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Colloque Image du corps
Montreal

Beauty ideals now on sale!

The role of media in body dissatisfaction

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Outline

- ❑ **Media Content**
- ❑ Media exposure and body dissatisfaction
- ❑ Social media
- ❑ Prevention

Appearance ideals

- Media bodies very lean and toned
- Represent a very small % of the range of shapes and sizes found among the general population, growing gap
- Increasing number of women in print and screen media with BMIs below the recommendations
- In addition, most images digitally modified

= Creation of appearance ideals unattainable by healthy means

Positive Expectations and Appearance Ideals

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Positive Expectations and Appearance Ideals

- “Ideal” bodies associated with positive life outcomes including success, happiness, health, and popularity
- Equation with socially valued personal attributes such as self-discipline etc.
- Messages regarding the benefits of thinness and socially prescribed attractiveness in children’s media content : books, TV, and cartoons

In sum, HOT = HAPPY

Controllability of Appearance

- Emphasis on the controllability of weight, shape and weight as being highly malleable and amenable dieting and exercise
- Increasing media content devoted to weight management and weight loss
- Focus on individual responsibility and capability to control weight

= Weight can and should be controlled!

Objectification

- Objectification of women (men): reduction of women's (men's) value to that of their body
- Media contribute to this by portraying segmented bodies
- Objectifying media internalized by women, resulting in self-objectification, and body image concerns

Media,
Capitalism,
Consumerism,
Commodification

Media, Capitalism, Consumerism, Commodification

- Media discourses evolves in consumer culture
- The media participate in both creating body “problems” and promoting a variety of products promising to alleviate them
- Increasing presence of male bodies in media accompanied by the identification of men as a valuable appearance-market
- Commodification of the body, that is appropriating the body as a form of merchandise

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Introduction of TV in Fiji

- Naturalistic experiment
- Disordered eating significantly increased 3 years after introduction of TV (Becker et al., 2002)



Media

- Association between TV/magazines and body dissatisfaction
 - Experimental studies
 - Correlational studies
 - Longitudinal studies

(Levine & Murnen, 2009; Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009b)

Causality?

- Considering formal criteria for establishing causality, still a lack of longitudinal evidence.
- NEVERTHELESS, robust association, moderated by media content and individual vulnerabilities
- Mediated by internalization of media messages

Men

- Increasing presence and objectification/commodification of men in media
- Reviews of experimental studies confirming detrimental effect of exposure to media on male body image
- Increasing levels of body image concerns among men

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Youth online

94% of teens are online daily

$\frac{3}{4}$ adolescents have a smart phone

24% of teens go online “almost constantly,”

Association: Internet/social media and body image and eating concerns

- Among female adolescents and early adolescents, exposure to Internet appearance-related content associated with:
 - weight dissatisfaction
 - drive for thinness
 - thin-ideal internalization
 - appearance comparison
- Facebook viewing associated with prospective increase in bulimic symptoms and over-eating one week later

- Experimental exposure to online content associated with increased body image and eating concerns
- Exposure to Facebook associated with even more appearance comparisons than exposure to a fashion magazine website
- Photo-based platforms and activities particularly problematic

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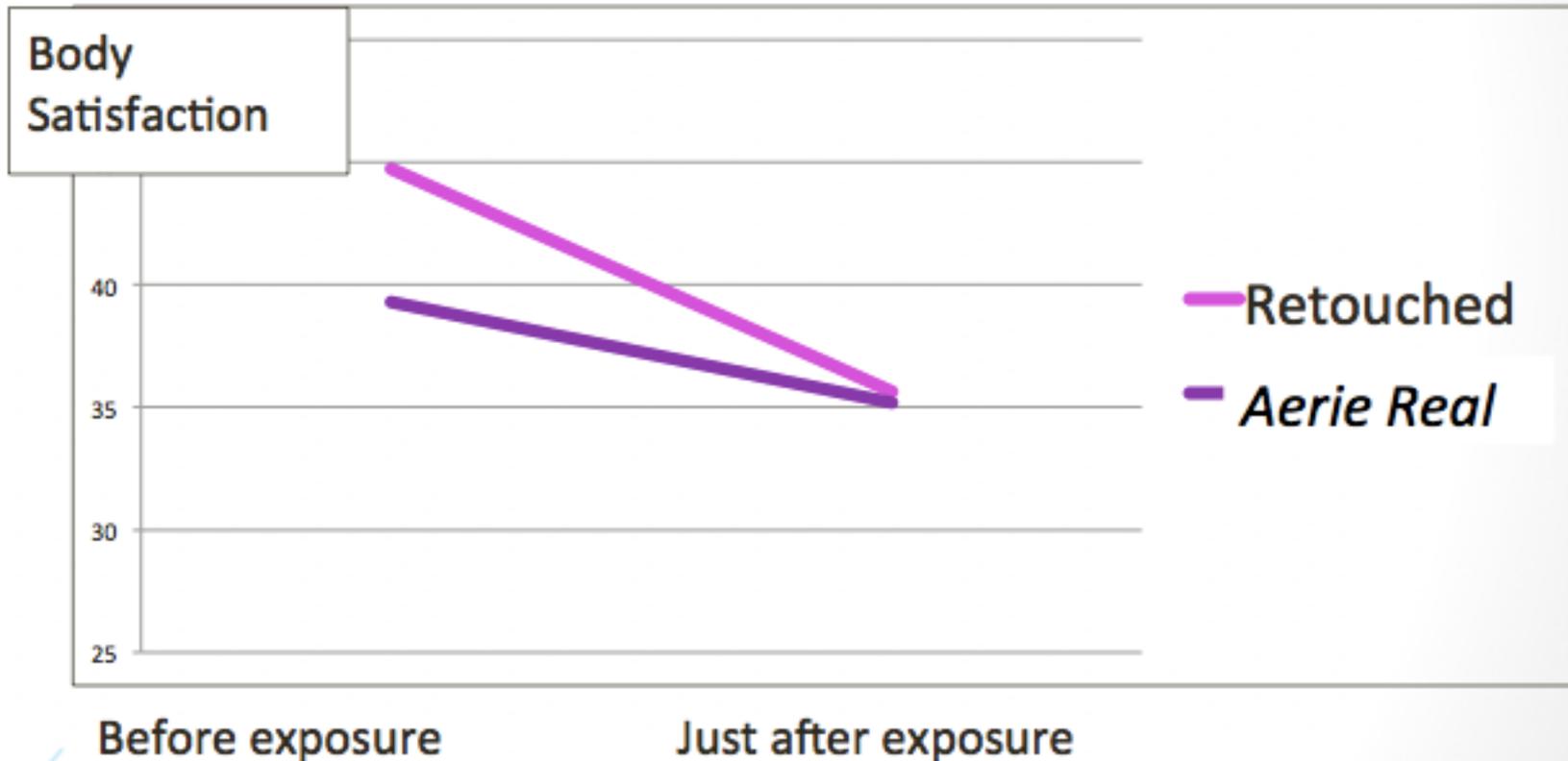
Prevention

- A number of successful interventions targeting individual level factors that have decreased media influences on body image
- Fewer data regarding efforts to change macro-level factors
- One notable example the Charte Québécoise pour une image corporelle saine et diversifiée.

Media images- Aerie

Study findings

Figure 1. Body Satisfaction scores among the high comparison group (n = 77)



Legislation and Policy

« **Art. L. 7123-2-1.**-L'exercice de l'activité de mannequin est conditionné à la délivrance d'un certificat médical. Ce certificat atteste que l'évaluation globale de l'état de santé du mannequin, évalué notamment au regard de son indice de masse corporelle, est compatible avec l'exercice de son métier.

Art. 1er. – I. – Dans le cadrevérifient que l'état de santé ...notamment au regard de son indice de masse corporelle, lui permet l'exercice de l'activité de mannequin.

III. – Hors cas spécifiés..., l'indice de masse corporelle est pris en compte, en particulier lorsque sa valeur se rapproche d'une maigreur modérée à une maigreur sévère après l'âge de 18 ans et qu'elle est inférieure au 3e percentile des références françaises....

Participants

- Professional model age 18 and over
- Participating in NYFW, or castings for NYFW

Attitudes Towards Policy Proposals

Policy Proposal	Impact	Feasibility
1. models are required to have a BMI = 18 or above	3.24 (1.36)	2.00 (1.09)
2. food and a 30 min break during jobs longer than 6 hours.	4.67 (.07)	3.77 (1.31)
3. twice per year checkups by an independent physician evaluating health, wellness, and weight	4.25 (.98)	2.81 (1.35)
4. models cannot lose their jobs because of weight gain or change in body shape/size.	4.11 (1.12)	2.05 (1.14)
5. ...compensation is paid in wages and agreed upon	4.69 (.62)	2.96 (1.25)
6. More job security and benefits in terms of protection.	4.79 (.93)	2.40 (1.10)
7. Requiring a large sample size to be on offer	3.86 (1.28)	2.44 (1.48)

Conclusions

Strategic research

- Importance of asking the right people the questions
- Giving the data to the right people
- Being proactive as well as reactive

Conclusion

- Media unequivocal role in marketing body image concerns
- Explicit goal within a growth model for several industries (beauty, weight-loss, fitness, etc.)
- Usefulness of considering body image through this systemic lens
- Implications for prevention focused at changing the environment

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APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM FOR
EATING AND APPEARANCE RESEARCH

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