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Model Citizen: Exploring the Portrayal of Unconventional Models on Television Shows in Relation to Women's Self Image

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Model Citizen: Exploring the Portrayal of Unconventional Models on Television Shows; in Relation to Women’s Self-Image

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GRADUATE PROJECT

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With a Major in Communication and Training

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my late grandmother, Dorothy Mae Fountain. Memories of her beauty and courage have inspired me in countless ways.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a privilege to acknowledge the individuals who gave me their continued support while I completed this project. I would like to thank: God, my family and, my friends for their love and encouragement.
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Abstract

According to the renowned Mayo Clinic (2009), having a low self-image can lead people to suffer harmful: physical, emotional, and behavioral consequences. Much of women’s self-image is reliant on comparing themselves to the media’s perception of beauty (Park, 2005). In an effort to bolster American women’s self-esteem, a workshop is proposed to explore the relation between portrayal of unconventional models on television shows and women’s/viewer’s self-image.
**Introduction**

Many studies (Andrist, 2003; Derenne & Beresin, 2006; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Monro & Huon, 2005; Morrison, Kalin, & Morrison, 2004) find that media outlets reinforce unrealistic standards of beauty, which are presented to women. These standards have been proven to have harmful effects on women. For example, research (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Krones, Stice, Batres, & Orjada, 2005) shows that viewing models who portray thin, media ideals can promote body dissatisfaction in women. Potentially harmful images are often times presented through the display of models on television (Anschutz, Engels, Van Leeuwe, & Van Strien, 2009; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004).

One television show in particular; *America’s Next Top Model* has a strong core audience of women viewers. In fact, according to a television press release discussed on Tvbythenumbers.com: “Now in its 13th cycle, *[America’s Next Top Model]* continues to maintain a steady hold on its core audience, retaining 90% of last's fall's premiere delivery among the show's target women 18-34 demographic.” (Seidman, 2009, para. 2) The show focuses on women who are competing for a chance to win a modeling contract. Though some would argue that television shows such as *America’s Next Top Model* assist in perpetuating standards of beauty that women can’t reach; I argue that-- in certain conditions, viewing television shows about modeling has the power to shed a positive influence women’s self-image. This study aims to reveal ways in which watching television shows that feature unconventional models can raise women’s self-image. Another show, *She’s Got the Look*, gives women who are 35-years-old or older a chance at winning a modeling contract (Erwin, 2008). The average fashion model is younger than 35-years-old (“What We Look For”, n.d.). Therefore, the goal of the show seems to be to convey that women of any age can be beautiful. Both of these shows
portray unconventional models who are outside the scope of standard fashion models (“Scout Me”, n.d.; “What We Look For”, n.d.)

As a result, a workshop has been formulated that helps uncover the positive ways in which viewing unconventional models on television shows can improve women’s self-image. Hopefully, this seminar is able to bring focus to the media-influenced, self-image issues that women face. Not just in looking at the negative aspects, but in looking for ways for women to overcome them. By utilizing television shows as learning tools, the framework for the workshop addresses ways in which women can improve their self-image. This workshop introduces unconventional forms of modeling to the participants. It includes having attendees view episodes of various television shows which feature unconventional models (i.e. full-figured, petite, etc.). The attendees’ reactions to the television episodes are to be gauged in relation to their own self-image.

The goal of the workshop is to explore unconventional models on television shows in relation to women’s self-image. Particularly, a key purpose of the workshop is to find ways in which viewing unconventional models on television shows can help improve women’s self-image. Essentially, this project seeks to use the often-chastised, mainstream media in a positive manner.

**Literature Review**

**Justification for Workshop**

Within the past several years, certain television shows have depicted models that are more like “average” American women in terms of: age, height and weight. Examples are the television shows: *She’s Got the Look, America’s Next Top Model* and *The Secret Lives of Women* (Battaglio, 2009; Erwin, 2008; “Specialty Models”, n.d.). The women featured on the television
shows have looks that are outside the realm of the “typical”, fashion model (“Scout Me”, n.d.; “What We Look For”, n.d.). Women watching these particular shows can benefit from the portrayal of unconventional models on television. This is due to the fact that the media often has an influence on female self-image. In this case it has the potential to help raise women’s perception of themselves. In addition, the proposed research is significant due to a lack of diverse research in the topic area.

**Media Images Often Influence Female Self-Image**

The discussion of model portrayal through the media, in relation to women’s self-image is very important to promoting good mental, physical and behavioral health (Mayo Clinic, 2009). Studies show that women tend to become dissatisfied with themselves when viewing models in the media (Field, 2000; Park, 2005; Turner & Hamilton, 1997). For example, Park’s study was conducted to observe the likelihood of body image dissatisfaction occurring, after exposing women to advertisements featuring thin models. The study was performed using 553, college-aged women as participants. The women were administered tests among which some measure influence of the thin ideal. In the results, Park concluded women’s personal desire to be thin grew when exposed to thin models in media outlets. As a result, one can infer that models depicted on television have the ability to influence women’s self-image (Park, 2005).

This assumption can be supported under the Cusumano and Thompson (2001) Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS). The MMIS scale is designated to determine possible areas that the media influence. Ultimately, Cusumano and Thompson asserted that the media had the potential to influence five areas. They are:

1) Awareness of media’s promotion of thin ideal, 2) internalization of or adoption of media’s publicized ideals as personal standards of attractiveness, 3) importance assigned
to media as a valuable source of information about attractiveness, 4) tendency to compare one’s body to images promoted in the media and, 5) perception of pressure from the media to emulate the look promoted by its models and actors. (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001, p. 39)

After taking into consideration each of the aspects of the MMIS, Cusumano and Thompson noted the significance of each of these probable influences (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001, p. 42). While a Harrison (2009) study found aspects of the MMIS need to be modified to consider diverse age and race factors; a conclusion was made that “Perceived media influence is therefore likely to become an even more important predictor of body dissatisfaction and unhealthful weight control behaviors among children in the future” (p. 25). Furthermore, Harrison (2009) states, “the MMIS could become an excellent tool for researchers who wish to quickly and easily assess perceived media influence among children who are just old enough to be aware of this influence” (p. 25). In assuming these inferences are true, and in applying them to adult women, the MMIS has the ability to be used in determining the relationship between women’s self-image and watching unconventional models on television (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001; Harrison, 2009). For example—based on the possibility of influences numbers 4 and 5, is the implication that a woman who views someone who looks like herself on television, is less likely to feel the need to change her appearance. This is can in turn, possibly help raise her self-image; supposing the woman watches the models often enough. However, researchers require further investigation to determine the likelihood of these influences in adult women.

Lack of Diverse Literature in Topic Area
While there is some research on models in the media in regards to women’s body image; authors of the literature appear to predominantly take the same stance. For example, studies by David, Morrison, Johnson, and Ross (2002) and by Holstrom (2004) discussed that there was an over-abundance of thin, female models on television. These studies then suggested that the body images of women who view the models were negatively impacted. However, there is a lack of current, scholarly literature which marks the entrance of models on television that are divergent from the typical standards of beauty in regards to: age, height, and body size/appearance. Though, a potential researcher is able to find inklings of information on unconventional models, it is mostly in the form of news articles.

There is a lack of scholarly research that explores how the featuring of unconventional models on television affects women’s self-image. Scholars must consider research questions that will help better define this area of research. Although there is still much research to do in the area of women’s self image in relation to modeling shows, this study is worthwhile--particularly, if it provides a potential gateway for women to feel better about themselves.

**Main Topics for Workshop**

The major topic areas of concentration for this project are: (1) women’s self-image, (2) modeling on television, and (3) unconventional models. It is necessary to uncover the current literature related to these topics in order to prepare the workshop as an informed moderator. Reviewing literature on the topic areas can help provide an understanding of past and/or present research connected to the core, workshop subjects.

**Women’s Self-Image**

Women’s self-image is a central topic of the proposed workshop. In fact, one of the key components of the workshop will involve students discussing ways to help improve women’s
self-image, through modeling television shows. Therefore, literature essential to focus on is associated to the following sub-topics: (1) characteristics that deflate self-image; (2) influences of modeling on self-image and; (3) characteristics that build up self-image.

**Characteristics that deflate self-image.** To begin with, the concept of “self-image” is defined using Butler’s definition presented in his article “The Self Image Profiles.” Butler describes self-image as, “the descriptive aspect of the self (i.e., how I think about myself)…” (2001, para. 5).

The reasoning behind the proposed workshop suggests that women’s self-image as a whole is suffering. Why is that? According to Peter Haddon, poor self-image has a direct correlation with who people surround themselves with:

> Your self-image at the moment, that is the mental picture you hold of yourself, is a result of your past conditioning, whether this is positive or negative. And your past conditioning will largely have been due to the influences that authority type figures such as your parents, teachers, sports coaches and the like had on your earlier belief system. You need to be aware of how important your belief system is to your performance level, as your beliefs will actually determine the amount of your potential that you will use and obviously that will have a direct bearing on the actions you take and consequently the results you achieve in life. (Haddon, 1999, p. 148)

Haddon’s suggestions for improving negative self-image are discussed more in the next section.

Earlier research performed (Apter, Galatzer, Beth-Halachmi, & Laron, 1981; Slap, Khalid, Paikoff, Brooks-Gunn, & Warren, 1994) sought to find whether an increase in negative self-image, occurs due to pubertal concerns. Though limitations are noted, Slap, Khalid, Paikoff, Brooks-Gunn, and Warren’s research helped uncover issues that may deflate a woman’s self-
image at a young age. These issues might be her physical appearance and/or hormonal variables. The study was supposed to last for one year and consisted of 100 participants (girls ages 10-14 years old), the number of girls dwindled considerably after one year. However, the remaining participants were still tested; physically, hormonally, and using a psychosocial assessment. Slap et al. (1994) concluded that the girls’ breast development and also, certain hormonal features appear to be associated with their level of self-image. This literature somewhat conflicted with, Apter et al.’s (1981) finding that while pubertal maturity did not influence self-image, height issues heavily influenced self-image. In fact, Apter et al. found that height issues were just as influential in girls as in the boys they used as samples. It seems that perhaps, both physical and/or hormonal issues have some influence on a person’s self-image.

While Apter et al. and Slap et al. researched biological reasons someone might have a low self-image; other research (Calogero, R., Herbozo, S., & Thompson, J., 2009; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006) provided compelling information about the importance of words. A 2006 study performed by Herbozo and Thompson sought to determine the level by which negative, body-related commentary influences women’s body image and self-esteem. The Herbozo and Thompson research involved 246 women, ages 18-25 years old. Participants were exposed to questions on a Likert-style scale that measured the effect of both negative and positive commentary about physical appearance. The scale mainly focused on body weight and body shape. In the results, Herbozo and Thompson found the frequency by which negative, body-related commentary was received by a woman, was directly related to the amount she was negatively influenced by them (Herbozo & Thompson, 2006, p. 255-9). The researchers revealed, “the Negative Weight and Shape Frequency and Effect subscales were significant predictors of satisfaction with one’s physical appearance” (Herbozo & Thompson, 2006, p. 259).
These findings helped bring to light the idea that negative commentary about physical appearance can deflate women’s self-image. Past research by Herbozo and Thompson focused on the effects of negative words. More recent research by Calogero, Herbozo, and Thompson concluded that women with high body dissatisfaction still experienced high body dissatisfaction, in particular, after receiving compliments about their appearance (2009). These studies suggested the significance of verbal aspects on women’s self-image.

Perhaps some of the most convincing evidence of what deflates women’s self-image is Webster and Tiggemann’s (2003) study about body dissatisfaction in relation to women’s self-image. Another study (Yu-Jen, Yiing-Mei, Shuh-Jen, S. & Mei-Yen, 2004) found that weight factors have a tremendous deal to do with the likelihood of body dissatisfaction in women. The Webster and Tiggeman research coincided with Yu-Jen et al.’s findings. The research (Webster & Tiggemann, 2003) used 106 women as participants, ages 20 to 65 years of age. The women were administered various measures, including a body dissatisfaction scale. From the results, Webster and Tiggemann concluded that younger women hold a greater important on weight. Also, the researchers determined that body dissatisfaction was interrelated with how young women felt about themselves, self-esteem and self-concept (Webster & Tiggemann, 2003). These studies (Webster & Tiggemman, 2003; Yu-Jen et al., 2004) help convey that body dissatisfaction can lower a woman’s self-image.

Inevitably, there are many potential contributing factors that may cause a person to have a negative self-image. In exploring these concepts for the purpose of the workshop, a better understanding of the possible causes of low self-image is gained. An understanding of possible causes for poor self-image is necessary, so that workshop participants have background knowledge about women’s self-image as a whole. In looking at research about what possibly
In deflating women’s self-image, a reader cannot help but notice that the articles above (Calogero, R., Herbozo, S., & Thompson, J., 2009; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006; Webster & Tiggemann, 2003; Yu-Jen et al., 2004) broach the subject of body dissatisfaction, weight, etc. In noting the potential causes for low self-image; the workshop instructor will attempt to get participants to realize, why women’s self-image needs to be improved in the first place.

**Influences of modeling on self-image.** Although physical, mental or emotional issues may be contributing factors to a woman’s level of self-image, there is also the likelihood of the influence of fashion models (Peterson, R., Bing, X., & Limbu, Y., 2009; Roberts & Good, 2010). For example, research from Roberts and Good (2010) brought forth compelling evidence that — based on a woman’s personality type — being exposed to models in the media had the ability to affect her self-image. The participants for the study were 64, college-aged women. The women were exposed to images of both thin and plus-size models. Participant reactions to the models were based on the five different personality trait categories: (1) extroversion, (2) neuroticism, (3) conscientiousness, (4) agreeableness and, (5) openness to experience. In the results, Roberts and Good found that women with predominantly neurotic personality traits were particularly affected by the image. Viewing the thin models made them feel dissatisfied about their own body. This idea concurred with what similar studies suggested about women viewing thin models in the media (Janelle, C., Hausenblas, H., Ellis, R., Coombes, S., & Duley, A., 2009; Peterson, R., Bing, X., & Limbu, Y. 2009) In contrast, women who embodied the other personality traits, held less criticism of their own appearance after viewing thin models (Roberts & Good, 2010, pp. 211-215). Results of this research helped bring to light that modeling has the ability to influence women’s self-image. Though, future research must be done to discern to what extent the
influence exists. Notably, Roberts and Good proposed an idea that aligns with the proposed workshop:

Consequently, for women with high confidence or self-efficacy, idealized images may produce motivation rather than discouragement.

Consistent with this reasoning, we found that subjects [...] who embody self-confidence, felt better about themselves after viewing idealized images. Rather than feeling threatened, these individuals may have felt inspired by the models. This results in assimilation with the models and an enhancement of their self-image. (Roberts & Good, 2010, p. 215)

This concept coincides with the proposed workshop, in the sense that it suggests women may be able to improve self-image through viewing models.

In an earlier, 2007 study by Jarry and Kossert aimed to gauge how viewing models effected women’s level of body image dissatisfaction. The participants were 94 women, ages 17 to 43 years old. The women were administered a variety of tests including a self-esteem scale and a body image ideals questionnaire. The results implied that viewing thin models had the ability to uplift the body image of those women in danger of having low self-worth. Ideas and this research are similar to ideas found in a Tiggeman, Polivy and Hargreaves study. However in the latter study, Tiggemann and colleagues found that while using thin models as fantasy outlets had the ability to raise women’s mood, it did not raise their body image (2009). Whereas, Jarry and Kossert asserted that women may use the images of thin models as motivation for appearance self-enhancement (Jarry & Kossert, 2007). Jarry and Kossert also insinuated that woman may be compelled to improve their body image based on viewing thin models which
does align with Tiggeman and colleagues’ views (2009). Ultimately, additional research is needed to discover the behavioral effects of models on self-image (Jarry & Kossert, 2007).

Finally, an article by Diedrichs and Lee (2010) proposed the concept that consumers viewing average-size, male models in the media could positively influence women’s body image. 619 participants were chosen for the study. They were men and women, ages 17 to 25 years old. Participants were given a variety of tests including scales set up to measure participants’ current state of body image and internalization of beauty ideals. Regarding the women participants, Diedrichs and Lee presented results in which the women experienced positive self-evaluations of their own appearance—whether exposed to average-size or muscular male models (Diedrichs & Lee, 2010, pp. 218-26). This concept is in conjunction with ideas for the proposed workshop. This is so, in the sense that if male models (whether average-size or muscular) can positively influence women’s self-image; is it not possible female models (whether standard or unconventional) have the ability to positively influence women’s self-image?

In reviewing literature on this sub-topic it is apparent that (whether positively or negatively), models have the ability to influence women’s body image. This assertion is in conjunction with the proposed workshop; in that one of the objectives of the workshop is to find ways women can use modeling on television to improve self-image. Again, as a potential instructor, one cannot ignore how models are mentioned on the topic of women’s self-image, women’s body image, and women’s self-esteem (Peterson, R., Bing, X., & Limbu, Y., 2009; Roberts & Good, 2010). Two of the studies discussed (Diedrichs & Lee, 2010; Roberts & Good, 2010), both help make the concept of using modeling television shows to try and improve women’s self-image seem more feasible. This is because these two articles both found that
women can use viewing models in the media as inspiration to make positive changes in their lives (Diedrichs & Lee, 2010; Roberts & Good, 2010).

**Characteristics that build up self-image.** The primary goal of this workshop is to try to raise women’s self-image through watching modeling television shows. Interestingly, Haddon coincides with the idea that viewing positive television shows can elevate self-image. One of Haddon’s suggested strategies:

> The next step is to limit your television viewing to selected shows. When indiscriminate viewing becomes habitual, it starts destroying your creative ability. The imagination needs constant use to improve its creativity. In the same way that a physical muscle will atrophy if not used, so will your imagination weaken commensurate with its degree of neglect. Used correctly, television can be beneficial but does require becoming selective about what is regularly fed into your mind. (Haddon, 1999, p. 152)

This aligns with the concept that perhaps watching the appropriate types of modeling television shows can assist in raising women’s self-image.

A study that sought to reveal positive, body-image characteristics is covered in a 2010 article by Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, and Augustus-Horvath. The research participants were 15, female, college students (ages 18 to 21 years old). The women were administered questionnaires, including an evaluation of appearance and a body/self-relations questionnaire. In the results, any positive body-image characteristics were uncovered. They included perspectives such as having appreciation for one’s body and feeling comfortable/confident with one’s body. According to the researchers, these positive characteristics might be a result of: unconditional acceptance by significant others, loyalty to a higher power, engaging in self-care behaviors (i.e.
stress-relief), and/or mentoring others towards body self-acceptance (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010, pp. 106-16). All of these aspects may in turn cause women to build up their self-image, or, the way they perceive themselves. Particularly due to ideas that women’s self-image is often inter-related to their body-image (“Body Image: Loving Your Body Inside and Out”, n.d.). The mention of “loyalty to a higher power” in this study somewhat relates to a Boyatzis, Kline, and Backof research that seeks to prove that religious affirmation can help improve women’s body image. Boyatzis and colleagues concluded that reading spiritual affirmations could help improve women’s body image despite the women being exposed to thin models (2007, pp. 553-564).

In exploring the aforementioned characteristics and influences, the conclusion is drawn that it may be beneficial for women to be vigilant about what information they are exposing themselves to; either via commentary or television shows. The literature available does not directly address the influence of unconventional models on women’s self-image. However, the articles in this section are helpful in that they provide a potential workshop instructor with information on how women’s self-image can be improved. One of the objectives of the proposed workshop involves attempting to get participants to find ways to improve their own self-image as a whole. Necessary insight has been gained.

Modeling on Television

What widely known about models on television involves the body image of women. Body image is interrelated to self-image, or the way one sees them self as a whole. In fact, a woman’s self-image is often a direct result of her body image (“Body Image: Loving Your Body Inside and Out”, n.d.). Existing literature related to models in the media stress, (1) Idealized images in the media and; (2) the influence of the thin ideal on eating disorders (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003; Harrison, 2000).
Idealized images the media. Minimal research can be found on how modeling in the media positively influence women’s self-image. However, much is known on how the media promotes the suggestion that an impossibly, thin body is the “ideal” female body. This concept is often referred to as the “thin ideal” (Bessenoff, 2006; Dittmar, Halliwell & Stirling, 2009; Yamamiya, Cash, Melnyk, Posavac, & Posavac, 2005).

A 2005 Yamamiya et al. study, wanted to determine the level by which certain women are influenced by viewing thin ideal models. The participants were 123 female students, ages 18 to 29 years old. The women performed three evaluations, including a Likert-style, body image scale. The results indicated a startling outcome. Unfortunately, both this study and another article reviewed (Tucci & Peters, 2008) found that after exposure to thin models, a woman had the ability to experience body dissatisfaction. (Yamamiyaa et al., 2005, pp. 74-80).

Another example is Bessenoff’s 2006 study, which explored the influence of thin ideal images on women’s body image. The participants were 112, female, college students (ages 17 to 39 years old). The women completed many tests, including a body image survey. In the results Bessenoff found exposure to thin ideal images influenced, “weight concerns, mood, self-esteem, and depression” (Bessenoff, 2006, pp. 239-51). This study is congruent with other studies on the topic of modeling in the media (Brown & Dittmar, 2005; Evans, 2003; Glauert, Rhodes, Byrne, Fink, & Grammer, 2009).

Lastly, are Dittmar, Halliwell and Stirling’s two 2009 studies that examined the psychological influence of thin media models on women’s body image. The two studies respectively involved 87 women and 155 women. The second study was a replication of the first study with a larger sample of participants. The women were administered multiple tests including a thin ideal internalization scale. Based on the results, Dittmar, Halliwell and Stirling
concluded, “The ultra-thin female models typically used in advertising, and the mass media generally, leads vulnerable women to feel bad about their bodies” (See Figure 1.) (Dittmar, Halliwell and Stirling, 2010, pp. 43-72). These results coincided with ideas in the Bessenoff study.

These articles all display instances of thin media ideals being recognized in relation to modeling in the media. However, the literature does not specifically address the influences of women being exposed to unconventional models in the media.

**The influence of the thin ideal on eating disorders.** Unfortunately, literature on models in the media also reinforces the idea that thin ideals lead to eating disorders in women (Ahern, Bennett & Hetherington, 2008; Anschutz, Engels & Strien, 2008; Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999).

An Ahern et al., 2008 article explored the level at which women who admire significantly, underweight models display eating disorder symptoms. The participants were 105 women, ages 16 to 24 years old. The women completed a series of questionnaires and Likert-style evaluations. This included an eating disorder inventory scale. The results not only implied that the media poses as a paramount force in body dissatisfaction; but it also partially supported the researchers’ hypothesis. That hypothesis being women who favored positive opinions of ultra-thin models, displayed more prominent eating disorder symptoms (Ahern et al., 2008, pp. 294-307). A 2007 Current Events article also found that fashion models greatly influenced the body image of young women (“The Skinny on Models”).

Furthermore, Anschutz, Engels and Strien’s 2008 study agreed that thin ideals influence eating disorders in women. This study was conducted to try and prove that thin ideals influence eating styles (some of which can be destructive). The participants were 163 women that were university students. These women were administered an eating styles questionnaire. This 33-
question evaluation measured the various eating styles. The main eating styles discussed in this study were: Restrained eating, emotional eating, and external eating. In the results, Anschutz, Engels and Strien believed that thin media ideals directly related with all three eating styles (Anschutz, Engels & Strien, 2008, p. 70-9).

Even a much earlier, 1999, Wilson and Blackhurst study also agreed that the thin ideal influenced eating disorders. The researchers asserted one of the ways food advertisers promote body dissatisfaction in women, is by comparing women’s body to a more favorable, thin ideal. The article cited a Hershey’s Syrup ad, in which various milk types were symbolic for women’s types. Wilson and Blackhurst also mentioned a General Foods ad where a dress symbolized a smaller figure. Throughout the writing, other symbolic messages in advertising were addressed (i.e. Special K and Pop Secret ads). Ultimately, the researchers made the following conclusion, “Eliminating these messages in food advertisements as well as other media will be central to reducing the prevalence of eating disorders” (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999, pp.111-22).

While it is evident that modeling in the media has some negative influence on women’s self-image/body image, it is of interest for researchers to explore possible positive aspects. If the appearance of thin models in the media can have a negative impact on women’s perceptions of their bodies, cannot the appearance of unconventional models have an encouraging impact? A main component of the workshop seeks to discover ways in which these types of television shows can help improve women’s self-image.

**Unconventional Models**

What is meant by “unconventional” model? To begin, a model outside of the “thin ideal.” The models are purposively outside the scope of the characteristics of a “typical” fashion model
(“Scout Me”, n.d.; “What We Look For”, n.d.). They may diverge from the standard of fashion models in regard to: (a) age, (b) height and, (c) weight.

**Age.** In an early instance of unconventional models in the media, an article by Kate Fitzgerald (2000) quickly noted a Macy’s search for fashion models between the ages of 40 and 60 years old. A news article, by Demetria Erwin (2008) mentioned, *She’s Got the Look*, a television show especially featuring models over the age of 35 years old. Nonetheless, it is difficult to find in-depth research which provides information on how watching the show affects the body image of women.

**Height.** The same applies in regards to modeling television shows where models are shorter than the normal fashion industry height standard. According to their website (“Scout Me”, n.d.) BMG Models, a talent agency, requested female models that were taller than 5’8”—as does other, more prestigious agencies such as Elite Models (“What We Look For”, n.d.). However, a person seeking more information can merely find news briefs; such as the article by Stephen Battaglio (2009), which notated the fact that the 13th season of *America’s Next Top Model* was solely geared towards models that are under the height of 5’7”. The lowering of the height requirement for models on *America’s Next Top Model* (Battaglio, 2009) undoubtedly makes opportunities for many women who were previously rejected. As a result, it is necessary to ask research questions which allow for the study of how the display of shorter models can positively influence the self-image of women.

**Weight.** Finally, in research which discusses models that are above the average weight requirement of fashion standards, one must admit that progress has been made (Hogg & Fragou, 2003; Jalees & Majid, 2009). Though there are television shows that feature plus-size models (“Specialty Models”, n.d.); there are still very few scholarly articles that investigate how the
exhibit of plus-size models on television influence the self-esteem of women. There are articles (David, Liu, & Cortese, 2003) that touch on the subject.

The David, Liu and Cortese study attempted to determine the effect of plus-size models on public perception of body ideals. The participants were 243 college students; a mixture of men and women. Ages ranged from 17 to 49 years old. The men and women were exposed to stimuli that consisted of ads featuring models of varying body sizes. Participants completed multiple evaluations, including measurements of body image and self-esteem. In regards to the women, results implied that viewing plus-size models did have a slight ability to influence women’s perception of thin ideals (David, Liu & Cortese, 2003, pp. 1-38). Although this study does provide some evidence of studies on the relationship of plus-size models in the media, this article deviates from the norm of available literature.

In addition, there is a tremendous lack of literature on how unconventional models in relation to age and height, influence women’s self-image. This helps propel the necessity for a corresponding workshop. While the aforementioned articles in this section briefly refer to unconventional types of models; they do not discuss ways in which viewing these types of models on television can have a positive influence on women’s self-image. The proposed workshop seeks to have participants explore/discuss the possibilities.

**Research Question**

I propose the following research question be addressed within the workshop:

RQ\(^1\): How can watching unconventional models on television help raise American women’s self-image?

**Workshop**
This seminar-style workshop helps participants uncover the ways in which viewing unconventional models on television shows can improve women’s self image. This workshop will help attempt to uncover ways to improve women’s self-image through unconventional models on television.

The workshop objectives are as follows:

1. Discuss the definition of “self-image”, and its relationship with the media (television in particular).
2. Engage in nuanced discussion pertaining to modeling on television.
3. Analyze visual learning tools concerning the course topic.
4. Evaluate participant’s level of self-image through exercises.
5. Examine ways modeling television shows can build self-image.
7. Assess course materials and potential future applications.

The workshop outline presented in the syllabus will be followed as closely as reasonably expected. This workshop will be fueled by relevant student discussion/activities. The seminar will revolve around viewing and discussion of the following visual learning tools.

- *America’s Next Top Model;* Season 13; Episode 1: “How Short Can You Go”
- *She’s Got the Look;* Season 1; Episode 1: “Pilot”
- *The Secret Life of Women;* Season 4; Episode 23: “Specialty Models”

Before viewing the first video, participants will complete the Self-Image Quiz (See the document “Self-Image_Quiz.doc”, found in the “Workshop Materials” folder.)

While viewing each video participants will complete an accompanying worksheet. Supplementary questions may be asked of participants to further promote class discussion and to encourage use of critical thinking skills.
Following the video activities participants will complete certain aspects of the instructor-provided handout, “How to improve your self-image and self-confidence: Chapter 5.” (This can be found in the “Workshop Materials” folder.) This resource is an excerpt taken from the Peter Haddon book, Mastering Personal and Interpersonal Skills (1999). In particular, as a class we will: (1) Read/Discuss “Changing Your Self-Image” pp. 148-151, (2) participate in the activity, “Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses”, pp. 165-167.

Finally, participants will be provided a Suggested Resource list for their personal use. (This can be found in the “Workshop Materials” folder.)

Outside Assignments

Participants will complete the written assignment outlined in the syllabus. They will refer to the 20 strategies listed on pp. 151-160, as guidelines (as explained in the syllabus.)

Links

Many of the workshop visual materials can be found on the Internet. The links are as follows:

- America’s Next Top Model - “How Short Can You Go”
- She’s Got the Look - Pilot Episode
  Online here (this episode can be downloaded for $1.99 from Amazon):
  [http://http://www.amazon.com/The-New-York-10/dp/B001AM0MJG/ref=od_aui_detailpage_o00_s00](http://http://www.amazon.com/The-New-York-10/dp/B001AM0MJG/ref=od_aui_detailpage_o00_s00)
- The Secret Lives of Women- “Specialty Models” Episode
  Online here:
  o Part 1- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1LXFIC2jfo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1LXFIC2jfo)
o Part 2- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPt3dvU94ec&feature=related
o Part 3- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEX7y8PXG-M&feature=related
o Part 4- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3hjDMYaHVs&feature=related
o Part 5- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySHyq8rD3FA&feature=related
References


activation attention level, and thin-ideal internalization for young women’s responses to ultra-thin media ideals. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 24*(8), 1088-1113.


Seidman, R. (2009). In its 13th cycle *America’s Next Top Model* maintains its
its-13th-cycle-americas-next-top-model-maintains-its-hold-on-target-young-
women/26744.


pubertal manifestations, and pubertal hormones: Preliminary findings in young
139X(94)90606-8.


“Specialty models”. (n.d.). *WeTv.com* para.1

Tiggemann, M., & McGill, B. (2004). The role of the social comparison in the
Effect of magazine advertisements on women’s mood and body dissatisfaction. *Journal
of Social & Clinical Psychology, 23*(1), 23-44.

In fashion magazines: A source of social comparison or fantasy?. *Journal of Social &
Clinical Psychology, 28*(1), 73-93.

comparison and body dissatisfaction. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 35*(1),


Appendix

Figure 1.

![Diagram of model with boxes labeled Thin-Ideal Internalisation, Exposure to Thin Media Models, Weight-Related Self-Discrepancies, and Body-Focused Negative Affect, connected by arrows indicating a flow from left to right.]

FIGURE 1. New model of media exposure effect for women with thin-ideal internalization as moderator and weight-related self-discrepancy arousal as mediator

(Dittmar et al., 2009, p. 51)
Women’s Empowerment Workshop
Model Citizen: Explore Ways to Improve Women’s Self-Image through Watching Unconventional Models on Television
Fall 2012

Moderator: Nicole James, M.A.
Email: n-james@mail.govst.edu

Description: This seminar helps participants uncover the ways in which viewing unconventional models on television shows can improve women’s self image. The workshop encourages participants to discuss the media-influenced, self-image issues that women face. Not just in looking at the negative aspects, but in looking for ways for women to possibly overcome them.

Rationale: Women’s self-image is often influenced by images in the media; particularly, by viewing models on television. Much is known about how the media perpetuates ideas that thin models as having the “ideal” appearance. However, here, the goal is to expose ways viewing unconventional models on television can promote a healthy self-image. Essentially, this workshop aims to use the often-chastised, mainstream media in a positive manner.

Modalities:
- Short Lecture
- Discussion
- Visual Learning Tools
- Group Activities (i.e. presentation, role play, etc.)

Objectives
1. Discuss the definition of “self-image”, and its relationship with the media (television in particular).
2. Engage in nuanced discussion pertaining to modeling on television.
3. Analyze visual learning tools concerning the course topic.
4. Evaluate participant’s level of self-image through exercises.
5. Examine ways modeling television shows can build self-image.
7. Assess course materials and potential future applications.
Model Citizen: Explore Ways to Improve Women’s Self-Image through Watching Unconventional Models on Television

Fall 2012

Hours 1-3

✓ **Introductions**
✓ **Definition of Self-Image/Brief Class Discussion**
  Group will discuss, the definition of “self-image.” In the lecture, students will be provided with Butler’s (2001) definition of self-image obtained through research. (Objective: 1)

✓ **Short Lecture**
  This lecture is provided to expose participants to background knowledge about women’s self-image in relation to modeling. The content of the brief lecture is a result of scholarly research; with sources provided in the PowerPoint presentation. (Objective: 2)

✓ **Self-Image Assessment Worksheet(s)**
  This self-image assessment is intended to provide a general gauge participants’ current level of self-image. This will help give participants an idea of how they tangible reflection of how they currently perceive themselves. (Objectives: 4)

✓ **Visual Learning Tool - Video #1/Worksheet/Group Discussion**
  Participants will watch the visual learning tool, America’s Next Top Model, Cycle 13, Episode 1 “How Short Can You Go”. Participants will complete a worksheet to gauge their opinions about the episode. A discussion will follow. The discussion will attempt to determine how (if so) viewing the show influenced the participants’ level of self-image. The group will also discuss possible ways viewing the show could (if so) help other women’s self-image/body image. (Objectives: 2-5)

Hour 4-5

✓ **Lunch 12 p.m. – 1 p.m.**

Hours 5-8

✓ **Visual Learning Tool - Video #2/Worksheet/Group Discussion**
  Participants will watch the visual learning tool, She’s Got the Look, Season 1, “Pilot”. Participants will complete a worksheet to gauge their opinions about the episode. A discussion will follow. The discussion will attempt to determine how (if so) viewing the show influenced the participants’ level of self-image. The group will also discuss possible ways viewing the show could (if so) help other women’s self-image/body image. (Objectives: 2-5)

✓ **10-Minute Break**

✓ **Visual Learning Tool - Video #3/Worksheet/Group Discussion**
  Participants will watch the visual learning tool, The Secret Life of Women, Season 4, Episode “Specialty Models”. Participants will complete a worksheet to gauge their opinions about the episode. A discussion will follow. The discussion will attempt to determine how (if so) viewing the show influenced
the participants’ level of self-image. The group will also discuss possible ways viewing the show could (if so) help other women’s self-image/body image. (Objectives: 2-5)

✓ **Handout Discussion/Activity**
Participants will complete certain aspects of the instructor-provided handout, “How to improve your self-image and self-confidence: Chapter 5.” (This can be found in the “Workshop Materials” folder.) This resource is an excerpt taken from the Peter Haddon book, *Mastering Personal and Interpersonal Skills* (1999). In particular, as a class we will: (1) Read/Discuss “Changing Your Self-Image” pp.148-151, (2) participate in the activity, “Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses”, pp.165-167. These activities will help students identify general ways in which they can improve their self-image. (Objective: 6)

✓ **Student Feedback**
✓ **Dismissal**

**Written Assignment**
Each participant is required to write a detailed, reflective paper. This written assignment should discuss how the participant will implement future use of 4 or more of the 20 strategies on pp.151-160 of the handout. The participant may also include feedback about the course (i.e. comments, and/or suggestions). (Objective: 7)

**Requirements:**
- Format
  - APA Style (with appropriate citations)
  - Double-spaced
  - 12-pt font (Times New Roman or Arial)
  - List all references

The written assignment is to be emailed to the instructor at: n-james@mail.govst.edu.
Explore Ways to Improve Women’s Self-Image through Watching Unconventional Models on Television

Women’s Empowerment Seminar
Instructor: Nicole James, M.A.
Fall 2012
Self-image is the way you perceive yourself.

(Butler, 2001)
Women’s self-image is often influenced by images in the media; particularly, by viewing models on television. Much is known about how the media perpetuates ideas that thin models as having the “ideal” appearance. However, here, the goal is to expose ways viewing *unconventional* models on television can promote a healthy self-image. Essentially, this workshop aims to use the often-chastised, mainstream media in a positive manner.
Studies show that women viewing thin models in the media has the ability to:

- Influence Women’s Self-Image
- Influence Women’s Body Image (the way women feel about their bodies)
- Cause women to develop eating disorders

(Ahern, Bennett & Hetherington, 2008; Bessenoff, 2006; Dittmar, Halliwell & Stirling, 2009; Field, Carmago, Taylor, Berkey, & Colditz, 1999; Tiggeman, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009)
So, if that’s the case...

- Can watching different models in the media (particularly on television), help boost women’s self-image as opposed to lowering it?

- Why do you hold this viewpoint?
Watching unconventional models on television, can help improve your *own* self-image?

Why? Or, why not?
Complete the *Self-Image Quiz* handout, and calculate your score.

You will have 20 minutes!

Class discussion about this assignment will follow...
ANTM EPISODE- “HOW SHORT CAN YOU GO”

Online here: http://www.megavideo.com/?v=2K7R3XWC

COMPLETE ACCOMPANYING WORKSHEET!

DISCUSSION WILL FOLLOW.
BREAK NOW!

LUNCH 12P.M. TO 1 P.M.
SHE’S GOT THE LOOK - PILOT EPISODE

Online here:
http://http://www.amazon.com/The-New-York-10/dp/B001AM0MJG/ref=pd_vodsm_B001AM0M JG

COMPLETE ACCOMPANYING WORKSHEET!

DISCUSSION WILL FOLLOW.
BREAK NOW!

YOU MAY TAKE A 10-MINUTE BREAK NOW.
Part 1 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1LXFiC2jfo
Part 2 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPt3dvU94ec&feature=related
Part 3 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE7y8PXG-M&feature=related
Part 4 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3hjDMyHV&feature=related
Part 5 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySHyq8rD3FA&feature=related

COMPLETE ACCOMPANYING WORKSHEET!

DISCUSSION WILL FOLLOW.
Self-Image Quiz

1) When I look in the mirror, I smile and am glad I’m me.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

2) My life has a healthy balance between work and fun.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

3) I believe people when they offer compliments, and don’t consider it just being nice.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

4) When I have an awkward social moment, I focus on it - sometimes for days or longer.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

5) Its hard for me to ask for help, and I always apologize for the inconvenience.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

6) I berate myself for making mistakes, even call myself names like “stupid”.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

7) If I have a decision to make, I don’t ask more than 1 or 2 people for their opinions.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

8) I accept feeling empty, sad or other vulnerabilities, and don’t try to escape from them.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

9) If I meet someone I like, it’s no problem pursuing a relationship.
   a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

10) Sometimes I say or do things just to have another's approval.
    a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

11) It often seems like other people have it better than me.
    a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

12) I use either stress or celebration as an excuse to over-eat, over-drink, over-spend, or another unhealthy outlet.
    a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

13) I enjoy doing things that promote a healthy body.
    a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

14) I am comfortable expressing dissatisfaction or asserting my needs.
    a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

15) I enjoy my time alone as much as I enjoy being with others.
    a) frequently   b) sometimes   c) seldom

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SCORING
Now add up all your points as shown below.
For Questions # Apply these points: For Questions # Apply these points:
1-3 a=6 4 - 6 a=2
7 - 9 b=4 10 - 12 b = 4
13 - 15 c = 2 c = 6

RESULTS

25-49
Your poor self-image has really taken a beating! You seldom feel able to cope with everyday challenges, let alone take on big goals. Your thoughts are often consumed with painful reminders of flaws and blunders, and you struggle to find a balance in your interpersonal relationships. Your social encounters are often interpreted as rejection and reinforce your sense of inadequacy. The saddest part of all is that every painful thought you have about yourself is a lie! The truth is there is no evidence that you are anything but great! Every human being has a right to reach his/her highest potential and you are no different. You are a capable person with many talents and purposes yet to be discovered. Your primary goal right now should be to overcome your false beliefs.

50-74
Although you have accomplishments, you sometimes feel like an imposter. Your sense of self relies a bit too much on external factors. People who know you would be amazed if you exposed your self-doubt because you appear very competent. You have experienced what a healthy self-image feels like, but it’s not consistent and seems to change with current events. Failing is often devastating for you as you’re not convinced that you are not your performance. Perhaps you measure your success based on: social status, job position, marriage & children, etc. All of these are fluid and not solid enough to determine your worth. Learning to define yourself with internal parameters could be the key factor to having a more consistent self-image. The core of you is where your essence resides and that’s your pure worth. It’s all in you; so what do you want to do with it?

75-100
You are a person who takes on life’s challenges instead of running from them, as you believe in your ability to solve problems. You don’t see yourself as innately flawed and have healthy boundaries in your interpersonal relationships. You have learned how to navigate through your world with minimum damage. As a result, you have the confidence it takes to set realistic goals and achieve them. You seldom look at your success as just a fluke, as you understand the relationship between hard work and achievement. Although you’re not a stranger to disappointment - you are the master of your life and you seldom play the victim for long. Congratulations on your well earned self-image!

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Course Materials

ANTM Episode – “How Short Can You Go”

Worksheet

1) How tall are you? What have been your perceptions about your height throughout your life?

2) Why do you think Tyra decided to change the height requirement for this season of the show?

3) Which model candidate could you relate the most to, in this episode? Why?

4) How do you think the “average” woman would think of this episode?

5) How do you think this episode would influence women’s self-image as a whole? Why?

Your Thoughts/Comments on Episode: (Use back of sheet if necessary)
She’s Got the Look – Pilot Episode

Worksheet

1) How old are you? How do you feel about getting older?

2) Why do you think this show was created?

3) Which model candidate could you relate the most to, in this episode? Why?

4) What do you think the “average” woman would think of this episode?

5) How do you think this episode would influence women’s self-image as a whole? Why?

Your Thoughts/Comments on Episode: (Use back of sheet if necessary)
Specialty Models – Pilot Episode

Worksheet

1) How do you feel about your appearance as a whole?

2) Why do you think this show was created?

3) Which model candidate could you relate the most to, in this episode? Why?

4) What do you think the “average” woman would think of this episode?

5) How do you think this episode would influence women’s self-image as a whole? Why?

Your Thoughts/Comments on Episode: (Use back of sheet if necessary)
Supplementary Questions that may be asked of students during the discussion:

**ANTM**

- As one of the pioneer modeling television shows, do you think *ANTM* has helped or hindered women’s self-image as a whole? Why or why not?

**She’s Got the Look**

- How much do you think age influences a woman’s self-image? Explain why you feel this way.

**She’s Got the Look**

- Do you think Daniela Victoria still thinks poorly of herself? Explain why you feel this way.

- How much do you think weight influences a woman’s self-image? Explain why you feel this way.
Suggested Resources

All of the videos can be either watched online, free of charge, or purchased for a small fee. The episodes are:

ANTM EPISODE- “How Short Can You Go”

Online here: http://www.megavideo.com/?v=2K7R3XWC

She’s Got the Look - Pilot Episode

Online here (this episode can be downloaded for $1.99 from Amazon):

http://http://www.amazon.com/The-New-York-10/dp/B001AM0MJG/ref=pd_vodsm_B001AM0MJG

The Secret Lives of Women- “Specialty Models” Episode

Online here:

Part 1- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1LXFIC2jfo

Part 2- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPt3dvU94ec&feature=related

Part 3- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEX7y8PXG-M&feature=related

Part 4- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3hjDMYaHVs&feature=related

Part 5- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySHyq8rD3FA&feature=related
Other Recommended Viewing:

- *Drop Dead Diva*, Lifetime Network
- *More to Love*, Fox