BUMPING UP THE BODY: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF CELEBRITY GOSSIP MAGAZINES ON BODY IMAGE DURING PREGNANCY

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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JULY 2010

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

BUMPING UP THE BODY: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF CELEBRITY GOSSIP MAGAZINES ON BODY IMAGE DURING PREGNANCY

presented by K. Megan Hopper,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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To Mom, Dad, Kristina, Kimberly, Kelly, and Kara

To Marilyn Hopper, my mom, best friend, hero, and biggest supporter. Of all the education I have received over the past 30 years, you have taught me the most important lesson of all: All things are possible through hard work, strength, love, and belief in God. Because of your instruction and faith, this dissertation is just as much your accomplishment as it is mine.

To Professor Dale Hopper, my dad. You once said one of the proudest days of your life would be the day your baby girl became a Ph.D. I was a couple years too late, but I know you are smiling down on me nonetheless. Thank you for instilling in me a love of knowledge and the desire to share that knowledge with others. I pray some day I can be half the teacher and mentor you were to so many.

To Kristina. Kimberly, Kelly, and Kara - the best big sisters a person could have. Thank you for teaching me how to read, encouraging me to be the best that I could be, changing my diapers (sometimes), and not letting Mom name me Kassandra.

To Kara Hopper Murdock, my sister and the strongest person I have ever known. Thank you for always being there for me and for never, ever doubting me. Your perseverance and faith never cease to amaze me. Without someone like you to look up to, I certainly would not be where I am today. I would play Sorry with you any time, anywhere, any day of the week…you just have to ask.

To my grandparents, Tunis and Elaine Hoekstra and Clyde and Hazel Hopper, who all worked extremely hard so that I could have the opportunity to receive an education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, who has provided me with excellent guidance and the utmost support for the past four years. Thank you for having faith in me even when I did not have faith in myself. I am extremely lucky to have been able to witness your brilliance as a researcher, educator, and mentor. I can truly say I have learned from the very best.

I am also grateful for the many amazing faculty and staff members I have encountered throughout my education. I am especially thankful for the members of my committee, Dr. Lissa Behm-Morawitz, Dr. Loreen Olson, Dr. Michael Porter, and Dr. Cyndi Frisby, for their continued support throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Joe Blaney for his guidance during both my undergraduate and graduate education. His suggestion that I extend my graduate education at the University of Missouri has turned out to be one of the best suggestions I have ever received.

In addition, this project could not have been completed without the individuals who helped recruit participants and for the many pregnant women who agreed to participate. I hope that I have represented the many pregnant women who participated in this project both fairly and accurately.

Last, I could not have made this journey without the encouragement and friendship of the graduate students in the Department of Communication. I feel very fortunate to have spent the last four years with a group of people who were always willing to help in any way they could. I especially would like to thank my advisor sister and ace Siobhan E. Smith. I could never have done this without you. I thank God that we entered, survived, and are leaving the war together.

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ABSTRACT

The present analysis examined the impact of celebrity gossip magazine coverage on pregnant women through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Study 1 employed both objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) in an experimental design. Results showed that exposure to full-body sexually objectified images and text concerning pregnant celebrities resulted in more social comparison than non-objectifying images and text. However, exposure to non-objectifying headshot-only images and accompanying text concerning celebrities resulted in significantly more self-objectification than exposure to control images of baby products. Study 2 employed the articulation model of meaning (Hall, 1986) in focus group discussions in which participants indicated that they recognize how celebrity gossip magazines sexually objectify pregnant celebrities. Participants largely criticized this sexual objectification while simultaneously describing their own objectification of pregnant celebrities featured in these magazines. Although they did not feel as if they were negatively affected by this sexual objectification in the long term, participants indicated that younger pregnant women most likely are. The results of both studies are interpreted in light of objectification theory, social comparison theory, and the articulation model of meaning.

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION

Attractiveness in U.S. culture, particularly for females, has increasingly been linked to slenderness (Grogan, 1999). Studies have found there is a clear trend towards a thinner ideal in our culture (Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, & Thompson, 1980; Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, & Ahrens, 1992). Slenderness in women has not always been idealized, as Grogan (1999) points out, because for many years the plump, reproductive female figure was considered highly desirable, and a woman's full stomach was heralded for representing fertility. However, the thin ideal that originated in the 1920s has resurfaced today and is widely portrayed in the mass media. Although the bodily signs of reproductive capability were once applauded, today the thin ideal has become particularly problematic for women to demonstrate when carrying out the highly important function of pregnancy. As Cusk and Allardice (2003) argue, during pregnancy a woman vastly and rapidly surpasses the culturally accepted and normalized boundaries for women's bodies. Further, Western cultural ideals require women to not only be thin and young, but to also hide any signs of their reproductive functioning because to do otherwise would likely incite negative reactions from others (Goldenberg, Goplen, Cox, & Arndt, 2007).

The continuous decrease in size allowed for women's bodies, according to Bordo (2003), appears to convey the discomfort our culture has with any increase in female power and presence. As the ideal bodies for women have come to be regarded only in slender and flabless forms, Bordo states "*any* softness or bulge comes to be seen as unsightly - as disgusting, disorderly 'fat,' which must be 'eliminated' or 'busted,' as popular exercise-equipment ads put it" (p. 57). Currently, slenderness is often related to

positive emotions and outcomes for individuals, whereas being overweight is associated with negative attributes such as laziness and lack of motivation. Evidence suggests that women are required to be thin in order to be deemed beautiful and to be able to achieve both social and financial success (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Goodman, 2005). These requirements then place abundant demands on women to reduce the size of their bodies.

Images of Pregnancy

Possibly because of the aberration from the thin ideal, historically images of pregnant women have been scant in U.S. culture. For example, in researching images of pregnancy over time, Matthews and Wexler (2000) found very few publicized photographs of pregnant women, which led them to assert that for many years the public display of pregnant women induced a state of "cultural anxiety" (p. 2). This closeting of pregnancy began to be opened up beginning with advertisements for maternity clothes featuring pregnant women as models in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The door was then broken wide open in 1991with the appearance of the now infamous photograph of actress Demi Moore, nude and pregnant, on the cover of an issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine. "After decades of closeting, the pregnant woman was being represented as most other women in our culture: as an object of the gaze packaged to create and play on the desires of the viewer" (p. 201). Following the Moore cover photo, Deziel (2006) argued the onslaught of public representations of pregnant celebrities began and remains strong. However, she asserts many of the pregnant celebrities do not appear as any less glamorous and toned as when not pregnant. This discourse communicates to pregnant women in society that although pregnant, their bodies are still being held to impossible standards.

Despite the onslaught of public representations, the importance placed on pregnant celebrities' bodies in popular culture has yet to be explored by feminist scholarship (Nash 2005/2006). This gap needs to be addressed because, according to Ferris (2003), celebrity bodies consistently placed on public display possess a great deal of influence and control on the public. For many years celebrities and their private lives have been a public fascination having a persistent presence in people's social worlds. Dyer (1986) argues that individuals are fascinated by celebrities because they allow people to understand what it means to be a person in a particular social climate. "Stars represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed" (p. 17). Society's fascination with celebrities now encompasses the need to know the most up-to-date information on when they become pregnant (Stelter, 2008). Pushing this obsession are U.S. celebrity magazines which have made a lucrative business out of announcing who is pregnant, following celebrities around while pregnant, and being the first to have pictures of celebrities' new babies. With the proliferation of media coverage of pregnant celebrities and the idealization of these celebrities maintaining thin bodies and/or quickly retaining thin bodies once post-partum, it is important to examine the impact of these portrayals on pregnant women's perceptions of their own bodies. The significance of this coverage can be quite extensive as celebrity culture "shapes not simply the production and consumption of media content but also the social values through which we experience the world" (Holmes & Redmond, 2006, p. ii).

Cultural Ideals for Female Bodies

Grogan (1999) suggests body image is malleable and influenced by social experiences and pressures. As such, researchers examine both individuals' experiences with their own bodies as well as the cultural context they are immersed in to take into account the social construction of body image. One cultural variable that impacts body image is the media. Grogan asserts body image is influenced by acquisition of new information from mass media sources. "Media imagery may be particularly important in producing changes in the ways the body is perceived and evaluated depending on the viewer's perception of the importance of those cues" (p. 3). Thus, it is important to examine media portrayals because of the cultural power they exert. Media are a crucial social influence to examine in regards to how they may influence individuals' body image, as they consistently portray and idealize the thin female body. For example, content analyses have found that in the media women are increasingly depicted as extraordinarily thin, the media place an emphasis on women's bodies, and the media reward thin individuals and punish overweight individuals (Fouts & Burggraf, 1999; Guillen & Barr, 1994; Signorielli, 2001; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986; Ward, 1995; Wiseman et al., 1990). Although media exposure is not the sole influence on one's body image, a meta-analysis of 25 empirical body image studies provides evidence for exposure to "thin-ideal media" being linked to body dissatisfaction, distortions of body image, a drive for thinness, and other problematic perceptions in girls and women (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002).

Despite past studies in body image research providing valuable evidence for the impact of the mass media, much of the existing research does not fully take into account

significant stages across a woman's lifespan such as pregnancy. This is one of the stages Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) refer to as "biological milestones," which are important to consider when studying female body image because, as they argue, these milestones have the potential to increase body fat deposition. While pregnant, Hanson (2004) asserts that women's ideas of their bodies both in regards to visibility and physical sensation have the potential to be shattered. As a woman's body begins to grow and change, what she sees when she looks in the mirror does not match her internalized image of self. Simultaneously, a pregnant woman's "bodily sensations" (Hanson, p. 13) also do not correspond with her previous awareness and understanding of her own body. Although a few studies have examined how body image may fluctuate during pregnancy (e.g., Duncombe, Wertheim, Skouteris, Paxton, & Kelly, 2008; Fox & Yamaguchi, 1997; Patel, Lee, Wheatcroft, Barnes, & Stein, 2005; Skouteris, Carr, Wertheim, Paxton, & Duncombe, 2005), these studies do not assess how one's media exposure may affect them while pregnant. A major assumption of the current study is that when the media focus on the bodies of pregnant women, it detracts from the human life within the pregnant woman – the main point of pregnancy. Instead, pregnant women's bodies become spectacles to be looked at.

Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Body Image

The media not only consistently idealize the thin female body, but they also focus on women's bodies more so than any other aspect of their identities. Two theories, objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), have provided the framework for much of the research examining the link between media portrayals of women and women's body image.

First, objectification theory provides the theoretical grounding for examining the sexual objectification of women, or of women being valued and defined by their bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).The media's use of sexual objectification has been the focus of research examining the effects of media portrayals on women's body image (Aubrey, 2006a; 2006b; 2007; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). This sexual objectification is important to examine because sexually objectified images of women may affect women's thoughts and feelings about their own bodies.

A great deal of research has examined the sexual objectification of women with much of this research focusing on young women. However, this research has not examined how women may be objectified while carrying out one very important role that has great impacts on the body, that of pregnancy. This is particularly important to study as in a content analysis of U.S. celebrity gossip magazines, Hopper (2009) found that the appearance of speculated to be pregnant, pregnant, and recently post-partum celebrities was mentioned in photograph captions more often than the appearance of non-pregnant celebrity women. The only known investigation of the sexual objectification of pregnant women in the media, this study indicates the importance of examining this phenomenon in greater detail as a focus on pregnant women's appearance takes away from the very point of pregnancy – carrying and sustaining the life of another human being.

Further, a great deal of research employing social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) has indicated that individuals compare themselves to those they see depicted in the media. Social comparison is important to examine in conjunction with objectification theory because it may well be part of the self-objectification process whereby social comparison is the mechanism linking individuals' media use to their engaging in self-

objectification. If women see celebrity women portrayed in the media being primarily valued for their appearance and for their thin bodies, they too may start to value themselves predominately for their appearance and bodies. For example, a woman may see images and text sexually objectifying a celebrity in a magazine, which could prompt her to compare her own body with that of the celebrity she sees depicted. This comparison of her body to that of the celebrity may then, in turn, cause the woman to view her worth as primarily based on appearances. Thus, both social comparison theory and objectification theory are useful to use together because they help to explain the larger picture of the media's role in impacting how individuals feel about their bodies.

Cultural idealization of thin female bodies can prove dangerous not only to women's psychological well-being but their physical health as well in regards to malnutrition and dangerous amounts of weight loss when they engage in social comparison. "If a woman is a regular user of ideal-body media such as fitness and fashion magazines, not to mention television programming featuring advertisements for diet foods and products, she may be moved to abstain from eating several times a day" (Harrison, Taylor, & Marske, 2006, p. 525). Such restricted eating could result in a great deal of unhealthy amounts of weight loss if engaged in over a significant amount of time.

Similar to sexual objectification, social comparison has not been applied to pregnant women. The representation of pregnant women, especially celebrity pregnant women, has proliferated over the last decade (Matthews & Wexler, 2000), and often these representations depict a glamorous and sexually objectified pregnant female body (Deziel, 2006; Matthews & Wexler, 2000). Thus, it is important to examine if and how pregnant women compare themselves to these images.

Transmission vs. Ritual Models of Communication

Much of the existing media-related body image research is situated in the media effects tradition, applies a transmission model of communication, and employs quantitative research methods (e.g., Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). Although much of this research has found a link between individuals viewing thin-ideal-depicting media and having lower satisfaction with their bodies (Groesz et al., 2002), this research offers little insight into what these types of media *mean* to girls and women at particular times in their lives. Specifically in regards to individuals viewing of celebrities, Dyer (1986) states that "audiences cannot make media images mean anything they want to, but they can select from the complexity of the image the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them" (p. 5). Thus, a fuller picture of how the media may impact one's body image and how one comes to assign meaning to that media can be gained by applying a ritual model of communication (Carey, 1989) to complement a transmission model when examining this process.

Whereas the transmission model sees messages being determined unidirectionally sent by one entity and received by another, the ritual model of communication believes in a co-construction of meaning by audience members. Carey (1989) states that in the transmission model, "communication is a process whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for the control of distance and people" (p. 15). By contrast, the ritual model does not have to do so much with spreading messages through space and imparting information, but rather with representing shared beliefs. Instead of giving information to others in a cause and effect type manner as seen in the transmission model, the ritual

model views information as shared and involving a collective creation of meaning. The ritual model sees communication as being "culturally specific and as such can only be understood as a process from the point of view of the people involved" (Ruddock, 2001, p. 119). Thus, the ritual model is important to consider when investigating the impact of media exposure on individuals' body image because media exposure does not occur in a vacuum. Often individuals discuss with each other what they see depicted in the media, which, in turn, impacts the meaning media texts have for them. Such interaction with others needs to be accounted for when advocating the definition of body image advanced by Grogan (1997): "a person's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about his or her body" (p. 2), which views one's body image as malleable and socially constructed by the cultural milieu one is immersed in. Her argument is that researchers need to examine the cultural context individuals are immersed in to take into account the social construction of body image. Further, Jensen (1987) argues that the situation in which one receives a media text needs to be conceived by researchers "as a complex of social and cultural factors that have implications beyond the meeting between audience and medium" (p. 26).

The transmission model is still important to apply in conjunction with the ritual model because in everyday life and in many practical settings, communication is not thought of as a creation and reproduction of shared meaning but as a means to achieve a function – spreading information to others. Even Carey (1989) asserts that the transmission and ritual models are not mutually exclusive because although meanings are shared, these meanings have to be made by someone in the beginning (Ruddock, 2001). However, the goal of the present analysis is to employ the ritual model as well as the

transmission model because they both help to provide a better understanding of how messages are shaped and used by audiences. In employing both of these models of communication, the present analysis utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to examining exposure to celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. Quantitative methods are particularly applicable when taking a transmission model approach in seeking to gain an understanding of how media messages impact individuals, whereas qualitative methods are more applicable when taking a ritual model approach in seeking to examine how meaning is created from media messages.

Mixing Methods and Approaches

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), scholars have recently encouraged mixed methods research as its own type of design based on the assumption that mixing quantitative and qualitative methods can offer a superior understanding of a phenomenon than either method could alone. The increase in ability to understand a phenomenon is a result of the strengths mixing methods provides that compensate for the weaknesses of using one method over the other. According to Creswell and Plano Clark, "It also encourages the collection of more comprehensive evidence for study problems, helps answer questions that quantitative or qualitative methods alone cannot answer, and reduces adversarial relationships among researchers and promotes collaboration" (p. 18). Study 1 is largely situated in the media effects tradition and applies a transmission model. This study employed an experimental design to analyze what pregnant women themselves may not be able to cognitively recognize and self-report on, such as how they might possibly be psychologically affected by magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities.

In applying the ritual model, Study 2 takes a cultural studies approach to the impact of media exposure on pregnant women's body image in order to uncover the multiple social-historical factors that affect what celebrity magazines mean to these women. Cultural studies, according to Ruddock (2001), was developed in order to answer some of the questions raised by the limitations of media effects research. Cultural studies involves a "shift from the analysis of what texts *do* to the audience to what texts *mean* to them" (p. 117). One such way of uncovering the various meanings media texts have for audience members at differing times within the cultural studies tradition is through the articulation model of meaning (Hall, 1986), which recognizes that several factors come together to articulate the meaning of a media text to its receiver. Specifically, this model is useful when considering how one's pregnancy may impact how she views the bodies of pregnant others in relation to her own body during the particular historical moment of pregnancy. By incorporating a cultural studies approach in conjunction with and to complement a media effects approach, the impact that media have and what media mean to women during the important stage of pregnancy can be uncovered. Cultural studies research into audience reception of popular culture texts almost exclusively relies on qualitative methods such as focus groups. Focus group discussions are often employed because they allow for researchers to investigate the ways in which everyday talk plays a role in the social construction of meaning. Thus, in Study 2, focus group discussions were conducted in order to explore the meaning celebrity magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities have on pregnant women. According to Milkie (1999), qualitative methods nicely complement quantitative findings by allowing the voices of women to be heard regarding their own explanations and evaluations of media content.

Taking a cultural studies approach to examining body image during pregnancy could complement a media effects approach to together provide a much richer and fuller picture of the role media plays in a woman's life. Several cultural studies scholars have advocated supplementing qualitative methods with the quantitative methods that are largely situated in the media effects tradition to produce a greater understanding of phenomena under study. For example, in discussing questions of theory and method in cultural studies research, Ruddock (2001) argues a triangulation approach is the best method when trying to understand audiences as mixed methods give researchers a more complex, albeit never full, view of the relationship between audience and media. Modern-day scholarship, no matter which paradigm one is situated in, concurs that multiple methods are needed when studying the highly complex relationship that exists between media and audience. Whereas quantitative methods allow researchers to explore the "denotative aspects of power" (p. 181), qualitative methods can usefully complement "as ways of analysing how these formations of consensus are created, maintained and diverted" (p. 181).

Thus, the present analysis investigates through both experimental and focus group discussion designs how media exposure may impact women's body image and the meaning media hold for women while carrying out an extremely important role – pregnancy. The following chapter outlines relevant research concerning pregnant women and body image, discusses the importance of examining magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities, and describes the basis for Study 1. In the third chapter, the method for Study 1 is detailed and in the fourth chapter, the results of Study 1 are presented. In the fifth chapter, the cultural studies tradition and relevant research studies are outlined, followed

by the posing of research questions. Chapter Six includes a description of the method for study two, followed by the results in Chapter Seven. Last, Chapter Eight includes interpretation of the results, theoretical implications, and the strengths and limitations of both studies, as well as directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: PREGNANT BODIES, CELEBRITIES, AND MAGAZINES

Body Image During Pregnancy

There are three important bodily changes that occur during a woman's lifespan: puberty, pregnancy, and menopause. Specifically, pregnancy is one major reproductive milestone that is particularly important to examine in conjunction with body image because it produces a great deal of change in the outward appearance of a pregnant woman in a relatively short amount of time. Thus, it is important to consider how these changes impact a woman's thoughts about her own body.

Although motherhood is deemed extremely important in Western culture, what becoming and being pregnant mean for a woman and how she is thought of in society is often not as accepted. Crawford and Unger (2004) state, "becoming pregnant and giving birth highlight a woman's sexuality; at the same time, society denies the sexuality of pregnant women and mothers; this perpetuates a split between body and self" (pp. 333-334). The body also becomes a problem for a woman during pregnancy because it is characterized by a large amount of weight gain and overall transformations of the shape of her body. This is problematic because pregnancy disrupts the thin ideal, making it impossible for a woman to adhere to the standard thin female form. In addition, this is problematic because women are mainly described and thought of based on their bodies.

As a result to the drastic changes in bodily shape and size, many pregnant women report one of the biggest stressors of pregnancy to be changes in their body image, which may also contribute to depression in new mothers (Crawford & Unger, 2004). In a society that equates slenderness with attractiveness, how pregnancy affects a woman's outward

appearance is particularly important to consider. For example, according to the 1997 Body Image Survey, "pregnancy is increasingly being seen not as a normal body function but as an encumbrance to body image" (Garner, 1997, p. 85). In addition, a number of women in the study noted they are deciding to not have children because of the expected negative outcomes it would have on their bodies. Further, Skouteris, Carr, Wertheim, Paxton, and Duncombe (2005) argue that examining body image during pregnancy is important because women's body shape changes drastically during a relatively short amount of time and thus examining body image during this time likely allows for a stronger test of what may influence one's body dissatisfaction than when examining non-pregnant women's body image.

A substantial amount of research has examined how pregnancy may impact a woman's body image. One such study conducted by Fox and Yamaguchi (1997) illuminated the connection between pregnant women's body image change, weight prior to pregnancy and social values. In this study, currently pregnant women in the United Kingdom, who were predominately Caucasian, completed free-response questionnaires assessing how they felt about their appearance and body shape while pregnant as well as completing the Body Shape Questionnaire assessing their concern with body shape over the past four weeks. For women who were of normal weight pre-pregnancy, 62% reported they experienced a negative change in body image during pregnancy. Conversely, women who were overweight prior to pregnancy experienced a positive change in body image. The women who were of normal weight prior to pregnancy explained their experiences of negative change in body image as resulting from feeling self-consciousness due to a heightened sense of public scrutiny. In addition, they

attributed the negative change to feeling their body weight was now out of their control and to feeling less physically or sexually attractive. Fox and Yamaguchi attribute the amount of negative change experienced by pregnant women who were of normal weight pre-pregnancy to the inconsistency between the advanced pregnant body shape and society's accepted idea of the thin-ideal female body. They assert that pregnancy appears to call to mind the shame and negative stereotyping associated with being overweight in women who are of normal weight.

Other studies of pregnant women and body-image concerns have examined how body image might fluctuate at different times during pregnancy. For instance, Skouteris et al. (2005) and Duncombe, Wertheim, Skouteris, Paxton, and Kelly (2008) both examined body image changes in Australian pregnant women at four differing stages: early, middle, and late pregnancy as well as retrospectively during pre-pregnancy. Both Skouteris et al. (2005) and Duncombe et al. (2008) found that women in the early stages of pregnancy were most likely to report they had greater amounts of dissatisfaction with their bodies. In addition, both studies found pregnant women's tendencies to engage in body comparison while in early pregnancy predicted their seeing weight and shape as more important. Although to a smaller degree, tendencies to engage in body comparison also predicted feelings of being fat (assessed by 13 items on the Body Attitudes Questionnaire; Ben-Tovim & Walker, 1991) during late stages of pregnancy. These findings may be due to women comparing their changing bodies during the early stages of pregnancy to non-pregnant women who have gained weight, rather than other pregnant women (Duncombe et al., 2008). As a woman's pregnancy progresses, she may become used to her bodily changes and accept them as a normal part of a successful pregnancy.

Because of this, Duncombe et al. suggest the social comparison tendencies of pregnant women should be examined further. Interestingly, in the Skouteris et al. (2005) study, the pregnant women reported socio-cultural pressures to lose weight from close others and the media, led to decreases in their felt attractiveness, increases in seeing themselves as fat, and in placing importance on weight and shape.

One study that was qualitative in design examined how three differing groups of recently postpartum women dealt with eating, body shape, and weight transformations after giving birth. In this study, Patel, Lee, Wheatcroft, Barnes, and Stein (2005) examined predominately Caucasian British postpartum mothers who either had an eating disorder, were at risk for an eating disorder, or were part of a comparison group with no eating disorder concerns. Findings suggested those mothers with no eating disorder concerns were better able to cope with eating, body shape and weight changes than those with eating disorder concerns. However, Patel et al. state that all of the mothers in the study described being concerned about their pregnancy-related weight gain and many described feeling negatively about their appearance. Further, in evidence of the importance of examining body image during important reproductive stages in a woman's life, those mothers who had eating disorders compared the distress they felt about the changes in their bodies during pregnancy and once postpartum to how they felt about bodily changes during puberty. Despite the value of these studies in providing insight into how women feel about their bodies while pregnant, none of them address what impact media exposure may have on pregnant women's body image. As the next section will outline, media exposure is a pervasive and influential cultural force that needs to be examined.

Celebrities and Magazines

In a society that is inundated by media influence, scholars have argued it has become difficult to disconnect media and culture. One of the ways that media and culture converge is through society's obsession with celebrities. According to Holmes and Redmond (2006), celebrities speak with their bodies and thus are subject to a gaze created by popular media that spotlights the shape and size of their bodies much less often than close-ups of their faces. For female celebrities, popular media focus on photographing their perfect bodies in order for them "to-be-looked at" (p. 121). Female celebrities' bodies are often idealized cultural indicators of what the perfect woman consists of such as: "long legs, slender wrists, ample bust, thin neck, and flat stomach" (p. 121). However, fans of celebrities not only worship them based on their perfect bodies, but also often condemn them for the ever more imperfect bodies they present. Fans seek to discover the "truth" about their favorite celebrities and when they are allowed to see the celebrity without all of their finery, fans feel as if they are free to gaze at and be intimate with the true celebrity. "If one gets to see the star or celebrity body as flawed (fat, spotty, wrinkled), then one is supposedly getting a more natural or unmediated picture of them" (p. 4).

The search for intimacy with a celebrity is tied to some individuals responding to a celebrity as if they were in a real relationship with that celebrity, also known as parasocial interaction (PSI). First introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), PSI often resembles a friendship, which is often found in regard to individuals' feelings about celebrities (Giles, 2002). According to Holmes and Redmond (2006), celebrities are often thought of by their fans as being replacements for absent or nonexistent relationships

with others. Related to PSI is the concept of wishful identification. Wishful identification is defined as "a psychological process through which an individual desires or attempts to become like another person" (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005, p. 327). Several studies have examined individuals' desires to become like those they see portrayed in the media (Hobbs, Broder, Pope, & Rowe, 2006; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Hoffner, Levine, Sullivan, Crowell, Pedrick, & Berndt, 2006; Lonial & Van Auken, 1986; Martin & Kennedy, 1994). Although wishful identification always involves a desire to emulate a media figure, Giles (2002) asserts PSI does not always entail this desire. Wishful identification is important to examine further as identification with and comparison to media characters are often based on physical traits (Cohen & Perse, 2003) and have been found to significantly influence individuals' decisions about their own appearance, attitudes, goals, and other relevant characteristics of self (Austin & Meili, 1994; Boon & Lomore, 2001). Holmes and Redmond (2006) assert the celebrity body is a part of this process as "the body of the star or celebrity circulates in intertextual fantasy environments whereby fans/consumers are asked to like (love), and be physically like, the famed figure in question" (p. 122).

However, audience reception research employing qualitative methods have found conflicting results. For example, Johannson (2006) found that women tabloid readers indicated the major appeal of these publications was the bashing of celebrities, which lessened the resentment, jealousy, and frustration they felt towards celebrities. Thus, pregnant women may identify with pregnant celebrities they see depicted in the media influencing how they feel about how they look while pregnant but they may also find comfort in the bashing celebrity gossip magazines take part in when discussing pregnant

celebrities and distance themselves from those celebrities. This study will attempt to further explore these conflicting findings by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The images, traits, and cultural ideals of celebrities are widespread, disseminated, replayed, and copied by all forms of media (Holmes & Redmond, 2006). One particularly pervasive media purveyor of celebrity information are celebrity gossip magazines, also referred to as tabloids. Gossip magazines are one of the three main subgenres of women's magazines (along with fashion and lifestyle), and they often include stories about celebrities frequently emphasizing celebrity babies (Hermes, 1995).

Scholars have placed a great deal of focus on women's magazines (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Tuchman, 1978; Wolf, 1991) and much less emphasis on the subgenre of celebrity gossip magazines. However, celebrity gossip magazines should not be ignored by scholarly research for several reasons. First, magazines are important media to examine because, according to Abrahamson (2007), "they not only reflect or are a product of the social reality of the times, but they also serve a larger and more pro-active function – that they can also be a catalyst, shaping the social reality of their sociocultural moment" (p. 667). This is especially true of gossip magazines because, as the name of the genre implies, these magazines are often used socially, as portable devices providing topics to share and discuss with others. As Johansson (2006) argues about the gossip magazine, "intersecting with the social and spiritual dimensions of celebrity consumption is its potential role in the construction of cultural identities" (p. 346).

Second, it is important to examine gossip magazines because entertainment and news have increasingly become blurred resulting in a surge of "infotainment." For

example, popular celebrity gossip magazines such as *People* ranks 10th among the top 100 largest magazines based on circulation, and *US Weekly* ranks 43rd (The New York Job Source). According to Mnookin (2003), this type of magazine has soared in popularity because of a growing obsession in the United States with celebrity news. These magazines allow insight into both celebrities' professional and personal lives. By devoting coverage to celebrities when they are speculated to be pregnant, confirmed pregnant, or recently post-partum, the celebrities may seem more accessible to the public (Carlson, 2008). Further, celebrity magazines are strategically placed in the check-out aisles of grocery, drug, and discount stores throughout the country where women frequently spend a good deal of time waiting in lines. Celebrity magazines such as *US Weekly* and *Life & Style* have seen boosts in circulation over the past three years in particular evidencing their current pervasiveness in society (Ives, 2007).

Last, and most important to the present analysis, celebrity gossip magazines are an important medium to examine, especially in regard to depictions of the pregnant female body, because they have been found to sexually objectify pregnant celebrities bodies more often than non-pregnant celebrities' bodies (Hopper, 2009). This suggests that at a time such as pregnancy when women are carrying out the important function of giving life to another human being, celebrity gossip magazines focus on their bodies and appearance rather than this important function. The next section discusses further how the pregnant celebrity body has been portrayed in the media and in magazines in particular.

Media Portrayals of Celebrity Pregnancy

According to Deziel (2006), at one time not only were images of pregnant women hidden in Hollywood, but even the mere mention of the word "pregnant" was forbidden.

For example, Lucille Ball was not allowed to say the word on her popular television show *I Love Lucy*. However, all of this changed with one issue of *Vanity Fair* featuring pregnant actress Demi Moore on the cover. The cover image of Moore, who was in her third trimester, became an immediate controversy and, according to Matthews and Wexler (2000), ripped off the previous restraints on public depictions of pregnancy. The American public, it appears, did not completely know how to respond to the newfound publicity accorded the pregnant form, and, in response, *Vanity Fair* placed approximately 88% of the copies of the magazine in a white paper sleeve to hide the cover photo (Donaton, 1991). However, in Manhattan where the magazine cover was not hidden, sellouts at many retailers were reported (Zeman, 1991).

Exactly one year after Moore's nude and pregnant body graced the cover of *Vanity Fair*, she again appeared on the cover of the magazine, non-pregnant and at first glance wearing a man's suit. Upon closer look, however, Moore was actually nude with the suit being painted onto her body. Matthews and Wexler (2000) argue that in this sense the pregnant belly took on the function of a fashion accessory that could be worn at some times and then taken off at others. Further, Moore being able to seemingly quickly return to her thin pre-baby self also increased pressure for pregnant women to conform to the thin ideal as rapidly as possible after delivering their babies.

Although a great deal of research has been conducted examining pregnant and postpartum women's body image, an examination of the role of the media in this process has been ignored. First, it is important to examine how the media portray pregnant women as it may have some impact on how individuals come to view others who are pregnant as well as how pregnant women come to view themselves. Second, it is

important to examine how the media's sexual objectification of women may impact a pregnant and recently postpartum woman's body image. Last, as suggested by Duncombe et al. (2008), how media images of women may or may not be used as social comparison targets needs to be examined further when exploring the comparison tendencies of pregnant women.

In the only known study to examine the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities depicted in the media, Hopper (2009) conducted a content analysis of photo captions focusing on both pregnant and non-pregnant celebrity women in U.S. celebrity gossip magazines. Findings indicated these magazines explicitly refer to the appearance of pregnant celebrities' bodies more frequently than the bodies of non-pregnant celebrities. The focus on the body of a woman while pregnant detracts from the important function of a pregnant woman sustaining another human's life. The effects these discussions and images have on non-celebrity women are thus important to investigate as they may contribute to the ideal of a slim body no matter the circumstances.

Further, Kelly (2007) conducted a qualitative analysis of U.S. celebrity magazine coverage of two pregnant celebrities, Angelina Jolie and Katie Holmes, in relation to female stereotyping. Findings indicated that although Jolie and Holmes were represented as two opposite female types of pregnant women, Jolie as "independent and active" and Holmes as "male-oriented and passive", neither were presented in a favorable light (Kelly, p. 20). Importantly, Kelly notes how celebrity magazines often compare celebrities based on their bodies and appearance. In addition, he discusses how these magazines have recently begun to compare pregnant celebrities based on these criteria and take part in "describing pregnant stars in terms of the size of their 'bumps'" (p. 13).

Nash (2005/2006) analyzed representations of Britney Spears' pregnant body. Specifically, Nash states "Spears' various characterizations as good/bad, sexy/modest, glamorous/grotesque, fit/fat, locate her within larger discourses [such as the 'sexy mother', the 'anti mother' or the 'good mother'] surrounding the corporeal tensions faced by all pregnant women, not just celebrities" (p. 44).

Goldenberg, Goplen, Cox, and Arndt (2007) argue the media present conflicting views of pregnancy. Of particular importance to the present study, they assert that when American media flaunt pregnancy, it is often in regards to celebrity bodies that present unrealistic images of pregnancy. These idealistic portrayals could make viewing pregnancy more acceptable by members of society despite these celebrities' bodies still defying the cultural ideal of female thinness when pregnant. However, at the same time, Goldenberg et al. assert, that the idealistic portrayals can enhance the dissatisfaction pregnant women have for their bodies because their bodies do not measure up to the unrealistic images disseminated. These impossible ideals are also evidenced in an analysis of *Shape Fit Pregnancy* magazine in regards to how "the pregnant form is presented as maternally successful yet aesthetically problematic" (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004, p. 610). As aesthetically problematic, Dworkin and Wachs argue, the pregnant body is described as "in need of getting your body back" in health and fitness discourses. Thus, it is important to study not only the messages that these portrayals emphasize to evaluate the unrealistic expectations the media disseminate in regard to pregnancy but to also study what impact these images have on pregnant women. In the next section, body image research conducted within the media effects tradition are reviewed and the two theories guiding Study 1 are discussed.

A Media Effects Approach to Body Image

Research on the Media and Body Image

Investigations into individuals' images of their bodies began in the 1920s when Paul Schilder took a psychological and sociological approach to body image research (Grogan, 1999). Specifically, Schilder studied the susceptibility of body image to change in regard to why many experienced inconsistencies in perceptions of body size, feelings of being thin and fat, and how body image impacted one's relations with others. Several definitions for what one's body image consists of have been proposed and employed in research examining individual's body image. Building upon Schilder's original body image research, Grogan defines body image as "a person's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about his or her body" (p. 2). Further, Grogan argues for emphasis to be placed on the recognition that body image is subjective and malleable to social influence.

One pervasive aspect of society that has been argued as an influence on one's body image is the relentless depiction of the exceptionally thin female body found and idealized in the media. In particular, media that idealize thinness, or thin-ideal-depicting media, are regarded as "those that focus on the thin body shape, to the exclusion of other facets of human character like personality and agency" (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003, p. 217). In addition, Harrison (2000) argues the media may also advance the thin ideal when fatness is portrayed as being undesirable, which also has been found to have negative impacts on individuals' body image.

An abundance of research studies has found that adolescent and adult women are affected by mass media images representing the thin-ideal (Harrison, 1997; 2000; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Levine & Smolak, 1998). For

example, in a meta-analysis of 25 experimentally designed body image studies, Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002) found that after viewing images of thin women, body satisfaction for women was significantly lower than after viewing images of average, overweight women or after viewing images depicting objects with no people included. Further, in a meta-analysis of 34 experimentally and survey-designed body image studies, the effects of media exposure on adolescent and adult females' body image were found to be small yet consistent (Holmstrom, 2004).

Several theories have been proposed and employed as frameworks in research studies examining the media's impact on girls' and women's body image. Two of the more frequently used frameworks are objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). Although rarely used in conjunction, these latter two theories are employed in this analysis of media and pregnant women's body image for two main reasons. First, both of these theories are used because they take into account how bodily changes that are characteristic during certain stages in a woman's life may affect body image evaluations. Second, and most importantly, in the present research the two theories are used together because the social comparison process may be the mechanism linking media use to women then objectifying themselves. A comprehensive discussion of these two theories is presented in the next two sections.

Objectification Theory

Sexual objectification is one proposed way the media focus on women's appearance. This objectification "occurs whenever people's bodies, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from their identity, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing them" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997,

p. 175). When a woman is sexually objectified, she experiences being evaluated and found worthy primarily based on her body and how it can be used by others. Building upon the notion of sexual objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) assert that girls and women have come to perceive themselves based on how they think their bodies appear to others and thus focus on their externally perceivable traits rather than their internal traits. This self-objectification can be a chronic, trait-like tendency; however, it can also become a state when individuals are in certain situations or are exposed to certain stimuli that can temporarily intensify self-objectification by making personal appearance particularly salient (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003).

Frequently sexual objectification occurs through the gaze of others on the female body, according to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). They assert that the media exhibit the objectifying gaze in two areas. First, the gaze is exhibited in visual media that portray interpersonal encounters in which males are portrayed as looking at females more frequently than females are portrayed looking at males. Second, the gaze is exhibited in visual media that focus on bodies and body parts drawing viewers to engage in an objectifying gaze of those images. Related to this, scholars have examined media depictions in terms of how women, and their appearance in particular, are the focus of the "male gaze." Specifically, representational critiques of media images examine the male gaze, which gives women characters the quality of "looked-at-ness" (Hart & Daughton, 2005, p. 298). The notion of the male gaze was first introduced by Mulvey (1975) who argues that in a society in which males and females have a power imbalance, the pleasure in looking allows for males to be active and females passive. In this case, men have the preferred point of view, and this "teaches an audience (even its female members) to see

female characters from the male character's perspective – as erotic, perhaps pathetic, but hardly dimensional" (Hart & Daughton, 2005, p. 299).

In a classic piece, Mulvey (1975) argues that women are the object of male gaze because in our patriarchal culture, women serve as other to the male standard and because men are disinclined to gaze at their own sex. This male gaze may lead women to take on an observer's perspective of themselves, or self-objectification. Further, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argue that engaging in self-objectification can lead to harmful consequences such as feelings of shame and anxiety, an inability to experience peak motivational states, and a disconnect between their external bodies and their own inner bodily experiences (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001).

Self-objectification may be learned from the media as according to Douglas (1994), the media including advertisements, movies, and television shows have taught women more so than men to relentlessly submit their bodies to surveillance. From the media, Douglas asserts "women learn to turn themselves into objects to be scrutinized; they learn they must continually watch themselves being watched by others" (p.17). Several content analyses have examined and provide evidence of how media images objectify both women and men (Archer, Iritani, Kimes, & Barrios, 1983; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Stankiewicz & Roselli, 2008; Thompson, 2000). However, textual messages that appear in conjunction with visual images (i.e., magazine headlines, photo captions and article text) may also serve to objectify individuals. In regards to what types of textual messages appear in magazines, Malkin, Wornian, and Chrisler (1999) examined gendered messages appearing on magazine covers. They found

bodily appearance to comprise a majority of the content of women's magazine covers. Specifically, the text appearing on the covers was analyzed for diet, exercise, or general messages about weight loss with no specific direction as to how to lose weight. In terms of the present study, the Malkin et al. analysis points to the importance of examining what types of impact the messages emphasized in the text appearing next to images of pregnant celebrities have on pregnant women.

Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) provides a framework to examine how changes in the female body over the lifespan coincide with changes in mental health risks such as depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. Specifically, this theory proposes "that having a reproductively mature female body may create a shared social experience, a vulnerability to sexual objectification, which may in turn create a shared set of psychological experiences" (p. 175). This is largely because, as Fredrickson and Roberts argue, a woman's body experiences drastic changes throughout her lifetime. Changes in the female body can be attributed to hormones (which play a large role in pregnancy), which then influence women's experience of sexual objectification by creating changes in the body that are visible to others. Thus, objectification theory proposes that sexual objectification will be most experienced by women during the stages in their lifespan when they are peak reproductive potential. It seems plausible, then, that pregnancy is another time in a woman's life that would be influential in her experiences of sexual objectification as the pregnant body goes through drastic changes in a relatively short amount of time, and those changes become increasingly visible to others as the pregnancy progresses.

Despite the usefulness of objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) for examining body image throughout the lifespan, existing research has not done so in regards to the specific aspect of pregnancy. One study employing objectification theory to examine women's body image throughout the lifespan was conducted by Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) and was cross-sectional in design. Findings indicated that self-objectification significantly declined with age; however, body dissatisfaction stayed the same across the age range. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that objectification theory is useful in describing the manner in which body image changes with age. Although examining body image across the lifespan, the study did not examine the impact of pregnancy nor of media portrayals on self-objectification. Further, as the media have been found to play an important role in self-objectification processes (Aubrey, 2006a; 2006b; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003), how the media are used by and how it impacts women during pregnancy in particular, is important to investigate. Therefore, the present analysis examines objectification processes in relation to the mass media during the important stage of pregnancy.

In applying objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) to individuals' perceptions of their bodies, researchers have examined how exposure to sexually objectifying situations may impact individuals' engagement in self-objectification. In one of the first applications of objectification theory, Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) conducted two experiments testing both men and women's trait and state self-objectification and related body shame. First, they manipulated women's self-objectification by having them try on either a swimsuit or a sweater and found that women who tried on the swimsuit and were high on trait self-objectification reported the

largest levels of body shame. This increase in body shame then predicted these women's restricted eating behavior.

In the second experiment, they had both men and women try on either swimwear or a sweater and tested their state self-objectification, levels of body shame, discrete emotion, as well as having them complete a test of math performance. Again, women who tried on the swimsuit reported more body shame than those who tried on the sweater, which in turn predicted restrained eating. However, this effect was only present in the women participants not in the men. In regard to the math test, women who tried on a swimsuit did worse than those who tried on a sweater but again this effect was not found in the men who participated. Fredrickson et al. (1998) note that these results could be interpreted as being due to effects of stereotype threat as math is a field in which men are stereotypically thought to be superior to women. Thus, those women who tried on swimsuits were possibly reminded that they were women, which in turn reminded them that their gender is thought to be inferior in math. However, Fredrickson et al. argue this explanation is improbable as women in the sweater condition were most likely also aware of the stereotype and therefore women in both conditions were aware of and completing the math test under stereotype threat surroundings. Rather, they assert this finding is due to the fact that those women who tried on a swimsuit "face the added burdens associated with self-objectification, and it is these added burdens that account for their more extreme deficits in performance" (p. 280). Such added burdens concern how self-objectification can have negative cognitive effects as individuals' self-conscious examination of their own appearance depletes the amount of mental resources they have for performing other tasks. Thus, the women who tried on the swimsuits in this study were possibly so

concerned with how they looked in the swimsuit that they then had less mental resources available to fully concentrate and to do well on the math test.

The role of the media in influencing one's tendency to engage in self-objectification has also been examined by several other studies. In manipulating individuals' tendencies to self-objectify, several researchers have exposed individuals to objectified media images and have tested whether those images influence individuals to self-objectify. For example, Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) examined how reading sports magazines and being exposed to women's lean, women's non-lean, and men's sports videos affected adolescents' body perceptions. First, they used a survey design to measure adolescents' *trait* self-objectification and the relationship between sports magazine reading and eating disorder symptomatology. Findings indicated that during each stage of female adolescence, trait self-objectification was present and increased significantly with age regardless of individuals' race and body mass index. Although sports magazine reading was linked to decreased body shame and disordered eating in older adolescents, trait self-objectification in all ages predicted mental health risks including body shame, disordered eating, and depression.

Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) also manipulated sexual objectification in media stimuli in a second study employing an experimental design. The experiment measured adolescents' *state* self-objectification as participants were randomly assigned to one of three video conditions (men's sports, women's lean sports, and women's nonlean sports) or to a no-media comparison group with no stimulus whatsoever. Findings indicated that for White participants watching lean sports was associated with a larger increase in self-objectification than either watching nonlean or men's sports, whereas for participants of

color, watching nonlean sports increased self-objectification more so than watching lean sports or men's sports. Exposure to men's sports did not raise self-objectification in either racial group. Whereas watching sports in which fellow women are participating may lead to girls thinking about their own bodies and then engaging in self-objectification, Harrison and Fredrickson argue exposure to male athletes is unlikely to do so because of the focus on the male body. These findings are important to Study 1 of the present analysis because they demonstrate the possibility of exposure to sexually objectifying media stimuli temporarily triggering state self-objectification.

In another study demonstrating the potential of sexually objectifying media stimuli in impacting one's state self-objectification, Harper and Tiggemann (2008) tested the effects of exposing young women to magazine advertisements that included either a thin woman alone, a thin woman with at least one attractive man, or ads with no images of people. They found more reports of state self-objectification occurred in the women who viewed the ads that included images of thin women, both alone and with attractive men, than those who viewed the ads with no images of people in them. Not only did these participants experience an increase in state self-objectification, they also reported greater amounts of weight-related appearance anxiety, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction. The importance of these findings, according to Harper and Tiggemann, is that they "demonstrate that self-objectification can be stimulated in women without explicitly focusing attention on their own bodies" (p. 649). Thus, both the Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) and the Harper and Tiggemann studies indicate that self-objectification can be triggered simply by women viewing images of other women's bodies, which are often displayed in the media. It would seem plausible then that similar results would be found

in pregnant women, an aim of Study 1.

Studies into the relationship between media exposure and self-objectification have also employed survey methodology. For example, in a 2-year panel study involving undergraduate men and women, Aubrey (2006a), found participants' levels of exposure to sexually objectifying television during the first year of the study experienced increased trait self-objectification in the second year of the study. In addition, the participants' trait self-objectification during the first year of the study predicted participants' selective avoidance of sexually objectifying television during the second year. Thus, women may be under constant threat of engaging in self-objectification when exposed daily to the large amounts of media images objectifying the female body and this self-objectification may be so uncomfortable that women may then choose to avoid such media in order to protect themselves.

As celebrity gossip magazines have been found to objectify the pregnant female body (Hopper, 2009), it would seem plausible that self-objectification would be enhanced when exposed to objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities found in these magazines. Thus, based on past research that has found a link between individuals' exposure to objectifying images and increased levels of self-objectification (Aubrey, 2006a; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008), the following hypothesis is posed:

> *H1:* Pregnant women who view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will report more self-objectification than pregnant women who are assigned to view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women who view images and text focusing on baby products.

Further, Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, and Smith (2009) suggest it is important to recognize that self-objectification is not necessarily a negative or positive experience because a woman might be pleased with the way she looks and still engage in self-objectification. However, Aubrey et al. found in an experimental study that exposure to sexually objectifying body-display images described their appearance less positively than women who were exposed to body-parts images and "control" images featuring miscellaneous things and places with no people in them. Thus, the following hypothesis in regards to valence of appearance descriptors is posed:

H2: Pregnant women who view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will use more negative descriptors to describe their appearance than pregnant women who view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women who view images and text focusing on baby products.

Aubrey (2006b) also examined the role played by selective exposure and potential individual differences and moderating influences on the impact exposure to sexually objectifying media has on college women. Results indicated that, in general, exposure to sexually objectifying media actually resulted in lower amounts of trait self-objectification with only women who had low levels of global self-esteem being negatively affected. According to Aubrey (2006b), "the negative influences of sexually objectifying media are only likely if individual characteristics make women more susceptible to the media's influence" (p. 168). Aubrey's (2006b) study indicates the importance of examining possible moderating influences when investigating the role of self-objectification in the relationship between media exposure and self-body perceptions.

One such moderating factor that has been found to be influential in the relationship

between sexually objectifying media exposure and self-objectification is body surveillance. Body surveillance is closely linked to self-objectification as they both involve a concern about appearance. Aubrey (2006a) asserts that body surveillance includes both thinking and worrying about appearance and actually working on one's appearance (e.g., primping) as a result of trait self-objectification. Because of this distinction, Aubrey has investigated trait self-objectification and body surveillance as measuring similar but not equal constructs. In examining the role of body surveillance, Aubrey et. al (2009) found that women who reported higher levels of body surveillance and who were exposed to sexually objectifying body-display images reported more self-objectification than women who were exposed to body-parts images and "control" images featuring miscellaneous things and places. Thus, the following hypothesis is posed to examine the influence of body surveillance on self-objectification in pregnant women:

> *H3:* The effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification will be strongest for those who score high on trait body surveillance.

Another possible moderating factor that will be tested in Study 1 is wishful identification (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Research has indicated that individuals' identification with and comparison to media characters are often based on physical traits (Cohen & Perse, 2003) and have been found to significantly influence individuals' decisions about their own appearance, attitudes, goals, and other relevant characteristics (Austin & Meili, 1994; Boon & Lomore, 2001). It is plausible then that pregnant women who wishfully identify with the pregnant celebrities they see depicted will influence how

they feel about their bodies while pregnant. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posed to examine the role of wishful identification as a moderating factor:

H4: The effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification will be strongest for those who score high on wishful identification with the celebrities featured.

According to Harper and Tiggemann (2008), negative views of one's own body have been linked to those who have high levels of trait self-objectification. Prior research has found one particularly damaging experience to be felt anxiety about one's own weight-related appearance (e.g., Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). Thus, the role weight-related appearance anxiety may play in the self-objectification process will be assessed by the following hypothesis:

H5: Pregnant women who view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will report more weight-related appearance anxiety than pregnant women who view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women who view images and text focusing on baby products.

Further, Aubrey (2007) argues for the need to examine mediating mechanisms that may help elucidate the relationship between media exposure and how individuals feel about their bodies. In a survey design study, Aubrey examined the possible influences mediating the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying media and body perceptions among men and women. Specifically the role of trait self-objectification and body surveillance, combined into the latent construct of body self-consciousness, was investigated. The findings of this study indicated that exposure to sexually objectifying media is related to individuals' more closely monitoring their bodies. Aubrey found body

self-consciousness, the role of trait self-objectification and body surveillance combined, to partially mediate the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying media and body shame and anxiety. Thus, the following hypothesis is posed to investigate the mediating role of self-objectification in pregnant women's exposure to sexually objectified pregnant celebrities:

H6: Self-objectification will serve as a mediator in the relation between exposure to sexually objectified pregnant celebrities and weight-related appearance anxiety.

Past literature that has examined women's body image during pregnancy has highlighted a few variables related to pregnancy that may impact how negatively individuals feel about their bodies while pregnant. One important variable that has been found to impact individuals' thoughts about their bodies while pregnant is the stage of pregnancy a woman is in. Specifically, Skouteris et al. (2005) and Duncombe et al. (2008) found that women in the early stages of pregnancy reported greater amounts of dissatisfaction with their bodies than women in the later stages of pregnancy. Further, although not previously examined in past literature, it is possible that the number of births women have had prior to their current pregnancy would impact their perceptions of their bodies. Thus, the following two research questions are posed to examine the impact of these pregnancy-related variables:

RQ1: How, if at all, will the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities and pregnant women's self-objectification vary across the three trimesters of pregnancy?

RQ2: How, if at all, will the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities and pregnant women's

self-objectification vary between those with no previous live births and those with one or more previous live births?

Social Comparison Theory

Another widely used theoretical framework in body image research is social comparison theory originally developed by Festinger (1954). This theory asserts that individuals are naturally inclined to compare themselves to others. According to the theory, this is because people have a natural desire to evaluate themselves and thus will compare themselves with those around them in order to make those evaluations. Festinger argues that individuals come to learn about themselves through these comparisons in which individuals evaluate their own attributes based on the attributes they see others to have.

The social comparison process has been extended by scholars since Festinger's (1954) original conceptualization of the theory. Wood (1989) proposes that besides the main process of comparing oneself to others, there are also three surrounding dimensions included in social comparisons such as self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement. These dimensions, according to Wood, impact the ways in which individuals try to meet their goals through engaging in social comparison. These dimensions also influence how individuals respond to the comparisons that are forced upon them in the social world they inhabit.

In regard to the self-evaluation dimension, the most important postulate of this dimension is that individuals are more likely to compare themselves to those they deem to be similar to themselves. Individuals feel they are able to better evaluate themselves when comparing themselves to others they deem to be like them. In addition,

comparisons appear to have the most impact on individuals who feel greater similarity with the person they are comparing themselves to particularly in regard to sex, race, age, and personality (Frisby, 2004; Tesser, 1986). For example, Frisby examined the social comparison processes and perceptions of similarity involved in viewing ad models of differing races. Results indicated college-age African American women who were exposed to idealized images of African American models that they felt similar to reported lowered self-satisfaction with body esteem than African American women who were exposed to idealized images of Caucasian models that they felt less similar to.

The relevance of Festinger's (1954) classification of two differing types of comparisons that individuals engage in comes into play in the self-improvement dimension. The first is upward comparison whereby individuals view a better-looking and/or more successful person than they themselves are and then compare themselves to that better off person. The second type is downward comparison whereby individuals look at someone who they perceive to be less good-looking and/or successful and evaluate themselves based on that comparison. According to Wood (1989), those looking for self-improvement can possibly learn from as well as feel support from engaging in upward comparisons with those they feel are superior to them on the specific attribute under comparison, but who they also feel are similar to them on other attributes. However, Wood also asserts that if the upward comparison target is deemed as a competitor, the comparison may result in an individual feeling threatened.

The last surrounding dimension in the social comparison process, according to Wood (1989) is self-enhancement. Whereas upward comparisons are more involved in the self-improvement dimension, downward comparisons are more relevant to the self-

enhancement dimension. When engaging in downward comparisons with targets (comparisons with similar others who are deemed to be less successful and/or attractive), individuals generate a sense of self-enhancement.

Social comparison theory is useful to body image research because, as Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, and Tantleff-Dunn (1999) assert, the "theory proposes that individual differences in the tendency to compare oneself with others accounts for differing levels of body image disturbance within the context of a culture that endorses thinness and attractiveness" (p. 126). A large body of research has examined the role of social comparison in impacting one's body image. Investigations into the nature of individual's social comparison tendencies and body image have included correlational, experimental, and comparative theoretical studies (Thompson et al., 1999). One of the first examinations of the theory was correlational in nature and found that levels of body dissatisfaction were related to women's tendencies to compare their own weight with others (Striegel-Moore, McAvay, & Rodin, 1986). Since this initial study, Thompson et al. note that correlational studies have consistently found an association between individuals' engaging in social comparison and their levels of satisfaction with their bodies with those who tend to compare with higher frequencies being less satisfied. Most of the experimental studies, according to Thompson et al., involved measuring social comparison tendencies in individuals after exposing them to media images, which leads to the next section.

Although a great deal of research has indicated the negative effects of media images on women, some have found these effects to vary depending on individual differences, with one such difference being amount of social comparison tendencies. A

brief review of these results led Tiggemann and McGill (2004) to conclude "clearly, not all women are equally vulnerable to adverse effects of media images" (p. 25). Thus, the role that social comparison plays in the media's impact on girl and women's body image has also been examined in a great deal of research. This is because in applying this theory to media images, it is plausible that individuals compare themselves to those they see depicted in the media, which are primarily those who exemplify the thin-ideal. Several studies have investigated how a variety of media images may serve as comparison targets and what effects those comparisons have on individuals.

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) is important to apply in conjunction with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) because it is likely that engagement in social comparison is part of the objectification process and links individuals' media use to their seeing themselves primarily as objects to be looked at by others. For example, a woman may see images and text sexually objectifying a celebrity in a magazine, which could prompt her to compare her own body with that of the celebrity she sees depicted. This comparison of her body to that of the celebrity may then, in turn, cause the woman to view her worth as primarily based on appearances. Thus, both social comparison theory and objectification theory are useful to use together because they help to explain the larger picture of the media's role in impacting how individuals feel about their bodies.

Much of the research examining the media, body image, and social comparison processes has focused on the advertising industry and how models may be used as comparison targets. Specifically, social comparison has been found to be a pervasive interactive use of advertising among females when viewing female models (Luther &

Nentl, 2001; Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004; Wilcox & Laird, 2000). In examining social comparison processes in individuals when viewing advertisements, Richins (1991) argues the media frequently depict idealized models, which consumers use as standards to which they feel they must attempt to be like. When examining how idealized images in advertising affect females in particular, Richins found that advertising does cause some women to engage in social comparison. In addition, Luther and Nentl (2001) found teenage girls in Japan to engage in social comparison with ad models, which helped to form the perceptions those girls had of the roles women play in society. Thus, they state "perhaps it is through the process of social comparison that advertising has the greatest influence on shaping the thoughts of individuals; without this interactive behavior, the impact is minute" (p. 37).

Outside of studies into social comparison involving advertisement models, research has also examined how individuals may compare themselves to celebrities depicted in the media as well as television characters. For example, Heinberg and Thompson (1992) found a significant relationship between undergraduate female tendencies to compare themselves with celebrities and increases in body dissatisfaction, desire for thinness, and bulimic behaviors. Similarly, in a study involving high school females, Botta (1999) found those females who engaged in social comparison with television characters reported increases in bulimic behaviors, endorsement of the thin ideal, dissatisfaction with their bodies, and desire for thinness. Further, it appears individuals' tendencies to engage in social comparison in the first place may be impacted by their media exposure. For example, Goodman (2005) found individuals' thin ideal internalization and social comparison tendencies were influenced more so by felt

pressures from the media than from the dieting behaviors they see their peers engaging in. It seems plausible, then, that those who tend to more frequently make comparisons of their appearance with others will be more affected by sexually objectifying images, focusing on women's bodies, than those who do so infrequently. It is important to examine how individual differences in social comparison tendencies in relation to differing factors related to stages in a woman's lifespan, such as pregnancy, can impact the affect of media exposure on one's body image.

Thus, based on the above research that has found a link between both state appearance comparison as well as pre-existing tendencies to engage in social comparison and body image related factors, the following hypotheses are posed:

H7: Pregnant women who view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will engage in more social comparison than pregnant women who view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women who view images and text focusing on baby products.

H8: The effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification will be strongest for those who score high on appearance comparison tendencies.

H9: State appearance comparison will serve as a mediator in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and self-objectification.

Further, social comparison research has shown that comparisons with targets individuals' feel a greater similarity to appear to have the most negative impact on those individuals' body esteem when those comparisons are made (Frisby, 2004). Because

similarity has been found to be an important dimension in the social comparison process, it is important to examine when analyzing how social comparison processes might be the mechanism linking media exposure to self-objectification. Thus, the following research question is posed to examine what impact levels of felt similarity with the pictured celebrities have on individuals' self-objectification:

RQ3: Will levels of felt similarity with the pictured celebrities have a moderating influence on the effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification?

Summary of Study 1 Purpose

Overall, Study 1 seeks to both combine and extend the concepts of objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) to examine the impact of celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities on currently pregnant women. Past research examining the impact of media exposure on individuals' body image has relied heavily on the frameworks of objectification theory and social comparison theory. However, past research has not combined the propositions of these two theories to explore the processes at work when individuals' body image is impacted by media exposure. Further, past research has not examined the impact of media exposure on women while pregnant, a time in many women's lifespan in which their outer appearance is changing rapidly and over a short period of time. Thus, Study 1 seeks to fill these gaps within the literature by examining the hypotheses posed in the previous sections to provide a better understanding of the effects of media exposure on women's perceptions of their bodies while pregnant.

CHAPTER THREE: STUDY 1 METHOD

The purpose of the first study is to investigate the impact of objectified images and accompanying text regarding pregnant celebrities found in celebrity magazines on pregnant women's (1) state self-objectification, (2) social comparison tendencies, and (3) weight and appearance anxiety. Employing an experimental design for Study 1 allows for an investigation of whether celebrity magazine images have an impact on these dependent outcomes in the short term. In addition, the experiment allows for an investigation of whether levels of trait body surveillance, wishful identification, and tendencies to make appearance comparisons moderate the impact of viewing sexually objectifying depictions of pregnant celebrities. Last, the experiment tests whether self-objectification mediates the relationship between viewing sexually objectified images and text and individuals' weight and appearance anxiety and whether social comparison mediates the relationship between viewing sexually objectifying images and text and self-objectification.

Study 1 Pre-test

Prior to data collection, 11 pregnant women were solicited through snowball sampling to evaluate the stimuli used in the test conditions. The photos featuring pregnant celebrities used in the pre-test were taken from print and online versions of *Us Weekly*, *People*, *OK!*, *National Enquirer*, and *Life & Style*. The sexually objectified photos of pregnant celebrities were selected for the pre-test based upon the operational definition of sexual objectification found to have the most priming influence by Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, and Smith (2009), which consists of women with a high degree of body display.

For the purposes of the present study, visual objectification in the photos of pregnant celebrities was deemed as sexually objectifying if it adhered to two criteria (1) the celebrity was wearing little clothing and (2) if her belly was emphasized either by the use of clothing or full skin exposure of the belly.

The 11 pre-test participants viewed a mixture of full-body and head shot photos of 30 different celebrities. The participants saw 30 photos featuring the entire bodies of 30 different celebrities as well as 10 photos of a selection of the same 30 celebrities cropped to include only their heads and shoulders. For the full-body photos of pregnant celebrities, the amount of exposure of the celebrities' bodies ranged from some of the celebrities wearing bikinis with their bellies fully exposed to some of the celebrities fully clothed with no skin exposed but with tight clothing accentuating their pregnant bellies. Pre-test participants viewed each photo on a link through SurveyMonkey. After viewing the photos, they were asked to rate the amount of sexual objectification present in each photo on an 11-point scale (0 = *not at all sexually objectifying*; 10 = *extremely sexually objectifying*). Sexual objectification was defined for the participants as follows:

> Sexual objectification occurs whenever a person's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from his or her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing him or her. When objectified, people are treated as bodies – and in particular, as bodies that exist for the pleasure of others. (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 175)

Participants were also asked to rate the extent to which each image made them think about their own bodies (0 = *not at all*; 5 = *very much*), the extent to which they compared themselves to those they saw depicted in the photos and captions (0 = *no comparison*

whatsoever; 5 = *a great deal of comparison*), the extent to which they identified with the celebrity in each image (0 = *not at all;* 5 = *very much*), the extent to which they liked the celebrity (1 = *a lot*; 4 = *not at all*), the extent to which they liked the photo (1 = *a lot*; 4 = *not at all*), and how physically attractive they found the celebrity in each image to be (0 = *not at all*; 5 = *very much*). In addition, participants were asked to rate how candid or posed the celebrity appeared to be (1 = *extremely candid*; 5 = *extremely posed*), how much of the celebrity's skin was exposed (1 = *a lot*; 4 = *none*), the size of the celebrity's belly (0 = *very small*; 4 = *very large*), and to identify the facial expression of the celebrity in each image (1 = *sad*; 5 = *happy*).

To select the photos ultimately used as stimuli for Study 1, the results of the pre-test were analyzed to determine whether participants could distinguish between the sexually objectifying and non-objectifying stimuli. In addition, results were analyzed to see if the objectifying images made them think about their bodies more so than the non-objectifying images. Last, in order to ensure that objectification was not conflated with identification and/or physical attractiveness ratings of the celebrities, differences in the participants' ratings of those factors for both versions were assessed.

The means and standard deviations for the five celebrities selected for inclusion in Study 1 sexually objectifying stimuli are presented in Table 1. Ultimately, the five celebrities selected for inclusion in Study 1 stimuli were Tori Spelling, Nicole Kidman, Heidi Klum, Nicole Richie, and Angelina Jolie. In addition, the pre-test sought to determine whether participants could distinguish between the full-body, sexually objectifying celebrity images and the headshot only, non-objectifying celebrity images. Thus, paired samples *t*-tests were conducted between the full body images and the

headshot only images. The analyses revealed there was a significant difference in ratings of sexual objectification between the full-body Tori Spelling ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 1.57$) and headshot only Spelling ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 2.41$) images (t (10) = 4.80, $p = .001$), between the full-body Heidi Klum ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 3.59$) and headshot only Klum ($M = 1.00$, $SD = .000$)[1] images (t (9) = 3.26, $p = .010$), and between the full-body Angelina Jolie ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 3.17$) and the headshot only Jolie ($M = 1.20$, $SD = .42$) images (t (9) = 3.32, $p = .009$) (see Table 2).

These analyses were not conducted for differences between full-body and headshot-only images for Kidman and Richie, because headshot images of those two celebrities were not included in the pre-test stimuli. Only 10 of the images included in the pre-test were headshot only because it was deemed more important to include a greater number of full-body images in the pre-test. Because the full-body images varied in the amount of body display as well as facial expression, pose and celebrity pictured, whereas the headshot only images only varied in regards to the celebrity pictured and facial expression, it was crucial to provide pre-test participants with a wider range of full-body images to rate. The full-body shots of Kidman and Richie were compared in a paired sample *t*-test with headshot images of Ellen Pompeo and Jennifer Garner, who were rated similarly on all of the pre-test categories to Kidman and Richie, and the *t*-tests were not statistically significant.

Study 1

Participants

In total, 301 pregnant women participated in Study 1. Participants were recruited through Live Journal and Facebook, both social networking sites, as well as through

postings on pregnancy chat rooms (e.g., babycrowd.com and iparenting.com) and through a university-wide mass announcement email ($N = 294$). In addition, a small portion of the participants ($N = 7$) were solicited by college students enrolled in an introductory communication course. The students provided the researcher with the email addresses of currently pregnant women they knew in order for the women to be contacted and asked to participate in the present study. Upon completion of the study by the pregnant women they referred, students' earned extra credit in the course. All of the pregnant women who took part in study one were entered in a raffle with a chance to win one of three $50 gift certificates to Amazon.com.

The participants were on average 29.20 years old ($SD = 4.58$). In total, 92.2% ($N = 278$) of the participants identified as Caucasian, 2.6% ($N = 8$) as African American, 2.3% ($N = 7$) as Hispanic, 1.3% ($N = 4$) as Asian-Pacific Islander, and .3% ($N = 1$) as Native American. The remaining 1.0% ($N = 3$) did not identify with any of these categories. On a scale from 1 (some high school) to 5 (advanced degree achieved), participants reported a mean of 3.98 ($SD = .82$) to describe their highest level of education completed.

Other demographic characteristics relevant to a sample of pregnant women included the current week of pregnancy each woman was in and the number of children each woman had given birth to prior to her current pregnancy. The participants were on average 22.53 weeks ($SD = 10.73$) pregnant and reported a mean of .70 prior live births ($SD = 1.00$). Mean Body Mass Index (BMI) was 28.23 ($SD = 5.71$).

Design and Procedure

The design for Study 1 was a between-subjects experimental design with random assignment to one of three conditions: exposure to sexually objectifying images and accompanying text focusing on five pregnant celebrities ($N = 103$), exposure to non-objectifying images and accompanying text focusing on five pregnant celebrities ($N = 92$), and exposure to "control" images focusing on baby products with no people featured ($N = 107$).

Before participants viewed the stimuli, they were asked to complete a survey on SurveyMonkey assessing their amount of overall media consumption including magazine readership and television exposure; amount of viewing of the specific magazines included in the study (*Life & Style, People, OK!, National Enquirer*, and *Us Weekly*) as well as pregnancy, fitness and beauty magazines; and exposure to television shows that focus on real-life pregnant women (*18 and Counting, I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant, 16 and Pregnant, A Baby Story,* and *Bringing Home Baby*). In addition, the survey asked participants to indicate what stage of pregnancy they are currently in, how many live births they have had as well as to provide several demographic variables (e.g., age, occupation, highest level of education achieved). Interspersed throughout the survey were the measures of body surveillance, body esteem, and appearance comparison tendencies with various distracter questions so as not to tip off the participants to the true purpose of the study.

Then, each participant was randomly assigned a condition to view through SurveyMonkey containing 10 photos and photo captions in only one of the three categories. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) photos and

captions sexually objectifying pregnant celebrities, (2) non-objectifying photos and captions depicting the same pregnant celebrities, and (3) photos and captions depicting baby products with no people featured. There were two versions of the full-body condition counterbalanced to control for any order effects.

Once the data were collected, independent samples *t*-tests were calculated to examine any differences between the counterbalanced condition. The *t*-tests were not statistically significant; thus, the data from the participants who viewed the full-body stimuli were collapsed into one condition for any subsequent data analysis.

The main SurveyMonkey link for this study was set to randomly assign each participant who logged in to one of the three condition websites. Participants were able to access their assigned web site and the related pre- and post-exposure questionnaires on SurveyMonkey from a computer of their choosing. To check random assignment, age, BMI, week of pregnancy each woman was currently in, media consumption, magazine readership, body surveillance, body esteem, and appearance comparison tendency scores across the conditions was compared in order to examine any differences between participants in the three conditions. The only statistically significant difference across conditions was for age $F(2, 300) = 3.15$, $p < .05$. Thus, age was controlled for in all subsequent analyses.

Participants were told they were being asked to evaluate magazines specifically targeting pregnant women. They were then told their objective was to rate the quality of the magazine photos and captions they were exposed to. To mask the purpose of the study, participants were also asked to rate the magazine excerpt on a five-point scale (1 = *very low*, 5 = *very high*) in terms of how well it ranked for visual quality, ability to grab

their attention, and their level of interest. In addition, to enhance participants' attention to the photos and captions, they were asked to identify which magazine they thought the image had originally appeared in and to write a sentence describing why they thought the image had appeared in that particular magazine. Immediately following exposure to each photo and photo caption, they completed the dependent measures assessing self-objectification, state weight and appearance anxiety, and state social comparison.

Stimuli

Five photos and accompanying photo captions were used for each condition based upon Groesz et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis finding that experimental studies investigating media impact on body image reported the greatest effect sizes when presenting participants with one to nine stimuli. Thus, those assigned to the sexually objectified pregnant celebrity condition viewed five full-color photos with accompanying photo caption text featuring five sexually objectified pregnant celebrities and five "filler" images of baby products to mask the true purpose of the study. Those assigned to the non-objectifying pregnant celebrity condition viewed five full-color photos with accompanying captions featuring five pregnant celebrities, but the images only showed their faces and the text did not objectify them, and the same five "filler" images as the objectifying condition. Those assigned to the control condition viewed 10 full-color photos with accompanying captions featuring baby products, with no people appearing, and included the same five "filler" images presented to the other two conditions plus five additional "filler" images.

Prior to exposure to the stimuli, participants filled out measures of body surveillance, body esteem, and appearance comparison tendencies, which were measured

as potential moderators. After each image, participants in the full-body and headshot-only conditions also filled out the measure of wishful identification. Immediately following exposure to the stimuli, participants filled out the dependent measures: the Twenty Statements Test (measuring state self-objectification) and the Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire. Those in the full-body and headshot-only conditions then filled out the measure of state appearance comparison. They were told they were being asked to take the Twenty Statements Test, the trait self-objectification test, the state appearance comparison measure, and the wishful identification measure, in addition to evaluating magazine excerpts, because the researchers wanted to know more about them as potential magazine readers. At the end of the experiment, participants were presented with a paragraph debriefing them of the true purpose of the experiment they just completed and asking them to further participate in study two if they were eligible.

Pre-Exposure Measures

Each full measure included in this study can be found in Appendix A.

Body surveillance. The Surveillance Sub-Scale of the Objectified Body Consciousness scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) was used to measure body surveillance as it assesses how often individuals observe their own bodies and think of their bodies more in relation to how it looks than how it feels. Body surveillance was proposed to be a moderating factor influential in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying media and self-objectification because body surveillance is closely linked to self-objectification as they both involve a concern about appearance. The scale included five items (e.g., "I rarely think about how I look"). Participants rated their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*).

Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .80. This measure was completed prior to participants being exposed to the stimuli.

Appearance comparison tendencies. The Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS) (Thompson, Heinberg, & Tantleff, 1991) was used to measure participants' tendencies to make comparisons of their overall appearance with others. The scale includes five items (e.g., "In social situations, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of other people"). Participants rated their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). This measure was completed prior to the participants being exposed to the stimuli. One item was dropped due to a low inter-item reliability with the other items. Cronbach's alpha of the remaining four items was .72.

Body esteem. The Body Esteem Scale (BES) (Franzoi & Shields, 1984) was used to measure participants' body esteem. The sexual attractiveness, weight concern, and physical condition sub-scales of the Body Esteem Scale for females were employed in the present analysis. Body esteem was measured as a possible covariate. The sub-scales employed in this analysis list 12 characteristics and functions of the body such as "weight," "appearance of stomach," and "breasts." Prior to being exposed to the stimuli, participants rated how they feel about each part or function of their body on a 5-point scale (1 = *have strong negative feelings*, 5 = *have strong positive feelings*). Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Post-Exposure Measures

Trait self-objectification. The Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998) was administered to measure whether participants hold a physical self-concept mainly based on attractiveness or mainly based on competence. Participants

were asked to rank-order 10 body attributes on a 10-point scale (1 = *most important*, 10 = *least important*) in order of how important they see each part being to their physical self-concept. Of the items, five are appearance-based (physical attractiveness, weight, sex appeal, measurements, and muscle tone), and the remaining five are competence-based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, and physical fitness). Scores were calculated as the difference between the sum rankings of competence-based items and the appearance-based items. Noll and Fredrickson report the measure has demonstrated acceptable construct validity.

State self-objectification. The Twenty Statements Test employed by Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) was administered to measure state self-objectification. Participants were asked to describe themselves by completing 20 sentences beginning with "I am _____." Two independent coders categorized participants' responses into one of six groups: (a.) body shape and size (e.g., "I am fat", "I am short"); (b.) other physical appearance (e.g., "I am brunette", "I am cute"); (c.) physical competence (e.g., "I am weak", "I am active"); (d.) traits or abilities (e.g., "I am nice", "I am smart"); (e.) states or emotions (e.g., "I am sad", "I am worried"); and (f.) miscellaneous (e.g., "I am pregnant").

State self-objectification was operationalized as the frequency with which a participant produces a response classified in the "body shape and size" or "other physical appearance" categories. The two independent coders were two female graduate students. Ten percent of the statements were double-coded. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's *kappa* and was adequate at .87 for the body shape and size or other physical appearance categories. To determine the valence of each of the 20 statements

completed by the participants that had to do with their appearance, two independent female graduate student coders counted the number of negative ("I am fat"), positive ("I am pretty"), and neutral ("I am tall") statements. Ten percent of the statements were double-coded. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's *kappa* and was adequate at .85.

State appearance comparison. Following the scale used by Tiggemann and McGill (2004), state social comparison was assessed by three items measuring how much participants engaged in appearance processing and comparison while viewing the images and text depicting pregnant celebrities. Participants were first asked to rate on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *a lot*) how much they thought about their appearance while viewing the photos and captions depicting the pregnant celebrities. They were then asked how much they compared their overall appearance and particular body parts with those of the pregnant women they saw depicted in the photos and captions. Cronbach's alpha was .93.

State weight-related appearance anxiety. The Physical Appearance State Anxiety Scale (Reed, Thompson, Brannick, & Sacco, 1991) was used to measure state weight-related appearance anxiety. Participants were asked to complete the 16-item scale measuring their current amount of appearance anxiety. They were asked to rate on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *exceptionally so*) how anxious, tense, or nervous they currently felt about several appearance-related aspects. From this scale, a weight-related appearance anxiety total (anxiety about waist, buttocks, thighs, etc.) and a non-weight-related appearance anxiety total (anxiety about feet, chin, lips, etc.) were calculated. Cronbach's alpha for the weight scale was .91 and .83 for the non-weight scale.

Wishful identification. The Wishful Identification Scale (Hoffner, 1996) was used to measure participants' wishful identification with the celebrities featured in the magazine photos and photo captions in the full-body and headshot conditions. The sub-scale used in the present study was designed to identify one's desire to be like the celebrities featured in the photo and captions (e.g., "These people are the sort of people I want to be like myself"). The three items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Item responses were coded so that higher scores reflect higher levels of wishful identification. Cronbach's alpha for the wishful identification scale for the full-body condition was .88, and for the headshot condition it was .89.

Similarity. A single item assessed how much individuals agreed with the following statement "I am similar to this person" was used to measure participants' similarity with the celebrities featured in the magazine photos and photo captions in the full-body and headshot conditions. This item was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Item responses were coded so that higher scores reflect higher levels of similarity.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY 1 RESULTS

For a full listing of hypotheses, variables, and statistical tests employed for analyses, please see Appendix B. For descriptive statistics for the key variables under analysis, please see Table 3. For correlations between all variables, please see Table 4.

Characteristics of the Sample

Several one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine any initial differences in possible covariates across the three experimental conditions. There were no significant group differences in BMI, $F(2, 286) = .76$, $p > .05$, magazine subscriptions, $F(2, 298) = 2.22$, $p > .05$, time spent reading magazines each week, $F(2, 300) = .35$, $p > .05$, time spent watching television per day $F(2, 301) = .59$, $p > .05$, frequency of celebrity gossip magazine readership $F(2, 301) = .91$, $p > .05$, and frequency of celebrity gossip magazine purchase $F(2, 301) = .16$, $p > .05$. There was a significant difference across conditions for age $F(2, 300) = 3.15$, $p < .05$.[2] Therefore, age was entered as a covariate in all subsequent analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

Before testing for any main effects an initial multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted with state self-objectification, valence of appearance descriptors, appearance and weight anxiety, and state appearance comparison serving as the dependent variables and age, BMI, week of pregnancy, number of pregnancy, overall media consumption, media about pregnancy consumption, and body esteem entered as the covariates. From the results of the MANCOVA, it was determined that the multivariate main effect of condition was significant, Wilks Lambda = .73, $F(4, 72) =$

5.18, $p < .001$. This established that condition did have an effect on the dependent variables as a group. The MANCOVA also determined that body esteem, Wilks Lambda = .58, $F(4, 72) = 10.07$, $p < .001$, also had a main effect on the dependent variables suggesting that it was the only control variable that needed to be entered as a covariate in subsequent analyses of any main effects. Age was also controlled for in subsequent analyses due to the difference across experimental conditions.

Main Effects

To test for main effects for hypotheses 1, 2, 5, and 7, a series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were calculated to examine the influence of magazine exposure on state appearance and weight anxiety, state self-objectification, valence of appearance descriptors, and state appearance comparison with body esteem and age entered as covariates and experimental condition entered as the factor (See Table 5).

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a main effect of condition on state self-objectification, such that those pregnant women who viewed images and text sexually objectifying pregnant celebrities would report more state self-objectification than those who viewed non-objectifying images and text. To test this hypothesis an ANCOVA was run with state self-objectification as the dependent variable, condition as the factor, and body esteem and age entered as covariates. A main effect for condition was revealed in the ANCOVA $F(2, 237) = 3.89$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Posthoc tests employing the Scheffé procedure at $p < .05$ compared mean scores. Although not what was predicted in Hypothesis 1, interesting differences in state self-objectification emerged between the groups. Posthoc analyses indicated that participants in the headshot

non-objectifying condition (M = .97, SD = 1.38) reported significantly more self-objectification than participants in the control condition who viewed baby products only (M = .56, SD = .91). Participants in the sexually objectifying full-body condition (M = .91, SD = .96) were not significantly different from the other two groups (See Table 5).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted there would be a main effect of condition on the valence of appearance descriptors, such that those pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying images and text would describe their appearance more negatively than those who viewed non-objectifying stimuli and those who viewed control stimuli. To test this hypothesis, an ANCOVA was calculated with valence of appearance descriptors entered as the dependent variable, condition as the factor, and body esteem and age as the covariates. Hypothesis 2 was not supported as results revealed no main effect of condition on valence of appearance descriptors $F(2, 119) = 2.93$, $p = .57$, observed power = .56. Thus, the valence of participants' TST statements about their appearance were not affected by type of stimuli they were assigned to view.

Hypothesis 5

Pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying stimuli were predicted to report more weight anxiety than women who viewed non-objectifying stimuli and those who viewed control stimuli in Hypothesis 5. To test this hypothesis, two ANCOVAs were calculated. The first ANCOVA was calculated with weight-related appearance anxiety entered as the dependent variable, condition as the factor, and body esteem and age as the covariates. In contradiction to Hypothesis 5, there was no significant main effect of condition on weight-related appearance anxiety $F(2, 260) = .29$, $p = .75$,

observed power = .10. It appears participants' levels of weight-related appearance anxiety were not affected by the stimuli they were assigned to view.

The second ANCOVA was calculated with non-weight-related appearance anxiety entered as the dependent variable, condition as the factor, and body esteem and age as the covariates. In contradiction to Hypothesis 5, there was no significant main effect of condition on non-weight-related appearance anxiety $F(2, 260) = 2.09$, $p = .13$, observed power = .43.

Hypothesis 7

The last main effect tested in this study was in relation to Hypothesis 7, which predicted pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying stimuli would engage in more social comparison with the pictured pregnant celebrities than those who viewed the non-objectifying stimuli. To test this hypothesis, an ANCOVA was calculated with state social comparison as the dependent variable, condition as the factor, and body esteem and age as covariates. In support of Hypothesis 7, a main effect of condition on social comparison emerged in the ANCOVA, $F(1, 173) = 13.16$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .08$, with pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying stimuli that included full-body shots of pregnant celebrities engaging in more comparison, $M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.07$, than pregnant women who viewed non-objectifying stimuli that included headshot only images of celebrities, $M = 1.93$, $SD = .85$. This hypothesis was not relevant to the control condition, thus posthoc analyses were not appropriate for this hypothesis as there were fewer than three groups under analysis. Based on the results, it appears that viewing images and text that sexually objectified pregnant celebrities encourages pregnant women to compare themselves with those celebrities more so than pregnant women who viewed images and

text that did not objectify celebrities. Table 6 presents the ANCOVA results for all of the main effects hypotheses.

Interaction Effects

Hypotheses 3, 4, and 8 and Research Question 3 examined the possible moderating influences of participants' levels of trait body surveillance, wishful identification, appearance comparison tendencies, and similarity. Multiple regression models with interaction terms were estimated for each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 posited that participants' trait body surveillance would moderate the effects of condition on participants' self-objectification. To test this hypothesis, a regression model was calculated with body surveillance, condition (with the full-body and headshot only conditions dummy coded against the control condition), and the interaction between body surveillance and condition serving as the independent variables and self-objectification serving as the dependent variable. For body surveillance, the regression equation was not statistically significant, $F(4, 254) = 1.84$, $p = .12$. The interaction between body surveillance and condition was also not statistically significant $\beta = -.14$, $t = -.34$, $p = .28$. Thus, the effects of experimental condition on participants' self-objectification did not vary based on their existing levels of trait body surveillance pre-exposure, and Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that participants' wishful identification would moderate the effects of condition on participants' self-objectification. To examine Hypothesis 4, a multiple linear regression was calculated with wishful identification, condition, and the

interaction between wishful identification and condition entered as the independent variables and self-objectification entered as the dependent variable. The regression equation was not statistically significant for wishful identification $F(2, 163) = .95$, $p = .41$. The interaction between wishful identification and condition was also not statistically significant, $\beta = .38$, $t = 1.30$, $p = .20$. Based on these results, the effects of experimental condition on participants' levels of self-objectification did not vary based on their levels of wishful identification with the celebrities pictured.

Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8 predicted that participants' levels of appearance comparison tendencies would moderate the effects of condition on participants' self-objectification. To examine this hypothesis, a regression model was calculated with trait comparison, condition, and the interaction between trait comparison and condition entered as the independent variables and self-objectification entered as the dependent variable. The regression equation was not significant for trait comparison, $F(3,163) = .96$, $p = .41$ and for the interaction between trait comparison and condition $\beta = -.73$, $t = -1.63$, $p = .11$. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 was not supported as the effects of experimental condition on participants' amounts of self-objectification did not vary based on their existing levels of trait comparison pre-exposure.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 examined the possible moderating influence of participants' levels of felt similarity with the pictured celebrities on the effects of condition on participants' self-objectification. To examine this research question, a regression model was calculated with similarity, condition, and the interaction between similarity and

condition entered as the independent variables and self-objectification entered as the dependent variable. The regression equation was not statistically significant for similarity $F(3, 159) = .76$, $p = .52$. The interaction between similarity and condition was also not statistically significant, $\beta = -.32$, $t = -1.17$, $p = .24$. Based on these results, the effects of experimental condition on participants' levels of self-objectification did not vary based on their levels of similarity with the celebrities pictured.

Mediating Influences

The possible mediating influences of self-objectification and state social comparison were examined in Hypotheses 6 and 9. These hypotheses were submitted to regression-based path analysis and followed Judd and Kenny's (1981) steps for establishing mediation. These steps include: (1) finding a significant association between the predictor and criterion variables, (2) finding a significant association between the predictor and proposed mediator variables, (3) finding a significant association between the mediator and criterion variables, and (4) for full mediation, finding the reduction of the association between the predictor and criterion variables to 0 when the mediator is controlled for. Before submitting the hypotheses to regression-based path analyses, two dummy variables were created, one comparing the full-body condition and the original control condition and the other comparing the headshot condition against the control condition.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 predicted that self-objectification would serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and participants' levels of reported weight-related appearance anxiety. In first examining

weight-related appearance anxiety, the initial regression examining the effect of assignment to condition on weight-related appearance anxiety was not statistically significant. Therefore, Judd and Kenny's (1981) first condition that the predictor must affect the criterion variable was not met, as assignment to condition did not significantly influence participants' weight-related appearance anxiety. However, the second condition was met as assignment to both the sexually objectifying full-body condition ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.15$, $p = .03$) and to the non-objectifying headshot condition significantly increased participants' self-objectification ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.45$, $p = .02$). These results differ from the results of Hypothesis 1 because for the regression it was coded as sexually objectifying condition versus all other conditions whereas the ANCOVA examined the differences between all three groups. The third condition that the mediator must affect the dependent variables was not met, as participants' levels of self-objectification did not significantly influence weight-related anxiety. (See Figure 1).

In regard to non-weight-related appearance anxiety, in examining the effect of assignment to condition, initial regressions established contradictory results to the predictions of Hypothesis 6 as well as the main effect predicted in Hypothesis 5. Initial regressions established that being assigned to the sexually objectifying full-body shot condition significantly reduced participants' non-weight-related appearance anxiety ($\beta = -.17$, $t = -2.50$, $p = .02$) and that the assignment to both the sexually objectifying full-body condition ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.15$, $p = .03$) and to the non-objectifying headshot condition significantly increased participants' self-objectification ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.45$, $p = .01$). However, Judd and Kenny's (1981) third condition that the mediator must affect the dependent variables was not met, as participants' levels of self-objectification did not

significantly influence non-weight-related appearance anxiety. (See Figure 2). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported in regard to appearance and weight anxiety, as it appears that self-objectification does not mediate the relationship between exposure and either weight-related and non-weight-related appearance anxiety.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 predicted that state social comparison would serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between exposure to objectifying images and text and self-objectification. In examining the effect of assignment to condition, the initial regressions established that being assigned to both the sexually objectifying full-body condition ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.15$, $p = .03$) and to the non-objectifying headshot condition positively predicted participants' self-objectification ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.45$, $p = .02$) and being assigned to the sexually objectifying full-body condition significantly increased social comparison ($\beta = .27$, $t = 3.68$, $p < .001$). However, as with Hypothesis 6, Judd and Kenny's (1981) third condition for mediation was not met. (See Figure 3). Participants' level of social comparison did not significantly influence self-objectification, and therefore, the prediction that state social comparison would mediate the relationship between exposure and self-objectification was not supported.

To test a further possible mediating effect of social comparison, a structural equation model was completed with two groups, one high in trait comparison tendencies and one low in trait comparison tendencies. This analysis was employed to see if the mediation would work only for those high in trait comparison. However, the data did not satisfactorily fit the model, $X^2/df = 12.88$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .23, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .20.

Pregnancy-Related Variables

The main effect of condition on self-objectification for each of the three pregnancy trimesters separately was examined in Research Question 1. In addition, Research Question 2 examined the main effect of condition on self-objectification for those participants who reported having no previous live births and those who reported one or more live births. Linear regressions were estimated for both research questions.

Research Question 1

To answer this research question, a regression model was estimated to examine the main effect of condition on self-objectification for each of the three pregnancy trimesters separately. The results demonstrated that for the participants in their first trimester (weeks 1-12 of the pregnancy), exposure to headshot only images positively predicted self-objectification, $\beta = .32$, $t = 2.25$, $p = .03$. For those in the second trimester (weeks 13-28 of pregnancy), the regression equation was not statistically significant, $F(2, 101) = .48$ with an *Adj*. R^2 of -.01. Last, for participants in their third trimester (weeks 29 and beyond of pregnancy), the full body images positively predicted self-objectification, $\beta = .23$, $t = 1.89$, $p = .06$ at a level of marginal significance. Thus, it appears that those participants in their first trimester reported greater amounts of self-objectification after viewing headshot-only images and accompanying text, and those in the third trimester reported greater amounts of self-objectification after viewing full-body images and text.

Research Question 2

To answer this research question, a regression model was estimated to examine the main effect of condition on self-objectification for those who reported having had no previous live births and those who reported having one or more previous live births

separately. For the participants with no previous live births, the headshot-only condition predicted self-objectification, $\beta = .18$, $t = 1.93$, $p = .06$ at a level of marginal significance. On the other hand, the relationship between condition and self-objectification, $F(2, 116) = 1.69$, $p = .10$ with an *Adj.* R^2 of .01 was not statistically significant for the women who had had previous live births. Therefore, it appears that those participants who had not given birth to a child prior to their current pregnancy reported greater amounts of self-objectification after viewing non-objectifying headshot-only images and accompanying text than the women who had not had at least one previous live birth.

Posthoc Analyses

Although some objectification theory scholars (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Fredrickson et al., 1998; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003) have distinguished between trait and state self-objectification, in a recent comprehensive review and assessment of the current state of objectification theory research, Moradi and Huang (2008) argue otherwise. They contend that using the term trait implies that self-objectification is inborn, remains constant, and does not respond to intervention, which ignores the importance of contextual experience. Moradi and Huang prefer to distinguish between self-reported self-objectification and experimentally influenced self-objectification. Thus, this study employed measures that have been used by other scholars to examine the impact of media exposure (Aubrey, 2006a; 2006b; 2007; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008). However, no significant main effect of condition was found when examining participants' trait or self-reported self-objectification scores and thus participants' levels of state self-objectification were used to represent self-objectification in all subsequent analyses in the present study.

Despite there being no significant main effect for trait self-objectification, it is important to note that the mean score (M = 5.03, SD = 12.78) on the trait self-objectification measure for this sample of pregnant women appeared to be higher than those reported in other studies employing the measure. For example, in a similar experimentally designed study examining the impact of advertisement images of female models, Harper and Tiggemann (2008) reported a post-exposure trait self-objectification mean of .32 in their sample of 18-35 year old Australian undergraduate college women. A one sample *t*-test comparing the mean trait self-objectification score in the present analysis with that of the Harper and Tiggemann study was significant (t (268) = 6.04, p < .001). These results indicate that being pregnant may intensify one's trait self-objectification, regardless of their situation-specific media exposure.

Further, although there were no significant main effects for weight-related appearance anxiety, the mean score (M = 16.81, SD = 7.32) on the weight-related appearance anxiety measure for this sample of pregnant women also appeared to be higher than those reported in other studies employing the measure. For example, in the aforementioned similarly designed study conducted by Harper and Tiggemann (2008), they reported a post-exposure weight-related appearance anxiety mean score of 15.22. A one sample *t*-test comparing the mean weight-related appearance anxiety score in the present analysis with that of the Harper and Tiggemann study was significant (t (265) = 3.52, p = .001). In addition, in an experimentally designed study examining the impact of thin-idealized images on women, Tiggemann and McGill (2004) reported a post-exposure weight-related appearance anxiety mean score of 13.30 in their sample of 18 to 28-year-

old women. A one sample *t*-test comparing the mean score in the present analysis with that of the Tiggemann and McGill study was significant (t (265) = 7.80, $p < .001$).

Mean scores on the non-weight-related appearance anxiety measure (M = 10.08, SD = 3.57) for this sample of pregnant women were also higher than those reported in other similarly designed studies. For example, the mean score reported in the Harper and Tiggemann (2008) study for non-weight-related appearance anxiety was 4.53. A one sample *t*-test comparing the mean non-weight-related score in the present analysis with that of the Harper and Tiggemann study was significant (t (265) = 25.37, $p < .001$). Thus, it appears being pregnant in and of itself may intensify one's weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety.

Summary of Study 1 Results

The purpose of Study 1 was to examine the role of exposure to images and text that sexually objectify pregnant celebrities on pregnant women's levels of self-objectification, number of negative descriptors about appearance, appearance and weight anxiety, and state social comparison respectively. In addition, Study 1 sought to examine the possible moderating influences of body surveillance, trait comparison tendencies, and wishful identification. Last, this study sought to examine the potential of self-objectification to mediate the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and participants' appearance and weight anxiety and the potential of state social comparison to mediate the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and participants' self-objectification.

Of the nine hypotheses predicted in this study, only one (Hypothesis 7) was fully supported. However, there was a significant multivariate main effect of condition.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the stimuli had some effects on the pregnant women involved in this study, though not always in the direction predicted. In addition, as predicted, participants who viewed the sexually objectifying full-body photos of pregnant celebrities engaged in more comparison with those celebrities than those who viewed the non-objectifying headshot-only photos. From these results, it seems that pregnant women are more apt to compare themselves to celebrities who are also pregnant rather than with headshot photos of celebrities in which it is not discernible whether they are pregnant or not.

Although contradictory to what was predicted, participants who viewed non-objectifying images and text experienced more self-objectification than participants who viewed control stimuli. Also somewhat surprisingly, based on past literature, none of the three variables predicted to influence the impact of exposure to sexually objectifying images and text on participants' levels of self-objectification were statistically significant. Further, no support was found for the two mediation models predicted involving self-objectification and social comparison as potential mediators. However, interesting results emerged in regard to variables related to pregnancy, such as stage of pregnancy and number of live births examined in Research Questions 1 and 2. Viewing the non-objectifying headshot-only stimuli increased self-objectification for those in the first trimester of their pregnancy whereas viewing full-body sexually objectifying stimuli marginally increased self-objectification for those in the third trimester. The amount of self-objectification engaged in by those in their second trimester were not significantly impacted by condition. Further, for those who had no previous live births, viewing the headshot-only condition marginally increased their self-objectification. By contrast, the

amount of self-objectification reported by those who had 1 or more previous live birth was not statistically significantly impacted by condition.

The following chapters present the justification, method, and results of Study 2 of the present analysis, which sought to qualitatively explore the impact of celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities on pregnant women. Study 2 was undertaken to be able to provide a fuller explanation of the influence of celebrity gossip magazines as well as to be able to better interpret the meaning of Study 1 results. The results of Studies 1 and 2 will be explained, theoretically situated, and linked to each other in the last chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY 2

A Cultural Studies Approach to Body Image

Cultural Studies Background

In response to early media effects research, cultural studies was developed to provide an interpretative approach to studying media texts and audiences. According to Ruddock (2001), one of the main differences between traditional mass effects research and cultural studies is "the shift from the analysis of what texts *do* to the audience to what texts *mean* to them" (p. 116). Assumptions guiding cultural studies include: there are dominant and subordinate groups in society who do not have the same opportunities to achieve power, context is important in understanding cultural meanings, and media audiences are "relatively autonomous" (p. 127) in that they are seen as having some freedom to determine meaning and oppose dominant meanings. By incorporating a cultural studies approach in conjunction with and to complement a media effects approach, the impact that media have and what media mean to women during the important stage of pregnancy can be uncovered.

According to Storey (1996) scholars see cultural texts as not only reflecting history, but as also being responsible for creating history and are part of the practices and processes of history. As such cultural studies is concerned with the ideological work of media texts, how people use the media to make sense of their experiences, and how the media help individuals to construct their self-identities.

One form of ideological criticism that cultural studies scholars often engage in is feminist criticism, which aims to change discourse in order to defy oppression and

privilege. To feminist critics, texts simultaneously form and reflect the cultures in which they were created and thus include what a specific culture deems appropriate behaviors for males and females (Hart & Daughton, 2005). There are many types of feminist theoretical frameworks that often resemble other perspectives such as postmodernism and Marxism. However, feminist media theory, which is often employed by cultural studies scholars, is unique because "unconditional focus on analyzing *gender* as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds and our experiences of them, is hard to find in other theories of the media" (van Zoonen, 1996, p. 31). van Zoonen argues feminist media scholars agree that the media are a main source of stereotypical, patriarchal, and hegemonic portrayal of values about women. According to Strinati (1995), feminist cultural critics define patriarchy as "the unequal power relationship between men and women which serves as a key determinant of how women and men will be represented in popular culture, and of how they will respond to those representations" (p. 198). Several cultural studies scholars have examined the ideological work of popular culture texts from a feminist standpoint and have focused on print texts specific to female audiences such as adolescent magazines (Currie, 1999; McRobbie, 2000) and romance novels (Radway, 1984).

Feminist cultural studies criticism currently recognizes that women are relatively autonomous and thus need to speak of their experiences in their own words, although this was not always the case. McRobbie (1982) asserts that her research of popular culture texts aimed at girls and women and how these individuals live day-to-day under the pressure to demonstrate femininity in a partriarchal society, partially developed from her commitment to feminist politics. Further, she argues that in order to have any

significance to girls and women who are not part of the feminist movement, feminist researchers need to listen to these individuals and learn about their displeasures and experiences living in a partriachal society. In a textual analysis of British teen girls' magazine *Jackie*, McRobbie (2000) found that the magazine is located in a considerably powerful publishing industry and explicitly tries to achieve girls' acquiescence to the dominant order in regards to femininity, leisure, and consumption. In addition, McRobbie argued *Jackie* is a conservative text that teaches young girls that they cannot move outside of the boundaries of traditional femininity. However, McRobbie did not speak to the readers of the magazine in order to explore how they experience the texts. One study that did include interviews with readers of teen girl magazines was conducted by Currie (1999) in order to examine how teen girls derive pleasure from reading these magazines. Whereas McRobbie's textual analysis of *Jackie* indicated a rather closed text offering little room for teen girls to re-appropriate *Jackie* in ways that go against traditional femininity and the dominant patriarchy, Currie's conversations with teen girl magazine readers illuminated differing findings. Specifically, Currie found that teen girls often reject several aspects of teen magazines that textual analyses have argued are harmful to them in favor of content that they consider to be realistic and thus useful to their own everyday lives. Regardless of the content, it is important to consider how a popular culture text is read when issuing a critique of that text. Thus, to further explore the autonomy of pregnant women and how they are affected by celebrity gossip magazines, Study 2 examines pregnant women's consumption and interpretation of celebrity gossip magazines from a feminist cultural studies critical lens.

Cultural Studies Theory and Methodology

The three main methodological approaches of cultural studies research have traditionally included studies of production/political economy, textual analysis, and lived cultures/audience reception. Although some scholars have attempted to incorporate all three approaches into one study, Johnson (1986) argues this is not recommended as each approach has theoretical incompatibilities and the aims of many singular approach-based studies are already vast enough. Thus, Johnson asserts scholars need to go beyond the production and content of the text as the main objects of examination because the text is only one piece of the much larger puzzle in cultural study. Further, Radway (1986) argues that the content of a message does not solely reside in that message, but rather the content of a message is created by the audience who relates to that message. Therefore, how meaning is derived from popular culture texts by audiences is extremely important to examine.

Further, reception studies have been linked to the possibilities of cultural studies scholars being able to give voice to those who have been previously muted and to implement change. For example, Radway (1986) argues that critics of mass culture need to be able to talk to those who enjoy the very form of mass culture under critique to gain a better understanding of those individuals' particular views of the world. In doing so, Radway also asserts that cultural critics need to keep in mind that neither ideology nor patriarchy are ever simple or consistent. Rather, both involve compatible yet contradictory and poorly connected practices that constitute individual subjects in specific ways. That constitution needs to be identified in order for critics to attend to the subsequent needs that arise from that constitution. By talking to people concerning how

they assign order and meaning to the particular situation they find themselves in, scholars are shown how to best address the concerns that consume those individuals under study as well as how to be understood by those individuals. As she states "If we wish to change patriarchal social relations – if we wish to challenge the capitalist organization of production – then I think we cannot ignore what the study of people's engagement with mass culture can tell us" (p. 118). Studying the reception of media portrayals of pregnant celebrities found in gossip magazines by pregnant women allows for an exploration of those women's views of the world and thus will provide an opportunity to identify how best to address their concerns.

The steps in reception analysis involve examining any diverse readings of a text by audience members as well as suggesting how individuals may have accepted, restructured, or resisted the meaning a particular text was meant to have by the producer of the text (Lindlof, 1995). Frequently, the reception scholar goes further than simply explaining the encounter between the text and the audience. "Such explanatory frames might involve the audience's identity (e.g., gender) or place in the social structure (e.g., economic class), especially in the context of a critical theory" (Lindlof, p. 56). In the present study, explanatory frames involve how the identity of being a pregnant woman impacts the reception of gossip magazines.

One theoretical lens in the cultural studies tradition often used to analyze audience reception is Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model. In this model, Hall asserts there are three different types of readings or positions an audience member may situate themselves in to either accept or resist the "preferred reading" instituted by the producer of a text. These positions include: hegemonic/dominant position, negotiated position, and an

oppositional position. By taking a hegemonic/dominant position, the reader is accepting wholeheartedly the preferred reading communicated in the text. In the negotiated position, the reader recognizes the preferred reading being advocated and accepts it to an extent, but also adapts it to his or her own situation. Last, in the oppositional position, the reader does not accept the preferred reading but rather opposes it and derives his/her own unique meaning from the text.

Despite the value of recognizing that audiences can be active and do engage in differing constructions of meaning upon encountering a text, cultural studies scholars have critiqued Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model. Specifically, the model has been criticized for being uncertain as to where the preferred reading originates (Morley, 2006). Other scholars have questioned if a preferred reading even exists and if it does whether scholars can access it (Lewis, 1983). Further, critiques have also involved the model's delineation of the oppositional reading position. For example, Morley argues that the original conceptualization of the encoding/decoding model seems to favor oppositional readings and fails to fully appreciate negotiated readings. In addition, Morley argues, audiences who may be indifferent to a media text are not adequately addressed by the model. As such encoding/decoding does not clarify whether audience members who do not choose to read a text thoroughly enough to decode it are any less oppositional than those who do read a text sufficiently enough to make the effort to express their disagreement with it.

Although the encoding/decoding model is still useful to consider in that it allows for some audience agency, perhaps a more fruitful study of the audience is through Hall's (1986) articulation model of meaning (AMM). Rather than focusing on a singular

preferred reading of a text and relatively limited audience options for a reading of that text, Hall's notion of articulation situates a media text in individual's lives and focuses on context. Within this model, the expression of meaning is always articulated through a specific context, during a specific moment, and within a specific discourse (Storey, 1996). Further, Hall seems to address the concerns about the encoding/decoding model's preferred reading of a text as with AMM he argues the text is not the originating source of the articulation of meaning.

The articulation model of meaning (AMM) was developed by Hall (1986) on the basis of Gramsci's (1972) notion of ideology, or a taken-for- granted truth. As Hall states "A theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (p. 53). Ideology is an important part of everyday life and culture. In our culture, the thin ideal for adolescent girls and women has become an omnipresent aspect of the dominant ideology of what it means to be attractive and desirable. In addition to Gramsci's work, Hall also incorporates the work of Volosinov (1973) who argues for the multiaccentual nature of cultural texts and practices and that different people in different contexts at differing times will articulate certain meanings (Storey, 1996).

According to the model, meaning is not directly transmitted from text to receiver, as argued by the transmission model. Rather, meaning is found in the specific and direct intersection of all aspects of meaning at a particular time including text, culture, social location, and experiences. Thus, AMM takes into account and helps to explicate the multiple meanings a media text has for an audience as well as how meanings of a text

change from one particular time to another as meaning is historically specific. According to AMM, therefore, in the moment of being pregnant, a woman may be more likely to identify with a pregnant celebrity being covered in a media text and thus derive unique meanings from the text. Further, a woman who is currently pregnant may come to derive meaning from celebrity magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities in different ways than a non-pregnant woman would. AMM will help to uncover how these unique meanings not only result from but also encourage felt social pressures of pregnant women. In advocating viewing communication as articulation, Slack (2006) argues that what matters about a message is never just its effect on an audience. Rather, researchers also have to take into account the multiple and intersecting socio-cultural factors that impact meaning of a message at a given time. "Thinking with articulation is a way to comprehend the power of a concept, the work it performs, its reality, without being seduced into accepting it as an absolute truth or as an unchanging essence" (Slack, pp. 226-227).

In a study applying AMM to adolescent romance novel readers, Moffitt (1993) asserts the model is useful to employ because of its acknowledgement of the patriarchal and capitalistic society we live in as well as the ideology of the particular media text under study. Further, Moffitt argues that this acknowledgement, as well as AMM's recognition of individuals' unique lived experiences and social pressures, allows for a better understanding of the "seductive features of media texts and practices" (p. 239). Specifically, Moffitt found in interviews with romance novel readers that several factors such as approaching adulthood, gender, and physical ideals associated with being a woman intersected with aspects of the romance novel and the process of reading these novels itself to articulate meaning to adolescent romance novel readers. Thus, much more

is involved in the derivation of meaning from a media text than simply a clear and absolute transfer of meaning from the text to the receiver.

In AMM, the audience is given agency in that meaning does not lie solely in the text but lies in both the text and the receiver and involves an intersection of multiple elements. In using this model, we can begin to uncover the multiple meaning elements and the differing lived experiences of women during differing stages of their lifespan. This is important because as Moffitt (1994) argues, if an individual feels the social pressure to be physically attractive more so than any other pressure during his or her reception of a media text, this pressure will affect the meaning derived by that receiver more than any other factor. Therefore, AMM is used in the present study in order to better understand how pregnant women derive meaning from gossip magazines, and coverage of pregnant celebrities in particular, during the important moment of being pregnant.

Specifically, Study 2 applies the AMM to explore how women derive meaning from celebrity gossip magazines during the social moment of being pregnant in order to complement the findings of Study 1. In order to examine the articulation of meaning, it is first important to understand the experiences women have while pregnant in a male-dominated society which equates female slenderness with attractiveness as a dominant ideology. Thus, the following research question is posed to uncover these experiences:

RQ1: What experiences do women share while pregnant in a patriarchal society that values the thin-ideal for the female body?

Celebrities, Magazines, and Audience Reception

Celebrities are a large part of popular culture in many societies and appear in virtually all popular media texts. As such, Holmes and Redmond (2006) argue celebrities, and their bodies in particular, play an influential role in ideological struggle. This struggle allows for celebrity bodies to operate in two separate ways: either to reinforce the dominant ideology of a patriarchal and heterosexual gaze or to permit contradictory and oppositional meaning to emerge. Thus, the impact that celebrities have on individuals is important to explore especially in regard to how media portrayals of celebrities are read by audiences situated in certain social locations.

Despite a good deal of interest being placed on the public lives of male celebrities such as Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, Feasey (2006) asserts celebrity women are valued more often for their personal lives than their male counterparts are. However, Feasey argues that this celebrity coverage can also be viewed as a possible avenue for female readers to experience empowerment. Often, the private lives of celebrities can be seen and read in gossip magazines. Although not receiving as much attention as television texts, several cultural studies scholars have investigated gossip magazines in an attempt to understand their cultural impact. For example, Bird (1992) justified her cultural study of supermarket tabloids because she argues these magazines are immersed in culture as tabloids "complement the star system, the other popular media, the class system, and the gender system" (p. 2). In addition, Johansson (2006) asserts it is important to examine the social uses of celebrity tabloid coverage such as the subsequent gossip these magazines create among women. Similarly, Feasey asserts that the gossip magazine genre can play a

discursive role in women's everyday lives. Thus, they may serve to connect women with other women that may have otherwise been inaccessible.

Although gossip magazines have often been written off for their part in the subjugation of women, Feasey (2006) argues the potential of these magazines to have a positive impact on women should not be ignored. In her post-feminist reading of *heat*, a British gossip magazine targeted at young women, Feasey states that the magazine makes a point to expose the physical imperfections of celebrities caught on camera. In this way, *heat* magazine shows that celebrities are more than just perfect fashion icons for readers to appreciate, the magazine also illustrates that these celebrities are just regular women. Feasey argues that although women do enjoy seeing perfect celebrity bodies on display, *heat's* concentration on the flaws of some celebrity bodies encourages female readers to negotiate what they see depicted. In addition, *heat* also devotes ample coverage to the pains of exercise, dieting, and surgical procedures celebrities go through in order to build and keep their perfect bodies, which helps everyday women to see celebrity beauty is not effortless. Thus, Feasey argues, although readers may want to model the bodies of celebrities they see praised in gossip magazines, they may not want to actually emulate the types of diet and exercise described in detail along with the flawless bodies they see pictured. "Such reporting in *heat* magazine does not pressurize the reader to work towards an idealized celebrity physique but rather may liberate the reader from feeling inadequate for failing to create her own celebrity body" (p. 187). Despite the valuable insight Feasey's analysis of *heat* magazine provides into gossip magazines, she did not actually talk to readers of the magazine to further corroborate her claims. Therefore, the

present study attempts build upon this analysis by speaking to women to uncover any of the positive aspects that Feasey purports are a part of gossip magazines.

Gossip magazine reception studies indicate the importance of talking to everyday women about how they receive these texts. For example, in an interview study of women London-based tabloid readers, Johansson (2006) found many of these women mainly read these tabloids for the gossip and celebrity columns. In general, they described their tabloid reading as a social activity, reading with others, and deriving "talking points" (p. 348) from the celebrity stories. In addition to the social use of tabloids, Johansson also found themes of both reader identification with celebrities as well as distancing, as readers saw celebrities as living a different, more glamorous life, but also recognized commonalities between celebrities' lives and their own. Identification and distancing were accompanied by resentment and frustration on the part of tabloid readers as they often mentioned being jealous and unhappy about their own situation in comparison to those of celebrities. The major appeal of reading tabloids, according to Johansson, is the bashing of celebrities these tabloids engage in, which allows for a lessening of resentment. This finding is at odds with research into wishful identification (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005), which has found that individuals desire to become like those they see portrayed in the media and this desire significantly influences individuals' decisions about their own appearance, attitudes, goals, and other relevant characteristics of self (Austin & Meili, 1994; Boon & Lomore, 2001).

Similar to Johansson's (2006) findings, Hermes (1995) found serious gossip magazine readers experienced pleasure in the connection they felt with celebrities covered in these magazines. However, readers also simultaneously criticized the

journalistic tactics of gossip magazines and the decidedly suggestive manner of writing included in the magazines. The results of these audience reception studies of gossip magazines indicate the importance of further investigating how individuals, especially in specific contexts and moments in their lives, make sense of these magazines. Therefore, the following research question is posed to investigate how pregnant women make sense of celebrity gossip magazines:

RQ2: How do pregnant women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy?

Further, although Johansson (2006) interprets the jealousy and resentment among British tabloid readers as being due to celebrity representation of social privilege and power, in the United States, resentment may be due to the standards celebrities set for what are considered to be successful and attractive bodies in our culture. This may particularly be the case in standards set for pregnant celebrities bodies found in celebrity gossip magazines. However, this is purely speculation and thus the following research question is posed:

RQ3: How does celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities impact pregnant women's thoughts about their own bodies?

CHAPTER SIX: STUDY 2 METHOD

Data Collection

Frequently, research methodology is largely disregarded by cultural studies literature (Lewis, 1997). Recently, however, several cultural studies scholars have devoted more attention to methodology with some advocating quantitative approaches to supplement the qualitative research that has dominated the paradigm in order to strengthen research conducted in the cultural studies tradition (Lewis, 1997; Morley, 2006; Ruddock, 2001). Thus, Study 2 of the present analysis will employ the qualitative method of focus groups involving a sample of the same participants that took part in the experiment in Study 1 of this analysis. Because quantitative data do not allow for exploration of the meaning individuals derive from media depictions, qualitative methods were implemented to give voice to these pregnant women. In addition, Study 2 served as a debriefing of the true purpose of Study 1.

Rationale for Focus Groups

The focus group is often employed in audience reception research in order to understand the everyday means through which audiences make sense of media texts (Liebes & Katz, 1990; Morley, 1981; Press, 1991; Radway, 1984). Focus groups allow for researchers to investigate the ways in which everyday talk plays a role in the social construction of meaning. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), the main rationale for using focus groups is to examine how people in groups are encouraged by the thoughts and experiences of other group members. In addition, focus groups also reduce researcher bias by making sure that individuals are not speaking only with the researcher and

provide adequate open-endedness for unexpected views to come to light (Delli Carpini & Williams, 1994).

When employing a ritual model of communication (Carey, 1989), researchers view meaning as being created collectively rather than individually. In this view, meaning is negotiated and impacted by the beliefs expressed by others. As Lunt and Livingstone (1996) argue, "the focus group emphasizes the social nature of communication and does not reduce social scientific research to the study of the individual, an important consideration in the context of media research" (p. 90). Thus, focus groups allow participants a voice of their own as well as the opportunity to engage in discourse with similar others. This particular method was selected for the present study because focus groups are the most appropriate avenue for obtaining insight into the shared construction of meaning in the social world (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). In addition, focus groups are particularly useful to employ in the present study because previous research examining gossip magazines has found individuals to derive pleasure from the talking points gossip magazines provide when interacting with others (Johannson, 2006). It was hoped, then, that the focus groups would serve as a method in which I could observe such interaction with others created by the celebrity gossip magazines made available to participants during each group session. Therefore, to supplement the results of the experiment in Study 1, participants who took part in Study 1 were asked to also participate in a focus group.

Participants

In audience reception research, the focus group usually consists of 6-10 people who all possess common cultural or demographic attributes (Lewis, 1991). Although

focus groups were scheduled with six women included in each of them, several of the women were not able to attend the group they had requested to take part in. Rather than turn away the women who did show up at their scheduled times, nine focus group discussions including 2-4 women each were conducted. According to Greenbaum (1987), there is no set number for an appropriate sample size in focus group research; rather, the researcher estimates an appropriate size based on the scope and complexity of the phenomenon under study as well as based on access to participants and the time and monetary resources available for conducting the groups. As a feminist researcher, it was my main goal for each pregnant woman involved in this study to have her voice clearly heard and to never encounter a possibility of being muted in any way. I feel that the focus group discussions allowed for this goal to be achieved and seemed to also provide a cathartic function for the pregnant women.

Thus, nine focus group discussions including 2-4 pregnant women each were conducted with a total of 25 currently pregnant women participating. The majority of the women reported being 18-29 years old (15 women), while the rest reported being 30-39 years old (10 women). In addition, the majority of the women identified themselves as Caucasian (21), while the remaining four identified themselves as African American, Asian Pacific-Islander, Hispanic, and Other. The mean week of pregnancy the women were in was 20.8 weeks; and for most, the child they were expecting was going to be their first. It is important to note, however, that although a majority of the pregnant women participating in the focus group discussions reported no existing children, many of them mentioned during the discussions that this was not the first time they had been pregnant. In fact, many of the pregnant women who participated in the focus group

discussions had suffered a miscarriage, and in some cases, several miscarriages prior to their current pregnancy. Please see Table 7 for a further breakdown of participant information.

Sampling

Individuals are often appropriate sampling units in interview-based studies, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), because they "have had experiences, or possess knowledge and/or expertise, that are important to the research questions" (p. 121). In the case of the present study, availability of participants was limited to the geographic area in which the researcher was located, and thus, convenience sampling was used. In addition, criterion sampling was used as all of the participants had to be at least 18 years of age and currently pregnant.

Many of the Study 2 participants were solicited through their participation in Study 1 through which at the end of the survey they were offered the opportunity to earn $20 by taking part in a focus group discussion near Columbia, Missouri. Interested participants were asked to enter their email address at the end of the Study 1 survey. I later contacted them and further explained the details of what their participation would entail and some possible dates and times during which they could participate. After initial recruitment through Study 1 failed to solicit more than five participants, I posted an announcement specifically recruiting for the focus groups on a mass email that was circulated through all academic and medical-related agencies linked to the University of Missouri. This resulted in 20 interested pregnant women, who contacted me via email to express their desire to participate in a focus group. Once willing participants were

scheduled to attend a group discussion, they were asked to take part in the Study 1 survey posted on SurveyMonkey before attending their discussion group.

Unlike quantitative research in which an appropriate number of participants is generated, qualitative research typically depends on reaching a point of theoretical saturation to determine appropriate sample size. Theoretical saturation occurs when a researcher hears repetitive information with no new data being uncovered (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Of all of the participants eligible and willing to participate in a focus group, none were turned away even after theoretical saturation was achieved in the hopes of achieving a diverse group of participants and a resultant diverse commentary.

Research Setting and Procedure

The focus group discussions were held in a conference room at the University of Missouri-Columbia that included comfortable chairs and a soft, inviting couch. The atmosphere was informal, and I tried to make each pregnant woman as comfortable both physically and mentally during each discussion session. Many of the women commented on how comfortable the furniture was and how nice it felt to be able to be off their feet. I also increased their comfort by offering drinks and snacks during each interaction.

Prior to the beginning of each discussion group, participants were asked if the sessions could be audio-recorded. They were assured confidentiality would be preserved through safe storage of the audio-files and were told their names would not be attached to their comments in the final research report. All of the pregnant women who participated in the focus group discussions agreed for the sessions to be recorded. The audio-files and resultant transcripts were stored in three secure locations: 1) on my personal computer of which is password protected, and I am the only one who knows the password; 2) on a

USB flash drive that stores electronic files, which is also password protected; and 3) a hard copy of the transcripts were printed on my personal printer and are kept locked in a file cabinet at my place of residence. I felt the need to store the data in several locations in order to have a back-up in the event of the files or transcripts being damaged but made sure that each location was secure.

After providing verbal informed consent, participants were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire (See Appendix C). This questionnaire was designed to gather information about the stage of pregnancy each participant was in, whether participants subscribed to celebrity gossip magazines, how often they read the magazines, and how often they watched television programs depicting pregnant women. Questions about any felt social pressures, the participants' images of themselves, and demographic characteristics were also included.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), interviewers should seek to attain rapport with participants doing as much as they can to make participants comfortable during focus groups. There are several ways to establish rapport as advocated by Lindlof and Taylor, which were employed in the present study. First, participants were told what the purpose of the study is, why pregnant women such as them were being contacted for the study, and what the over-arching goals of the study were. In addition, participants were told how the focus group discussion was going to proceed and what they could expect during their time. Second, Lindlof and Taylor advocate those moderating focus group discussions share something about themselves to set the tone for a meaningful interview. Thus, I shared with the participants my goals as a graduate student, my background, and reasons for wanting to study pregnant women. In relation to my own

introduction, I also asked participants to introduce themselves and provide information regarding how far along they were in their pregnancy, when their estimated due dates were, and if they had any existing children in order to put them at ease about speaking with myself and the other group members. I was extremely pleased with how the sharing of this information about their pregnancies seemed to put each woman at ease with the other pregnant women and how the sharing of that information seemed to bond these women almost immediately.

After attempting to establish rapport, I described why I was interested in speaking with pregnant women in regards to their opinions of celebrity gossip magazines. Then, photographs and accompanying captions of pregnant celebrities pulled from popular celebrity magazines (*People*, *Life & Style*, *Us Weekly*, *National Enquirer* and *OK!*) were passed around to the participants. In audience reception research, it is very common to provide samples of a media text in order to familiarize participants with the text under study and to provide a jumping off point for the discussion (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In many instances, participants began commenting about and discussing with each other the coverage of pregnant celebrities found in the magazines without any prompting from myself. After they each had a chance to see the photos and captions, they were asked to discuss their general opinions about celebrity magazines such as what they like and dislike about reading about pregnant celebrities. Next, they were asked to describe what they saw specifically in the celebrity magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities that was passed around for them to look at. This indicated some of the themes they picked up on during their exposure to the coverage. Then, the pregnant women were asked how they feel about the depictions of pregnant celebrities in these magazines being pregnant

themselves, whether women might compare themselves to pregnant celebrities, and whether they feel any camaraderie with the pregnant celebrities featured.

Last, they were asked how seeing celebrity magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities affects how they feel about their own bodies. In addition, in order to gain a better understanding of the findings of Study 1, participants in Study 2 were given the definition for sexual objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and the true purpose of the experiment they participated in Study 1 was more fully explained to them. Based on this information, they were asked their thoughts about the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities in celebrity gossip magazines, how this objectification might impact pregnant women who see these magazines, and what messages they think this objectification sends to men and women who have never been pregnant themselves. (See Appendix D for focus group guide in full).

Each focus group discussion lasted anywhere from 1 to 2 hours with the majority lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes. Those groups with two participants generally lasted about 1 hour, whereas the larger groups typically lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes. During each session, I took detailed notes, or what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) refer to as *fieldnotes*, to be able to consult afterwards when analyzing the transcripts. In addition, in my notes I tried to describe any aspects of the discussions that an audio-file would miss, such as the non-verbal communication of participants, the specific pictures and parts of the magazines they would point to while describing them, and the overall atmosphere of each session.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis and as soon as possible after each focus group discussion, the audio-files were transcribed word for word and compiled in a computer word processing file to be analyzed further. Transcriptions of the focus group discussions totaled over 200 pages single-spaced and were checked for accuracy. Initial analysis of the data involved the use of what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) term *asides*, or short, reflective pieces of analysis based upon the information included in fieldnotes and transcripts. I made use of asides frequently while transcribing each audio-file from the focus group discussions. The asides were short notes I placed into the transcripts in brackets that interpreted and further explained aspects of each focus group discussion that were not evident in the transcripts themselves. Another aspect of my initial data analysis while transcribing the audio-files included what Lindlof and Taylor describe as *commentaries*, which are more developed notes inserted after participants' responses. These commentaries largely incorporated the many notes I took during each of the focus group discussions that captured the elements of the groups that were not translated in the audio such as nonverbal communication. In addition, the commentaries gave me an opportunity to develop a general outline of some of the themes that were emerging in each group discussion. After compiling asides and commentaries, I moved on to developing what Lindlof and Taylor refer to as *in-process memos*. Several of my in-process memos were related to the asides and commentaries I had written but they were much more developed and in-depth elucidations of the data. In these memos, I began to concentrate on any themes or issues that emerged repeatedly in my fieldnotes and transcribed data.

While continuing to conduct focus groups, transcribe the data, and compiling asides, commentaries, and in-process memos, I also interpreted the data based on a thematic analysis. The first step in qualitative data thematic analysis, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), involves categorization and coding of the data. Categorization entails labeling units of data with a term that encapsulates items in the data that are similar. Rather than applying preformed theoretical categories in a deductive fashion, I categorized the data inductively. According to Lindlof and Taylor, during inductive analysis "a category begins to form only after the analyst has figured out a meaningful way to configure the data" (p. 215). Therefore, this categorization, they assert, requires the researcher to integrate many forms of evidence that emerge from the data in order to develop categories inductively and to have an understanding of cultural meanings relevant to their participants rather than purely theoretical assumptions.

In contrast to categories, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) assert codes connect the data to the categories conceived by a researcher. The main point of coding is to highlight the units of data when they connect meaningfully with the categories a researcher has developed. Thus, in data analysis I categorized themes that emerged from the data by writing them on index cards, noting through the use of codes how these categories related to the data and noting any irregularities within the data as needed. My categorization and coding were largely guided by the research questions posed for this study, but more specifically, a search for similarities and differences in the responses of each focus group discussion, what themes repeatedly surfaced in each discussion, and whether participants appeared to agree with one another in each session.

More broadly, in the cultural studies tradition, I engaged in reception analysis to examine any diverse readings of the celebrity gossip magazines by pregnant women and incorporated the previously described articulation model of meaning (AMM) (Hall, 1986) into my data analysis. As Lindlof (1995) states, the reception scholar incorporates audience members' identities and position in social structure into any explanation of their encounters with the particular media text under examination. Further, Hall argues multiple intersecting factors, such as gender and class, among others, are a large part of being able to articulate the meaning a media text has for a particular audience member at a particular time in her or his life. Thus, my analysis sought to determine these intersecting factors within this sample of women immersed in the moment of being pregnant and how these factors impacted their interpretations of celebrity gossip magazines. Within this analysis, I was also concerned with how the pregnant women might have accepted, negotiated, or resisted the meaning of celebrity gossip magazines.

Validation

After gathering and analyzing the data, several steps advocated by Creswell (2007) were taken to validate and add trustworthiness to the results. First, I attempted to *clarify any biases* I may have that influenced my interpretations. I have never been pregnant myself, yet I do feel that pregnant celebrities' bodies are overly focused upon by the media and that this coverage is demeaning to these women. Further, I consider myself to be a feminist, and thus this affiliation affects how I see the way that women are treated in our society. I tried to be as cognizant of this as possible. McRobbie (1982) asserts that in order to repeatedly feel with the women under study, researchers within the feminist tradition must position our own life stories and experiences within the questions we seek

to ask of those women. Thus, I continuously reflected on any biases including my own experiences as I read over my findings in order to see if these feelings affected my interpretations and if so in what way.

Next, I made a conscious effort to provide the readers of my results and interpretations with as *thick and rich descriptions* of the interviews as possible. For example, the participants are described in detail with their own words often being used to communicate their thoughts and feelings. In addition, the research setting is described in full detail to provide further context for readers. Last, I conducted *member checks* whereby I shared my analyses and interpretations of the data with seven randomly selected women who participated in differing focus group discussions for the study to ensure I was correct in my representation of their thoughts and feelings. Specifically, I presented each of the seven women with a one and one-half page summary of my results. I asked these women if there was anything in the summary they disagreed with, anything they particularly agreed with, whether I had been fair, and if they thought my description was accurate. Six of the seven women responded. All six of the women agreed with my results and felt that I had been fair and accurate in my descriptions. One of the women asked to evaluate my findings, Jennifer (group 6) thanked me for doing this study because it allowed her the opportunity to speak with other pregnant women about pregnancy. Jennifer also expressed how beneficial it was for her to hear what they had to say. In her words, the focus group discussion "was almost therapeutic."

CHAPTER 7: STUDY 2 RESULTS

In the focus group discussions I had with the 25 pregnant women who participated in this study, I developed a much clearer picture of some of the joys, struggles, and pressures these women experienced in relation to their pregnancies and the meaning celebrity gossip magazines hold for them. Three research questions guided Study 2. The first research question sought to identify the experiences women share while pregnant in a patriarchal society that idealizes slenderness in the female body. Research Question 2 sought to examine how pregnant women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy. Research Question 3 sought to examine how celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities impacts pregnant women's thoughts about their own bodies.

Further, in applying Hall's (1986) articulation model of meaning (AMM) to these discussions, the multiple factors related to pregnancy, social roles, class, lived identities, and the use of the text of celebrity gossip magazines emerged. Additionally, how these factors come to articulate meaning to pregnant women also emerged during these discussions. Both the themes and articulating factors are described in-depth in the following sections as related to the three research questions guiding this study.

Research Question 1: Experiences While Pregnant

Before delving into the themes related to interpretation of celebrity gossip magazines that emerged, it is important to explain some of the intersecting factors these women described as part of their lived experiences. These factors are crucial to understanding how these women derive meaning from celebrity gossip magazines while

pregnant. As Hall's (1986) AMM points out, in order to fully understand the features of any media text, the unique histories and context within which audience members are situated must not be overlooked. Over the course of the discussions, several intersecting factors that many of these women had experienced and continued to experience were brought to light and were explained by the women in much the same language.

Overwhelmingly, it emerged that the social roles of being a female, a spouse, a mother, and a professional impacted participants' experiences while pregnant and the ways in which they interpreted celebrity gossip magazines. Many described trying to navigate their social roles and, more specifically, the expectations for women in a patriarchal society while pregnant. Identification of these factors are important, as Moffitt (1993) argues they allow us to "appreciate the audience's struggle with social and political elements in media messages and can recognize audiences and media texts as 'meaning-full' within historical and cultural contexts" (p. 242). As such, these factors will be discussed frequently throughout the interpretation of the results of this study.

The following sections describe three key factors that impact the ways in which these women experienced the moment of being pregnant. The first factor, Under Surveillance, refers to participants' experiences of being subject to greater bodily scrutiny while pregnant. The second factor, I Just Look Fat, refers to their anxieties about appearance while pregnant and once post-partum, as well as their desire for others to realize they had a legitimate reason for their weight gain. The last factor, Balancing Act, refers to participants' worries over being able to balance adequately providing for their unborn children, maintaining their jobs, and retaining their pre-pregnancy bodies, all while being able to be good mothers.

Under Surveillance

The expectations the participants felt from their families, friends, co-workers, and the public in general, were described in many of the comments made during the focus group discussions. Most often, the women described feeling pressure to look a certain way while pregnant and to not surpass by too far the normalized boundaries of the female body. Although the participants indicated that the pressures they felt as women to live up to physical ideals was something they felt whether they were pregnant or not, they did feel a greater scrutiny of their bodies while pregnant.

Mary[3] (group 1), pregnant with her first child, explained that there is a greater scrutiny because pregnant women's bodies seem more public to her. In particular, participants felt that their growing bodies evoked interesting reactions from men, whether strangers in public places, spouses, or co-workers. Some women were okay with these reactions while others were not so sure. Several women indicated how surprised they were with the sexualization of the changes their pregnant bodies were going through. This sexualization, mentioned in several of the groups, was explained particularly well by Amelia (group 3), who was pregnant with her first child.

> Amelia: It's hard because you want to still feel attractive and yet your goal I think is I don't want to be a sex pot you know and that's hard. There's some tension with that in terms of wanting to still feel attractive and realizing there's a baby inside. I don't want another person to particularly find me uber-hot [laughing] when I'm 9 months pregnant. I don't know. [Group 3]

Amelia describes the dialectic many of these pregnant women felt between still wanting to meet the cultural ideals of being an attractive female and yet not feeling attractive because of the baby they were carrying.

The public sexualization of the pregnant body was also discussed in group 6 by Darla, Jennifer, and Adrienne.

> Darla: It's actually pretty disgusting because if you think about the woman's body and what it does when it's pregnant and how it just knows to do all these things and it's just tremendous and it doesn't get credit. It's only everything else: weight gain, boobs, what the body looks like after…
>
> Jennifer: It gets criticized…
>
> Darla: Yeah. So as a woman it's just frustrating.
>
> Adrienne: I think then you are not getting credit for, okay, you are sustaining life. [Group 6]

In the interaction above, these women describe how in our patriarchal society they are largely valued for how their bodies look even while pregnant.

Sexualization of the pregnant body was not the only reaction these women experienced from men. For example, Nancy (group 4), pregnant with her second child, said in both of her pregnancies she got the feeling that some men she encountered in public seemed a bit frightened by her as a pregnant woman.

> Nancy: Especially when you get to the end and you're obviously very pregnant.
>
> Marina: Yeah.
>
> Nancy: Like, "Oh my God."
>
> [Group laughter]
>
> Sophia: Like she could deliver right now in the Wal-Mart.
>
> Marina: Yeah! You know, it's just like, "Go on, go on." [chuckling] And they're like that right now to me. They're like, "Oh, oh. Go ahead of me." Or like they think I'm going to pop right now and I'm like, "I've got two more months left." But they act like that as soon as they see that belly. Like my belly, it's just like, "Whoa. You look like you're about to pop any time!" [Group 4]

The expressed assumption that Marina looked as if she was about to deliver at any minute by men she encountered was echoed in other focus group discussions as well. Both Lily and Kassandra in group 9 talked about their similar experiences with others speculating about their due dates. Lily discussed how a male co-worker told her he thought she would surely deliver before her due date in June based on her size. In response, Kassandra explained the following experience during her first pregnancy:

> Kassandra: Well with my first I was huge and I was like 6 months pregnant and people would be like "Oh you must be about to go any day" and I'd be like no [laughs] not even close. And they were like "Boy are you having twins, triplets?" Everybody always thought I was having more than one or I was about due. It gets…you know the first couple of times it… you laugh it off but then it gets real tiresome after a while [laughs]. It's frustrating but at the same time it's a good cause so… [Group 9]

These quotes illustrate how scrutinized these women's bodies are and how closely they are watched. That people and, as indicated by these women, men, in particular, commented on the bodies of these pregnant women illustrates how the society in which we live is so focused on the body. It appears those who felt compelled to comment on the size of these women's bodies were attempting to rationalize why these women were trespassing the normalized boundaries for female bodies in our culture. The state of being pregnant did not seem to be enough of an explanation, as surely these women were going to give birth at any moment or were carrying more than just one baby.

Although women's bodies serve the function of being looked at in our culture (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), Sara (group 7) explained that the looks she was receiving were much different as a pregnant woman than anything she had experienced before.

> Sara: Um I never had an issue with men or anyone looking at my body while I'm talking to them. But now they do because they are looking at my belly. I don't really find it offensive, I just find it interesting because they will make eye contact but then they'll immediately look down to see if they can see the bump yet or if

they can tell. So, it's just weird because you're not used to it. [Group 7]

The frightened reactions, the expression "You must be ready to pop!," and overall increased surveillance of pregnant women's bodies clearly provides evidence for the lack of room allowed for women's bodies in our culture. Possibly because of these comments, or the fear of generating such comments, the overwhelming majority of participants listed weight or appearance-related worries as their most currently felt social pressure.

Further, women who had struggled with weight issues before becoming pregnant seemed to have greater difficulty than the women who did not mention prior weight struggles when adjusting to the greater scrutiny of their bodies while pregnant. Amber (group 1), who was pregnant with her first child, communicated her discomfort with the greater focus on her body while pregnant.

> Amber: I'm very proud of my pregnancy but for me it's a very personal thing and so I've always said that if strangers touch my stomach I am going to move their hand away. People I know probably okay but strangers I don't know that is not okay. And so for me because it is so personal that's a little bit rough like I tend to be sort of quiet and a little bit introverted and so to have that much attention focused on my body specifically and maybe because I've lost a lot of weight and that's not really the kind of attention I like, I don't know but yeah. [Group 1]

For the most part, prior issues with weight contributed to a greater sense of public scrutiny, a greater scrutiny of the women's own bodies while pregnant, and feelings of anxiety about how their bodies would look once they were post-partum.

For women who did not describe having past struggles with weight, pregnancy was still a difficult time because it was a time in which they began to worry about and struggle with their external appearance. Terry and Sara (group 7) described how being pregnant created anxiety over how they looked to others.

> Terry: You know in the beginning you don't want to get too big too fast but you hate feeling in the in between stage because you just look fat. But you don't

want to get into maternity clothes too quick because that's just against society's rules or something. I don't know.

Sara: Yeah I've noticed a difference especially for me because it is my first pregnancy and I just recently had to make the transition to maternity clothes and so I definitely take more time getting ready in the morning than I used to because I'm not as familiar with the clothes and how they look or how they fit…

Terry: And there's changes to your body every week. [Group 7]

For Terry and Sara, and many others in the focus group discussions, there is a constant battle while pregnant between the need to conform to socially acceptable standards for the appearance of women yet still be comfortable.

I Just Look Fat

The second key factor that impacted the ways in which participants experience the moment of being pregnant, and in many ways resulted from the greater sense of bodily scrutiny, concerned their anxieties about their changing bodies. Related to the need to continue to conform to cultural ideals of attractiveness, several of the women mentioned feeling pressure to keep weight gain to a certain prescribed range during their pregnancy and to for others to know that there was a legitimate reason for their weight gain. They realized that they needed to gain a certain amount of weight but that they had to be very careful and monitor themselves in order to not let weight gain get out of hand. For example, Sophia (group 4) worried she was in danger of surpassing the appropriate amount of weight gain.

Sophia: I've gained 10 pounds already. I'm only 3 months along and it's ridiculous. It makes me feel guilty that I've gained so much weight, but I'll get over it. Um, I don't eat badly. I just eat a lot.

Megan: Why do you think you feel guilty?

Sophia: Well, because I keep reading about "You don't have to gain any weight the first trimester." I'm not supposed to gain any weight. [Group 4]

Sophia then rationalized that maybe because it was her first pregnancy she felt more guilt because she did not know what to expect. Marina, who was pregnant with her second child, reassured Sophia that she felt more guilt during her first pregnancy than she did with this one. She said she felt pressures from her husband, and she admitted to taking that guilt a bit too far in her estimation during her first pregnancy.

> Marina: I was so self-conscious about what my husband was going to think of me. I know this is all mental. But I was just like… I made sure that… I didn't want to gain a lot of weight so it's not like I starved myself but I still watched what I ate. I think that's the reason why I only gained 18 pounds because that's way below. I mean the average is 25, 35. And you guys are going to laugh at this but my scale, I weighed myself every day, and the scale was made by a company called Taylor and that is how I came up with the name of my daughter because I stared at that name every day. [Group 4]

Although Marina expected the other two pregnant women in the focus group discussion to laugh at her admission of deciding upon her daughter's name based on the name of the company that made the scale she weighed herself on compulsively, neither of them did. Rather, both Sophia and Nancy indicated no shock or disbelief whatsoever at this admission.

Feeling the pressure to live up to a physical ideal as a woman was something these women all indicated they experienced throughout their entire pregnancy. However, in all of the focus group discussions, the pregnant women mentioned their first trimester as being toughest in terms of feeling badly about their bodies. Although pregnancy is most publicly visible during the later stages, these stages were experienced less negatively than the early stages. For example, Paula and Leigh (group 2) both mentioned feeling that their bodies were much more acceptable once it was obvious they were pregnant.

> Paula: I think that first trimester and early in the second before you look pregnant it's especially hard because…you're like I just look chunky I don't even look pregnant. And I probably have beat myself more up this time [during her second pregnancy] because I'm like I just look fat, I look like I've gained some weight and that's about it. It was almost a relief when all of this popped out [points to stomach] and I'm just like thank God! [laughs]
>
> Leigh: That's how I feel! Really, I can't wait for a big belly to like be okay you know, she's not just fat she is pregnant kind of a thing.
>
> Paula: Yeah so I was like as soon as it [her stomach] kind of popped out I was like where is the tightest pregnancy t-shirt I've got. I'm like showing this off today. I look pregnant. I just don't look like I've ate too much! [laughs]. [Group 2]

Amelia (group 3) explained that at 4 or 5 months along she was uncomfortable with how she looked because it seemed more like she had overindulged by single-handedly eating a couple of large pizzas than that she was pregnant. These sentiments were reiterated again in yet another focus group discussion by Sara and Terry (group 7), who discussed the scrutiny a woman faces and has to worry about in regards to gaining weight.

> Sara: I'm ready to be a little bit even just a little bit bigger than I am now so that it's obvious [that she's pregnant].
>
> Megan: Why?
>
> Sara: Just because I mean among people that know it doesn't matter um but out in the general public depending on what I'm wearing it could just look like I've gained five pounds so and I would rather it be clear that yes I've gained five pounds but it's because I'm pregnant not something else.
>
> Terry: Not because I ate… yeah. [Group 7]

In the above statements, the pregnant women expressed how they feel that they need to have a legitimate reason for their weight gain. For example, Paula (group 2) described how the first trimester is the most difficult in regard to negative feelings about the pregnant body because it is not evident to others that you are pregnant. In her words:

"I just look chunky", "I just look fat". In these interactions, the participants appear to be describing their engagement in body shame, an outcome of self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The women have to worry about visible increases in their bodies being perceived socially as happening for what they deemed the wrong reasons – simply gaining weight due to overeating. As the pregnancy progresses, the public can clearly see, it is hoped by these women, that their weight gain has a purpose – being pregnant. However, these women were clearly cognizant of the fact that it would be acceptable to gain weight while pregnant, but that they had to be very careful to not gain *too much* weight and to make sure to lose any pregnancy weight after they give birth.

The fears of gaining too much weight while pregnant and of the public thinking that the weight gain was due to overeating or to letting yourself go – just "looking fat", all point to the constant surveillance and maintenance women in our patriarchal culture have become accustomed to performing in regard to their bodies (Douglas, 1994). In further evidence of this constant surveillance and maintenance of the female body, many of these women described being worried about if and how their bodies could live up to cultural bodily ideals once they were post-partum. In one focus group discussion, all three participants noted the worries they had already developed about getting their bodies back in shape after giving birth. Adrienne (group 6), pregnant with her first child, indicated that she had always been "thick" and therefore needed to take that into consideration while pregnant.

> Adrienne: Oh yeah I mean I've already talked to my [health] club because I can't exercise right now. I can walk but I can't exercise because I'm having heart palpitations. But I told them as soon as this baby is born, I'm back in the gym as soon as my body can take it. Like as soon as I get done I'm back because I don't want to… it's just really easy for me to gain weight and not easy for me to lose it. [Group 6]

In response to Adrienne's discussion of her post-baby plans for exercise, both Jennifer and Darla talked about their anxieties over being able to find time to work out once the baby is born as well as to maintain full-time jobs. In all of the focus group discussions, it emerged that intersecting with the pressure to lose any baby weight after giving birth for the women, was also the pressure to be financially stable, which is the last factor that emerged.

Balancing Act

In addition to the currently felt social pressures in regards to their bodies, the majority of these women currently indicated feeling financial pressures. Many of the women in this study reported worrying about having enough money to raise a child and balancing that worry with not wanting to leave their children when they went back to work. Specifically, many of these women felt pressures to have enough money to buy a home for their child or to continue to be able to make payments on the homes they were currently living in. Several others commented on feeling financial pressures due to either they or their husbands losing hours at their jobs or losing their jobs completely in this weak economy.

Early on in the group 6 discussion, Jennifer mentioned that her husband had recently lost his job and therefore she was the main breadwinner for the family adding to the pressures she already felt. Adrienne and the third woman involved in this focus group, Darla, also acknowledged the pressures they felt to balance working full-time, being a good mother, and returning to an ideal body shape.

> Jennifer: It's like you, and I don't know what your all's plans are for after the baby comes, but it's just like I already have the guilt of gosh I am going to leave my kid with somebody else for how many hours a day and then I'm going to go

take an hour or whatever to go work out.

Darla: Oh yeah even living here I have the same worry of fitting everything in.

Adrienne: Exactly. One of my concerns is how long my body is going to actually recover from labor and going through that whole process and then will I even have energy to be with my child. Like that freaks me out. Will I have energy to be there and work because unfortunately I can't stop working you know and how do I fit in the gym, how do I fit in all the other things I was doing. That weighs a lot on me. [Group 6]

The above quotes illustrate how these women were torn between needing to continue to work not only in their professions but also on their bodies and wanting to have enough time to spend with their new children.

The visual scene that occurred during the discussion between Adrienne, Darla, and Jennifer described above was particularly poignant to me as all three seemed to be physically beaten down by these pressures. When Adrienne said "That weighs a lot on me", in reference to her worries of having enough time and energy for work, working out, and most importantly her new child, her shoulders sagged and she seemed to cradle her pregnant belly with her arms as if these pressures were literally weighing down on her and the baby she was carrying.

During the discussion of these pressures to not gain too much weight while pregnant, to be able to lose the weight once post-partum, and have financial security, all of the women appeared exhausted just talking about these pressures. Throughout my fieldnotes, I found not only the same themes popping up regarding these felt pressures, but also descriptions of how non-verbally drawn and anxious these women seemed to be when describing their current endeavors and future plans to balance all of these pressures.

In the remainder of this chapter, I seek to examine the meaning celebrity gossip magazines have for women who are currently pregnant in light of the experiences these

women indicated sharing while pregnant. The remaining two research questions will guide this examination and will be addressed in the following sections through the application of the AMM to these pregnant women's own words.

Research Question 2: Articulating Meaning

Prior research examining audience reception of gossip magazines has found that readers experience pleasure through a connection with celebrities featured in the magazines, while simultaneously feeling disdain for the tactics these magazines use in their reporting (Hermes, 1995; Johannson, 2006). The second research question sought to examine how pregnant women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. This section discusses the themes that emerged regarding this question, which are described in the participants' own words and are explained in the context of their felt social pressures and experiences while pregnant as advocated by the AMM (Hall, 1986).

Throughout the focus group discussions, most of the pregnant women involved in this study indicated that they did not subscribe to celebrity gossip magazines (89%) and rarely, if ever, purchased them (85%). However, overall, the majority of women described reading, flipping through, and paying attention to these magazines in waiting rooms, checkout lanes, when friends had them, and online. This provided evidence that these magazines are hard to avoid. In particular, three themes emerged from the discussion of how these women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazines. The first theme addresses the appeal of these magazines and was labeled Guilty Pleasure to explain how women were drawn to these magazines in the first place. The second theme was named Body Gossip, which illustrates how these pregnant women

interpreted the content and messages contained in celebrity gossip magazines. The last theme, Objectification through Unrealistic Glamorization, represents how these women negotiate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazines.

Guilty Pleasure

In describing the appeal of celebrity gossip magazines, the pregnant women in this study talked about how reading these magazines was a treat, an escape into a fantasy world, and overall, just simply a guilty pleasure. They felt guilty about this pleasure of reading celebrity gossip magazines because they knew this genre of magazine was considered "trashy" in our culture. Several women noted that these magazines were pleasurable because they transported them away from their own mundane realities. For example, Marilyn (group 8) spoke about the opportunity these magazines offered for an escape from her own everyday life and regarded these magazines as something that is "mindless."

Celebrity gossip magazines are appealing then and deemed worthy of a guilty pleasure because of the escape and daydreaming opportunities they provide. Nancy (group 4) stated the escape provided by gossip magazines is "a little bit voyeuristic" in some ways giving readers an insight into how celebrities live and the lifestyles that most non-celebrities will never know for themselves. Nancy's observation and her fellow group members' reactions further illustrate the appeal of these magazines.

> Nancy: They're [celebrity gossip magazines] sort of like reality TV. It's just a guilty pleasure.
>
> Marina: That's exactly what it is. A guilty pleasure. It's like chocolate, only paper.
>
> Sophia: It's an escape. They kill time. [Group 4]

Described in these ways, celebrity gossip magazines, like chocolate and other candy, are appealing and pleasurable but should not be something you enjoy on a regular basis. I think this is especially the case for women in our culture because to enjoy such guilty pleasures is to be deemed indulgent and risks incurring a disapproving gaze from others. This is also true of other popular media texts that are especially popular with women and have been considered low in critical esteem. Cultural studies scholars have studied these types of texts that are considered to be low culture but appeal specifically to women such as romance novels (Radway, 1991), teenage girls' magazines (Currie, 1999; McRobbie, 1991), and soap operas (Hobson, 1982). In studying these texts, these scholars recognize the importance of privileging a female audience and of not overlooking the impact of popular culture.

Amelia (group 3) described her guilty pleasure in terms of disapproval from others.

> Amelia: The one time I will buy it [celebrity gossip magazine] and my husband gets so embarrassed, but when I am on a plane trip I will buy one of these [points to a gossip magazine]. And not all of the time and I'll try to do something a little bit more high brow. But yeah that is my one guilty pleasure when I'm on a plane ride, I just get sort of what I call a trashy mag. [Group 3]

The above quote points to a male disdain of these types of media texts. But, Amelia also appears to be somewhat embarrassed herself by her own admission of reading such material. Clearly then, celebrity gossip magazines are considered low culture and, like candy, not something to over-indulge in.

Some women, however, indicated the very notion of society making one feel guilty and/or shameful about enjoying such a magazine, made them that much more appealing.

> Corey: I like the scandal um and I guess I like reading things that we're sort of told we're not supposed to read you know. Um, that is just slightly transgressive too so that's probably why I like that. I think there is such a stigma with gossip magazines. You are not supposed to like them, you're not supposed to read them, you know especially if you are supposed to be an educated person which is crazy. I don't like them or I think I don't like them but then I read them whenever I get the chance so…I guess I am conflicted about them. [Group 8]

In response to Corey's admission of feeling conflicted about celebrity gossip magazines, fellow group discussion participant Marilyn discussed having conflicting feelings of her own.

> Marilyn: And in some ways I think the [celebrity gossip magazine] message makes you feel worse because it paints this really perfect picture. But in some ways I find it makes me feel better because finances are always a concern and I find that here are all these people with all the money they could ever dream of and look at how much of a mess they are and so I'm fine with what I got. [laughs] [Group 8]

Both Corey and Marilyn appear to be negotiating both the lowbrow reputation of and the messages included in celebrity gossip magazines in their own ways. Although Corey expresses the social pressure as an educated person in our society to not enjoy such texts, she finds pleasure in going against that social norm. However, simultaneously she succumbs to that pressure by trying to tell herself that she does not like gossip magazines. In Marilyn's case, although the dominant ideology depicted in the messages in celebrity gossip magazines often makes her feel worse about herself and her financial pressures, she negotiates these messages to make her situation seem more favorable.

Evidence of the negotiation of the guilty pleasure offered by celebrity gossip magazines was also found in group 5. Participants of this group talked about how these magazines provided them a chance to escape, enter the privileged lives celebrities lead, and to be able to dream about going places and having things they could not have in their real lives.

> Jeri: Women care what they look like. They like seeing what people are wearing. They like seeing the newest things for the season, or how they [celebrities] are wearing their hair or makeup and cute clothes and accessories and where they are going on vacation. To be able to dream about stuff that you can't actually have.
>
> Anna: Yeah you know it's not realistic for me to, you know, wear maternity evening gowns such as this one [points to a picture of a pregnant Angelina Jolie in an evening gown]. It's more like daydreaming.
>
> Olivia: Yeah.
>
> Jeri: Through someone else.
>
> Anna: But I would definitely not want to lead any of these lives that they have. This all looks like a big train wreck to me [holds up a magazine] but….it is kind of hard to steer away from it. [Group 5]

Like Marilyn in group 8, Jeri and Anna describe the appeal of daydreaming about having the things that celebrities have. However, Anna also notes how she realizes that her life is superior to that of celebrities negotiating her lack of materialistic items that celebrities have with the fact that her life has less drama.

Body Gossip

Throughout these focus group discussions, several of the women described how they negotiated the messages contained in celebrity gossip magazines. The most prevalent messages, according to these women, are messages about celebrities' bodies. When describing these magazines' messages about pregnant celebrities specifically, these women overwhelmingly described the focus that these magazines place on pregnant celebrities' appearance. During the historical moment of being pregnant themselves, these women were situated in a unique position to be able to interpret and critique these messages. The theme of Body Gossip, describes the interpretations of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities by these currently pregnant women.

At the beginning of each focus group discussion, when the pregnant women involved were flipping through the provided celebrity gossip magazines, they would almost immediately begin discussing with each other how these magazines focused on the bodies of pregnant celebrities. Many would point out a headline or photo caption that they felt was particularly egregious and share it with their fellow focus group discussion members. For example, at the beginning of group 1, Jan pointed out to Amber and Mary how the magazine she was looking at (a copy of *Us Weekly*) described a celebrities' pregnancy all in terms of her weight.

> Jan: Ha! This one says that Jessica Alba packed on an estimated 20 pounds.
>
> [all 3 participants laughing]
>
> Jan: Packed on! [says sarcastically]
>
> Amber: Is that like through the whole pregnancy? Because that's not a lot. It may not be enough [laughs]. Wow!
>
> Jan: Yeah, yeah. Like 25 to 30 is like average I guess, is normal, but yeah. I think that is for her whole pregnancy. [Group 1]

Interactions like this occurred frequently throughout the nine focus group discussions and seemed to put these women at ease with each other. It seemed as if they bonded over how outrageous some of the celebrity gossip magazine coverage was and the unique perspective they, as currently pregnant women, had of this coverage.

Although these women indicated that gossip magazines focused on all female celebrities' bodies, they expressed how overwhelmingly they felt these magazines focused on the bodies of celebrities when they were pregnant to the exclusion of other very important and relevant information. Essentially, when covering pregnant celebrities, these pregnant women felt celebrity gossip magazines were mainly concerned with

gossip related to their bodies. The pregnant women involved in this study criticized these magazines for taking part in such coverage. This is illustrated particularly well in the following quote by Sara (group 7):

> Sara: I think if there is an actual article that goes along with it (pictures of pregnant celebrities) they almost always focus on weight gain and how their sex life has changed um and that's about it. They don't talk about any of the other stuff.

Sara, and many of the other participants, felt that celebrity gossip magazines left out a great deal of information about what actually goes on during one's pregnancy in order to place focus on pregnant celebrities' bodies both in photographs and text.

When these pregnant women were asked to describe what they saw depicted in celebrity gossip magazines specifically in regard to coverage of pregnant celebrities, they highlighted three particular sub-points within the overall theme of Body Gossip. In particular, the pregnant women indicated that celebrity gossip magazine focus on the bodies of pregnant celebrities, usually concerned (1) how much weight celebrities had gained while pregnant, (2) how quickly they could lose that weight and return to their pre-baby bodies, and (3) a speculation that particular celebrities were pregnant based on their appearance.

Weight gain. When describing celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities, the focus on weight gain while pregnant was brought up in all of the focus group discussions. For example, in Group 6, Adrienne, Darla, and Jennifer talked about how many of the magazines show pregnant celebrities in bikinis and use the photos to critique their bodies.

> Jennifer: I noticed it's always about the weight that they've [pregnant celebrities] gained and how much they've gained and if whoever is writing it's their opinion if they've gained too much weight and has the celebrity talked about what they're

going to do to lose the weight afterwards.

> Adrienne: The weight, it's funny. Like a lot of the articles, the first thing they say is "She's gained 40 pounds!". It's like well what do you expect her to gain like 10?
>
> Jennifer: Well and every woman is different. Some women are going to stick to the little petite with just that little baby bump and some women gain it all over.
>
> Darla: Yeah. Exactly. [Group 6]

The above quotes illustrate how mostly the participants criticized celebrity gossip magazines for focusing on weight gain. In these discussions, they empathized with the pregnant celebrities and indicated how much they would hate for their pregnancy weight gain to be scrutinized and publicized to a mass audience. Although the participants largely criticized the magazines for this focus, many had described focusing on their own weight gain when talking about their experiences while pregnant, as discussed in the results of Research Question 1. To a large extent, these women described their experiences while pregnant as relating to their outer appearance rather than their internal experiences of carrying a child inside of them.

Within the discussion of the coverage of weight gain in celebrities while pregnant, several focus group discussion participants commented on how celebrity gossip magazines put forth an ideal pregnant body. The women agreed that when depicted in celebrity gossip magazines, pregnant celebrities were celebrated for the belly being the only thing that changed on their bodies. Paula and Leigh (group 2) discussed further just what the ideal pregnant body according to celebrity gossip magazines entailed.

> Paula: They [gossip magazines] kind of got you in the mode you should have the skinny arms, and skinny legs, and then just the belly and that's it. I kind of feel like that's kind of what they promote. I don't know that's just kind of how I feel. They think you should have it right here [touches own belly] and your arms are little twigs and…

Leigh: And that's how a lot of their pictures look. [Group 2]

This ideal was also described by Amelia in group 3, in which the other members agreed with her description.

> Amelia: I don't know if it's deliberate, but I have noticed that it's also the idea that everything else looks normal. Like there is no other pregnancy symptom they [pregnant celebrities] have besides a round belly and you're like how is that possible you know? Like the upper arm flab or the you know whatever. And I think different people are different. I would assume some celebrities kind of cover up more and go under cover and others really celebrate it and put it on magazine covers so…
>
> Hannah: Yeah. [Group 3]

Thus, the ideal pregnant body, as advocated by these magazines seemed similar to the ideal body advocated for non-pregnant women. The one main difference, though, is that the ideal set for the pregnant body allows for one part — the belly — to surpass the normalized boundaries of a thin female form. However, the pregnant women in this study indicated that the time frame for the acceptability of this larger body part was limited. They explained how celebrity gossip magazines made this clear in the great deal of coverage they gave to how quickly celebrities could get back to their pre-baby bodies once postpartum.

Sets a timeframe. Across all of the focus group discussions, the participants described how a large part of celebrity gossip magazine coverage concerned not only the weight the pregnant celebrities had gained while pregnant but how quickly they were able to shed the weight after they gave birth. In fact, Kassandra (group 9) explained that she felt celebrities' bodies were scrutinized and critiqued more heavily right after they had their babies rather than while they were pregnant. In her opinion, gossip magazines placed even greater pressure on a celebrity to return quickly to their pre-baby bodies after

giving birth than they did for celebrities to not gain too much weight during their pregnancies.

The members of focus group discussion 5 described in detail how a great deal of coverage was given to recently post-partum celebrities' abilities to rebound once post-partum.

> Anna: That is almost what you hear before how well the baby is doing is "How long did it take for her to lose her weight and get her body back?" And then they show the before and after.
>
> Jeri: Yeah and then Giselle [Bundchen, a supermodel] modeling like just a couple of weeks after she had the baby.
>
> Olivia: And Heidi Klum.
>
> Jeri: Exactly! Yeah!
>
> Anna: I think that sets a really unrealistic expectation. [Group 5]

Similar to the discussion of the felt social pressure associated with a greater public scrutiny of their bodies, the women in Group 5 criticized this coverage for glossing over the most important part of pregnancy. As communicated by Anne in the above quote, gossip magazines ignore how the baby is doing and immediately begin discussing the state of the newly post-partum celebrity's body.

Further, the pregnant women also discussed how the celebrity gossip magazine coverage focusing on how quickly celebrities could lose excess baby weight after giving birth was not reserved for only recently post-partum celebrities. Rather, this focus began while the celebrities were still pregnant. The members of group 8 describe this coverage and their interpretations of it particularly well.

> Corey: Maybe like a third of, I don't know like most of it [holds up an article about a pregnant Kendra Wilkinson] is all about like how much weight is going on, how she is being positive about 40 pounds of weight, and then how is it going

> to come off. It's like this whole um plan of exactly how it's going to come off and how she can't wait to show off her new hips and butt. So it's like looking past the whole pregnancy to the post-pregnancy body.
>
> Kelly: I think for the celebrities it's like I can do this and be a celebrity. You know what I mean? It's not like about taking time off to be with the baby. It's I can do this and still be a model 2 months later you know and you know that's like they do these super human mom things [laughs].
>
> Marilyn: The time frame thing is a big thing I've seen pushed.
>
> Kelly: Mmmhmm. [Group 8]

As indicated in the above interaction, Corey felt as if celebrity gossip magazines are quick to skip past the pregnancy and the baby to how the celebrity will look once post-partum. In addition, Kelly describes the lack of focus given to a new mom taking time with her baby. Examples like these and others, many women felt, further communicated that the most important thing about pregnancy was a pregnant woman's body.

Similar to their critiques of the focus on pregnant celebrities' weight gain, although the participants criticized these magazines for focusing on how quickly celebrities can return to their pre-baby bodies, this was a concern these women admitted feeling as part of their experiences while pregnant. Participants indicated that they were concerned with balancing financial pressures with those of being a good mom and quickly losing their baby weight. In these ways, these women were negotiating the meaning they derived from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. They opposed the preferred reading of this coverage by realizing there is so much more to pregnancy than issues related to the outer appearance of the body, yet they simultaneously engaged in the very criticism of their own bodies that they found distasteful in this coverage of pregnant celebrities.

Baby bump? Celebrity magazine coverage also often used celebrities' bodies to speculate as to whether they were pregnant, according to the pregnant women in this study. When I asked Sara and Terry (group 7) what this coverage of speculation often entailed, they described it as follows:

> Sara: There's a picture of somebody who's abdomen is somehow…
>
> Terry: Bloated…[laughs]
>
> Sara: Bloated or bulging in the slightest way with a big arrow pointing to it and asking if it's a baby bump and…yeah. [Group 7]

This coverage again is noted as focusing on celebrities' bellies and any changes in it as indicating that pregnancy is involved. These interpretations are interesting in light of these women's admissions of feeling the worst about their pregnant bodies in the first trimester. How this coverage affects these women's thoughts about their own bodies is discussed later on in this chapter in the results of Research Question 3.

Although being under surveillance is part of celebrities' job descriptions, Jeri (group 5) explained the coverage of pregnancy speculation by gossip magazines takes this observation a bit too far.

> Jeri: It is part of their life and they are in the public eye but taking it to the extreme that some of these magazines do it's a little bit ridiculous. And like with all of the speculation, you know, if someone eats a big lunch they may end up on a cover like, is so and so pregnant? I think that is ridiculous. [Group 5]

In group 3, Amelia also talked about this surveillance that celebrities have to deal with.

> Amelia: They're [celebrity gossip magazines] watching these women and do they have bumps you know. So the minute that they eat a big meal they assume that they're pregnant. It seems a bit cruel um yeah. So there's this sort of obsessive gut watch and you know both before and after and that's hard.

Largely, when describing the coverage of pregnant celebrities by gossip magazines, these women's interpretations indicate how much pregnant celebrities are

objectified by these magazines. In discussing the rationale for Study 1 in Chapter 3, objectification theory was introduced. Objectification theory proposes that sexual objectification is one way the media focuses on women's appearance. This objectification "occurs whenever people's bodies, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from their identity, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing them" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 175). Although this definition was presented to the women in Study 2, they described their interpretations of magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities before hearing this definition. The more specific thoughts on the consequences of sexual objectification are presented in the results of Research Question 3 later in this chapter. However, it is important to note how these women described the objectification of celebrities in gossip magazines without prompting.

Although these pregnant women saw celebrity gossip magazines as objectifying pregnant celebrities' bodies, their reading of these magazines was not completely oppositional. Rather, they still felt these magazines were appealing as guilty pleasures and continued to read them and therefore several of the women negotiated the dominant ideology put forth by these magazines of a thin female body whether pregnant or not. For example, Sara and Terry [group 7] noted that spotlighting these pregnant celebrities' bodies was not all bad. When I asked them what they meant by this, their negotiation of the meaning of this content emerged.

> Terry: Well that the pregnant body is beautiful. I mean…
>
> Sara: That pregnancy is not something that needs to be hidden or covered any more than anyone else's body. But at the same time, just like media coverage of women in general I think it sets a very limited sort of definition of beauty.

> Terry: There needs to be a wider range of bodies…
>
> Sara: I think it's a step in the right direction [giving pregnancy more visibility]. I don't, I wouldn't necessarily say I'm optimistic um just given the way women in general are still portrayed. [Group 7]

Possible negotiation of positive aspects of this coverage was also described in group 8 as well.

> Marilyn: I do think it is a positive thing that celebrity moms are out there, in comparison to the past, celebrating their figure if you can put it that way. I mean there are a lot of negative messages but it's not something you have to hide anymore and I remember when I was first pregnant my sister-in-law said you can wear form-fitting stuff now you don't have to wear tents you don't have to hide it now. Celebrities have kind of paved the way there where it's about flaunting your body, your pregnancy.
>
> Kelly: I think it's nice to know that women have decided that having babies is a great thing. I mean even celebrities. That I think it pushes young teen moms and things like that that they can do it too you know. It's portrayed in the media, and they do it in style and everyone is interested in them while they're pregnant. They're not shunned so those kinds of things are positive for me. [Group 8]

That something positive could be derived from these magazines helped these women to be able to continue to enjoy these magazines. These women hope that the focus on pregnant celebrities' bodies has already and continues to allow the pregnant body to no longer be hidden and to generate interest rather than avoidance.

Scholars have argued that although gossip magazines have often been discarded as unworthy texts guilty of subjugating women, they have potential to have a positive impact on women (Feasey, 2006). Further, the celebrity bodies so often displayed in these magazines play an influential role in ideological struggle (Holmes & Redmond, 2006) and either reinforce the dominant ideology of a patriarchal and heterosexual gaze or permit contradictory and oppositional meaning to emerge. The above comments provide evidence for a positive potential and contradictory meaning making as these pregnant

women applauded celebrity gossip magazines for the strides made in granting pregnancy and the pregnant body in particular more visibility and recognition. However, as these women note, while increasing visibility, the messages these magazines communicate about the ideal female body continue to reinforce the dominant ideology of what it entails to be valued as a woman in our culture. Further, despite criticizing celebrity gossip magazines for engaging in body gossip, in these women's discussions of their own experiences, they largely described how much of a focus they themselves place on the outer appearance of their own bodies while pregnant.

Based on the description the pregnant women involved in this study gave of the body gossip these magazines focus on, it becomes apparent why one of their lived experiences while pregnant is of their bodies being under surveillance by others as well as themselves. The focus celebrity gossip magazines place on pregnant celebrities' bodies and related surveillance they partake in of these celebrities' bodies can also help to explain the resultant social pressures these pregnant women indicated feeling in regards to their bodies. The participants' feelings about their own bodies and the effects of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities' on their feelings are discussed further when the results of Research Question 3 are presented. The next theme addresses how these pregnant women indicated that for the most part celebrity gossip magazines glamorized pregnancy and motherhood and that these portrayals were largely unrealistic. However, these magazines also provided an opportunity for these women to engage in objectification of pregnant celebrities, an opportunity many described taking part in despite derogating these magazines for engaging in such objectification.

Objectification through Unrealistic Glamorization

In further describing the fantasy, escape, and daydreaming appeal celebrity gossip magazines held, the pregnant women in this study noted that what they see depicted in these magazines is not real. Sophia (group 4) provided an apt analogy of this appeal:

> Sophia: It's like watching *National Geographic*, when you look at animals.
>
> [group laughter]
>
> Sophia: It's the same sort of thing! It's fun. It's entertaining. It's not, it's not real. You're not an animal, but it's entertaining. Because they're fun. They're interesting. [Group 4]

Sophia's description of the depiction of celebrities' lives in gossip magazines as "not real" was repeated in many of the focus group discussions. The knowledge that the depictions of celebrities in gossip magazines is largely unrealistic was another way these pregnant women opposed the preferred reading of these magazines. However, they also negotiated the dominant ideologies present in these magazines by continuing to engage in the objectifying gaze these magazines largely placed on these celebrities. By equating celebrities with animals that serve to be looked at, these women are directing their gaze in the ways that these magazines are exhibiting the objectifying gaze.

In addition to and part of the focus celebrity gossip magazines place on the appearance of celebrities, the majority of the pregnant women in this study indicated that these magazines glamorized pregnancy in many ways. Whereas several years ago you did not hear about celebrities, or anyone else, being pregnant in the media, now many women said this information is heavily covered. Further, having a baby was seen as a current fad in Hollywood, which was something these women felt celebrity gossip magazines reinforced. For example, Olivia, Anne, and Jeri (group 5) talked about how these

magazines treated pregnancy and the pregnant belly like an "accessory". The following quote from Anne illustrates how she felt gossip magazines pushed this idea:

> Anne: It kind of is an accessory. Like a purse. Cool little things like a dog. Now it is the baby and how nice of a little baby carrier you can have and how much money can you spend on the nursery. [Group 5]

In the above quote, Anne describes how she and many of the other women in this study felt that gossip magazines largely overlooked the amount of responsibility it takes to have a child. Instead these magazines often made pregnancy and having a baby seem like a cool thing to do.

Although these pregnant women felt a small amount of identification with celebrities who were also pregnant, they felt their experiences were quite different. Anne (group 5) talked about how "perfect" the photos and article text make pregnancy seem like it is supposed to feel.

> Anne: Um, so far, what I have been seeing, it seems kind of like they are glamorizing pregnancy. Talking about how they [pregnant celebrities] are glowing and what they are wearing. They all, the ones that I have seen, look very perfect and they also focus on their buggies and strollers and how much they are costing and making it look like everything is very perfect. [Group 5]

Similarly, others commented that the hard work involved in being pregnant as well as in subsequently being a mother to the child was often ignored and that pregnancy was viewed as fun and games.

As such, many of the women also expressed that not only was pregnancy made to look perfect in these magazines but it was also made to look easy. In all of the focus group discussions, the pregnant women expressed how some of the hardships and not-so-pleasant aspects associated with being pregnant, outside of weight gain, were largely ignored by celebrity gossip magazines. In the following interaction, members of group 6

describe their engagement of the objectification of pregnant celebrities featured in these magazines, while also simultaneously realizing that that they are not getting the full picture of celebrities' pregnancies.

> Jennifer: A lot of times they're [pregnant celebrities] just done up. Like hair is done, the makeup is perfect, and they always have some cute little outfit that a lot of the time you are not going to be able to find. And I look at them and I'm like really? Everything is perfect like they have this perfect little world going on in this picture.
>
> Darla: Mmmhmm.
>
> Adrienne: Yeah exactly. You're not seeing them throw up or be nauseous or go through a mood swing. You're not seeing those things. Everything is perfect and it's like yeah right. Let's get in front of the camera and look at what's really going on in that house. [Group 6]

These sentiments were also expressed in group 3 by Amelia.

> Amelia: I think it may make it [pregnancy] look kind of glamorous and easy you know. That it's all joyful and blissful and no having massive heartburn at night or waking up with a Charlie horse. I mean you know there are those realities. [Group 3]

And also in group 5:

> Olivia: They don't tell you about how tired you get and how you cannot get comfortable at night and how you feel nauseous in the morning sometimes.
>
> Anne: Or how you feel you look.
>
> Jeri: The headaches.
>
> Olivia: Your face breaks out and…The varicose veins, oh my gosh the varicose veins. It's like, "What is this!". I did not sign up for this. [Group 5]

In applying the AMM to these comments, it is clear that these women are employing their unique perspective as currently pregnant women to derive meaning from celebrity gossip magazines. They are in the historical moment of being pregnant and thus can easily identify the flaws in this coverage. To these women, the general discomfort, the pain, the

fatigue, the mood swings, and, at times, for some, the ambivalence of being pregnant, were all very real parts of being pregnant. Thus, this coverage, although fun to look at, to engage in an objectifying gaze of these celebrities, and as an escape from their own lives, was recognized as being highly unrealistic and glamorized.

Besides their lived experiences as pregnant women helping them to realize that celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnancy were unrealistic, they also indicated having knowledge of these magazines not being real in the first place. The terms "photoshopping" and "airbrushing" emerged frequently throughout the focus group discussions and were used to explain how these magazines had little to no lasting effect on them. This was described in the following interchange between two members of group 8:

> Kelly: I think it's the same whether you're pregnant or not what you think about these magazines and the people that are in them. It's not like I'm really going to compare myself to these people that have been under makeovers and have been photoshopped so much you don't really know who they are anyway.
>
> Marilyn: Yeah and I feel like I gravitate toward pregnancy topics more so now because it's fun to look at or to hear baby names or just to see baby stuff they are advertising. But I take it all with a grain of salt too. Like the whole happy, perfect family picture I know that everything is photoshopped and fake so… [Group 8]

The following quote from Adrienne (group 6) also illustrates how this knowledge helps these women not let these portrayals affect them negatively.

> Adrienne: I have to pull back and remember like you know I do know that these pictures are airbrushed, I do know that this is what they're supposed to do you know. They're supposed to take these beautiful pictures make everything look glamorous otherwise they wouldn't have a magazine, they wouldn't have something to sell, they wouldn't have something to catch the eye you know. [Group 6]

From the above quotes, it appears that these women, whether pregnant or not, know the techniques these magazines use to be able to make celebrities look perfect at

times. The participants realize you cannot photoshop or airbrush real life. Thus, although they engage in objectification of pregnant celebrities, they acknowledge it is silly for them to feel bad about themselves for not being able to match the perfect lives and bodies they see depicted in celebrity gossip magazines.

Further, the other social pressures and lived experiences that intersected with their pregnancy influenced these women's meaning making of the glamorization and unrealistic nature of this coverage. As mentioned in the discussion of the results of Research Question 1, frequently, these women indicated feeling the pressure to maintain financial stability. Similarly, financial status was brought up frequently in these pregnant women's discussions of the glamorization of pregnancy in celebrity gossip magazines.

> Adrienne: You just see pretty pictures. They don't show you what real women go through. Like, hey, we have to find a daycare provider, we actually have to budget financially and let alone you are actually someone who is doing it on your own. You know single moms out there and whatever their case is. They don't show all of those things. They make it look all glamorous and beautiful not realizing that your body is going through a lot. Your emotions are…
>
> Jennifer: Like one minute you are happy and the next minute you're crying…
>
> Adrienne: Yeah and the next minute you want ice cream. [laughs] [Group 6]

Here Adrienne discusses how she recognizes the gap between her income and responsibilities as a pregnant woman and future mom and those of a celebrity. This recognition also allows her to understand that the glamorous and beautiful pregnancy scene she sees depicted in celebrity gossip magazines is unrealistic for her and many other women.

Likewise, the fact that celebrities have the financial wherewithal to have personal trainers and chefs, hair and makeup artists, stylists as well as full-time nannies to help make them look glamorous and their lives appear perfect was also asserted as evidence of

the unrealistic nature of these magazines. Several of the pregnant women described how the financial bracket they were situated in did not allow for such excesses and therefore they acknowledged it was ridiculous to want to be like these celebrities because that was unrealistic for them. This is illustrated particularly well in the following discussion that arose in group 4 after I asked how the glamorization of pregnancy made the women feel about their own experiences with pregnancy.

> Sophia: This isn't real.
>
> Megan: Okay.
>
> Marina: Right.
>
> Sophia: There's no way. Or their's isn't real for me. It's not, it's not my reality.
>
> Marina: We can't afford these outfits.
>
> [Group laughter]
>
> Nancy: Yeah. Yeah.
>
> Marina: We can't afford to look like this. Or pay personal trainers to get us down to the size we want six weeks after we have a baby. We don't have that kind of money.
>
> Sophia: And we don't have that kind of lifestyle that requires it. [Group 4]

The above interaction points to how these women recognized the lengths that celebrities went to in order to appear glamorous and the amount of money involved. Not only did they not have the money required to go to such lengths, but they did not need to because they are not photographed each and every day to be plastered all over magazines.

In summary, the three themes presented above collectively help to answer Research Question 2, which sought to examine how pregnant women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities.

Despite realizing the many flaws and undesirable messages contained in them, these women indicated the general appeal of these magazines was the opportunity it provided them to escape from their everyday, mundane realities and that enjoyment of these magazines was a guilty pleasure. Overall, these magazines were not purchased frequently, but were hard to avoid and the infrequent purchases of them were reserved for special treats. Further, these women described how their use could generate backlash from others as well as a feeling of guilt by the women themselves – hence the feeling of a guilty pleasure.

Specifically in regard to the messages about pregnancy contained in celebrity gossip magazines, pregnant women felt that the magazines predominately focused on pregnant celebrities' bodies, portrayed pregnancy in an unrealistic fashion, and glamorized pregnancy. The women largely criticized the magazines for covering celebrity pregnancy in these ways and interpreted this coverage as focusing more on the mother and more specifically on how she looked, rather than on what many of them felt was the most important aspect of pregnancy – the baby. However, as indicated by the results of Research Question1, these women described their experiences with pregnancy largely in terms of how their bodies look to others and the related pressures they felt because of that.

Further, the pregnant women in this study interpreted celebrity gossip magazines as a whole and specifically in regard to coverage of pregnant celebrities as being largely unrealistic and as glamorizing pregnancy. Despite this recognition, they described taking part in a negotiated reading of this coverage, as they also discussed how they themselves take part in the objectifying gaze these magazines place on pregnant celebrities. In

addition, the pregnant women described how different celebrities' lifestyles were from their own. Although they currently had pregnancy in common with some of the celebrities they see in gossip magazines, they felt that their financial backgrounds and personal lives were largely discrepant from those of pregnant celebrities. This disidentification that was expressed in the present study of pregnant women is discussed further in the next section, which examines how magazine portrayals impact pregnant women's feelings about their bodies, the purpose of the third research question guiding this study.

Research Question 3: Impact on Thoughts about the Body

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, one of the most pressing social pressures these women described feeling in their experiences while pregnant was the pressure to meet cultural standards of attractiveness and physical ideals. This pressure stemmed from a feeling of being under greater bodily scrutiny while pregnant. Scrutiny was described as feelings of more surveillance of their bodies by others as well as a need to perform more surveillance of themselves. In this section, how these felt pressures intersected with the impact of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant women on pregnant women's thoughts about their own bodies is discussed to answer the third research question.

Within these pregnant women's discussions of the amount of celebrity gossip magazine coverage that focused on the bodies of pregnant celebrities, how this coverage impacted their thoughts about their own bodies was brought to light. Specifically, three themes emerged that help to explain this impact. The first theme, Distant Comparison, illustrates how these pregnant women related celebrity gossip magazine coverage of

pregnant celebrity bodies back to their own bodies. The second theme was labeled Great Expectations and addresses the societal pressures to rebound quickly once post-partum these women felt were related to gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. Not Us, Them was the third and final theme that emerged, and this theme represents how pregnant women described in their own words the effects of celebrity gossip magazines on individuals' feelings about their own bodies.

Distant Comparison

To examine how these women related gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities to their own pregnant selves, I asked the participants if they ever compared themselves to pregnant celebrities in gossip magazines. Many replied that they did, especially in regard to their bodies, because much of the coverage of pregnant celebrities concerned the body as discussed in the results of the first research question. Several women explained comparison of their own bodies to others was something that women did whether pregnant or not and that it was easy to engage in with celebrities because their bodies are so visible in the public eye. However, largely comparison of their own bodies with those of celebrities was described as a distant comparison. For example, when I asked group 4 if they ever engaged in comparison with pregnant celebrities, all three of the women indicated that they did and described this comparison as follows:

> Sophia: In the very distant…
>
> Marina: in a distant way…
>
> Nancy: Yeah
>
> Megan: Okay.
>
> Sophia: Yeah. Something like there's…because you're not them. You're not a star. You're not in the spotlight. You don't have trainers. You don't have people..

Marina: Styling their hair or makeup or clothes.

Sophia and Nancy in unison: Yeah. [Group 4]

Although these women admitted to comparing themselves to pregnant celebrities, this comparison was distant because, as indicated in the quotes above, these women felt little similarity with pregnant celebrities and realized they were not on the same level. As with the discussion of the results concerning Research Question 2, outside of the fact that they shared being currently pregnant with these celebrities, they mainly disidentified with those celebrities realizing they had very different lifestyles.

Individuals come to learn about themselves through social comparison with others, according to social comparison theory, which was introduced in Chapter 3 and measured in Study1. According to Festinger (1954), original author of the theory, when individuals engage in comparison, they evaluate their own attributes based on the attributes they see others to have. Social comparison theory classifies two differing types of comparison that individuals engage in with others – an upward comparison and a downward comparison. Upward comparison involves, for example, individuals comparing themselves to someone who they deem to be better-looking and/or more successful. Many of the women discussed the upward comparison they took part in with pregnant celebrity bodies and the negative thoughts about their own bodies that resulted from such comparisons. Despite the initial negative impact these comparisons had, the women indicated they did not feel this impact long-term. As Johansson (2006) found in her study of tabloid readers, identification and distancing with celebrities were often accompanied by resentment and frustration on the part of readers who experienced jealousy when comparing themselves with celebrities. Resentment and jealousy were

often present in the women's descriptions of their upward comparisons with pregnant celebrities. However, these upward comparisons were also described as quickly being pushed aside.

The process of pushing aside such negative feelings that resulted from upward comparison is described by Amelia in the following quote:

> Amelia: I mean I think it's a fleeting thought of what I wished my upper arms looked like [laughs]. But again I don't use that as sort of like a normal barometer and like you said [points to Gloria] you have no idea how touched up or whatever that that might be. So again, it's nothing really to dwell on. And again it's sort of like a land of reality and a land of Hollywood. [Group 3]

Similarly, Corey also discussed how she realized how ridiculous she was in her upward comparison with pregnant and recently post-partum celebrities' bodies.

> Corey: Yeah I mean part of it I'm like ugh how come they're so thin and pregnant ugh but then it's like oh whatever that's there job to be thin and that's not my job and um. You know but also I'm like oh they totally were able to take that weight off so I totally am going to be able to too. So I find it, I mean, it is somehow making me think that I could become really thin after having a baby um which is not at all likely because there is no way I have that much time or that much energy, but yeah, I think, you know, I do definitely compare myself even though I do know at the same time that it's absurd. [Group 8]

In the above quotes the women describe their upward comparisons with pregnant and recently post-partum celebrities' bodies as being both fleeting and silly. Again these comparisons are described in these ways because they also realize that their lives are nothing like those of celebrities and so they can recognize that to put such a pressure on their bodies to resemble those of celebrities is not logical. In these ways, they can protect themselves in the long term from the harmful experiences of feeling like their bodies do not measure up by negotiating what they see depicted.

These pregnant women also indicated engaging in downward comparison with pregnant celebrity bodies at times. Downward comparison occurs when individuals

compare themselves to someone who they perceive to be less good-looking and/or successful and evaluate themselves based on that comparison (Festinger, 1954). As much as these women criticized celebrity magazines for focusing on the weight of pregnant celebrities, they also took some pleasure in recognizing how their weight gain was not as substantial as some celebrities. For example, the women in Group 4 talked about how as much as seeing some pregnant celebrities' bodies being flaunted and praised makes them initially feel badly about their own bodies, seeing other pregnant celebrities' bodies being ridiculed can make them feel better about their own bodies.

> Nancy: I mean when you hear of somebody who gains 50 pounds during their pregnancy, you know, and you only gain 25, that'd make me feel a little bit better about yourself.
>
> Sophia: Mmmhmm.
>
> Marina: Yeah.
>
> Nancy: You know especially when you know what they look like to start wth and then you know…
>
> Megan: Okay.
>
> Sophia: That would make you feel better about it all…
>
> Nancy: Yeah. [Group 4]

Further, Hannah described how she simultaneously engages in both upward and downward comparison with pregnant celebrities.

> Hannah: Yeah I initially probably do but then I don't dwell on it. Like I looked at a picture of her [points to Kendra Wilkinson on the cover of *Us Weekly*] and I was like she's 7 months and so then I was like okay so she's only like 4 weeks more than I am and I'm not quite as bulgy. I think it's something I think about at first and yeah I will say ehh they're a lot thinner but I don't think it's something I constantly am thinking about you know … [Group 3]

Although the downward comparisons described above were not engaged in as frequently as the upward comparisons they were also used as coping mechanisms by these women. By finding ways to feel as if their pregnant bodies were not as bad as they could be, these women were better able to deal with the changes they were experiencing in their bodies. These findings are in line with Johansson's (2006) argument that the major appeal of reading tabloids is the bashing of celebrities these magazines engage in because it allows for any resentment and jealousy felt on the part of the reader to be somewhat alleviated.

To further illustrate how distant their comparison was with pregnant celebrities, the women in this study described how more useful and realistic comparison targets were people they knew personally. For many, friends, family members, and co-workers who were currently or who had been pregnant were more suitable comparison targets. For example, Terry and Sara (group 7) indicated that they compared themselves more often with close others because they felt the comparison was more valid when it was engaged in with someone who was normal like they were and whose attitudes and behaviors were similar to their own.

Further, the issue of the gap in lifestyles between these women and celebrities was also mentioned as a reason for comparison with close others to be more valued. Friends, family members, and co-workers were more likely to belong to the same economic class as these women and therefore had similar resources. Marina further elucidated this idea in the following quote:

> Marina: They're [celebrities] not in our financial bracket to even compare us to. Because their financial bracket is so far above ours that we cannot afford to do what they do and look the way that they do. They need – we need to be down with real people in our own blue collar world to compare ourselves with, I think.

[Group 4]

In applying the AMM to these discussions, one of the experiences of social pressures these pregnant women described currently feeling is a lack in financial stability. Although these women indicated they would like to be better off financially, their realization that they are not in the same financial bracket as celebrities may also help protect them from negative feelings associated with comparing their bodies to those of celebrities. They appear to realize that in many cases pregnant celebrities bodies are more desirable than their own; however, they are more willing to brush those feelings aside because they understand that financially they cannot compete with the lengths celebrities go to in order to keep their pregnant bodies as toned and thin as possible. On the flip side, though, this realization may, although only briefly, enhance the pressures they feel to attain better financial stability so that they can take time off of work to devote to their bodies, and have personal trainers, chefs, and live-in nannies.

However fleeting and distant these pregnant women described their engagement in comparison with pregnant celebrities' bodies to be, most were well aware of the expectations gossip magazine coverage of celebrity bodies set for all women. These expectations both fed into and out of the social pressures these women felt to live up to physical ideals for women in our society. Not only did these women compare the state of their current pregnant bodies to those of pregnant celebrities, they also described engaging in a prospective comparison with recently post-partum celebrities in regard to how their own bodies would look once they gave birth. In relation to this prospective comparison, in the next section, I discuss how celebrity gossip magazines impacted the

participants' feelings about what expectations they and others held for their bodies once they gave birth to the children they were carrying.

Great Expectations

As described at the beginning of this chapter, one of the most pressing social pressures these pregnant women felt was a pressure to live up to a physical ideal as women in our culture. While pregnant, most of the women indicated they experienced at least some anxiety over being able to lose any weight left over once they gave birth to their children. The body gossip, which was discussed in the results of Research Question 2, that celebrity gossip magazines engaged in when covering pregnant celebrities was described by these women as factoring in to their anxieties about their own bodies. Specifically, many of the women indicated how frustrating it was to see gossip magazines devote a great deal of favorable coverage to recently post-partum celebrities who had been able to return to thin and toned bodies quickly. This coverage, they noted, set expectations in themselves as well as set expectations they perceived others to have for how their bodies should look once they gave birth. The majority of pregnant women in the focus group discussions agreed that they felt more pressures in terms of their bodies from the coverage of celebrities getting back to their pre-baby bodies than from the discussion of weight gain by celebrities during their pregnancy. In addition, although the coverage that included the speculation of a celebrity being pregnant was explained by these pregnant women as impacting their struggles with their appearance in the early stages of pregnancy, they knew that these struggles were short lived as soon enough it would be evident they were pregnant and had not simply overeaten.

As a result of engaging in the aforementioned prospective comparison and the expectations these women felt, they described an impact on how they felt about the future state of their bodies. Sara and Terry (group 7) discussed these expectations in the following interaction:

> Sara: They [celebrity gossip magazines] always seem to jump from pictures like this [points to a picture of a very pregnant celebrity] to pictures of the same people like 6 weeks later and they look like that [points to a picture of a recently post-partum celebrity who has lost all baby weight and is toned]. And like it's…
>
> Terry: It sets an expectation…
>
> Sara: It doesn't mention that they have live-in nannies you know and a personal trainer that comes to work with them you know 6 days a week and…
>
> Terry: And that sets an expectation for you to be back in the same shape you were before in 6 weeks. [Group 7]

In the above discussion, Sara and Terry describe the surveillance of celebrity bodies that celebrity gossip magazines engage in, especially in regard to critiquing recently post-partum celebrities' bodies. By juxtaposing pictures of celebrities when they are in the late stages of pregnancy adjacent to pictures of the same celebrities only a few weeks later but looking toned and thin, Sara and Terry felt expectations for their own quick return to their pre-baby bodies were clearly communicated.

The expectations celebrity gossip magazines set for women once they are post-partum also included being able to wear the clothing a woman was wearing pre-pregnancy right after giving birth according to these women. For example, Paula (group 2) described how unattractive she felt in maternity clothing but had to continue to wear such clothing for a long time after the birth of her first child. It was hard for her to see scantily clad celebrities pictured in these magazines and be praised for being sexy shortly after giving birth. This made her question her body's response to her first child, and now

being pregnant again, how long it would take for her body to rebound after the birth of this child.

Therefore, these women felt celebrity gossip magazine coverage of recently post-partum celebrities set expectations for an appropriate timeline for these women to return to their pre-baby bodies. Many of the pregnant women indicated this coverage led them to ponder exactly how long it would take for them to get back to an appropriate body shape and size. This was illustrated by Amelia in group 3 when she was describing the expectations that celebrity gossip magazines have for and communicate about recently post-partum celebrities.

> Amelia: I think for regular people too you wonder. I mean clearly I'm not going to lose weight and walk on a runway right away but I have already thought about how I am going to get back in shape and will that happen sort of naturally or am I really going to have to work at it. [Group 3]

A similar discussion occurred in group 6 and is illustrated in the following interaction:

> Darla: I think about how long it will take.
>
> Jennifer: Oh yeah.
>
> Adrienne: Yeah.
>
> Darla: I think what they do [recently post-partum celebrities] is unrealistic for us in the real world. I mean in 4 weeks to have a runway body like Heidi Klum for Victoria's Secret. I'm like is that even healthy to do that?
>
> Adrienne: Yeah is that even right?
>
> Jennifer: Is she even sleeping?
>
> Darla: But yeah I think it is a worry for sure. [Group 6]

As illustrated in the above quotes, once again these women recognized how unrealistic these portrayals were for normal women. Many felt it was unrealistic for themselves to return to their pre-baby bodies as quickly as celebrities did as well as how

unrealistic it was for them to hope to have bodies that resembled those of celebrities' in the first place. In this way, they negotiated the meaning of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of recently post-partum celebrities in order to protect themselves from resultant long-term negative feelings about their bodies. In addition, as exemplified in the group 6 interaction between Darla, Jennifer, and Adrienne, these women often reconciled their anxieties about their bodies once post-partum by questioning how healthy celebrities were.

The belief that being healthy was more important than looking good was described in many of the group discussions when the pregnant women were explaining the impact of celebrity gossip magazines on their bodies. For example, when asked about the impact of coverage of post-partum celebrities' returns to their pre-baby bodies, Gloria (group 3) responded in the following way:

> Gloria: I can't say I'm not worried about it, but um….The most important thing is that I will have a healthy baby. This is the most important thing to me and then I will look at myself and see what I will do to lose the weight and stuff like this. [Group 3]

Whereas celebrity gossip magazines often made it seem like the most important part of a pregnancy was the celebrity and how good her body looked both during and immediately after pregnancy, the pregnant women in this study described that they realized the most important thing to them was carrying and delivering a healthy child. Although they placed a great deal of importance on how they looked while pregnant and on thinking about how they could lose pregnancy weight once post-partum, participants balanced these thoughts with the goal of delivering a healthy baby.

Having a healthy baby was particularly important to this group of women because in the vast majority of the focus group discussions conducted for this study, at least one

of the pregnant women participating had experienced troubles getting pregnant or had experienced a miscarriage prior to their current pregnancy. In the first focus group discussion it became evident that infertility and past miscarriages were prevalent and important issues. Jan (group 1) was the first pregnant woman I encountered in this study who had suffered a miscarriage prior to her current pregnancy. Due to this miscarriage, Jan explained that she was extremely accepting of any bodily changes happening during pregnancy this time around and shared with the group how much she loved her big belly.

These issues surfaced again with all three of the participants in focus group discussion 3. One member of this group, Hannah, did not have any existing children, yet she revealed that her current pregnancy was actually her third in the past year and four months. After two miscarriages, Hannah relayed that the doctors discovered her problem:

> Hannah: We found out I actually have a clotting disorder and so with this [pregnancy] I do heparin shots twice a day and take aspirin and folic acid and fish oil. So there's a big appreciation you know. You are like I don't even care about what's going on with my body. [Group 3]

Much like many of the other participants, Hannah was willing to deal with the unpleasant side effects, including weight issues, of being pregnant after struggling to successfully carry a child in the first place.

These sentiments continued to be a theme throughout many of the other focus group discussions, in which women who described experiencing miscarriages and/or problems being able to get pregnant recognized the bodily changes and feelings they were going through, although frustrating, were worth it. Thus, when taking into account these women's unique histories and lived experiences, the meaning they derive from these magazines is better understood. Although they feel the expectations set for pregnant women's bodies once they give birth, they resist negative feelings about their bodies

because of their experiences with infertility and miscarriage and therefore also realize they should be more concerned with the health of their children. However, they also realized that the importance these magazines placed on the body could have damaging effects for others.

Not Us, Them

All of the women involved in Study 2 had also participated in the Study 1 experiment and thus had been very briefly told the purpose of Study 1. Therefore, at the end of each focus group discussion, I explained more in depth how Study 1 examined if exposure to sexually objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities enhanced their self-objectification, weight and appearance anxiety and social comparison. A full definition of sexual objectification was provided for the women and they were asked to describe their thoughts about any sexual objectification they had noticed in regard to celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. These women had already largely described what sounded like the sexual objectification of not only pregnant celebrities, but also recently post-partum and speculated to be pregnant celebrities in these magazines earlier in their group discussions. However, after hearing the definition, they now called it sexual objectification themselves.

When asked to describe the effects of such objectification of pregnant celebrities on others, the women referred back to some of their own feelings they had already described such as comparison, jealousy, frustration, feelings of inadequacy, and pressures to live up to unrealistic expectations. However, they also described much more harmful consequences that could occur such as dangerous food restriction and excessive exercise that some women could feel compelled to engage in during pregnancy. Overwhelmingly,

though, these harmful consequences of the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities were described as occurring to others, not these pregnant women themselves.

In these discussions of the impact of the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities found in gossip magazines on these women, evidence for the third-person effect, a well-known hypothesis, was present in all of the focus group discussions. This hypothesis was originally introduced by Davison (1983), who argued that individuals are more likely to believe that they themselves are not substantially influenced by media messages but others are. In the present study, the women did recognize that they compared their own bodies to the pregnant celebrities they saw in gossip magazines. They also recognized that gossip magazines set expectations for what their bodies should look like once post-partum and how quickly they could get their bodies to look that way. However, these women were clear in their persistence that those comparisons and felt expectations were brief and did not negatively impact their thoughts about their own bodies in the long term. A main reason why they argued they were not negatively impacted by this coverage was because they felt they were able to discern that the portrayals of pregnancy and motherhood were unrealistic and these celebrities' lifestyles were vastly different from their own.

Despite these women's abilities to recognize the unrealistic nature of gossip magazine portrayals, many of them discussed how others, especially younger women, were more likely to accept it as reality. In fact, evidence of the third-person effect hypothesis was found in every focus group discussion held in this study. All of the women believed that individually and collectively as mature women they were not

adversely affected by the messages included in celebrity gossip magazines, but that younger, less mature women most likely were.

In the focus group discussions, these pregnant women commented on the fact that they were not influenced by what they saw depicted in celebrity gossip magazines because they knew much of what they saw was unrealistic, glamorized, photoshopped, and airbrushed. According to these women, the messages in these magazines, especially in regard to pregnancy, however, were not good messages and likely had a negative impact on younger women's ideas of what pregnancy entails. This was illustrated particularly well by in the following group 4 discussion:

> Nancy: I think, you know, for me, and and I would say for most of my friends and relatives um who were pregnant. I think that we're pretty cognizant that this [points to a gossip magazine] is not necessarily the norm, and this is not something necessarily to try to attain. Um. You know, so but for maybe for the, a younger crowd or somebody who's a little more naïve, that maybe might think that this is a little more real than it is. And that could be a scary thing.
>
> Marina: Like if you had us in a room with like a 22-year-old to 26-year-old.
>
> Sophia: Or a 16-year-old.
>
> Marina: Yeah a six-, yeah. A sixteen-year-old sitting across from us, I could guarantee they would think not one iota of what we're thinking right now.
>
> Megan: Okay.
>
> Marina: Because they are so naïve. [Group 4]

In the above interaction, both Nancy and Marina described how younger women would be more likely to be negatively impacted because of their lack of experience. In addition, Nancy was quick to distance herself as well as her close others by arguing that they were well aware of the unrealistic nature of these portrayals whereas younger women were not.

The third-person effect was also described in group 3, in which Jennifer, Darla, and Adrienne talked about how those with even lower levels of maturity could be impacted by celebrity gossip magazines.

> Jennifer: Like a 14 or 15 year old is not going to see that being pregnant is not this great. I mean it is exciting but it's also you know they don't understand all the changes that you go through…
>
> Darla: Mmmhmm, right. They just see the cute girl in the cute dress, hair is all done…
>
> Jennifer: Right and the cute little bump. Oh isn't that cute…
>
> Darla: And it takes four weeks to get my body back and that's it.
>
> Jennifer: And then you have this cute baby that you get to play dress up with. [Group 3]

The above interactions indicate how these women felt that their maturity allowed them to largely escape any negative effects of gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. However, the glamorous, effortless, and perfect picture of pregnancy depicted in gossip magazines was more likely to be thought of as real by younger and less mature girls and women.

In addition to lower levels of maturity making some more susceptible to influence of celebrity gossip magazines, according to many of the women so could education level and background. Amber (group 1) described this in the following way:

> Amber: I can't say that I like try to avoid things like we talked about before but I'm conscious of what I think when I look at something and I don't know that most women are conscious of the message that is being sent to them through an advertisement or in magazine or in an article. They just think whatever it is and then it becomes ingrained. [Group 1]

The above quote illustrates how Amber felt her own media literacy protected her from any negative impact, but that others may not have such skills. Amber also credited her

educational background in Sociology as helping her to become more conscious of messages she consumes. Others that differed in such background and in such media literacy skills, she felt, would not be so lucky.

Prior research examining third-person effect has found that this effect is especially prominent when individuals deem a message as being unfavorable and possibly harmful (Perloff, 1999). Such undesirable features of celebrity gossip magazine messages about pregnancy were brought to light by fellow group 3 member, Adrienne. Based on the above comments from her group members she responded by describing a photospread she saw in a celebrity gossip magazine that involved Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony's newly delivered twin babies. Adrienne described the spread as seeming like a fairy tale with the twins dressed up like "two porcelain dolls." Jennifer and Darla also remembered seeing this spread and being disgusted by it. Celebrity gossip magazine photospreads and articles like these, according to these women, do have an impact on young girls.

> Adrienne: I have actually heard young girls say they want to have a baby so they can dress them up and play you know. That's the only reason they want to have a kid. Not realizing that "Oh honey child, there is so much more that goes into it." These kids do not stay sweet and cute like they do in these magazines.
>
> Jennifer: They grow up and have dirty diapers…
>
> Adrienne: They have dirty diapers, they are going to puke on you..
>
> Jennifer: And they scream. [laughs]. [Group 3]

Thus, because these women understood that the content of celebrity gossip magazines was largely unrealistic, glamorized, and contained undesirable messages, it was easy for them to feel that they were unaffected. However, girls and women with lower levels of maturity and education were likely affected. Despite these women's ideas

about the effects of these messages, prior research into young girls' interpretations of media images of females has indicated otherwise (Currie, 1999; Duits & van Romondt Vis, 2007; Milkie, 1999). For example, in focus groups with ninth and tenth grade girls, Milkie found the girls to believe females depicted in magazines were unrealistic, disliked media images of females for that very reason, and also because they felt the images were dangerous for themselves and others.

The third-person effect has been found to be particularly strong when the group that is seen as being affected by the media is perceived as being distant from those who are perceiving this effect. This is explained by the notion of the social distance corollary in which the differences individuals feel between themselves and others are more pronounced when the perceived distance between self and others increases (Perloff, 1999). For women in our culture, a dominant ideology concerns linkages of youth with beauty (Wolf, 1991). Therefore, women are often made well aware of their age and the disparities between themselves and more youthful women. Being that these women are constantly made aware of the growing distance between themselves and youth, it may have been easier for them to perceive such an effect on that group. In addition, it may be that these women remembered how they were affected by the media when they were younger and based such suppositions on their own experiences. For example, Lily and Kassandra (group 9) both said that although now they are largely unaffected by this coverage, they probably would have been influenced more so if they had gotten pregnant when they were younger. Kassandra explained that she placed more importance on gossip magazines and celebrities when she was in high school but has now come to realize there are many more other important things.

In sum, the results of Research Question 3 regarding how celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities impact pregnant women's feelings about their own bodies were presented in this section. The pregnant women involved in this study described engaging in a distant comparison of their own bodies with those of pregnant celebrities and that this comparison was fleeting and did not impact them negatively in the long term. In addition, the women described the expectations that celebrity gossip magazines communicate in regard to how quickly a woman should lose any leftover weight and return to her pre-baby body once post-partum. These expectations were described as being unrealistic for them, but did cause them to ponder how long it would take to get their bodies back in shape after giving birth. Ultimately, based on their lived experiences and struggles with infertility and miscarriage, many of these women indicated they realized the health of their babies was more important than worries over appearance.

Further, when given the definition of sexual objectification, these pregnant women expressed how celebrity gossip magazines largely engage in the sexual objectification of pregnant, recently post-partum, and speculated-to-be pregnant celebrities. This sexual objectification was criticized by these women, as they felt the celebrity gossip magazine focus on the bodies of celebrities took away from the most important part of pregnancy in their minds – the baby and the health of that baby. According to these women, the sexual objectification so often engaged in by these magazines could certainly have harmful consequences; however, they felt largely unaffected. Rather, younger, less mature, and less educated girls and women would more likely be impacted negatively by the sexual objectification in these magazines.

Although the participants largely felt that others are negatively affected by celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy but they themselves are not, their comments prior to hearing the definition of sexual objectification indicated otherwise. In particular, participants admitted that the expectations celebrity gossip magazines communicated for a woman's body once post-partum accentuated their anxieties about their own bodies and how quickly they could return to their pre-baby bodies after giving birth. The women are affected; however, it may not have been socially desirable for them to admit these effects, especially in front of strangers. Thus, it appears that to an extent, the pregnant women in this study may have been overestimating the impact of celebrity gossip magazine messages about celebrity pregnancy on others and underestimating the impact on themselves.

Summary of Study 2 Results

Despite the many flaws and undesirable messages contained in celebrity gossip magazines, these women indicated that their general appeal was the opportunity it provided them to escape from their everyday, mundane realities and that enjoyment of these magazines was a guilty pleasure. Overall, these magazines were not purchased frequently, but were hard to avoid and the infrequent purchases of them were reserved for special treats. Further, these women described how reading these magazines could generate backlash from others as well as a feeling of guilt by the women themselves – hence the feeling of a guilty pleasure.

Specifically in regard to the messages about pregnancy contained in celebrity gossip magazines, pregnant women felt that the magazines predominately focused on pregnant celebrities' bodies, portrayed pregnancy in an unrealistic fashion, and

glamorized pregnancy. When focusing on pregnant celebrities' bodies, most often the women in this study described this coverage as discussing weight gain during pregnancy, how quickly that weight could be lost post-pregnancy, and speculation of pregnancy based on celebrities' appearance. The pregnant women in this study interpreted this coverage as focusing more on the mother and more specifically how she looked, rather than on what many of them felt was the most important aspect of pregnancy – the baby. Although participants criticized these magazines for placing importance on looks in the coverage of celebrity pregnancy, they also described how they themselves engage in an objectifying gaze of these celebrities when exposed to this coverage.

Further, the pregnant women in this study interpreted celebrity gossip magazines as a whole, and specifically in regard to coverage of pregnant celebrities, as being largely unrealistic. As part of these interpretations, the pregnant women described how different celebrities' lifestyles were from their own. Although they currently had pregnancy in common with some of the celebrities they saw in gossip magazines, they felt that their financial backgrounds and personal lives were largely discrepant from those of pregnant celebrities. The realization that celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities is largely unrealistic, helped these pregnant women to combat any possible negative effects. Although they admitted to comparing their own bodies with those of pregnant celebrities, most indicated this was a distant comparison and did not last long. Rather, they more often compared their pregnant bodies with friends, family members, and co-workers who were currently, or who had been, pregnant.

Many of the women in this study felt that the sexual objectification of pregnant women was apparent in celebrity gossip magazines and that this objectification sends an

undesirable message. However, as previously mentioned, many of the women also described engaging in objectification of celebrities featured in these magazines. Despite this, they felt largely unaffected by these magazines because they felt they were able to discern the unrealistic nature of this coverage. Most of the participants noted how a younger, less mature group of women could be negatively impacted by this coverage in terms of thinking their bodies could look like the bodies of celebrities while pregnant and that they could lose any pregnancy weight extremely quickly once post-partum. However, their comments prior to hearing the definition of sexual objectification indicated that the they may have underestimated the impact of these magazines on themselves.

The interpretations of celebrity gossip magazines were discussed in light of the most prominent social pressures these women currently described feeling. These pressures dealt with their experiences while pregnant, as well as their gender and financial status. In the next chapter, I discuss the results of both Study 1 and Study 2 and how the results of each study relate to one another. The theoretical and practical implications, strengths, limitations, and directions for future research are also addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

Overview

In Western culture, attractiveness for females in our society has been consistently linked to slenderness (Grogan, 1999). However, pregnancy is one significant stage in the lifespan of many women that produces a great deal of change in their outward appearance in a relatively short amount of time. Despite bodily signs of reproductive capability once being considered attractive and desirable, today the thin ideal becomes particularly problematic for women to meet while pregnant. Therefore, this stage is particularly important to examine how these changes in one's body impact a pregnant woman's thoughts about her own body. The recent onslaught of public representations of pregnant celebrities in celebrity gossip magazines further communicate the ideal body shape for pregnant women. However, research thus far has neglected to examine how media portrayals of celebrity pregnancy impact women's perceptions of their bodies while pregnant.

The present analysis sought to investigate through both quantitative and qualitative methods how media exposure impacts women's body image and the meaning media hold for women while pregnant. Study 1 was designed to examine the impact of viewing sexually objectifying images and text pertaining to pregnant celebrities on women's self-objectification, valence of appearance descriptors, weight and appearance anxiety, and engagement in social comparison with the featured celebrities. Study 2 was conceptualized to complement the findings of Study 1 and to investigate how pregnant

women describe in their own words the meaning celebrity gossip magazines hold for them.

Both studies incorporated concepts from objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) with the purpose of examining the impact of celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities on the self-objectification and social comparison processes. Further, a cultural studies approach, and more specifically the articulation model of meaning (AMM) (Hall, 1986), was employed in Study 2 with the purpose of generating a better understanding of the experiences a woman encounters and the meaning she derives from celebrity gossip magazines while pregnant. To achieve these aims, pregnant women 18 years of age and older voluntarily participated in an online experiment. In addition, a portion of these women also volunteered to participate in a focus group discussion. In the rest of this chapter, I discuss the implications of both Study 1 and Study 2 findings, the theoretical significance of the findings of both studies, the strengths and limitations of both studies, and directions for future research.

Implications of Study 1 Findings

Main Effects

Hypothesis 1. This hypothesis proposed that pregnant women who viewed images and text of sexually objectified pregnant celebrities would experience more self-objectification than those who viewed non-objectifying images and text and those who viewed control images. Although not in the direction predicted noteworthy differences in self-objectification emerged between the three conditions.

The ANCOVA results revealed participants who viewed the non-objectifying images and text experienced more self-objectification than those who viewed the control stimuli. Self-objectification was measured by adding up the number of appearance-related words that participants used to complete 20 "I am _____" statements. The pregnant women participating in this study who viewed non-objectifying headshot-only photos of celebrities and read accompanying text, used more appearance-related statements to describe themselves compared to the pregnant women who viewed images of baby products.

However, results of the regressions calculated to examine the possible mediating influence of self-objectification on participants' weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety indicated that assignment to both the sexually objectifying full-body condition and the non-objectifying headshot condition significantly increased participants' self-objectification. Thus, the results of Study 1 are mixed in regard to the impact of exposure on self-objectification as these results differ from the results of Hypothesis 1. For the regression used to test Hypothesis 6, condition was coded as sexually objectifying condition versus all other conditions whereas the ANCOVA calculated for Hypothesis 1 examined the differences between all three groups. The ANCOVA was used to test Hypothesis 1 because the ANCOVA results are a bit more nuanced and further elucidate the differences between the conditions.

These results are contradictory to past research that has found a link between individuals' exposure to objectifying images and increased levels of self-objectification (Aubrey et al., 2009; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). However, past research examining the impact of sexually objectifying images on

individuals' self-objectification has largely been studied in populations of young women and adolescent girls. Because there are no known studies of the impact of sexually objectifying media exposure on women while pregnant, research has not yet examined what triggers self-objectification during pregnancy and whether the experience of being pregnant causes changes in the self-objectification process.

It was clear that the celebrities featured in the sexually objectifying stimuli presented in Study 1 were pregnant. However, although the non-objectifying headshot-only images featured the heads of celebrities who were pregnant, it was not evident to participants in either the images or the text that these celebrities were pregnant. Therefore, seeing images of celebrities while not visibly pregnant, whether sexually objectified or not, might have primed their self-objectification while pregnant. Further, it could be that these women visualized in their heads what the bodies attached to the celebrities they saw in the headshot images looked like and visualized them as being non-pregnant, thin, toned, and sculpted. In support of this, Holmes and Redmond (2006) argue that celebrities speak with their bodies and thus are subject to a gaze created by popular media that spotlights the shape and size of their bodies much less often than close-ups of their faces. Thus, images of thin, toned, and sculpted celebrity bodies are so prevalent in our culture and these bodies are so frequently objectified by the media, it is likely just seeing their heads triggered these women to visualize images of these celebrities' bodies that they had previously been exposed to. This visualization in turn may have caused them to see themselves as objects to be evaluated by others because their pregnant bodies differed from their visualization of that thin ideal.

Because the present analysis did not examine the effects of full-body images of non-pregnant celebrities on pregnant women's self-objectification, it is not clear whether seeing these images would increase self-objectification more so than seeing full-body images of pregnant celebrities or headshot-only images of celebrities. Future research is needed to further clarify this process.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis proposed that pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying images and text would describe their appearance more negatively than those who viewed non-objectifying stimuli and those who viewed control stimuli. This hypothesis was not supported as there were no significant differences in the valence of appearance descriptors between the three conditions. Although past research (Aubrey et al., 2009) has indicated that it is important to recognize that self-objectification is not necessarily a negative or positive experience and that exposure to sexually objectifying images has been found to cause participants to describe their appearance less positively, this prior research has not examined pregnant women. Overall, this sample of pregnant women described their appearance in primarily neutral terms. Thus, women may be less harsh when describing their bodies in terms of valence because they realize how their pregnant bodies are only temporary.

Hypothesis 5. Pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying stimuli were predicted to report more weight-related appearance anxiety than women who viewed non-objectifying stimuli and those who viewed control stimuli. For both weight-related (e.g., thighs, buttocks, waist) and non-weight-related (e.g., chin, lips, feet) appearance anxiety, this hypothesis was not supported, as there were no significant differences between the three groups. Again it is important to point out that although past research

has found that exposure to images of thin-idealized women results in higher levels of weight anxiety, this research was not conducted in a sample of pregnant women. Therefore, as with the experience of self-objectification, the experience of weight anxiety may differ while one is pregnant. Posthoc analyses indicated that the mean scores on both weight-related and non-weight-related appearance anxiety were statistically significantly higher than the mean scores on these variables in other similarly designed studies involving non-pregnant women. Thus, in general, it appears that women experience more appearance and weight anxiety while pregnant than when not. The results of Hypothesis 5 showed that although pregnant women do experience greater levels of both weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety, there were no statistically significant differences in experiences of these outcomes between condition.

Hypothesis 7. This hypothesis proposed that pregnant women who viewed sexually objectifying images and text would engage in more social comparison with the pictured celebrities than those who viewed non-objectifying images and text. This hypothesis was supported as the pregnant women who were exposed to sexually objectifying stimuli reported engaging in statistically significantly more social comparison than those who were exposed to non-objectifying stimuli. As previously mentioned, it was evident to participants who viewed celebrities featured in the sexually objectifying stimuli that those celebrities were pregnant. By contrast, it was not evident to participants who viewed celebrities featured in the non-objectifying stimuli that those celebrities were pregnant. Thus, these women may have been more inclined to compare themselves to similarly pregnant celebrities than to ones that were not visibly pregnant. Festinger (1954), author of social comparison theory, argues that individuals come to

learn about themselves through comparisons with others in which individuals evaluate their own attributes based on the attributes they see others to have. For pregnant women, the results of Study 1 indicate that seeing other pregnant bodies with similar attributes, such as the pregnant belly, invites more social comparison.

It could be that pregnant women feel it is more realistic and possibly less damaging to their own body image to compare themselves to celebrities who are pregnant like they are than to headshot-only images in which they visualize a non-pregnant body accompanying those headshots. The women involved in Study 2 indicated that they do compare themselves to pregnant celebrities because they share the commonality of being pregnant. However, they also indicated that this comparison is distant because they still largely do not identify with celebrities and realize how different their lifestyles are. These women indicated that comparison with pregnant celebrities was relatively harmless; however, prospective comparison of their bodies once post-partum with recently post-partum celebrities was more distressing to them. Thus, seeing headshots of celebrities with no indications of pregnancy may lessen comparison because pregnant women, as previously argued, may visualize those celebrities' bodies as being thin and toned and nowhere close to their current bodies. Further, pregnant women would engage in less comparison with headshot-only images of celebrities that do not appear to be pregnant than those that are visibly pregnant because they see fewer similar attributes with which to compare their own attributes.

Interaction Effects

Although evidence for the predicted moderating variables in this study has been found in prior research, Study 1 did not find such variables to have an influence in this sample of pregnant women.

Hypothesis 3. This hypothesis predicted that participants who scored high on trait body surveillance and who were assigned to the sexually objectifying condition would experience the most self-objectification. This hypothesis was not supported as the effects of experimental condition on participants' self-objectification did not vary based on their existing levels of trait body surveillance pre-exposure.

Body surveillance was proposed to be a moderating factor influential in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying media and self-objectification because body surveillance is closely linked to self-objectification as they both involve a concern about appearance. Those with higher levels of trait body surveillance are more attentive in monitoring their own appearance both cognitively (e.g., worrying about appearance) and behaviorally (e.g., spending more time grooming oneself) (Aubrey, 2006a). However, the results of Study 1 indicate that the existing levels of body surveillance in this sample of pregnant women did not impact the effects of exposure to sexually objectified images of pregnant celebrities on participants' self-objectification.

In a culture that consistently focuses on the female body, monitoring of one's body may be something women engage in consistently whether pregnant or not. However, as the results of Hypothesis 1 indicated, when seeing full-body sexually objectified images and text concerning pregnant celebrities, pregnant women experienced no more self-objectification than when seeing non-objectifying and control stimuli.

Therefore, any effects existing levels of body surveillance may have had on pregnant women's self-objectification may have been offset due to seeing celebrities in the same pregnant state as they currently are in.

Hypothesis 4. This hypothesis predicted that the effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification would be strongest for those who scored high on wishful identification with the celebrities featured. This hypothesis was not supported as the effects of experimental condition on participants' levels of self-objectification did not vary based on their levels of wishful identification with the celebrities pictured. This hypothesis was posed because prior research has indicated that individuals' identification with media characters influences individuals' decisions about their own appearance, attitudes, goals, and other relevant characteristics (Austin & Meili, 1994; Boon & Lomore, 2001). Thus, it would seem plausible that pregnant women who scored high on wishful identification with pregnant celebrities, who are largely valued for their bodies, would be more likely to perceive themselves more in terms of how they appear to others and focus more so on their externally perceivable traits than their internal traits. However, the results of Study 1 indicated otherwise.

Again, the results of Study 2 can be used to interpret these findings. The pregnant women involved in Study 2 largely disidentified when engaging in a distant comparison with pregnant celebrities they saw pictured in gossip magazines, realizing that they lived very different lifestyles. However, they mentioned that if they did feel similarity with pregnant celebrities, it was a slight similarity and was mainly because they were pregnant too. Therefore, those with higher levels of wishful identification with pregnant celebrities

may also be engaging simultaneously in higher levels of disidentification, which then may counteract any impact the wishful identification may have on self-objectification.

Hypothesis 8. This hypothesis predicted that the impact of sexually objectifying images and text on participants' self-objectification would be moderated by appearance comparison tendencies. Hypothesis 8 was not supported as the effects of experimental condition on participants' self-objectification did not vary based on their existing levels of trait comparison. This hypothesis was posed because past social comparison theory research has consistently found an association between individuals with higher levels of appearance comparison tendencies being less satisfied with their bodies than those with lower levels of comparison tendencies (Thompson et al., 1999).

In Study 2, participants described comparison as something that is natural and something that all women do; however, they described their comparison with pregnant celebrities in gossip magazines as distant, fleeting, and silly. By contrast, these women described their tendencies to engage in social comparison with close others such as friends, family members, and co-workers who were also currently pregnant or who they remember being pregnant, as having much more of an impact on their thoughts about their own bodies. Thus, the impact of seeing close others pregnant on the levels of self-objectification of those with higher appearance comparison tendencies may be more substantial than the impact of seeing pregnant celebrities. In addition, as mentioned previously, pregnant women may realize that their bodies while pregnant are in a temporary state and thus even if they have higher appearance comparison tendencies, those tendencies may have more of an impact on their self-objectification when not pregnant.

Research Question 3. This research question examined the possible moderating influence of participants' levels of felt similarity with the pictured celebrities on the effects of condition on participants' self-objectification. Results indicated that the effects of experimental condition on participants' self-objectification did not vary based on their levels of felt similarity with the pictured celebrities. The role of similarity was examined in the present analysis because previous research has shown that comparisons with targets individuals' feel a greater similarity to appear to have the most negative impact on those individuals' body esteem when those comparisons are made (Frisby, 2004). Thus, the possible impact of similarity on self-objectification was explored.

As with the discussion of Hypothesis 4, which indicated that wishful identification was not a moderating influence, the results of Study 2 can be used to interpret the findings that similarity did not impact the effects of condition on self-objectification. In Study 2, the participants expressed feeling very little similarity with celebrities. Participants discussed feeling a slight similarity with celebrities who are pregnant while they are currently pregnant; however, they indicated that they realize how different their lifestyles are from the lifestyles of celebrities. Thus, any felt similarity with celebrities on variables such as age, race, and being pregnant likely would not impact participants' thoughts about their bodies because they realize the dissimilarities on other important variables such as financial status and occupation are too great.

Mediational Influences

Although evidence for the predicted mediating influences of self-objectification and state social comparison in this study has been found in prior research, Study 1 did not find such influences in this sample of pregnant women.

Hypothesis 6. Hypothesis 6 predicted that self-objectification would serve as a mediator in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and participants' levels of reported weight-related appearance anxiety. This hypothesis was not supported for both weight-related appearance anxiety and non-weight-related appearance anxiety. Neither condition or self-objectification significantly impacted participants' weight-related appearance anxiety. Although effects were found for condition on non-weight-related appearance anxiety and on self-objectification, the third condition for mediation was not met as self-objectification did not have an effect on non-weight-related appearance anxiety. Despite exposure to sexually objectifying images resulting in neither an increase or decrease in weight-related appearance anxiety, it did negatively predict non-weight-related appearance anxiety. Further, participants' engagement in self-objectification did not impact their levels of either weight-related or non-weight-related appearance anxiety.

It appears then that seeing sexually objectified full-body images of pregnant celebrities decreased pregnant women's anxieties about non-weight-related aspects of their bodies, such as their lips, ears, and chin, but it did not impact their anxieties about weight-related aspects of their bodies such as their waist, muscle tone, and thighs. In addition, viewing themselves as objects to be looked at by others does not seem to impact their anxieties about weight-related or non-weight-related aspects of their bodies. These findings could be interpreted as resulting from the greater focus that celebrity magazines place on celebrities' bodies, and the weight-related aspects of their bodies in particular, rather than focusing on their faces. Thus, pregnant women's anxieties about their non-weight-related aspects of their appearance might have been decreased due to this lack of

focus. Pregnant women might already be focusing more on their weight-related appearance aspects while pregnant because those are the things that are drastically changing and those changes are clearly visible to others. As such, they may be paying less attention to worrying about the non-weight-related aspects of their bodies, and when they see magazines pay less attention to pregnant celebrities' non-weight-related appearance aspects, it also helps to decrease their anxieties about such aspects.

Hypothesis 9. Hypothesis 9 predicted that state social comparison would serve as a mediator in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and self-objectification. This hypothesis was not supported. Being assigned to the non-objectifying headshot condition positively predicted participants' self-objectification and being assigned to the sexually objectifying full-body condition positively predicted social comparison. However, the third condition for mediation was not met as participants' social comparison levels did not significantly influence their levels of self-objectification. This hypothesis was posed because past research has found a significant relationship between undergraduate and high school females comparing themselves with celebrities and increases in their negative thoughts about their bodies (Botta, 1999; Heinberg & Thompson, 1992). Past research has not examined the relationship between self-objectification and social comparison much less how these relationships work in a sample of currently pregnant women.

As explained in the discussion of Hypothesis 7, viewing images and text concerning a similarly pregnant celebrity may encourage a pregnant woman to engage in social comparison with that woman more so than with a headshot of a celebrity with no visible signs of pregnancy. However, because, as indicated in Study 2, these women

engage in a distant comparison with similarly pregnant celebrities realizing how different celebrities' lifestyles are from their own, this comparison might not influence the amount that they view their own worth as primarily being based on appearance. Further, it could be that women realize that the weight gain and other changes they experience in relation to their pregnant bodies are temporary and thus will hopefully be able to be eliminated in the near future. Because their pregnant bodies are deemed temporary, they may engage in a comparison with the bodies of pregnant celebrities, yet not experience effects on their body image due to this comparison. Therefore, it is still important to examine the role of social comparison in the self-objectification process because social comparison may be the mechanism linking media exposure to self-objectification in those who are not pregnant and whose bodies are not viewed as being in a temporary state.

Pregnancy-Related Variables

Research Question 1. Research Question 1 examined the main effect of condition on self-objectification separately for each of the three trimesters of pregnancy. Results indicated that exposure to the non-objectifying headshot-only images and accompanying text increased self-objectification for those in the first trimester of their pregnancy (weeks 1 through 12). These results provide further evidence for the findings of Skouteris et al. (2005) and Duncombe et al. (2008) that indicated women in the early stages of pregnancy experience greater amounts of dissatisfaction with their bodies.

In Study 2, participants described the first trimester as a time in which they felt most negatively about their bodies because it was not obvious that they were pregnant, rather it looked as if they had simply gained weight. It is possible then, that they were still holding their bodies up to cultural expectations for non-pregnant bodies to meet the

thin ideal. As with the discussion of Hypothesis 1, it could be that the headshot-only images triggered women to visualize images of these celebrities' bodies as being non-pregnant, thin, toned and thus meeting the thin ideal, even if those bodies were not pictured. Therefore, visualizing those images caused women to see themselves as objects to be evaluated by others because they felt they looked like they had gained weight rather than pregnant, and thus their bodies differed from their visualization of that thin ideal.

By contrast, exposure to the sexually objectifying full-body images and accompanying text increased self-objectification for those in the third trimester of their pregnancy (29 weeks and beyond). For those in the third trimester of their pregnancy, it is much more evident that they are indeed pregnant. Thus, when they see a sexually objectified full-body image of a celebrity who is also clearly pregnant and is being valued primarily for her body, women in the third trimester may be more apt to see themselves as objects to be evaluated by others.

Further, results indicated the relationship between condition and self-objectification was not statistically significant for the women who were in their second trimester of pregnancy (weeks 13 through 28). The participants in Study 2 described feeling better about their pregnancies as whole during the second trimester once it became noticeable that they were indeed pregnant and had not just gained weight. In addition, it is during the second trimester in which most women are able to first feel their babies move inside of them and experience the internal sensations of carrying a baby (American Pregnancy Association). These experiences could encourage pregnant women in their second trimester to see themselves as being valued for what is going on inside of their bodies rather than their being objects to be evaluated by others and therefore protect

them in a sense from the effects of the images and text they viewed on their self-objectification.

Research Question 2. Research Question 2 examined the main effect of condition on self-objectification for those pregnant women who had no previous live births in comparison to those who had one or more previous live births. Results indicated that exposure to the non-objectifying headshot-only images and accompanying text marginally increased self-objectification for those who reported having no prior live births. On the other hand, the relationship between condition and self-objectification was not statistically significant for the women who reported one or more prior live births.

Those with no previous live births may be more anxious about and focused on the external appearance of their pregnant bodies because they are unsure about how their bodies will rebound once they give birth. Those who have gone through pregnancy and have given birth previously have a better idea of how the external appearance of their pregnant body is only temporary and thus see themselves less as objects to be evaluated by others.

Posthoc Analyses

Although there were no significant main effects for trait self-objectification or weight-related appearance anxiety, this sample of pregnant women reported fairly high levels of both of these variables in comparison to the levels found in previous studies involving non-pregnant women. Further, this sample of pregnant women reported fairly high levels of non-weight-related appearance anxiety in comparison to the findings of previous studies on non-pregnant women. These results indicate that in general, pregnant women take on more of an observer's perspective of themselves and feel more nervous,

tense, and/or anxious about the parts of their bodies than when not pregnant. However, it appears that exposure to media that sexually objectify pregnant celebrities does not significantly impact these already heightened levels of trait self-objectification and weight and appearance anxiety. This suggests a possible ceiling effect. The implications of these findings to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) are further discussed in the theoretical significance section of this chapter.

Implications of Study 2 Findings

Research Question 1: Experiences While Pregnant

Study 2 shifted the analysis from what celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities *do* to pregnant women to what these portrayals *mean* to pregnant women. One of the assumptions guiding Study 2 was that context is important in understanding cultural meanings. Thus, in applying the articulation model of meaning (AMM) (Hall, 1986), Study 2 sought to give voice to pregnant women and to examine how their experiences impact the social pressures these women describe while pregnant. The women involved in the focus group discussions described feeling pressures to not gain too much weight while pregnant, to be able to lose their pregnancy weight quickly once post-partum, to be good mothers, and to be financially stable. In our discussions, it was evident that all of these pressures coalesced to articulate the meaning that celebrity gossip magazines have for these women.

Although all of the aforementioned pressures cohered to impact the meaning these women derived from celebrity gossip magazines, the pressures they felt in regard to their appearance came up the most throughout the focus group discussions. These pressures

appear to stem from women's feelings of their bodies being under greater public as well as personal surveillance. These results are similar to the findings of Bailey (1999) in her qualitative study with pregnant women. The women in Bailey's study described feeling the sense of being treated differently by strangers once their pregnancies began to show, and, as a result, the pregnant women's relationships with their bodies began to change. Similarly, the pregnant women in Study 2 described feeling that others paid more attention to their pregnant bodies than their non-pregnant bodies and they felt that men, in particular, were more likely to stare at and/or comment on their pregnant bodies.

In regard to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), many of the women involved in this study described feeling an objectifying gaze from men in particular while pregnant. These results are similar to the findings of Fox and Yamaguchi (1997) in their study of pregnant women. As with the women in Study 2, Fox and Yamaguchi found their participants to explain negative changes in body image during pregnancy as resulting from feeling self-conscious due to a heightened sense of public scrutiny. According to objectification theory, a consequence of being under this greater scrutiny is self-objectification, or perceiving yourself based on how you think your body appears to others and thus focusing on your externally perceivable traits rather than your internal traits. The results of Study 1 indicated that the pregnant participants had higher levels of trait self-objectification than levels found in previous studies of non-pregnant women. Thus, trait self-objectification may be heightened during pregnancy as a result of these women feeling their bodies were under greater scrutiny, regardless of situational exposure to media portrayals of objectified pregnant celebrities. This trait self-objectification may, in turn, cause them to be concerned about gaining too much weight

while pregnant and of surpassing the boundaries of the thin ideal advocated in our culture for women's bodies.

Although changes to a woman's body while pregnant are more visibly evident to others in later stages of a pregnancy, the women involved in Study 2 described feeling the worst about their bodies early on in their pregnancies. Similar results were reported in two other studies of pregnant women and changes in their body image. For example, Skouteris et al. (2005) and Duncombe et al. (2008) both found that women in the early stages of pregnancy were most likely to report they had greater amounts of dissatisfaction with their bodies. The women in Study 2 indicated they disliked the feeling of others thinking their pregnancy weight gain was due to overeating rather than to pregnancy. They felt that their weight gain would be more socially acceptable if it was clear to others that it was a result of serving the important purpose of bringing human life into existence and not a result of simply letting themselves go and "just looking fat."

The heightened trait self-objectification may well continue beyond these women's pregnancies and into the post-partum stage. Many of the pregnant women in Study 2 described worrying about if and how their bodies could live up to cultural body ideals once they gave birth. In fact, many of the women described their worries over being able to return to their pre-baby bodies as being more severe than their worries about gaining too much weight while pregnant. Therefore, it is possible that trait self-objectification may be heightened even further in the post-partum stage than during the actual pregnancy.

The pressures these pregnant women indicated feeling in regard to their bodies appear to largely stem from their experiences of being subject to a sexually objectifying

gaze. According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), one of the ways, and possibly the most dangerous way, in which the objectifying gaze occurs is in visual media that focus on the body and body parts. These images are particularly dangerous, they assert, because they are nearly impossible to avoid. Further, exposure to this type of media draws viewers to engage in an objectifying gaze as a result of viewing those images. The two remaining research questions guiding Study 2 were designed to examine how pregnant women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities and the objectifying gaze these magazines have been found place on these celebrities. The findings of these two research questions are discussed in the next two sections.

Research Question 2: Articulation of Meaning

The second research question sought to examine how pregnant women articulate the meaning they derive from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. The focus group discussions with pregnant women participating in Study 2 revealed that they largely read celebrity gossip magazines for an escape from their mundane realities, and they viewed their use of these magazines as a guilty pleasure. They felt guilty about indulging in celebrity gossip magazines because these magazines are considered to be a low form of culture in our society. However guilty they felt about looking at these magazines and however much they indicated not seeking out these types of magazines, many of the pregnant women talked about how hard they were to avoid.

These magazines, although considered to be "trashy," at times made these women feel better about their own lives and provided topics for discussion with others. Often, these women noted, celebrity gossip magazines depicted celebrities' lives as tumultuous

and drama-filled. This drama not only provided interesting reading material and conversation topics to engage in with others, it also made their own lives, although mundane, seem a lot more manageable. In addition, these women negotiated the trashiness of these magazines by rationalizing that the magazines allowed them to gossip about others without hurting anyone. Whereas gossip about friends, family members, and/or co-workers with others could get back to those individuals, and potentially hurt them, gossiping about celebrities was seen as more acceptable and less damaging. Although these women found pleasure in the escape these magazines provided from their own realities, they also criticized the magazines' journalistic tactics providing further evidence for the experience of simultaneous pleasure and criticism gossip magazine readers have described in other reception studies (Hermes, 1995).

In regard to the content of celebrity gossip magazines, the pregnant women involved in Study 2 described the sexual objectification of pregnant, speculated-to-be pregnant, and recently post-partum celebrities these magazines took part in. The participants described celebrity gossip magazines as focusing on how much weight those celebrities had gained. Immediately after those celebrities had given birth, the women described gossip magazine coverage focusing on how quickly those celebrities could lose their pregnancy weight and return to their pre-baby bodies. Last, the pregnant women in Study 2 described the speculation of particular celebrities being pregnant based on their appearance as a large part of celebrity gossip magazine content.

Overall, the women in Study 2 felt that celebrity gossip magazines overwhelmingly focused on the body when discussing celebrity pregnancy, and they were critical of this focus. Many described how this focus took away from what they felt was

the most important aspect of their own pregnancies – the baby. In addition, these pregnant women also felt that gossip magazines focus on the bodies of all celebrity women, whether pregnant or not, and value these celebrities primarily for their bodies. However, these women while criticizing the focus on the body simultaneously described engaging in an objectifying gaze directed at the celebrities depicted in this coverage. Thus, it appears that these women engage in a negotiated reading of this content as they have become accustomed to the dominant ideology of the objectifying gaze on the female body often exhibited, engage in that objectifying gaze, but are also critical of the objectification present in celebrity gossip magazines.

Further, some of the women in Study 2 described a negotiated reading of the coverage of pregnant celebrities by indicating that they felt a positive aspect of this coverage was the greater visibility and recognition this coverage gave to pregnancy. This provides evidence for Feasey's (2006) argument that gossip magazines should not be entirely discounted as trash because of their potential to have a positive impact on women. However, although some of these women liked the greater visibility given to pregnancy by these magazines, they also realized that these magazines continue to reinforce the dominant ideology of what an ideal female body should look like and that women should be primarily valued for their bodies. In addition, in their discussions of their experiences while pregnant, participants largely described how they focused on their own bodies during the moment of being pregnant and were concerned with how their outer appearance looked to others.

The participants also interpreted celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy as largely being unrealistic and as glamorizing pregnancy. In the discussion of

this interpretation, these pregnant women also described how they disidentified with pregnant celebrities more so than they identified with them. By realizing how different their own lifestyles are from celebrities, the pregnant women can negotiate the meaning of celebrity gossip magazines allowing for them to enjoy the magazines without feeling as if they are inadequate. A great deal of research has examined how individuals connect with media characters through feelings of similarity, wishful identification, imitation, and liking (Austin & Meili, 1994; Boon & Lomore, 2001; Cohen & Perse, 2003; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). However, in the case of the present study, pregnant women expressed feeling a sense of fleeting similarity with celebrities when they were pregnant but they were quick to note how different their lifestyles were from that of celebrities. These results provide further evidence for the findings reported in studies examining readers' interpretations of tabloids (Johansson, 2006) and young girls' interpretations of celebrities (Duits & van Romondt Vis, 1997). For example, Johannson found readers to both identify with celebrities as well as distance themselves as readers saw celebrities as living a different and more glamorous life, but also recognized commonalities between celebrities' lives and their own. Further, Duits and van Romondt Vis found young girls to recognize both sameness and difference between their lives and female celebrities. As such, they argue that theory on identification with media characters needs to take into account how audience members often may engage in "disidentification" with those they see portrayed in the media (p. 16). The results of the present study provide further evidence for the need to recognize disidentification as an important aspect of the meaning-making process.

Research Question 3: Impact on Thoughts about the Body

Research Question 3 sought to examine the impact of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities on pregnant women's thoughts about their own bodies. The focus group discussions revealed how the pressures pregnant women felt to continue to fit cultural standards of attractiveness and physical ideals while pregnant intersected with the impact of gossip magazine coverage on these women's thoughts about their bodies. In the discussions of this intersection, these women indicated that they do relate the messages they read and the images they see regarding pregnant celebrities in gossip magazines back to their own bodies. However, they did not feel that celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy encouraged them to feel negatively about their own bodies in the long-term during pregnancy.

Evidence of these women engaging in social comparison of their bodies with those of pregnant celebrities featured in these magazines emerged but they described it as a fleeting and distant comparison. This comparison was described as distant because these women largely disidentified with pregnant celebrities by recognizing that celebrities have access to personal trainers, chefs, and make-up artists, and by recognizing how different their lifestyles are from that of celebrities. As Feasey (2006) argues, gossip magazine coverage of the lengths that celebrities go to in order to have perfect bodies may help everyday women to see that celebrity beauty is not effortless and therefore this realization may free women from feeling badly about not looking like celebrities. The pregnant women in Study 2 recognized the large monetary expense as well as the amount of time it took for a celebrity to look good – money and time that these women did not have.

A more close and useful comparison target, these women indicated, were the bodies of people they knew personally who were or who they could remember being pregnant. Close others in the everyday world were more realistic comparison targets because they typically shared the same lifestyles as these pregnant women. Still, social comparison theory research has shown that individuals' thin ideal internalization and engagement in social comparison were influenced more so by felt pressures from the media than from the dieting behaviors they see their peers engaging in (Goodman, 2005). Because celebrity gossip magazines are seen to be "trashy" and guilty pleasures, these women may feel that peers are more realistic comparison targets yet still be affected by their engagement in comparison with celebrities.

Although social comparison with pregnant celebrities was mostly upward in nature whereby these pregnant women compared themselves to celebrities they thought were better-looking, some of the women in this study described engaging in downward comparison. For example, despite criticizing gossip magazines for focusing on the body, at times the discussion of the amount of weight a pregnant celebrity had gained in comparison to their own weight gain was pleasing for these women, especially if their own happened to be less. Thus, as Johansson (2006) has argued, a major appeal of reading gossip magazines is the bashing of celebrities these magazines at times engage in because it allows for readers to feel less resentment towards the many perfect celebrity bodies they often see depicted.

In addition to engaging in social comparison with currently pregnant celebrities, the pregnant women in Study 2 also described thinking about how their bodies would look once they gave birth in relation to celebrities who were recently post-partum. The

women indicated that celebrity gossip magazines devote a great deal of coverage to how quickly celebrities can return to their pre-baby bodies after giving birth and that this coverage set expectations in themselves for how they should look once they gave birth. Further, these magazines were seen as setting the expectations others in society had for how quickly the participants could shed their pregnancy weight and return to wearing normal clothing. These expectations intersected with the pregnant women's felt social pressure to live up to the dominant ideology of the physical ideals of a thin, toned, and sculpted female body in our culture.

Despite the expectations celebrity gossip magazines communicated about how quickly pregnant women should return to their pre-baby bodies, these women negotiated the meaning of this coverage by recognizing how unrealistic these expectations were for normal, everyday women. This negotiation allowed for them to protect themselves to an extent from long-term feelings of inadequacy and anxiety over the state of their bodies. Further, many of the pregnant women resisted engaging in a preferred reading because they realized that the lengths celebrities went to in order to quickly return to their thin and toned bodies such as the money spent, the health risks involved, and time spent away from their newborn babies, simply were not worth it.

Another purpose of Study 2 was to provide these pregnant women, who had all participated in the Study 1 experiment, a more detailed debriefing of the experiment and what sexual objectification entailed at the end of each focus group discussion. The women all agreed that celebrity gossip magazines mostly engage in the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities, speculated-to-be pregnant celebrities, and recently post-partum celebrities when devoting coverage to these celebrities. They mainly

criticized magazines for engaging in such objectification because they felt it displaced the focus on the baby and the health of the baby and placed it on the body of the mother. Despite largely criticizing the magazines for taking part in such practices, these women had previously described accepting this objectification and engaging in an objectifying gaze of pregnant celebrities. Thus, a dialectic emerged in these focus group discussions in which resistance to the messages put forth by celebrity gossip magazines was exhibited by the participants while they also simultaneously accepted the messages and engaged in the very objectification they were purporting to be opposed to.

The pregnant women in Study 2 also agreed that there could be harmful consequences of this sexual objectification on pregnant women who were exposed to these magazines. However, evidence of the third-person effect (Davison, 1983) was prevalent in all of the focus group discussions as the women felt they were not affected by gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy, but others most likely were. Specifically, younger girls and women were thought to be impacted more negatively by the sexual objectification of pregnant, speculated-to-be pregnant, and recently post-partum celebrities. Although describing how they themselves were negatively affected by gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy before being given the definition of sexual objectification, the women tended to overestimate the negative affects of celebrity gossip magazines on others and to an extent underestimate the affects on themselves. The pregnant women in Study 2 rationalized that they themselves were not negatively affected long-term because they could recognize how unrealistic, glamorized, photoshopped, and airbrushed magazine portrayals of celebrity pregnancy were. However, younger girls and women likely could not recognize such characteristics and

are therefore more susceptible to the negative consequences of being exposed to the sexual objectification in these magazines.

Theoretical Significance

The present analysis employed three theoretical frameworks to examine the impact of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities on pregnant women. Specifically, objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), and the articulation model of meaning (AMM) (Hall, 1986) guided the present analysis. The implications for all three theories, as well as for two other important mass communication-related concepts that emerged during this analysis, wishful identification and third-person effect, are presented in this section.

Objectification Theory Implications

In regard to objectification theory, four specific conclusions emerged that are particularly significant to this line of research. First, Study 1 found that headshot images and accompanying text that do not objectify celebrities caused pregnant women to engage in more self-objectification than control images featuring baby products. These findings are at odds with the results of previous objectification theory research that has found full-body images of women to increase participants' self-objectification (Aubrey et al., 2009; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). The Harper and Tiggemann study and the Harrison and Fredrickson study both indicated that self-objectification can be triggered simply by women being exposed to images of women's bodies demonstrating the thin ideal and women athlete's bodies. By contrast, the present analysis indicated that self-objectification can be triggered by seeing headshot-only images. However, these findings were mixed as when the sexually objectifying full-body

condition was compared to all other conditions in the regressions calculated to examine mediating influences, the full-body condition did significantly predict self-objectification.

Further, Aubrey et al. (2009) found in an experimental study that exposure to sexually objectifying body-display images enhanced individuals' self-objectification more so than exposure to body-parts images and control images with no people featured. However, the participants in the Aubrey et al. study were undergraduate females and the images used were of non-celebrities. Study 1 of the present analysis used recognizable celebrities and therefore headshot-only images may still enhance self-objectification because women have become accustomed to picturing these women's full bodies. Headshot-only images of celebrities are so infrequently displayed in the media (Holmes & Redmond, 2006), women may picture the bodies attached to those heads on their own rather than having to see them. This speculation is backed up by the tenets of priming theory (Jo & Berkowitz, 1994), which was developed to examine how messages and images could influence individuals' assessments of others in the short-term. Individuals may have schemata, or stored cognitive representations of what female celebrities look like, such as having thin, toned bodies. Therefore, the headshot images may have primed this schemata and caused women to recall the thin and toned bodies associated with non-pregnant celebrities and which are often valued more so than any other aspect of a celebrity. This, in turn, temporarily induced the pregnant women to see themselves primarily as objects to be looked at by others, or to engage in state self-objectification. Thus, the results of the present analysis indicate that headshot images may also trigger self-objectification, which had not previously been studied in objectification theory research.

In addition, this study indicates how self-objectification operates in women while pregnant may be a rather unique process. The unique self-objectification process possibly at work in pregnant women was evidenced further in Study 1 by the reported valence of these women's self-objectification. Although past objectification theory research has found self-objectification to be related mostly to negative feelings about the body (Aubrey, 2007; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002), the present study found women in all three conditions to primarily describe their appearance in neutral terms (M = 1.92, SD = .66) after exposure to the stimuli.

Study 1 also found that women appear to have heightened levels of trait self-objectification and weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety while pregnant in comparison to their non-pregnant counterparts. Further, the majority of the pregnant women in Study 2 described feelings of their pregnant bodies being under greater public surveillance. In objectification theory terms, these women described being under the objectifying gaze at a stable, trait level. Thus, it appears that pregnant women feel a trait level of self-objectification that might not be as vulnerable to media stimuli as non-pregnant women's trait levels of self-objectification.

As Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) explain, the experience of self-objectification is variable and depends on the differing contexts individuals find themselves immersed at any given moment. Thus, they argue that objectification theory recognizes there are "powerful situation-specific effects in the experiences of objectification and its consequences" (p. 180). In addition, objectification theory proposes that sexual objectification will be most experienced by women during the stages in their lifespan when they are at peak reproductive potential. The results of the present analysis indicate

that being pregnant may be one such powerful situation that increases women's self-objectification and weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety. Future objectification theory research needs to pay attention to this very important stage many women go through during their lifespan.

Social Comparison Theory Implications

In regard to social comparison theory, the results of Study 1 indicate that pregnant women engaged in more comparison with sexually objectified full-body images and accompanying text featuring pregnant celebrities than with non-objectified headshot-only images and accompanying text featuring celebrities. As previously mentioned, the headshot-only images and text did not indicate that the celebrities featured were pregnant. Thus, it appears that pregnant women may engage in social comparison more so with other pregnant individuals.

Despite evidence being found for pregnant women engaging in social comparison with pregnant celebrities, social comparison was not found to mediate the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and self-objectification. Therefore, no evidence was found for the idea that social comparison is a part of the objectification process as engaging in social comparison was not found to link media use to individuals seeing themselves primarily as objects to be looked at by others. Although no evidence was found in the present analysis of social comparison serving as a mediational variable, future research examining the impact of media exposure on self-objectification processes in populations of non-pregnant women should continue to examine the role of social comparison in this process. Pregnant women may view the outer appearance of their pregnant bodies as being temporary and therefore engaging in

social comparison with celebrities has little effect on their thoughts about their bodies. However, those who are not pregnant may view the outer appearance of their bodies as being relatively stable and thus engaging in social comparison with celebrities pictured in the media would have more of an effect on their engaging in self-objectification.

In addition, the results of Study 2 significantly add to the body of social comparison theory research by providing a better understanding of how the social comparison process works in pregnant women. Specifically, the pregnant women in Study 2 described their comparison with pregnant celebrities as a distant comparison as they realized how different their own lifestyles were from that of celebrities. Because this comparison was distant and fleeting, the participants felt it was less damaging to their body-related perceptions than their social comparison with close others. Thus, future research into social comparison needs to take into account that there may be differing levels of comparison (e.g., close, intermediary, distant) in addition to the differing types of comparison (e.g., upward and downward). It may be that celebrities are considered to be close comparison targets at certain times in a woman's life and more distant targets at others. Further, the pregnant women described the prospective comparison they engage in with recently post-partum celebrities who they often see being applauded by gossip magazines for how quickly they can return to their thin pre-baby bodies. This comparison, they felt, causes more anxiety over the state of their own bodies and how quickly, if at all, they can lose their pregnancy weight once giving birth.

Articulation Model of Meaning Implications

In examining audience reception, Study 2 employed the AMM to gain a better understanding of how women's experiences while pregnant impact how they derive

meaning from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. Hall (1986) developed the AMM to better address and appreciate how individuals engage in negotiated readings of media texts. Study 2 of the present analysis provides evidence for the further appreciation of negotiated readings and the ways in which individuals negotiate the meaning of celebrity gossip magazines. Specifically, a clear dialectic emerged in these pregnant women's readings of celebrity gossip magazines, as these women described simultaneously accepting and resisting the ideological messages that they found to be prevalent in these magazines.

The pregnant women in Study 2 recognized the dominant ideology of the thin ideal as having a major presence in celebrity gossip magazines and engaged in the objectifying gaze exhibited by these magazines, but were able to negotiate this ideal by realizing the images they saw in these magazines were largely unrealistic. Further, Study 2 provides evidence for the importance of AMM's ability to take into account how being situated in a specific context, during a specific moment, and within a specific discourse can affect these negotiated readings. Specifically, this study indicated how the moment of being pregnant and the associated experiences and felt social pressures intersected with the features of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy to articulate meaning to pregnant women.

Wishful Identification Implications

Several media effects scholars have examined what has been termed wishful identification with media characters, or individuals' desires to become like those they see portrayed in the media (Hobbs et al., 2006; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Hoffner et al., 2006; Martin & Kennedy, 1994). Media effects research has found that this identification

significantly influences individuals' decisions about their own appearance, attitudes, goals, and other relevant characteristics of self (Austin & Meili, 1994; Boon & Lomore, 2001). However, the results of Study 1 indicated that the effects of sexually objectifying stimuli on participants' self-objectification were not significantly stronger in those participants with higher levels of wishful identification with the pictured celebrities.

The discussions of felt similarity and identification with pregnant celebrities by the pregnant women involved in Study 2 reveal that these women identified with pregnant celebrities only in terms of their also being pregnant. Primarily, participants described feeling very little similarity with celebrities. The findings in Study 2 complement the results of other audience reception research that indicates that in addition to some identification with celebrities portrayed in the media, audience members also engage in a great deal of distancing (Duits & van Romondt Vis, 1997; Johansson, 2006). This distancing appeared to help the women realize it is less important for them to focus on the external aspects of their own bodies, whereas it is much more important for celebrities to do so because it is part of the job description of a celebrity. Therefore, wishful identification research needs to take into account how individuals may simultaneously engage in wishful identification and disidentification with media characters and how this disidentification may help to protect them from feelings of inadequacy and other negative emotions.

Third-Person Effect Implications

Last, although not a framework guiding the present analysis, evidence for the third-person effect hypothesis (Davison, 1983) emerged in Study 2. The results of this study provide further evidence for the pervasiveness of individuals' beliefs that they

themselves are not impacted by the media but that others most likely are. Although the participants had described the negative impact celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy has on them, once they were presented with the definition of sexual objectification, they tended to downplay any effects of these magazines on themselves and possibly overestimate the affects on younger women. In addition, Study 2 provided further evidence for past third-person effect research that has found this effect to become more apparent when individuals are describing the effects of unfavorable messages (Perloff, 1999). The women in Study 2 predominately described the messages contained in celebrity gossip magazines as being unfavorable, particularly in regard to the amount of sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities these magazines engaged in. Thus, it was easy for them to assume that these unfavorable messages would likely have harmful affects on others.

Although Study 2 provided evidence for the perceptual component of the third-person effect hypothesis, through which individuals perceive greater effects on others than for themselves, there was no evidence of the behavioral component. In this component, individuals take action based on their perceptions that media messages are likely negatively impacting others. The behavioral component, according to Perloff (1999), encourages individuals to attempt to limit the availability of media messages that are proposed to harm others. None of the participants described wanting to limit younger women's access to celebrity gossip magazines; however, they did describe limiting their own access. Despite the messages contained in celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy being deemed largely unfavorable by the participants, the messages continued to catch their attention and were pleasurable to view; however, they felt guilty

about indulging in such low-brow content. Future third-person effect research might take into account how conflicted feelings about media messages may differently influence the perceptual and behavioral components of the hypothesis.

Limitations

There are a few limitations for both Study 1 and Study 2 that deserve mention. In regard to Study 1, a first limitation concerns experimental procedure. This limitation to Study 1 involves the unequal number of participants in each of the three conditions (exposure to sexually objectifying images and text, exposure to non-objectifying images and text, and exposure to control images). Because Study 1 was administered online through SurveyMonkey, it was difficult to randomize participants into each condition. Although SurveyMonkey was set up to randomize participants, there was no way to make randomization completely equal amongst the three groups.

A second limitation concerning experimental procedure is that a pre-/post-test design was not used in order to establish that the social comparison actually occurred. Wood (1989) has argued that individuals may engage in post-comparison comparisons such that if an initial comparison of an attribute is experienced negatively, individuals may focus on other attributes in future comparisons to aid in self-enhancement. Therefore, body esteem could have been measured after exposure rather than only pre-exposure to the stimuli to examine such post-comparison processes. Also, variables such as mood and life satisfaction were not measured both before and after exposure to possible comparison targets in order to examine these processes. However, Study 1 was not a pre-/post-test design because it was feared participant attrition would occur between the pre- and post-test. Future research should examine these post-comparison processes to

further examine how pregnant women engage in social comparison with pregnant celebrities.

Another procedural limitation is that some of the participants may have suspected the true purpose of the experiment and therefore may have responded to the dependent measures based on that knowledge. However, none of the participants in Study 2 who had participated in the conditions that viewed pictures and images of celebrities in Study 1 indicated that they knew the true purpose of the experiment. Related to this limitation is the possible priming effect that may have occurred in all three conditions by measuring participants' weight at the beginning of the experiment rather than at the end of the experiment. This may have caused participants to be thinking about their bodies before being exposed to the stimuli. Weight was measured at the beginning of the study because it was feared participants would leave the website once viewing the stimuli and completing the main measures.

In regard to sample, this study involved predominately Caucasian women (92%). Therefore a third limitation of Study 1 is the lack in racial diversity among participants. The last limitation of Study 1 is that because the study could only be completed online, individuals who did not have access to a computer or to the Internet could not participate in the study. Those with certain income limitations or who live in rural areas but were otherwise qualified to participate may not have been able to due to their lack of access to a computer and/or the Internet. Thus, the results of Study 1 may not be generalizable to all pregnant women over the age of 18.

There are also a few limitations of Study 2 that deserve mention. First, in regard to sample, it was limited demographically as the majority of participants were Caucasian

and were drawn from the same geographic region. In addition, the majority of the participants had no existing children and therefore the results may have been different with a sample of women who had experienced previous full-term pregnancies. A second limitation in regard to sample concerns the age of the women participating in Study 2. Although the women in Study 2 indicated that they felt celebrity gossip magazines would be more likely to impact younger women – primarily teens – this study as well as Study 1 only examined the effects of pregnant women who were 18 years of age and older. In order to examine the actual differences between the age group represented in the present study (18-39) and the age group these women indicated would be most negatively affected, those who are pregnant and under the age of 18 need to be given the chance to voice their own opinions on celebrity gossip magazines.

Strengths

Despite the aforementioned limitations, there are several strengths of the two studies conducted in the present analysis both in isolation and combined. Although lack in racial diversity and an exclusion of participants without access to computers or the Internet was a limitation to Study 1, a first strength of this study is that a broad geographic sample was able to be reached by conducting the experiment online. Rather than being limited to the geographic area in which I am situated, by conducting Study 1 via the Internet, I was able to solicit participants nationwide as well as internationally. Many of the past experimental studies examining self-objectification have been conducted in a laboratory setting and thus have not been able to access as broad of a sample as Study 1 was able to do and thus external validity was a strength of Study 1.

A second strength of Study 1 is the broad age range of the participants (19-45 years). The majority of objectification theory and social comparison theory research has mainly examined college age women. Thus, as Moradi and Huang (2008) note, key psychometric information regarding the main concepts of objectification theory are restricted to college students. Study 1 expanded the reach to examine women of varying ages and educational backgrounds.

Specifically in regard to Study 2, a first important strength is the qualitative research design that guided this study. There are no known studies examining the tenets of objectification theory and the impact of sexual objectification on women through qualitative methods. Most of the studies employing objectification theory are experimental or correlational in nature. By following up the experiment conducted in Study 1 with focus group discussions with a sample of the women involved in the experiment, I was better able to interpret the findings of Study 1, especially the findings that were in contradiction to the hypotheses posed. As such, Study 2 allowed for these pregnant women to describe and comment upon the sexual objectification of other pregnant women as well as all women in general and voice their own thoughts and feelings about the impact of such objectification on themselves and others. In addition, this study examined how these women describe and explain in their own words their use of the particular media text under analysis, which helps provide a better understanding of how sexual objectification is encountered by these women in their own daily lives. By conducting focus group discussions, a better understanding of how women communicate with each other about the content and effects of celebrity gossip magazine was also achieved. As Feasey (2006) has argued, gossip magazines can play a discursive role in

women's everyday lives connecting women with other women. Therefore, these focus group discussions allowed me to observe such interactions and gain a better understanding of how these magazines are at times collectively interpreted and made meaningful.

A second strength specific to Study 2 is that, by applying the AMM, it took into account the cultural context within which these women were immersed and their currently felt social pressures and experiences. When examining the ways in which women may self-objectify and compare their bodies to those of others while pregnant, it is important to understand what other factors may influence the objectification and comparison processes. Uncovering the intersecting factors related to pregnancy, gender, and financial status allowed for a better understanding of what celebrity gossip magazines mean to pregnant women.

In addition to the strengths of Study 1 and Study 2 individually, there are a few strengths the two studies shared. First, both studies employed both objectification theory and social comparison theory. Although a great deal of body image research has employed one of these two theories as a framework, rarely are the two theories used in conjunction. The present analysis provides evidence for the usefulness of employing these two theories together in body image research. From the results of this analysis, it appears that seeing a pregnant celebrity being sexually objectified in a magazine prompted these pregnant women to compare their bodies with that of the celebrities they saw depicted. Future body image research should use objectification theory and social comparison theory together to further flesh out both the self-objectification and social

comparison process as well as the larger picture of the media's role in impacting how individuals feel about their bodies

A second strength of both studies is that they examined the impact of media exposure on women's body image while pregnant, a group largely ignored by existing body image literature. Much of the existing body image research has been conducted in primarily college student samples and has neglected to take into account significant stages across a woman's lifespan. The present analysis pays attention to one of the biological milestones many women experience that produces a great deal of change in their outward appearance in a relatively short amount of time. That the pregnant women involved in this study reported fairly high levels of trait self-objectification in comparison to samples of college student participants indicates the importance of examining this population.

Directions for Future Research

The present analysis has uncovered several avenues for future research into the effects of media images and text on pregnant women's perceptions of their bodies. Due to the lack of both quantitative and qualitative research examining the constructs of both objectification theory and social comparison theory together in pregnant women, there are many implications for future research. In this section, I discuss six specific directions for future research in this area.

First, future research needs to examine women who have recently given birth. The women in Study 2 indicated that a large part of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy is devoted to the plans pregnant celebrities have for returning to their pre-baby bodies once post-partum as well as to if the celebrity actually is able to

successfully and quickly return to her thin and toned body after giving birth. The pregnant women reported that they put more pressure on themselves to have their bodies look a certain way once they were post-partum than when they were pregnant and also felt the pressure of others expecting them to look a certain way once post-partum. They felt that celebrity gossip magazines communicated unrealistic yet unavoidable expectations for how quickly women should lose pregnancy weight once post-partum. Therefore, future research needs to examine the impact of these magazine portrayals on recently post-partum women to see if they are more apt to engage in self-objectification than currently pregnant women.

Second, Study 1 indicated that this sample of pregnant women scored fairly high on both the trait self-objectification and weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety measures compared to scores reported in previous similarly designed studies employing these measures. Thus, this study provides evidence for the need to examine the objectification process during pregnancy further. In their assessment of the current state of objectification theory research, Moradi and Huang (2008) argue that future research should attempt to broaden the usefulness of objectification theory to women with more diverse backgrounds. In this vein, future research is needed to examine how being pregnant may intensify one's self-objectification and appearance and weight anxiety in general.

Third, future research should examine the impact of media exposure on a younger population of pregnant women. Although the women involved in Study 2 did not feel that they were overly affected negatively by media portrayals of pregnant celebrities, they did express their concern for the susceptibility of younger women and teenagers in particular.

These perceptions may be due largely to third-person effect as previously discussed. However, with the surge in media coverage and portrayals of teen pregnancy, this group should not be ignored. Recently, the media have devoted coverage to the teen pregnancies of Jamie Lynn Spears and Bristol Palin, as well as the group of 17 teenagers attending the same high school in Gloucester, Massachusetts who all became pregnant together. In addition, the Lifetime television network recently aired an original movie entitled *The Pregnancy Pact*, which depicted a group of teenage girls who made a pact to become pregnant at the same time. The MTV television network also recently began airing two reality series, *16 & Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*, that depict both currently pregnant and recently post-partum teens. Thus, currently pregnant teenagers are inundated with media portrayals of other pregnant teens. Further, pregnant teens may not have observed real-world pregnancies of close others and therefore may be more apt to compare themselves to media targets while pregnant than with close others. Future research, then, needs to examine pregnant teens and whether they do indeed engage in more self-objectification and social comparison than a population of older pregnant women.

Fourth, the impact of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy on women who are not currently and who have never been pregnant needs to be examined. The coverage of celebrity pregnancy is a large part of the content of celebrity gossip magazines, a medium that is hard to ignore. Further, Hopper (2009) found that pregnant, speculated-to-be pregnant, and recently post-partum celebrities are sexually objectified more often than non-pregnant celebrities in these magazines. Therefore, the examination of the effects of this objectification should not be limited to pregnant and

recently post-partum women but to all women. Specifically, future research needs to examine whether being exposed to the objectification of pregnant, speculated-to-be pregnant, and recently post-partum celebrities encourages non-pregnant women to self-objectify and/or engage in social comparison.

In addition, whether exposure to the sexual objectification of celebrity pregnancy impacts these women's decisions to become pregnant also needs to be examined. Recently, personal trainer Jillian Michaels, who has become well known for her role as a trainer on the reality television series *The Biggest Loser*, publicly communicated her fears about the negative impact pregnancy would have on her body. In an interview with the magazine *Women's Health*, Michaels stated she would love to adopt a child rather than become pregnant because she could not deal with doing that to her body (Tahnk, 2010). Therefore, the pressures to conform to the thin ideal whether pregnant or not that are communicated by celebrity gossip magazines, may have an impact on women's decisions to become pregnant.

Fifth, future research needs to follow the lead of the present analysis and employ mixed methods to examine the impact of media messages on body image perceptions and concerns on both women and men. Much of the existing research into body image, and self-objectification and social comparison in particular, applies the transmission model of communication and employs quantitative methods. The quantitative methods employed in Study 1 were valuable because they allowed for an analysis of how pregnant women were psychologically affected by magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities, effects that these women may not have been able to cognitively recognize themselves. However, by complementing Study 1 with the qualitatively designed Study 2, I was better able to

interpret the findings of Study 1. Through the focus group discussions, the voices of pregnant women were heard and they were able to describe how they use and interpret celebrity gossip magazines in their daily lives, not under the controlled conditions of an experiment. Further, these women were able to describe in their own words the process of social comparison and their thoughts on the presence of and the consequences of the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities in gossip magazines. Thus, future research needs to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods if we are to continue to gain a better understanding of the relationship between audience and media texts.

Last, a future direction of research involves a further examination of the results of Study 2. Specifically, another level of analysis of the focus group discussions might be applied in order to examine the group-level dynamics that surfaced during these discussions. It is important to analyze how the pregnant women in Study 2 interacted with one another and how they may have performed their pregnant bodies in front of each other.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the two studies conducted in the present analysis provide a better understanding of the impact of celebrity gossip magazine portrayals of pregnant celebrities on pregnant women. The results of Study 1 indicate that pregnant women engage in more social comparison with sexually objectified pregnant celebrities than with non-objectified celebrities. However, those pregnant women who viewed non-objectifying images and text, rather than the women who viewed sexually objectifying images and text experienced statistically significantly more self-objectification than those women who viewed control images of baby products. Further, the results of Study 1

indicate that during pregnancy women may experience higher levels of trait self-objectification and weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety than at other times.

Study 2 uncovered the shared experiences and felt social pressures of pregnant women and how those pressures impacted the ways in which they derive meaning from celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy. The pregnant women involved in this study indicated that they regarded these magazines as guilty pleasures and found the content of these magazines to provide unrealistic and glamorized portrayals of pregnancy. Further, these women recognize that they engage in social comparison with pregnant celebrities; however, this is a distant comparison. These women also recognized that celebrity gossip magazines sexually objectify currently pregnant, speculated-to-be pregnant, and recently post-partum celebrities. Despite largely criticizing this objectification, these women also described engaging in their own objectification of celebrities through their reading of these magazines. Last, evidence for the third-person effect hypothesis (Davison, 1983) was present as although participants do not feel that they personally are negatively affected in the long-term by this objectification, they indicated that a younger population of pregnant women most likely would be.

The present analysis extended the use of objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), and the articulation model of meaning (Hall, 1986) to examine the impact of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities on pregnant women. The present analysis indicated that the self-objectification process is unique during pregnancy, which provides further evidence for Fredrickson and Roberts' assertion that it is important to recognize how differing

contexts in individuals' lives have differing impacts on their experience of self-objectification. Further, the social comparison process may also be unique during pregnancy as the present analysis indicated that pregnant women describe engaging in a distant comparison with celebrities. This finding adds to existing social comparison theory literature in providing evidence for the existence of differing levels of comparison.

Finally, in regard to the articulation model of meaning (AMM), findings support the notion that AMM is useful in uncovering how audiences may engage in negotiated readings of media texts, or of individuals recognizing the dominant ideology that is present in texts but also realizing the flaws inherent to these texts. As several cultural studies scholars have criticized Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model for largely neglecting such negotiation, the present analysis provides further evidence for how AMM corrects for such neglect and thus is a useful framework to use in place of the encoding/decoding model.

Overall, the present analysis provided a better picture of the unique self-objectification, social comparison, and meaning-making processes that occur in regard to the consumption of media messages during pregnancy. While pregnant, women appear to experience higher levels of trait self-objectification and weight- and non-weight-related appearance anxiety than when not pregnant. In addition, seeing non-objectifying headshot-only images of celebrities appear to impact women's tendencies to describe themselves with appearance-related statements. Pregnant women also engage in social comparison with pregnant celebrities. However, this comparison is not deemed damaging to their own thoughts about their bodies by these women because the process is described as a distant comparison. Further, pregnant women recognize that the sexual

objectification of pregnant celebrities by celebrity gossip magazines is a large part of celebrity gossip magazine coverage of celebrity pregnancy and described engaging in an objectifying gaze of the celebrities featured in these magazines. Despite this recognition, these women did not want to admit that this objectification might have a negative impact on how they feel about their currently pregnant bodies. For them, these guilty pleasures are all about escape rather than anything harmful to their perceptions of their bodies.

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APPENDIX A

STUDY 1 MEASURES

State Appearance Comparison (Tiggemann & McGill, 2004)

1. How much did you think about your appearance when viewing the magazine photos and captions?

No thought	A little	Some	Frequently	A lot
1	2	3	4	5

2. How often did you compare your appearance to the celebrities you saw depicted in the magazines?

No comparison	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	A lot of comparison
1	2	3	4	5

3. How often did you compare your specific body parts with those of the women you saw depicted in the magazines?

No comparison	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	A lot of comparison
1	2	3	4	5

Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS) (Thompson, Heinberg, & Tantleff, 1991)

Please rate the statements below.

1. At parties or other social events, I compare my physical appearance to the physical appearance of others.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

2. The best way for people to know if they are overweight or underweight is to compare their figure to the figure of others.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

3. At parties or other social events, I compare how I am dressed to how other people are dressed.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

4. Comparing your “looks” to the “looks” of others is a bad way to determine if you are attractive or unattractive.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

5. In social situations, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of other people.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:
1 = Have strong negative feelings
2 = Have moderate negative feelings
3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
4 = Have moderate positive feelings
5 = Have strong positive feelings

Factor Loading (see below)
Male Female
1. waist _____ PC WC
2. thighs _____ PC WC
3. body build _____ UBS WC
4. buttocks _____ PA WC
5. arms _____ UBS
6. chest or breasts _____ UBS SA
7. hips _____ PA WC
8. legs _____ WC
9. figure or physique _____ UBS, PC WC
11. appearance of stomach _____ PC WC
12. weight _____ PC WC

A factor analysis indicated that three factors emerged for males and females. These factors are (1) Physical Attractiveness (PA) for males or Sexual Attractiveness (SA) for females, (2) Upper Body Strength (UBS) for males or Weight Concern (WC) for females and (3) Physical Condition (PC) for both males and females. Means for these three factors can be computed for males and females but please note that these means cannot be compared because they are not based on the same items. Also note that two items load on two factors for males. The information under the Factor Loading heading should be deleted before the test is given - the information is provided for experimenters who wish to analyze the three factors separately.

To determine a subject's score for a particular subscale of the Body Esteem Scale, simply add up the individual scores for items on the subscale. For example, for female sexual attractiveness, you would add up the subject's ratings of the items comprising the sexual attractiveness subscale (13 items).

Twenty Statements Test (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998)
Please describe yourself by filling in the blank for the following 20 sentences.
1. "I am _____."
2. "I am _____."
3. "I am _____."
4. "I am _____."
5. "I am _____."
6. "I am _____."
7. "I am _____."
8. "I am _____."
9. "I am _____."
10. "I am _____."
11. "I am _____."
12. "I am _____."
13. "I am _____."
14. "I am _____."
15. "I am _____."
16. "I am _____."
17. "I am _____."
18. "I am _____."
19. "I am _____."
20. "I am _____."

Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998)

We are interested in how people think about their bodies. The questions below identify 10 different body attributes. We would like you to *rank order* these body attributes from that which has the *greatest impact* on your physical self-concept (rank this a "9"), to that which has the *least impact* on your physical self-concept (rank this a "0").

Note: It does not matter *how* you describe yourself in terms of each attribute. For example, fitness level can have a great impact on your physical self-concept regardless of whether you consider yourself to be physically fit, not physically fit, or any level in between.

Please first consider all attributes simultaneously, and record your rank ordering by writing the ranks in the rightmost column.
IMPORTANT: *Do Not Assign The Same Rank To More Than One Attribute!*
9 = greatest impact
8 = next greatest impact
1 = next to least impact
0 = least impact

When considering your *physical self-concept* . . . _____
1 . . . .what rank do you assign to *physical coordination ?* _____
2. . . .what rank do you assign to *health?* _____
3. . . .what rank do you assign to *weight?* _____
4. . . .what rank do you assign to *strength?* _____

5. . . .what rank do you assign to *sex appeal?* _____
6. . . .what rank do you assign to *physical attractiveness?* _____
7. . . .what rank do you assign to *energy level (e.g., stamina)?* _____
8. . . .what rank do you assign to *firm/sculpted muscles?* _____
9. . . .what rank do you assign to *physical fitness level?* _____
10. . . .what rank do you assign to *measurements (e.g., chest, waist, hips)?* _____

Scores are obtained by separately summing the ranks for appearance-based items (3, 5, 6, 8 and 10) and competence-based items (1, 2, 4, 7 and 9), and then subtracting the sum of competence ranks from the sum of appearance ranks. Scores may range from -25 to 25, with higher scores indicating a greater emphasis on appearance, interpreted as higher trait self-objectification.

Surveillance Sub-Scale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996)

1. I rarely think about how I look.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I rarely compare how I look with how other people look.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

5. I rarely worry about how I look to other people.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

The Physical Appearance State Anxiety Scale (Reed, Thompson, Brannick, & Sacco, 1991). Items 1-8 comprise the weight-related appearance anxiety scale and items 9-16 comprise the non-weight-related appearance anxiety scale.

The statements listed below are used to describe how anxious, tense, or nervous you feel Right Now about your body. Use the following scale:

Not at All	Slightly	Moderately	Very Much So	Exceptionally So
1	2	3	4	5

Right now, I feel anxious, tense, or nervous about:

1.	The extent to which I look overweight.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My thighs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My buttocks.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My hips.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My stomach (abdomen).	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My legs.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My waist.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My muscle tone.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My ears.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My lips.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	My wrists.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My hands.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	My forehead.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My neck.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	My chin.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My feet.	1	2	3	4	5

Wishful Identification (Hoffner, 1996).

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. This person is the sort of person I want to be like myself.
2. I wish I could be more like this person.
3. I am similar to this person.

APPENDIX B

H1: Pregnant women who are assigned to view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will report more self-objectification than pregnant women who are assigned to view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women assigned to view images and text focusing on baby products.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures how often participants took an observer's perspective on their bodies	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape and size, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Participants' scores on state self-objectification will consist of the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	ANCOVA
	The Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire. Participants rank order a list of 10 body attributes from that which has the greatest impact on their physical self-concept to that which has the least impact.	Measures whether participants hold a physical self-concept mainly based on attractiveness or mainly based on competence.	Participants were asked to rank-order 10 body attributes on a 10-point scale (1 = *most important*, 10 = *least important*) in order of how important they see each part being to their physical self-concept. Of the items, five are appearance-based (physical attractiveness, weight, sex appeal, measurements, and muscle tone), and the remaining	

			five are competence-based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, and physical fitness). Scores will be calculated as the difference between the sum rankings of competence-based items and the appearance-based items.	
IV with 3 categories: Objectifying images and text, Non-objectifying images and text, Images and text focusing on baby products				

H2: Pregnant women who are assigned to view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will result in more negative descriptors about appearance than pregnant women who are assigned to view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women assigned to view images and text focusing on baby products.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Negative descriptors about appearance	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures how often participants were encouraged to think negatively about their appearance.	Coders counted the number of negative (e.g. "I am fat"), positive ("I am pretty"), and neutral ("I am tall) statements. 1= Positive, 3 = Negative, 2= Neutral	ANCOVA
IV with 3 categories: Objectifying images and text, Non-objectifying images and text, and Images and text focusing on baby products				

H3: The effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification will be strongest for those who score high on trait body surveillance.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures how often participants took an observer's perspective on their own bodies	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification are the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or other physical appearance category.	Multiple Regression
	The Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire. Participants rank order a list of 10 body attributes from that which has the greatest impact on their physical self-concept to that which has the least impact.	Measures whether participants hold a physical self-concept mainly based on attractiveness or mainly based on competence.	Participants were asked to rank-order 10 body attributes on a 10-point scale (1 = *most important*, 10 = *least important*) in order of how important they see each part being to their physical self-concept. Of the items, five are appearance-based (physical attractiveness, weight, sex	

			appeal, measurements, and muscle tone), and the remaining five are competence-based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, and physical fitness). Scores will be calculated as the difference between the sum rankings of competence-based items and the appearance-based items.	
Independent Variable: Objectifying images and text				
Moderating Variable: Trait body surveillance	Surveillance Sub-Scale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale. Eight items including: "I rarely think about how I look", and "I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me."	Measures how often participants observe their own bodies and think of their bodies more in relation to how it looks than how it feels.	5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)	

H4: The effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification will be strongest for those who score high on wishful identification with the celebrities featured.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures how often participants took an observer's perspective on their own bodies	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification are the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or other physical appearance category.	Multiple Regression
Moderating Variable: Wishful Identification	The Wishful Identity Scale. Three items including: "This person is the sort of person I want to be like myself", "I wish I could be more like this person", and "I am similar to this person".	Identifies the extent to which participants desire to be like a pictured celebrity.	5 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).	

IV with 2 categories: Objectifying images and text and Non-objectifying images and text.				

H5: Pregnant women who are assigned to view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will report more weight-related appearance anxiety than pregnant women who are assigned to view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women assigned to view images and text focusing on baby products.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: State weight-related appearance anxiety	The Physical Appearance State Anxiety Scale. Sixteen items assessing how anxious, tense, or nervous you feel right now about certain aspects of your body such as: "My thighs", "My buttocks", "My stomach", "My hips", etc.	Measures how anxious, tense, or nervous participants are in regards to how they currently feel about several body-related aspects such as their waist, buttocks, and hips.	5 point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = a lot).	ANCOVA
IV with 3 categories: Objectifying images and text, Non-objectifying images and text, Images and text focusing on baby products				

H6: Self-objectification will serve as a mediator in the relation between exposure to sexually objectified pregnant celebrities and weight-related appearance anxiety.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Mediating Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures how often participants took an observer's perspective on their own bodies	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification consist of number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	Regression-based path analysis
	The Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire. Participants rank order a list of 10 body attributes from that which has the greatest impact on their physical self-concept to that which has the least impact.	Measures whether participants hold a physical self-concept mainly based on attractiveness or mainly based on competence.	Participants were asked to rank-order 10 body attributes on a 10-point scale (1 = *most important*, 10 = *least important*) in order of how important they see each part being to their physical self-concept. Of the items, five are appearance-based (physical attractiveness, weight, sex	

			appeal, measurements, and muscle tone), and the remaining five are competence-based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, and physical fitness). Scores will be calculated as the difference between the sum rankings of competence-based items and the appearance-based items.	
Dependent Variable: Weight-related appearance anxiety	The Physical Appearance State Anxiety Scale. Sixteen items assessing how anxious, tense, or nervous you feel Right now about certain aspects of your body such as: "My thighs", "My buttocks", My stomach", "My Hips", etc.	Measures how anxious, tense, or nervous participants are in regards to how they currently feel about several body-related aspects such as their waist, buttocks, and hips.	5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = exceptionally so).	
Independent Variable: Objectifying images and text				

H7: Pregnant women who are assigned to view images and text objectifying pregnant celebrities will engage in more social comparison than pregnant women who are assigned to view non-objectifying images and text concerning pregnant celebrities and pregnant women assigned to view images and text focusing on baby products.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: State appearance comparison	Three items including: "How much did you think about your appearance while viewing the photos and captions?", "How much did you compare your overall appearance and particular body parts to the pregnant women you saw depicted in the photos and captions?"	Measures how often participants think about and compare their appearance to those pregnant celebrities they see depicted in images and text.	5 point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = a lot).	ANCOVA
IV with 3 categories: Objectifying images and text, Non-objectifying images and text, Images and text focusing on baby products				

H8: The effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification will be strongest for those who score high on appearance comparison tendencies.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures whether sexually objectified images will be more likely to effect those who tend to make comparisons of their overall appearance with others.	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification consist of the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	Multiple Regression
	The Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire. Participants rank order a list of 10 body attributes from that which has the greatest impact on their physical self-concept to that which has the least impact.	Measures whether participants hold a physical self-concept mainly based on attractiveness or mainly based on competence.	Participants were asked to rank-order 10 body attributes on a 10-point scale (1 = *most important*, 10 = *least important*) in order of how important they see each part being to their physical self-concept. Of the items, five are appearance-based (physical attractiveness, weight, sex appeal, measurements, and muscle	

			tone), and the remaining five are competence-based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, and physical fitness). Scores will be calculated as the difference between the sum rankings of competence-based items and the appearance-based items.	
Independent Variable: Objectifying images and text				
Moderating Variable: Appearance comparison tendencies	The Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS). Participants complete five items including: "In social situations, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of other people" and "At parties or other social events, I compare how I am dressed to how other people are dressed."	Measures participants' tendencies to make comparisons of their overall appearance with others.	5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always).	

H9: Social comparison will serve as a mediator in the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text and self-objectification.				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures whether sexually objectified images will be more likely to affect those who tend to make comparisons of their overall appearance with others.	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification consist of the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	Regression-based path analysis
	The Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire. Participants rank order a list of 10 body attributes from that which has the greatest impact on their physical self-concept to that which has the least impact.	Measures whether participants hold a physical self-concept mainly based on attractiveness or mainly based on competence.	Participants were asked to rank-order 10 body attributes on a 10-point scale (1 = *most important*, 10 = *least important*) in order of how important they see each part being to their physical self-concept. Of the items, five are appearance-based (physical attractiveness, weight, sex appeal, measurements, and muscle tone), and the remaining five are competence-based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, and physical fitness). Scores will be	

			calculated as the difference between the sum rankings of competence-based items and the appearance-based items.	
Mediating Variable: State appearance comparison	The Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS). Participants complete five items including: "In social situations, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of other people" and "At parties or other social events, I compare how I am dressed to how other people are dressed."	Measures participants' tendencies to make comparisons of their overall appearance with others.	5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always).	
Independent Variable: Objectifying images and text				

RQ1: What effect, if any, will stage of pregnancy have on the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on pregnant women's self-objectification?				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures whether stage of pregnancy impacts the effect of sexually objectified images.	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification consist of the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	Multiple Regression
Independent Variable: Objectifying images and text				
Independent Variable: Stage of pregnancy	What week of pregnancy are you currently in?		Weeks 1-12 = First Trimester Weeks 13-28 = Second Trimester Weeks 29 & beyond = Third Trimester	

RQ2: What effect, if any, will number of previous live births have on the relationship between exposure to sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on pregnant women's self-objectification?				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures whether stage of pregnancy impacts the effect of sexually objectified images.	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification consist of the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	Multiple Regression
Independent Variable: Objectifying images and text				
Independent Variable: Number of live births	How many live births have you had prior to your current pregnancy?		0 = No previous live births 1 or more = At least 1 previous live birth	

RQ3: Will levels of felt similarity with the pictured celebrities have a moderating influence on the effect of sexually objectifying images and text featuring pregnant celebrities on self-objectification?				
Variable	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose of Question**	**Scale**	**Statistical Test**
Dependent Variable: Self-objectification	Twenty Statements Test. Participants complete 20 sentences beginning with "I am ___."	Measures whether stage of pregnancy impacts the effect of sexually objectified images.	Responses were categorized into one of six groups: 1. body shape, 2. other physical appearance, 3.physical competence, 4. traits or abilities, 5.states or emotions, 6. miscellaneous. Scores on state self-objectification consist of the number of statements that fit into the body shape and size category or the other physical appearance category.	Multiple Regression
Moderating Variable: Similarity	One item on the Wishful Identification Scale: "I am similar to this person".	Identifies the extent to which participants feel similar to a pictured celebrity.	5 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).	
IV with 2 categories: Objectifying images and text and non-objectifying images and text.				

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is a brief anonymous survey to help me get to know the women who participated in this discussion a bit better. Thank you for your time!

1. What is your current occupation?

_____

2. Into what age group do you fall?

18-29
30-39
40-49
50-59

3. Do you have children, besides the one you are currently carrying? _____

If so, how many, and what are their ages?_____

_____

4. How far along are you in your pregnancy and when is your due date?

_____

_____

5. What is your race?

Caucasian
African American
Hispanic
Asian-Pacific Islander
Native American
Other

6. Do you currently, or have you in the past, subscribed to any magazines?

Yes No

If so, which ones? _____

_____

7. How often would you say you *purchase* celebrity gossip magazines (e.g., *People*, *Us Weekly*, *In Touch*, *Life & Style*)?

Never Rarely Occasionally Often All the time

8. How often would you say you *read* celebrity gossip magazines (could be a friend's copy, on the Internet, in a doctor's office, at the grocery store, etc. or one that you purchased)?

Never Rarely Occasionally Often All the time

9. What are the titles of the celebrity gossip magazines you read the most?

_____

_____

10. How often would you say you watch television shows depicting pregnant women?

Never Rarely Occasionally Often All the time

11. If you do watch shows depicting pregnant women, which shows do you watch?

_____

_____

12. What, if any, social pressures do you currently feel?

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. What, if any, social pressures do you feel in regards to your pregnancy?

_____

_____

_____

14. When you look in the mirror, describe what you see.

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. Would you say you would like to change something about yourself?

Yes No

If so, what exactly would you change? _____

_____

Thank you for participating!

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Hello, my name is Megan Hopper and I am currently working on my dissertation in the communication department at the University of Missouri. I am interested in learning more about how pregnant women interpret celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant women and how this coverage impacts their thoughts and feelings about themselves while pregnant. I have never been pregnant myself, but was struck by how much coverage these magazines devote to pregnant celebrities and therefore wanted to learn more about how these magazines are received by those who are currently pregnant.

You were all invited here today because you participated in the first part of a study for my dissertation on the portrayal of pregnant celebrities in the media. You were also invited because it is important to hear from currently pregnant women about their opinions about celebrity magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities. I want to assure you that your names will not be attached to any of the comments you make during this meeting nor the survey you just completed and that no one outside of this group will know exactly what you said. During this group discussion, I will ask each of you to look at some photos and photo captions focusing on pregnant celebrities that have appeared in celebrity gossip magazines and to then share your reactions to this coverage. Next, I will ask you about how you as a pregnant woman feel about this coverage in relation to yourself and your own pregnancy. Last, we will discuss the first study that you participated in.

First, I would like to ask each of you to introduce yourself by telling us how far along you are in your pregnancy, when your estimated due date is, and to share any other information you feel comfortable with about you as a person.

Next, I would like to pass around a couple of photos and photo captions focusing on pregnant celebrities that appeared in celebrity gossip magazines. Take some time to look these over and then we will discuss your reactions as a group.

Now that you have had a chance to look through some of the photos and captions, I would like to ask you a few questions about celebrity gossip magazines.

1.) Describe what you saw depicted in the photos and captions I just passed around.
2.) Describe how these celebrities look.
3.) Tell me about your personal opinions regarding what you saw in the photos and captions.
4.) Describe what feelings you experienced when seeing the pregnant celebrities in the magazines?
5.) In your opinion, why do women read these magazines?
6.) Have you ever compared pregnant celebrities to yourself?
    a. If so, describe how you go about comparing.
    b. If not, why do you refrain from comparing?

6.) Being pregnant yourself, describe any camaraderie you feel with pregnant celebrities.
7.) How does celebrity gossip magazine coverage of pregnant celebrities affect how you feel about your own body?
8.) Overall, what messages do you think celebrity gossip magazine coverage of these celebrities convey to the public about women and pregnancy?

Last, I want to talk to you about the first part of this study you participated in through Survey Monkey. You either saw images of pregnant celebrities that sexually objectified these celebrities (full body shots of the celebrities), images that showed only the heads of pregnant celebrities, and/or images of baby products. All of the participants then took the same survey assessing whether the images encouraged you to self-objectify, or if you were coaxed to internalize an observer's perspective on yourself. Some of you all also took a survey assessing whether the images encouraged you to compare yourselves with the pregnant celebrities. The purpose of the study was to see if viewing sexually objectified images of the pregnant celebrities caused you to think about your own bodies and/or compare your bodies with the pregnant celebrities you saw. Sexual objectification occurs whenever a person's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from his or her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing him or her. When objectified, people are treated as bodies – and in particular, as bodies that exist for the pleasure of others (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 175).

9.) What are your thoughts about the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities?
10.) How might the sexual objectification of pregnant celebrities in celebrity gossip magazines impact pregnant women who see these magazines?

Footnotes

[1] All participants rated Heidi Klum a 1 on the sexual objectification scale.

[2] Posthoc analyses employing the Scheffé procedure at $p < .05$ compared mean scores on age. These analyses indicated that participants in the full-body condition were significantly older ($M = 30.01$, $SD = 4.60$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 28.43$, $SD = 4.41$).

[3] The names of all Study 2 participants were changed to ensure the confidentiality of their statements.

Table 1
Results of Study 1 Pre-Test

	Celebrity									
	Kidman		Klum		Jolie		Richie		Spelling	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Sexual Objectification	3.30	2.91	4.55	3.45	4.60	3.17	6.45	2.81	6.45	1.57
Self-objectification	1.90	.74	2.36	1.12	2.20	7.89	2.55	1.29	2.73	1.10
Social Comparison	1.60	.70	2.00	1.00	1.80	.63	2.36	1.12	2.27	1.01
Attractiveness	1.60	.70	1.09	.30	1.70	.95	2.91	1.14	2.18	.75
Skin Exposure	2.80	.42	3.00	.00	2.90	.32	1.09	.30	1.09	.30
Facial Expression	4.50	.53	4.64	.51	4.50	.53	4.91	.30	4.55	.52
Candidness	4.30	.68	4.82	.41	4.20	.63	3.00	1.00	4.27	1.01
Size of Belly	2.70	.68	3.45	.52	2.70	.68	2.91	.70	2.00	.63
Celebrity Liking	2.33	1.00	1.73	.91	2.50	1.18	3.00	1.18	2.91	.83
Liking of Photo	2.30	.95	2.18	.87	2.40	.97	2.55	1.37	2.55	.93
Identification	2.20	.42	2.64	1.03	2.30	.48	2.45	1.04	2.64	1.03

Note. Sexual objectification was measured on an 11-point scale (0 = *not at all sexually objectifying*; 10 = *extremely sexually objectifying*). Self-objectification was measured by the extent to which each image made participants think about their own bodies on a 5-point scale (0 = *not at all*; 5 = *very much*). Social comparison was measured by the extent to which participants compared themselves to those they saw depicted in the photos and captions (0 = *no comparison*; 5 = *great deal of comparison*). Ratings of attractiveness of each celebrity and identification with each celebrity were measured on 6-point scales (0 = *not at all*; 5 = *very much*). The extent to which participants liked each celebrity and each photo were measured on a 4-point scale (1 = *a lot*; 4 = *not at all*). Candidness was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *extremely candid*; 5 = *extremely posed*). Skin exposure was measured on a 4-point scale (1 = *a lot*; 4 = *none*). The size of each celebrity's belly was measured on a 5-point scale (0 = *very small*; 4 = *very large*). The facial expression of each celebrity was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *sad*; 5 = *happy*).

Table 2

Paired Samples T-test of Full-Body and Headshot-Only Celebrity Images

	Full-Body		Head Shot		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Heidi Klum Objectification	4.70	3.60	1.00	.000	3.26*
Angelina Jolie Objectification	4.60	3.17	1.20	.422	3.32*
Tori Spelling Objectification	6.45	1.57	2.73	2.41	4.80*

Note. *$p < .05$

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*Range*	*N*
Trait self-objectification	5.03	12.78	-25.00 – 25.00	269
State self-objectification	.80	1.09	1.00 – 7.00	255
Valence of appearance descriptors	1.92	.66	1.00 – 3.00	124
State comparison	2.22	1.01	1.00 – 5.00	177
Weight anxiety	16.81	7.32	1.00 – 5.00	265
Non-weight-related anxiety	10.08	3.57	1.00 – 5.00	265
Wishful identification	2.15	.66	1.00 – 5.00	190
Similarity	2.07	.64	1.00 – 5.00	189
Week of Pregnancy	22.53	10.73	0.00 – 41.00	297
Number of Live Births	.70	1.00	0.00 – 8.00	302
Body surveillance	3.14	.55	1.00 – 5.00	302
Trait comparison	2.99	.62	1.00 – 5.00	301
Body esteem	2.99	.76	1.00 – 5.00	299

Table 4

Correlations Between Key Variables

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1.	State SO	1.0									
2.	Trait SO	.05	1.0								
3.	Valence	.03	-.13	1.0							
4.	Comparison	-.02	-.37***	.31**	1.0						
5.	Weight Anx.	-.03	-.27***	.43***	.52***	1.0					
6.	Body Surv.	.00	-.21***	.15	.30***	.31***	1.0				
7.	Trait Comp.	.01	-.23***	.27**	.50***	.50***	.35***	1.0			
8.	Wishful ID	-.08	-.12	.07	.37***	.21**	-.03	.16*	1.0		
9.	Body Est.	.01	.23***	-.50***	-.30***	-.61***	-.28***	-.32***	-.15*	1.0	
10.	NW Anx.	-.00	-.09	.29**	.21**	.45***	-.02	.40***	.12	-.24***	1.0
11.	Similarity	-.07	-.05	-.12	.08	-.03	-.16*	.05	.77***	.02	1.0

Note. State SO = state self-objectification. Trait SO = trait self-objectification. Valence = valence of appearance descriptors. Comparison = state social comparison. Weight Anx. = weight anxiety. Body Surv. = body surveillance. Trait Comp. = trait comparison. Wishful ID = wishful identification. NW Anx. = Non-weight-related anxiety.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .000$

Table 5

Main Effects for Study 1

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*Range*	*N*
Trait self-objectification				
Sexually objectifying condition	5.31_a	13.2	-25.00 – 25.00	89
Non-objectifying condition	4.93_a	12.7	-25.00 – 25.00	83
Control condition	4.85_a	12.5	-25.00 – 25.00	97
State self-objectification				
Sexually objectifying condition	$.91_a$	.96	1.00 – 7.00	88
Non-objectifying condition	$.97_a$	1.42	1.00 – 7.00	76
Control condition	$.56_b$	.92	1.00 – 7.00	91
Valence of appearance descriptors				
Sexually objectifying condition	2.02_a	.65	1.00 – 3.00	55
Non-objectifying condition	1.77_a	.70	1.00 – 3.00	37
Control condition	1.91_a	.63	1.00 – 3.00	32
State comparison				
Sexually objectifying condition	2.48_a	1.07	1.00 – 5.00	93
Non-objectifying condition	1.93_b	.85	1.00 – 5.00	84
Control condition				
Weight-related anxiety				
Sexually objectifying condition	16.09_a	7.22	1.00 – 5.00	88
Non-objectifying condition	16.78_a	6.95	1.00 – 5.00	81
Control condition	17.50_a	7.72	1.00 – 5.00	96
Non-weight-related anxiety				
Sexually objectifying condition	9.43_a	2.21	1.00 – 5.00	88
Non-objectifying condition	10.04_a	3.31	1.00 – 5.00	81
Control condition	10.72_a	4.57	1.00 – 5.00	96

Note. Means with differing subscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$ according to the Scheffé procedure.

Table 6

Analysis of Covariance for Main Effects of Condition on Dependent Variables

Variable	SS	DF	MS	F
State self-objectification	8.56	2	4.28	3.65*
Valence of appearance descriptors	1.88	2	.94	2.93
State comparison	13.16	1	13.16	15.55**
Weight-related anxiety	19.50	2	9.75	.29
Non-weight related anxiety	49.98	2	25.00	.13

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Table 7

Focus group Discussion Participant Information

Group No.	Age	Race	No. of Children	Week of Pregnancy	Gossip mag. readership	Occupation
1	18-29	Caucasian	0	25	Rarely	Coordinator
1	18-29	Caucasian	0	20	Occasionally	Afterschool Consultant
1	30-39	Caucasian	0	7.5	Occasionally	Grad. Student
2	30-39	Caucasian	0	18	Occasionally	Billing Agent
2	30-39	Caucasian	1	20	Often	Precision Procurement
3	18-29	Other	0	28	Rarely	Lab Tech.
3	18-29	Caucasian	0	24	Occasionally	Registered Nurse
3	30-39	Caucasian	0	24	Rarely	Career Counselor
4	30-39	Hispanic	0	14	Rarely	Flight Attendant
4	30-39	Caucasian	1	30	Often	Event Coordinator
4	30-39	Caucasian	1	10.5	All the Time	Post-Doc. Fellow
5	18-29	Caucasian	0	19	Often	Academic Advisor
5	18-29	Caucasian	0	30	Occasionally	Office Support
5	18-29	Caucasian	0	10	Occasionally	Research Associate

Group No.	Age	Race	No. of Children	Week of Pregnancy	Gossip mag. readership	Occupation
6	30-39	African American	0	25	Rarely	Data Specialist
6	18-29	Caucasian	0	13	Rarely	IT Professional
6	30-39	Caucasian	0	31	Occasionally	Coordinator
7	18-29	Caucasian	0	20	Occasionally	Assist. Professor
7	18-29	Caucasian	1	10	Occasionally	Admin. Assistant
8	18-29	Caucasian	0	19	Occasionally	Instructor
8	30-39	Caucasian	4	28	Rarely	Portrait Photographer
9	30-39	Asian- Pac. Islander	0	12	Occasionally	Finance
9	18-29	Caucasian	0	31	Rarely	OSS III
9	18-29	Caucasian	2	19	Rarely	Stay-at-home Mom

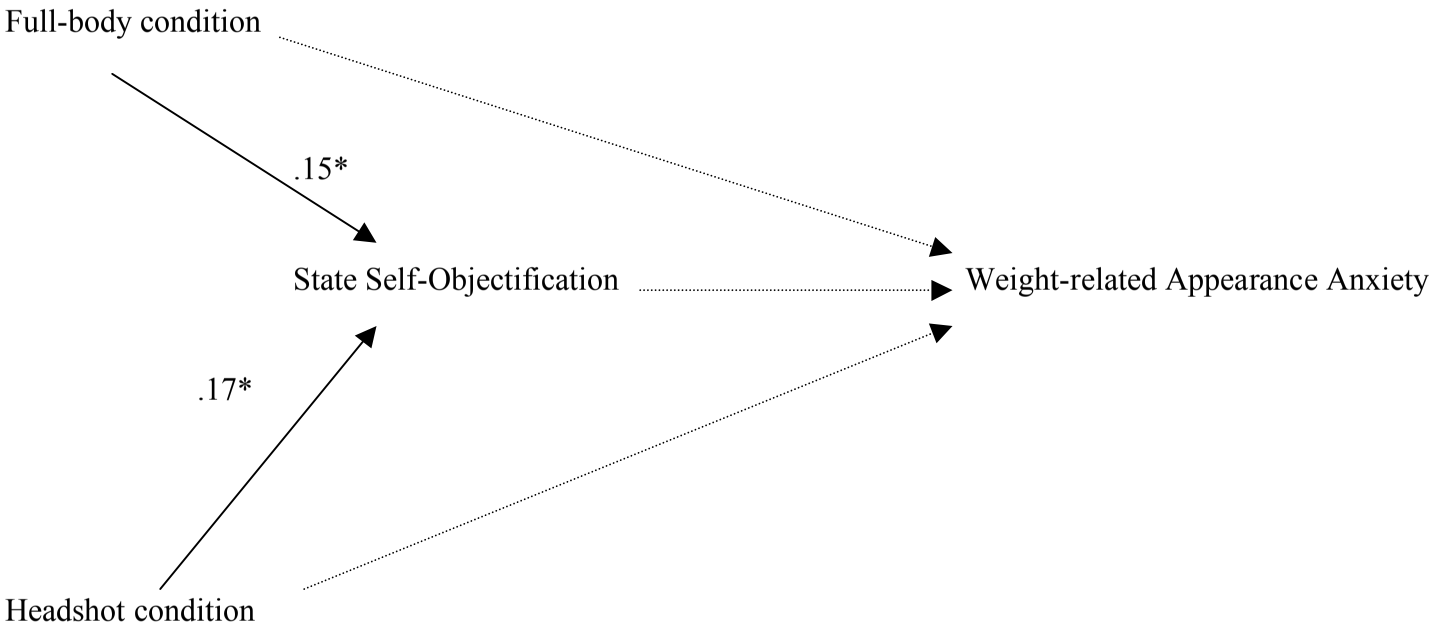

Fig. 1. Mediational model examining state self-objectification mediating the main effect of condition on weight-related appearance anxiety
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. Dotted paths = n.s.

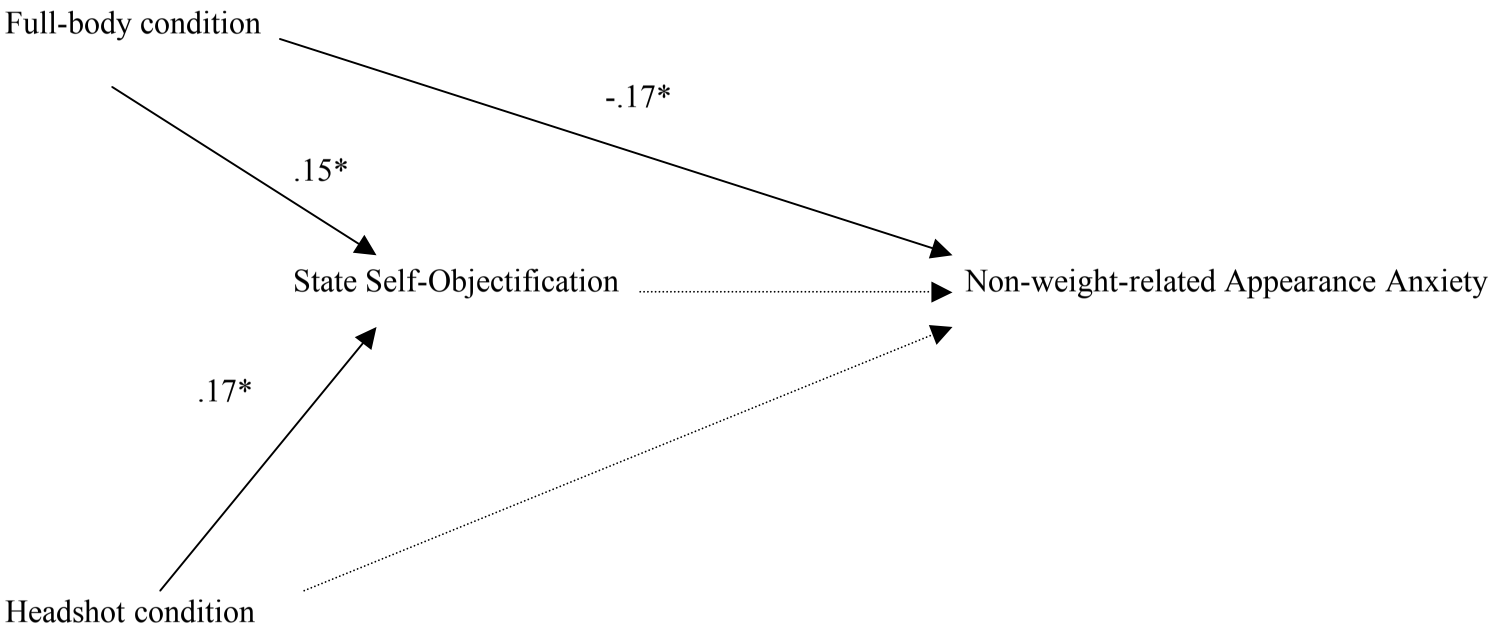

Fig. 2. Mediational model examining state self-objectification mediating the main effect of condition on non-weight-related appearance anxiety
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. Dotted paths = n.s.

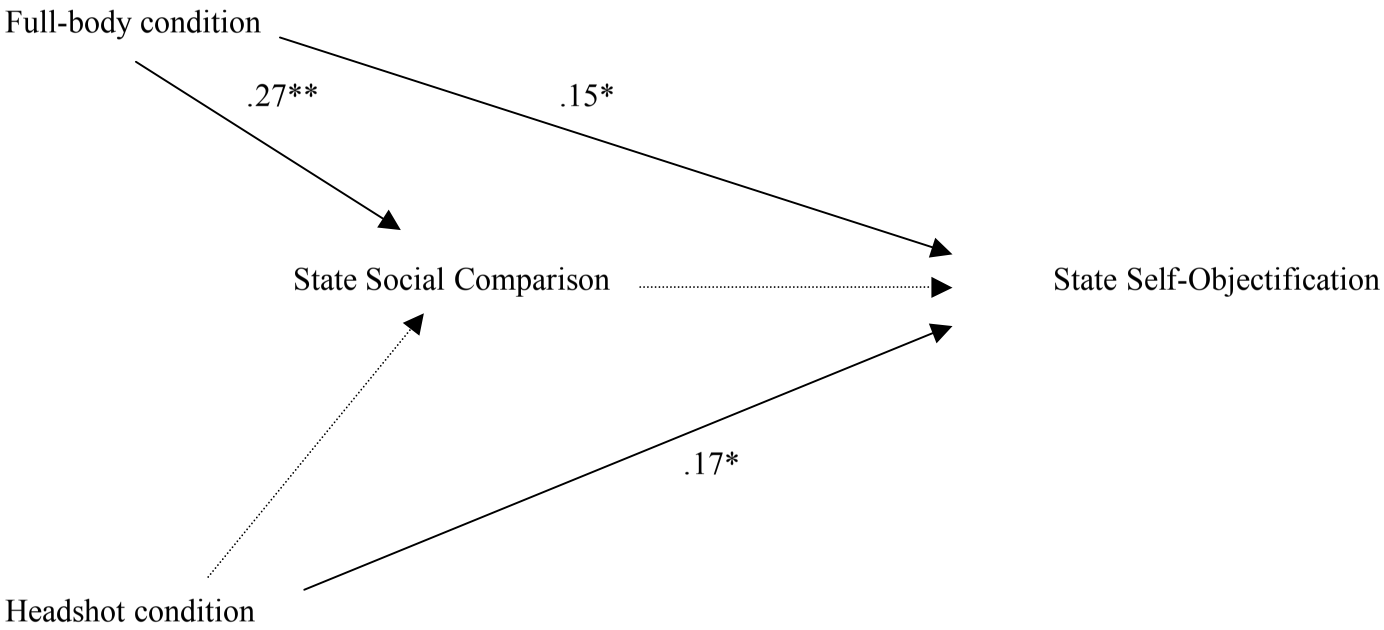

Fig. 3. Mediational model examining state social comparison mediating the main effect of condition on state self-objectification. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. Dotted paths = n.s.

VITA

K. Megan Hopper obtained a Master of Science degree in Communication from Illinois State University in 2006 and a Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communication from Illinois State University in 2002. She worked as a news reporter and freelance reporter for *The Pantagraph*, a daily newspaper in Bloomington, Illinois, from 2002 to 2006. Megan has served as a graduate teaching assistant in communication at the University of Missouri – Columbia where she received the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award in 2009 for her efforts in the classroom. She was appointed Visiting Assistant Professor in Communication at the University of Missouri – Columbia in 2010.