



BODY IMAGE AS A FUNCTION OF SOCIAL COMPARISON AND SELF-SCHEMA

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Body image as an overall sense of one's appearance is closely related to the cognitive importance placed on appearance. Individuals place cognitive importance on appearance in response to internalized ideal images influenced by individual as well as sociocultural factors. Self-schemas (Markus, 1977) refer to cognitive representations of organized information about the self as a domain of importance. Women who place cognitive importance on appearance are expected to have self-schemas in the domain of appearance. This study predicted that the extent to which appearance is generalized as an important part of individuals' cognitions affects their body perceptions, i.e., body image. This study particularly focused on affective aspects of body image: individuals with high appearance schematicity would be more emotionally distressed than those with low appearance schematicity. The study consisted of two experimental sessions: the initial session was designed to identify subjects' appearance schematicity and the follow-up session was designed to measure subjects' responses regarding their mood. Data completed by 98 college women was analyzed. This study revealed that the impact of social comparisons with attractive others can be biased by the extent of cognitive importance placed on the domain of appearance. The results imply that young women placing more cognitive importance on appearance are more vulnerable to negative feelings.

Markus, H. (1977). Self-schemata and processing information about the self. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 35, 63-78.