# Transcript

**00:00:03 Announcer**

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

**00:00:11 Emily Letterman**

Thin. Corseted. Short. Heroin chic. Rubenesque. Healthy. What society considers beautiful in women is ever changing. But no matter the style, one thing remains the same – women are never content with their bodies.

Body image has been at the forefront for women for as long as women have been alive, but in a world of Photoshop, and the increasing use of AI images, the landscape is unlike any women have faced before.

I’m Emily Letterman. My guest today is Missouri State University professor of psychology Dr. Brooke Whisenhunt who studies body image and the influences of social media.

**00:00:50 Dr. Brooke Whisenhunt**

So, it's a whole new landscape. In terms of how to approach body image, but I think one of the take home messages is that we really have to be thinking about social media literacy. If you want to think about it that way at a really young age, but it has to go kind of get turbocharged in the world of social media and it needs to come at younger and younger ages.

I am kind of shocked at the age at which girls, particularly thinking about girls and body image, in particular the age at which they start posting and being exposed to this content, is younger and younger. So an 8-year-,old 30 years ago probably was not as influenced by these things. As you see an 8-year-old now.

**00:01:29 Emily Letterman**

Whisenhunt says media literacy isn't just knowing a magazine cover is photoshopped, but also that the picture your friend just posted probably is, too.

**00:01:38 Dr. Brooke Whisenhunt**

When I first started doing research and body image, some of the studies that we were really interested in were looking at magazine images or publications, TV shows, things like that, and really kind of concerned about this idea that you could Photoshop these images and they wouldn't be real. And I kind of laugh when I think back to that.

As a naive kind of interpretation, whereas now, we're faced with social media, we've got Instagram and snap pictures and all kinds of things that lots of girls tend to look to more than anything. And if you think about the filters now that people can put on those images, the amount of editing that goes into a single girls post where she will put one image.

But she took maybe 50 images and she's going to highly cultivate what she puts out there. So one of our concerns in terms of body image, I would say given this like mass amount of social media that are young people and I guess anyone is.

Zooming is that this is such highly cultivated images and used to in the old days, people would compare themselves to an ideal image, maybe a model who's on a cover of a magazine, whereas now they're comparing themselves to their friends. So they think this is a real image of their friends, as opposed to the idea that they know this isn't real when they looked at a magazine article.

**00:03:00 Emily Letterman**

In her research, Whisenhunt found women have been chronically dissatisfied with their current body size. While that size has increased in Americans, the ideal body size has also decreased. There is an obvious disconnect.

**00:03:12 Dr. Brooke Whisenhunt**

From a really historical perspective, idealized images in art, for example, were not images that were then viewed as supposed to be attainable by the average person, so they were ideals, and I think what happened over time in the last 50 to 60 years is that those idealized images became put a pressure on women that not only is this the ideal, this is something you should strive for and this is attainable if only you do this right thing. At the same time, we have seen, obviously that average body size for women has been increasing for decades now, and so we define body dissatisfaction as the gap between an individual's ideal image and their real image.

**00:04:01 Emily Letterman**

How can we mitigate these thoughts? Was and Hunt says thank you for your life like a pie.

**00:04:06 Dr. Brooke Whisenhunt**

One of the things that is really important for people to focus on is not just so much. What do I think about my parents, but how much does what I think about my appearance influence how I feel about myself? Overall, we have an assessment that's really like a pie chart and you, you divvy it up like.

Personal appearance and body shape and size versus my career and how it's going or my friends and my relationships and my children, and how much of your pie in terms of how you feel about yourself, are you letting appearance take out of your life? And I think the the more you can shrink that part of pie, especially if it's going to be something that you're never going to be 100% satisfied with then it impacts your day-to-day life much, much less.

**00:04:50 Emily Letterman**

My guest today has been professor of psychology, Dr. Brooke Whisenhunt. Read more of her research at blogs.missouristate.edu/mindseye.

Hi, I'm Emily Letterman for the Missouri State Journal.

**00:05:04 Announcer**

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