

B. How does the media influence body image in the youth population?

12 CAFS – Independent Research Project (IRP)

Part B: The project diary (5 marks)

Time	Task	Comments
term 4 2010 week 3	Decide on research question/hypothesis and conduct background research to determine if it is achievable.	Received Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks) Considered research question/hypothesis: How effective are child abuse reporting standards in schools?

Diary

Date of entry: Tuesday, 26/10/10

Clear statement about what has been done:

Received Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks). Began considering research topic and hypotheses. Considered the research question/hypothesis: How effective are child abuse reporting standards in schools? My interest in this topic being brought about by my current topic in Legal Studies, Human Rights - under this research question I could further investigate the Ebony case. Completed a mind map to determine where relevant information could be sourced from. I am really interested and enthusiastic about this topic.

Outline the process undertaken:

Received Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks). Took part in my weekly phone call, we spoke about my interest in the topic and possibility of it being my research question/hypothesis - concerns were raised about how accessible accurate information would be and the sensitivity of the topic, it was suggested that I complete a mind map on the sources and resources I could access information from.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

Completing a mind map as a method to overcome the problem of accessing sources and resources and collecting relevant data for the final report.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Phone

Heinemann Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC course textbook

Ebony Case Study

Mrs. Sinclair (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Mrs. Woods (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Legal Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Decide upon hypothesis.

Time	Task	Comments
term 4 2010 week 4	Decide on research question/hypothesis and conduct background research to determine if it is achievable.	Considered research questions/hypothesis: Are there enough effective support services for families in crisis? Is there enough support for modern soldiers suffering from PTSD? Does baby brain exist? Alcohol – is it the most dangerous drug? Is there an underage drinking problem in Wee Waa? Is there enough support for parents in Wee Waa? How will the paid parental leave scheme affect parents?

Diary

Date of entry: 2/11/10

Clear statement about what has been done:

Initial proposal for research question/hypothesis has been rejected due to lack of available sources of information and the difficulty of undertaking primary research into such a sensitive topic area, am feeling disappointed about this necessary decision as I was so set on it being my research topic - I did not anticipate the problems it would raise. Considered several research question/hypotheses this week including: Are there enough effective support services for families in crisis? Is there enough support for modern soldiers suffering from PTSD? Does baby brain exist? Alcohol – is it the most dangerous drug? Is there an underage drinking problem in Wee Waa? Is there enough support for parents in Wee Waa? How will the paid parental leave scheme affect parents? The research questions/hypotheses thought of without teacher's guidance were: Are there enough effective support services for families in crisis? Is there enough support for modern soldiers suffering from PTSD? Does baby brain exist? Alcohol – is it the most dangerous drug? The inspiration from these came from personal interest and radio broadcasts I had heard throughout the week, however, the disadvantages of these were their broadness with no direct access to primary information in Wee Waa. The research questions/hypotheses discussed during my weekly phone call were: Is there an underage drinking problem in Wee Waa? Is there enough support for parents in Wee Waa? How will the paid parental leave scheme affect parents? The advantages of these were their link to Wee Waa, making primary data collection possible. However, I am left feeling uninspired and disillusioned by these topics - none of them particularly interest me and I feel they are somewhat generic, overused topics.

Outline the process undertaken:

Took part in my weekly phone call, we spoke about the new research topics/hypotheses I had come up with, it was suggested that the topics I was contemplating were too in-depth and at university level or required a long term study, discussed several topics that were modified versions of my original research questions/hypotheses.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

The most significant decision this week was the decision not to use the research question/hypotheses: How effective are child abuse reporting standards in schools? Methods of overcoming problems of a lack of inspiration for research topic ideas included: mind maps, discussion and watching the news for current issues.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Phone

Radio

Television

Heinemann Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC course textbook

Mrs. Sinclair (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Consider research questions/hypotheses: Is there an underage drinking problem in Wee Waa? Is there enough support for parents in Wee Waa? How will the paid parental leave scheme affect parents?

Decide upon hypothesis.

Time	Task	Comments
term 4 2010 week 5	Decide on research question/hypothesis and conduct background research to determine if it is achievable.	Decided on research question/hypothesis: How does the media influence body image in the youth population?

Diary

Date of entry: 9/11/10

Clear statement about what has been done:

All of the research questions/hypotheses from last week have been rejected after careful consideration. I have finally decided upon a research question/hypothesis that interests me and is achievable. The research question/hypothesis is: How does the media influence body

image in the youth population? I am feeling really excited about what my results will show and am motivated to complete my IRP to the best of my ability now. Initial background research has determined the topic to be achievable. I picked up a book at work, titled 'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls' and started reading it as a portion of my research will focus on this subject. Have become aware that Melinda Tankard Reist (editor of 'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls', author, speaker and advocate) will be speaking in Wee Waa soon, will find out details and attend.

Outline the process undertaken:

Final research question/hypothesis decided upon during weekly phone call, originally suggested by Mrs. Symons, I thought about it and was convinced this was the topic for me. Conducted background research to determine whether it is achievable and found it was. Began research by reading 'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls'.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

All of the research questions/hypotheses from last week have been rejected after careful consideration. Decided on research question/ hypothesis: How does the media influence body image in the youth population?

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Phone

Heinemann Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC course textbook

Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Finish reading Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls.

Obtain details of Melinda Tankard-Reist's talks and attend.

Time	Task	Comments
term 4 2010 week 6	Begin conducting research	Begin project diary and bibliography

Diary

Date of entry: 16/11/10

Clear statement about what has been done:

I have begun conducting research, keeping a project diary and bibliography. Finished reading 'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls', I have to return this copy to

work so others can read it but I will get my own copy to use for my report. My IRP has come up in discussion this week with Mrs. Horne who suggested I can use Jenny O'Dea's research papers. Continued working on TP 1-5, Research Methodology Booklet in preparation for my IRP.

Outline the process undertaken:

Preliminary research has involved reading 'Getting Real Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls', reading magazines targeted at youth, internet searches and discussions with individuals.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

No significant decisions were made this week and no problem solving was necessary.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Phone

Heinemann Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC course textbook

Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls

Mrs. Horne (Wee Waa High School, staff member)

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Return 'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls' to work.

Search for Jenny O'Dea's research papers on body image.

Time	Task	Comments
term 4 2010 week 7	Complete Part A: The Project Plan	DUE 26/11/2010 Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks)

Diary

Date of entry: 25/11/10

Clear statement about what has been done:

Tomorrow Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks) is due, however, I have been sick for several days and have not been at school or able to complete the task. I have much more work to do than I thought, because I misunderstood the task, thinking the assessment was to simply fit out the pro-forma I had been sent with the assessment task notice and information. But after my weekly phone call I realised it was necessary to complete paragraphed work to fulfill the requirements of the top marking criteria (5-4 marks, what I

was aiming for!). On Tuesday and Wednesday, I completed a large amount of it after taking part in my weekly phone call and saved it on my USB to work on at home. I stayed home today, and planned to work on this task and submit it electronically via email from home. However when I went to open the file - it wouldn't open - I had forgotten to save it in Compatibility Mode meaning I could not open it as a 2007 Word document can't be opened by 2003 Word which is the version I have at home. After tears and frustration I thought about my problem and went down to a friend's house, Abbey has broadband and 2007 Word on her laptop. I completed and submitted the task from her house. I submitted Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks) by the due submission date. I am happy that the first part of my IRP is completed, relieved I got it finished and satisfied with the quality of the work I submitted. I also obtained details on where and Melinda Tankard Reist will be speaking, from Alison Downes; 3/12/2010: Attend Melinda Tankard-Reist talk @ WWHS Library P2 10.30am and WWPS Hall 7.30pm - 9.30pm.

Outline the process undertaken:

The process involved in the completion and submission of Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks) involved responding to the questions, presenting the task in an appropriate format, including the relevant information and submitting the task on time, I was able to do this with the particular assistance of Mrs. Symons and Abbey O'Brien. The task was submitted electronically, via email.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

The methods of problem solving used this week included; finding a fast, easily accessible way to open the Word file in which I had completed the majority of the project plan. I brainstormed and decided to use the resources available to me and contacted a friend who allowed me to use her laptop.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Email

Laptop

USB

Phone

Heinemann Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC course textbook

Excel Community and Family Studies Study Guide

Abbey O'Brien (friend)

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

3/12/2010: Attend Melinda Tankard-Reist talk @ WWHS Library P2 10.30am and WWPS Hall 7.30pm - 9.30pm.

Time	Task	Comments
term 4 2010 week 8	3/12/2010 Attend Melinda Tankard-Reist talk @ WWHS Library P2 10.30am & WWPS Hall 7.30 – 9.30pm & Write introduction	Have individual meeting with Melinda Tankard-Reist, request email or phone interview and get contact details

Diary

Date of entry: 3/12/2010

Clear statement about what has been done:

TP 1-5 Research Methodology Booklet has been completed and sent off on the 1/12/2010. I attended both of Melinda Tankard Reist's talks, at school I introduced myself to her, spoke about the research project I was undertaking and informed her that I would also be attending her night talk. The night talk was much the same as the one held at school with only slightly more explicit images. Afterwards I approached her and requested either an email or phone interview and her contact details. She consented to an interview and gave me her business card, contact details are as follows - M: 0414 305 738, E: melinda@tankardreist.com and W: www.melindatankardreist.com.

Outline the process undertaken:

The process undertaken this week involved submitting via post, TP 1-5 Research Methodology Booklet and attending Melinda Tankard Reist talks, listening to her present her evidence on the topic of sexualisation and asking questions of her.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

I have made the decision to interview Melinda Tankard Reist via email due to ease of recording responses and for her convenience due to her heavy involvement with electronic media.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Phone

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Melinda Tankard-Reist (writer, speaker and advocate)

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Obtain a copy of the sound recording from Melinda Tankard Reist's night talk at WWPS Hall 7.30pm - 9.30pm.

Time	Task	Comments
holidays week 6	Generate surveys, questionnaires and interviews and pilot & Generate cover letter	Compile a list of contact details of respondents
holidays week 7	Distribute surveys and interviews & Type up structure of IRP & Begin literature review	

Diary

Date of entry: 25/01/11

Clear statement about what has been done:

Due to the school holidays and work commitments I have not been able to complete any more tasks towards the completion of my IRP until this week, hence the gap between my last diary entry and this one. However, I have collected a variety of secondary sources and information including: 'Body image tops youth concerns: study' - ABC News, 'Youth body image concerns worsen: study' - Sydney Morning Herald and O'Dea tackles body image. I generated surveys, questionnaires and interviews and piloted these successfully; no changes had to be made to them. I also generated a generic cover letter to be distributed with each survey, questionnaire and interview in order to introduce myself and the purpose of the research, define key terms and convey a due date. I compiled a list of contact details of survey respondents in order to keep track of who has returned it. Surveys and interviews were distributed to all possible respondents. The contact details of interviewees are as follows:

Melinda Tankard Reist (writer, speaker, advocate) - melinda@takardreist.com

Tiffany Dunk (Dolly editor) - dollymail@acpmagazines.com.au

Sarah Cornish (Girlfriend editor) - girlfriend@pacificmags.com

Dr Michael Carr Gregg (Psychologist) - michael.carrgregg@gmail.com

Lydia Turner (CEO Body Matters) - lydia_turner@hotmail.com

I typed the structure of the IRP to enable the final presentation of the report to be logical and to have a professional finish. I also began the literature review and am using a variety of Literature including 'Getting Real Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls', newspaper articles, magazine articles and findings from reports.

Outline of the process undertaken:

The process undertaken involved the creation of suitable survey, questionnaire and interview questions and the distribution of these. The final presentation of Part C: The Product (10 marks) was considered and a typed report featuring column graphs in the section titled 'Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data' was decided upon.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

Significant decisions this week included the content of the surveys, questionnaires and interviews and the final presentation of Part C: The Product; it was decided that it would be a typed report, in the same design and formatting as both Part A: The Project Plan (5 marks) and Part B: The Project Diary (5 marks), the Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data will feature colour coded bar graphs in order to display the questionnaire results. The method used to overcome the problems of being unable to meet my interviewees in person due to proximity issues and being unable to accurately record telephone conversations was solved with the use of interviews via email.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Email

Laptop

USB

Phone

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Excel Community and Family Studies Study Guide

Interviewees

Survey respondents

Notes for future actions:

Regularly check school email for responses to interviews and surveys.

Conduct questionnaires.

Time	Task	Comments
term 1 2011 week 1	Conduct questionnaires	

Diary

Date of entry: 1/02/2011

Clear statement about what has been done:

A variety of youth from the ages of 15-24 years and of both genders completed my questionnaire. 36 questionnaires were returned with a 100% return rate, there were an equal number of male and female respondents. The results have been compiled in a tally sheet to assist in the generation of graphs from this data.

Outline the process undertaken:

The process undertaken involved the printing of the pre-prepared closed questionnaires and giving them to a variety of individuals to complete. A tally sheet was used to compile the results in order to make the generation of graphs for the Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data to be more efficient and accurate.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

The decision was made to compile the questionnaire responses as soon as all of the questionnaires were returned in order to improve efficiency. The problem of how to deliver the questionnaire to youth and ensure their return was solved by approaching teachers of various classes and asking if they would give it to their class before commencing their planned lesson.

Record of the resources used:

Computer

Printer

Mr. Catt (Wee Waa High School, teacher)

Mrs. Burgess (Wee Waa High School, teacher)

Questionnaire respondents

Notes for future actions:

Generate graphs reflecting data sourced from questionnaires.

Compile survey and interview results.

Time	Task	Comments
term 1 2011 week 2	Compile survey and interview results	

Diary

Date of entry: 8/02/2011

Clear statement about what has been done:

I had not as of yet received a reply from Dolly Magazine, Girlfriend Magazine or Dr Michael Carr-Gregg. In order to receive a response from the media I tried to contact them again but to no avail. Instead I emailed two smaller publications, Style Magazine and Bella. I became aware of Style Magazine after taking part in my weekly phone call. I received an in-depth response from Style Magazine's editor Jacqui Gregg. I printed of all survey and interview results but did not compile them - instead I will leave them in their raw format until I write the final report. I also emailed my survey to Mrs. Symons who will distribute it among her colleagues, in order to receive a wider variety of responses from varying locations.

Outline the process undertaken:

The process involved searching for Style Magazine and Bella's email addresses and sending them my interview. I printed of all responses and filed them for future use. I emailed my survey to Mrs. Symons for her to distribute on my behalf

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

The decision was made not to compile the survey and interview results since the information would already be easily accessible in its raw format. The problem of having not yet attained a response from someone involved in the media was solved by contacting smaller publications who would have much more time and interest in my research than the larger publications - their response is still as relevant since they work in the same industry. The problem of having only a limited number of respondents within my community was solved by emailing my survey to Mrs. Symons to distribute on my behalf in order to include a wider cross-section of respondents.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Email

Computer

Printer

Phone

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Write: Research Methodology, Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data and Conclusion and Recommendations, References and Appendix.

Time	Task	Comments
term 1 2011 week 3	Write: Research Methodology, Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data and Conclusion and Recommendations, References and Appendix	

Diary

Date of entry: 15/02/2011

Clear statement about what has been done:

The Research Methodology, Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data and Conclusion and Recommendations, References and Appendix have been written and completed. In order to generate the graphs featured in the Results, Analysis and Discussion I used the 'Insert Diagram' function in Microsoft Word. I was unsure about exactly what to include in and how to set out some of these sections, so after my weekly phone call, Mrs. Symmons faxed me through a copy of a completed IRP as a guide. I am feeling super excited about nearing the completion of this project, whilst I enjoyed the topic and found the findings interesting, it began to feel quite tedious and drawn out - since I had been working on it for such a long period of time. For awhile I almost felt as if I would not be able to complete it by the due date, but now everything is under control!

Outline the process undertaken:

The process undertaken involved the collation of primary and secondary data collection with conclusions to be drawn from these. This was completed in the structure of the final report.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

I was unsure of how to set out and what to include in some of the sections of my final report, this problem was solved by requesting a completed IRP to use as a guide.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Email

Laptop

USB

Phone

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Primary data

Secondary data

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

Notes for future actions:

Complete final report and presentation.

Send off completed IRP prior to or on Friday, 25/02/2011.

Time	Task	Comments
term 1 2011 week 4	Complete final report and presentation IRP DUE	DUE 25/2/2011 Part B: The Project Diary (5 marks) Part C: The Product (10 marks)

Diary

Date of entry: 25/02/2011

Clear statement about what has been done:

A short and final entry to complete Part B: The Project Diary (5 marks). I have finally completed my IRP; I am feeling relieved and excited! I am happy with the quality of the work I have submitted as I know the amount of effort I put in to complete it to the best of my ability. I will email Part B: The Project Diary (5 marks) to Mrs. Symmons and post Part C: The Product (10 marks) through snail mail due to the large amount of supporting material. I now await my marks!

Outline the process undertaken:

The process undertaken involved proofreading my project diary and final report for spelling and grammar errors and correcting those that I found. Part B: The Project Diary (5 marks) was emailed whilst Part C: The Product (10 marks) was posted.

Comment about significant decisions and methods of problem solving:

The problem of how to deliver Part C: The Product was solved by opting to mail it, so all of the supporting material could be attached as I did not have access to a scanner.

Record of the resources used:

Internet

Email

Laptop

USB

Computer

Heinemann Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC course textbook

Excel Community and Family Studies Study Guide

Supporting Material

Australia Post

Mrs. Symons (Dubbo School of Distance Education, Community and Family Studies teacher)

12 CAFS - Independent Research Project (IRP)

Part C: The product (10 marks)

How does the media influence body image in the youth population?



Abstract

Over a period of 19 weeks, between 29th October 2010 and 25th February 2011, a wide range of research has been conducted in order to determine how the media influences body image in the youth population. The aim of conducting research into this topic was to discover how the media in all of its forms impacts upon and influences the youth of today, in both a positive and negative way and how that influence can impact upon the lives of young people.

Using questionnaires, surveys and interviews; a range of youth, those involved with youth, body image experts and media representatives were questioned on their views about the media's influence on body image in the youth population and strategies to further enhance the positive conduct of the media in body image issues. In all, 36 questionnaires were handed out to members of the youth population, with a 100% return rate, 20 surveys distributed to a variety of parents, carers, teachers and youth with a 100% return rate and 6 interviews distributed to a variety magazine editors and body image experts, with a 50% return rate. Both qualitative and quantitative research was used in order to collect a range of valid results and to vary the presentation of the data.

After conducting various forms of primary research, it is recommended that, in order to uncover more reliable and varied information and results a much larger sample size should be used. This should include the questioning of more individuals to gain a wider variety of opinions, along with a wider range of experts and media representatives from mainstream forms of media.

The following report includes details of the information discovered throughout the research process, including the results and conclusions found after analysing the data.

Acknowledgements

There are numerous individuals and organisations I would like to thank for their assistance with my research, specific acknowledgements follow:

I would like to thank all questionnaire and survey respondents, thank you for your time.

I would like to thank all interviewees: Melinda Tankard-Reist, Lydia Turner and Jacqui Greig. Your interest, encouragement and in-depth responses to my interview were very helpful and appreciated.

I would like to thank Mrs. Burgess and Mr. Catt of Wee Waa High School for allowing their classes to fill out my questionnaires prior to commencing their planned lessons.

I would like to thank Mrs. Symonds of Dubbo School of Distance Education for assisting me in deciding upon a research topic and not becoming frustrated with endless brainstorming or my indecision!

I would like to thank Carol Thompson, owner and manager of Rose St Café, Wee Waa, for allowing me to create a study area whenever I required!

I would like to thank my parents for their understanding – especially my mum for undertaking copious amounts of proofreading!

I am sure I will have forgotten someone, if it's your name that's missing - fill in this page.

Without support from the aforementioned individuals and organisations I would not have been able to successfully conduct my research or complete the following report.

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Introduction

The research topic 'How does the media influence body image in the youth population?' involves a close study into all forms of media and the positive and negative effects on youth in regards to body image from a variety of different perspectives. The research should lead to the discovery of how the media in all its forms impacts on and influences the youth of today, in both a positive and negative way and how that influence can impact the lives of young people. The research could illustrate the negative impacts that the media has had on youth including: low self esteem, low self concept, eating disorders and bullying. The research could also uncover positive aspects the media has contributed, including increased awareness of positive body image and awareness of photo-shopped and enhanced photos. Research should lead to the discovery of accountability and responsibility that all forms of media have in promoting healthy body image and provide insight and opinions of a variety of youth and subjects in regards to the topic.

I have opted to choose this research topic as its target group; youth – includes adolescents, which makes the issue relevant to me and I am also aware that youth is a group highly influenced by the media. These factors led to the election of this research topic and prompted close investigation and interest into the issue.

The relationship between the focus of the project and the course content area is illustrated through these links to the syllabus: HSC Core 1: Research Methodology (H4.1, H5.1), HSC Core: Groups in Context (H2.2, H3.1, H3.3, H.5.1): Identify groups with specific needs - youth, identifying the needs of specific groups in the community - health, self-esteem and sense of identity and factors affecting access to resources - age, level of education, gender (males vs. females), location (city vs. country) and socioeconomic status.

Strategies implemented to address bias and ethics were varied and included but were not limited to: the timely and accurate recording of all data, using a variety of research methodologies, choosing respondents I didn't know, remaining objective, ensuring all responses were kept private and confidential, remaining polite and courteous to all involved, not leading or influencing the respondent, wording questions appropriately and ensuring the wellbeing of respondents was protected, ensuring research questions are of a high moral and ethical standard and fulfilling the highest level of integrity of researcher.

Limitations that were encountered by the researcher included time and location restrictions. Due to the restriction of time and resources, the sample size addressed was relatively small - although a wide variety of localities were canvassed including: Wee Waa NSW, Dubbo NSW, Port Macquarie NSW and Adelaide SA. This factor affects the validity of results, as only a minute selection of people could be questioned in relation to the opinions of individuals within Australia, a larger sample size is necessary to be truly representative of the whole population. Data was collected from a wide variety of individuals varying in age, gender, locality, socio-economic status and involvement with the media and/or youth in order for the results to be as valid as possible and to overcome the restrictions encountered.

Literature Review

Media is 'the means of communication, as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc, that reach large numbers of people'. (Macquarie Dictionary, 5th Ed, pg 775).

Body image is defined as 'the perception that a person has of their own body, particularly in relation to whether they see themselves as fat or thin, good looking or not (Macquarie Dictionary, 5th Ed, pg 134).

Youth is determined to be 'the period between childhood and adulthood, generally between 15-24 years' (Weihen L, Chapman S, Duggan B & Wood B 2006, *Community and Family Studies Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC Course*, Text Book, Heinemann, VIC, pg 200).

The issue of body image in regards to the youth population and the media's overriding influence is becoming an increasingly debated and focused upon topic. According to statistics drawn from Mission Australia's 2007 survey of youth concerns, body image has become the main concern for male and females, with approximately a third of the 30,000 individuals surveyed listing it ahead of family conflict and stress. These results may be due to 'much more of a focus as a nation on the number of individuals who are overweight including young Australians... we've got an increasing focus...on body beautiful and what constitutes an acceptable and healthy body' (Mission Australia's Manager of Research Anne Hampshire, ABC News).

Jennifer O'Dea, an associate professor in nutrition information, found whilst conducting research that children's self worth was dictated by their body image and weight, with 'kids spending their lives pursuing something as futile as the 'perfect body' (O'Dea tackles body image).

To assist in combating the negative influence of the media on youth body image the Australian Government has introduced a 'Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image' (*Fighting for positive body image for young women*, Indymedia Australia) in June 2010 for the fashion and beauty industries, discouraging organisations from using digitally enhanced images.

Television - one of the most influential forms of media on youth; had a severe impact on a media naïve population regarding disordered eating. Within a comparative study of Fijian school girls before and after prolonged television exposure the results indicated key indicators of disordered eating were significantly more prevalent following exposure and narrative data revealed subjects interest in weight loss as a means of modeling themselves after television characters. The prevalence of bingeing and self-induced vomiting in order to control weight also increased (Becker A, Burwell R, Herzog David, Hamburg P & Gilman S 2002, *Eating behaviours and attitudes following prolonged exposure to television among ethnic Fijian adolescent girls*, The British Journal of Psychiatry, vol. 180, pg 509-514). This indicates the negative influence influential forms of media have on youth, who aspire to look like their role models and are unaware of the falseness of digitally enhanced images.

There is little recognition within the media of factors which influence an individuals body shape; the ideals which are presented include stereotypical images of thin, evenly proportioned, large breasted, tanned skin women and muscled, tall, dark and handsome men, however, a large majority of an individuals body shape is due to their genetics and no

amount of exercise and dieting will change the shape of a person's body. For those with an ethnic background there are a variety of environment and cultural factors which may influence the ideal body image. 'Struggles with food and body image are not merely about willpower - they're social, cultural and familial' (*Lisa Lee and Lynn Chen Launch Body Image Blog 'Thick Dumpling Skin'*, Hyphen Magazine).

The negative impacts that the media has had on youth include: low self esteem, low self concept, eating disorders and bullying, whilst the positive aspects the media has contributed include: increased awareness of positive body image and awareness of photo-shopped and enhanced photos.

It is a fact that 1 in 4 girls in Australia want to have plastic surgery (Tankard Reist, M (ed.) 2009, *'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls'*, Spinifex Press).

In 2000, Jennifer O'Dea conducted a program designed to boost self esteem in Year 7 and 8 students in ways unrelated to their body image and emphasizing that their uniqueness is to be expected, accepted and celebrated. The data indicate that her hypothesis was correct: given a dose of self-esteem, children's body satisfaction would increase (Feature: O'Dea tackles body image).

Currently there is little known about the specific risk factors for Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa or Binge Eating Disorders, however well-established risk factors exist for eating pathology, are identified as: elevated, perceived pressure to be thin, internalisation of the thin-ideal standard of beauty, body mass, body dissatisfaction and negative affect.

The association between socioeconomic status, weight, age and gender, and the body image and weight control practices of 6- 19-year-old children and adolescents was investigated by Jennifer O'Dea and Peter Caputi. Their findings found that 'low socioeconomic status children were more likely to be overweight, to skip breakfast, to perceive themselves as 'too thin', to be trying to gain weight and less likely to receive dietary or weight control advice. Physical self-esteem was lowest among overweight girls of middle/upper socioeconomic status and greatest among boys of lower socioeconomic status, despite the latter being more likely to be overweight' (O'Dea J & Caputi P 2001, *'Association between socioeconomic status, weight, age and gender, and the body image and weight control practices of 6- 19-year-old children and adolescents'*, Health Education Research Theory and Practice, vol. 16 no. 5, pg 521-532)

An increasing amount of advertising is featuring overtly sexual images (also termed 'sexualisation, 'pornification, 'corporate paedophilia' and 'raunch culture'). Youth are being 'exposed to sexual imagery from their earliest years, to sex as a product and our bodies as commodities' (Tim Costello, CEO, World Vision Australia). There seems to be a desensitisation towards highly sexualised images, with pornographic images becoming increasingly mainstream, for example Kanye West's latest music video titled 'Monster' which features eroticised images of dead women, thus promoting harmful messages about females, what female's bodies are 'good for' and how males should treat women. These images are providing both males and females with an aesthetic image to aspire to but also a physical image of how to behave. (Tankard Reist, M (ed.) 2009, *'Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls'*, Spinifex Press).

It is imperative that the media, advocacy groups, the Australian Government, parents/carers and educators work together to create a positive environment in which youth do not feel pressured to look a certain way.

The emotional wellbeing of youth in regards to body image is greatly influenced by the images presented by the media through its various forms including the internet, magazines and television. These images contribute substantially to an individual's body image, self concept, eating behaviors and overall wellbeing.

A positive attitude towards healthy body image should be promoted and endorsed. This would be facilitated through a nation wide approach to healthy role models, increased media literacy; decreased use of digitally enhanced images and sexualized images and the formation of a mindset that takes into account factors influencing a persons body shape and their attitudes, values and beliefs about positive body image.

Research Methodology

The most appropriate methodology for the research topic was a combination of questionnaires, surveys and interviews. This was due to the data required centering on the opinions and beliefs of a variety of individuals; youth, parents/carers, relatives, teachers, media representatives and body image experts. A variety of qualitative and quantitative data sourced from a large sample size was necessary in order for the results obtained to be valid and to vary the presentation of the data.

A questionnaire was distributed to a variety of youth of varying ages within the given age bracket, localities, gender and socioeconomic status. The questionnaire featured 10 closed questions relating to the research topic. This research was conducted via email, in person and by a third party. To ensure the questionnaires were returned, the teachers of various classes were approached and asked if they would give the survey to their class before commencing their planned lessons; the majority of questionnaires were distributed in this way. In all, 36 questionnaires were handed out to members of the youth population, with a 100% return rate

A survey was distributed to a variety of parents/carers, relatives, teachers and youth. The survey featured 2 closed questions and 8 open questions relating to the research topic. This research was conducted via email and post. In all, 20 surveys were distributed with a 100% return rate.

An interview was distributed to a range of media representatives and experts in the field of body image and youth. The interview featured 10 open questions relating to the research topic. This research was conducted via email due to proximity issues and being unable to accurately record a telephone interview. In all, 6 interviews were distributed to a variety of magazine editors and body image experts, with a 50% return rate. Interviewees who provided detailed responses were: Lydia Turner - psychotherapist specialising in eating disorders and body image disturbances and managing director of BodyMatters Australasia, Jacqui Greig, editor of Style Magazine and Melinda Tankard Reist - writer, speaker and advocate.

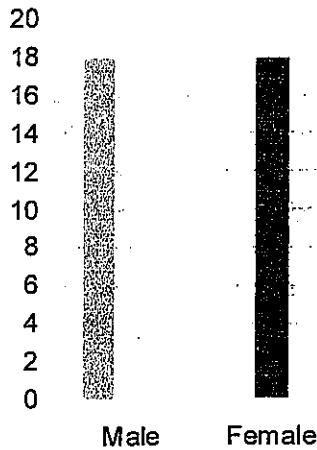
Each questionnaire, survey and interview was distributed with a cover letter explaining the research topic, stating the required date of return, listing key definitions, emphasising confidentiality would be maintained and providing the researchers contact details.

The sampling process used when collecting data involved a combination of stratified sampling; selecting an equal division of a particular group e.g. number of males/females, socioeconomic status and location and cluster sampling; choosing from subgroups within a group e.g. editors of teen magazines. These sample groups were used in order to be able to provide a range of comparable data and to address the research topic from a variety of different viewpoints.

To ensure out of the small sample size accessible, that a variety of different people were selected with no bias towards those chosen, participants were selected at random and an attempt was made to include individuals from outside regional areas.

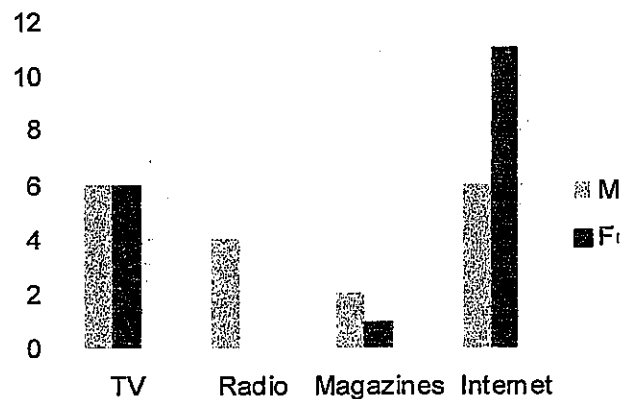
Results, Analysis and Discussion of Data

Are you male or female?



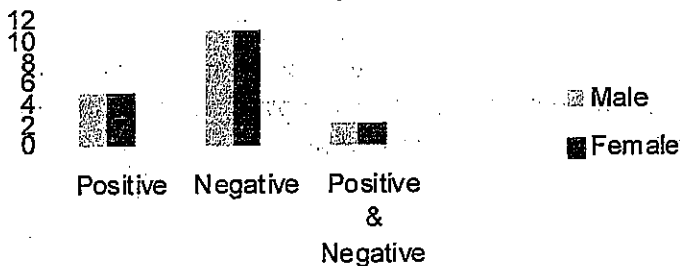
The survey was distributed to an equal proportion of male and females. The questionnaire was returned by all respondents resulting in a 100% return rate, by 18 male respondents and 18 female respondents.

What form of media do you have the most exposure to?



TV and Internet are the most influential forms of media, as these are the two mediums which youth have the most exposure to. For females the Internet was the media which they had the most exposure to, with 61% of females selecting this option whilst for males, TV and Internet had an equal exposure level with 33% of males selecting these options.

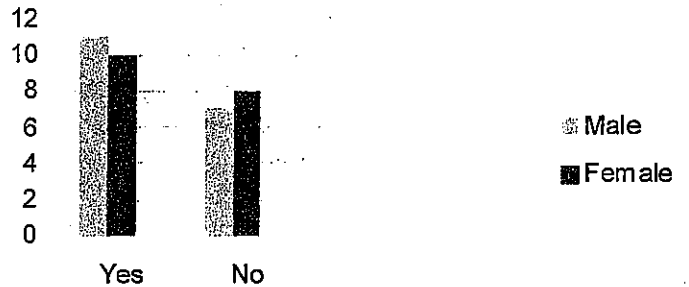
Do you believe the media influences your body image in a positive or negative way?



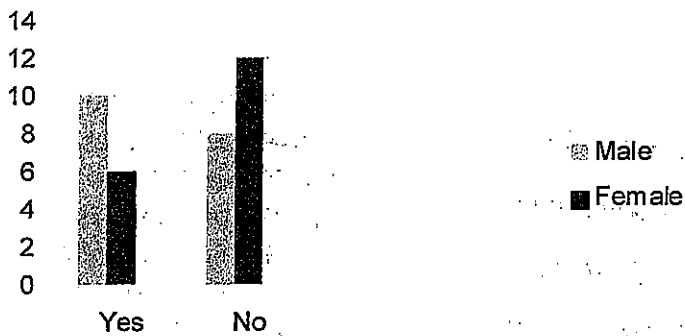
The majority of both males and females identified that the media influences their body image in a negative way, with 61% of respondents indicating this. 14% of both males and females identified the media as having a positive influence on their body image, whilst the remaining 11% of respondents identified the media as having both a positive and negative influence on their body image, despite this not being an option on the questionnaire.

58% of all questionnaire respondents indicated they were aware of any guidelines or initiatives by the media to promote healthy body image, whilst 42% were not.

Are you aware of any guidelines or initiatives by the media to promote healthy body image?



Do you believe the 'look' featured in the media is healthily attainable?



The majority of male questionnaire respondents believed the 'look' featured in the media to be healthily attainable at 56%, whilst the majority of females believed the 'look' featured in the media to not be healthily attainable at 67%.

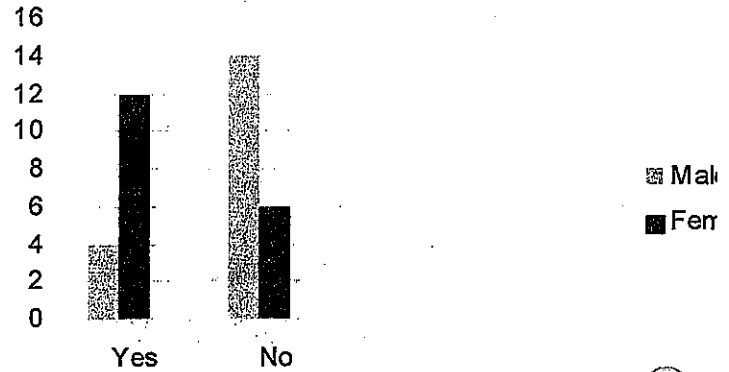
The majority of males, 78%, had known someone who has been adversely influenced by the media's portrayal of body image, whilst an equal proportion of females answered yes and no to this question, with 50% of females having known someone who has been adversely influenced by the media's portrayal of body image and 50% having not.

Do you know anyone who has been adversely influenced by the media's portrayal of body image?

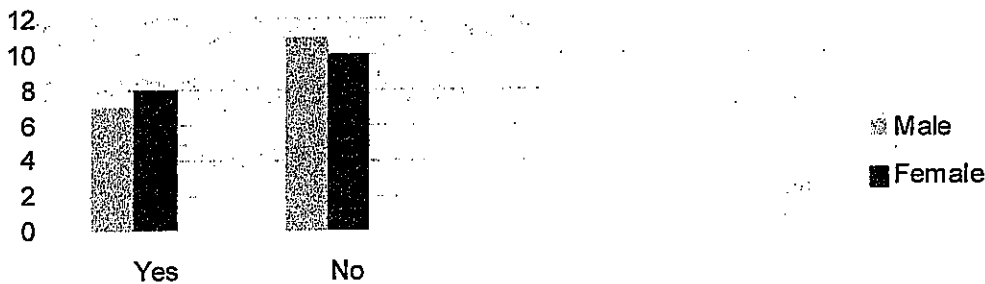


Females were the more highly influenced gender in regard to having ever attempted to change their image to fit with the image being projected by the media, with 67% of indicating yes as compared to only 22% of males. The majority of males, 88%, indicated that they had not ever attempted to change their image to fit with the image being projected by the media whilst only 33% of females indicated this.

Have you ever attempted to change your image to fit with the image being projected by the media?



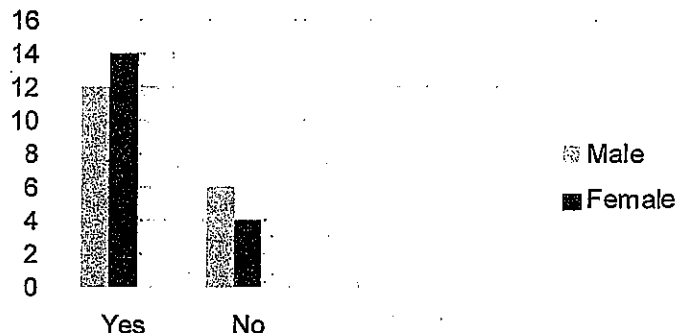
Do you believe there should be censorship similar to TV ratings, on all media, to ensure that youth are not given an unattainable body image to aspire to?



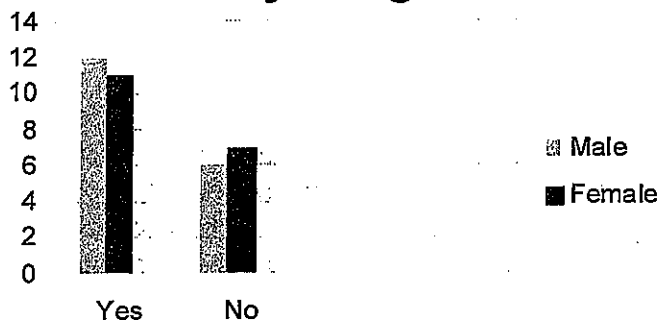
The majority of both males and females indicated that they did not believe there should be censorship similar to TV ratings, on all media, to ensure that youth are not given an unattainable body image to aspire to, 58% of questionnaire respondents felt this way whilst the remaining 42% believed this measure should not be implemented.

A significant majority of both males and females indicated that they thought the media promotes and images and products that sexualise young persons, with 72% of questionnaire respondents feeling this way. The remaining 28% of questionnaire respondents indicated they did not think the media promotes images and products that sexualise young persons.

Do you think the media promotes images and products that sexualise young persons?



Do you believe the media should be held accountable and responsible for promoting healthy body image?



The majority of both males and females believe the media should be held accountable and responsible for promoting healthy body image, at 64% whilst the remaining 36% did not agree with this.

Both males and female members of the youth population and those involved with youth either through parenting/caring, relatives and/or teaching responded to surveys regarding the research topic.

The key words used to describe the body type that the media portrays as most desirable for females included: tall, very thin, tanned, clear skin, large breasts, long flowing hair whilst for males the key words included muscular, tanned, strong jaw, broad shoulders, narrow waist and handsome.

The role the media plays in promoting a positive body image was identified as magazines coming clean about how they doctor images through Photoshop, the use of bigger sized models, showing people of a range of shapes and sizes and campaigns promoting positive body image.

The role the media plays in promoting a negative body image as identified by the survey respondents involves: constructing what the media thinks is ideal, not recognising that there are many different body types, promoting unrealistic images, junk food advertising, more focus being placed on the overweight population than the underweight and influencing

youth to believe they have to look like the individuals in TV shows or magazines to be successful or get a partner.

Survey respondents identified ways the media has attempted to increase awareness of positive body image including: revealing 'tricks of the trade', use of bigger sized models, TV shows such as Biggest Loser and Ugly Betty, more cooking shows with an emphasis on using fresh ingredients, acceptance of different body shapes, magazine covers which haven't been Photoshopped i.e. Sarah Murdoch, using 'real' models, involving models in society as people by interviewing and explaining what they experience to get themselves to the level they're at and showing their personality, including athletes on magazine covers, teen magazines featuring campaigns to promote positive body image, self respect and more awareness, attempting to provide a forum to discuss body image, highlighting some of the efforts by some governments to address this issue e.g. the minimum BMI to model in some countries and the voluntary code of conduct covering issues such as too-skinny models and digitally-enhanced images; the code recommends designers not hire models with a dangerously low body mass index or excessively muscular male models and calls for a ban on advertising rapid weight loss products and cosmetic surgery that is not medically necessary.

The ways media can influence the lives of young people, regarding body image as detailed by the survey respondents include: influencing young people to think they should look more like the people in the media, depression, low self esteem and making young people feel bad about their appearance.

The ways the media may be held accountable for promoting healthy body image, as identified by survey respondents include: introducing laws to cut out doctoring of images and fines if caught doing this, restrictions on the amount of body image related content that can be included in various media sources, legislation preventing anyone below a size 10 being on the cover of a magazine, acknowledging when images have been Photoshopped, limiting negative comments about body shape, promoting health rather than 'thin appearance', use of more realistic models/actors, if they use images or presenters that are more than 25% skinnier than the national average they should be made to change that individual to one that fits the criteria - if the outlet refuses the government should suspend their licence until they become compliant, having more TV shows in channels such as MTV which are extremely popular with today's youth to focus on healthy eating & lifestyle and forming an alliance with all levels of government to work together to push health as more important than looks.

The guidelines survey respondents believe need to be implemented to ensure the responsible conduct of the media include: cease placing such emphasis on famous models and celebrities who are 'fat' or have 'gained weight', minimum weight for actresses/models by ensuring they are in the healthy weight range for their height, minimum altering of images, no 'trick photography', Photoshop acknowledgement on photos which have been edited, the media should be taken to court if they blackmails their subjects/models into not eating or turning to Bulimia Nervosa to stay thin and keep their jobs and punished if they refuse to give a job to someone based solely upon how they look, anything to offensive should be governed by government rules, using a variety of sizes for models/actors and forced to only use individuals that fall into the healthy BMI range - anyone on the negative side of this BMI should be examined by a medical professional and have to be declared healthy to continue in that role.

The survey respondents believe the most significant impacts on youth the media has contributed, in regards to body image include: eating disorders, excessive dieting and exercise, a feeling of inferiority leading to depression and not belonging, the desire to be perfect, beautiful, skinny and tanned, increased emphasis on making youth more beautiful - more teens are spending money on makeup, hair, spray tans and clothes than ever before, some media has had a positive impact by conveying a message that imperfections are the 'true' normal, clothing which doesn't cover the body, making young girls feel that beauty is related to being thin and underweight, contributing to a warped view of body image, conveying mixed messages that confuse youth, teaching young people to equate success with having a good body, negatively influencing social and emotional wellbeing by portraying an 'acceptable' body image that youth are unable to attain, mental illness caused by the obsessions to look a certain way, impacting self-esteem and substance abuse.

Jacqui Greig, editor/publisher of Style Magazine recognises that it can be difficult for editors to use images of celebrities that haven't been Photoshopped. ...'when searching to purchase a photo of a celebrity for a cover - it is next to impossible to buy an image that hasn't already been re-touched - it's the celebrity's way of protecting their image.' She believes that cat walks shots are the images that are most damaging to young people's mental health as are images of celebrities misbehaving. Jacqui believes that regardless of their situation, young people are always going to be looking at what other people are doing, and be susceptible to body image issues regardless of age, level of education, gender, location or socioeconomic status. She does not believe that initiatives such as awareness of photoshopped images have had an effect 'Everyone knows that these images have been Photoshopped; but it doesn't change the message that the images are imparting.' Whilst not working closely with youth she identifies the mental effects of 'sexualised' images on youth as increasing their own sexual awareness, perhaps before they are mentally (or physically) prepared to deal with what this means.

Lydia Jade Turner is a psychotherapist specialising in eating disorders and body image disturbances, the Managing Director of BodyMatters Australasia (an eating disorders clinic that provides eating disorders treatment, education, consultancy, and advocacy) and a freelance writer for the ABC and Online Opinion. Lydia states that 'studies have shown that there are some characteristics that are considered to be 'universally' beautiful (such as facial symmetry, dilated pupils, etc). However, a large amount of what a person finds aesthetically pleasing is influenced by their environment. Lydia states it is not any one particular image that is the most damaging to young person's mental health but rather 'the bombardment of images reflecting the same ideal body type over and over again'. She believes media literacy is a significant part of building resiliency to body image disturbances in young people; however, there is still an overwhelming emphasis on the need for people - to look 'hot.' She surmises that 'it seems that media images do not directly cause anorexia, however they contribute to body dissatisfaction which puts people at risk of dieting'. A desensitisation towards sexualised imagery has had negative impact providing 'narratives that promote harmful messages about women and what women's bodies are "good for."

Melinda Tankard Reist; writer, speaker and advocate believes the media has played a major role in promoting an idealised notion of women as needing to be hot, thin and sexy because the media and popular culture is so pervasive. In regards to sexualisation she states that 'Girls are being raised in a hypersexualised culture in which they are reduced to the value of their sexual parts.' Melinda says 'Boys are taking their cues about sex and relationships from porn and often young women think they have to act like porn stars to please men. Young women are also looking to modify and alter their bodies, based on how women look

in pornography.' She believes that 'children and teenagers need help to be able to critically examine the images they are presented with. They need to understand that many images have been airbrushed, digitally enhanced and photo shopped and are not actually real'. She goes on to illustrate her point 'Even Girlfriend magazine, while having a positive body image/self-respect policy, admits that it airbrushes all the women in its magazine, including its own staff' Melinda lists the psychological problems which may occur due to the idealised, sexualised and objectified images of women as: anxiety, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, low self-esteem, poor academic performance in girls and feelings of disgust and self-hatred.

As seen in the results, the majority of people questioned felt that the media influences the body image of the youth population in negative way. However a variety of strategies have been recently implemented by the media in order to address body image concerns. These strategies have not been enough to significantly influence the rising amount of youth who are experiencing body image issues in society today.

The results show that the majority of individuals feel that the problem of the negative influence of the media is due to a lack of government regulations, however it is also acknowledged that for youth to be dramatically influenced by the media in regards to body image they may have predisposing factors and a lack of parental guidance.

Increased media literacy is recognised as a solution towards problems of poor body image, in order for youth to be able to determine what is 'real' and what is not in the media. It was felt that this should be delivered in schools.

It was also felt that the Government should implement stricter regulations and legislation regarding what images can be presented by the media. There should also be a stricter focus on physical wellbeing and physical activity rather than 'looks' to ensure that youth in contemporary society are developing a mindset towards a healthy maintainable lifestyle.

It is evident through these results that while individuals feel the media has made a considerable effort within recent years to promote a healthy body image, more needs to be done by both media organisations and the Federal Government.

The strongest trend among the results show that increasingly sexualised imagery is a major concern and these images can have serious mental and physical effects on youth - this can be seen in the fact that 1 in 4 adolescent girls in Australia wants to have plastic surgery. Youth are also identifying these images as harmful with a significant majority of both males and females surveyed indicating that they thought the media promotes images and products that sexualise young persons, with 72% of questionnaire respondents feeling this way.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is clear from the results obtained after conducting research into the topic 'How does the media influence body image in the youth population?' that contemporary society acknowledges youth body image is a growing mental and physical health issue and are adamant that more needs to be done by both the government and media organisations, including the introduction of more stringent legally enforceable guidelines rather than simply providing a 'Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image', if this problem is going to be combated.

The results accentuate the negative influence the media is having on youth body image and also highlights the issues youth have in determining which images are 'real' as compared to those that have been significantly digitally altered. This is providing youth with an unattainable body image to aspire to. It is evident that a large amount of education and awareness needs to be provided on this topic in order to increase media literacy.

It is clear that individuals feel the Government should offer assistance in different areas – such as providing legislation that demands media outlets use models that are clearly of a healthy weight and representing realistic images of people in order to regulate the media industry and limit the amount of stylised imagery which youth are exposed to.

Recommendations that have arisen from the research include introduce legislation to regulate the media, to increase media literacy and to promote health living as more important than achieving a certain physical appearance.

The results uncovered were supported by secondary data sources including newspaper articles, text books, magazine articles and surveys.

The results obtained throughout this research task are sufficiently valid and reliable; however there are a number of limitations encountered during the research including time and a lack of access to a large number of respondents.

A number of steps that could have been taken to improve the accuracy of results collected include questioning a larger sample group in order to include a wider array of opinions and beliefs.

There were not any notable inconsistencies discovered in the research results, however, if future research was to be conducted, more care should be taken to ensure a wider variety of participants were selected, including those from different cultures. This would provide the researcher with more varied and therefore more valid results.

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Appendix 1 - Primary Research

Questionnaires, Surveys and Interviews



Questionnaire

"How does the media influence body image in the youth population?"

1. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

2. What form of media do you have the most exposure to?

TV

Radio

Magazines

Internet

3. Do you believe the media influences your body image in a positive or negative way?

Positive

Negative

4. Are you aware of any guidelines or initiatives by the media to promote healthy body image?

Yes

No

5. Do you believe the 'look' featured in the media is healthily attainable?

Yes

No

6. Do you know anyone who has been adversely influenced by the media's portrayal of body image?

Yes

No

7. Have you ever attempted to change your image to fit with the image being projected by the media?

Yes

No

8. Do you believe there should be censorship similar to TV ratings, on all media, to ensure that youth are not given an unattainable body image to aspire to?

Yes

No

9. Do you think the media promotes images and products that sexualise young persons?

Yes

No

Survey

"How does the media influence body image in the youth population?"

1. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

2. What involvement do you have with youth?

Parent/Carer

Relative

Teacher

Youth

Other (Please Specify)

3. Describe the body type that the media portrays as most desirable.

Most forms of media use an athletic (muscular, toned etc) or sexy body type (swimsuit model type – female: quite voluptuous but still really toned and fit – male: Chiselled jaw line and physique showing larger than normal arm, chest, & thigh muscles) as the benchmark body that is desirable to all.

4. What role does the media play in promoting a positive body image?

The media play an extremely important role in promoting positive body image, especially for young people. This is because people use the images on TV and in magazines, newspapers and the Internet to gauge where they are at in terms of their body. The human forms that are used by the media set a standard in people's minds that they aspire to reach. Therefore, media outlets have a social responsibility to promote a healthy body image due to the fact that appearance is often viewed as being a persons most significant defining characteristic. Some people who see an overly skinny or muscular physique may obsess themselves with transforming their own body to match that image rather than saying "is that what is 'hot' these days". Due to eating disorder and body image being so closely related the media needs to be exercise (no pun intended) caution with the images that it uses.

10. Do you believe the media should be held accountable and responsible for promoting healthy body image?

Yes

No



5. What role does the media play in promoting a negative body image?

As the media is the major fuel for our perceptions of body image it is crucial they label each image with a BMI and put what is a normal and healthy BMI for a person that size next to the image. As a majority of the population is constantly plugged in to some or multiple media's they must take on their social responsibility to slam unhealthy/negative body images.

6. How has the media attempted to increase awareness of positive body image?

In the last few years the media has made an obvious attempt to at least provide a forum to discuss body image. They have also highlighted some of the efforts by some governments to address this issue e.g. the minimum BMI to model in some countries. I feel that the media have also attempted to use a few more 'average' healthy looking people on high rating TV shows, in magazines and also in advertisements.

7. In what ways can the media influence the lives of young people, regarding body image?

- By using more images of the average size healthy people
- Having more TV shows in channels such as MTV which are extremely popular with today's youth to focus on healthy eating & lifestyle.
- Form an alliance with all levels of government to work together to push health as more important than looks.

8. How must the media be held accountable for promoting healthy body image?

If they use images or presenters that are more than 25% skinnier than the national average they should be made to change that individual to one that fits the criteria. If the outlet refuses the government should suspend their licence until they become compliant.

9. What guidelines do you think needed to be implemented to ensure the responsible conduct of the media?

They should be forced to only use individuals that fall into that healthy BMI range. Anyone on the negative side of this BMI should be examined by a medical professional and have to be declared healthy to continue in that role. The voluntary code of conduct covering issues such as too-skinny models and digitally-enhanced images that was being drafted by the media and fashion industries in 2010 sounds good as they are coming up with their own solution although it would be nice to force one upon them.

The code recommends designers not to hire models with a dangerously low body mass index or excessively muscular male models. The code also calls for a ban on advertising rapid weight loss products and cosmetic surgery that is not medically necessary.

10. What do you believe are the most significant impacts on youth the media has contributed, in regards to body image?

- Eating disorders such as Bulimia and Anorexia
- Mental illness caused by the obsessions to look a certain way, impacting self-esteem
- Substance abuse
- Unhealthy exercise routines and diet

Interview

"How does the media influence body image in the youth population?"

1. What is your name and job title?

My name is Lydia Jade Turner and I am a psychotherapist specialising in eating disorders and body image disturbances. I am also the Managing Director of BodyMatters Australasia (www.bodymatters.com.au), an eating disorders clinic that provides eating disorders treatment, education, consultancy, and advocacy. I am also a freelance writer for the ABC and Online Opinion.

2. How many years experience you have had with youth and/or media?

As the former School Liaisons Director for The Eating Disorders Foundation (NSW), I have been working with youth for 7 years. My media experience ranges approximately 4 years.

3. How do you believe the media can represent bodies that are both aesthetically pleasing and realistically attainable?

While studies have shown that there are some characteristics that are considered to be 'universally' beautiful (such as facial symmetry, dilated pupils, etc), it seems what a person finds aesthetically pleasing is also significantly influenced by their environment. For example, for centuries in China, foot binding was a painful practice inflicted on female infants and young girls. The 'lotus foot' rendered girls and women essentially crippled for life, however it was considered beautiful and fetishized. In some rural parts of India, a bride-to-be is typically 'fattened up' by her mother and mother-in-law. Fat female bodies in those areas are considered to be beautiful and a sign of a woman's husband's success (ie wealth).

As you can see, there are a variety of body shapes and sizes that have been considered beautiful for women throughout history. By contrast, the ideal for men's bodies has remained relatively stable, although in recent years there has been increasing emphasis for men to have a six pack, all-muscle-little-fat, and V-shaped chest. This may be due to the beauty and fashion industries successfully positioning men as a growing target market for profit.

Because bodies come in all shapes and sizes, representing bodies of different shapes and sizes would be necessary to show what is realistically attainable. There are a variety of ways in which people's bodies store fat- some naturally store more fat on their thighs than others, some more in their breasts, others on their stomachs or arms etc. This has much to do with genetic programming, and no amount of exercise or dieting will ever change the shape of a person's body. The images used in media (particularly women's magazines) are almost always airbrushed, photoshopped, with the models presented in the best lighting

possible, with a team of make-up staff, bodies waxed, tanned and so forth. All of these aspects manipulate and distort the real image of the model. Presenting something realistically attainable would involve presenting a range of body shapes and sizes, and not airbrushing/photoshopping the images. As people become more accustomed to seeing a variety of bodies presented in a variety of ways, it will probably follow that the current beauty ideal will transform. There already are individual differences to some extent as to what any individual person finds attractive, and these individual preferences may be enhanced when the beauty ideal is no longer so prescriptive and narrowly defined.

4. What images do you believe are the most damaging to young peoples mental health?

It's not any one particular image that is the problem, but rather the bombardment of images reflecting the same ideal body type over and over again. This sends a strong message that a woman's worth hinges on her being 'hot thin and sexy.' Companies know that if they can make a person feel inadequate about something (ie their body and what they look like), it makes it easier to sell that person a product that promises to 'fix' the 'problem' (for example, cellulite reduction cream). These images contribute significantly to a person's level of body dissatisfaction. We know from the research that body dissatisfaction itself puts a person at higher risk of developing unhealthy weight loss behaviours (ie 8% of teenage girls currently smoke to control their weight), depression, reduced self-esteem, eating disorders, and future weight gain.

5. What form of media do you believe has the most influence on young people and why?

It's difficult to say which form of media has the most influence on young people – and what aspects of that medium has a healthy or unhealthy influence. The rise of social media networks is relatively new, and while a recent study linked Facebook to increased risk of developing Anorexia Nervosa, it is also possible that Facebook is being used by some as a way of supporting those with eating disorders towards recovery. Further research into how young people access different forms of media and what effect it has on them will be useful.

6. Do you believe age, level of education, gender, location or socioeconomic status influences how impressionable a young person is, in regards to body image?

Currently there is little known about the specific risk factors for Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, or Binge Eating Disorders. However well-established risk factors exist for eating pathology and these have been identified as:

- Elevated perceived pressure to be thin
- Internalization of the thin-ideal standard of female beauty
- Body mass
- Body dissatisfaction
- Negative affect

7. Do you believe initiatives such as awareness of photo shopped images has had an effect?

Media literacy is a significant part of building resiliency to body image disturbances in young people. However, it does not go far enough. There is still an overwhelming emphasis on the need for people – especially girls and women – to look 'hot.' The way in which the models are presented is also problematic – I have written about this for Melinda Tankard Reist's blog recently where I discuss the problem of pornographic themes creeping into mainstream media and also contrasted how women are positioned to men in these images:

"Women are frequently positioned very differently to men in media. Often shown as passive, vulnerable, scantily clad, headless, and sometimes dead...These images inform women over and over that their body primarily exists for the purpose of evoking male desire, as though their bodies are merely sex aids."

The rest of this article can be found here, with images which I think help to demonstrate my argument <http://melindatankardreist.com/2010/11/womens-bodies-are-not-sex-aids/>

It is important to recognise that Anorexia Nervosa (unlike Bulimia Nervosa and other eating disorders) has been documented as far back as the 13th century. It seems that media images do not directly cause anorexia, however they contribute to body dissatisfaction which puts people at risk of dieting. Dieting is the biggest predictor of eating disorders. So while media images do not in themselves 'cause' eating disorders, they certainly contribute to the likelihood of young people engaging in risky behaviours that heighten their risk of developing one (if they are already pre-disposed).

To date there has been strong emphasis on discussing media images in the context of eating disorders, however there needs to be more discussion on how media images put young people at risk of developing unhealthy weight loss behaviours and poor mental and emotional wellbeing – even for those who *don't* go on to develop eating disorders.

8. What effects do you think exposure to unhealthy body images has had on youth?

The repeated exposure to unhealthy body images has been shown to put young people at risk of developing unhealthy weight loss behaviours, extreme exercise, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and likelihood of having plastic surgery.

9. What effect do you believe their has been on youth due to mass media and a desensitisation to these images?

I don't agree that youth are desensitised to images of ideal beauty. It seems an increasing percentage of youth (including children) are aspiring to look 'perfect' and going to extraordinary lengths to achieve this 'perfect body. Children as young as eight are being hospitalized for eating disorders, while the National Eating Disorders Association reports that 80% of ten year olds are afraid of being fat. It's worrying that we are now seeing images of adultified children as this will likely induce bodily anxieties at an earlier age (you can see images of this in the link I provided above).

There does however, seem to be desensitisation towards highly sexualized images, as the porn industry is becoming increasingly mainstream. This has led to corporations competing to out-do each other, pushing boundaries such as we see with Lady Gaga's music video *Telephone* pairing sexual imagery with violence and Kanye West's latest video *Monster* showing eroticised images of dead women. These videos provide narratives that promote harmful messages about women and what women's bodies are "good for."

10. What do you believe, are the physical and mental effects of 'sexualised' images on youth?

As sexualization is not my area of specialty (although there is some overlap with body image disturbances) - I will quote my good friend and colleague Melinda Tankard Reist:

"The objectification of women and sexualization of girls contributes to a number of the most common mental health problems suffered by them such as eating disorders, self-harm, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem...It is a fact that 1 in 4 adolescent girls in Australia wants to have plastic surgery. They don't like themselves very much. They are obsessed about their bodies; they are obsessed about their looks. They are spending a lot of time trying to perfect their body image."

Appendix 2 – Supporting Evidence

