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**Investigating Moderators of the Effects of Attractiveness-Focused
Media Articles on Self-Esteem**

Ammaarah Akhtar

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science by Research (Human
and Health)

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Abstract

Self-esteem has been identified as an important factor in contributing to the mental health and well-being of individuals. Previous research has indicated that self-esteem can be negatively affected by exposure to attractiveness-related media, but there is little previous research investigating individual differences in these effects. The present study investigates sex differences, and contingent self-worth and sociocultural attitudes towards appearance as potential moderators of the effects of exposure to attractiveness-related media articles on self-esteem. 170 participants were randomly allocated to either a positive or negative experimental condition, in which they were exposed to a media article depicting either a highly attractive or unattractive celebrity respectively, or a control condition, in which they viewed a neutral advertisement article. Prior to this, all participants completed measures of contingent self-worth and sociocultural attitudes towards appearance, and self-esteem was measured both before and after exposure to the articles. Results indicated that following the experimental manipulation, relative to those in the control condition, participants in the positive condition reported significantly decreased, and participants in the negative condition reported significantly increased self-esteem. Unexpectedly no significant sex differences were found, suggesting that both male and female self-esteem can be influenced by such media articles. Multiple regression analyses revealed that both contingent self-worth and sociocultural attitudes towards appearance significantly moderated the effects of the experimental conditions such that participants who reported higher levels of these variables were significantly more affected by the experimental conditions. These results are discussed in relation to previous research and theory, and the limitations and practical implications of the study are explored.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Self-Esteem and the Media

Self-esteem has been found to have a significant impact on individuals' mental health and wellbeing and is one of the most widely studied concepts in social psychology (Baumeister, 1993). Self-esteem is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation of themselves (Orth & Robins, 2014), and is thought to be built on feelings of self-acceptance and self-respect with individuals centring their self-evaluations on their attributes, capabilities and qualities (Harter, 1999).

High self-esteem has been associated with healthy developmental outcomes, greater life satisfaction and academic success (Michaels, Barr, Roosa & Knight, 2007), as well as being identified as one of the most influential predictors of happiness (Furnham & Cheng, 2000). In contrast, low self-esteem has been associated with poor mental and physical health, and issues such as delinquency, depression, anxiety and academic difficulties (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt & Caspi, 2005). Substance use and suicidal behaviours have also been linked to low self-esteem (Michaels et al., 2007). Given the positive impact high self-esteem can have on people, it is essential for researchers to determine what factors can influence self-esteem in the hope of improving the quality of life for individuals. Such research could highlight possible societal factors that influence self-esteem and help to develop ways of countering detrimental influences on individual self-perceptions. If successful, this could benefit society as a whole by reducing negative behaviours and creating more optimistic outlooks for individuals.

Sociocultural factors are influential in shaping the thoughts, feelings and lives of the population (Heinberg, 2001). The media is a powerful sociocultural factor that is fascinated with appearance and is present in the vast majority of individuals' lives, especially through media articles and advertisements. Since previous literature has found that perceptions of physical attractiveness and body-image positively correlate with self-esteem (Abell & Richards, 1996), the media may have a significant influence on the development of individual self-perceptions, highlighting it as an important topic for research in this area.

Research has found the media to have a negative impact on the psychological wellbeing of adolescents (Polce-Lynch, Myers, Kleiwer & Kilmartin, 2001). Media critics argue that expectations regarding appearance are projected on to individuals through its content (Mazur, 1986), which has been condemned for the message it represents. Derenne and Beresin (2006) state that the way women and beauty are portrayed by the media is unacceptable as the body weight the media deems fit to show is approximately 15% lower than the average weight of females (Tucci & Peters, 2008). Vaughan and Fouts (2003) found that around 90% of the female models used in media images are below the average ideal weight for women. A rise in the number of individuals that have developed eating disorders has been suggested to be linked to the increase in the depiction of thinner models in magazines (Garfinkel, Coldbloom, Marion, Olmsted, Garner & Halmi, 1992).

1.2 Previous Literature

The media is full of visually appealing images and potent messages regarding body image and appearance, and previous research has found this to have a negative impact on females. Previous literature has focused on the relationship between the media and body-esteem which has been assumed to impact on individuals' self-esteem. Research has indicated an increased level of body dissatisfaction within women over the years (Cash, Morrow, Hrabosky & Perry, 2004), with women developing low social competence levels and dissatisfaction regarding their appearance after exposure to media depictions of female models (Rivadeneyra, Ward & Gordon, 2007). The internalization of these media images has been suggested to lead to eating disorders because of body dissatisfaction and low levels of self-esteem for those who do not meet the media's expectations (Dittmar & Howard, 2004).

Tucci and Peters (2008) conducted a repeated measures design study to support the notion that the media has a significant effect on female body-esteem. Their study included 42 female psychology students all of whom had not had any previous history of eating disorders. The experiment consisted of two conditions; one containing 30 images of thin celebrity models, the

other with 30 bigger looking celebrities. Body satisfaction was recorded before and after participants viewed the images. After taking part in one condition, participants came back seven days later and took part in the other condition. Results indicated that participants reported higher body satisfaction after viewing the bigger looking celebrities and a decrease in body satisfaction scores after viewing the thin-ideal images. In addition, an increased drive for thinness was found in participants after viewing the slender model images. These findings support the idea that media exposure can have an immediate effect on individual self-perceptions. However, as participants were psychology students it is plausible that students were familiar with research surrounding this topic area, therefore making them aware of what researchers expected to find. Furthermore, demand characteristics were high due to participants having to return to the study a week later to take part in the second condition, as participants could have guessed the aims of the study.

Despite the limitations highlighted in Tucci and Peters' (2008) study, other empirical research supports their findings. Wilcox and Laird (2000) created a similar study, however this time 41 volunteer female participants were used and the true purpose of the study was disguised. Participants were led to believe they were taking part in a study relating to memorable models' features and should expect a memory test, which never took place, in order to reduce the likely influence of demand characteristics and increase the validity of the study. After being shown 10 images of models representing the thin ideal, or of normal sized women, results revealed the majority of participants reported lower levels of self-esteem after viewing images of the thin models.

It is evident from previous empirical studies that researchers have given participants media depictions of slender models and then measured their body satisfaction. Not only are demand characteristics likely to be present in such studies, but showing participants a few media images could be argued to not accurately represent the real content of the media. The media is an enormous platform that projects beauty standards and expectations constantly on to society daily, and showing individuals several images taken from the media may not constitute an accurate representation of the general content of the media. Therefore this questions the validity of

previous studies and literature that has stated a relationship between the media and body satisfaction. Furthermore, many individuals could already be aware that images used are heavily edited and this could hinder the true impact the media has on individuals, and previous research has not typically accounted for this. In addition, previous research has shown that there is a relationship between the media and body satisfaction, which is then assumed to affect women's self-esteem. However, less research has focused on the direct relationship between the media and self-esteem itself. This would be more beneficial for social psychology as self-esteem is a more general and influential variable, associated with developing individual's self-concept (Cast & Burke, 2002), than body satisfaction is. Thus, there is a need for research which utilises more realistic representations of media content and which studies the direct relationship between the media and self-esteem in order to produce more valid findings which could be beneficial in improving individuals' mental health and well-being.

1.3 The Feminist Approach and Objectification Theory

There is substantial evidence indicating media experiences can have a significant influence on individuals' self-perceived attractiveness (Strahan, Lafrance, Wilson, Ethier, Spencer & Zanna, 2008). It has been suggested that media exposure regarding the importance of attractiveness has caused individuals to evaluate their own appearance and seek ways to 'fix' anything they are unhappy with, such as cosmetic surgery (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Cosmetic surgery has slowly become a widespread approach that is both easily accessible and affordable for women to turn to in order to achieve physical improvement (Markey & Markey, 2010). The feminist movement believes that because the media specifically targets women through its content, the inaccurate stereotypes it portrays of how women should look have been found to damage female self-perceptions (Thornham, 2007). It can be suggested that women are turning to cosmetic surgery as a result of being unhappy with their appearance due to the beauty ideals they are exposed to by the media. Research has indicated a high percentage of women have undergone surgery in an attempt to change their appearance. It was reported an estimated £1.2 billion in

2009 was spent in the United Kingdom on both surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures (Papadopoulos, 2010). In 2010, it was revealed that women in the United States of America accounted for 90% of the overall number of cosmetic procedures carried out (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012). The statistics reveal a large number of women are dissatisfied with their appearance and are more likely to undergo cosmetic surgery than men. As feminists argue that the media targets women through its content and a high volume of women are unhappy with their appearance, it could be argued that the media is the cause of some women having negative self-perceptions, supporting the feminist argument.

The worrying risk to women has caused many feminists, both liberal and radical, to examine what exactly is making women want to change something about their appearance and the process of this. Bordo (2004) believes that when women fail to meet the unachievable standards set by the media it has severe consequences for their self-perceptions. The objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) is popular amongst feminists in explaining how the media has a damaging impact on women's mental health and wellbeing. According to this theory, women internalize society's appearance related standards and use these expectations as guidelines within their own self-schemas, a process called 'self-objectification'. Self-objectification involves women constantly reflecting on their own body and appearance, using society's expectations as guidelines to compare themselves to. Due to the internalization of these guidelines, feminists argue that women are forced into attempting to achieve unachievable standards of beauty, which are deemed attractive to men, and this is why the majority of women are not satisfied with their appearance.

Tiggemann and Slater (2001) found that the constant reflection on appearance due to self-objectification results in women experiencing increased feelings of shame towards their body. Lewis (2000) defines shame as an emotion that results from failure to meet cultural standards. Wolf (1991) states that it is unsurprising women develop shame towards themselves, as the media has created unachievable standards of attractiveness. Tolman, Impett, Tracy and Michael (2006) discovered that women who rely on society's appearance related expectations are more

likely to experience low self-esteem and depression. In addition, self-objectification has been associated with diminished sexual health which has been identified as an important factor for healthy wellbeing (Satcher, 2001). Healthy sexual wellbeing has been linked to high levels of self-esteem (Hurlbert & Whittaker, 1991) and overall happiness (Laumann et al., 2006). The self-objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) is a well-researched and supported explanation used by feminists to demonstrate how women internalize sociocultural standards set by the media and the damaging long lasting effect this can have on female self-perceptions.

1.4 Social Comparison and Self-Perception Theory

Not all women are affected in the same way after being exposed to attractiveness-related media, for some women this has no influence on their self-esteem. Wilcox and Laird (2000) believe that although some women experience feelings of inadequacy after viewing attractive models, some women like to view these images. In their study (discussed in section 1.2 above) these authors found that some women's self-esteem did not decrease after viewing the attractive models. It would be beneficial for research to explore which individual differences affect the impact the media can have on self-esteem, as developing a greater understanding of this could help those who specialise in helping to improve the mental health and well-being of individuals.

The social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), is a well-known theory in social psychology that offers an explanation of why the media may influence individuals' self-esteem differently. According to this theory, when individuals want to carry out self-evaluations they compare themselves to people in their social environment. As the media is a powerful societal factor, always present in society, it can be seen as a component of this social environment, and thus a source of comparisons for the development of self-perceptions. The media is full of images and articles expressing what the ideal body shape and facial attractiveness should look like for both men and women. The social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), suggests this is what individuals look to in order to make comparisons between themselves and the models used by the media. Research has found that individuals are very likely to turn to media magazines in order

to find information about how to gain the ideal body (Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012). Females have been found to gravitate towards women's beauty magazines for their drive for thinness (Thomsen, McCoy, Gustafson & Williams, 2002) and males to muscle magazines in order to achieve muscularity (Morrison, Morrison & Hopkins, 2003).

Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory offers an explanation as to why some women experience pleasure after viewing media images and others displeasure. Festinger (1954) proposed that individuals can engage in both upward and downward social comparisons. Upward comparisons involve individuals comparing themselves to someone perceived to be better than them on a specific dimension, whereas downward comparisons are made with someone perceived to be worse than them. Downward comparisons are predicted to enhance an individual's mood and self-esteem (Wills, 1991) whereas upward comparisons have been associated with low self-esteem and negative moods (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) predicts that individuals who often compare themselves to people that are deemed 'more attractive' than them are at a higher risk of body dissatisfaction, compared to those who do not.

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) has been widely supported by a large amount of empirical research. In a study using college students, Bessenoff (2006) found that participants who were shown media images of slender attractive models reported body dissatisfaction and decreased mood levels as they carried out upward social comparisons between themselves and the model. In comparison, those participants who viewed images containing no models were unaffected. These findings demonstrate that social comparisons do take place when women are exposed to attractiveness-related media images.

Lakoff and Scherr (1984) argue that magazines may be particularly damaging as they portray the models they use to be accurate representations of how individuals should look, rather than heavily edited images. The use of editing programmes such as Photoshop, has resulted in media images of models looking different to reality. Consequently, the likelihood of women readers viewing media images and feeling more attractive than the model is very small, as the images are highly unrealistic. Therefore participants in previous studies which solely employ

highly attractive images of models as comparators are highly unlikely to make downward comparisons. Downward comparisons would not be able to explain why women are not negatively impacted by the depictions in previous studies, unless participants felt they were better than the images used. As discussed, it is deemed almost impossible for women to achieve the same standard of appearance as the models used in the media due to digital editing and are therefore unlikely to feel better than the model, highlighting a possible limitation of the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). Therefore it is important to explore other possible theoretical explanations when trying to understand individual differences in the relationship between the media and self-esteem

Wilcox and Laird (2000) used self-perception theory in an attempt to explain why women respond differently to media exposure. This theory believes that common sense is wrong and emotion does not result from action, rather feelings are dependent on actions. Individuals who are reliant on personal cues are expected to feel an emotion based on an action; for example, they are happy because they smile. Research has indicated that if an individual is required to act out a specific emotion, they end up reporting feeling that emotion (Laird & Bresler, 1992). In contrast, individuals reliant on situational cues depend on the social context in order to determine how they feel; they change their attitudes according to how they believe others would expect them to feel and respond appropriately (Laird & Bresler, 1992). According to this theory, women who rely on personal cues will be negatively impacted when exposed to an attractive female model as they are being forced to carry out a comparison with the image. This is likely to cause the women to produce negative feelings towards themselves and subsequently decrease their self-esteem and body satisfaction. Those women reliant on situational cues are expected to view the images without evaluating their own appearance as nothing has instructed them to do so.

However the majority of previous research has not forced women to compare themselves to the images they have been shown, rather just to view them. This weakens the argument that personal cues can explain why some women feel worse about themselves after media exposure. Furthermore, demand characteristics have been high in previous studies and participants may

have been able to guess the aims of the study. If this were the case those reliant on situational cues would be expected to feel negatively after media exposure as that is what others would expect if they did not look better than those in the images. Therefore there are limitations in previous theories, such as self-perception theory (Wilcox & Laird, 2000) in explaining why individual differences occur in the effects of exposure to attractiveness-related media on self-esteem. Thus there is a need to investigate alternative possible explanations for such individual differences.

1.5 Contingent Self-Worth

Empirical research has found that feelings of self-esteem are a result of adhering to expectations set by society and feelings of acceptance from others (Leary, Tambor, Terdal & Downs, 1995). However, individuals differ in how much they rely on this acceptance (Rogers, 1959). In a recent study Henderson-King, Henderson-King and Hoffmann (2001) discovered that the amount of importance women place on physical attractiveness determines how they react when viewing media images of attractive female models. They argue that the assumption that all women are equally and continually unhappy with their bodies and appearance is incorrect, instead they believe women differ in the amount of importance they give to different parts of the self. As a result, Henderson-King, Henderson-King and Hoffmann (2001) proposed that women who place a high importance on attractiveness in contributing to their sense of self will be more negatively affected after media exposure to female models, compared to those women who do not view attractiveness as important.

The results of their study showed that women who viewed attractiveness to be important, reported lower levels of body-esteem and self-perceived physical attractiveness after viewing media depictions of female models. Those women who reported attractiveness as being less important to them were almost unaffected after viewing the same images. This indicates that the level of importance women place on attractiveness determines how they react to media exposure. Deci and Ryan (1995) can explain how women determine the importance they place on

attractiveness, as they described a continuum with two types of self-esteem; true self-esteem and contingent self-esteem (CSE). Individuals who possess true self-esteem are not dependent on achieving certain expectations or acceptance from others; they are secure in their feelings of self-esteem. However, individuals with contingent self-esteem constantly seek validation and social acceptance from others in order to gain self-worth.

Patrick, Neighbors and Knee (2004) believed that social comparisons would be higher in those individuals high in CSE as they are more likely to look to others to determine their level of attractiveness. Those individuals low in CSE are less likely to carry out such comparisons as they are already secure within themselves. Patrick, Neighbors and Knee (2004) conducted a study in which participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. The first condition required participants to view 10 advertisements containing images of attractive women taken from popular female magazines. Participants in this condition were asked to rate the models on their facial and bodily attractiveness, they were also asked to rate how much they think they looked like the model in order to induce social comparison. Participants in the second condition viewed the same advertisements but were asked to rate the quality of the advertisement rather than the model. Body-esteem and current emotion measures were completed once the advertisements had been rated. Results indicated that women who were high in CSE were more likely to report comparing themselves to the models regardless of what condition they were in and reported an increase in body-shame as well as experiencing a greater decline in positivity across both conditions. This research offers an explanation as to why some individuals could be more affected by media exposure than others.

CSE can explain why some women are impacted negatively by the media and others aren't, however Contingent Self-Worth (CSW; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) is a more in-depth theory developed to explain how individuals associate appearance with self-esteem and the process by which they do this.

James (1890) proposed that self-esteem is a stable trait that allows individuals to come to an overall judgement regarding how they evaluate their entire self. However James (1890)

also argued that this trait has less stable state components that can fluctuate depending on events that occur in individuals' lives. According to James (1890) individuals differ in which events influence their self-esteem. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) expanded on James' (1890) theory by proposing contingencies of self-worth, a theory that suggests that overall levels of self-esteem are less important than the contingencies on which self-esteem is based. These contingencies consist of domains in which good and bad events can momentarily influence individuals' level of self-esteem. It is the experiences of success or failure resulting from these events that individuals learn to associate with high or low self-esteem. Contingencies are developed over time and are based on different forms of social influence (Bandura, 1991) such as cultural norms and values (Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1991) as well as observational learning (Bandura, 1991). According to this theory, individuals must believe that they adhere to the standards they set in these domains in order to experience high self-worth and esteem.

In regards to how CSW can be used to explain individual differences within self-esteem, Kernis (2003) identified physical appearance as an important domain of CSW. The media can be seen as having a significant influence on developing the expectations set in this domain due to its large scale influence on society. According to this theory, individuals that are high in attractiveness CSW, base their self-esteem heavily on appearance, therefore any attractiveness comparisons they make, upward or downward comparisons, with media images should have more of an effect on their self-esteem. As a result, those high in attractiveness CSW should be more affected by media exposure than those who are low in this.

1.6 Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance

The Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire - 3 (SATAQ-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda & Heinberg, 2004) is a measure developed to assess how much individuals' feelings about their appearance are influenced by the media. This questionnaire investigates how aware individuals are of the media's expectations regarding appearance, and how much they internalize and strive to meet these expectations. Previous research that has incorporated the SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004) has found that those who internalize

sociocultural expectations about appearance are more negatively affected after viewing media images than those who do not internalize these expectations (Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005). In addition, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw and Stein (1994) found that internalization of sociocultural standards regarding body image was indirectly associated with eating disorder symptoms. It could be predicted that those higher in CSW (discussed in section 1.5 above) are likely to report high levels of sociocultural attitudes towards appearance as these individuals base their self-esteem on the expectations set by society. In contrast, those who are low in CSW are less likely to internalize society's expectations regarding appearance and thus score lower on this measure of sociocultural attitudes.

1.7 Male Self-Esteem

It is apparent from the research mentioned throughout that the focus has been on how women are impacted by the media as feminists would argue they are the only sex being targeted in a patriarchal society. However, as society has evolved over the years, it has become clear that males are also subject to pressures caused by the media. Consequently, more research has recently begun to investigate male self-esteem and its relationship with the media (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000). However, to date there is still very little research studying male self-esteem within this topic area, compared to females.

Males are now becoming increasingly aware of an ideal body image for men as being muscular and well built (Crewe, 2003), which is emphasised in a growing number of male lifestyle magazines. Ridgeway and Tylka (2005) found that men also wanted to change their appearance by developing broader chests and more defined abdominal muscles, suggesting that as with women, men could also be facing pressures to look a certain way by society and the media. Similar to female models, male models are often portrayed in exaggerated ways regarding the images used in magazines (Hobza, Walker, Yakushko & Peugh, 2007), once again setting unachievable standards for men to meet. In a survey it was discovered that 95% of males reported wanting to change some aspect of their appearance (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein &

Striegel-Moore, 1986). Furthermore, more recent research has found that male participants report increased body dissatisfaction and depression after viewing ideal male model images taken from television advertisements, compared to men who view neutral images (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004). Research has also found that 20% of male college students indicated behaviours linked to eating disorders (O'Dea & Abraham, 2002), 25% of men were found to carry out excessive exercise (Rash, 2004) and there is a rise in the number of adolescent males engaging in the use of steroids in order to look like the models shown by the media (Wright, Crogan & Hunter, 2000).

It seems apparent that as with women, men are also at risk of being negatively impacted by the media, affecting their health and wellbeing. However, as there has been little research focusing on males, it is hard to establish whether males are impacted in the same way as females by media exposure. As research has indicated a possibility of this, more studies need to include male participants as well as females which could have important implications for helping to improve the quality of life for individuals of both sexes.

1.8 The Current Study

The current study aimed to address a number of limitations in this research area highlighted in the discussions above.

To date, previous research has typically given participants media images of attractive models followed by body-esteem measures (discussed in section 1.2 above). Solely using images may not constitute an accurate representation of the message that the media projects on to society – the notion that appearance is all that matters to the worth of an individual. The content used in magazines usually associates happiness with attractiveness and positive body-imagery, and sadness with unattractiveness and negative body-imagery, by accompanying images with text which reinforces these messages. Viewers may start to believe that attractiveness leads to happiness and turn to media content in order to discover how to achieve the same level of

attractiveness they read about and see. As a result, typical media articles may offer much stronger messages regarding the importance of appearance to their readers than would simple unaccompanied images. Furthermore, this is an important limitation of previous empirical research in this topic area that needs to be addressed, since previous studies can be seen to lack ecological validity in this regard.

The current study used media articles talking solely about a celebrity's appearance, as well as an image of them in order to give participants a visual representation of the celebrity being described. Unlike any other previous research, this study contained both a media article to read and image to view, increasing the validity of the study as it offered a more accurate representation of media content. In addition the current study focused on the relationship between the media and self-esteem as previous research has measured body-esteem instead.

The current study contained both negative and positive articles to discover whether reading about an attractive celebrity made an individual feel worse about themselves and if reading about an unattractive celebrity made individuals feel better about themselves. The inclusion of both positive and negative media articles is something that no other previous study has done, making the current study unique to this topic area. A control condition was used in order to increase the validity of the findings. No previous research has explored the implications of reading about attractive and unattractive celebrities on the reader's self-esteem and the findings could provide important information to clinicians and researchers when trying to improve the quality of life of an individual by increasing their self-esteem. Furthermore, this research could offer new up to date and reliable evidence to support the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), in particular by studying the effects of both upwards and downwards social comparisons.

The current study also investigated individual differences in the effects of media articles on self-esteem. Although there are a number of theories which can explain why individual differences occur in self-esteem, little research has looked at individual differences as moderators of the effects of exposure to the media on self-esteem, and the current study addresses this. The Contingencies of Self-Worth scale (CSWS; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper & Bouvrette, 2003) and the

SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004), discussed in section 2.3.1 above) were the two variables examined as potential moderators of the effects of exposure to attractiveness-related media articles on self-esteem. These measures were included to investigate how much an individual bases their self-esteem on appearance and their awareness and internalization of appearance-related expectations caused by the media. Both predictor variables should interact with the experimental condition to significantly predict participants' subsequent self-esteem.

A key aspect of the current study was that both males and females were used, as it is clear that males have largely been excluded from previous research (discussed in section 1.7 above). As the pressure builds for males to look a way deemed acceptable by society, and this is influenced by the media, it is interesting to investigate how much this has impacted on their self-esteem. Differences between male and female self-esteem were also taken into consideration in this study in order to offer evidence to either support or criticise the feminist argument (discussed in section 1.3 above) and also offer new data on this topic.

The current study contained two experimental conditions as well as a control condition. Both experimental conditions contained a media article describing a popular celebrity's appearance and a media image of them alongside it. The positive condition described a popular attractive celebrity and the negative condition described a well-known unattractive celebrity. Participants were exposed to same sex celebrities during the experimental manipulation. Once allocated to their condition participants were asked to complete measures of contingent self-worth, sociocultural attitudes towards appearance, and self-esteem. They were then exposed to the experimental manipulation, and finally completed the same measure of self-esteem.

It was predicted that participants who viewed the positive media article would show a decrease in subsequent self-esteem and participants who viewed the negative media article would show an increase in subsequent self-esteem levels, relative to those in the control condition. A significant interaction between sex of participant and condition was predicted, such that the conditions would have a greater effect on female participants than males. Lastly, it was predicted that changes in subsequent levels of self-esteem for participants in the experimental conditions

would be greater for participants scoring highly on both contingent self-worth and sociocultural attitudes towards appearance.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

In total, 170 participants agreed to take part in the study, with an equal number of males and females. Participants were recruited through opportunity sampling by approaching individuals personally and asking if they would like to take part in the study. The majority of participants collected were students from the University of Huddersfield, both undergraduate and postgraduate students, however family members, friends and work colleagues also took part. Participants with varying ages and a wide range of ethnicities were part of the research and although these factors were not recorded or analysed in the research, all participants were over the age of 18 and were able to comprehend and speak English to a satisfactory level.

2.2 Design

Participants were randomly allocated to one of three conditions. The control condition consisted of 50 participants in total, with an equal number of males and females. The positive and negative conditions both contained 30 males and 30 females each. The effects of the experimental condition on subsequent self-esteem (controlling for initial self-esteem), and the possible moderating role of sex, sociocultural attitudes towards appearance, and contingent self-worth, were examined.

2.3 Materials

Three questionnaires used in this study; the appearance subscale of Contingencies of Self-Worth scale (CSWs; Crocker et al., 2003), the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Scale – 3 revised edition (SATAQ -3R; Thompson et al., 2000), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)

2.3.1 Contingent Self-Worth

The appearance subscale of the Contingencies of Self-Worth scale (CSWS; Crocker et al., 2003) was used to measure how much participants rely on their physical attractiveness to determine their self-esteem and self-worth. The appearance subscale consists of five items which participants respond to on seven-point scales, ranging from '1 = Strongly Agree' to '7 = Strongly Disagree' so that lower scores on the scale indicate higher levels of contingent self-worth. Example questions include 'My self-esteem is influenced by how attractive I think my face or facial features are', and 'My self-esteem is unrelated to how I feel about the way my body looks' (reverse scored) and 'When I think I look attractive I feel good about myself'. This scale demonstrated moderate internal consistency in the current sample (Cronbach's alpha = .49), which indicated an acceptable level of reliability given the relatively small number of items. The CSWS has been reported to also have strong validity with empirical studies finding that appearance related comparisons are more harmful to individuals' self-perceptions for those who report high levels of CSW (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) compared to those report low levels of this (Patrick, Neighbors & knee, 2004).

2.3.2 Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance

The Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance scale (SATAQ-3; Thompson et al., 2000) was used to measure participants' perceptions of how much their attitudes towards appearance are influenced by the media. The SATAQ-3 consists of 38 items which participants respond to on five-point scales, ranging from '1 = Strongly Agree' to '5 = Strongly Disagree' so lower scores on the scale indicate higher sociocultural attitudes towards appearance. This questionnaire consists of 5 subscales; importance of the media (e.g. 'Magazine advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and 'being attractive)'), media pressures (e.g. 'I've felt pressures from TV or Magazines to have a perfect body'), media awareness (e.g. 'Physically fit people are

more attractive'), internalization (e.g. 'I try to look like the people in music videos') and social comparison (e.g. 'I compare my body to the bodies of TV and movie stars'). This scale demonstrated extremely high internal consistency in the current sample (Cronbach's alpha = .98) and has been reported to have excellent convergent validity for all of the subscales, especially internalization (Thompson et al., 2004).

2.3.3 Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to measure participants' self-esteem, both before and after the experimental manipulation. This is a 10 item Likert scale which requires participants to score each item from '1 = Strongly Agree' to '4 = Strongly Disagree'. Items include 'On the whole I am satisfied with myself', and 'All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure' (reverse scored). Cronbach's Alpha in the current sample was .95 for this measure, revealing an exceptionally high consistency between all 10 items, and demonstrating the questionnaire to have good reliability. Empirical research has supported the validity of the RSES, the scale has been found to significantly correlate with other measures of self-esteem and has been found to be a significant predictor of depression and anxiety (Ciarrochi and Bilich, 2006). Hagborg (1993) used correlational and cross-validation multiple regression analyses in their study and found that the RSES was strongly associated with global self-worth, supporting the notion that the RSES is a valid measure of self-esteem.

Items were taken from the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002) and used as filler questions interspersed with the RSES items administered after the manipulation, in order to attempt to avoid potential demand characteristics from participants recognising the repeated scale. The same scoring scale was used as the RSES for the filler questions, although participant's scores for these items were not included in the data analysis.

2.3.4 Experimental Stimuli

The experimental stimuli consisted of fake media articles given to participants which were created by the researcher and contained information describing, in detail, celebrities' facial and physical appearance. Information unrelated to appearance, such as wealth or status, was not included in order to avoid introducing possible confounding variables which could have affected participants' self-esteem. The articles can be found in Appendix 1. Participants read articles depicting individuals of the same sex in order to allow comparisons to take place, those in the positive condition read about an attractive celebrity and those in the negative condition read about an unattractive celebrity. Despite the media articles referring to four different celebrities, the articles were matched as closely as possible in their content to allow for a valid comparison to be made in the analysis. The male and female profiles used in the positive condition depicted individuals who were reported to have struggled with less than perfect bodies in the past, however had now managed to achieve the ideal body and as a result they were now portrayed as having perfectly toned bodies and had taken part in revealing photo-shoots to showcase this. The two celebrities depicted in the negative condition were reported to have both once had highly attractive figures but were now battling excessive weight gain. The celebrities used in the negative condition have both faced excessive media scrutiny regarding their weight gain and have been heavily criticised by the media regarding their appearance as a result. A before and after image was included in the media articles of each celebrity in order to help participants visualise the article content, these images were taken from Google.

The control condition described a model of car, describing its specification and features and also included an image of the car. This was chosen for the control condition as it is highly unlikely to affect participants' self-esteem after reading about it. See Appendix 2 for this article.

2.4 Procedure

Once participants had been invited to take part in the research, they were sat down in The University of Huddersfield's library to begin the study, participants were given the information sheet to read which provided more detail on what they would have to do during the study (see

Appendix 3). Once participants had finished reading the information sheet they were given two consent forms to sign and date, one was collected by the researcher the other they could keep (see Appendix 4). To begin with participants were given the CSWS to complete, followed by the SATAQ-3 and the first RSES questionnaire. Once these questionnaires were completed they were collected by the researcher and participants were handed the media article to read depending on which condition they had been randomly allocated to. Participants were given as much time as they required to read the article. Once they had finished with the article, participants were then given the RSES questionnaire to complete again, however this time the filler questions were included. Once all of the questionnaires had been completed, they were collected by the researcher and a debrief form was presented to participants which they could keep (see Appendix 5). Participants were allowed time to read the debrief sheet and ask any questions they desired. Participants were thanked for their participation in the study and were allowed to leave.

3. Results

3.1 Group Equivalence Checks

In order to examine whether the experimental manipulation affected participants' levels of self-esteem, it was crucial to investigate whether this trait was initially similar across all three conditions. Similarly, participants' scores for the CSWS and the SATAQ-3 were compared between conditions since these constituted the two additional predictor variables in the study. The descriptive statistics for these variables are displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Self-Esteem, Contingent Self-Worth and Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire.

		Baseline		Positive		Negative			
		Condition		Condition		Condition		Total	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pre	self-esteem scores	3.04	.81	3.04	.80	2.85	.78	2.97	.80
Post	self-esteem scores	3.03	.81	2.64	.90	3.20	.79	2.95	.87
Difference between pre and post self-esteem scores		- .00	.09	-.40	.61	0.34	.50	-0.02	0.56
Contingent Worth Scale	Self-	5.04	1.43	5.13	1.43	5.27	1.35	5.15	1.40
Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire	Towards Appearance	3.48	0.92	3.40	1.01	3.34	1.04	3.40	0.99

A one way ANOVA was conducted on participants initial self-esteem scores which revealed no significant difference between participants in the baseline condition, positive condition and negative condition, ($F(2,167) = 1.04, p = .36$). Similarly, results also revealed no significant differences for the CSWS, ($F(2,167) = .39, p = .68$) and the SATAQ-3, ($F(2,167) = .28, p = .78$). These results suggest there were no significant differences between participants in the three experimental conditions in terms of their initial self-esteem, CSWS and SATAQ-3 scores as expected.

3.2 Manipulation Effects on Self-Esteem

Participants' initial self-esteem was subtracted from participants' subsequent self-esteem scores and the resulting difference scores were used in the statistical analyses. A one way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between participants in the different experimental groups on their subsequent self-esteem scores ($F(2,167) = 37.74, p < .001$). A Tukey post hoc test indicated that participants in the positive condition had significantly ($p < .001$) decreased self-esteem (Mean = $-.40$, SD = $.61$,) compared to participants in the baseline condition (Mean = $.00$, SD = $.09$), as expected. Similarly, participants in the negative condition reported significantly ($p < .001$) increased levels of self-esteem (Mean = $.34$, SD = $.50$,) compared to those in the baseline condition. Lastly, participants in the positive condition reported significantly ($p < .001$) decreased levels of self-esteem compared to those in the negative condition, as predicted. The effect size (partial eta squared) demonstrated that the experimental condition accounted for 31% of the variance in self-esteem difference scores, which is considerably high according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines.

A 2 x 3 between subjects ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of sex and condition on participants' self-esteem difference scores. Levene's test of equality indicated there was no homogeneity of variance, ($F = 10.31, p < .05$). However, this was not problematic since there were equal numbers of participants in each condition and it has been argued that as long as sample sizes are equal, parametric statistical tests are robust under violations of homogeneity

of variance (Zimmerman & Zumbo, 1992). A significant interaction was found between sex and condition ($F(2,164) = 3.18, p = 0.04$), as predicted. Figure 1, below, shows the nature of this interaction.

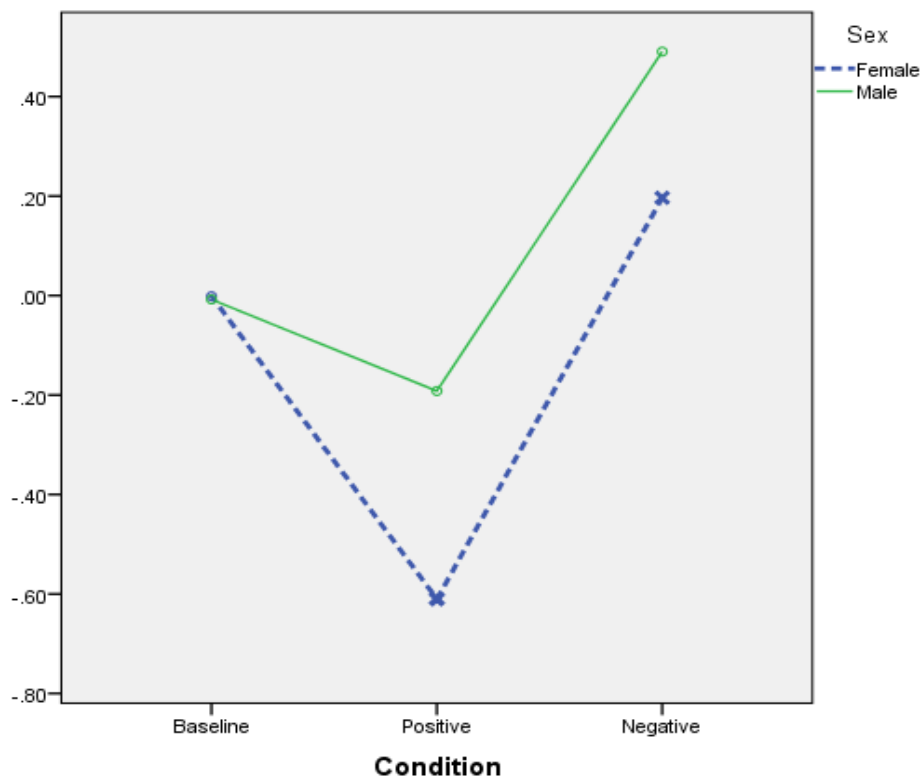


Figure 1: Interaction effects of sex and condition on self-esteem.

In order to explore this interaction, a series of two-tailed t-tests were carried out comparing participants' self-esteem difference scores, examining males and females separately. Females in the positive condition (Mean = $-.61$, SD = $.54$) reported significantly decreased levels of self-esteem compared to females in the baseline condition (Mean = $-.00$, SD = $.12$), ($t(53) = 5.56, p < 0.05$). Cohen's effect size calculations revealed this to be a large difference ($d = 1.6$) between the two conditions.

Females in the negative condition ($M = .20$, SD = $.46$) reported significantly increased levels of self-esteem compared to females in the baseline condition ($t(53) = -2.109, p < 0.05$).

Cohen's effect size calculations revealed this to be a moderate difference ($d = .6$). Females in the positive condition reported significantly decreased levels of self-esteem compared to females in the negative condition, ($t(58) = -6.284, p < 0.05$). Cohen's effect size calculations revealed this to be a large difference ($d = 1.6$) between both conditions. These results demonstrate that for women, the negative manipulation positively affected their self-esteem and the positive manipulation negatively affected their self-esteem as predicted, relative to controls.

As with females, the same post-hoc tests were carried out on male self-esteem difference scores. Males in the negative condition (Mean = .49, SD = .50) reported significantly increased levels of self-esteem compared to males in the baseline condition (Mean = -.01, SD = .03) ($t(53) = -4.95, p < .001$). Cohen's effect size revealed this to be a large difference ($d = 1.4$) between the two conditions. No significant difference was found between males in the baseline condition and males in the positive condition (Mean = -.19, SD = .61), ($t(53) = 1.50, p = .14$), and Cohen's effect size revealed this to be a small to moderate difference, ($d = .4$). Males in the negative condition reported significantly increased levels of self-esteem compared to males in the positive condition, ($t(58) = -4.72, p < 0.05$). Cohen's effect size indicated a large difference ($d = 1.2$), between the two conditions. For males, the negative condition positively affected their self-esteem as predicted, relative to controls, whereas the positive condition had no effect.

3.3 Moderating Effects of Contingent Self-Worth and Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses using *Interaction!* software (Soper, 2013) were conducted in order to examine whether contingent self-worth and sociocultural attitudes towards appearance moderated the effects of the experimental conditions on self-esteem.

In the first analysis, condition (dummy coded), participants' SATAQ-3 scores (centred) and the interaction between these were used as the predictor variables, and the mean difference between participant's pre- and post-manipulation self-esteem scores was the criterion. The full

model was significant ($F(3,166) = 37.01, p < .001$), and explained 39% of the variance ($\text{adjusted}R^2 = .39$) in participants self-esteem difference scores. The interaction between SATAQ-3 scores and condition accounted for 8% of the variance ($\text{adjusted } R^2 = .08$) in self-esteem difference scores. The model coefficients revealed that condition ($\beta = -.38, p < .001$) and the interaction between SATAQ-3 and condition ($\beta = -.20, p < .001$) significantly negatively predicted participants' self-esteem difference scores, but the SATAQ-3 scores did not ($\beta = .00, p = .93$). As predicted, these results demonstrate that SATAQ-3 scores significantly moderated the effects of the experimental conditions on participants' subsequent self-esteem.

Figure 2 below shows a simple-slopes analysis comparing pre- to post-manipulation differences in self-esteem in participants with mean levels of SATAQ-3 with those scoring plus or minus one standard deviation, across conditions. The plot indicates that the experimental conditions caused greater changes in self-esteem for those with higher levels of SATAQ-3 as expected.

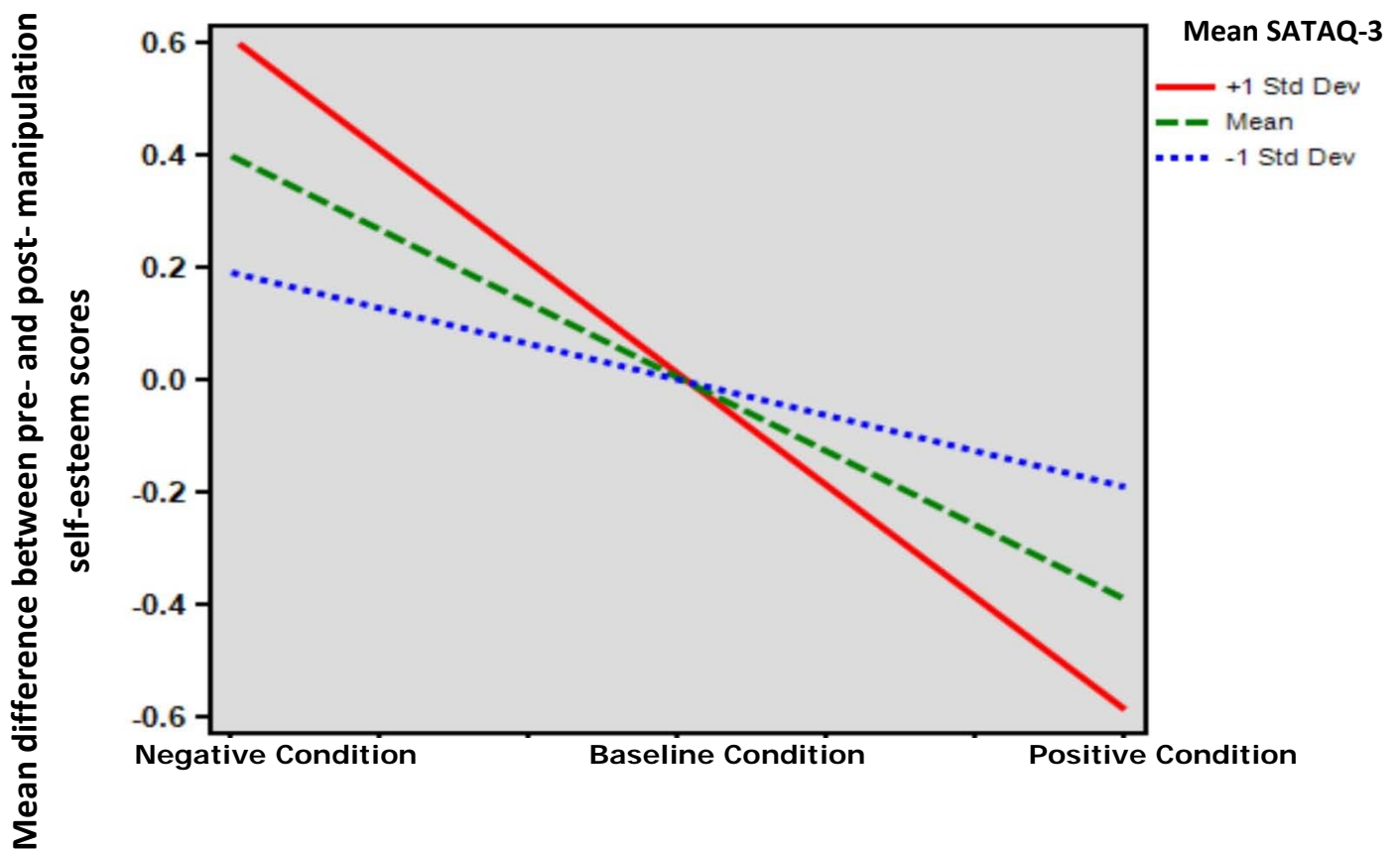


Figure 2: Interaction between SATAQ-3 and condition in predicting changes in self-esteem.

The same analytical procedure was used to investigate whether contingent self-worth moderated the effects of the experimental conditions on self-esteem. Condition (dummy coded), CSW scores (centred) and the interaction between the two were used as predictor variables and the mean difference between participants' pre- and post-manipulation self-esteem scores was the criterion. The full model was significant ($F(3,166) = 39.15, p < .001$) and explained 40% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .40$) in participants self-esteem difference scores. The interaction between CSW scores and condition accounted for 10% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .10$) in self-esteem difference scores. The model coefficients revealed that condition ($\beta = -.37, p > 0.001$) and the interaction between CSWS and condition ($\beta = -.15, p < .001$) significantly negatively predicted participants subsequent levels of self-esteem, but that CSW scores alone did not ($\beta =$

-.01, $p > 0.05$). As predicted, the results indicate that CSW scores significantly moderated the effects of the experimental conditions on participants' subsequent self-esteem.

Figure 3 below shows a simple – slopes analysis comparing pre- to post manipulation differences in self-esteem in participants with mean levels of CSW with those scoring plus or minus one standard deviation, across conditions. The plot demonstrates that the experimental conditions caused greater changes in self-esteem for those with higher levels of CSW as expected.

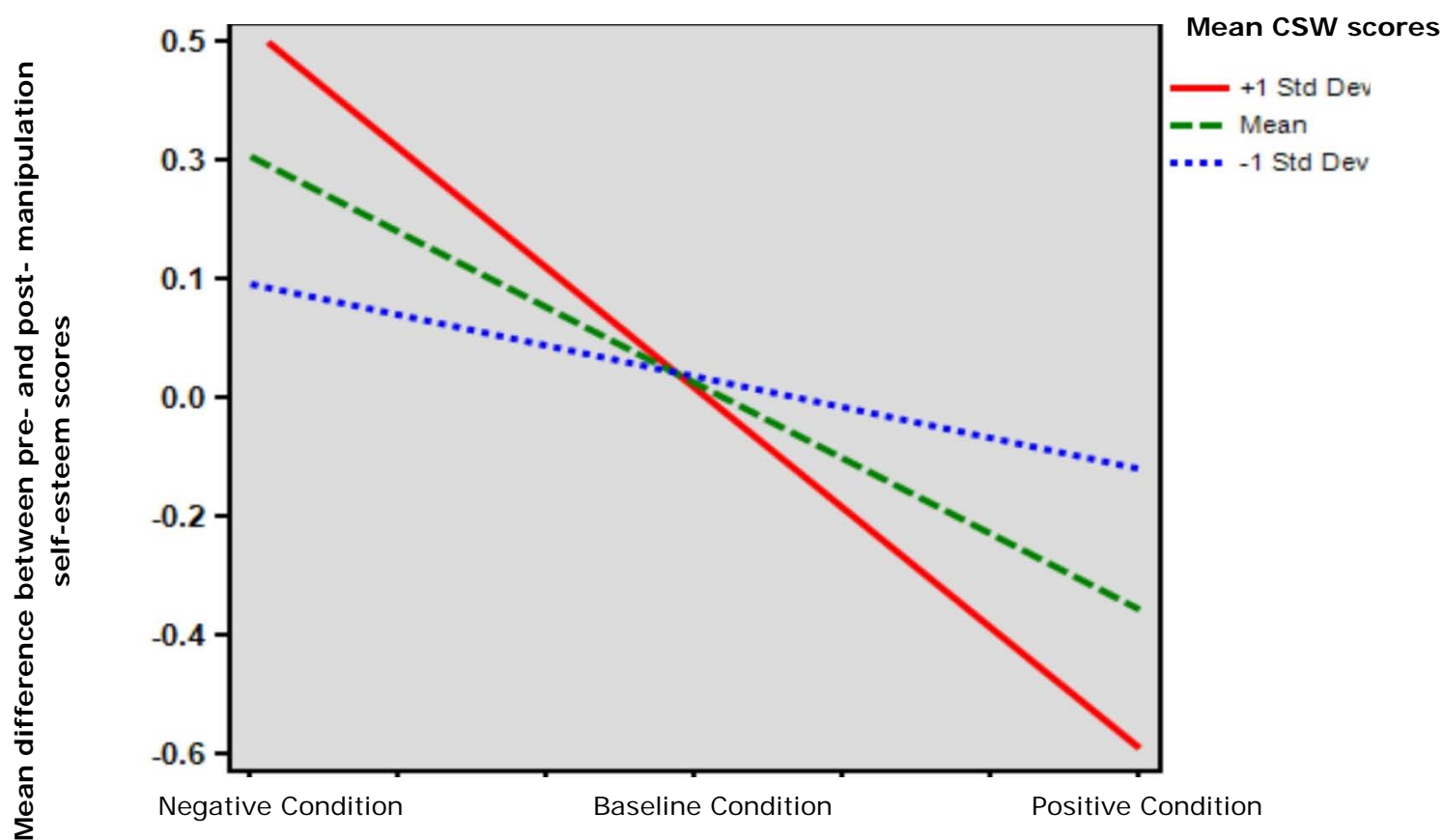


Figure 3: Interaction between CSWS and condition in predicting self-esteem.

4. Discussion

4.1 Findings of the current study

Results indicated that participants in the positive condition reported subsequently lower self-esteem and participants in the negative condition reported subsequently higher self-esteem, relative to those in the control condition, after receiving the experimental manipulation and both hypothesis can be accepted. As predicted, no change in self-esteem was found for participants in the control condition. The current study utilised a more realistic representation of the media by incorporating media articles and images, unlike previous research (Tucci & Peters, 2008; Wilcox & Laird, 2000), contributing new and meaningful findings to this area of social psychology. These findings also suggest that there is a strong relationship between the media and self-esteem, building on previous research focusing on the relationship between the media and body-esteem (Rivadeneyra, Ward & Gordon, 2007). Future research should explore the relationship between the media and self-esteem further, in order to support the current findings and this is discussed below. In addition, it is evident participants carried out social comparisons during the current experiment, offering new, up to date evidence to support Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory.

A significant interaction was found between sex and condition, such that female self-esteem was more affected by the positive condition and male self-esteem was influenced more by the negative condition. After further investigation into this interaction, results indicated that women's self-esteem was significantly affected by both experimental conditions as predicted, however no significant difference was found for males in the positive condition. These results support the prediction that female self-esteem is more affected by media exposure than males, and also supports the feminist argument (discussed in section 1.3 above) and the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) (discussed in section 1.4 above). It is thought that women in the negative condition carried out downward comparisons and those in the positive condition carried out upward comparisons. Feminists would argue that women were more affected by the

positive condition than males because they face more pressures to achieve a certain level of attractiveness than men (Van Zoonen, 1991), due to a patriarchal society. If women were not sexualised and under scrutiny by society and the media regarding their appearance they would not be expected to be so affected by what they see in the media, however the results did not support this, which accords with the feminist argument.

Despite previous research indicating males also face pressure to achieve a certain level of attractiveness by the media (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005), the current findings did not support this notion. No significant difference was found between males in the control and positive conditions yet participants felt significantly better after reading about an unattractive celebrity. As the questions given to participants probed them to think about their feelings towards themselves, their body and attractiveness, one explanation for these findings could be that males do not feel as comfortable as females expressing their true self-perceptions and emotions. Courtenay (2000) argues that emotional control is an important part of masculinity and if men show signs of vulnerability or expressing emotion they are considered feminine (Warren, 1983). It could be possible that male participants were afraid to admit they were unhappy with their appearance or envious of another man's appearance because this could be seen as feminine. O'Brien, Hunt & Hart (2005) found that males believed they had to suppress their emotions and be confident and strong when facing emotional difficulties. As confidence has been identified as a masculine trait, when males view someone unattractive it could boost their ego and make them feel much better about themselves. This could explain why male participants in the current study were significantly affected by the negative condition and not the positive condition. Furthermore, this could also explain why women weren't as affected by the negative condition compared to males as confidence has not been identified as a feminine trait.

To date minimal research has studied male self-esteem and the influence of the media and due to the current findings being inconsistent with previous studies (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005), it is evident more research needs to be done. Although participants were told the purpose of the study was to investigate sociocultural factors and self-

perceptions, avoiding going into explicit detail regarding the true aims of the study in order to prevent potential socially desirable responding, this did not rule out this possibility completely. In the current study, the researcher was present whilst male participants completed their questionnaires, this could have prevented participants from exposing their true feelings, as even though the data was anonymous participants could have felt the researcher may read their answers after they left.

Gender stereotyping is thought to be carried out by both adults. For example, people tend to associate fear, sadness and happiness with females and anger with males (Birnbaum & Croll, 1984). Furthermore, cultural stereotypes suggest that women are more emotional and likely to express their feelings more than men, as males are thought to be the 'stronger' sex, both physically and mentally' (Courtenay, 2000). Male participants may have felt as though the researcher would expect certain responses from them based on their sex, had they guessed the aims of the study, due to the type of questions being asked. Future research could repeat this study; however instead of the researcher collecting participants themselves, the study could be conducted online. This would prevent individuals from feeling as though they may be judged on the answers they give, as there would be no contact between researcher and participant. If the results indicated that male participants were actually negatively impacted by the positive condition this would support previous research (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005). Furthermore it would suggest the need for developing potential interventions to attempt to counteract these harmful effects.

The current findings suggest male self-esteem is positively impacted when reading about someone less attractive, this could help support and therapy groups that deal with individuals with low self-esteem to construct new strategies to help improve male mental health and wellbeing. However, if the results were the same as the current study, more research would need to be done exploring what impact the media has on male self-esteem as results are inconsistent. There has been an extensive amount of research on female self-esteem over a long period of time, whereas research surrounding male self-esteem is still in its early stages and less is known.

This could explain why results have been inconsistent for males as more research needs to be done in order to understand their self-esteem better, which will hopefully increase the consistency of future findings.

The final two research hypotheses predicted that changes in self-esteem would be higher for those participants reporting high levels of the two predictor variables of the study; sociocultural attitudes towards appearance, and contingent self-worth. The effects of the experimental condition were stronger for those higher in levels of these variables and the research hypothesis is accepted. These results support the research discussed section 1.5 and 1.6 above and offer an interesting insight into how to potentially decrease the influence of the media on self-esteem, as discussed below.

4.2 Limitations

One possible limitation of the current study was that participants' self-esteem was measured before and after the experimental manipulation using the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965). Although filler questions were added to the second RSES (Rosenberg, 1965) in an attempt to prevent demand characteristics from occurring, due to the short space of time between completing the two self-esteem measures, demand characteristics cannot be ruled out completely. If some participants remembered and repeated their previous answers this could diminish mean differences between pre- and post-manipulation self-esteem scores, and so obscure the effects of the experimental conditions. . Alternatively, participants may have guessed the aims of the study once they received the second RSES (Rosenberg, 1965) to complete, which could have led to their guessing the aims and hypotheses of the study and altered their responses to accord with these. Given the significant results obtained, the latter possibility seems more likely in the current study, but the design did not allow for this to be directly assessed.

Self-esteem was measured before participants received the media article to assess whether participants in the three conditions were equal in their mean level of this before

experimental manipulations. This allowed the researcher to be more confident that any differences in self-esteem between groups after the manipulation were due to differences between the effects of the conditions and not pre-existing differences in the groups. In addition, measuring pre-existing self-esteem allowed for this to be controlled for in the statistical analyses and for difference scores which directly showed whether self-esteem increased or decreased in each group to be calculated. Future research could replicate this study using two different self-esteem measures, pre- and post- manipulation, in an attempt to minimize demand characteristics occurring. If results were similar to the findings of the current study, it would suggest that using the same self-esteem measure twice was not problematic. However, a limitation of using two different measures of self-esteem is that it wouldn't allow for an assessment of whether, and to what extent, each condition influenced self-esteem, and for this reason the same measure was used to assess both pre- and post- manipulation self-esteem in the current study.

Another possible limitation of the current study concerns the specific sample used. The majority of participants were students from The University of Huddersfield. Even though age was not measured it seems likely that in such a sample, young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one would have been over-represented, relative to those of other ages, and this may have influenced the findings. Young individuals have been labelled as 'perceptually bound' because they are thought to base their thinking on the appearance of things (Gelman & Markman, 1986). As a result this could put younger individuals' self-esteem at a higher risk of being influenced by the media which is focused on appearance. Therefore, if the current study had included younger individuals results may have differed and found a larger difference in self-esteem between the experimental groups for both sexes. It would also be interesting to include an older population in the sample to investigate whether the media still influences individuals at a later stage in life. Age wasn't specifically examined in the current study since arguably, the media is present in everybody's life, young and old, and so any effects of the media on self-esteem might be expected to be found across age groups. Festinger (1954) proposed that all humans evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others, another reason why age was not analysed in the current study.

Future research could examine whether media exposure has a lasting effect on self-esteem, by conducting a longitudinal study whereby an individual is studied across a number of years. Researchers could investigate whether relying on the media at a young age for appearance related standards affects individual's self-esteem later in life. Researchers may wish to show individuals a media article and image similar to the one used in the current study at the age of eleven, measure their self-esteem, how much they rely on the media and how much they internalize sociocultural factors regarding appearance through SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004) scores and their CSW (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) scores. Researchers could repeat this when the participants are sixteen, twenty-one, thirty and forty-five. Since in such a longitudinal study demand characteristics could be prevalent if participants received similar information at each time point, a qualitative and quantitative study could be conducted. Researchers could provide participants with a media article and image as well as develop a measure designed to question participants about their media habits, attitudes, importance and usage in order to capture how dependent they are on the media, and administer this at ages eleven, sixteen and eighteen. At the following time points researchers could carry out interviews with participants asking them to explain their general feelings towards themselves, how they felt about their appearance, and general self-esteem related questions. This should indicate whether focusing on the media at a younger age has a lasting effect on individual's self-esteem as they grow older. If results do find this to be true, interventions and strategies could be put in to place within education, to teach individuals at a young age that the media promotes unrealistic and unachievable standards regarding appearance. This would hopefully protect individuals from suffering negative effects on their self-esteem later in life and improve their mental health and well-being.

4.3 Individual Differences

The current findings demonstrate the effects of the experimental conditions were greater for those scoring higher on the CSWS (Crocker et al., 2003) and SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004). This suggests that if researchers develop ways to lower individuals' contingent self-worth

and attitudes towards appearance this should minimise the influence of the media on self-esteem. As James (1890) suggested, self-esteem is a trait that can fluctuate depending on the success or failure of adhering to standards set in individual contingencies (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

Future research could give participants the appearance subscale from the CSWS (Crocker et al., 2003), SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004) and RSES (Rosenberg, 1965) to complete, and call those who scored highly on the CSWS (Crocker et al., 2003) and SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004) back two weeks later. Researchers could then expose these participants to a media article and image of an attractive male or female celebrity, depending on the sex of participant. Since compliments have been found to increase self-perceived attractiveness for both genders (Yatsenko, 2013), once exposed researchers could compliment the participant on their appearance to investigate the potential effects of this on self-esteem. Researchers could also discuss the media in a negative way with the participant by informing them of digital editing and how it produces unrealistic images, which would potentially decrease the amount of importance participants placed on the media. Lastly, participants would be asked to complete the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965) again and if results indicated that their self-esteem had increased from the first time, relative to participants who hadn't been complimented and educated in these ways, it could suggest that the self-esteem interventions had worked. Researchers could then focus on developing new strategies that help reduce contingent self-worth and sociocultural attitudes towards appearance in individuals, to help improve their self-esteem.

Since the current study found a significant interaction between each of the two predictor variables and the experimental condition, it would be interesting for future research to explore whether other variables would similarly interact with this experimental manipulation. This would allow for researchers to investigate what other factors can influence individuals to react in different ways when exposed to the media and new potential ways to decrease the media's influence on self-esteem. Two possible suggestions are family and peer interactions as both these factors have been found to be important in the development of adolescent self-esteem (Klarin, Sasic & Prorokovic, 2012). Empirical research has found that adolescents who have good family

relationships, especially parental ones, are more likely to have higher self-esteem (Hoffman, Ushipz & Levyshiff, 1998) and independence (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993). Furthermore, Klarin, Sasic and Prorokovic (2012) argue parental relationships are a significant predictor variable for self-esteem. As individuals are thought to spend more time with peers than family members, especially throughout education, it seems plausible to assume that peer relations could also predict how individuals respond when exposed to the media. Research has found peer relations to have a significant effect on self-esteem and negatively related to poor mental health (Windle, 1994). The literature suggests positive peer and family relations may serve as a protection from factors that could influence self-esteem, such as the media, however negative relations may increase the chances of self-esteem being influenced.

Future research could repeat the current study and change the two predictor variables to measures of family and peer satisfaction scales. It would be predicted that if individuals report strong family and peer relations their self-esteem would be less affected by the media than those who report poor relations. If this were found, work could be done to improve family and peer relationships between individuals at a young age to help them develop high self-esteem and positive mental health and well-being. There are many ways this could be done; after school sessions could be set up where parents and children discuss what the child had done at school that day, how they were feeling and generally spending more time together getting to know each other better. This would potentially help parents to bond more with their child and form better relationships. In addition, centres could be set up for children to meet new people and make friends, which would hopefully decrease the chances of low self-esteem developing in individuals. Not only would this help individuals' self-esteem but hopefully also improve their social skills. As minimal research has explored individual differences in the relationship between self-esteem and the media, it seems necessary for future research to investigate this further in order to gain a better understanding of this.

4.4 Future Research

It is evident from the current findings that exposure to attractiveness-related media does have a significant influence on self-esteem. It would be interesting to investigate whether people who work in the media are still affected the same way that other individuals are when exposed to media content. Media employees may not be as affected by media content as they could be aware of how media articles and images are constructed, or it could have more of an impact on them due to them constantly carrying out social comparisons to evaluate their self-worth. Future research could include two different populations in their study; those who work in the media industry and individuals who do not. Such a study could include open ended questions related to feelings about the self that allow for detailed responses from participants but could also include happiness related questions that are not body or appearance focused. It is possible those who work for the media may not be influenced in the same way as others, in relation to their self-esteem after media exposure, due to the fact that they may have become desensitized to what they see in the media. However, this does not necessarily mean they have a more positive outlook on life and higher self-esteem than the rest of society, it could be that they block out their feelings in order to stop themselves feeling negative emotion whilst at work. Researchers may wish to test this by developing a measure that questions participants on how much they allow work to influence their personal life. It is predicted that media employees who do not allow their work effect their personal life will report higher levels of happiness than those employees who do allow their work effect their personal life.

It could be predicted that participants' self-esteem will be more affected by media content for those who do not work in the media industry compared to those who do, however those who do not work for the media will report higher levels of happiness than individuals who do. If the predicted results are found, it would suggest that working for the media has a negative effect on individuals' mental health and well-being and not just the viewers. Positive moods and happiness have been associated with several health benefits, including a reduced risk of mortality (Chida & Steptoe, 2008). Employees are constantly surrounded by the media more than others are exposed to it, action needs to be taken to help prevent their happiness from suffering. One suggestion could be that media employers should be required to fund their staff to have regular meetings

with councillors and therapists in order to monitor and improve their feelings towards themselves and their levels of happiness. This would hopefully minimize employees reporting unhappiness and create a better outlook for them.

As the current study and previous empirical research have demonstrated, individuals can be negatively impacted by what they view in the media. Future research could investigate methods for preventing individuals' self-esteem from being negatively influenced by the media, in order to improve the general well-being of the population. One possible solution would be to let participants know during the study about the use of digital editing and enhancing of content by the media. Empirical research has found that individuals who viewed media images that included warning labels informing them the image had been digitally altered, reported lower body dissatisfaction than individuals who viewed the same images with no warning label (Slater, Tiggemann, Firth & Hawkins, 2012).

Future research could measure participants' self-esteem and then show participants in one condition a media article and image, similar to the one used in the current study, followed by another self-esteem measure. Researchers could repeat this procedure for participants in the other condition, however after exposure to the media content, participants could receive an article regarding the use of digital editing and enhancing by the media. It could also be suggested to participants that the media does not present a definite representation of what beauty should look like or what expectations regarding appearance should be based on. As the issue of demand characteristics is high, researchers may wish to call participants back two weeks later to measure their self-esteem rather than twice in one day. However, this would not rule out the possibility of demand characteristics completely.

It would be predicted that the self-esteem of participants who received the information about the manipulation of images after the media content would be less affected by the experimental manipulation compared to participants who did not receive this information. If the findings were to support this prediction, it could offer a robust solution to help prevent individuals' self-esteem being negatively impacted by the media. If taken seriously, petitions could be started

to force the government to make it compulsory for the media to highlight details of their usage of digital editing and airbrushing of their content. It may also be made compulsory in education, especially in primary schools, to include information on the nature of the media and how individuals should not base their self-perceptions on what they view in the media, since it is often highly unrealistic. This would hopefully influence individuals to believe that their self-esteem should not be influenced by the media and improve their health and well-being as well as their self-perceptions.

4.5 Implications of the current findings

Throughout the discussion, numerous suggestions for future research have been made based on the findings of the current study. However, the current findings also have important implications for individuals' long term health and wellbeing. This research has argued that in order to improve the mental wellbeing of individual's new interventions should be developed that associate self-esteem development with the media. Consequently, developing strategies using the media in an attempt to improve self-esteem may actually be damaging in the long-term. Instead, it would be more beneficial for individuals if researchers developed new ways to prevent individuals from allowing their self-esteem to be influenced by such factors, and making it a more robust trait. A possible suggestion may be to educate society, especially parents, about the damaging effects the media can have on self-esteem and to advise parents to monitor what their children are exposed to. If this is implemented by parents when the child is at a young age this would hopefully allow for their self-esteem to develop without facing pressures from sociocultural factors.

However, the likelihood of stopping media exposure on individuals is low as society is constantly surrounded by media influences on a daily basis. Although most people might argue that it is extremely undesirable that the media have such a strong influence on self-esteem, this may be something that would be almost impossible to change, as individuals seem to rely on the media as an important source of information despite its flaws. Consequently, developing

strategies to attempt to help to change media messages to be more positive regarding appearance, based on the research discussed here, could be used in parallel with programs designed to help individuals to change their self-perceptions and evaluations.

4.6 Conclusion

The current study has offered evidence to demonstrate that media exposure can have a damaging effect on individuals' self-esteem and self-perceptions. This research used a more realistic representation of the media when exploring its relationship with self-esteem with the use of media articles and images, unlike previous empirical research, which has typically employed isolated images. In addition this study also accounted for individual and sex differences within this area, which previous research has neglected, allowing for future research to develop these findings further, in order to investigate the complexities of relationships in this area. Furthermore, this research has highlighted ways to help improve individual's health and well-being by focusing on their self-esteem, which could have important positive implications for individuals and wider society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Attractiveness manipulation stimuli

Khloe Kardashian

Do we have a new female boss in the Kardashians? Kim who ...? There's a new Kardashian queen in town and her name is Khloe Kardashian! It's official, Khloe Kardashian has to be the sexiest Kardashian out of the bunch!

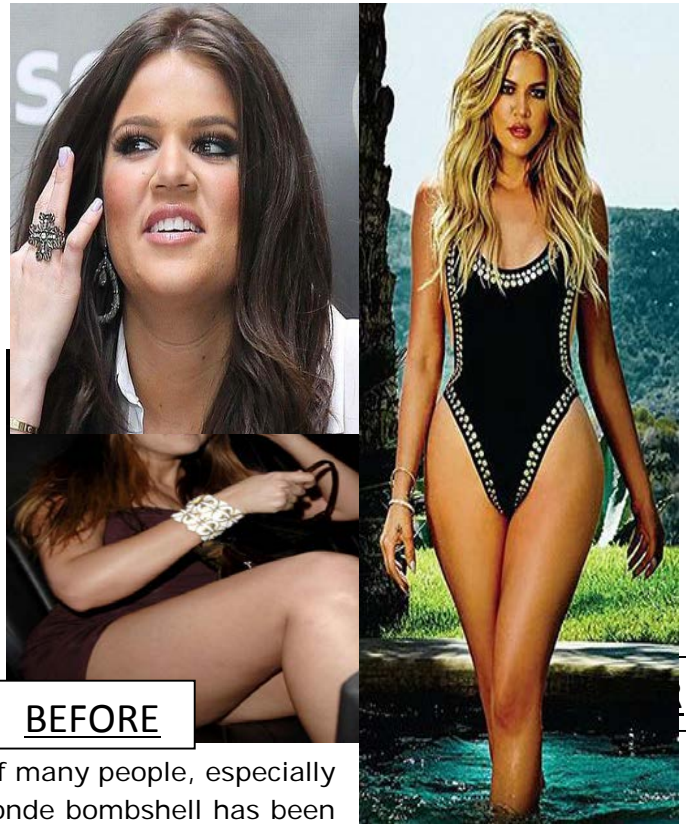
Khloe is best known as starring in the hit reality TV show 'Keeping up with the Kardashians', the success of which has turned her into an A-list celebrity world-wide! Appearing in the spotlight 24/7 it's unsurprising she has decided to focus a lot of her time and energy on her appearance and the 31 year old has never looked better.

After a long hard journey, Khloe is barely recognizable as she has completely transformed herself = by far the hottest Kardashian.

Khloe's new found beauty has captured the eyes of many people, especially the fashion and beauty industry! Our stunning blonde bombshell has been labelled as having flawless beauty and has managed to land herself as the cover of many magazines, such as cosmopolitan and complex. With or without makeup, this Kardashian manages to look like perfection constantly due to her impeccable skin, chizzled cheeks, piercing eyes and voluptuous lips!

Not only is this woman the epitome of beauty but her insane body transformation has dazzled us all. Speaking to a women's health and beauty magazine late last year, Khloe admitted that it took a lot of hard work, commitment and dedication to finally get her dream body that simply wows onlookers everywhere she goes. The racy star also admitted that she's the most confident she's ever been and welcomes any opportunity to show off her sexy new toned curves. It is clear to see Khloe now has a body every girl wishes they had, with her curves in all the right places. The reality TV star has a perfect hourglass body shape - gorgeous perk boobs, a tiny waist line and her long jaw dropping legs compliment her big behind just right. Admittedly though, Khloe's derriere does have to be her best most popular feature, so amazing that it has led to the whole world talking about it. Khloe's bum is what every girl dreams of having and one that leaves every guy speechless!

Khloe Kardashian has blossomed into one of the world's most beautiful women and rightly so as she looks amazing and we admire and applaud her motivation and commitment – it was definitely worth it Khlo! It is rumoured that Khloe is about to launch a new fitness campaign, not only to flaunt her new body but to help others achieve what she has = we'll deffo buy it!



Justin Bieber

Justin Bieber took the world by storm in 2015, changing from a teen pop sensation into a very sexy young adult! The heart-throb has managed to capture the eyes of many all over the world – especially the ladies! Out of nowhere Justin managed to transform his entire look, appearance and most importantly his body to capture the female population's attention.

Bye Bye baby face, helloooo hotness –thank goodness for puberty. The 21 year old singer has indeed shaped up to be a very striking young man attracting attention wherever he goes. Not only is the singer's music loved by many, but his perfectly chiselled jawline and jaw dropping good looks has led to him being identified as a sex symbol adored by many. Unsurprisingly Justin Bieber has been voted as the 'sexiest singer alive' for the second year running already this year by Glamour's magazine. To add to his collection, the star was also featured in MTV's top 50 'sexiest men alive' list – quite some achievements for a 21 year old if you ask me!

Bieber's good looks aside, his new and improved physique is probably what dazzled the world the most. The singing sensation went from having a thin, below average body to having an extremely well built figure with a perfectly defined six-pack! To complete his new body, Justin celebrated by decorating it with numerous new tattoos including a full sleeve – he is growing up fast! Justin's new body caught the eyes of many people worldwide, including various fashion and men's health magazines. In 2015 he was named as the new face and body of the new Calvin Klein campaign, slowly making his way into the elite fashion industry.

The Calvin Klein shoot produced various photos of Justin posing seductively in some Calvin Klein briefs, giving the world a clear view of his newly toned abs and perfect physique. Bieber called this experience a 'transition' into adulthood and judging by the steamy photos, he is most definitely a beautiful young man.

Justin Bieber has clearly blossomed into one of the world's most hottest men right now and rightly so as he looks amazing and we admire and applaud his motivation and commitment to make this incredible transformation – it was definitely worth it Biebs! It is rumoured that Bieber is about to launch a new fitness campaign, not only to flaunt his new tatted body but to help others achieve what he has – we can't wait Justin!



Robert Kardashian

Robert Kardashian is most famously known as being a star in the hit American reality TV show 'Keeping up with the Kardashians', but unlike the rest of his gorgeous successful family members, Robert has been making the headlines for other reasons. A few years ago Robert spiralled into depression after his dramatic weight gain and ever since, the reality TV star seems to have gone into hibernation. His family have informed the media that he is still battling his depression and still suffers from low-self-esteem due to his appearance.

Robert was once a striking handsome young man who attracted a lot of female attention with a very muscular physique and dashing good looks, however over the years he began to let himself go. The star now weighs just under 100 Kilograms and has lost his attractive facial features.



Understandably there is a lot of speculation regarding what Robert is doing with his time as he is very rarely pictured out in public – something unknown for the Kardashians! There are strong rumours about the star going off to 'fat camp' in order to regain a hold on his life, however Robert took to twitter and hit back with 'to the blogs saying I went to fat camp or rehab LOL the why am I still fat u fools?'. It is evident that the Kardashian star is struggling to cope with everything and is undoubtedly not the same Robert the world once knew.

In recent episodes of 'Keeping up with the Kardashians' we learn that Robert's doctors results indicate that he is at a high risk of developing diabetes and eventual organ failure if he doesn't change his ways. Even his Mum Kris Jenner warns Rob that his liver is shutting down and it will be life threatening if he doesn't put a stop to his bad eating habits and unhealthy lifestyle.

Unfortunately Robert has visibly reached rock bottom, he went from having a flawless figure to having a body that wouldn't make a girl look twice. It's such a shame that his once razor sharp jawline has turned into a saggy double chin and his drop dead facial features have been eaten up by his weight gain. Nothing seems to be going right for the overweight 27 year old, however we pray he manages to get himself back to the old Rob, the one we all once loved.



Kelly Clarkson

Kelly is that you ...?! The 33 year old American singer/songwriter has become unrecognisable as her weight balloons to over 200 pounds – Jheez Kelly! Miss Clarkson was best known as the ‘original American idol’ as she was the first winner of the hit music show ‘American Idol’, however it’s clear for all to see that she is not the woman she once was! It seems as though Kelly’s music career and success has been overshadowed by her appearance over that past few years.

Kelly was once a beautiful young woman, with stunning good looks and a sexy slender figure that would make most females envious and most males wanting to see more! However over the years the singer has begun to let herself go, losing her attractive facial features and toned body – such a shame. It’s not known what the exact cause of Kelly’s excessive weight gain was, however she seems to have spiralled into a dark whole she can’t climb out of – unsurprising!



Understandably there is a lot of regarding how Kelly spends her rarely papped out in public – celeb world! Sources close to Kelly embarrassed to be pictured out in saying ‘she feels as though she is a person’. Rumours state that Kelly fat camps in an attempt to shift however nothing seems to be

Not only has Kelly’s weight captured media, it has also caught the the medical field, with doctors year old as ‘obese’! Dr Stuart Radar Online reported ‘being her singing voice, but will not help on to explain that obesity shortens expectancy and puts them as risk to over 65 different illnesses, including multiple cancers in women. If you don’t want to suffer the consequences Kelly, we suggest you start watching what you eat and start exercising!

speculation time as she is very unheard of in the claim she is too public with reports completely different has joined several those extra pounds, working for her.

the eyes of the attention of those in describing the 33 Fischer speaking to heavier may help her health’. He went individuals life

Unfortunately Kelly has visibly reached the lowest point of her career; she went from having a flawless figure to having a body that wouldn’t make a boy look twice. It’s a great shame that that her once defined jawline has turned into multiple sagging chins and her stunning facial features have been eaten up her excessive weight gain. We pray the singer manages to get herself back to the old Kelly, the one we all once loved.

Appendix 2: Control condition stimuli

With its record-breaking light weight of under 1,500kg, the BMW M4 Coupé has been designed to make the impossible possible. Even at a glance, the BMW M4 Coupé is clearly a car that delivers high performance. A classic BMW M model, its powerful, sporty look is enhanced with athletic lines and an elongated silhouette. The interior blends in seamlessly: every detail is built around the driver, offering the best possible control and an uncompromising motorsport character. With BMW Professional Navigation as standard.

The power of the BMW M4 Coupé is evident in every detail. Striking air inlets in the front cool the M drivetrain during its high-performance journeys. The muscular powerdome delineates the contours of the turbocharger engine.

The extended bonnet is the beginning of an athletic coupé line that exudes pure sportiness. The Aero Curtain and Air Breather offer added aerodynamics. Just like the M kidney grille with double slats, M side gills, M exterior mirrors or the M quad



tailpipe, they visually underline the dynamic appearance of the BMW M4 Coupé.

At the rear, the four bevelled tailpipe finishers with their unmistakable sound send out a clear message: this vehicle stands for unbeatable performance – in technology, design and, above all, out on the road.

Just like its driving dynamics, the BMW M4 Coupé leads the way when it comes to efficiency. Intelligent EfficientDynamics technologies such as Auto Start-Stop or Brake Energy Regeneration keep energy use to a minimum and play a crucial role in maintaining the car's power and stamina. This results in not only better driving dynamics, but also a reduction in fuel consumption and emissions.

At the heart of the BMW M4 Coupé is the redeveloped M TwinPower Turbo straight six-cylinder petrol engine, which delivers tremendous power and an unmistakable sound. The interplay of optimally-aligned motorsport technologies provides direct power development with a boost of 431hp.

With its forward-looking technologies such as Adaptive Headlights as well as high-stability, high-tech carbon and intelligent comfort solutions, the BMW M4 Coupé guarantees maximum safety and pure driving pleasure.

Appendix 3: Participant information sheet

Sociocultural factors and individual self-perceptions

Hi, my name is Ammaarah Akhtar and I am currently a postgraduate student carrying out a Masters degree in Psychology, at the University of Huddersfield. I would like to invite you to be a part of my research study investigating sociocultural factors and self-perceptions. You have been asked to participate in this study as I require individuals over 18.

Please read the following information carefully as it provides you with an understanding of the study and do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have. This research study is being supervised by Dr Christopher Bale, a senior lecturer in behavioural and social sciences at The University of Huddersfield and has attained ethical approval by the University.

In this study you will be asked to complete four questionnaires, these involve questions regarding sociocultural attitudes; e.g. 'attractive people are happier' and individual self-perceptions; 'I take a positive attitude towards myself' 'My sense of self-worth suffers whenever I think I don't look good'. Instructions on how to complete each one will be written at the top of each questionnaire. Please read the instructions carefully on how to answer the questions. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with. You will also be asked to read a media article during the study, this will be given to you along with the questionnaires.

The study should take approximately 20 minutes. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point before completing it, without explanation. If this is the case, any answers you have already given will be destroyed and will not be included in the research. Withdrawal from the study once you've finished it is not possible, as there is no way of identifying your data in order to destroy it. The reason for this being that all data collected will be anonymous, with no personally identifying questions being asked. In addition, all participant data collected will be confidential as only my supervisor and I will have access to it. All data will be kept locked away in a secure place. Information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield.

It is anticipated that this research may, at some point, be published in a journal article, however anonymity and individual confidentiality is guaranteed. There are no known benefits or risks for you by taking part in this study.

If you would like to know the results this research study found please email myself at Ammaarah.Akhtar@hud.ac.uk, and I will be happy to provide you with the findings. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Christopher Bale at C.Bale@hud.ac.uk.

If you have any questions after reading the information sheet, please ask them before you proceed. If you have fully understood all of the information given to you and are happy to take part, please complete and sign the consent form provided.

Thank You.

Appendix 4: Consent form



CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Sociocultural factors and individual self-perceptions

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research ☐

I consent to taking part in it ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason ☐

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield ☐

I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided. ☐

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____	Signature of Researcher: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____
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(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Appendix 5: Debrief sheet

The media has been found to have a significant influence on individual self-perceptions due to its content. Previous empirical research has found that the media is associated with creating body dissatisfaction within women. However, the vast majority of previous research has solely focused on women in their studies and has not measured the direct relationship between the media and self-esteem.

The aim of this study was to investigate gender differences in the relationship between media influence and self-esteem, whilst taking into consideration individual differences that may occur due to sociocultural factors. This research hopes to discover new information that could contribute to improving the mental health and well-being of individuals and improve their quality of life.

In the current study you were randomly allocated into one of three conditions, either the baseline, positive or negative condition. The baseline condition contained a media article describing a car along with a picture of that car. The positive condition contained two articles; one describing an attractive female celebrity with a picture, the other describing an attractive male celebrity and a picture of him. Finally the negative condition contained two media articles describing an unattractive male and female celebrity and their picture. Male participants were given the male media articles and female participants were given the female media articles in order to examine any gender differences that took place.

The aim of these conditions was to see whether reading about an attractive celebrity has a negative impact on individual's self-esteem and reading about an unattractive celebrity increases an individual's self-esteem. The baseline condition was added to strengthen the study as reading about a car is unlikely to have an impact on individual's self-esteem.

The first questionnaire you were asked to complete was the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS) Scale and this questionnaire measured how much you base your self-esteem on your physical appearance. Following this you completed the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale – 3 revised edition (SATAQ-3). The SATAQ-3 measured how much of an impact the media has on your attitudes towards appearance. The third questionnaire was the Rosenberg self-esteem scale which measured your self-esteem. After you received the media article to read, you were again given the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to complete, however this time more questions were added. These questions were taken from the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and this was done to stop participants guessing what the researcher expected to find or remembering the answers they put the first time round and scoring them again for that reason.

We predict the results to find that participants who read the article about an unattractive celebrity will report subsequently higher levels of self-esteem than those participants who read the article about an attractive celebrity. We also expect females to be more affected by the media articles than males. In addition, we anticipate that those individuals who score highly on both the CSWS and SATAQ-3 will be more affected by the media articles than those scoring lowly on these.

If you have been affected by anything whilst participating in this study, support is available by the Samaritans. You can email them at: jo@samaritans.org or phone them on: 08457 90 90 90. Additional support is also available by YoungMinds, to get in touch with them please visit www.youngminds.org.uk/.

If you would like to find out the overall results of the study, please email me at ammaarah.akhtar@hud.ac.uk. You may also contact my supervisor, Christopher Bale at C.Bale@hud.ac.uk.

Thank you once again for your participation.

