

Experimental Evidence that Theistic-Religious Body Affirmations Improve Women's Body Image

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We examined in a random-assignment, pretest-posttest design whether college women's body image would improve after reading religious and spiritual affirmations about their bodies. The sample was predominantly white and Christian. In a pretest, women completed measures of religiosity and body esteem (how they felt about their weight and appearance) and were then assigned via matched random assignment to three different groups for a treatment and posttest one week later. In the Religious group, women read affirmations with a theistic and Christian-based tone that emphasized God's love and acceptance of their bodies; in the Spiritual group, women read body affirmations with a more positive secular tone and no mention of God; Control group women read random statements about campus issues. After reading the affirmations, women then viewed photos of "thin ideal" fashion models to activate body image concerns. Women next completed the posttest body esteem measures. Women in the Religious group increased significantly compared to Control women (who declined) in how they felt about their appearance and looks. Women in the Spiritual condition improved marginally compared to the Control condition.

In the United States, poor body image is so pervasive for young women that it has been referred to it as "normative discontent" (Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, and Rodin 1986). A common explanation for this body dissatisfaction is the ubiquitous media emphasis on a "thin ideal" (e.g., Harter 1998; Thompson and Stice 2001; Tiggemann 2001). Research has confirmed that females' exposure to such thin-ideal images is associated with a decline in body image satisfaction and an increase in disordered eating. These results have emerged not only in studies with correlational design (e.g., Levine, Smolak, and Hayden 1994) but experimental designs (Hargreaves and Tiggeman 2003; Hawkins et al. 2004).

There is ample evidence that religiosity is linked to many aspects of psychological and medical well-being (Koenig, McCullough, and Larson 2001). Unfortunately, little of this empirical work has addressed religiosity in relation to body image. Indeed, many reviews of religion and health do not mention body image at all (e.g., Chamberlin and Hall 2000; Koenig et al. 2001; Plante and Sherman 2001). However, it is clear that many religions espouse beliefs that are relevant to body image. These include doctrinal assertions that people are made in the image of God, that the body is a gift from God or a temple of God, and that God is loving and forgiving and merciful—presumably regardless of one's appearance or weight. In major research reviews on body image, there is rare acknowledgment of religion and spirituality (see, e.g., Grogan 1999; Thompson and Smolak 2001). Given the centrality of body image in women's self-esteem, this neglect can only lead to an incomplete understanding of women's well-being.

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There are rich historical treatments of links between religion, body, and eating (e.g., Bemporad 1996; Bynum 1987; Keel and Klump 2003; Lelwica 1999; Miles 1995; Vandereycken and van Deth 1994). There are also several studies of women diagnosed with body image or eating disorders who have used their religious beliefs to justify or perpetuate their illness (see Banks 1997; Ford 1992; Graham, Spencer, and Andersen 1991; Joughin et al. 1992; Morgan, Morgan, Marsden, and Lacey 2000). These historical and clinical cases suggest that the dynamics between religion and women's body image have a long and complicated history. There is also growing attention to the role of religion and spirituality in psychotherapy with individuals or families with eating disorders (e.g., Forthun, Pidcock, and Fischer 2003; Richards et al. 1997). However, case studies on tiny samples of women with severe pathology and therapeutic integrations of religion may not capture how these variables interact in the majority of contemporary, nondiagnosed young women who possess a "normative discontent" (Striegel-Moore et al. 1986) about their bodies.

Recent empirical work has shown that women's religiosity has a positive relationship with their body image. For example, correlational research on the construct of sanctification has shown that the more college women view their bodies as being expressions of God and as having sacred qualities (e.g., blessed, holy), the higher their body image (Mahoney et al. 2005). In addition, feeling better about one's weight and appearance is related to praying more, having a closer relationship with God, and having higher intrinsic religious orientation (Boyatzis and McConnell 2002). In another sample, adolescent girls' belief in God predicted unique variance in their body image (Boyatzis and Walsh 2006). In college women who were highly religious, prayer was an effective coping mechanism to deal with body image and eating concerns (Jacobs-Pilipski et al. 2005). Higher scores on quest orientation—an openness to change in their religious beliefs and an acceptance of doubt as integral to their faith—were related to significantly lower body satisfaction in young women (Boyatzis and McConnell 2006). An analysis of female college students and graduate students at a Southern university showed that prayer frequency, importance of religion, and religious intimacy with one's father (open discussion about religious and spiritual issues) each predicted significant and unique variance in women's body esteem (Boyatzis and Wallace submitted). Support for the positive role of religiosity also comes from qualitative data showing that when women describe in writing whether and how religion affects their body image, the impact is typically positive (Boyatzis et al. 2006). Thus, evidence from multiple samples and multiple measures is pointing to a healthy association between religiosity and young women's satisfaction with their bodies.

Unfortunately, the correlational designs that are prevalent in the research just described preclude any insight about religion's *causal* impact on body image. This is a well-known and much-lamented shortcoming in the broader literature on well-being and religiosity (e.g., Koenig et al. 2001). To rectify this limitation, in our study we employed a random-assignment, pretest-posttest design. Women first completed a pretest of their body image and provided data on basic religiosity indices (e.g., prayer frequency, importance of religion, service attendance). Women's scores on these measures were used to create equivalent groups for the subsequent treatment conditions. Women were randomly assigned to a religious, spiritual, or control condition. In the religious condition, women read theistic affirmations that explicitly mentioned God and that endorsed acceptance and approval of one's body (e.g., "God has created my body, and I am able to see the divine perfection in my own body"). In the spiritual condition, women read body affirmations with a more secular spiritual tone and with no mention of God (e.g., "With love and joy, I am able to accept and embrace the body that I have"). In the control group, women read neutral passages with no religious or spiritual content or mention of body issues.

After women read their affirmations, all participants viewed photos of fashion models that represented a beautiful and "thin ideal"; this task was intended to activate women's concerns about body image. Women then completed a posttest survey of their body esteem, and posttest scores were compared to their pretest body esteem scores. Our between-group, pretest-posttest design is advantageous in light of a recent meta-analysis, which found that such a design generated good effect sizes (Groesz, Levine, and Murnen 2002).

In our study, we expected that women who viewed the photos of thin-ideal fashion models but did not read any body affirmations would decline in body image. In contrast, we predicted that women who read statements affirming the goodness and perfection of their bodies would enjoy a protective buffer or “inoculation” from the negative impact of viewing thin-ideal photos. We further expected that the theistic-religious affirmations would lead to the strongest benefits due to the prior finding (Mahoney et al. 2005) that women who viewed their bodies as sacred and holy also had higher body image. The affirmations used in this study are a kind of “positive intervention” that is becoming increasingly common in experimental research on well-being and positive psychology (e.g., Seligman et al. 2005).

METHOD

Participants

The initial sample was 135 women enrolled in general psychology courses at a private university; women received course credit for participation. Most women (80 percent) were first-years and sophomores, and the large majority of women were white. We omitted 10 women from the initial sample, resulting in a final sample of 125. Given the nature of the experiment's pictorial stimuli with fashion models (described below), women who reported on the demographic survey that they had been diagnosed with an eating disorder ($N = 5$) did not see these stimuli and completed an alternate set of materials in the procedure; these women were not included in the final sample. Two other women were omitted due to incomplete data. Given the purpose of the study and nature of the religious and spiritual affirmation manipulations, we also omitted any women whose responses to the demographic survey showed that they were extremely nonreligious, defined as meeting at least four of these five criteria: they never prayed, never attended worship services, did not belong to a religious denomination, classified themselves as “neither religious nor spiritual,” and indicated that religion was “not at all important” to them. Only three women fell into this category and were omitted.

On a demographic survey women reported their height and their weight; to report their weight, women placed themselves within a decile group (e.g., 121–130 lbs.) from a list we provided (from 81–90 lbs. to 251–260 lbs.). For each woman, we assigned the midpoint of the decile she chose (e.g., 125 lbs.) and used that figure to compute BMI. The final sample's average body mass index (BMI) was 22.24 ($SD = 3.26$). In terms of religious affiliation, 41 percent of women stated they were Protestant, 34 percent Catholic, 11 percent Jewish, and 13 percent agnostic or atheist. In response to how important religion was to the participants, 18 percent said “not at all,” 43 percent “somewhat,” 27 percent “very,” and 12 percent “extremely.”

Procedure

Women completed two testing sessions one week apart. In the first (pretest) session, women completed a demographic survey and the 23-item Body Esteem (BE) Scale (Mendelson, Mendelson, and White 2001), with subscales on how women felt about their appearance (BE-App) and weight (BE-Wt). Higher scores indicated more positive body esteem. Internal consistency was strong on BE-App and BE-Wt subscales ($\alpha = 0.90$ and 0.93 , respectively). To avoid any time-of-year or day-of-week effects on women's body esteem scores, data collection sessions were conducted on different days during the week, different months throughout the academic year, and over a span of three semesters. Data collection sessions were conducted in small groups of 6–12 women.

After the first session, women were assigned via matched random assignment to one of three body-affirmation conditions based on women's self-reported importance of religiosity and pretest BE scores. This matching process yielded equivalent groups. Groups were not different on their average BE-App scores, $F(2, 122) = 1.02$, nor BE-Wt scores, $F(2, 122) = 0.89$. In addition, the

groups did not differ on BMI, $F(2, 122) = 1.70$, with M s ranging from 21.50 to 22.86 across the three groups. The groups were also similar in religiosity. For example, on the demographic survey, religion was “not at all” or “somewhat” important to 62 percent of women in the Religious group, 67 percent of the Spiritual group, and 61 percent of the Control group.

In the second session one week later, women completed several small tasks. First, they were told to “spend several minutes reading and thinking about” a list of 15 statements. In the Control group ($N = 41$), women read 15 statements about current events at their university; these statements had no references to religious or spiritual issues or to body image (e.g., “Student government meetings are open to students and the campus community”). The other two groups read brief body-affirmation statements. Each group read a different set of affirmations, all of which were chosen for their ostensibly positive and uplifting message. In the Religious group ($N = 42$), most statements were explicitly theistic as most mentioned God; many affirmations were Christian-based and some were quotations from or inspired by New Testament biblical passages (e.g., “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?”). Due to their theistic emphasis, these affirmations would be quite consistent with the definition of “religious” for most Americans (e.g., Zinnbauer et al. 1997). The Spiritual group ($N = 42$) read 15 similar body affirmations but with no reference to God (e.g., “The spirit of life is expressed in my body—I treat it with reverence and respect”). These affirmations emphasize a positive and holistic view of the body without any explicit religious intonations.

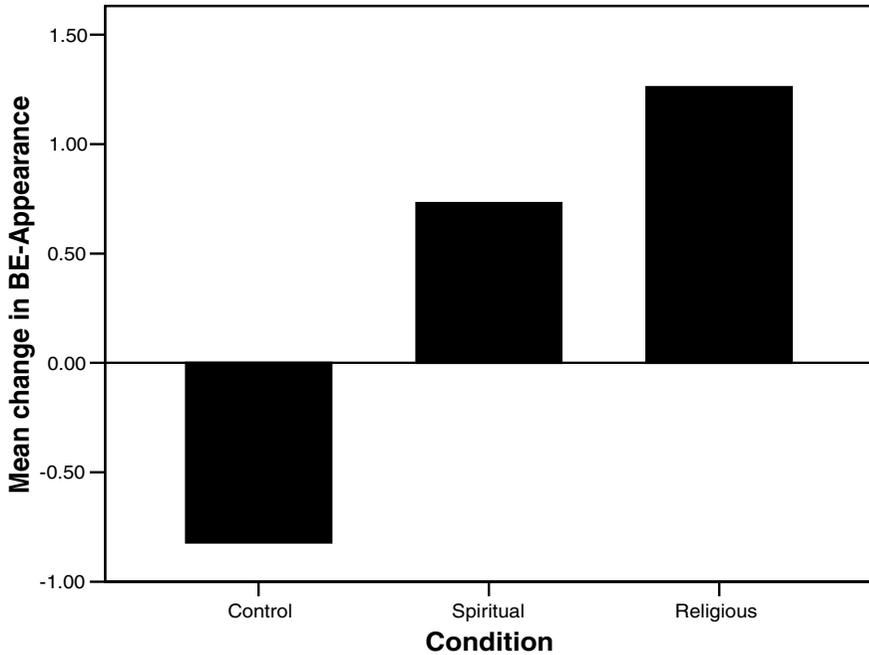
We recognize that in some ways the spiritual affirmations may reflect a “positive psychology” message more than a spiritual one, and that some of the statements could be endorsed by individuals regardless of their spiritual or nonspiritual inclinations. To determine if this set of affirmations would be viewed “spiritual” by young women like those in our sample, we asked 30 college students (M age = 19 years) who were from the same university as the sample but not used in the actual experiment to rate each of the 15 spiritual statements on a four-point scale (1 = *not at all spiritual*, 4 = *extremely spiritual*). The list had an overall average of 2.61 ($SD = 0.23$), which fell between “somewhat spiritual” and “strongly spiritual,” and the set of items had acceptable internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.73$). Thus, there we feel there is some empirical basis for labeling this condition “spiritual.” (A narrative account of how these affirmation lists were created is offered below,¹ and the Appendix includes the statements for the three conditions.)

Then, to make the body image manipulation less apparent, women completed the first of two distracter tasks by reading a brief story that was neutral in tone with no reference to religion, spirituality, or body image. Next, women were told to examine “for about 4 minutes” a packet of 16 black-and-white photocopies of full-page, full-body photographs of fashion models from women’s magazines. These photographs were chosen by our research group from among dozens of options to epitomize the “thin ideal”; the photos were full page with no text on them, and the women in the photos were alone and not blatantly endorsing a product. If the participants stopped looking at the packet early (before the four minutes had passed), they were asked by the experimenter to continue looking at them. (Recall that the women were tested in small groups, in part to allow such monitoring.) Then, women completed the second distracter—writing a one-paragraph summary of the short story they had read earlier. Moments later, women completed the posttest body esteem measurement. To disrupt the potential for a response set (from doing the survey a week earlier), the 23 body esteem items were ordered randomly and were embedded in a longer list that included a dozen distracter statements about academics (e.g., “I do better on papers than exams”).

RESULTS

The major dependent variable was the change from pretest to posttest in women’s scores on the BE-Appearance and BE-Weight subscales of the body esteem measure. Positive change scores indicated that body esteem scores improved from pre- to posttest, and negative scores

FIGURE 1
MEAN CHANGE IN BODY ESTEEM APPEARANCE FROM PRE- TO POSTTEST BY CONDITION



indicated that body esteem scores dropped (i.e., women felt worse about their bodies). A one-way ANOVA on BE-Wt scores found no significant differences between the groups in their pre- to posttest change in how they felt about their weight, $F(2, 122) = 1.15$; the mean change scores were Religious ($M = 1.19$, $SD = 3.47$), Spiritual ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 4.11$), and Control ($M = 0.66$, $SD = 4.10$). On the measure of BE-App, however, a one-way ANOVA comparing the change scores revealed a significant effect for group, $F(2, 122) = 5.42$, $p = 0.006$ (see Figure 1). A post hoc Tukey test found that women in the Religious group ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 3.04$) increased significantly more than Controls ($M = -0.98$, $SD = 3.37$) on BE-App ($p = 0.005$). The means indicate that, as predicted, Control women who did not read any affirmations felt worse about their appearance whereas women who read religious body affirmations felt better about their appearance. Women in the Spiritual group ($M = 0.54$, $SD = 3.05$) were marginally higher than women in the Control group ($p = 0.08$) but, contrary to our prediction, not significantly different from women in the Religious group. Additional analyses controlling for women's pretest scores and BMI values confirmed the effect of the group condition on women's BE-App change scores² (Figure 1).

Descriptive data and individual participant change scores help convey the benefits of Religious affirmations for women's BE-App. In the Religious group a majority of women (27/42 or 64.2 percent) improved or felt better about their looks versus a minority in the Control group (14/41, or 34 percent) and Spiritual group (20/42, or 47.6 percent). In terms of negative changes (i.e., feeling worse about their appearance), only 28.5 percent (12/42) of women in the Religious group had a negative change score whereas 53.6 percent (22/41) of Control women and 38 percent (16/42) of Spiritual women changed for the worse. The group differences are further illuminated by the most extreme change scores. Across the entire N of 125, of the *most positive* change scores on BE-App (i.e., increases of 5+ points), four of these seven scores were from women in the Religious group, two of seven in the Spiritual group, and only one of seven in the Control group. (The actual positive change scores in the Religious group were 10, 6, 6, and 5; in the Spiritual group

12 and 5; and in the Control group 6.) In contrast, of the *most negative* change scores (declines of 5+ points), five of six were in the Control group and one was in the Religious group. (These actual scores in the Control group were -11, -6, -6, -6, -5 and, in the Religious group, a -5.) These findings underscore the different effects of theistic-religious affirmations versus control statements on women's feelings about their appearance.

DISCUSSION

We believe this study is the first to demonstrate in a random-assignment experiment that reading religious messages about one's body improves women's body image. As we predicted, women who read theistic-religious or spiritual affirmations about their bodies subsequently felt better about their appearance than did control women who did not read such affirmations. (We explore below why only the religious group changed significantly more than the control group.) These positive changes in the affirmation groups occurred despite the fact that all the women viewed thin fashion models, a manipulation that typically impairs body image (Hawkins et al. 2004) and that did occur in the control group. Of course, the benefits of theistic-religious affirmations could have been due to the temporal proximity between the affirmations and the body image measure, so future research must determine whether the effects are lasting or only ephemeral. We note, though, that research on various positive interventions has found lasting rather than fleeting positive effects (Seligman et al. 2005).

Our findings extend recent work that has found significant relations between religiosity and body image (e.g., Boyatzis et al. 2006; Boyatzis and McConnell 2006; Gluck and Geliebter 2002; Mahoney et al. 2005). However, rather than merely add to the many correlations linking religion and well-being, this study shows that reading theistic-religious affirmations of one's body improved how women feel about their appearance and looks. Many of those affirmations emphasized God's embrace of the body as whole and perfect and deserving of respect; several affirmations causally yoked the relationship with God to a higher status of the body (e.g., "Because I am a child of God, I am perfect and whole and my body is perfect and whole"). Other religious affirmations endorsed a healthy perspective that could enhance women's body image (e.g., "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"). The qualities of divine acceptance and a balanced perspective on the body may well have helped women in the theistic-religious group feel better about their appearance, whereas control women received no such enhancement. The women in the spiritual condition read statements without a divine approval or authoritative voice outside the self and improved only marginally compared to control women. Put another way, to feel better about one's appearance, some affirmations were better than none, but theistic affirmations stating God's love and acceptance were best of all.

Because three-quarters of our sample's women affiliated with a Christian religion, it is possible that the religious affirmations' theistic and Christian tone were especially salient given our sample. However, the women in the religious group were not particularly religious—fully 61 percent of them felt that religion was "not at all" or only "somewhat" important to them. The potency of the religious affirmations is further supported by other facts. First, women in the religious condition improved on BE-Appearance regardless of their body mass index and their scores on their appearance pretest.² Second, the improvement occurred after reading just 15 affirmations, which fit on one page, for just a few minutes. Third, the stimuli we used to activate body image concerns could have been stronger. A meta-analysis on the impact of thin-ideal fashion models on body image has shown that effect sizes decrease as the number of stimuli increases (Groesz et al. 2002). The strongest effects have occurred with fewer than 10 photos (Groesz et al. 2002) and in our study women viewed 16 photos, a number of stimuli associated with lower effects. In light of these facts, the positive impact of the religious affirmations seems all the more impressive.

Though this experiment could not identify the particular mechanism(s) to explain why religious affirmations helped, it seems plausible that women's beliefs and feelings about their looks could become more positive from reading a set of affirmations that are rich in religious imagery and language and that espouse a vision of one's body as divinely loved and accepted. Research on sanctification of the body suggests that thinking of the body as holy and sacred provides a cognitive framing that can enhance body image (Mahoney et al. 2005). Our findings are consistent with this interpretation; the affirmations may well have provided women with immediately available, sanctifying lens through which to view their own body. Faulty cognitions and irrational views of one's body are common in body image problems (e.g., Freedman 1990), and the findings here may inspire future research to determine if positive body affirmations with a theistic tone may uplift women's body schemas. Of course, as one reviewer of an earlier version of this article pointed out, it would not be difficult to identify Judeo-Christian statements about the body that could have detrimental impact on one's body image. Indeed, there are many case studies throughout history confirming this negative scenario in which women have used religious language and imagery to perpetuate their pathological eating and body image (e.g., Banks 1996; Bynum 1987).

However, in the present experiment the positive affirmations about one's looks seem to have offered a constructive counterpoint—especially for our young women who were not highly religious—to the ubiquitous messages and images women receive about appearance. Thus, not only the basic content but the distinctiveness and novelty of the affirmations may have enhanced women's body schemas and feelings about their looks. Some of our recent work (Boyatzis et al. 2006) suggests that qualitative data may be key for understanding the links between women's religious beliefs and their body image.

It is unclear why affirmations would lead women to feel better about their appearance but not weight. There were no differences between groups' change scores on BE-Wt. In our sample, women's average BMI was 22.24, comparable to college women of similar ages (e.g., Arriaza and Mann 2001). The percentage of women in our sample with underweight (BMI < 18.5) or overweight or obese (BMI > 25 and 30, respectively) body masses was similar to national norms (e.g., Faith et al. 2001; www.cdc.gov/growthcharts). Therefore, it is unlikely that women's feelings about their weight did not change because they were particularly thin to begin with. An alternative explanation is that appearance, more than weight, consists of many different components (e.g., Page and Fox 1997) and thus may be more prone to influence due to affirmations. For many women, appearance involves features that can fluctuate markedly across days or even within days, such as hair style, makeup, facial complexion, different items of clothing, and so on. These myriad factors may be more susceptible to influence from body affirmations, whereas weight may be a more stable component of body image.

Future studies will need to examine the effect of affirmations on body image in more diverse samples. For example, the vast majority of our sample was white. In comparison with white women, African-American women have higher BMIs *and* higher body satisfaction (e.g., Dounchis, Hayden, and Wilfley 2001). Future research will examine the effect of affirmations on body image in additional racial and ethnic groups. Our sample also came from a single, private university in the northeast. Given the regional differences in religiosity (Gallup and Lindsay 1999) it will be important to examine these issues in samples in other geographic regions. Toward that end, a recent study on college women at a large southern public university (Sedges et al. 2006) showed positive links between religiosity and body image similar to what has been found in other regions (e.g., Boyatzis et al. 2006; Mahoney et al. 2005). Finally, although our sample came from a nonclinical and normative population, our work has implications for interventions. Among psychotherapy practitioners there is a surge of interest in spiritual and religious issues (e.g., Miller 1999; Richards and Bergin 2000; Smith et al. 2003; Sperry and Shafranske 2005). Whether the body affirmation manipulation in this study would enhance body image in women with diagnosed disorders remains

to be seen, and ideally future research would allow comparisons of women with and without diagnosed body image or eating problems.

In closing, while more work on these issues is needed, this study is important for demonstrating that theistic-religious affirmations that emphasized divine acceptance of one's body make women feel better about their appearance. Whether this effect lasts over time remains to be determined, but that these findings emerged in a sample of nondiagnosed college women in an experimental, random-assignment design makes it all the more significant.

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NOTES

1. The body affirmation statements for the Religious and Spiritual groups were generated during multiple discussions by a group of six to eight researchers. To find material for these lists, we consulted different versions of the Bible and perused books and websites that addressed body, eating, or food issues from a religious or more secular spiritual perspective. To create meaningful distinctions between the Religious and Spiritual conditions, we considered prior research findings (e.g., Zinnbauer et al. 1997) that Americans conceive of "religion" in more God-based, traditional, and organizational terms, whereas conceptions of "spiritual" are marked by more personal, idiosyncratic, and private qualities. Consequently, we decided that the Religious items should have a more institutional tone and emphasize the relationship with a divine being. In contrast, we designed the Spiritual items to have a more secular or what some might call a "New Age" feel. We tried to create parallel statements for the two conditions; for example, one Religious statement is "The Spirit of God is expressed in my body, and therefore, it is my duty to treat it with reverence and respect," and its parallel Spiritual item is "The spirit of life is expressed in my body. I treat it with reverence and respect." To arrive at the specific affirmations, our research group drafted many different statements for possible inclusion, and through extensive discussion we settled on 15 items for each that we believed had face validity. For example, 12 of the 15 Religious items mention "God," whereas none of the Spiritual items do. In one of the three Religious statements that do not mention God, the word "Spirit" appears several times in capitalized form. The Religious statements contain terms associated with organized religion rather than spirituality (e.g., words such as "glorify," "temple," "reverence"), whereas such words are rare in the Spiritual statements. To emphasize the organized-institutional tone of the Religious items, four of the 15 statements were quoted verbatim from the Bible.

The Appendix provides citations for many items we located in published or online sources. (Several items were drawn from original works yet we failed to record their specific sources, and we apologize for this oversight.) A *t*-test showed that the total number of words in the Religious (379) and Spiritual (337) affirmations were not significantly different from each other. In addition, the number of times that key words appeared in the statements was similar (e.g., "body" appeared 19 times in the Religious and 16 times in the Spiritual affirmations; "soul" appeared three times in Religious and five times in Spiritual statements). The lists were also highly similar in pronoun usage. For example, first-person singular pronouns appear in nine Religious affirmations and eight Spiritual affirmations; second-person singular pronouns appear in two affirmations each in Religious and Spiritual; first-person plural pronouns appear in two Religious and three Spiritual affirmations; and there are no pronouns in two affirmations each in Religious and Spiritual. Thus, the affirmations in the two conditions differed in terms of language about God and traditional religious terminology but were rather similar in length, pronouns, and several other key terms.

2. To confirm the effect of the group condition on women's BE-App scores, we computed additional analyses. Because change scores are sensitive to pretest scores, in one analysis we controlled for women's pretest scores; in another analysis we controlled for women's BMI to ensure that the group differences were not due to women's weight relative to their height. No between-group differences emerged on women's BE-Wt. However, a repeated measures ANCOVA on women's posttest BE-App scores, using women's pretest BE-App scores as a covariate, yielded a significant group effect on women's posttest BE-App scores, $F(2, 114) = 4.20, p < 0.02$. A second ANCOVA on women's BE-App change scores, this time using women's BMI as the covariate, also found a significant group effect on women's BE-App change scores, $F(2, 114) = 5.53, p < 0.01$. These analyses were consistent with the ANOVA reported in the text of the Results section and confirmed that religious affirmations improved women's feelings about their appearance, regardless of women's pretest scores or BMI scores.

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APPENDIX

Religious Passages

1. Because I am a child of God, I am perfect and whole and my body is perfect and whole.
2. The Spirit of God is expressed in my body, and therefore, it is my duty to treat it with reverence and respect.
3. My body is the temple of the living Lord. I am filled with the infinite Intelligence of God who sees this body only as whole and perfect.
4. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?^a
5. My body is blessed. It is God who cleanses soul and sets my mind and body free from all imperfections and disharmonies.

6. I love, bless, and thank God for all the foods that I have, and intend that whatever I consume provides me with positive, healing energy.
7. For the spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty keeps me alive.^b
8. I love my mind, body, and soul, unconditionally. God has created my body, and I am able to see the divine perfection in my own body.
9. With God's gifts of love and joy, I am able to accept and embrace the body I have been given.
10. God gives me food not for pleasure, but for me to nourish my mind, body, and spirit.
11. Let no one act as your judge in regard to food and drink.
12. Our journey begins in spiritual infancy and unfolds and grows through our everyday experiences. It is all right to be hungry. It is all right to want more. But it is God who feeds the waiting heart. We must wait—ever gentle with ourselves, until God scoops us up, and comforts us.
13. As the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin, so are we, soul and body, clad in the Goodness of God.
14. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.^c
15. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? . . . So glorify God in your body.^d

^aWorld English Bible.

^bNew American Bible.

^cRevised King James Revised.

^dStandard Version.

Spiritual Passages

1. With love and joy, I am able to accept and embrace the body that I have.
2. Because I love my body, I consider it to be perfect and whole.
3. If you talked to your friends the way you talk to your body, you'd have no friends left at all.^a
4. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the brightness of the heavenly is one kind and that of the earthly another. The brightness of the sun is one kind, the brightness of the moon another, and the brightness of the stars another. For star differs from star in brightness.^b
5. I will my body to be cleansed and set free from all imperfections and disharmonies.
6. I am thankful for the foods that I choose to eat, and whatever I consume provides me with positive, healing energy.
7. In order to experience everyday spirituality, we need to remember that we are spiritual beings spending some time in a physical body.^c
8. I love my mind, body, and soul, unconditionally. I am able to see perfection in my own body.
9. The spirit of life is expressed in my body.
10. I wish to see my body only as whole and perfect.
11. Some say the soul informs the body. But what if we were to imagine for a moment that the body informs the soul . . . Do we wish to spend a lifetime allowing others to detract from our bodies, judge them, find them wanting?
12. Your body is your vehicle in life. As long as you are here, live in it. Love, honor, respect and cherish it, treat it well, and it will serve you in kind.^d
13. The spirit of life is expressed in my body. I treat it with reverence and respect.
14. None of us is perfect—not our souls, not our bodies. One of the most compassionate things we can do for ourselves is not take those imperfections too seriously.

15. The human body is an immense source of imagination. The body is the soul presented in its richest and most expressive form.

^aMarcia Hutchinson.

^b <http://www.catholic-forum.com/dcforum/DCForumID2/743.html>.

^cBarbara DeAngelis.

^dSuzy Prudden.

Control Passages

1. Many local businesses advertise regularly in the campus newspaper and occasionally send messages through the campus email system.
2. The Samek Art Gallery exhibit contains traditional Chinese art forms in new ways. All of them represent the vital regeneration of contemporary life in China today.
3. When Ben Stein came to campus recently, he was quoted as saying, "My best advice is to fall in love."
4. The Campus Theater was under restoration for eight months and opened to the public a few weeks ago.
5. The National Society of Black Engineers hosted the first Multicultural Explosion in Larison Dining Hall, where 11 groups performed.
6. The Career Development Center offers weekly events to help place juniors and seniors in internships and jobs.
7. The Kalman Research Symposium was held for undergraduates in different departments who conducted research with faculty.
8. The university is considering making cable TV available in the dorms next year.
9. The Choreographer's Showcase, held in Tustin's Black Box theater, Bucknell faculty and students in a variety of dance routines.
10. The director of the health services had hoped to run for the U.S. House of Representatives.
11. A team of Bucknell math students competed in this year's Lowell Putnam Math competition. Participants spend 6 hours trying to solve 12 challenging problems.
12. James Brown will not be coming to campus for Chrysalis. George Clinton will be performing instead.
13. Members of the admissions staff believe the increased number of visitors to Bucknell last summer, up 41 percent, played a pivotal role in this year's record number of applications.
14. Student government meetings are open to students and the campus community.
15. Actor/writer James Earl Jones will give the lecture, "The Culture Quest," on April 12 in the Weis Center.

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