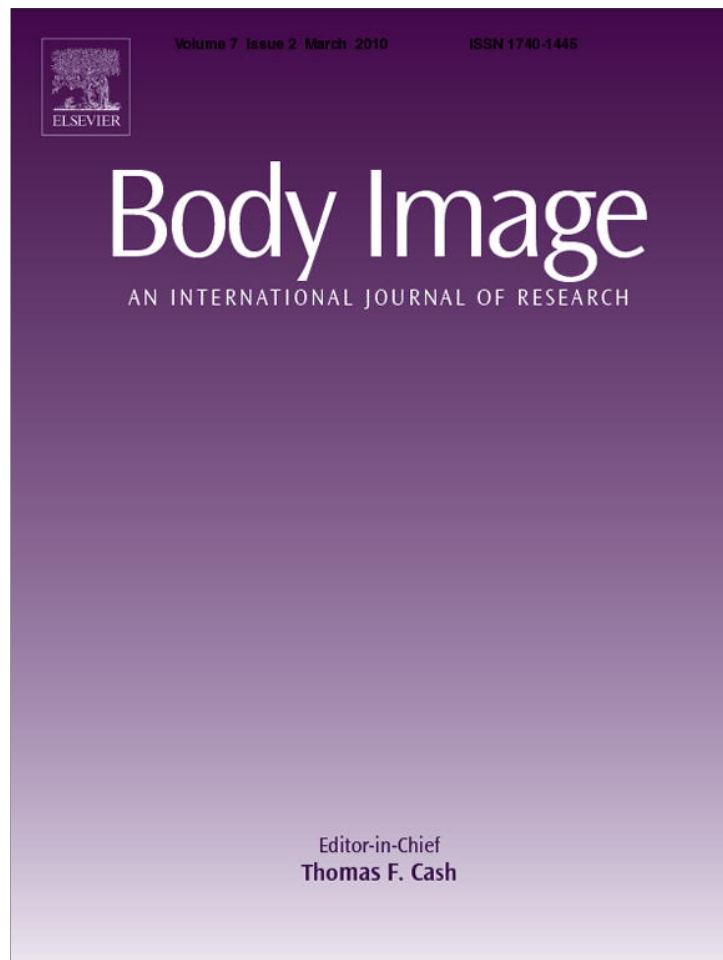


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A correlational and experimental examination of reality television viewing and interest in cosmetic surgery

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ABSTRACT

Two studies are presented that examine the influence of media messages about cosmetic surgery on youths' interest in altering their own physical appearance. In Study 1, 170 participants (59% female; M age = 19.77 years) completed surveys assessing their impression of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery, appearance satisfaction, self-esteem, and their interest in cosmetic surgery. Results indicated that participants who reported favorable impressions of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery were more likely to indicate interest in pursuing surgery. One hundred and eighty-nine participants (51% female; M age = 19.84 years) completed Study 2. Approximately half of the participants were exposed to a television message featuring a surgical make-over; the other half was exposed to a neutral message. Results indicated that participants who watched a television program about cosmetic surgery wanted to alter their own appearance using cosmetic surgery more than did participants who were not exposed to this program.

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Introduction

The importance of physical beauty to individuals' perceptions of themselves and others begins early in life (e.g., Goldfield & Chrisler, 1995; Hawley, Johnson, Mize, & McNamara, 2007) and may result in behavioral and mental health consequences (Lu & Hou, 2009; Markey & Markey, 2009; Ogden, 2003; Polivy & Herman, 2002; Sarwer, Magee, & Clark, 2004; Stice & Shaw, 2002; Wertheim, Paxton, & Blaney, 2009). Although there is evidence that perceptions of attractiveness are guided by innate preferences for symmetry and evolutionarily adaptive features (e.g., small waist-to-hip ratios among women; see Markey, Tinsley, Ericksen, Ozer, & Markey, 2002; Singh, 1993, 1994), there is also substantial evidence that social experiences – including media experiences – contribute significantly to perceptions of attractiveness (e.g., Markey, 2004; Markey et al., 2002; Posavac, Posavac, & Posavac, 1998; Strahan, LaFrance, Wilson, Ethier, Spencer, & Zanna, 2008). The potential effects of media messages on men's and women's body image have been examined in past research, with various forms of the media (e.g., music videos, television, magazines) appearing to have the potential to impact body image via different

processes (e.g., Botta, 1999; Lew, Mann, Myers, Taylor, & Bower, 2007; Mazzeo, Trace, Mitchell, & Gow, 2007; Nabi, 2009; Strahan et al., 2008; Tiggemann, 2003, 2005; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004). However, as new information is gained from this research, new media messages about techniques for changing one's physical appearance are continually being made available to the public. The present study examined one of these new media messages (reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery) in relation to young adults' interest in changing their physical appearance using cosmetic surgery.

Because of the importance of their physical appearance to individuals' psychological and physical well being (especially youths, see Harter, 1989, 2006) and the relative lack of objective criteria for evaluating physical beauty, it is likely that individuals assess their own appearance using every source of information available. According to Festinger (1954), social comparison provides individuals with a means to evaluate their own qualities when objective or unambiguous criteria for evaluation are not available. Body image research suggests that the media have the potential to influence appearance satisfaction via the process of social comparison (Lew et al., 2007; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). The majority of media messages are directed at women and these messages appear to result in negative self-evaluations; the vast majority of women cannot achieve the ideals presented by the media (Henderson-King, Henderson-King, & Hoffman, 2001; Lew et al., 2007). In contrast, when individuals are asked to compare themselves with unattractive media images, they report feeling

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better about themselves (Brown, Novick, Lord, & Richards, 1992). Women who report greater media contact not only report lower self-concept, but evidence also suggests links between women's health-related behaviors (e.g., eating disorders) and their exposure to unrealistic media messages (Field, Cheung, Wolf, Herzog, Gortmaker, & Colditz, 1999; Moriarty & Harrison, 2008). Recent research further suggests that exposure to depictions of beauty ideals is particularly detrimental to women who are invested in their appearance, prone to body dissatisfaction, and suffering from low self-esteem (Bessenoff, 2006; Heinberg & Thompson, 1995; Henderson-King et al., 2001; Ip & Jarry, 2008).

Research examining links between men's exposure to idealized media images and their feelings and behaviors related to their bodies is less extensive than is the research examining women and presents less consistent findings (e.g., Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2009; van den Berg, Paxton, Keery, Wall, Guo, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). However, men have been found to report greater levels of body dissatisfaction, depression, and interest in enhancing their bodies following exposure to ideal male bodies (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Hatoum & Belle, 2004). One recent experiment (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2009) suggests that social comparison may be the mechanism linking exposure to images and men's body-related concerns and that men with body-related concerns may be more vulnerable than others to media messages. Consistent with research focusing on women, men's exposure to ideal media images may not just impact their dissatisfaction with their appearance but their global sense of self and interest in changing their appearance (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2009).

Recently, cosmetic surgery has become increasingly popular as a means of appearance-enhancement. Cosmetic surgery has come to be conceptualized as an approach to physical improvement that is accessible, relatively affordable, and appropriate for all ages. In 2008, 12.1 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed, a 63% increase since 2000 (American Society of Plastic Surgeons [ASPS], 2009). Although the increase in procedures in the last decade is due in part to the increase in minimally invasive procedures (e.g., Botox), the demand for cosmetic surgery is unquestionable. There is a strong gender bias in this demand, with 91% of cosmetic surgery procedures performed on females, but cosmetic surgery patients are increasingly ethnically and socio-economically diverse (ASPS, 2008) and the appeal of cosmetic surgery is international (International Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery [ISAPS], 2008).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) have suggested that increasing exposure to messages about the importance of attractiveness should lead to individuals' increasing concerns about their own appearance and openness to using various means through which cultural standards can be achieved. However, little research has examined the extent to which media messages about cosmetic surgery influence individuals' desire for self-change, and the research that is available is limited in its focus on women and/or its correlational approach (e.g., Crockett, Pruzinsky, & Persing, 2007; Markey & Markey, 2009; Mazzeo et al., 2007; Nabi, 2009; Sperry, Thompson, Sarwer, & Cash, 2009; Zuckerman & Abraham, 2008). Perhaps most relevant to the present study is research suggesting that television shows featuring cosmetic surgery do not necessarily influence body satisfaction, per se, but may influence attitudes toward cosmetic surgery and interest in acquiring cosmetic surgery (Crockett et al., 2007; Nabi, 2009; Sperry et al., 2009). Further, Mazzeo et al. (2007) suggest that media messages featuring cosmetic surgery may impact eating disordered attitudes and behaviors among women. The present studies extend this research by using both correlational and experimental data to examine the influence of reality television

shows featuring cosmetic surgery on individuals' interest in altering their own physical appearance.

Study 1 aims

The present study builds on past research examining predictors of cosmetic surgery, media influences on body image, and the desire for self-change by examining the potential role that impressions of television shows featuring cosmetic surgery may have on individuals' desire to pursue surgery. Social comparison theory would suggest that reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery make-overs may be particularly appealing to viewers as they compare themselves to "average" (i.e., similar) looking individuals who become "attractive" individuals across less than an hour of TV time.

This study is unique from past research in several ways. First, in an effort to extend research focusing almost exclusively on women, we examine a sample of both men and women. Second, we examine both face and body satisfaction. Although cosmetic surgery to alter the body (e.g., "tummy tucks" and liposuction) is popular, facial procedures (e.g., rhinoplasty) are consistently among the top procedures performed in any given year (ASPS, 2009). Thus, we will consider both face and body satisfaction and cosmetic procedures designed to alter both the face and body. Third, in addition to examining body and face satisfaction as predictors of interest in cosmetic surgery, we also examine global self-esteem. Given that past research indicates that media exposure has the potential to influence not only women's feelings about their physical appearances but their feelings about themselves more generally, we include self-esteem as a potential predictor of interest in cosmetic surgery (see Sarwer et al., 2004). Finally, perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this study is our focus on participants' perceptions of reality television featuring cosmetic surgery as a possible correlate of their interest in pursuing cosmetic surgery.

There are four hypotheses we address in this study. Our first hypothesis is that gender will uniquely predict interest in cosmetic surgery, with women being more interested in cosmetic surgery than men. Our second hypothesis is that body image (i.e., face and body satisfaction) will uniquely predict interest in cosmetic surgery; those who are less satisfied will be more interested in cosmetic procedures. Our third hypothesis is that self-esteem will uniquely predict interest in cosmetic surgery, with lower self-esteem being related to greater interest in surgery. Our fourth hypothesis is that positive impressions of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery will be uniquely associated with participants' interest in cosmetic surgery.

Method

Participants and procedures

One hundred and seventy participants (101 females; M age = 19.77 years, $SD = 4.38$) completed this study. Participants were all students from a Northeastern university and they represent a diverse group in regards to ethnicity and other demographic traits. About half (58%) of the sample self-identified as Caucasian/Euro-American, 12% of the sample was African American, 15% Asian American, 10% Hispanic/Latino and 5% indicated that they were of an "other" ethnic background.

Participation took place in small groups of two to six participants. Participants completed the measures used in this study along with other measures to mask the true intent of this study. Administration of the questionnaires was performed by trained research assistants in a private laboratory setting. All procedures were designed in accordance with the American

Psychological Association's guidelines for the ethical treatment of human subjects and participants were compensated with research credit toward their Introductory Psychology course.

Measures

Impression of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery

In order to assess participants' impressions of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery, they responded to 10 items created for the purposes of this study (Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .77). Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire only if they had watched at least one reality television show featuring cosmetic surgery in the past (all participants completed the questionnaire). Items assessed the extent to which participants enjoyed and found reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery transformations to be realistic (e.g., "I think that make-over shows are realistic"; "I think that make-over shows are inspirational"; "I think that make-over shows are interesting"). As expected, a factor analysis revealed a single factor as indicated by the first to second eigenvalue ratio of 3.64–0.92.

Body and face satisfaction

Participants indicated their general satisfaction with their body and face using single, Likert scale items: "How satisfied would you say you are with the way your body looks?" and "How satisfied would you say you are with the way your face looks?" Instructions indicated that participants should circle the most appropriate response ranging from 1 = "not satisfied at all" to 9 = "completely satisfied." Although lengthier measures are desirable for psychometric reasons, these items were chosen because they were simple, direct and comparable for men and women. Other available measures of physical appearance satisfaction (e.g., Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999) typically focus on specific body parts and men's and women's desires regarding these different parts are not the same, which can lead to confusion when interpreting these measures across gender.

Self-esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES, 1965) was used to assess participants' self-esteem (Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .81). This RSES is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem containing statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance (e.g., "I feel I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others"; "At times I think I am no good at all"). Items are answered on a 4-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Interest in cosmetic surgery to alter the body

Participants' interest in obtaining cosmetic surgery to alter their bodies was assessed using the Interest in Cosmetic Surgery Questionnaire's scale that focuses on the body (ICSQ; Markey & Markey, 2009; Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .89). This ICSQ scale contains a list of five cosmetic surgery procedures and participants were asked to rate, using a 5-point Likert scale, the extent to which they are interested in obtaining the procedures (1 = *I would never consider this procedure* to 5 = *I would definitely consider this procedure*). Participants' overall interest in cosmetic surgery to alter their bodies was determined by summing their responses to all the items. This list of procedures was derived from information provided by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' web page (see ASPS, 2009), Sarwer, 2001; Sarwer and colleagues' (2001, 2009) discussion of the cosmetic surgery procedures youths obtain (i.e., procedures associated with aging are not likely to be relevant to late adolescents/early adults), and procedures that can

be performed on both males and females (e.g., tummy tuck, liposuction, buttock lift, thigh lift, upper arm lift).

Interest in cosmetic surgery to alter the face

Participants' interest in obtaining cosmetic surgery to alter their faces was also assessed using the Interest in Cosmetic Surgery Questionnaire (ICSQ; Markey & Markey, 2009; Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .80). The Face scale consists of a list of 10 cosmetic surgery procedures and participants asked to rate, using a 5-point Likert scale, the extent to which they are interested in obtaining the procedures (1 = *I would never consider this procedure* to 5 = *I would definitely consider this procedure*). Participants' overall interest in cosmetic surgery to alter their face was determined by summing their responses to all the items. This list of procedures was also derived from information provided by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' web site (ASPS, 2009), Sarwer, 2001; Sarwer and colleagues' (2001, 2009) discussion of the cosmetic surgery procedures youths obtain, and procedures that can be performed on both males and females (e.g., nose reshaping, eyelid surgery, cheek implants, ear surgery, fat injections, etc.).

Results

In order to examine the hypotheses of the current study, separate hierarchical regression analyses were computed for each outcome measure (i.e., desire to alter the body using plastic surgery and desire to alter the face using plastic surgery). In each of these analyses, gender (G), self-esteem (SE), and body/face satisfaction (BS or FS) were entered in the first step. The main variable of interest was then entered in the second step: impression of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery (RT). Although it was not expected that these effects would be different for males and females, in the third step each predictor's interaction with gender was examined in order to determine whether or not these main effects differed across gender. To reduce issues associated with multicollinearity, self-esteem, body/face satisfaction, and reality television were centered and gender was dummy coded (0 = female and 1 = male; Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, consistent with Hypothesis 1, women had a greater desire to alter their bodies ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < .01$; predicted mean for the average female = 9.09; predicted mean for the average male = 6.29) and faces ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < .05$; predicted mean for the average female = 13.34; predicted mean for the average male = 11.74) using cosmetic surgery than men. Additionally, consistent with Hypothesis 2, participants who wanted to alter their bodies using cosmetic surgery tended to be unsatisfied with their bodies ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < .01$) and those who wanted to alter their faces using cosmetic surgery tended to be unsatisfied with their faces ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 3,

Table 1

Multiple regression analysis predicting desire to alter the body using cosmetic surgery (Study 1).

	B	SE B	β	Partial r
<i>Step 1: adjusted R² = .318**</i>				
Gender (G)	-2.79	0.61	-0.29	-.34**
Self-esteem (SE)	-0.60	0.67	-0.05	-.07
Body satisfaction (BS)	-0.75	0.17	-0.35	-.33**
<i>Step 2: Δ adjusted R² = .051**</i>				
Impression of reality TV (RT)	1.05	0.29	0.24	.28**
<i>Step 3: Δ adjusted R² = .002</i>				
G \times SE	-0.61	1.32	0.02	-.03
G \times BS	0.86	0.35	0.05	.15
G \times RT	-0.55	0.63	-0.05	-.05

Note: $n = 153$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Multiple regression analysis predicting desire to alter the face using cosmetic surgery (Study 1).

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	Partial <i>r</i>
<i>Step 1: adjusted R² = .091**</i>				
Gender (G)	−1.61	0.73	−0.17	−.18*
Self-esteem (SE)	0.09	0.85	0.01	.01
Face satisfaction (BS)	−0.73	0.27	−0.26	−.22**
<i>Step 2: Δ adjusted R² = .043**</i>				
Impression of reality TV (RT)	1.07	0.37	0.22	.23**
<i>Step 3: Δ adjusted R² = .005</i>				
G \times SE	−0.60	1.77	−0.03	−.03
G \times FS	0.77	0.61	0.13	.09
G \times RT	−0.42	0.81	−0.05	−.04

Note: *n* = 153.* *p* < .05.** *p* < .01.

which predicted that self-esteem would predict interest in cosmetic surgery, was not supported. However, consistent with the primary hypothesis of this study, participants who had favorable impressions of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery wanted to alter their own bodies ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .01$) and faces ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .01$) using cosmetic surgery. Finally, none of the interaction terms were significant indicating that the relations between body and face satisfaction, self-esteem, impressions of reality television make-over shows and the desire to alter ones appearance using cosmetic surgery were similar for males and females.

Study 2 aims

Study 2 replicates and extends the research presented in Study 1 by experimentally manipulating participants' exposure to a media message about physical appearance change. A significant limitation of Study 1 is the inability to determine the causal or temporal sequence of the association between participants' interest in cosmetic surgery and their positive impressions of reality television featuring cosmetic surgery. Although we hypothesized that reality television was the predictor and interest in cosmetic surgery the outcome, it is possible that the opposite is true. In Study 2, we attempt to address this limitation. Instead of querying participants about their perceptions of reality television based on their past television viewing experiences, participants were randomly assigned to watch a specific type of television show before rating their interest in cosmetic surgery. The hypotheses for Study 2 directly parallel the hypotheses examined in Study 1.

Our first hypothesis is that gender will uniquely predict interest in cosmetic surgery, with women being more interested in cosmetic surgery. Our second hypothesis is that body image (i.e., face and body satisfaction) will uniquely predict interest in cosmetic surgery; those who are less satisfied will be more interested in cosmetic procedures. Our third hypothesis is that self-esteem will uniquely predict interest in cosmetic surgery, with lower self-esteem being related to greater interest in surgery. Our fourth hypothesis is that watching a reality television show featuring cosmetic surgery (versus a "control" condition) will uniquely affect interest in cosmetic surgery.

Method

Participants and procedure

One hundred and eighty-nine participants completed this study (103 female; *M* age = 19.84 years, *SD* = 4.82). Participants were all students from a Northeastern university. Approximately half (57%)

of the sample self-identified as Caucasian/Euro-American, 18% of the sample was African American, 10% Asian American, 10% Hispanic/Latino and 2% indicated that they were of an "other" ethnic background. There was no overlap between the participants in Study 1 and the participants in Study 2.

Participation took place in small groups of two to six participants. Participants were first seated approximately 4 ft from a 32 in. television and the lights were turned off to eliminate any potential distractions in the room. Participants were instructed to pay close attention to what they were about to view as they would be asked questions pertaining to the show later and they were told to refrain from making any comments while viewing the show. Approximately half of the groups were exposed to a media message lauding the efficacy of surgical self-improvement (i.e., a reality television show featuring a cosmetic surgery make-over); the other half were exposed to a neutral media message (i.e., the control group). Both media messages were comparable in every way possible (length, general theme of "transformation," etc.) except for the specific topic addressed. After watching the television program participants completed the measures described below along with other unrelated questionnaires in order to disguise the hypotheses of this study. None of the participants indicated that they were aware of the true intention of the study.

Measures

Reality television show

The independent variable in this study was the television show that participants were exposed to. The cosmetic surgery show viewed was "Extreme Make-Over" and featured make-overs involving multiple cosmetic surgery procedures. Commercials and some of the tangential (i.e., personal) information about the individuals were deleted from the show so that the clip was only 20 min long. The control group viewed a parallel show featuring a home improvement (Sell This House). Commercials were deleted from this clip so that it was also 20 min long. Upon completion of the television viewing, all participants completed the same measurements used in Study 1 (see Study 1 for additional information about each assessment).

Body and face satisfaction

As in Study 1, participants indicated their general satisfaction with their body and face using single, Likert scale items.

Self-esteem

As in Study 1, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES, 1965) was used to assess participants' self-esteem (Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .87)

Interest in cosmetic surgery to alter the body

As in Study 1, participants' interest in obtaining cosmetic surgery to alter their bodies was assessed using five items from the Interest in Cosmetic Surgery Questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .86; Markey & Markey, 2009).

Interest in cosmetic surgery to alter the face

Participants' interest in obtaining cosmetic surgery to alter their faces was assessed using 10 items from the Interest in Cosmetic Surgery Questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha for this sample = .81; Markey & Markey, 2009).

Results

As in the analyses for Study 1, the hypotheses for Study 2 were examined using separate hierarchical regression analyses for each outcome measure (i.e., desire to alter the body using plastic

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis predicting desire to alter the body using cosmetic surgery (Study 2).

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	Partial <i>r</i>
<i>Step 1: adjusted R² = .172**</i>				
Gender (G)	−1.71	0.36	−0.23	−.22**
Self-esteem (SE)	−0.22	0.60	−0.03	−.02
Body satisfaction (BS)	−0.62	0.15	−0.31	−.29**
<i>Step 2: Δ adjusted R² = .036**</i>				
Viewing reality TV (RT)	1.58	0.52	0.20	.21**
<i>Step 3: Δ adjusted R² = .007</i>				
G \times SE	0.74	1.18	0.06	.04
G \times BS	0.32	0.31	0.09	.06
G \times RT	−0.74	1.18	−0.15	−.09

Note: *n* = 189.** *p* < .01.

surgery and desire to alter the face using plastic surgery). In each of these analyses, gender (G), self-esteem (SE), and body/face satisfaction (BS or FS) were entered in the first step. The variable of primary interest was then entered in the second step: reality television show watched (RT). Although no predictions were made about possible interactions with gender, in the third step each predictor's interaction with gender was examined in order to determine whether or not these main effects differed across gender. As in Study 1, to reduce issues associated with multicollinearity, self-esteem and body/face satisfaction were centered and both gender (0 = female and 1 = male) and television viewing group were dummy coded (0 = control group and 1 = cosmetic surgery reality television show; Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Consistent with the findings from Study 1 and Hypothesis 1, Tables 3 and 4 show that women had a greater desire to alter their bodies ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < .01$; predicted mean for the average female = 8.32; predicted mean for the average male = 6.61) and faces ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < .01$; predicted mean for the average female = 14.25; predicted mean for the average male = 12.45) using cosmetic surgery than did men. Additionally, consistent with Hypothesis 2, participants who wanted to alter their bodies using cosmetic surgery tended to be unsatisfied with their bodies ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < .01$) and those who wanted to alter their faces using cosmetic surgery tended to be unsatisfied with their faces ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < .01$). As in Study 1, Hypothesis 3 was not supported; self-esteem did not predict interest in cosmetic surgery. However, consistent with Hypothesis 4, participants who watched a reality television program about cosmetic surgery wanted to alter their own bodies ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < .01$; predicted mean for cosmetic surgery program = 8.25; predicted mean for home improvement program = 6.67) and faces ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < .01$; predicted mean for

Table 4

Multiple regression analysis predicting desire to alter the face using cosmetic surgery (Study 2).

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	Partial <i>r</i>
<i>Step 1: adjusted R² = .144**</i>				
Gender (G)	−1.79	0.64	−0.19	−.20**
Self-esteem (SE)	0.40	0.72	0.04	.04
Face satisfaction (BS)	−0.93	0.20	−0.35	−.31**
<i>Step 2: Δ adjusted R² = .040**</i>				
Viewing reality TV (RT)	1.85	0.63	0.19	.20**
<i>Step 3: Δ adjusted R² = .013</i>				
G \times SE	0.09	1.41	0.01	.01
G \times FS	0.75	0.41	0.17	.13
G \times RT	−1.45	1.26	−0.13	−.09

Note: *n* = 189.** *p* < .01.

cosmetic surgery program = 14.30; predicted mean for home improvement program = 12.43) using cosmetic surgery more than participants who watched a reality television show about home improvement. Finally, none of the interaction terms were significant indicating that the effect of reality television viewing (experimental versus control group) was not different for males and females.

Discussion

This study extends past research examining the media's effect on body image by looking at a specific type of media message (i.e., reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery) and its relation to men's and women's interest in changing their bodies and faces using cosmetic surgery. As hypothesized, in both Study 1 and Study 2, women were more interested in cosmetic surgery than were men, even after controlling for self-esteem and body and face satisfaction. This finding is consistent with reports of women's dissatisfaction with their bodies and statistics from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (2009) indicating that women comprise the majority of cosmetic surgery patients (Cash & Henry, 1995; Frederick, Lever, & Peplau, 2007; Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1985; Smolak & Levine, 2001). Although growing attention has been directed towards boys' and men's body dissatisfaction in the last decade (e.g., Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2009; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000) and there has been speculation that boys and men are increasingly likely to be dissatisfied with their appearance, the findings from this research suggest that young women are significantly more likely than young men to consider surgery as a means of "improving" their appearance.

Our second hypothesis was confirmed in both Study 1 and Study 2; young men and women who were dissatisfied with their appearance were more likely to indicate interest in changing their appearance surgically even after gender and global self-esteem were statistically controlled. Specifically, participants who reported dissatisfaction with the appearance of their face were also more likely to report a desire to change the appearance of their face using surgery than were those who were relatively satisfied with their faces. Participants who were dissatisfied with their bodies were more likely to report a desire to change the appearance of their bodies using surgery than were those who were relatively satisfied with their bodies. This finding is consistent with some research suggesting the role of body dissatisfaction in predicting women's interest in and pursuit of cosmetic surgery (e.g., Frederick et al., 2007; Markey & Markey, 2009; Sarwer et al., 2004; von Soest, Kvalem, Skolleborg, & Roald, 2006). Interestingly, inconsistent with Hypothesis 3, global self-esteem was not predictive of men's and women's interest in cosmetic surgery in Study 1 or Study 2. This suggests that individuals' general appraisals of themselves may not be completely overlapping with their appraisals of specific elements of their physical appearance despite research indicating the strong link between physical appearance satisfaction and self-concept (e.g., Harter, 1989, also see von Soest et al., 2006, for similar findings).

Perhaps the most unique contribution of this research was its focus on one particular form of media influence – reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery – on young men's and women's interest in cosmetic surgery. Consistent with research indicating that media exposure typically has deleterious effects on body image, we expected that these media messages about self-transformation would predict young men's and women's desire to obtain cosmetic surgery. In both Study 1 and Study 2, this hypothesis was confirmed. Study 1 suggests that individuals who have a positive impression of reality television shows featuring

cosmetic surgery transformations are more likely to want to alter their bodies and faces uses cosmetic surgery than are individuals who do not enjoy these types of shows. It is worth noting that the effect sizes yielded for the unique effects of reality television on the desire to utilize cosmetic surgery ($M \beta = 0.23$; M partial $r = .26$) were similar or greater than the unique effect sizes found for variables more typically conceptualized as predictors of cosmetic surgery interest: gender ($M \beta = 0.23$; M partial $r = .26$), self-esteem ($M \beta = -0.02$; M partial $r = -.03$), and appearance satisfaction ($M \beta = -0.31$; M partial $r = -.28$). Study 2 extended these findings by examining the possible causal influence of viewing reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery on the desire to pursue cosmetic surgery. Results from this study indicate that participants who were randomly assigned to watch a reality television show focused on cosmetic surgery were more likely to indicate a desire to obtain cosmetic surgery than participants who did not watch this type of program. It is relevant to note that participants were relatively young and were not queried about reconstructive procedures; they were not responding to culturally undesirable physical changes that often accompany aging or injury. Thus, taken together these two studies suggest, at least in the short-term, that viewing reality television make-over shows may cause individuals to desire their own cosmetic make-over.

If these reality television shows focused merely on hair styles and clothes, it could be argued that this influence was benign. However, given the extensive use of cosmetic surgery in these shows (e.g., 12 separate procedures in the clip we showed participants) to achieve these make-overs, these findings warrant consideration. These procedures are not performed to promote health or cure illness. Although some research suggests that cosmetic surgery may improve body image (e.g., Murphy, Beckstrand, & Sarwer, 2009; Sarwer, Infield, Baker, Casas, Glat, & Gold, 2008), the efficacy of cosmetic surgery for improving individuals' psychological health remains debatable (see opposing views presented by researchers including Bordo, 2003; Brumberg, 2000; Cash, 2006; Cook, Rosser, & Salmon, 2006; Hillhorst, 2002; Kamburoglu & Ozgur, 2007; Markey & Markey, 2009; Sarwer & Crerand, 2004; Zuckerman & Abraham, 2008). The fact that many cosmetic surgery patients are "repeat customers" (44% according to 2008 data; ASPS, 2009) suggests that for some individuals one procedure does not necessarily lead to physical appearance satisfaction. The question remains as to whether or not multiple procedures ultimately leads to physical appearance satisfaction or merely the realization that there is more than an individual can "fix."

Although this research is unique in its focus on the potential influence of make-over television shows, there are a couple limitations worth noting. First, participants viewed the television show and completed the surveys on the same day (Study 2) making it impossible to determine whether or not we were capturing merely a short-term effect of viewing these shows. Second, although fairly ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, the samples that comprise the two studies presented in this report are somewhat homogenous in terms of age and background (i.e., college students). Replication of these findings with more diverse samples will contribute to our understanding of the media's influence on individuals' pursuit of cosmetic surgery. Finally, the processes linking the media (featuring cosmetic surgery) and participants' interest in cosmetic surgery is theorized to be social comparison. However, we did not query participants specifically about social comparison; additional research is needed to determine what it is about this media format that appears to inspire individuals' interest in cosmetic surgery (see Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2009, and Nabi, 2009, for additional support for the role of social comparison).

For decades, researchers, laypersons, and policy makers have debated the potential effects of television viewing on youths (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, & Linz, 2003; Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Ferguson, 2009). The focus of this debate is typically television violence (e.g., Anderson et al., 2003; Ferguson, 2009), with fewer studies examining appearance-focused television and its effects on youths' feelings about their appearance and/or desire to change their appearance (e.g., Mazzeo et al., 2007; Moriarty & Harrison, 2008; Nabi, 2009). However, given the preliminary findings reported here and the potential risks associated with extreme forms of physical appearance change (e.g., surgery), this medium appears to warrant researchers' attention as well.

Reality television shows featuring physical appearance make-overs explicitly suggest to viewers that dramatic physical appearance change will facilitate dramatic changes in all areas of individuals' lives – their romantic relationship experiences, their employment opportunities, and their overall happiness. Although some benefits of physical attractiveness are well-documented (Feingold, 1992; Sarwer et al., 2004), the all-encompassing role of physical appearance presented in these television shows may be an oversimplification of reality. Some researchers (e.g., Bordo, 2003; Ogden, 2003; Striegel-Moore & Steiner-Adair, 1998) have even referred to this notion that physical change in effect leads to complete psychological and social change as the "myth of transformation." Additional empirical data that examines motives leading youths to pursue cosmetic surgery should clarify the extent to which young people believe in this "myth."

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