



Media Seminar week 3:

Media influences on eating behaviours

Food for thought...

- What are your opinions regarding the culture of `thinspiration?`
- To what extent are you aware of pro-anorexia or similar websites?
- How do you think that society has changed in attitudes towards appearance and weight since the second world war?
- To what extent do you think that males experience similar problems to females in the 21st century?

More to think about...

- What examples can you think of in terms of body modification (not just diet and exercise) that are common place in today`s society?
- What have you observed in terms of advertising, eating and health behaviours?
- What role do you think celebrities have in influencing young people today?
- To what extent do you think you are influenced by the media and the way in which men/women are portrayed or present themselves?

Where did it all come from?

- Where do you think obesity stems from?
- Overeating whilst viewing? Lack of exercise? Mindless consumption?
- Why do we like what is bad for our health?
- Are media really responsible?
- What can/should they do?

Loyalty at a price?

- How important really is `brand loyalty` when it comes to eating behaviour?
- Are children really `fooled` by advertisements?
- Why are body image disorders on the rise?
- To what extent do psychological theories contribute to our understanding of the issues raised in this weeks lecture?

Task:

Response scale for all items:

1. I disagree strongly
2. I disagree
3. I neither agree nor disagree
4. I agree
5. I agree strongly

1. I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life
2. If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what others think about it
3. I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things
4. I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing
5. I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do

Response scale for all items:

1. I disagree strongly
2. I disagree
3. I neither agree nor disagree
4. I agree
5. I agree strongly

5. I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do

6. I am not the type of person who compares often with others

7. If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others have done

8. I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face

9. I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences

Response scale for all items:

1. I disagree strongly
2. I disagree
3. I neither agree nor disagree
4. I agree
5. I agree strongly

10. I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people

11. I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills popularity) with other people

*reverse score 6 & 10

Gibbons, F.X. & Buunk, B.P. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: The development of a scale of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 129-142.
INCOM, Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Scale

Now try this...

- Please circle a number at a point which best describes the way in which you see yourself in comparison to others.

- For example:

Short 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Tall

- If you put a mark at 3 this means you see yourself as shorter than others; if you put a mark at 5 (middle) about average; and a mark at 7 somewhat taller. If you understand the above instructions, please proceed. Circle one number on each line according to how you see yourself in relationship to others.

In relation to others on social media, I feel:

Inferior	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Superior
Incompetent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More competent
Unlikeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More likeable
Left out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Accepted
Different	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Same
Untalented	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More talented
Weaker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Stronger
Unconfident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More confident
Undesirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More desirable
Unattractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More attractive
An outsider	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	An insider

- SCORING - Scoring, add up all items.

Sometimes it is useful to look at the 3 items of feeling left out, different and an outsider as a measure of group fit or belongingness.

- DESCRIPTION Social Comparison Scale

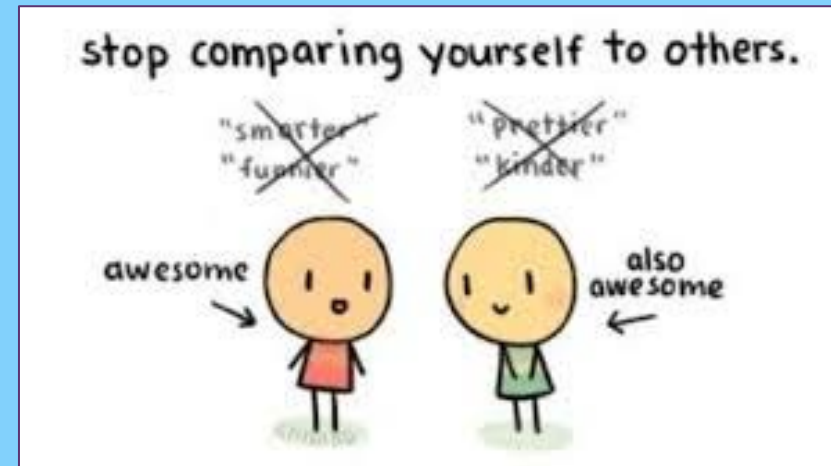
This scale was developed by Allan and Gilbert (1995) to measure self-perceptions of social rank and relative social standing. This scale uses a semantic differential methodology and consists of 11 bipolar constructs. Participants are required to make a global comparison of themselves in relation to other people and to rate themselves along a ten-point scale. A semantic differential scale.

The 11-items cover judgements concerned with rank, attractiveness and how well the person thinks they 'fit in' with others in society.

Low scores point to feelings of inferiority and general low rank self-perceptions.

The scale has been found to have good reliability, with Cronbach alphas of .88 and .96 with clinical populations and .91 and .90 with student populations (Allan and Gilbert, 1995, 1997).

Social Comparison



Social Comparison Theory

- People constantly evaluate themselves, and others, in domains like attractiveness, wealth, intelligence, and success.
- According to some studies, as much as 10 percent of our thoughts involve comparisons of some kind.
- Social comparison theory is the idea that individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against others.
- The theory was developed in 1954 by psychologist Leon Festinger. Later research has shown that people who regularly compare themselves to others may find motivation to improve, but may also experience feelings of deep dissatisfaction, guilt, or remorse, and engage in destructive behaviours like lying or disordered eating.

Benefits to Social Comparison

- When individuals compare themselves to others as a way of measuring their personal development, or to motivate themselves to improve and develop a more positive self-image, comparisons can be beneficial.
- It takes discipline, however, to avoid the pitfalls of negative comparison.
- In large part, how we react to comparisons depends on who we compare ourselves to: When we just want to feel better about ourselves, we tend to engage in comparisons to people worse off than we are, although this can become an unhealthy habit.
- When we want to improve, though, we may compare ourselves to people roughly similar to us but higher achieving in one trait or another.

How can Social Comparison help you?

- Social comparison can be highly beneficial when people use social networks to push themselves.
- In one study, friendly competition was highly effective in pushing people to exercise more, as peers pushed each other to keep up and do more. In such a "social ratchet effect," each person's activity generates more activity among others.
- Social networks in which people simply offered each other positive encouragement were far less helpful.
- Zhang, Jingwen., et al. (2016). Support or Competition? How Online Social Networks Increase Physical Activity: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Preventive Medicine Reports* (4)453-458.

The dangers of Comparison

- Theodore Roosevelt called comparison “the thief of joy,” and he may have been right.
- Social comparison can motivate people to improve, but it can also promote judgmental, biased, and overly competitive or superior attitudes.
- Most people have the social skills and impulse control to keep their standards for social comparison to themselves, and not to act on any envy or resentment spurred by comparison-making. But their true feelings may manifest in other ways.
- Research has found that more than 10% of daily thoughts involved making a comparison of some kind.
- Despite their prevalence, sayings such as “hike your own hike” and Teddy Roosevelt’s famous assertion that “comparison is the thief of joy” suggest that making comparisons can be harmful and detract from our happiness.

The role of social media in social comparison

- Constantly checking social-media feeds full of images from parties, concerts, or other aspirational events can diminish self-esteem and contribute to depression.
- But some studies have found that such risks primarily affect those high in the trait of neuroticism, and others suggest that social-media use can reinforce self-esteem; for example, when people review their own images of good times with friends.
- Chow, T. S., & Wan, H. Y. (2017). Is there any 'Facebook Depression'? Exploring the moderating roles of neuroticism, Facebook social comparison and envy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 119, 277-282. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2017.07.032

FOMO and social media

- That experience of “FOMO,” or Fear of Missing Out, is one that psychologists identified several years ago as a potent risk of Facebook use.
- You’re alone on a Saturday night, decide to check in to see what your Facebook friends are doing, and see that they’re at a party and you’re not. Longing to be out and about, you start to wonder why no one invited you, even though you thought you were popular with that segment of your crowd.
- Is there something these people actually don’t like about you? How many other social occasions have you missed out on because your supposed friends didn’t want you around?

What does this mean for 21st Century Society?

- Chow, T. S., & Wan, H. Y. (2017). Is there any 'Facebook Depression'? Exploring the moderating roles of neuroticism, Facebook social comparison and envy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 119, 277-282. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2017.07.032
- Lewallen, J., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2016). Pinterest or thinterest?: Social comparison and body image on social media. *Social Media & Society*, 2(1), 2056305116640559.
- Robinson, L., Prichard, I., Nikolaidis, A., Drummond, C., Drummond, M., & Tiggemann, M. (2017). Idealised media images: The effect of fitspiration imagery on body satisfaction and exercise behaviour. *Body image*, 22, 65-71.