

PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL BEAUTY STANDARDS
IN TELEVISED PAGEANTS

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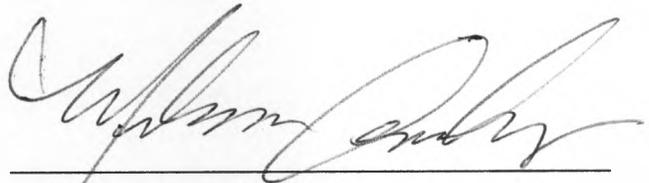
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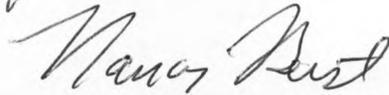
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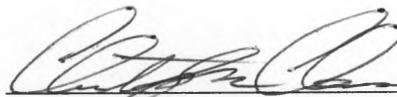
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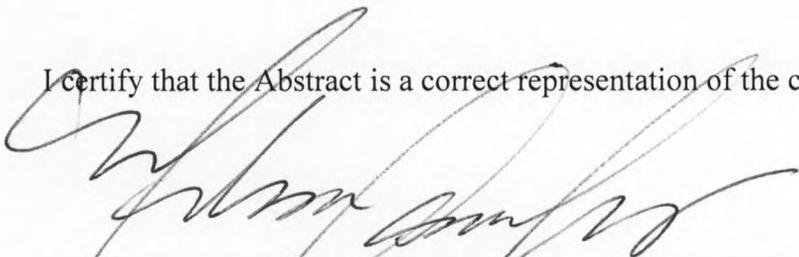
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PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL BEAUTY STANDARDS
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Media images of women who embody traditional standards of beauty tend to affect women's satisfaction with their bodies. The purpose of this study was to understand the impact that watching televised beauty pageants has on women's body image, appearance satisfaction, and social comparisons. The principal method of data gathering is a focus group discussion, but open-ended survey questions and the Body Appreciation Scale and the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale are also implemented. The study was compromised of five college-aged women. Results suggest that women oppose the lack of diversity in pageants. They reported seeing contestants who tend to be thin, lighter skinned, and fairly tall. Most participants compared themselves to pageant contestants, but this did not mean they were vastly dissatisfied with their appearance or that they desired to emulate contestants. The results are discussed in reference to social comparison theory. A new theme about the perceptions of beauty pageants and contestants emerged the during the focus group discussion. Participants criticized pageants and believed they lack value. Recommendations for future research are provided.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee

4/24/18

Date

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Keywords

beauty pageants, Miss contestants, traditional beauty standards, body image, appearance, television, social comparisons

Introduction

Every year, the Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe pageants are televised. Contestants have the opportunity to display their runway and public speaking skills in the hopes of impressing the judges and winning the crown. Several months of preparation conclude with a few intense hours on the stage before the name of the new titleholder is revealed. In the meantime, millions of viewers (Porter, 2017a; Porter, 2017b; Porter, 2017c) have the opportunity to watch contestants in swimwear and evening gowns and respond to the on-stage question, if contestants reach that point in the competition.

Annual pageants are held worldwide. In the United States alone, there are thousands of pageants across the country (Banet-Weiser, 1999). The Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe contests are considered natural beauty pageants (Shappert, 2011), but other types of pageants include festival and glitz pageants (Shappert, 2013). Three of the major pageants broadcast in the U.S. are the Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe competitions, and they are the pageants analyzed in this study. Viewers can watch the pageants on television or via online video recordings when accessible.

Critics argue that the standards of beauty in pageants do not represent all women (Dow, 2003; Schulz, 2000; Wu, 1997). Pageant queens are generally tall, thin, and light-skinned, resembling traditional standards of beauty (King-O'Riain, 2008; Schulz, 2000). This can be problematic because body image research suggests that women can be

negatively affected by the images of thin, attractive women presented in the media (Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012; Jung & Lennon, 2003; Mask & Blanchard, 2011). In fact, the effects of constantly seeing unrealistic body image ideals are felt across the globe and can be so profound that a French law dictates that any commercial image in which the model's body has been digitally edited must have a "retouched photograph" label (Lee, 2017). France's Health Minister Marisol Touraine contends that "exposing young people to normative and unrealistic images of bodies leads to a sense of self-depreciation and poor self-esteem that can impact health-related behaviour" (Eggert, 2017). Individuals tend to evaluate themselves by making comparisons with others (Festinger, 1954), and watching beauty pageants could affect the way women viewers feel about their appearance if they do not look like the contestants. From 1953 to 1985, the body sizes of Miss America titleholders declined (Spitzer, Henderson, & Zivian, 1999). Furthermore, several Miss America contestants have undergone plastic surgery. Wolf (2002) argues that women are making comparisons "with a new breed that is hybrid nonwoman" (2002, p. 267). Although the available research on body image includes magazine and television effects, there is little research that specifically addresses the impact televised beauty pageants may have on viewers. I will conduct a survey and focus group to determine if the Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe pageants affect how women feel about their bodies and appearance.

Beauty pageants are held at the local, state, national, and international levels (Crawford et al., 2008). The *American Beauty Industry Encyclopedia* defines beauty pageants as competitions in which a woman is judged by her physical appearance, but inner beauty is also considered (Mitchell, 2010). Banet-Weiser (1999) notes that "most

[pageants] have a familiar, recognizable format: female contestants enter a competition event, where they are judged based on beauty, personality, talent, and the ever so elusive 'poise'" (p. 31). Typical beauty pageant categories may include an interview, on-stage introduction, swimsuit, fun fashion, casual wear, on-stage question and answer, evening gown, traditional dress, and talent portion (Shappert, 2013; King-O'Riain, 2008).

However, the exact format varies in each pageant. The Miss America pageant judging criteria, for instance, consists of interview, swimwear, talent, evening gown, and on-stage question ("FAQ," n.d.). The Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants have a similar structure, but they do not include a talent section ("About," n.d.). In addition, the judging criteria is different for every pageant (King-O'Riain, 2008), but the woman with the most points in the several categories wins the title (Banet-Weiser, 1999). She has the responsibility of fulfilling her duties as a beauty queen, such as promoting the pageant and making appearances (Shappert, 2013).

The Miss America pageant was initiated in 1921 as an attempt to attract tourists to stay in Atlantic City, New Jersey, after the Labor Day weekend (Watson & Martin, 2000). Since it began, the pageant has represented the ideal American woman (Hamlin, 2004; Pang, 1969).

The Miss Universe pageant began in 1952 in Long Beach, California (Cole, 1998). It was founded by Catalina Swimsuits, a previous sponsor of the Miss America pageant ("About" n.d.). Miss America contestants are required to be between the ages of 17 and 24 ("Become a Contestant," n.d.), while the age range for Miss USA and Miss Universe contestants is between 18 and 28 years old ("About," n.d.). Miss America is a national competition and is the final pageant in the Miss America pageant system. Miss USA is

also a national pageant, but it is part of the Miss Universe pageant system. Subsequently, the winner represents the United States at the international Miss Universe contest.

Beauty pageant contestants are both similar and different from other television media figures and models. Like other television programs (e.g. situational comedies), pageants tend to feature thin and attractive women (Fouts & Burggraf, 2000; Greenberg et al., 2003; Yang, 2012), which can affect women's notions of their bodies (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). In contrast to fashion models, they are not as anonymous (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016). Meanwhile, magazines and television may affect women differently. Tiggemann (2003) found that although magazine and television exposure were both associated with body dissatisfaction, the internalization of the thin ideal mediated the association only between magazine exposure and body dissatisfaction, since television directly affected body dissatisfaction. Watching television, however, was connected to a higher BMI and lower self-esteem.

Beauty pageants explicitly inform viewers of traditional standards of beauty, similar to fashion magazines. Indeed, women may view fashion magazines for beauty standards more than they do TV (Tiggemann, 2003). Since beauty pageant contestants are, at least in part, judged by their physical appearance (Balogun, 2012; Banet-Weiser, 1999), they may be more similar to magazines in that respect. Although viewers may also learn about traditional beauty ideals from watching other television shows, those programs do not as directly emphasize what a beautiful woman should look like. Yet, even watching shows for entertainment purposes can lead to women's body dissatisfaction (Want, Vickers, & Amos, 2009). It is plausible that watching a show that is more specifically about physical appearance can have an even greater impact on

women. Hence, beauty pageants are different from other shows that feature thin and attractive women because they are very specifically about beauty. Other shows feature media figures that embody traditional standards of beauty as do pageant contestants, but they are not as overtly portrayed as the ideal woman.

Televised beauty pageants occur in one day rather than across multiple weeks like reality TV shows (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2006). In some ways, however, televised beauty pageants resemble reality television shows because both are competitive programs (and one can argue feature attractive participants); this may affect a viewer's body image (Egbert & Belcher, 2012). Egbert and Belcher (2012) assert that women with lower self-esteem and a higher BMI who watch competition-based reality TV shows (e.g. *American Idol*, *Dancing with the Stars*) experience greater body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness. They found that non-competitive reality shows do not have the same effect on body image. Based on this, one can contend that the competitive nature of pageants like Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe can potentially affect women's body image the way competitive-based reality television shows do. Adding to this is the fact that contestants of televised pageants have to at least win their state title before they compete at the national level, making the pageant even more competitive. Ultimately, because of their similarities with reality television shows, other television programs, and magazines, television pageants are positioned by pageant organizers, television producers, and judges, to affect women's perceptions about their bodies. A survey and focus group will be implemented in this study to determine the effects of televised beauty pageants on women.

Operational Definitions

In this paper, the discussion of beauty pageants can refer to any pageant in the United States or any other country. Televised beauty pageants, however, refer specifically to the Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe competitions.

Body image describes “a person’s mental perception of the size, shape, and appearance of his or her body” (Hendriks, 2002, pp. 106-107). As used in this study, body image includes body size and specific body parts. Appearance satisfaction extends to satisfaction with physical traits, such as height and eyes. Traditional beauty standards, in this paper, indicate common beauty ideals for women promoted by the media, society, and beauty pageants. They can also be referred to as Western, White, or ideal beauty standards. These standards of beauty include body size and body parts and physical attractions such as height and skin color. Specifically, they favor women who are thinner, taller, and lighter-skinned, among other ideals such as bigger eyes (Balogun, 2012; King-O’Riain, 2008; Wu, 1997). Body image and appearance satisfaction are subjective because they are based on what individuals *think* of themselves, whereas traditional beauty standards refer to beauty ideals that are commonly *seen* in the media, society, and beauty pageants.

Literature Review

Beauty Standards in the Media and Society

The standards of beauty promoted in (and by) the media are very specific, and as a result, they are unrealistic and unattainable for many women (Engeln, 2017). Nonetheless, women desire to look like the ideal beauty (Wolf, 2002). Wolf (2002) explains that after first publishing *The Beauty Myth*, thousands of women told her they

had at some point believed the ideal woman was “tall, thin, white, and blond, a face without pores, asymmetry or flaws, [and] someone wholly ‘perfect’” (p.1). Indeed, the media is replete with images of ideal women. They are seen in television shows, music videos, and magazines (Tiggemann & Slater, 2004; Want, Vickers, & Amos, 2009; Wasylkiw et al., 2009). It is practically impossible for women to not be exposed to idealized media figures.

Women who are thin are preferred in the media over women who do not fit traditional standards of beauty. A content analysis of prime-time television shows conducted by Greenberg et al. (2003) reveals that women with larger bodies are significantly underrepresented, even though this does not reflect real life. When they are seen, they are portrayed as less likely to engage in romantic or positive interactions and more likely to be viewed as less attractive. They are also the subject of humor, older, part of a minority group, or unemployed. A content analysis of prime-time situational comedies published by Fouts and Burggraf (2000) similarly indicates that below-average weight women were overrepresented. It also shows that in contrast to women in real life, 65% of female characters in the situational comedies weighed below average, while only five percent of women were above average (p. 929). Women who weighed more were exposed to more negative comments. Studies like this support the idea that women with larger bodies are represented in prime-time television shows but are portrayed differently than thinner women and are often times mocked. Other television content also differentiates between women with smaller and bigger bodies. In weight loss infomercials, thin women are more frequently shown than women with larger bodies (Blaine & McElroy, 2002). Individuals with bigger bodies are portrayed as dissatisfied

with their bodies and unattractive, and stereotypes of heavy individuals as lazy or lacking in willpower are reinforced. Conversely, women in the media who are thin tend to be portrayed as more successful and happier than women who do not embody standards of beauty (Engeln, 2017). This means that bodies are used in the media to reveal details about a person's life.

Thinness is also promoted in the fashion industry. In fashion magazines, majority of the models tend to be thin (Wasyliw et al., 2009). One study found that models in the front cover of fashion magazines became significantly thinner in the 1980s and 1990s (Sypeck, Gray, & Ahrens, 2004). In addition, by the late 1980s, magazines were more frequently showing models' full bodies, as opposed to just their face or parts of their bodies. Hence, not only are women presented with pretty faces, but thin ideal images of women have also proliferated. Even mannequin's body sizes in fashion retailers are deemed underweight and unrealistic of women's bodies (Robinson & Aveyard, 2017), which increases the exposure that women have to thinness.

Traditional beauty standards are not limited to body size. A study of fashion and fitness magazines conducted by Wasyliw et al. (2009) reveals that about 90% of the models are White. Research also shows that White and thin individuals are more frequently shown in social justice magazines (Wrenn & Lutz, 2016). White models in magazines are used to embody Afrocentric features, while Black models are left out (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014). Harrison (2003) affirms that "the ideal American woman is not only thin, she is thin with specific bust, waist, and hip proportions" (p. 255). WonderBra advertisements, for instance, have displayed 36–24–36 inches as the ideal measurements for a woman's bust, waist, and hips. Capodilupo and Kim (2014) found

that standards of beauty for Black women, in addition to body size, include hair, skin color, and physical traits. Ideals such as a preference for lighter skin, straight hair, fuller bodies, and large breasts are promoted by the media and (at times) by the Black community.

Many have relied on cosmetic surgery to achieve traditional standards of beauty. Asian American women have increasingly used cosmetic surgery to transform single eyelids into those that look more Caucasian (Wong, 2010). Enhancement practices are also highlighted in the media by reality television shows like *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*, in which stomach reductions, breast implants, rhinoplasty, and facial recontouring are discussed or performed (Marwick, 2010; Weber, 2010). Dissatisfaction with these body parts are often cited as the reason for participants' lack of sexual intimacy and low self-esteem (Marwick, 2010). Women in these shows feel more attractive after they more closely resemble the ideal beauty.

Beauty Standards in Pageantry

Pageant defenders contend that pageants emphasize more than outer beauty. They insist that pageants celebrate women's beauty and their achievements (Schulz, 2000; Mani, 2006). Pageant opponents, conversely, argue that pageant contestants are too heavily judged on their physical appearance (Watson & Martin, 2000; Wu, 1997). In 1968, several feminists protested the Miss America pageant to fight what they believe was the oppression of women (Dow, 2003). Meanwhile, organizers of Carnival Calabar Queen, a Nigerian beauty pageant, critique contestants on their physical appearance even though the women are required to be university students or graduates (Gilbert, 2015), demonstrating that outer beauty is essential to this pageant.

Pageant organizers and audience members alike expect pageant titleholders to be thin. As contestants prepare for the Miss China pageant to select the country's Miss Universe representative, their weight is checked every day (Yang, 2012). Although the Miss China national director claims the pageant is more than outer appearance, she also says the women must possess "a minimum physical and aesthetic standard" (p.3). Similarly, contestants in the Miss Venezuela Organization are subjected to an eating plan that a nutritionist designs for each woman, and their weight and measurements are recorded (Auletta & Jaén, 2013). This formula has proven successful, since the organization currently has seven Miss Universe and six Miss World crowns (Malkin, 2013; "Telegraph Travel," 2017). Donald Trump, owner of the Miss Universe Organization at the time, heavily criticized Alicia Machado, Miss Universe 1996, for gaining weight after capturing the crown and called her "Miss Piggy" (Barbaro & Twohey, 2016). He arranged for photographs to be taken of Machado in the gym while she exercised (Perlmutter, 2000). Machado insists she suffered from eating disorders as a result of the humiliation she received (Barbaro & Twohey, 2016). Twenty years later, social media users body shamed Miss Canada 2016, Siera Bearchell, as she prepared for Miss Universe (Murray, 2017). They felt her weight was affecting her possibilities of winning the crown.

When Heather Whitestone, who is hearing impaired, won Miss America 1995, some viewed her success as a victory for the disabled community (Banet-Weiser, 1999). However, Perlmutter (2000) points out that her disability is not one that is physically visible, as opposed to, for example, a woman who is a quadriplegic. Although Whitestone was not the typical beauty queen because she is hearing impaired, her

disability did not detract from the fact that she is White (Banet-Weiser, 1999) and did not deviate from traditional standards of beauty.

Skin color also shapes traditional standards of beauty in American and international pageants (Perlmutter, 2000; Cunin, 2005). Although the Miss America pageant is presented as a contest that ordinary woman can win, it lacks racial diversity (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2006). The Miss America pageant was initiated in 1921, but no Black woman won a state title until 1970. Vanessa Williams became the first African American woman to capture the crown in 1983 (Perlmutter, 2000). Black Miss America winners are typically light skinned and have features and hair styles that resemble those of White women. Some African Americans, for instance, feel that Williams' green eyes and light skin do not represent the Black community (Watson & Martin, 2000) because she embodies traditional standards of beauty.

In the Miss USA system, as with Miss America, African American women are underrepresented as titleholders. If they do win, they usually have light skin. The Miss USA competition began in 1952, but the first African American women to win the title was Carole Gist in 1990 ("Carole Gist," n.d.). More than 25 years later, Deshauna Barber, Miss USA 2016, thought her dark skin color would prevent her from winning the title because "dark chocolate women have always been placed on the...back burner in American history when it comes to being defined as beautiful" (Barber, 2017). She argued that previous Black Miss USAs, with the exception of Miss USA 1993 Kenya Moore, did not represent her skin tone.

Women of other ethnicities are also largely excluded from the Miss USA and Miss America pageants. Rima Fakhri became the first Muslim and Arab-American

woman to be crowned Miss USA in 2010 (“Rima Fakhri On Making,” 2010). Nina Davaluri was the first Indian-American woman to win the Miss America title in 2013. However, some online users insisted that Miss Kansas, who is blonde and blue-eyed, was the real winner (Hafiz, 2013). Various ethnic pageants in the United States, such as Miss Vietnam USA and Miss Ethiopia North America, have emerged due to the lack of representation of women of color (King-O’Riain, 2008), but they are still not free from global standards of beauty.

Countries alter their individual standards of beauty to match international beauty ideals. To increase their chances of winning an international pageant, some countries like India and Venezuela send candidates that are taller and look more Western (King-O’Riain, 2008). Nigeria’s Carnival Calabar Queen contestants use skin-lightening products to adhere to traditional beauty standards (Gilbert, 2015). In the meantime, the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria (MBGN) and Queen Nigeria pageants are structured according to their relationship with international beauty pageants, although physical attributes including “height, body size, hair style, skin color and texture, and teeth and smile” are judged in both (Balogun, 2012, p.369). Since the winner of Queen Nigeria does not represent Nigeria internationally, the pageant can impose standards of beauty that are to some extent more conventional to Nigeria. Yet, because the top two winners of MBGN represent Nigeria in the international Miss World and Miss Universe pageants, MBGN is closely adjusted to international standards of beauty to increase the success of their candidates. When a candidate from MBGN won the Miss World title in 2001, the standards of beauty changed to favor women who were taller and thinner in order to fit international beauty standards (Balogun, 2012), reducing the number of women who fit

the beauty mold. In addition, bikinis are used in MBGN to scrutinize women's bodies (Balogun, 2012). One producer explains the importance of viewing contestants in swimwear:

We have to have them in bikinis to look for scars. Some of them have such bad scars from accidents, or really bad belly buttons, or those big tribal markings and we have to see all of that. We need to eliminate anyone with really bad scars or else they could get disqualified at Miss World or Miss Universe (Balogun, 2012, p.373).

In Mali, many people believe that the height, body size, and light skin preference of national beauty contests is influenced by traditional standards of beauty (Schulz, 2000). While some spectators believe that regional beauty pageants portray "real women" and that the judges may favor the local preference for women with bigger bodies, thinner women are sent to Bamako to increase the chances of success in the national contest (Schulz, 2000, p.131). In 2001, Vanessa Mendoza Bustos, the first Black Colombian to win the National Beauty Pageant, represented Colombia at the Miss Universe pageant (Sierra Becerra, 2005). Even though some media outlets viewed her victory as the end of racism in the pageant, others maintained that her blackness did not change beauty standards in the Colombian pageant (Cunin, 2005). She was called the "Black Barbie" and seen as "so pretty that she looked white" and having the "perfect silhouette and body" (Cunin, 2005, p.11). More women of color have won international pageants like Miss Universe, but "the continued valorization of 'whiteness' or 'lightness' and European beauty standards" (King-O'Riain, 2008, p.76) still impacts who and what is considered beautiful.

Traditional standards of beauty also dominate some ethnic pageants in the United States. Nasser De La Torre (2013), for instance, contends that judges from a Colombian beauty pageant in Houston, Texas favor women with lighter skin. Opponents of Miss Chinatown USA argue that contestants are evaluated according to traditional standards of beauty (Wu, 1997). For example, contestants' eyes are part of the judging criteria; bigger eyes and double eyelids, resembling traditional ideals of beauty, are seen as more favorable than smaller eyes with single eyelids, leading some contestants to resort to plastic surgery.

There are not many studies that analyze what viewers think of traditional beauty standards in pageants. Through focus group and interview sessions with Nepali women, Crawford et al., (2008) found that some women view pageants as an opportunity to raise a woman's confidence and represent Nepal on a larger scale. While many of the participants saw value in pageants, some also lamented the objectification of women's bodies or the potential for women to feel insecure about their bodies. Due to the perceived benefits and disadvantages of pageants, it is not clear what women think about beauty pageant ideals. To this end, this study will be the first to investigate how viewers cope with traditional beauty standards in the Miss America, Miss USA, and the Miss Universe pageants.

RQ1: How do women feel about traditional beauty standards in televised beauty pageants?

Media Effects on Body Image

Idealized media images can negatively impact women's perceptions of their bodies (Bair et al., 2012; Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002;

López-Guimerà et al., 2010). Women are less satisfied with their bodies when exposed to images of thin media figures (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). This can result in internalization of the thin ideal (Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008) and a considerable increase in body ideal size, especially for individuals with higher baseline anxiety levels (Owen and Spencer, 2013). Brown and Tiggemann (2016) found that women experience body dissatisfaction and a more negative mood after viewing images of both celebrities and peers that are thin and attractive on Instagram. The effects of thin ideal images in the media are possibly similar for beauty pageants. Because contestants from televised pageants tend to be thin, female viewers may feel dissatisfied with their bodies when watching pageants (Bair et al., 2012; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). Female viewers may also have smaller body ideals (Owen and Spencer, 2013) after watching televised pageants. The current study seeks to determine women's notions of their bodies when they are exposed to pageant contestants.

RQ2: What is the relationship between televised beauty pageants and body image for women?

There is an association between the thin-ideal internalization and body-focused anxiety (Brown & Dittmar, 2005; Pidgeon & Harker, 2013). Although both social comparisons and the thin ideal internalization may affect women's body image, internalization of the thin ideal can be a greater influencer (Dittmar, & Howard, 2004). Analyses demonstrate that women who internalize the thin ideal experience heightened body-focused anxiety when seeing thin models as opposed to average-size or no models (Brown & Dittmar, 2005; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004). Some studies suggest that it is specifically the thin body of models and not their attractiveness or toned and fit bodies

that produces dissatisfaction for women who internalize the thin ideal (Halliwell & Dittmar's, 2004; Homan et al., 2012). Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) and Homan et al.'s (2012) findings suggest that women who watch beauty pageants and internalize the thin ideal may experience body dissatisfaction because contestants are generally thin.

Thin media images can impact self-esteem. Women presented with images of the sociocultural norms for appearance have been found to rely more on appearance to measure their self-worth and are consequently more dissatisfied with their bodies (Strahan et al., 2008). Mischner, van Schie, and Engels (2013) found that when participants are exposed to norm-conforming information about sociocultural norms for appearance, women with lower self-esteem placed a higher value on advertisements related to appearance than those with higher self-esteem. However, when participants with low self-esteem are exposed to norm-challenging information, they place less value on appearance advertisements than women who do not view norm-challenging material. The connection between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction implies that female viewers with lower self-esteem may be more prone to comply with socio-cultural norms for appearance (Mischner, van Schie, & Engels, 2013). Because beauty pageants feature idealized images of women like other forms of media, viewers with lower self-esteem might feel dissatisfied with their bodies when exposed to pageant contestants.

Harrison (2003) examined the effects of ideal body images on television and found that a smaller waist and hips and a medium bust was the desired ideal. With more exposure to ideal-body television, women with smaller breasts wanted to have a bigger bust, women with larger breasts wanted to have a smaller bust, and women with medium breasts wanted neither a bigger nor a smaller bust. Women in the smaller to medium

sized breast group favored surgery for breast augmentation and wearing a padded bra to make breasts look bigger. Conversely, women in the medium to large breast sized group favored surgery for breast reduction and wearing a bra to minimize breast size.

According to these results, unless women possess the ideal bust size, they desire change.

Media images featuring traditional standards of beauty can influence eating disorders (Gunter & Wykes, 2005; Hausenblas et al, 2013; Rühl, Legenbauer, & Hiller, 2011). Hausenblas et al. (2013) conclude that eating disorder symptoms are greater when individuals are exposed to idealized images. Individuals more prone to eating disorders are more likely to experience increased depression and body dissatisfaction. Hausenblas et. al (2013) note, “high risk individuals include those who: are overweight and/or obese, internalized the belief that thinness is the ideal of beauty, are high self-objectifiers, have low self-esteem, and already evidence some level of eating disorder” (p. 179).

Rühl, Legenbauer, and Hiller (2011) found that when viewing images of thin women in television commercials, women with bulimia nervosa (BN) experienced “dysfunctional thoughts related to dietary restraint and eating and loss of control,” while participants without bulimia nervosa did not (p.354). Moreover, bulimic women can overestimate their body size by one-fourth after viewing images of thin women (Gunter & Wykes, 2005). When women already suffer from an eating disorder, exposure to thin ideal media can be even more harmful.

Besides media, peer or parents can influence women’s body ideals (Fardouly, Pinkus, and Vartanian, 2017; Kinally and Van Vonderen, 2014; López-Guimerà et al., 2010). Lev-Ari, Baumgarten-Katz, and Zohar (2014) maintain that best friends are very influential on women’s body image, even more than sisters. Women may also compare

themselves more to in person peers than to traditional media figures (Fardouly, Pinkus, & Vartanian, 2017), and this can affect the thin ideal internalization and body dissatisfaction more than the media (Kinnally &, 2012; Kinnally & Van Vonderen, 2014). In addition, “parent’s attitudes towards thinness are linked to their children’s perceptions of the social value of thinness, internalization of the thin ideal and even body dissatisfaction” (Kinnally & Van Vonderen, 2014, p.229). Nonetheless, the media may exert a stronger influence than what is apparent. Peers and parents might acquire traditional standards of beauty from the media and then project these ideals on to others. An individual may be more concerned with the beliefs of her parents or peers, but the media can indirectly impact body or appearance dissatisfaction.

Although many studies suggest that media images negatively impact women, there are others that offer different results (Holmstrom, 2004; Young, Gabriel, & Sechrist, 2012). Holmstrom (2004) found that images of overweight women positively impact women’s satisfaction with their bodies. Young, Gabriel, and Sechrist (2012) maintain that women who feel similar to a thin model may experience more body satisfaction than when women do not find themselves similar to a thin model. Some studies suggest that increased exposure to idealized images lessens their impact (Holmstrom, 2004; Tiggemann, 2013). Women may become so accustomed to seeing images of ideal women that they are not as affected by them. Although this could suggest that women could be less affected by beauty pageant contestants if they are regularly exposed to ideal body images, it is possible that because pageants are annual, female viewers do not become as acclimated to them as they might to other television shows.

Women from different ethnic backgrounds and subgroups might experience body image differently (Altabe, 1998; Stokes, Clemens, & Rios, 2016). For instance, Schooler et al.'s (2004) analysis demonstrates that women's body image may be affected more by women of their same race. White women were more dissatisfied with their bodies when exposed to television images of White women, but not impacted when watching Black-oriented programs. Black women were not affected by images of White women, but images of Black woman can result in more positive body image (Schooler et al., 2004) or body dissatisfaction (Frisby, 2004). Indeed, in a focus group study conducted by Capodilupo and Kim (2014), a woman asserts that Black women in music videos do not look like her, but it was not limited to weight but to "complexion, it's hair, it's everything" (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014, p. 41). In contrast to studies that point to the positive body image of Black women (Altabe, 1998; Grabe, S., & Hyde, J. S., 2005), Capodilupo and Kim (2014) affirm that Black women may still suffer appearance dissatisfaction for physical traits such as hair and skin color. Whites and Hispanics have been found to experience more negative body image than Blacks or Asians (Altabe, 1998). In addition, the more that Mexican American women are acculturated to the U.S., they are more likely to internalize American beauty ideals (Warren, Castillo, & Gleaves, 2010), and they might be more dissatisfied with their bodies (Poloskov & Tracey, 2013).

The findings on ethnicity and body image, when applied to beauty pageants, suggest that women's notions of their bodies may differ depending on the ethnicity of the viewer, and the ethnicity of the contestants. If a Black woman is watching a beauty pageant and looks at attractive White contestants, she might not be dissatisfied with her body (Frisby, 2004). However, Black women have been found to feel disillusioned

because Black media figures do not reflect their skin tone (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014) and because they are thin and attractive (Frisby, 2004). Black beauty contestants would most likely be light skinned and thin, and consequently, Black viewers might feel dissatisfied with their bodies or appearance if they do not look like them (Frisby, 2004). Altabe (1998) found that Caucasians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians view thinness and being taller as the ideal. Miss Universe contestants tend to be thin and tall (Balogun, 2012; Cunin, 2005), and viewers who do not fit standards of beauty could experience negative perceptions of their bodies or appearance. In some cases, ethnicity seems to protect women from body image disturbances, but in others, the globalization of beauty standards overpowers ethnic differences and still affects women's body image and general appearance satisfaction. It is therefore uncertain how ethnicity affects women who watch pageants.

Numerous studies have analyzed the effects of media on body image. Unfortunately, many tend to mainly focus solely on weight, which can be very limiting. Examining physical traits or body parts is equally important (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Harrison, 2003). A woman may not be impacted because a media figure is thin, but she may feel dissatisfied with certain body parts or other aspects of her appearance, such as her height, skin color, hair, or facial features. For example, a female viewer might feel discouraged because her eyes or breasts are not as big, or her skin is not as light, as that of a contestant, but not because she is not as thin. Consequently, an examination of physical appearance satisfaction will be included in this study.

RQ3: What is the relationship between televised beauty pageants and appearance satisfaction for women?

Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theorist Leon Festinger (1954) argues that humans are naturally inclined to measure their abilities and opinions. When the criterion for abilities is very clear, then an ability can be evaluated objectively. However, when the criterion is not as forthright, assessing an ability resembles an opinion because it is more subjective and dependent upon comparisons with others. He argues that individuals compare their abilities and opinions with others who are similar. Engaging in comparisons with others who are different would result in inaccurate measurement and thus, individuals defer from doing this. For instance, Festinger states that a newcomer would not compare him or herself to an expert chess player. An individual is less likely to change his or her opinion if others agree and more prone to change if the opinions of others differ. Individuals gravitate towards others whose opinions and abilities are similar. When the opinions and abilities of others in the same group differ, members will try to change their views to fit in if they consider the subject matter of importance. An example, as Festinger notes, is if a runner is slower in comparison to others in the group, he or she will invest time trying to be faster. Nevertheless, individuals are less likely to evaluate their abilities with others if they do not consider them important. Festinger maintains that the urge to evaluate ourselves stems out of a desire to belong to a group, but people tend to want to be part of a group that is similar to themselves.

When women compare themselves to others who embody traditional standards of beauty, they tend to feel dissatisfied with their appearance (Chrisler, Fung, Lopez, & Gorman, 2013; Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004). Results from one experiment, for example, show that women who watch music videos featuring thin and

attractive women engage in more comparisons than those who watch nonappearance videos and are consequently discontent with their bodies (Tiggemann and Slater, 2004). Chrisler, Fung, Lopez, and Gorman (2013) analyzed the Tweets users wrote during the 2011 *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* in which the models are considered attractive. Ninety percent of tweets related to body image show evidence of upward comparisons. One user, for example, asserts, "The Victoria's Secret fashion show = an hour to feel bad about yourself." Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe contestants are similar to models in the *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* because both represent traditional standards of beauty. If Twitter users feel discontent about their appearance when comparing themselves to Victoria's Secret models, it is likely that female viewers feel dissatisfied when comparing themselves to pageant contestants. Women preoccupied with their appearance are more prone to being dissatisfied when exposed to idealized images (Want, 2009). In turn, female viewers who are concerned with their appearance and watch pageants could be more affected than those who are not as distressed.

Upward comparisons are when individuals engage in comparisons with others who they consider superior (Festinger, 1954; Wood, 1989). Downward comparisons are when individuals compare themselves to others they think are inferior. Engeln-Maddox (2005) found that participants frequently engage in upward comparisons with models in women's magazines, which results in body dissatisfaction and internalization. One woman comments, "I feel like a chunky elephant compared to this model" (p. 1127). In pageants, this could suggest that women who watch pageants but do not fit traditional standards of beauty may engage in upward comparisons with contestants and consequently feel dissatisfied with their bodies and internalize the thin ideal. Moreover,

even pageant contestants can engage in upward comparisons with others. Siera Bearchell, Miss Canada 2016 and semi-finalist at the Miss Universe 2016 pageant, referring to her days prior to the Miss Universe competition, stated, “I was always comparing myself to others like this girl is taller, this girl has a smaller waist, maybe that means she's better than me because I don't have that body, or look that certain way” (Rodulfu, 2017). Seemingly, if a woman does not fully fit traditional standards of beauty, she may suffer when comparing herself to others.

After watching a section of a television situation-comedy with thin, attractive characters, women felt less content with their appearance than those who did not watch the clip (Want, Vickers, & Amos, 2009). Participants were expected to watch the show for entertainment purposes, and thus, social comparisons were less warranted than they are when viewing fashion magazines or television commercials; however, participants still engaged in social comparisons. Pageants tend to be similar to other television shows because they feature women who represent traditional standards of beauty. It is possible, then, that if female viewers compare themselves to women in shows that are meant strictly for entertainment, they would also compare themselves to contestants in pageants, which are more precisely about beauty. This could lead to dissatisfaction with their bodies or general appearance. Based on this, social comparisons will be analyzed in this study.

RQ4: What is the relationship between body image, appearance satisfaction, and social comparisons for women who watch televised beauty pageants?

Social comparison theory states that individuals compare themselves with others similar to themselves, since making comparisons with others who are different is

inaccurate (Festinger, 1954). Yet, Myers and Crowther (2009) point out that ordinary women compare themselves to women in the media who embody traditional standards of beauty, even though they are different, and research shows women feel dissatisfied with their bodies (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). Even though most women do not look like the women in the media, they may find themselves similar to them in some way and still find it meaningful to engage in comparisons. One possibility, as studies conducted by Frisby (2004) and Schooler et al. (2004) suggest, is that women compare themselves to media figures who are of the same race. Schooler et al. (2004) theorize that Black and White women may experience comparisons differently. Based on this, one can argue that a viewer might be likely to compare herself with pageant contestants of her same ethnicity. Because women of color tend to be underrepresented in pageants (King-O'Riain, 2008), this could mean that viewers of color might engage in less comparisons with the Miss America and Miss USA contestants, or that comparison with women of the same ethnicity affect the viewer differently. Another reason why everyday women might find themselves similar to women in the media is because a woman's sex may be more salient than her ethnicity (Grabe & Hyde, 2005), and a female viewer might relate to a pageant contestant because they are both women even if they are of a different race.

In their study, Fardouly, Pinkus, and Vartanian (2017) found that women compare themselves more to individuals in social media than to traditional media figures in magazines and television. They speculate that women do not compare themselves to models in magazines because social media peers "are seen as more relevant comparison targets than are models in magazines" (p.36). Festinger (1954) explains that individuals are more likely to compare themselves to others in their same group, especially if they

consider them important. Women may not identify with magazine models as they do with social media peers. However, they may find pageant contestants to be more relevant than magazine models since contestants can be seen as role models (Auletta & Jaén, 2013) and titleholders in pageants such as Miss America have been considered the ideal American woman (Hamlin, 2004). If viewers find pageant contestants similar to themselves and more important than traditional media figures, they may engage in more social comparisons with them.

Nevertheless, women do not always feel worse about themselves in comparison to others. Lennon, Lillethun and Buckland (1999) found that women do not compare themselves to women in advertisements. In fact, the women in their study were less likely to compare themselves to mainstream models in beauty or clothing advertisements than to ads with average sized models or no models at all. The authors suggest this could be because participants thought mainstream models were irrelevant, and social comparison theory predicts that individuals tend to compare themselves to those who they think are relevant (Festinger, 1954). In pageantry, this can mean that if women do not find pageant contestants to be relevant, they may not compare themselves to them and thus not feel dissatisfied with their appearance. In addition, beauty pageants in Nepal featuring beautiful contestants do not always affect the way Nepali women view themselves (Crawford et al., 2008). For instance, one woman expresses, “If I see a girl, a beautiful girl on the ramp...that doesn’t mean I feel bad about myself or about my looks or regret how I look” (Crawford et al., 2008, p.75). Another woman, however, affirms that the influence of the media and beauty pageants in Nepal made others “more

conscious about how they look” (Crawford et al, 2008, p. 76). Hence, there are at times mixed results when it comes to determining the effects of social comparisons.

Beauty pageants, like other forms of media, tend to lack racial and body size diversity. The Miss Universe competition is more racially diverse than the Miss America and Miss USA pageants because women from countries worldwide are represented, but contestants nonetheless tend to embody traditional standards of beauty (Auletta & Jaén, 2013, Balogun, 2012). The effects of idealized media images on body image (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002) suggest that watching televised beauty pageants may affect the way women view themselves, since pageant contestants generally fit the standards of beauty like other media figures. If female viewers find themselves similar to pageant contestants, they are likely to engage in social comparisons with the contestants. Exposure to pageant contestants can result in dissatisfaction with body size, specific body parts, or other aspects of a woman’s general appearance.

Research suggests that idealized images negatively affect how women perceive their bodies (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002). Women tend to engage in social comparisons with others and those who do not resemble beauty ideals are consequently dissatisfied with their bodies (Chrisler, Fung, Lopez, & Gorman, 2013; Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004). Traditional standards of beauty in televised beauty pageants are similar to beauty standards in other forms of media. This paper will analyze the impact of televised beauty pageants on female viewers.

Method

This study is a qualitative analysis to determine how watching televised beauty pageants affects women. Focus groups are the primary method of data collection. They provide in-depth and detailed information about a specific topic (Grudens-Schuck, Allen, & Larson, 2004). Although focus group data is not generalizable (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), they offer the opportunity to collect detailed information that contributes to the overall body of scholarship on the subject of beauty pageants, body image, appearance satisfaction, and social comparisons. Focus group discussions allow for topics to emerge and build on conversations, allowing for the potential of new, interesting, and important details about the subject matter. Indeed, a new theme emerged regarding perceptions of beauty pageants and contestants.

Surveys provide set responses, but they can still be useful to collecting concrete data. They also offer anonymity (Fowler, 2009), which gives participants an opportunity to respond without feeling pressure from a group to conform to the dominant points of view as might occur with focus groups (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). To this end, a small, initial survey was administered to participants to supplement the information gathered from them during the focus group.

Questionnaire Protocol

The survey consists of four general questions, open-ended questions, and two scales (see Appendices A and B). Body dissatisfaction was measured with the Body Appreciation Scale, which is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005). It consists of 13 items and was adapted for beauty pageants. The overarching statement is “when I watch television pageants...,”

and sample questions include, “on the whole, I am satisfied with my body” and “my self-worth is independent of my body shape or weight.” Social comparisons were measured with the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS) (Thompson, Heinberg, & Tantleff, 1991). It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always, consists of five items, and was adapted for beauty pageants. A sample question states, “when watching beauty pageants, I compare my physical appearance to the physical appearance of pageant contestants.”

At the start of the discussion, a few warm-up questions were asked before discussing the main topic (see Appendix C). For instance, participants were asked their favorite color as an ice breaker and the pageants they watch to start transitioning into the discussion of beauty pageants.

The focus group discussion was guided by the four research questions:

RQ1: How do women feel about traditional beauty standards in televised beauty pageants?

RQ2: What is the relationship between televised beauty pageants and body image for women?

RQ3: What is the relationship between televised beauty pageants and appearance satisfaction for women?

RQ4: What is the relationship between body image, appearance satisfaction, and social comparisons for women who watch televised beauty pageants?

An approximately 10-minute video consisting of segments from the swimsuit, evening gown, and crowning moment portions of the Miss USA 2017 and Miss Universe 2017 pageants was shown at the start of the session. The video included the top 10

contestants in swimsuit and the top three contestants in evening gown for Miss USA 2017. The Miss Universe 2017 clip contained the top three contestants for both swimsuit and evening gown. In addition, the video included the final on-stage question and answer section of the Miss Universe 2017 pageant. The Miss USA 2017 and Miss Universe 2017 pageants were selected because they were the two most recent pageants in those pageants systems at the time of the study.

Participants

Krueger and Casey (2015) suggest that the ideal focus group size is between five and eight participants in order to maximize the amount and quality of the data collected. Six participants signed up for the session, but only five participants attended the study. They were recruited first in person and then via email from an undergraduate media course at a public university in the West Coast. This class was selected because of its large enrollment numbers, and permission was secured to recruit students from it. All participants were college women between 18 and 21 years old. Two participants identified as White, two as Mexican-American, and one as Filipina. They were compensated \$30 cash for their time. Refreshments were served.

Participants are identified with a "P" and a number from one to five, followed by "S" for the open-ended survey questions or "F" for the focus group session. For instance, the first respondent from the open-ended survey questions is identified as P1_S. The third participant from the focus group discussion is identified as P3_F. The participants' numbers from the open-ended survey questions do not match their numbers in the focus group discussion. For example, P2_S is not the same participant as P2_F.

Procedure

After completing the necessary consent forms, participants watched an approximately 10-minute video clip about beauty pageants. They then took the survey, which was administered in hard copy. They received their compensation at the end of the study.

The focus group session was audio recorded. Before it began, participants were told that a different person would start each question, and then everyone would have an opportunity to respond to that question. The total time for the session was approximately 75 minutes.

Data Analysis

The audio recording for the focus group session was transcribed. Data was coded according to the constant comparative strategy (Krueger & Casey, 2015). First, responses from the participants were sorted into similar categories. The researcher started with one question and began analyzing each of the participants' responses one by one. For each comment, the researcher assigned a code that explained that comment. If the next comment was similar, the researcher assigned the same code, and if it was different, the researcher assigned a different code. The researcher coded the responses for each question until all the questions had been coded. The codes related to beauty standards, diversity, body image, social comparisons, and attitudes of pageants and contestants. After the responses were categorized, the researcher looked for emergent themes, paying attention to the following factors:

- Frequency—How often was a concept mentioned?
- Extensiveness—How many different people mentioned the concept?

- Internal consistency—Did individual participants remain consistent in their views?
 - Specificity—How much detail was provided by respondents?
 - Participant perception of importance—Did participants cite this as an important concept?
 - Intensity—How much passion or force was behind the comments?
- (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 147)

For example, a majority of participants mentioned a dislike for standards of beauty in pageants, which suggests that women oppose pageant standards. Conversely, if very few participants would have discussed pageant standards, this would have suggested that perhaps women are not concerned with beauty ideals in televised pageants.

The open-ended questions and questionnaire of the survey were used to gather additional information than what was acquired from the focus group. The open-ended questions were coded using the constant comparative strategy (Krueger & Casey, 2015), as were the focus group comments. Please refer to Tables 1 and 2.

Responses to the Body Appreciation Scale and the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale were used to calculate the averages of individual responses in each scale. The open-ended responses helped determined whether participants' views remained consistent in the focus group discussion.

Results

Participants reported having watched the Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe pageants, but Miss Universe was the most common. One respondent, for example, said she watched it more than the other pageants “because it’s kind of like the

head of all of them, so it's kind of like you see like who wins out of the whole entire universe.”

Open Ended Survey Questions

Body image and physical appearance.

Participants wrote about the lack of diversity they observed in pageants. They noted that pageant contestants tend to be identical in body size. They stated that contestants are typically thin, and some pointed out that they are toned. One participant said that contestants have no cellulite. Another one thought contestants were sexualized. All participants wrote about contestants' body parts. They particularly commented about the contestants' breasts and stomachs, in some cases noting that their breasts tend to be large and their stomachs flat. They also mentioned noticing the contestants' thighs, legs, and waist.

Participants commented about various aspects of the contestants' physical appearance. They particularly wrote about skin tone and ethnicity, but they also mentioned contestants' height and hair styles. They stated that contestants with darker skin were underrepresented, and some said that the contestants were tanned:

P4_S: They all look different shades of white.

P1_S: White girls are tanned, darker skinned girls are more rare, and black girls w/very dark skin are extremely rare.

Participants noted that contestants tend to be tall, but with varying degrees. P3_S maintained that contestants are “always very tall,” while P4_S stated they are “relatively tall.” P2_S noted that contestants were tall, “but not 6 ft tall.” However, P1_S stated contestants were typically around 5'9”. Some participants pointed out that contestants

tend to have similar hair styles. One respondent, for instance, said that contestants' hair tends to be long and thick.

Participants frequently commented on the lack of diversity in pageants, but most of them did report seeing some diversity in pageants. For example, they mentioned Miss Jamaica as someone who deviated from the norm because of her darker skin and different hair style. They expressed feeling pleased when they did see diversity in pageants in regards to skin tone and ethnicity:

P3_S: I haven't seen anyone w/any different body size, but I have seen different skin color and it makes me feel good. That everyone (not everyone) but race wise in included. It's a happy feeling to know my ethnic group and others are allowed to represent [*sic*].

P2_S: It is so amazing to see women from all walks of life walking across the stage. It makes me happy that it is not just white women who win.

Only one participant expressed having seen contestants with different body types.

Comparisons with contestants.

All participants reported making comparisons with contestants. In some cases, they tried to restrain from comparing themselves with contestants but found the comparisons unavoidable. For example, P5_S asserted:

I try and stear [*sic*] away from doing so...but I can see that it is kind of inevitable not to.

Participants felt disillusioned when comparing themselves to pageant contestants. For instance, P1_S maintained:

Having a woman who supposedly represents 'American beauty standards' who looks nothing like what most American women look like can be disheartening. Other participants felt they had to work harder to look or be more like the contestants:

P3_S: I always think that I have to get to the way they look to be able to feel as confident as they do.

Another participant desired to look more like the contestants but acknowledged it must have taken a lot of work for the contestants to be in the Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants. Meanwhile, another one maintained she compared herself to contestants but would never look like them due to genetics.

Survey Scales

In the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS), one (never) is more negative and five (seldom) is more positive. Please refer to Tables 3 and 4. Conversely, in the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS), one (never) is more positive and five (seldom) is more negative. The grand average for the BAS was 3.2, which is between sometimes and often, but closer to sometimes. This suggests that participants sometimes have a more favorable attitude towards their bodies. Statements two and nine were the responses with the lowest numbers. The averages were, respectively, 2.0 and 2.6. This means that participants did not feel too satisfied with their bodies, and they spent a lot of energy concerned with their body shape or weight. The highest number in the BAC was statement four, with an average of 4.0. This demonstrates that participants accept their bodies despite its flaws.

Reverse coding was applied to statement four in the PACS. In the other four statements, one (never) would suggest a more positive attitude, while five (always) would

imply a more pessimistic attitude when watching pageants. However, statement four states, "Comparing your 'looks' to the 'looks' of pageant contestants is a bad way to determine if you are attractive or unattractive." A response of one in this case would mean that participants think it is never a bad way to compare their looks to the looks of pageant contestants to determine their attractiveness, which would suggest a more negative attitude. In other words, a response of one indicates that participants think they should compare their looks to contestants' looks to decide if they are attractive or unattractive. The initial average for question four was 4.0, but with the reverse coding, the mean was 2.0.

The grand average for the PACS was 2.6, which is between seldom and sometimes, but slightly closer to sometimes. These results indicate that participants sometimes compare themselves with pageant contestants. Statements six and 10 had the highest responses. The averages were, respectively, 3.8 and 3.6. This means that participants compare their physical appearance and figure to the physical appearance and figure of pageant contestants. Statement two was the response with the lowest number, with an average of one. All five participants responded with a one to this question. Thus, they all felt that it is never a good way for individuals to determine if they are underweight or overweight by comparing their figure to those of pageant contestants.

Focus Group Session

Standards of beauty in pageants.

Participants frequently spoke of the lack of diversity they saw in beauty pageants. They asserted that contestants' body type, height, and skin tone is generally very similar. For example, one respondent maintained:

P4_F: It's like if you took if you took all of them and put them in a line of who are the most similar, put them in the middle and the ones on the outside are the one with darker skin, the ones that are taller or shorter, like put those on the outside. Those are the ones that are immediately going to be chopped off first you know, and I think that's just so I'm not going to say surprising because it's not surprising to me at all.

Participants described contestants' body type as thin, some noting that they are also toned and fit, to varying degrees. One participant questioned the standards to which contestants are upheld:

P5_F: It's like they want you to be fit but almost like I feel like starving like be on the brink of healthy but not unhealthy.

Respondents observed different body parts of the contestants. Some respondents said they were aware of the contestants' thighs, one noticed their flat stomachs, and another one their breasts. Participants described contestants' height as fairly tall. One respondent thought that height was an important factor because they announced Miss California's height when she was on stage, noting that only three other women as tall as her had won the Miss USA pageant. Another participant expressed feeling confused about height standards, as discussed by participants, because she believed that contestants were expected to be taller. At times, respondents stated seeing some diversity in respect to body type, height, and skin tone, but with limitations. They mostly described pageant contestants as identical:

P1_F: A bunch of women who kind of look the same but like a little different but they all have like the same body type and like same smile.

P3_F: They're literally like kind of like clones a little bit except I noticed Miss Jamaica probably was the one that had the most like different figure a little bit but um other than that I kind of just see like the same thing.

P4_F: Even like the Black girls aren't that dark skinned usually...they all have very kind of like Western looking features for the most part. I just think that if they weren't all so like homogenous like maybe it would be less mind numbing to see I guess maybe.

Participants expressed wanting to see more diversity in pageants in regards to body type, height, and skin tone. Some said they would also like to see contestants with different abilities, such as a woman on a wheelchair. They said that if pageants were more diverse, they would be more likely to support them.

Comparisons with contestants.

Participants reported engaging in social comparisons with contestants and feeling self-conscious when looking at pageant contestants. They thought that other women also felt the same way when watching pageants. Some felt that comparisons with contestants were inescapable:

P2_F: I think definitely either like directly or subconsciously I think everyone compares themselves when you see something like that. It's kind of inevitable because I mean you're just like scrutinizing the way we look and just like building an ideal look so it's how can you not compare yourself to that you know.

Some participants maintained that comparing themselves with contestants did not significantly affect them. For example, one participant said that even though she might feel insecure when watching the show, she would change the channel once it was over

and forget about it, unless related content appeared in social media. Nonetheless, she did not strongly desire to emulate contestants.

Some participants felt they had to work harder. Others questioned their full potential when comparing themselves with contestants:

P2_F: It makes me feel like I'm not doing enough to look the way I should, or sometimes it doesn't even make me feel healthy.

Participants compared themselves to the contestants' body parts they felt insecure about:

P5_F: Because I don't like my inner thighs I always was staring at their like thighs and just like if they like jiggled more.

P1_F: I don't like my waist, so I look at their waist when they're walking, and I'm like "that's a small waist."

However, one participant felt she looked so different than pageant contestants that she could not engage in comparisons:

P4_F: They're different species to me....I don't let it get to myself because ever since I was little I've always been taller than everyone, thicker than everyone like big bigger, and... it's just been something that I don't compare myself to—to other girls—because I just feel like I'm on a different wavelength over here being 6'2"...my mom really is someone who has told me like don't compare yourself to other people because it's not going to help you, and so I think I'm doing a pretty good job of that—not comparing myself—which is good.

She subsequently said that viewing contestants might subconsciously impact her, but she reiterated that she actively tried to not allow this to affect her. Other participants shared similar sentiments of perhaps unconsciously comparing themselves with contestants.

Some participants explained why they thought they would ultimately not try to look like contestants. One participant felt it was unhealthy to follow the contestants' paths. P1_F attributed genetics to her inability to resemble contestants:

At first it's like ooh comparison definitely comparing myself to her, but then it's like genetics, like no I don't have it in me to look like that. Like even if I worked for like a long time I could get to like part of it, but I'm short, so I'm never going to look like they do in those heels.

Another participant acknowledged the hard work it must have taken for contestants to be where they are at, but she asserted she would never be like them because she was not going to train and compete in pageants like them.

Perceptions of beauty pageants and contestants.

Some respondents felt that some contestants want to use their title for humanitarian purposes. Others mentioned that some contestants are educated or come from a non-profit background. They expressed wanting to support contestants, but they disputed whether pageantry was an appropriate platform for contestants to create change. Some participants questioned the impact of pageant contestants:

P3_F: After you win Miss Universe you're supposed to be like this big person that's like you know you're like smart, beautiful, you're going to be inspiring and stuff like that. Who won? South Africa, was it South Africa that won? (Participant interjects: "Yeah, I think so.") Um yeah. (Participant interjects: "What the hell did she do this year?") (Participant interjects: "Is she White?") I have never I have never like recalled anything they've done afterwards....I don't want to say like they don't win anything else but like I've never heard like back of like oh like

yeah she went to this this and that helped this non-profit and now they're a big da ra ra ra ra. Like no I haven't heard that. So like it's kind of you're just winning a crown and like the cover on some type of magazine is kind of what I see.

Participants thought of pageants as superficial. For instance, P2_F stated:

I guess just like the whole idea of a beauty pageant just seems kind of antiquated to me, just um giving a woman her worth by the way she looks.

One participant thought of pageants as glamorous, while others mentioned the contestants' hair and makeup. Participants felt that pageants emphasize outer beauty over other aspects of a woman. One participant said that because pageants are beauty competitions, it is expected that the focus is on outer appearance over talent or personality. Similarly, another respondent felt that contestants were unable to demonstrate their personality because the emphasis was on stage presence and on their "showy outfits" to please the viewers. One woman said that if pageants were not about outer beauty, the swimsuit portion would not exist.

Participants doubted that intelligence plays a role in pageantry and felt that the judges did not select the winner based on her intelligence. One participant felt the question and answer section of the pageant was used as a rationale for having the pageant. Another respondent thought that one of the Miss Universe contestants did not win because she did not respond in English, and others felt the interpretation of Miss Colombia at the Miss Universe 2017 pageant was inaccurate. One participant had competed in pageants as a teenager, but she felt she would have done better if the pageant emphasized personality more. She also thought the questions she was asked were inappropriate for her age group and did not measure intelligence. Participants discussed

being more likely to support pageants if there was more diversity and had a greater emphasis on contestants' personality or talent. At the same time, one participant said the content of pageants is based on whatever will sell.

When asked whether or not they would eliminate pageants if they could, participants struggled to give a definite response. Some felt that eliminating pageants would not make a difference because they have been in existence for years. P1_F, for example, stated:

If I had the option to stop it like now I don't think I would just because I think it would be kind of pointless because I don't know, it's been there for so long and then people are like going to try to find ways to have something like that anyways because it's already in existence.

However, she added:

But if I could like wipe the creation of beauty pageants then maybe I would...I don't know, I don't really see a huge point to it. You're just trying to compare people and show unrealistic beauty standards.

Similarly, other participants did not find meaning in pageants:

P5_F: If we are watching it we're just going to comment on like "oh she's pretty" you know "look at that," but it's like I don't know. I just feel like it doesn't go past more the physical features.

Others felt that eliminating televised pageants would be futile because they believe that non-televised pageants are ubiquitous:

P3_F: It's kind of too late now because you have girls in younger pageants and wanting to you know get themselves ready for something like that so I mean, in

my hometown they have like four pageants every like I want to say every three months...so it's already a big platform. So if we took it out now it's not going to make a difference because you still have all these pageants going on, and they're money makers, so yeah.

P4_F: These big televised ones are like just the surface, like there's so...many of these little pageants in every little town and every city in America.

One participant hesitated to say she would eliminate pageants, but instead she wishes people would not want to watch pageants:

I don't know if I would prohibit something like that because I mean if ideally I'd just like to change people's minds about it like and know that's not something we should be looking at. Like that's not something we should be considering. It just perpetuates the notion of what being perfect is.

Another participant thought pageants should not be broadcast on a major media channel.

Participants also discussed the competitive nature of pageants. One participant addressed the inner feelings of contestants and thought that contestants only pretended to be friends. Participants expressed feelings of uncertainty over contestants being strived against each other. One participant said she saw two women wearing the same swimsuit, and she thought people would be talking about that. Some respondents mentioned pageants scandals. One noted that some celebrities wanted to distance themselves from the Miss Universe pageant after Donald Trump's remarks. Another participant referenced the Miss America scandal, noting that if the directors were going to be saying negative comments about former winners, such as "she got fat...why keep the show going?"

Participants discussed watching pageants with their parents or by themselves. They expressed not watching pageants too often. When they have watched them, they typically did not watch the entire show. For example, one participant said she might watch pageant videos as a form of “entertainment away from the actual pageant,” such as when Steve Harvey mistakenly announced the wrong winner. Another respondent credited her parents for keeping her away from watching pageants. Some participants felt that viewers actively choose to watch pageants, and therefore, they should know what to expect:

P3_F: You're placing yourself to watch it so like you better know your mind is going to play with you a little bit.

Another respondent expressed similar sentiments when watching pageants:

P2_F: That's why I don't really watch um pageants because it just gets in your head.

Some participants thought that women who watch beauty pageants might feel unhappy because pageants define beauty:

P3_F: It's going to make you feel like “oh man” because they come out and say these beautiful young women, so you think ok that's the only like image of beautiful that it is, but if I were to be watching like another channel they're not going to say that.

When asked about whether or not pageants might influence some women to feel worthless, some participants entertained the possibility that watching pageants might make some women question their worth. However, they did not think this was a very likely outcome. Others asserted that even though they or other women might feel

insecure when watching pageants, it does not measure their worth. P5_F forcefully asserted:

I think everyone is beautiful in their own way. Like we cannot let something like this define anything. Like maybe it makes me feel a little bad about myself, but worthless, no.

Participants felt that men watch pageants for different purposes than themselves. One of them shared that she has watched pageants with her brother, and she believes that pageant contestants resemble his ideal image of a woman.

Participants compared beauty standards in pageants to traditional beauty standards in the media. They noted the lack of diversity in body type, race, and ethnicity. In reference to a comment about Black contestants' skin not being too dark, P1_F stated:

It sucks that this kind of perpetuates the light skin beauty standards...Miss Philippines, like she's gorgeous obviously, but like most Filipinos...they have dark skin, but then in Filipino media the only stars are like light skinned Filipinos...so a lot of Asian countries because of European colonization they support like lighting creams....So it kind of sucks that that's kind of being perpetuated there, too.

One respondent likened pageant contestants to traditional media figures, suggesting that both contribute to the ideal beauty image:

Those girls look like any model you see on like *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* or any most actresses you see...so it's just every single woman you see in the media, not every single but a lot, a good majority, look similar have those very like I don't know traditional like beauty standards. They all they all line up with that.

They all are skinny and all that stuff, and so I mean why would anyone ever feel insecure if they never knew that that was what beautiful was supposed to look like?

She also compared pageants to the NFL, noting that both promulgate ideals for men and women:

NFL, it's like the male version of it [pageants]. It's like what are men supposed to be. Big and strong and be able to hit each other and whatever and tackle each other. That's like male beauty male expectations, and female expectations are to be thin and pretty and have a white smile and all of that stuff so I don't know uh it's just all of the media it just stresses me out.

Another participant noted that even though she has seen diversity in pageants, she believes they are predominately White, like the Oscars. Participants noted that other forms of media, including social media, can make someone feel bad about themselves.

Discussion

Participants' opinions remained consistent for both the open-ended survey questions and focus group discussion. The findings were supported by the results of the Body Appreciation Scale and Physical Appearance Comparison Scale.

Beauty Standards in Pageants

The first research question asked, "How do women feel about traditional beauty standards in televised beauty pageants?" Participants regularly discussed the lack of diversity in beauty pageants in regards to body type, height, and skin color. In accordance with research about beauty standards in pageants (Balogun, 2012; Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2006; Perlmutter, 2000; Schulz, 2000), they stated that

contestants are typically thin, fairly tall, and lighter skinned. For example, contestants in the Miss Universe pageant system have their weight regularly monitored as they prepare for their national pageant (Yang, 2012; Auletta & Jaén, 2013). Some countries send taller contestants to international pageants in order to raise the likelihood of capturing the crown (King-O'Riain, 2008).

One participant noted that Black women's skin was not too dark and that they have features that look Western. Research suggests that pageants favor contestants with lighter skin (King-O'Riain, 2008). Indeed, even African American winners are typically light skinned; for instance, Miss America titleholders tend to have lighter skin and Western features (Perlmutter, 2000). Vanessa Williams became the first Black woman to win the Miss America title, but she has light skin (Watson & Martin, 2000).

Some respondents also said they have not seen contestants with disabilities, like a woman in a wheelchair, for instance. Heather Whitestone was crowned Miss America 1995 even though she was hearing impaired, but her disability was not physically apparent (Perlmutter, 2000). Wolf, Krakow-Schulte, and Taff (2002) found that women with disabilities feel that their bodies are not typically represented in the media. However, some women in their study named Abbey Curran, who has cerebral palsy, as an example of someone with a disability represented in the media. She competed in the Miss USA 2008 pageant.

All participants expressed dissatisfaction with beauty standards in pageants. They continuously described contestants as women who look very similar. Overall, they stated they infrequently saw diversity, but there were times when they observed some diversity in pageants. For example, some noted that Miss Jamaica was different from other

contestants because she has darker skin and distinct hair. They reported feeling content when they did see diversity. Nonetheless, they said they would like to see more diverse contestants, and some said that this would make them more likely to support pageants.

Body Image and Appearance Satisfaction

Research questions two and three, were, respectively, “What is the relationship between televised beauty pageants and body image for women?” and “What is the relationship between televised beauty pageants and appearance satisfaction for women?” Participants said contestants are typically thin. They voiced wanting to see more diverse body types in pageants. Results for the Body Appreciation Scale show that the women were not satisfied with their bodies, and they were concerned about their body shape or weight when they watch pageants. Nonetheless, they generally accept their bodies as they are. However, the discussion on how women felt about *their* own bodies and physical appearance was limited. Some said they felt they had to work out to look like the contestants, and one participant said she felt unhealthy when watching pageants, which suggests these participants felt dissatisfied with their bodies. Some briefly mentioned noticing contestants’ body parts, such as their stomachs, thighs, waist, or breasts. They also noted that participants tend to be relatively tall and lighter skinned. Some also mentioned their similar hair styles. However, participants rarely discussed how the contestants’ physical appearance in regards to height, skin color, and specific body parts affected them.

Some participants in the present study said they felt self-conscious of their appearance when watching pageant contestants. However, at times, it is unclear what specific aspects of their appearance they feel insecure about, since they did not provide

detailed explanations. Crawford et al. (2008) found that some women in their study did not feel dissatisfied with their appearance when they saw pageant contestants. Similarly, some participants in the present study discussed not feeling too affected when looking at contestants. One participant said she might feel self-conscious in the moment but that she would later on forget about the pageant.

Social Comparisons

The fourth research questions asked, “What is the relationship between body image, appearance satisfaction, and social comparisons for women who watch televised beauty pageants?” Women in the present study engaged in social comparisons with pageant contestants. Some felt that the comparisons were unavoidable. They reported feeling disillusioned when engaging in comparisons. Research indicates that women who compare themselves to idealized media figures tend to feel dissatisfied with their appearance (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004).

According to social comparison theory, people compare themselves to others who are similar to themselves, since the comparisons would otherwise be imprecise (Festinger, 1954). Nonetheless, participants compared themselves to contestants even when they felt they would never look like them. One participant, for example, said that she compared herself with contestants, but she subsequently maintained she would not resemble contestants’ looks due to genetics, stating that she was short. Another respondent said, “I definitely think I compare myself...seeing these people who are like super you know thin and like all that you want to do that.” At the same time, she recognized the contestants’ hard work and added:

So then when you think about those kinds of things I'm like ok well this is never happening because I'm not going to do training for like years to come and like start doing pageants like when I'm like a young kid so I mean. So I'm looking at it like "Oh that'd be nice to do or be like her," but then I just like give up on it and then kind of just tune out because I know it's just a little bit irrational.

Thus, although this participant compared herself with pageants contestants, it is possible that she found contestants to be too unattainable to want to emulate them. This suggests that women are not always too dissatisfied with their appearance when they see women who embody traditional standards of beauty.

Moreover, the extent to which other participants are impacted when watching pageant comparisons is unclear. One participant, for example, said that in the moment she compared herself to contestants, but that once she stopped watching the show she would change the channel. She also said she might think about a contestant if something came up on social media, "but at the same time [she was] not like super like stretched out to be her." Therefore, social comparisons for this participant were ambivalent. She did compare herself with contestants, but she did not appear to be very discontent if she did not look like them.

While most participants expressed comparing themselves with pageant contestants to some degree, one of them considered pageant contestants to be "different species," and she asserted that she tried to refrain from engaging in comparisons with contestants. Social comparison theory states that individuals engage in comparisons with other similar individuals (Festinger, 1954). Indeed, Fardouly, Pinkus, and Vartanian (2017) theorized that women in their study made more comparisons with social media

peers than with traditional figure because they saw their social media counterparts as more relevant comparison targets. It is possible that this participant did not compare herself to pageant contestants because they were not relevant comparison targets. However, she said she may subconsciously engage in comparisons with contestants.

Although making comparison with dissimilar individual is contradictory to social comparison theory, studies suggest that women compare themselves to idealized media figures (Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Myers and Crowther, 2009). For example, Chrisler, Fung, Lopez, and Gorman (2013) found that Tweeter users engaged in upward comparisons with models from the *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show*. The comments of some participants from the present study suggest they also engage in upward comparison with contestants. For instance, some said that looking at contestants made them feel unhealthy or like they had to work out. Participants may have compared themselves to contestants because they are of the same gender (Grabe & Hyde, 2005).

The findings for the Body Appreciation Scale and Physical Appearance Comparison Scale demonstrate that participants believe they should not decide whether a person is underweight or overweight by making comparisons with contestants. The results also show that at times, they compare their physical appearance and figure to that of pageant contestants. Their comments for the open-ended survey questions and focus group discussion also indicate that they compare themselves to contestants, but this did not mean that they strongly desired to be like them. Therefore, participants did not compare themselves with contestants at all times.

Social comparison theory maintains that individuals are less prone to compare themselves to others who they believe are irrelevant (Festinger, 1954). Participants found

pageants to be shallow and they generally disapproved of contestants. Thus, they perhaps were less affected when comparing themselves to pageant contestants than they would have been if they had a more favorable opinion of them. Nonetheless, the present study suggests that most participants engaged in social comparisons with pageant contestants.

Perceptions of Beauty Pageants and Contestants

A new theme about the perceptions of beauty pageants and contestants emerged during the focus group discussion. Participants were mainly critical of pageants. They reported feeling ambivalent about them. Although some at times pointed to the potential benefits of pageants, they were quick to qualify their statements. For instance, some felt that some contestants desire to use their title to help others, but they questioned why contestants would choose to be in a beauty pageant. Some respondents' comments suggest they think that women enter pageants seeking validation.

Crawford et al.'s (2008) research indicates that some participants in their study viewed pageants positively. For instance, some said that pageants could help contestants become more confident. Participants in their research maintained that pageants are not solely about outer beauty. One participant, for example, stated:

They [contestants] have to answer so many questions not only related to women but so many global issues, and they learn how to speak, how to be friends with people...[Beauty pageants] empower women...to get out of their homes, to know different countries, talk with people (Crawford et al.'s, 2008, p.72).

In stark contrast to this participant's views, women in the present study disputed the contestants' intelligence. One participant asserted:

I feel like yeah they answer a question for their intelligence or whatever, but like do you really have a brain?

In response to her comment, one participant interjected and said, “Or did you memorize that answer?” Some participants thought the judges did not select the winner based on the most intelligent response. One participant felt that the purpose of the question and answer section was to justify the existence of pageants. Another participant of the present study, in contradiction to the participant in Crawford et al.’s (2008) study, questioned the sincerity of friendships in pageants:

They [contestants] have to... psychologically be okay with being like “I want to beat her.” I’m not even her friend, she’s not even my friend, but let me act like it so it seems like I’m nice.

One participant in Crawford et al.’s (2008) study thought that that pageant organizers should stress talent and inner qualities more. Similarly, participants of the present study felt that the focus should be on talent or personality rather than on physical appearance. They consider pageants to be superficial. The comments of women from the present study suggest they mainly have negative perceptions of pageants. They had mixed feelings of eliminating pageants. One participant said she would eliminate pageants, but others were ambivalent about eliminating pageants if they could because they said that pageants have been in existence for years.

Some participants drew parallels between beauty pageants and other forms of media. They said that contestants are thin like models in the *Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show* and White like stars of the Oscars. Another participant explained that Miss Philippines was light skinned like other Filipino media figures but in contrast to the

general Filipino population. In agreement with research on beauty standards in the media (Capodilupo and Kim, 2014; Engeln, 2017; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004), participants contend that contestants and traditional media figures tend to be thin, light skinned, and White. For example, Greenbert et al. (2003) found that thin women are predominately represented in prime-time television shows. Wasyliw et al.' (2009) study reveals that most models in fashion magazines are thin and White.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the focus group session consisted of only five participants. The opinions of a small group of women do not represent the general viewpoints of all women. Another limitation is that participants may not have responded truthfully to the survey or focus group questions, and they may have responded in a way to please the researcher. Because focus groups are conducted in a group setting, some participants may have been reluctant to share their opinion out of fear of being judged. Some women may have been influenced by the opinion of others (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). This study presents only the researcher's interpretation of the data, and another researcher may find different results. Asking different questions in the survey or focus group discussion could have yielded alternative results. In addition, the video clip shown to participants included the Miss USA 2017 pageant, but contestants from other years may not have been as racially diverse. Thus, participants may have a different viewpoint about skin, race, and ethnicity in televised pageants if another pageant year would have been shown.

Conclusion

The present study suggests that women mostly disapprove of beauty pageants. They repeatedly spoke about the lack of diversity in pageants, maintaining that contestants tend to have the same body type, lighter skin, and be fairly tall. Nonetheless, they reported seeing diversity at times and expressed feeling pleased when this happened. Most of them engaged in social comparisons with contestants. Consequently, some felt somewhat disillusioned with their appearance. However, they did not necessarily desire to imitate contestants. Perhaps this was because participants were critical of contestants and pageants. They questioned why contestants would choose to be in pageants and felt that the impact of titleholders did not extend beyond the crown. They believe that pageants disregard intelligence and instead saw them as superficial contests that judge women solely on their physical appearance. Participants equated traditional standards of beauty promoted in pageants to standards of beauty in mainstream media. They voiced being more likely to support pageants if there was greater diversity.

Implications

Although women engaged in social comparisons with contestants, pageants did not appear to immensely impact women's body and appearance satisfaction in this study. Some women expressed feeling self-conscious about their appearance when watching pageants, but they would not give thought to it after changing the channel. Participants felt that viewers actively choose to watch pageants and should therefore know to what to expect when watching them. Nonetheless, women may not watch other television shows consciously awaiting to be exposed to traditional beauty standards. It is possible that women are more dissatisfied with their bodies or appearance when watching other shows,

since they are not overtly about beauty as pageants, but they still promulgate similar standards of beauty. Moreover, participants might not have viewed pageant contestants as pertinent comparison targets because they were critical of contestants, and they questioned why they competed in pageants. However, they might find traditional media figures from other televised shows to be more relevant; thus, they might have a greater influence on their body image and appearance satisfaction.

One participant in this study noted that the announcers in pageants say that the women competing are beautiful but that this is not the case with other shows. Other television programs may not as directly vocalize what it means to be a beautiful woman, but these messages are implicitly communicated. Women may choose to change the channel or not watch pageants, but images of women who embody traditional standards of beauty are not limited to beauty pageants. They are abundant in other television shows and forms of media, including social media, and the general society. Hence, if pageants were eliminated, women would still be exposed to beauty ideals.

Further Research

Additional research should have more participants, and they should be from diverse backgrounds, since they might have other attitudes about pageants. Crawford et al.'s (2008) study, for example, suggests that some women in Nepal have more positive beliefs about pageants. Further research should consider including women who frequently watch pageants. Supplementary research could also include the perceptions that pageant moms, directors, organizers, coaches, judges, and men have of beauty pageants.

Future research could focus on the opinions of pageant contestants and titleholders. As insiders, they may have a different perspective. For example, Bowers (2016) found that local titleholders in the Miss America Organization felt subjected to stereotypes about pageants, but they still perceived many benefits of competing in pageants. Supplementary research could also extend to non-televised pageants. Although televised pageants may be more popular, there are thousands of beauty pageants across the United States (Banet-Weiser, 1999). All pageants may not be the same. Furthermore, there may be a difference in how pageant contestants and titleholders at the local, state, national, and international level perceive pageants across different pageant systems. Therefore, to get a more holistic understanding of pageantry, it would be helpful to include pageant contestants and titleholders from various pageant systems at different levels.

Moreover, ethnicity has been found to play a role in women's body image (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Frisby, 2004; Schooler et al., 2004). There are cultural pageants in the United States (King-O'Riain, 2008), and women may feel differently about their bodies or physical appearance when watching cultural rather than televised pageants, particularly if they are part of the same culture. Some pageants may also be more diverse at the local level (Schulz, 2000). Thus, women who see local rather than televised pageants may have distinct perceptions of pageants. Likewise, contestants who compete in local pageants may feel differently about pageants than contestants at the national or international level. Future research, therefore, could compare how contestants and women who watch pageants feel about local pageants versus contestants and women who watch national or international pageants.

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Table 1

Themes for Open Ended Survey Questions with Sample Comments

Body Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Type “Similar in size, all skinny” “Relatively toned” • Body Parts “All have flat stomachs.” “All seem to have large breasts.”
Physical Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin “Miss Jamaica had darker skin tone.” “Tan to a certain golden” • Ethnicity “Ethnicity seems diverse, which is great to see.” • Height “Always very tall” “Relatively tall” “Some taller/shorter” • Hair “Similar hair styles”
Social Comparisons	<p>“I try not to but obviously...it’s hard not to.”</p> <p>“I definitely compare myself to them, but then I realize I’ll never look like that because of genetics.”</p>

Table 2

Themes for Focus Group Discussion with Sample Comments

Body Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Type “They all have the same body type.” “They’re kind of all shaped the same.” • Body Parts “I notice their flat stomachs.”
Physical Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin “Even like the Black girls aren’t that dark skinned usually.” • Ethnicity “I think saw like a good bit of diversity...I still think it’s very white dominated though.” • Height “Sometimes I do see like diversity in height but at the same time like the shortest girls or the tallest ones always go.”
Diversity (Body and Physical Appearance)	“It would be nice to see a lot more diversity in shapes, sizes um and just like I guess race racial diversity as well.”
Social Comparisons	<p>“I think definitely either like directly or subconsciously I think everyone compares themselves when you see something like that. It’s kind of inevitable.”</p> <p>“They’re different species to me...so it’s just been something that I don’t compare myself to.”</p>
Perceptions of Beauty Pageants	<p>“If it if it really wasn’t about beauty then why is there a swimsuit portion?”</p> <p>“Maybe they’ll do better if they can have other kinds of people win and let people with disabilities or like any kind of thing in.”</p>
Perceptions of Contestants	“It’s like you know you’re intelligent and you’re beautiful like but you don’t need to be here to like feel good about yourself...you know you could do other things.”

Table 3

Body Appreciation Scale (BAC) Averages

	Mean (average)
1. I respect my body.	3.0
2. I feel good about my body.	2.0
3. On the whole, I am satisfied with my body.	3.2
4. Despite its flaws, I accept my body for what it is.	4.0
5. I feel that my body had at least some good qualities.	3.2
6. I take a positive attitude toward my body.	3.4
7. I am attentive to my body's needs.	3.6
8. My self-worth is independent of my body shape or weight.	3.8
9. I do not focus a lot of energy being concerned with my body shape or weight.	2.6
10. My feelings toward my body are positive, for the most part.	3.2
11. I engage in healthy behaviors to take care of my body.	3.2
12. I do not allow unrealistically thin images of contestants in beauty pageants to affect my attitudes toward my body.	3.4
13. Despite its imperfections, I still like my body.	3.4
Grand Average	3.2

Table 4

Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PAC) Averages

	Mean (average)
1. When watching beauty pageants, I compare my physical appearance to the physical appearance of pageant contestants.	3.8
2. A good way for a person to know if they are overweight or underweight is to compare their figure to the figure of pageant contestants.	1.0
3. When I watch pageant contestants, I compare how I am dressed to how pageant contestants are dressed.	2.8
4. Comparing your "looks" to the "looks" of pageant contestants is a bad way to determine if you are attractive or unattractive.	2.0
5. When I watch beauty pageants, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of pageant contestants.	3.6
Grand Average	2.6

Appendix A
Survey Questions

General Questions

What is your ethnicity?

What is your age?

How often do you watch pageants?

Which of the three pageants have you watched? Please select all that apply. (Options are Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe.)

Which segments do you watch? Please select all that apply. (Options are opening, national costume (for Miss Universe), swimsuit, talent (for Miss America), evening gown, on-stage question and answer, and crowning moment.)

Open Ended Survey Question

What do you think about the way the contestants typically look in pageants on television? For example, what do you think about their body size, height, skin color, face, hair, or specific body parts like their legs, breasts, or arms?

Is there any aspect of contestants' physical appearance that you notice more?

Do you compare the way you look to the way the contestants look? If so, how does this make you feel about yourself?

Are there times when you have seen contestants who looked different than other contestants (e.g. different body size, height, skin color, etc.)? If so, how did this make you feel?

Appendix B
Scales

Body Appreciation Scale

Directions for participants: For each item, please circle the number that best characterizes your attitudes or behaviors.

When I watch televised beauty pageants (i.e. Miss America, Miss USA, Miss Universe):

	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always
1. I respect my body.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel good about my body.	1	2	3	4	5
3. On the whole, I am satisfied with my body.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Despite its flaws, I accept my body for what it is.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that my body had at least some good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I take a positive attitude toward my body.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am attentive to my body's needs.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My self-worth is independent of my body shape or weight.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I do not focus a lot of energy being concerned with my body shape or weight.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My feelings toward my body are positive, for the most part.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I engage in healthy behaviors to take care of my body.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I do not allow unrealistically thin images of contestants in beauty pageants to affect my attitudes toward my body.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Despite its imperfections, I still like my body.	1	2	3	4	5

Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS).

Directions for participants: For each item, please circle the number that best characterizes your attitudes or behaviors.

	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always
1. When watching beauty pageants, I compare my physical appearance to the physical appearance of pageant contestants.	1	2	3	4	5
2. A good way for a person to know if they are overweight or underweight is to compare their figure to the figure of pageant contestants.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I watch pageant contestants, I compare how I am dressed to how pageant contestants are dressed.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Comparing your "looks" to the "looks" of pageant contestants is a bad way to determine if you are attractive or unattractive.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I watch beauty pageants, I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of pageant contestants.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Focus Group Guide

Target Audience: Adult women who have watched the Miss America, Miss USA, or Miss Universe pageants within the last year.

Total time: 60 – 90 minutes

Purpose: to understand how watching televised beauty pageants affects the women's perceptions of their bodies and general appearance

Before the discussion begins, give an overview of the focus group session, answer any questions, have participants fill out the informed consent form and survey, and have them verbally agree to maintain the discussion confidential.

I. Introduction (10-15 minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce myself
- Inform them that the session will be audio taped but destroyed after the end of the study
- Inform participants that in order for everyone to have an opportunity to speak, they might be interrupted
- Inform participants that a different person will start each question, but that they are allowed to pass if they choose
- Inform participants that identifying information will not be associated with their answers in the research paper

II. Warm-Up Questions (5 minutes)

Go around the room and ask everyone these questions

- What is your favorite animal?
- What is one interesting thing about you? OR What is your favorite color and why? (participants choose what question they want to answer)
- What pageants do you watch more often?

III. Formal Questions

1. What is the first thing you think of when you hear beauty pageants, specifically the Miss America, Miss USA, or Miss Universe pageants?
2. How do beauty pageant contestants typically look like? For instance, what is their body size and height, and what do specific body parts or other physical attractions look like?
3. (In reference to question 2) How do the contestants' looks make you feel about yourself when you are watching beauty pageants?

Possible follow up questions:

Do you feel good or bad about yourself when you see contestants?

Do you wish you looked different when you see contestants?

4. When you watch beauty pageants, does someone watch them with you? Do you talk about the contestants?

Possible follow up question:

What do you say about the contestants?

5. Do you compare yourself to the contestants when you watch televised pageants? If so, how does that make you feel about yourself?

Possible follow up questions:

Do you wish you looked like the contestants?

In what ways do you wish you be like contestants? Is it their looks or something else?

6. Some people think that beauty competitions put too much emphasis on a woman's appearance, and that they might influence women to think that they are worthless if they are not beautiful. Do you agree or disagree?" (Crawford, 2017)

Possible follow up question:

Do you think that beauty pageants teach women that if they do not look a certain way, they are not beautiful?

7. If it were up to you to, would you permit or prohibit televised beauty pageants (Crawford, 2017)?

Possible follow up questions:

Do you think beauty pageants serve a purpose in society?

Do you think that beauty pageants are all about beauty? If not, what are they about? If yes, should they be this way?

8. Is there anything else you would like to say about beauty pageants?

III. Closing (2 m)

- thank participants for taking the time to participate in focus group
- remind them that their identities will not be associated with the information used in the research paper and that the audio tape will be destroyed after the study is complete
- remind them that if necessary, the researcher will contact them 15 days to one month after the focus group session to ask any clarifying questions
- remind participants about confidentiality and not sharing the discussion outside of the group
- let them know that if they have any questions or want to know the results of the study, they can contact the researcher at ddelacr3@mail.sfsu.edu or the faculty advisor, Melissa Camacho, at mcamacho@sfsu.edu