

Running Head: BODY EVALUATION ORDER EFFECTS

**Everybody is SOMEbody: How Evaluating Your Body Affects Your
Evaluation of Others' Bodies**

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Abstract

I investigated whether women's evaluations of a stranger's appearance would be altered by prompting them to consider their own appearance first. I also investigated whether self-esteem, non-clinical narcissism, and perceived similarity to the stranger would alter this effect. Women were randomly assigned to two groups: those who rated their body first and those who rated the stranger first. No differences were found in the stranger ratings of the two groups. Self-esteem, non-clinical narcissism, and similarity did not moderate the effect. I did find that when women rated the other person first, their self-evaluation was correlated to their evaluation of the stranger.

Introduction

According to Festinger's theory of social comparison (1954), people strive to evaluate themselves, particularly against others they deem to be similar to them in the specific area they are comparing. For example, an athlete is likely to compare his strength to another athlete and not a chess master (Franzoi & Klaiber, 2007). Sometimes, however, people compare themselves to someone clearly more attractive than them such as women in movies, entertainment, or advertisements, which has been found to be detrimental (Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas, & Williams, 2000; Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn & Twenge, 1998; Henderson-King, Henderson-King., & Hoffman, 2001; Kraye, Ingledew, & Iphofen, 2008; Martin, & Kennedy, 1993; Mazur, 1986; Posavac, Posavac, & Posavac, 1998; Richins, 1991; Schutz, Paxton, & Wertheim, 2002).

Women are more likely than men to practice upward social comparison rather than downward social comparison or peer social comparison (Franzoi & Klaiber, 2007). Upward social comparison occurs when someone compares themselves to someone who is better than them in the compared aspect and downward social comparison occurs when someone compares themselves to someone who is worse than them in the compared aspect (Fein, Hoshino-Browne, Davies, & Spencer, 2003). However, there has been little research on the flip side of comparison processes: how does evaluating oneself influence the way in which a person judges another person?

People are more likely to see themselves more positively than others may see them and are likely to perceive themselves as better than their peers, so they are likely to judge themselves more favorably than the stranger (Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003). If they are judging a stranger before reflecting on themselves, a woman might be likely to subsequently

rate herself higher than if they had rated themselves without judging the stranger. If they judge themselves first, their self-ratings will likely be lower, thus lowering how they rate the stranger. However, one could argue that women are generally their own biggest critics and therefore are likely to rate themselves harshly (Fredrickson et. al., 1998). Using their own overly scrutinized bodies as a measuring stick, they may be forced to rate the stranger even more harshly because objectively the participant may have better thighs or arms than the stranger in the picture. Since women do rate themselves harshly, self-esteem preservation may also cause them to rate the stranger lower by engaging in downward comparison (Fein et. al, 2003).

Conversely, American women regularly engage in unrealistic upward social comparison as is shown by the negative impact models have on women's self-esteem and body satisfaction (Lennon, Lillethun & Buckland, 1999). They may then convince themselves that other women will always be more attractive. If this is the case, women will regularly rate the stranger higher than themselves.

Moderators of the Proposed Social Comparison Effect

One variable we think might moderate this effect is narcissism. Narcissism is characterized by an enhanced sense of self and the idea that one is somehow exceedingly superior to other people (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994). We believe that narcissism will strengthen this effect because it is linked with higher perceptions about oneself (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006; Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003). While narcissists frequently have high opinions of themselves, they are very sensitive to anything that could damage that high opinion (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004). Therefore, people high in narcissism are likely to rate themselves

higher to begin with and might also be likely to rate the stranger lower to protect their inflated sense of self. Gabriel, Critelli, and Ee (1994) found a correlation between narcissism and inflated assessment of attraction despite the fact that women in general were relatively accurate in assessing their attractiveness compared to the two experimenters who assessed participants' "actual" attractiveness. This indicates that not only are women high in narcissism likely to rate the stranger lower, they are likely to rate themselves higher, exaggerating the expected effect.

We believe that low self-esteem will also strengthen this effect because women with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in downward social comparison and would therefore be motivated to rate the other person lower (Fein, Hoshino-Browne, Davies, & Spencer, 2003; Jones & Buckingham, 2005). Fein et al (2003) found that threat to one's self-image is frequently combated through social comparison. Additionally, people are more likely to engage in downward social comparison after their self-image has been threatened, as is the case when one is asked to rate their attractiveness. For example, in one study, participants took an intelligence test and were universally given negative feedback regarding the results. They were then told that they were to be interviewed by other participants and should try to make a good impression. They were exposed to a clip of an interview that went well and one that went terribly and asked which interview they would like to hear in its entirety. They found that a large majority of these participants elected to hear the disastrous interview, presumably to restore some of their self-image (Fein et al, 2003). This indicates that participants who judge themselves before the stranger are likely to rate the stranger lower in order to increase their self-image, and particularly those who are already low in self-esteem.

Jones and Buckingham (2005) found that women with low self-esteem rated their bodies as more favorable if they were exposed to an unattractive woman before they judged themselves

and thus engaged in downward social comparison than if they were exposed to an attractive woman before they judged themselves, thus engaging in upward social comparison. Perhaps, then, women with low self-esteem may be more critical of the average looking stranger after activating their low self-esteem by rating themselves (the activity that would activate their low self-esteem) than women with high self-esteem.

We believe that participants seeing themselves as more similar to the stranger will enhance the effect because people tend not to compare themselves to those who are extremely different than them (Festinger, 1954; Franzoi & Kliber, 2007; Lennon, Lillithun & Buckland, 1999; Schutz, Paxton, & Wertheim, 2002). Festinger's social comparison theory (1954) suggests that social comparison is used to garner information about oneself and therefore only occurs when there is a similar other to whom they can compare themselves. Comparison to an extremely dissimilar other would yield no useful information and is therefore less likely to occur. Similarly, Franzoi and Kliber (2007) found that students were more likely to compare their bodies to the general population, skaters were more likely to compare their bodies to athletes, and models were more likely to compare their bodies to other models. This indicates that if people feel that they are similar to the stranger, they will be more affected by that comparison, yielding stronger effects.

This study would add to the literature because while there are many studies that have examined the effect of rating others on one's rating of themselves, no one has investigated how rating oneself may affect the rating of others. In addition to expanding the literature on social comparison, this study will also expand the literature on narcissism and self-esteem by looking at social comparison to peers instead of clear upward or downward social comparison. We hypothesize that women who rate their own attractiveness before they rate the attractiveness of

an average looking stranger will rate the stranger lower than women who do not rate themselves first. We also hypothesize that self-esteem, non-clinical narcissism, and participants' perception of similarity to the unknown woman will strengthen this effect.

Method

Participants

Participants ($n=78$) were female students at American University, between the age of 18 and 37 ($M=19.85$, $SD=2.716$). Of those undergraduates, 46.2% ($n=38$) of participants were freshman, 17.9% ($n=14$) of participants were sophomores, 12.8% ($n=10$) of participants were juniors, and 23.1% ($n=18$) of participants were seniors. Participants were recruited through postings on the university's daily bulletin, signup sheets on the psychology bulletin board, a list of experiments for credit in introductory psychology classes, through a Facebook event, and word of mouth. Attempts were made to have racial representation similar to the undergraduate community with 66.7% ($n=52$) of participants reporting their race as White, 14.1% ($n=11$) of participants reporting their race as Asian, 6.4% ($n=5$) of participants reporting their race as Black or African American, 1.3% ($n=1$) of participants reporting their race as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 10.3% ($n=8$) of participants reporting their race as Other including the 3.8% ($n=3$) who reported their race as Hispanic or Latino. One person (1.3%) did not report her race. This was an experimental design with two groups, one control and one experimental. The control group ($n=38$) rated the stranger's appearance based on a picture (see Appendix A), and then their own appearance before filling out questionnaires on self esteem and narcissism. The experimental group ($n=40$) rated themselves, then the stranger, and then filled out the questionnaires. All participants came to the same room to participate and were offered either \$8

or ½ psychology research credit as compensation for participation; 85.9% (n=67) elected for the \$8 and 14.1% (n=11) elected for the research credit.

Instrumentation

Four instruments were used in this study (see Appendix B). One is a survey of general demographic information. This survey asked participants their gender, age, year in school, and race. The others assessed participants' body esteem, self esteem, and non-clinical narcissism.

To judge participants' feelings on attractiveness, we used a modified version of the Body Esteem Scale (BES; Franzoi & Shields, 1984). This is a self-report scale which lists various body parts and functions, divided into three factors of body esteem for women: sexual attractiveness, weight concern, and physical condition. Participants were asked to rate each factor on a scale ranging from 1 ("have strong negative feelings") to 5 ("have strong positive feelings"). The BES was modified by removing 16 of the 35 body parts and functions. Of those, 14 were removed because those are aspects that could not possibly be known about the stranger. For example, items assessing health, agility, and physical coordination were eliminated, as well as some sexual attractiveness and weight control items, including body scent and appetite. The last 2 were removed because they were only applicable to male factor loading, not female. The 19 items that have been kept include nose, lips, chin, and chest. To score the BES, the ratings of each body part or process were averaged where lower scores indicate lower body esteem. The alpha coefficients of the unmodified BES for women were .78 for sexual attractiveness, .87 for weight concern, and .82 for physical condition (Franzoi & Shields, 1984). Thomas and Freeman (1990) later replicated these findings indicating acceptable validity. In the present study, the alpha coefficient of the modified version of the BES was .847. Additionally, after participants

rated the stranger, they were asked how similar they think they were to the stranger on a scale of 1 to 4 (extremely dissimilar, somewhat dissimilar, somewhat similar, and extremely similar).

Self esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES: Rosenberg, 1989). This is a self report scale with 10 items on a Likert scale from 0 (“strongly disagree”) to 3 (“strongly agree”) where a higher score indicates higher self-esteem. Example items include “on the whole, I am satisfied with myself,” “at times I think I am not good at all,” and “I am able to do things as well as most other people.” After reverse scoring negatively phrased questions, a score was created by averaging the responses for each question where a higher score indicates higher self esteem. The RSES has been found to be valid in comparison with other measures (Rosenberg, 1989). Lorenzo-Hernandez and Oullette (1998) found the English version of the RSES to have an alpha coefficient of .78, indicating acceptable validity. In the present study, the RSES had an alpha coefficient of .864.

Non-clinical narcissism was measured using the 16 item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16: Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). This measure gives 16 pairs of options such as “I really like to be the center of attention” or “It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention” and “I am going to be a great person” or “I hope I am going to be successful.” Participants are asked to choose one option for each question. In each pairing, there is one response that indicates narcissism and one that does not. A response indicating narcissism was scored as 2; a response not indicating narcissism was scored as 1. Then all scores were averaged to create a score of non-clinical narcissism where a higher score indicates a higher level of narcissism. Ames, Rose, and Anderson (2006) have found this measure to have an alpha coefficient of .72 indicating acceptable validity. In the present study, the NPI-16 had an alpha coefficient of .611, which was a little low.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Of the 78 undergraduate participants, 40 rated themselves first and 38 rated the stranger first.

The overall BES score for participants' self rating was $M=3.19$, $SD=.47$ with scores ranging from 2.21 to 4.53. The BES score for participants who rated themselves first was $M=3.23$, $SD=.33$ with scores ranging from 2.42 to 4.22. The BES score for participants who rated the stranger first was $M=3.15$, $SD=.49$ with scores ranging from 2.21 to 4.53. The means and standard deviations of each item for the BES are listed in Table 1.

The overall BES score for the stranger's rating was $M=3.18$, $SD=.34$ with scores ranging from 2.58 to 3.95. The BES score for the stranger when participants rated themselves first was $M=3.12$, $SD=.33$ with scores ranging from 2.58 to 3.95. The BES score for the stranger when participants rated the stranger first was $M=3.24$, $SD=.34$ with scores ranging from 2.68 to 3.89. The means and standard deviations of each item for the BES are listed in Table 2.

The overall RSES score was $M=2.11$, $SD=.50$ with scores ranging from .80 to 2.90. The RSES score when participants rated themselves first was $M=2.21$, $SD=.44$ with scores ranging from 1.20 to 2.90. The RSES score when participants rated the stranger first was $M=2.02$, $SD=.47$ with scores ranging from .80 to 2.80.

The overall NPI-16 score was $M=1.31$, $SD=.17$ with scores ranging from 1.00 to 1.81. The NPI-16 score when participants rated themselves first was $M=1.30$, $SD=.18$ with scores ranging from 1.00 to 1.69. The NPI-16 score when participants rated the stranger first was $M=1.32$, $SD=.17$ with scores ranging from 1.00 to 1.81.

Inferential Statistics

We selected an alpha of .10 due to the small sample size, preliminary nature of the data, and an assumption that the differences, if they existed, would be subtle. Our primary hypothesis was that women who rate their own attractiveness before they rate the attractiveness of an average looking stranger will rate the stranger lower than women who do not rate themselves first. Additionally we hypothesized that self-esteem, non-clinical narcissism, and participants' perception of similarity to the unknown woman will strengthen this effect such that higher scores on any of these scales would indicate a larger difference in the ratings.

To examine whether participants in the two conditions (evaluating themselves or the stranger first) gave different scores for the stranger on the BES, we conducted an independent sample T-test. This analysis revealed no significant difference in the stranger's BES score by those who rated themselves first ($M=3.14$, $SD=.33$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=3.23$, $SD=.34$), $t=-1.13$, $p>.10$. We also conducted an independent sample T-test to examine whether participants in the two conditions gave different scores on each item used to create the overall BES score. Consistent with the overall BES score, this second analysis revealed no significant difference between conditions and most scores. However, this analysis revealed significant difference in the evaluation of appearance of eyes between those who rated themselves first ($M=4.05$, $SD=.79$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=4.38$, $SD=.78$) $t=-1.87$, $p<.10$ and body hair between those who rated themselves first ($M=3.31$, $SD=.57$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=3.77$, $SD=.84$) $t=-2.84$, $p<.01$ such that when participants evaluated themselves first, they rated the stranger lower on appearance of eyes and body hair.

In order to determine if self esteem, non-clinical narcissism, or perceived similarity were moderators, we conducted a factorial ANOVA. There was no interaction for high versus low

self esteem and condition $F=.092, p>.10$. There was no interaction for high versus low non-clinical narcissism and condition $F=.272, p>.10$. There was no interaction for high versus low perceived similarity and condition $F=.503, p>.10$.

After finding no mean differences or interactions, we analyzed the correlation between participants' BES scores and the BES scores they gave the stranger. The correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between participants' BES score and the BES score they gave the stranger, $r=.413, p<.001$. Thus, the higher the participants' BES score, the higher the BES score they gave the stranger. To investigate whether the order of evaluations affected the correlation, separate correlational analyses were run by case. When participants evaluated themselves first, the correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between participants' BES score and the BES score they gave the stranger, $r=.331, p<.05$. Thus, when participants rated themselves first, the higher the participants' BES score, the higher the BES score they gave the stranger. When participants evaluated the stranger first, the correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between participants' BES score and the BES score they gave the stranger, $r=.530, p<.01$. Thus, when participants rated the stranger first, the higher the participants' BES score, the higher the BES score they gave the stranger. This effect therefore seemed even more pronounced in the condition where they rated the stranger first.

We further wanted to investigate possible correlation between the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score with their RSES score. Consistent with the ANOVA analysis, the BES score and most of the composite scores participants gave the stranger were not significantly correlated with their RSES score. However, the correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between participants' RSES score and the score they gave on the stranger's biceps $r=.217, p<.10$, between participants' RSES score

and the score they gave on the stranger's chin $r=.206$, $p<.10$, and between participants' RSES score and the score they gave on the stranger's stomach $r=.262$, $p<.05$. Thus, the higher the participant's RSES score, the higher they rated the stranger's biceps, chin, and stomach. So women with higher self-esteem did tend to rate some body parts of the stranger as higher. All r and p values of the correlation between RSES score and the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score for the entire sample are listed in Table 3.

We then analyzed the correlation between the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score with their NPI-16 score. Consistent with the ANOVA analysis, the BES score and most of the composite scores participants gave the stranger were not significantly correlated with their NPI-16 score. However, the correlational analysis indicated a negative relationship between participants' NPI-16 score and the score they gave on the stranger's stomach $r=-.213$ $p<.10$. Thus the higher the participant's NPI-16 score, the lower they rated the stranger's stomach. All r and p values of the correlation between NPI-16 score and the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score for the entire sample are listed in Table 3.

We then analyzed the correlation between the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score with how similar they perceived themselves to be to the stranger. Consistent with the ANOVA analysis, the BES score and most of the composite scores participants gave the stranger were not significantly correlated with how similar they perceived themselves to be to the stranger. However, the correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between how similar they perceived themselves to be to the stranger and the stranger's waist $r=.202$, $p<.10$ and feet $r=.244$, $p<.05$. Thus the more similar participants

perceived themselves to be to the stranger the higher they rated the stranger's waist and feet. The correlational analysis also indicated a negative relationship between how similar they perceived themselves to be to the stranger and the stranger's ears $r = -.291$, $p < .05$ and eyes $r = -.194$, $p = .089$. Thus the more similar participants perceived themselves to be to the stranger the lower they rated the stranger's ears and eyes. All r and p values of the correlation between how similar they perceived themselves to be to the stranger and the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score for the entire sample are listed in Table 3.

We ran a correlational analysis, splitting the group by condition (evaluating themselves or the stranger first), to see whether the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score were correlated with condition and found similar results. All r and p values of the correlation between the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score and RSES score, NPI-score, and how similar participants perceived themselves to be to the stranger when rating themselves first are listed in Table 4. All r and p values of the correlation between the BES score participants gave the stranger as well as the individual components of the score and RSES score, NPI-score, and how similar participants perceived themselves to be to the stranger when rating themselves first are listed in Table 5.

Supplemental Analysis

For exploratory purposes, we analyzed the data for participants' self-evaluations in much the same way we analyzed the participants' evaluations of the stranger since the extant literature left the possibility open that evaluating the stranger may actually affect how participants evaluate themselves.

To examine whether participants in the two conditions (evaluating themselves or the stranger first) scored themselves differently on the BES, we conducted an independent sample T-test. This analysis revealed no significant difference in their BES score by those who rated themselves first ($M=3.22$, $SD=.45$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=3.14$, $SD=.49$), $t=-.75$, $p>.10$. We also conducted an independent sample T-test to examine whether participants in the two conditions (evaluating themselves or the stranger first) gave different scores on each item used to create the overall BES score. Consistent with the overall BES score, this second analysis revealed no significant difference between conditions and most scores. However, this analysis revealed significant difference in the evaluation of appearance of eyes between those who rated themselves first ($M=4.05$, $SD=.88$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=4.39$, $SD=.79$) $t=-1.82$, $p<.10$, legs between those who rated themselves first ($M=3.41$, $SD=.82$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=2.87$, $SD=1.19$) $t=2.33$, $p<.05$ and appearance of stomach between those who rated themselves first ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.18$) and those who rated the stranger first ($M=2.03$, $SD=1.00$) $t=2.71$, $p<.01$. Thus when rating themselves first, participants evaluated the appearance of eyes lower, but evaluated legs and the appearance of stomach higher.

In order to determine if self esteem, non-clinical narcissism, or perceived similarity were moderators, we conducted a factorial ANOVA. There was no interaction for high versus low self esteem and condition $F=.682$, $p>.10$. There was no interaction for high versus low non-clinical narcissism and condition $F=1.007$, $p>.10$. There was no interaction for high versus low perceived similarity and condition $F=1.119$, $p>.10$.

As with the evaluation of the stranger, we ran a correlational analysis of the participants' BES score as well as the individual components of the score with their RSES score, NPI-16 score, and how similar they perceived themselves to be to the stranger. All r and p values of the

correlation between the participants' BES score as well as the individual components of the score and RSES score, NPI-score, and how similar participants perceived themselves to be to the stranger for the entire sample are listed in Table 6. All r and p values of the correlation between the participants' BES score as well as the individual components of the score and RSES score, NPI-score, and how similar participants perceived themselves to be to the stranger when rating themselves first are listed in Table 7. All r and p values of the correlation between the participants' BES score as well as the individual components of the score and RSES score, NPI-score, and how similar participants perceived themselves to be to the stranger when rating themselves first are listed in Table 8.

Discussion

Contrary to our hypothesis, there was no difference in the mean BES scores for the stranger, regardless of whether participants rated themselves or the stranger first. There are a variety of explanations for this occurrence, most of which will be explored when discussing the limitations of this study. One explanation is that rating oneself does not affect how women rate a stranger, despite some indication from previous studies that there might be some influence (Fein et al, 2003; Taylor et al, 2003). The hypothesized effect, or lack thereof, was not altered when self esteem, non-clinical narcissism, or perceived similarity to the stranger were taken into account, indicating that none of these three factors were moderators.

Supplemental Analyses

In addition to examining mean differences, we looked at correlations of the stranger's BES score and component scores with participants' RSES scores, NPI-16 scores, and perceived

similarity in the sample as a whole and divided by case. Very few body factors were correlated in the overall sample or when participants rated themselves first. Those that were significantly correlated are likely to be type I error, the error occurs when a researcher rejects the null hypothesis when it should be accepted. We ran extensive statistical tests so it is probable that some significant results were a result of chance. When participants rated themselves first, five factors were positively correlated with self-esteem, four were positively correlated with similarity and face was negatively correlated with similarity. The stranger's ears were also negatively correlated with similarity but the picture did not show her ears so that is probably also type I error. The fact that these correlations only became significant and numerous when participants rated themselves first may indicate that they were already put in the mindset of how they think about themselves and were more likely to use that same mindset to rate the other person, whereas when participants rated the stranger first, they may have been in a more harshly judgmental mindset.

While there were no mean differences in participants' BES scores, regardless of whether participants rated themselves or the stranger first, nor was the effect altered by the potential moderators, there was significant correlational data indicating that rating the stranger first affected their self-ratings. The flip side of the previous idea, rating the stranger first may put them in a more generous mindset or give more of a guideline for judging themselves and may explain this effect. Women are generally their own worst critic, but if they are already in the mindset of judging someone else, they may use the same, less stringent, criteria for themselves.

We also looked at the correlations of the participants' BES score and component scores with participants' RSES scores, NPI-16 scores, and similarity both over all and divided by case. Unsurprisingly, several factors were positively correlated to higher self-esteem as predicted by

the literature (Jones & Buckingham, 2005). Non-clinical narcissism was only significantly correlated with 2 or fewer factors in the analyses, but the probable reason for this will be discussed in limitations. Surprisingly, participants' perceived similarity to the stranger was negatively correlated with between four and seven factors and the overall BES score in the entire sample and when they rated themselves first. Since we strove to find an average looking stranger, this may indicate the high standards to which women hold themselves. Only exceptionally beautiful women are acknowledged as attractive by society (as reflected by celebrities) so looking like an average woman would be a negative thing, thus the more similar they felt they were to this average woman, the worse they will view their own body.

Limitations

A significant limitation is method used for recruiting participants. A large portion of participants were acquainted with the head researcher or were participating to get credit for introductory psychology classes. The rest of the participants were either friends of someone who fell into either of the latter categories or were the type of person who reads the daily announcements and/or were looking for quick cash. Given these factors as well as the fact that American University is rather homogenous, the lack of diversity may have affected our results.

Restriction of range may also have been a limitation. The standard deviations for all measures were between .17 and .50, indicating that all scores were fairly close. With many scores being somewhat similar, it is difficult to find significant mean differences. This may have been exacerbated by an effect that would probably be subtle if it existed.

Additionally, women at American University tend to be feminist leaning and highly aware of how bad it is for a woman's self-esteem to compare herself to another woman. There is

a whole campaign currently occurring about embracing your body as it is and encouraging others to do the same, thus encouraging participants to at the very least say that how they perceive someone else's body is completely separate to how they perceive their own body.

Particularly for our results regarding narcissism, instrumentation may have been a limitation. Despite the acceptable alpha coefficient published when the NPI-16 was created, the coefficient was low in the present study, meaning it was not a particularly reliable measure of narcissism and thus limits the validity of the measure. Also, if someone realized that the study was looking at self-esteem, they may want to appear as if they have higher esteem and try to give the "right" answers to the questions. In trying to trick the measure to think they have higher self-esteem, they would artificially inflate scores of narcissism.

With only 78 participants, another limitation of this study was the low power. A larger sample may have revealed that some effects that may have been trending towards significance were actually significant.

The model used as the stranger may have also been a limitation. While the researchers considered her to be average, beauty is so subjective that we do not know if she was actually a peer to participants; she may have been clear upward or downward comparison, which would alter our interpretation of the data. The only information we have about the participants is their own perception, which is not always an accurate portrayal of what someone actually looks like.

Future Directions

One alteration for a future study would be to gather objective data on both the stranger and the participants such as height, weight, and BMI in addition to possibly have a panel objectively evaluate the participant's body. The researcher could also gather data on whether the

participants think they are more or less attractive than the stranger for each factor in the BES.

With that information, the researcher could deduce whether upward, downward or peer comparison is occurring. Alternatively, the same manipulation could be used with more experimental groups. With a larger sample, there could be experimental groups with less attractive, very attractive, and average strangers.

Future researchers may also want to investigate a wider variety of moderators such as self-activation, or how becoming aware of oneself can affect perceptions of a situation or person. The addition of social desirability might allow the researcher to account the effect of someone trying to present themselves in a better light. Another possibility would be to use more measures for the same moderators or longer and more valid instruments.

Conclusions

In the present study we examined whether women who evaluate their own bodies first evaluate an average stranger any differently than they would have if they did not rate themselves. We hypothesized that women who rate their own attractiveness before they rate the attractiveness of an average looking stranger will rate the stranger lower than women who do not rate themselves first. We also hypothesized that self-esteem, non-clinical narcissism, and participants' perception of similarity to the unknown woman will strengthen this effect. Our results did not support the hypothesis, but there were preliminary findings indicating that when women rate the stranger first, their self-ratings are more similar to their ratings of the average looking stranger than when rating their own bodies first. This is important because most of the existing literature focuses on how evaluating a highly attractive or highly unattractive person affects self-evaluation, but not peer comparison. This study shows that the field of social

comparison is still in need of further investigation almost six decades after Festinger first developed the concept.

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Table 1.

Means and Standard Deviations for Participants' BES

	Overall		Rated Self First		Rated Stranger First	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Nose	3.05	1.12	3.23	1.07	2.87	1.14
Lips	3.73	.77	3.63	.81	3.84	.72
Waist	2.91	1.13	2.85	1.15	2.97	1.13
Thighs	2.41	.99	2.48	.99	2.34	.99
Ears	3.45	.78	3.35	.83	3.55	.72
Biceps	3.01	.96	3.05	.93	2.97	1.00
Chin	3.13	.81	3.10	.71	3.16	.92
Body Build	3.17	.97	3.28	.93	3.05	1.01
Breasts	3.42	1.10	3.28	1.01	3.58	1.18
Appearance of Eyes	4.22	.85	4.05	.88	4.39	.79
Cheeks/Cheekbones	3.67	.82	3.80	.65	3.53	.95
Hips	2.92	1.04	2.95	.99	2.89	1.11
Legs	3.14	1.05	3.41	.82	2.87	1.19
Figure	3.23	.95	3.33	.92	3.13	.99
Feet	3.23	.99	3.20	.91	3.26	1.08
Appearance of Stomach	2.37	1.14	2.70	1.81	2.03	1.00
Body Hair	2.83	1.07	2.75	1.06	2.92	1.09
Face	3.78	.78	3.85	.70	3.71	.87
Weight	2.87	1.19	3.03	1.14	2.71	1.23
Overall Score*	3.19	.47	3.23	.45	3.15	.49

Note. * Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations for Stranger BES

	Overall		Rated Self First		Rated Stranger First	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Nose	3.50	.60	3.43	.59	3.58	.60
Lips	3.64	.64	3.58	.68	3.71	.61
Waist	2.72	.80	2.65	.77	2.79	.84
Thighs	2.54	.77	2.45	.68	2.63	.85
Ears	3.11	.39	3.08	.35	3.14	.43
Biceps	2.72	.72	2.68	.69	2.76	.75
Chin	3.18	.83	3.23	.77	3.13	.91
Body Build	2.91	.85	2.95	.88	2.86	.82
Breasts	3.31	.61	3.30	.65	3.32	.57
Appearance of Eyes	4.22	.80	4.05	.78	4.39	.79
Cheeks/Cheekbones	4.00	.822	3.88	.72	4.13	.91
Hips	3.10	.80	3.13	.85	3.08	.75
Legs	2.82	.83	2.83	.87	2.82	.80
Figure	2.78	.79	2.75	.87	2.81	.70
Feet	3.08	.53	3.10	.38	3.05	.66
Appearance of Stomach	2.72	.79	2.65	.83	2.79	.74
Body Hair	3.54	.75	3.30	.56	3.79	.84
Face	4.03	.61	4.00	.65	4.05	.57
Weight	2.59	.59	2.55	.60	2.63	.59
Overall Score*	3.18	.34	3.13	.33	3.24	.34

Note. * Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Table 3.

Correlations for Stranger's BES Factors

	RSES		NPI		Similarity	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Nose	.092	.421	-.047	.681	.059	.608
Lips	.122	.286	-.034	.764	-.003	.981
Waist	.141	.186	-.038	.738	.202*	.076
Thighs	.129	.223	.025	.828	.187	.101
Ears	-.004	.974	-.008	.454	-.291**	.012
Biceps	.217*	.057	-.089	.439	.103	.369
Chin	.207*	.070	-.105	.359	-.062	.588
Body Build	-.015	.896	-.036	.757	.104	.370
Breasts	.053	.642	.128	.263	-.080	.486
Appearance of Eyes	-.058	.613	.044	.704	-.194*	.089
Cheeks/Cheekbones	-.066	.568	.011	.921	-.086	.455
Hips	.052	.652	-.187	.101	.127	.269
Legs	.135	.239	.021	.858	.168	.141
Figure	.050	.668	-.172	.134	-.003	.978
Feet	.086	.452	.046	.690	.244**	.032
Appearance of Stomach	.262**	.021	-.213*	.062	-.130	.258
Body Hair	-.124	.279	-.056	.626	-.137	.231
Face	.012	.917	-.046	.688	-.075	.515
Weight	.170	.138	-.086	.453	.060	.599
Overall Score [†]	.168	.140	-.106	.358	.042	.714

Note. * $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

[†] Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Table 4.

Correlations for Stranger's BES Factors: Rated Self First

	RSES		NPI		Similarity	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Nose	.184	.255	-.169	.297	-.185	.253
Lips	-.024	.885	-.131	.421	.005	.974
Waist	.031	.850	.022	.895	.286*	.074
Thighs	.256	.111	.094	.566	.136	.403
Ears	.110	.505	-.019	.911	-.195	.233
Biceps	.194	.231	-.090	.528	.046	.778
Chin	-.020	.901	-.011	.944	.060	.713
Body Build	-.146	.369	.036	.823	-.057	.728
Breasts	-.035	.829	.162	.317	-.087	.591
Appearance of Eyes	-.053	.743	.292*	.067	-.118	.469
Cheeks/Cheekbones	-.070	.669	-.002	.992	-.172	.289
Hips	.080	.625	-.336**	.034	.145	.370
Legs	.211	.191	-.068	.678	.004	.980
Figure	.187	.249	-.137	.399	-.163	.315
Feet	.351**	.027	.021	.896	-.112	.490
Appearance of Stomach	.408***	.009	-.174	.282	-.204	.206
Body Hair	.094	.562	-.053	.747	-.352**	.026
Face	-.128	.436	.126	.443	.166	.311
Weight	.033	.841	-.136	.402	.024	.884
Overall Score [†]	.177	.274	-.075	.645	-.065	.692

Note. * $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$ [†] Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Table 5.

Correlations for Stranger's BES Factors: Rated Stranger First

	RSES		NPI		Similarity	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Nose	.064	.704	.066	.692	.310*	.059
Lips	.338**	.038	.066	.692	-.006	.971
Waist	.304*	.064	-.114	.496	.131	.433
Thighs	.102	.541	-.052	.755	.237	.151
Ears	-.069	.693	-.161	.355	-.373**	.027
Biceps	.274*	.097	-.099	.556	.160	.339
Chin	.384**	.017	-.188	.257	-.169	.309
Body Build	.102	.548	-.117	.491	.276*	.098
Breasts	.161	.333	.084	.616	-.072	.669
Appearance of Eyes	.026	.876	-.265	.108	-.268	.104
Cheeks/Cheekbones	-.006	.973	.001	.996	-.012	.941
Hips	.010	.952	.006	.971	.105	.531
Legs	.058	.731	.130	.438	.348**	.032
Figure	-.099	.560	-.232	.167	.201	.234
Feet	-.073	.663	.071	.671	.460***	.004
Appearance of Stomach	.157	.346	-.279*	.089	-.043	.798
Body Hair	-.163	.328	-.114	.496	.004	.979
Face	.190	.254	-.273*	.097	-.347**	.033
Weight	.345**	.034	-.041	.805	.102	.544
Overall Score [†]	.240	.147	-.167	.316	.154	.357

Note. * $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

[†] Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measureTable 6.

Correlations for Participants' BES Factors

	RSES		NPI		Similarity	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Nose	.386***	.000	-.097	.400	-.018	.877
Lips	.205*	.071	.052	.652	-.140	.223
Waist	.097	.399	-.076	.510	-.297**	.008
Thighs	.330***	.003	.071	.538	-.179	.116
Ears	.098	.395	.228**	.045	-.087	.448
Biceps	.238**	.036	.069	.550	-.189*	.098
Chin	-.131	.253	-.068	.553	.091	.429
Body Build	.192*	.093	-.076	.509	-.411***	.000
Breasts	.144	.207	.046	.686	.011	.923
Appearance of Eyes	.102	.376	-.020	.863	-.121	.293
Cheeks/Cheekbones	.157	.169	-.246**	.030	-.101	.380
Hips	.221*	.052	.035	.758	-.056	.626
Legs	.238**	.037	.150	.194	-.085	.461
Figure	.259**	.022	-.072	.532	-.353***	.002
Feet	-.096	.403	-.012	.917	.016	.887
Appearance of Stomach	.162	.155	-.129	.260	-.405***	.000
Body Hair	.073	.530	.186	.106	.151	.191
Face	.401***	.000	.069	.546	-.050	.666
Weight	.300***	.008	-.021	.856	-.448***	.000
Overall Score [†]	.375***	.001	.004	.969	-.304***	.007

Note. * $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

[†] Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Table 7.

Correlations for Participants' BES Factors: Rated Self First

	RSES		NPI		Similarity	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Nose	.449***	.004	-.134	.410	-.188	.245
Lips	.320**	.044	-.138	.396	-.154	.343
Waist	.013	.939	-.003	.987	-.378**	.016
Thighs	.252	.116	.085	.604	-.133	.414
Ears	.028	.865	.174	.282	-.221	.170
Biceps	.212	.188	.014	.932	-.327**	.039
Chin	-.234	.147	-.065	.692	.090	.581
Body Build	-.112	.492	-.140	.389	-.429***	.006
Breasts	.099	.542	-.094	.566	-.011	.949
Appearance of Eyes	.113	.489	-.026	.873	-.267*	.096
Cheeks/Cheekbones	-.058	.723	-.247	.125	-.251	.117
Hips	.102	.532	-.223	.166	.058	.724
Legs	.023	.889	.141	.393	-.067	.684
Figure	.070	.666	-.079	.627	-.383**	.015
Feet	-.049	.765	.047	.772	-.210	.193
Appearance of Stomach	.064	.695	-.097	.553	-.552***	.000
Body Hair	.037	.819	.169	.300	.067	.681
Face	.271*	.090	.073	.656	-.010	.951
Weight	.128	.433	-.093	.570	-.567***	.000
Overall Score [†]	.200	.217	-.072	.658	-.453***	.003

Note. * $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

[†] Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Table 8.

Correlations for Participants' BES Factors: Rated Other First

	RSES		NPI		Similarity	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Nose	.288*	.080	-.036	.830	.134	.422
Lips	.160	.338	.269	.103	-.120	.473
Waist	.210	.205	-.168	.312	-.213	.200
Thighs	.394**	.014	.067	.689	-.230	.165
Ears	.246	.137	.280*	.088	.072	.666
Biceps	.255	.122	.133	.426	-.062	.712
Chin	-.045	.788	-.078	.641	.094	.575
Body Build	.431***	.007	.006	.970	-.405**	.012
Breasts	.248	.134	.162	.330	.037	.827
Appearance of Eyes	.195	.242	-.048	.774	.047	.777
Cheeks/Cheekbones	.254	.125	-.241	.146	-.010	.953
Hips	.325**	.046	.297*	.070	-.159	.342
Legs	.314*	.055	.203	.222	-.110	.510
Figure	.402**	.012	-.050	.765	-.334**	.040
Feet	-.127	.447	-.073	.663	.209	.207
Appearance of Stomach	.159	.340	-.133	.426	-.294*	.073
Body Hair	.149	.378	.194	.249	.237	.157
Face	.491***	.002	.082	.626	-.086	.606
Weight	.422***	.008	.074	.658	-.351**	.031
Overall Score [†]	.518***	.001	.096	.565	-.175	.294

Note. * $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

[†] Overall Score calculated by averaging the other measure

Appendix A

Picture of the stranger



Appendix B

Participant Materials

INFORMED CONSENT

Investigator: **Heather Bauer**

Supervising Investigator: **Dr. Kate
Gunthert**

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that influence body perceptions.

Procedure: As a participant, you will be asked to answer a demographic questionnaire, a body satisfaction questionnaire, a rating scale of another person's features, and two brief personality inventories. The study should take approximately 30 minutes. You must be age 18 or older to participate.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide at any time that you would like to discontinue participation, you may withdraw at anytime. Also, you are not obligated to respond to all questions. There will be no penalty for non-participation.

Compensation: You can either be compensated with ½ credit of extra credit for a psychology course that accepts it, or or \$8 for participating in the study. Compensation will still be provided if you decide to discontinue participation at any time for any reason.

Confidentiality: All of your responses are for research purposes only. No identifying information will be placed on the questionnaires. Your data will be recorded using a participant ID number. In addition, all information will be kept in a locked location.

Potential Risks: There are no anticipated risks as a result of participating in the study. However, it is possible that reflecting on body image could elicit some minimal discomfort. If any questions make you uncomfortable, feel free not to answer. If these questions highlight the need for help, please contact the American University counseling center at 202-885-3500.

Potential Benefits: There are no specific benefits to you as a participant, though you might learn a little about the process of psychological research through your participation. This study will benefit the field by providing insight into the processes that influence body evaluation.

Concerns: If there are any questions or concerns you would like to raise regarding this study, you are encouraged to contact the supervising investigator, Dr. Kate Gunthert (202-885-1701), or the University's Institutional Review Board (irb@american.edu). For additional contact information, please see the next page.

* If you are interested in the general results of the study, you are welcome to contact Heather Bauer (hb4387a@american.edu), who will be able to send you a summary of the results after the study's completion in May 2010.

I, _____, have read the above information regarding the nature of this study and I understand the potential risks as well as my rights as described above.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

For further concerns, you can contact

Heather Bauer	Chief Investigator	hb4387a@american.edu	(973) 953-3517
Kathleen Gunthert	Faculty Advisor	gunthert@american.edu	(202) 885-1701
Matt Zembrzuski	IRB Coordinator	zembrzus@american.edu	(202) 885-3447
David Haaga	IRB Chair	dhaaga@american.edu	(202) 885-1718

Demographic Information

1. Age _____

2. Year in school:

_____ Freshman

_____ Sophomore

_____ Junior

_____ Senior

3. What race do you consider yourself to be?

_____ American Indian or Alaska Native

_____ Asian

_____ Black or African-American

_____ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

_____ White

_____ Other: _____

4. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

_____ Hispanic or Latino

_____ Not Hispanic or Latino

Please circle the rating you feel most appropriate for the woman for your feelings on each body part.

- 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

Nose	1	2	3	4	5
Lips	1	2	3	4	5
Waist	1	2	3	4	5
Thighs	1	2	3	4	5
Ears	1	2	3	4	5
Biceps	1	2	3	4	5
Chin	1	2	3	4	5
Body build	1	2	3	4	5
Breasts	1	2	3	4	5
Appearance of eyes	1	2	3	4	5
Cheeks/cheekbones	1	2	3	4	5
Hips	1	2	3	4	5
Legs	1	2	3	4	5
Figure	1	2	3	4	5
Feet	1	2	3	4	5
Appearance of stomach	1	2	3	4	5
Body hair	1	2	3	4	5
Face	1	2	3	4	5
Weight	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Dissimilar	Somewhat Dissimilar	Somewhat Similar	Very Similar	
How similar do you think you are to this woman?	0	1	2	3	

Please circle the rating you feel most appropriate for you for your feelings on each body part.

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

Nose	1	2	3	4	5
Lips	1	2	3	4	5
Waist	1	2	3	4	5
Thighs	1	2	3	4	5
Ears	1	2	3	4	5
Biceps	1	2	3	4	5
Chin	1	2	3	4	5
Body build	1	2	3	4	5
Breasts	1	2	3	4	5
Appearance of eyes	1	2	3	4	5
Cheeks/cheekbones	1	2	3	4	5
Hips	1	2	3	4	5
Legs	1	2	3	4	5
Figure	1	2	3	4	5
Feet	1	2	3	4	5
Appearance of stomach	1	2	3	4	5
Body hair	1	2	3	4	5
Face	1	2	3	4	5
Weight	1	2	3	4	5

Read each pair of statements below and place an "X" by the one that comes closest to describing your feelings and beliefs about yourself. You may feel that neither statement describes you well, but pick the one that comes closest. **Please complete all pairs.**

1. ☐ I really like to be the center of attention
 ☐ It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention
2. ☐ I am no better or no worse than most people
 ☐ I think I am a special person
3. ☐ Everybody likes to hear my stories
 ☐ Sometimes I tell good stories
4. ☐ I usually get the respect that I deserve
 ☐ I insist upon getting the respect that is due me
5. ☐ I don't mind following orders
 ☐ I like having authority over people
6. ☐ I am going to be a great person
 ☐ I hope I am going to be successful
7. ☐ People sometimes believe what I tell them
 ☐ I can make anybody believe anything I want them to
8. ☐ I expect a great deal from other people
 ☐ I like to do things for other people
9. ☐ I like to be the center of attention
 ☐ I prefer to blend in with the crowd
10. ☐ I am much like everybody else
 ☐ I am an extraordinary person
11. ☐ I always know what I am doing
 ☐ Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing
12. ☐ I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people
 ☐ I find it easy to manipulate people
13. ☐ Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me
 ☐ People always seem to recognize my authority
14. ☐ I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so
 ☐ When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed
15. ☐ I try not to be a show off
 ☐ I am apt to show off if I get the chance
16. ☐ I am more capable than other people
 ☐ There is a lot that I can learn from other people

Please circle the rating that is most applicable to you.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------	-------	-------------------

1) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	0	1	2	3
2) At time I think I am not good at all.	0	1	2	3
3) I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	0	1	2	3
4) I am able to do things as well as most other people.	0	1	2	3
5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	0	1	2	3
6) I certainly feel useless at times.	0	1	2	3
7) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	0	1	2	3
8) I wish I could have more respect for myself.	0	1	2	3
9) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	0	1	2	3
10) I take a positive attitude toward myself.	0	1	2	3