



THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP AS MEDIATOR OF THE MEDIA'S THIN FEMALE IDEAL

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We explored the reciprocal socialization process between adolescent girls and their mothers and how this process shapes daughters' and mothers' media use, appearance-related thoughts and behaviors, beliefs about the media's thin female ideal, and social comparison processes. This work was guided by social comparison theory, which holds that individuals compare themselves with others (e.g., fashion models) and that these comparisons can shape self-feelings (Festinger, 1954). Qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews with 20 mothers and their adolescent daughters.

Grounded theory analysis revealed eight themes conceptualized as participants' Body and Media Profiles. Body Profile themes included appearance orientation, body satisfaction, diet behaviors, and perceptions about body malleability. Media Profile themes included media involvement, perceived realism of models, identification with models, and idealization of models. Personal characteristics associated with the Body and Media Profiles shaped participants' (a) tendencies to compare themselves to models and (b) outcomes of self-to-model comparisons. In turn, mother-daughter interactions contributed to mothers' and daughters' personal characteristics associated with the Profiles. Findings clarify why some females are more affected than others by exposure to the thin female ideal.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. Human Relations 7, 117-140.