

Public Abstract

First Name:Kathleen

Middle Name:Megan

Last Name:Hopper

Adviser's First Name:Jennifer

Adviser's Last Name:Aubrey

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:Bumping Up the Body: Examining the Impact of Celebrity Gossip Magazines on Body Image During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is one significant stage in the lifespan of many women that produces a great deal of change in outward appearance in a relatively short amount of time and is a stage in which the thin ideal is particularly difficult to achieve. The recent onslaught of public representations of pregnant celebrities in celebrity gossip magazines (Deziel, 2006) communicate the ideal body shape for pregnant women. However, body image research has neglected to examine how media portrayals of celebrity pregnancy impact women's perceptions of their bodies while pregnant. Thus, the present analysis sought to investigate through two studies how media exposure impacts women's body image and the meaning media hold for women while pregnant. Study 1 examined through an experiment the impact of viewing sexually objectifying images and text pertaining to pregnant celebrities and Study 2 investigated through small group discussions how pregnant women articulate the meaning of celebrity gossip magazines. Results of both studies were interpreted using objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). Further, the articulation model of meaning (Hall, 1986) was employed to interpret the results of Study 2. The results of Study 1 indicated although pregnant women were more apt to compare themselves to sexually objectified images and accompanying text featuring pregnant celebrities, viewing non-objectifying headshot-only images and accompanying text featuring female celebrities resulted in significantly more self-objectification than viewing baby products only. Study 2 results indicated that the pregnant participants recognized how celebrity gossip magazines sexually objectify pregnant celebrities; however, these women felt that others, not themselves, were most likely negatively impacted by this coverage.