bertrand, 3). Popular trends include slimmer silhouettes and more color. Modern consumers seek a younger, more contemporary look, moving away from traditional business attire and more towards athletica (Peterson, 53-54). Whereas women often experience costume standards as an imposition of societal values upon their wardrobes, men have an almost reversed experience. In men, the rejection of fashion consciousness is seen as virtuous in relation to identity and internalized masculinity, emphasizing functionality over social relationships (Bertrand 7-8).

Male fashion models are also often positioned differently than female models. When both genders are pictured together, men are placed physically higher than women, reinforcing the idea that they have more power and importance. Furthermore, men’s faces are more prominent in fashion images, while women’s bodies are more emphasized. (Kraus, 355). Men, viewed as more “interesting” with longevity, can model at a much older age than females as well (Fleming).

“Modesty” has long been associated with religious and cultural ideals regarding behavior and bodily expression. However, the concept has come to involve both social and legal regulation of clothing choices and access to fashion goods. The definition of modest varies between communities, influenced by religious, economic, political, and geographical factors. It has also given individuals a means of self-expression outside of belief-based confines. In an abuse of morality and dress, modesty has been used to control and oppress groups of people by limiting options for wear or even by demeaning personal power through costume. Standards have changed over time as well due to shifts in thinking, and the perception of virtue expressed in clothing given certain cultural contexts. The term modesty illustrates a communal standard of virtue or expectation as communicated through dress.

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The Word “Genocide” as a Means of Cultural Acknowledgment
Rachel Weisbart

In 1915, my Great-Grandfather clung to the side of a English Battleship to escape the brutality of the Turkish army. He was Armenian, living in Izmir with his family and working at their cinder block factory on the water. The conflict between the Turks and the Armenians was a tale as old as time; two peoples with distinct cultures and different religions trying, and failing, to occupy the same space. When this five-thousand-year-old conflict finally escalated to the point of mass murder, millions of Armenians, including all but one of my ancestors were slaughtered. The story of my Great-Grandfather’s daring escape is one that I cling to, just as he clung to the ship that delivered him from harm. What I’ve been told of his bravery and his loss are all that I have of my Armenian ancestors. The story of the genocide that nearly wiped out my family and so many others has been largely erased from history. The word “genocide” itself was named in part for the events that took place in 1915, yet the Turkish government refuses to recognize their actions as such. The conflict is rarely taught in American public schools and was not even mentioned as genocide in American media until a New York Times story in 2004. A conflict that results in the mass-murder of 1.5 million people does not easily slip out of history. It must be deliberately erased with the intention of further invalidating the lives of the peoples affected. Such invalidation is felt by Armenians today and is reflected in their literary works. The actions of the Turks against the Armenians were, in fact, genocide, and the overarching societal refusal to acknowledge it as such has deeply affected the cultural consciousness of the Armenian people.

We must begin by defining the concept of genocide, for some definitions of that word may seek to exclude the Armenians. The term was coined in the 1940’s by Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin who saw what had been done to the Armenians and the Jews and thought that such crimes were deserving of a word to encompass their cultural meaning. Soon after, the UN codified the word with the following definition:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily harm;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
This definition is not without its flaws. NYU philosophy professor Paul Boghossian criticizes the definition in his essay “The Concept of Genocide,” arguing that the words “in whole or in part” and “as such” present several issues for interpreters. “As such,” Boghossian rightly argues, is vague and redundant, and I have thus struck the phrase from the definition I have chosen to employ for my research. Regarding “in whole or in part,” however, Boghossian falls into the trap of wondering if we should quantify genocide. He argues that the actions of victimized groups who fought back against their aggressors, such as the Armenians against the Turks or the Jews against the Germans, could technically fall under the UN’s definition of genocide, or that the events of 9/11 may also qualify though we obviously would never label either instance that way. A possible solution he proposes is to alter the definition to read, “in whole or in substantial part.” The problem here lies in the attempt to define genocide as having killed a certain number of people, which is difficult to do considering that various atrocities widely recognized as genocide have killed members of groups ranging from 100,000 in Bosnia to 6 million in Germany. While Boghossian recognizes the absurdity of attempting to apply some arbitrary death toll to the definition of genocide, both he and the UN fail to consider the aspect of genocide that eliminates any confusion as to which events may or may not qualify: the systematic destruction of a people over time. In every genocide there has been an element of organization on the side of the oppressors that has allowed for their actions to continue over a significant period of time. This is the reason we would not consider an event such as 9/11 to be genocide even though members of a national group, Americans, were targeted; the terrorists involved did not intend to wipe out the American people entirely over time, but rather to terrorize and wound them. Thus, the definition I have chosen to employ in this paper amends the UN definition to read:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed systematically over time with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily harm;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Having, now, a definition that would easily apply to all events that we instinctively read as genocide, we can examine the effect that the word itself has. Because regardless of any technical definition we may invent, the word has a connotation that holds great meaning for peoples affected by such atrocities. Genocide means the slaughtering of family members and friends. It means displacement and deportation. It means the degradation of culture. For the Armenians, genocide meant that only a quarter of their original population
would be able to carry on the traditions of their people. These effects are felt regardless of any government’s willingness to use the word “genocide.” The use of the word, however, serves as a means of acknowledgment that what was done to a people was wrong. In her article, “Denial Keeps the Genocide Alive,” University of Vermont Professor Dana Walrath begs the questions, “Can you imagine if we in the United States did not own our history of slavery? Can you imagine our children’s history books overlooking American Indians’ presence in North America before Europeans arrived?” Imagine an entire nation rejecting its troubling history and the effects that would have on the group they once brutally harmed. This is what the Turkish government has done to the Armenians, even going so far as to illegalize discussion of the genocide in Turkey.

The effects of this denial of genocide are evident in the cultural consciousness of contemporary Armenians. When examining poetry by the descendants of Armenian victims, we experience the anguish that is felt by the people today. In Tatul Sonentz’s poem “Letter to Hovsep,” the writer yearns to speak to his grandfather, a victim of the genocide. In the poem, after briefly telling the tale of his grandfather’s fate, he writes:

That – we’re told – is our yesterday
that never was or ever happened
to be banished from memory
and to be interred in haste
with your severed head
in the name of today
as the pack of gray wolves
howls a lewd dirge of sublime
rapture and joy at the final burial
of all recall of their forebears crime… (posted to The Armenian Poetry Project)

Both the pain and the anger that Sonentz feels are so evident in his comparisons of the story of his people to his grandfather’s dead body and of the Turks to wolves howling with rapture as they bury the evil truth. There is a sad irony here, that a writer’s letter to his murdered grandfather should be tainted by a reminder that the murderers refuse to acknowledge their acts. But that is the fate of the Armenian people; every story of the genocide carries that same reminder.

Poet, essayist, and musician Alan Semerdjian writes of the lack of the Armenian genocide in the global conversation on the topic in his poem “The Grandchildren of Genocide.” He writes:

We think in those horrible chambers when we think of genocide.
Those horrible 20th century chambers.

When we think of genocide, we don’t think of mountains and deserts.
We don’t think of bazaars.  (Armenian Poetry Project)

His language in this passage and throughout the poem may not even resonate with those who do not know of the Armenian genocide (due, of course, to the Turks’ denial), but to those who do, he is clear. When we think of genocide we consider primarily the Holocaust. That is not at all to say that the Holocaust should not be considered, but that other atrocities like those in Armenia, Cambodia, and Rwanda are often ignored. He later writes:

We think about reconciliation, but we don’t think about reconciliation when we think about genocide. We don’t study the memorials, we don’t explain the play in papers, we don’t shake hands and make up. When we think of genocide, we do other things with our hands.  (Armenian Poetry Project)

This passage could only have been written by an Armenian. In other instances of genocide, there has been reconciliation to an extent. Germany held the Nuremberg trials, Rwandans held trials via their “Gacaca” community court system, the UN established a criminal tribunal to try perpetrators of the Bosnian genocide. Armenians have had no such justice. Semerdjian’s assertions that we do not think about reconciliation and that we do not “shake hands and make up” are evidence of his heritage and of the bitterness modern Armenians feel at the refusal of the Turks to take any of the remedying actions taken by other governments that once perpetrated genocide.

The poet Diana Der Hovanessian sheds a different light on the effects of genocide and of cultural erasure in her poem “Tell the Armenian Story.” She too asks that the story be told, but in doing so celebrates the beauty of Armenia that has been lost. She writes:

Let the blue light of morning and the bright
greens of Karabagh remain
our secret. Keep the orange flame of Dzidzernagapert
and the yellow city sunsets
ours alone.  (Armenian Poetry Project)

The idea of keeping the colors and lights of Armenia “our secret” and “ours alone” implies ownership over them. Yet directly preceding these words she has written:

Tell the Armenian story
but not the gory past
Let it remain buried
with the roots of poppies
on our plains. (Armenian Poetry Project)

Is she asking that the story be told or kept secret? The answer comes in the last lines of the poem:

We do not  
want the heart to break.  
We want only light. (Armenian Poetry Project)

She is not asking that the story of her people be concealed, only that it be told “in black and white,” as she says in the second line of the poem. The “light” she wants is light shed on the truth of the actions done by the Turks. She wants, as so many Armenians do, to hold on to the beauty of Armenia and for it to remain in the culture of Armenians, which requires reconciliation for the atrocities done to them.

The poetry of a people speaks volumes about their values. In reading Armenian poetry, it became clear to me that as Armenians, we value a culture that has been largely destroyed. Part of the ache to feel connected to Armenia lies in the erasure of the destruction of its culture and its people. It is strange to feel so drawn to a culture that I and my fellow second or third generation Armenian-Americans have never truly known. I believe that this cultural pull exists because we wish to reclaim not only our land, but our history. The slaughtering of our ancestors is a blight on the face of history that resonates with us, but the fact that it is still denied in 2017 is a direct act of disrespect to both the living and the dead. As we have learned, the word “genocide” itself was given to the Armenians by the man who invented it. To take that word away is to falsely claim that our culture simply disappeared when in reality it was ripped from us by the evil jaws of bigotry. The Armenian story is not unique in the prejudice that caused it. Discrimination has been the catalyst of countless evil acts throughout history and the only redeeming quality common to many of those acts is the reconciliation that followed. For such reconciliation serves to acknowledge the crimes committed and to uplift the peoples affected. It is a means of saying to future generations that what happened to their ancestors was wrong, and that their anger, pain, and longing for lost culture is valid. I believe that the Armenians will continue to fight for recognition of the truth behind the story of the genocide. I believe we will continue to fight for the word itself to be spoken by the Turks and recognized by their government. I believe that one day, it will be. In the meantime, I have a story to cling to. And while the word “genocide” is a means of cultural acknowledgement, storytelling is a means of cultural preservation. I believe my Great-Grandfather would be proud of me. I am a storyteller.

For the Heart that Clings to Armenia  
By [essay writer]
How did you cling to the side of a ship
having just lost both heart and home?
Holding loss in your left hand
Survival in your right
Catching hope as a foothold
or maybe desperation

How long did you hang there in limbo
with cold salty seawater
flicking fresh wounds?
Did the winds of your mother
blow your ship to safety?
Did the soldier who pulled you aboard
have your father’s eyes?

Who left that ship
when it docked in Greece?
Did your brothers descend the steps
by your side?
Or were you alone
Clutching at stories
that slipped from your grasp
and sank into the sea

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In *The Morgesons* by Elizabeth Stoddard, nearly every character is motivated by and characterized by their desires. This includes how these characters choose to express them. Cassandra Morgeson, the novel's dynamic protagonist, is a prime example of this. Even at different stages of her life, Cassandra often subverts the cultural expectations of womanhood by expressing, and even indulging in, her carnal, materialistic, or gluttonous desires. She is rarely satisfied with what she has. However, this begins to occur with less frequency as Cassandra matures into adulthood. It is the fluctuations of Cassandra’s appetite that are symbolic of the changes in her desires.

*The Morgesons* has been described as “A novel in which everyone seems to be described in relation to his or her appetite…” (Smith 128). This is a point that is difficult to argue against, as many of the characters have extreme lifestyles. Mr. Morgeson spends exorbitant amounts of money on material goods, Veronica secludes herself from both food and society, and the Somers brothers drink to excess. While the male characters find self-actualization through consumption, the female characters tend to deny themselves. This is no accident, as “Stoddard's interest in female appetites is not anomalous, given its historical context... contemporary physicians’ reports on the then-famous “fasting girls” ... display an anxious fascination with women's ingestion of food” (Smith 129). Cassandra is the exception to this rule.

In one of her first scenes, a young Cassandra is present during her mother’s hosting of a tea party for the ladies of high society. During the preparations, Cassandra indulges both her stomach and sense of vanity as she “... slyly nipped lumps of sugar for my private eating and surveyed my features in the distorting mirror of the pot-bellied silver teapot, ordinarily laid up in flannel” (Stoddard 31). Her indulgence is immediately contrasted by the actions of the older women. Even though they have explicitly come to partake in tea and food, they initially refuse to enter the dining room. When they finally do enter, they refrain from eating until explicitly invited to do so by their hostess. On a surface level, one could argue that this is done out of propriety. However, we may also interpret that these women will not indulge their desires until given direct permission to do so.

These early signs of Cassandra’s indulgence are not merely the habits of a child. As Cassandra develops into young adulthood, her appetite is very explicitly linked to the maturity of her body. Cassandra herself observes that she “…assumed a womanly shape... I had lost the meagerness of childhood and began to feel a new and delightful affluence. What an appetite I had, too!” (Stoddard 70). Cassandra begins to express the faintest sensual desires, which she, due to her youth and inexperience, may not yet recognize. However, she does recognize her increased feelings of hunger that are often related to sensual longing.
Cassandra’s newfound hunger is not only limited to the consumption of food. One critic observes that “The novel's ultimate consumer, Cassandra, eats and shops almost incessantly throughout her youth, and her literal consumptions are underscored by her own use of metaphors of appetite: in her narrative, books are described as being devoured and time is consumed. Cassandra readily consumes the fine materials, furniture, and clothing that is supplied by her father. In one particularly telling scene, Cassandra squanders money on superficial purchases. As she describes it, “I found Washington Street, and bought six wide, embroidered belts, a gilt buckle, a variety of ribbons, and a dozen yards of lace. I repented the whole before I got back; for I saw other articles I wanted more” (Stoddard 97). Almost immediately after Cassandra has indulged herself, she finds herself unsatisfied and longing for more. She lacks a focus for her desires, and this is revealed by her aimless behavior.

This scene also reveals Cassandra’s tendency to indulge in her, perhaps unwise, impulses. As one critic observes, “…Cassy is not going to starve herself on a diet of abnegation and feminine propriety” (Pasquesi 184). Cassandra has the social and monetary privileges that allow her to freely engage in her desires, and she has not yet faced many major obstacles. While this may have easily resulted in a character who has no self-control, Cassandra soon faces opposition in the form of Charles and Alice Morgeson. After her first meeting with Charles, Cassandra is able to define her desires. Charles purposefully stirs feelings of sensuality, passion, and longing within Cassandra. Cassandra is aware that his marriage to Alice prevents these feelings from coming to fruition, but her appetite reveals her increasing desire for Charles.

During Cassandra’s first visit to the home of Charles and Alice, the couple hosts a tea for their guests. After finishing her meal, Cassandra is still faced with feelings of hunger. A quick survey of Charles and Alice reveals that they have finished eating, and Cassandra follows their cue (Stoddard 101). This relatively minor incident is emblematic of the situation at hand. Cassandra wishes to indulge in her desires, but it is the image of the social contract of marriage that stops her from doing so. As a married man, it is improper for Charles to engage in sexual relations with anyone but his wife. More importantly, it is Cassandra’s status as a single woman that bars her from sexual relations with anyone.

Though Cassandra may briefly suppress her appetite, it is not abated. Directly after this encounter, Cassandra and her mother retire to a guest room. Water and biscuits are delivered to them. Cassandra reveals that “There were six. I ate every one…” (Stoddard 102). During her stay in Rosville, Cassandra enters into a lifestyle of indulgence. She goes on shopping sprees and attends parties. Still, Cassandra continues to feel that she is never given enough to eat in the home of Charles. She cannot fulfill her physical hunger as she cannot fulfill her longing for Charles. She goes through periods of teasing his affections, trying to escape his influence, and quickly becoming entranced again. Though she and Charles both lust for each other, Cassandra does not allow herself to give in to her desires for him. After Charles confesses his love for her, the
situation seems impossible. Ultimately, Cassandra can only be released from
her internal struggle through the death of Charles.

After the death of Charles, Cassandra spends weeks recovering from
injuries she received from the accident. She is emotionally devastated by both
heartbreak and guilt. In a moment of weakness, she confesses to Alice that
“...you may or you may not forgive me, but I was strangely bound to him. And I
must tell you that I hunger now for the kiss he never gave me” (Stoddard 177).
Here, Cassandra’s appetite is explicitly related to her desire for Charles through
her own admission. She understandably expresses a belief that she will continue
to be hungry for him.

It is curious then that, not long after, Cassandra begins to eat again.
Notably, she requests that Alice, Charles’ widow, bring her more soup to satisfy
her physical hunger. As a widow, Alice is at her most vulnerable. She no longer
has a male figure to support and supply her. However, she acknowledges her
own strange reaction to this situation. She confesses to Cassandra that “I am
changed. When perhaps I should feel that I have done with life, I am eager to
begin it” (Stoddard 181). Though she grieves for the loss of her husband, she has
not been driven to despair. She is even eager to continue her life outside of her
role as a wife. While Alice first refuses to bring Cassandra more soup, she
eventually relents after Cassandra has had time to digest her last bowl. Alice has
learned to control her own metaphorical appetites, though she has previously
been guilty of over restriction, and may be trying to convey the value of doing
so.

It is difficult to say how successful Alice is as a teacher, but her
experiences in Belem offer Cassandra first-hand experience with the pitfalls of
overindulgence. Mr. Somers’ gluttony has led to gout, Mrs. Somers obsession
with rank and wealth has turned her into a cruel woman, and the other citizens of
Belem are all seem obsessed with material wealth. Desmond is one of the worst
of them all. He is never seen without a drink in his hand, has a surreptitious past
with a woman, is inappropriate on every occasion, and seems destined to
squander his life away. Though Cassandra is attracted to Desmond, she is not
willing to indulge in those desires which scarred her so badly before. Adelaide
even observed that Cassandra has become “delicate,” which may be a reference
to a loss of weight (Stoddard 266). This serves as a physical indication of her
withdrawal from indulgence. Unfortunately, Cassandra’s return home does not
allow her any time to reflect on her experiences.

The death of Cassandra’s mother seems to decimate Cassandra’s
appetite. When she is forced to become the lady of the Morgeson home,
Cassandra’s desires fall by the wayside. Though she does not starve herself,
Cassandra observes that she “... scarcely tasted what [she] ate” (Stoddard 317).
The references to appetite are no longer mentioned. Her spirit is completely
subdued, and she throws herself into the running of the home. The situation only
worsens when her father reveals that he has become bankrupt and is deeply in
debt. Cassandra is, for the first time in her life, forced to engage in difficult
housework. She no longer has the means to engage in material frivolity, but this
is not a source of internal conflict for her. Her desire shifts from the aimless to the objective. She wants to keep her family home, and almost everything she does from this point is motivated by this desire. Even Veronica and Ben’s wedding, while the product of love, will supply the family with the money needed to retain ownership of their home.

No longer defined by her relationship to others, Cassandra is the owner of her own home and the symbolic heir of the Morgeson family. However, the characters who do not learn to control their appetites are not so fortunate. Ben’s alcoholism results in his death, Veronica’s seclusion stunts her maturity, and Mr. Morgeson’s desire for material wealth results in his estrangement from his daughters. While Desmond has tamed his desires, he, like Cassandra, has done so at a great cost to his health and appearance. Ultimately, Cassandra learns to refocus and control her desires. They no longer manifest themselves through her physical state. Though Cassandra finds happiness in her role as a wife and sister, she has managed to subvert the traditional expectations of womanhood on a small scale. It is this newfound assertion of her individuality that allows her to find fulfillment through independence and self-actualization.

Works Cited


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