

**For better or Worse:
The effect of thin models in the media on females' self-evaluation**

Abstract

Many social psychology studies have investigated the effect of assimilation and contrast in social comparison. The current study was built on the three selves model (Blanton & Stapel, 2008) in the context of body image and added in the effect of perceived similarity with models by manipulating the nationality of models. The main effect of mindset and the interaction effect between mindsets and nationality of models on females' body esteem and emotion are the main focus of the study. It is hypothesized that assimilation occurs when possible and collective self mindset activate during social comparison. Participants exposing to Chinese models may intensify the assimilation effect because of the higher psychological bonding with Chinese models than that of Caucasian models. On the other hand, it is hypothesized that contrast occurs when personal mindset activates. Exposing to Chinese models may intensity the contrast because of the head-on comparison. The study recruited 174 female Chinese to conduct a 2 (Chinese models VS Caucasian models) × 3 (personal self, possible self, collective self) factorial ANOVA experiment. The result of the experiment showed that activated mindsets indeed influence body esteem. However, complicated result was found in the interaction and emotion.