

Flipping Through the Worries of a Teenager: Exploration of the Effects of Adolescent Stressors and Comparison Culture Through the Lens of Digital Magazine Illustrations

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Amongst the homework, extracurriculars, and need to fit in facing the average teenager, being an adolescent can be a regularly stressful time as teens navigate figuring themselves amidst a myriad of demands. However, this amount of stress has recently been highlighted to be alarmingly increasing as a Harvard and Commonsense study notes that “[a] majority (81%) of American teens report experiencing pressure that makes them feel bad in at least one of six domains” (Weinstein et al, pg.5, 2024). Many of these pressures come externally from academic stress and burn out as teens try to fit in and increase social status among peers; meet parental or guardian expectations; or meet their own need for achievement. Many teens find themselves using outlets like magazines or social media to keep up with the latest trends and or what is expected of them socially; with magazines from their inception having been a viewpoint into the trends and expectations like that of the ideals of peak male and female physique or gender norms. By creating these five illustrations, I wanted to touch on both my experience and research with teen pressure to visualize the experience of adolescents today while mirroring the influential nature of magazine covers. Each illustration in the series touches on one of the aforementioned pressures or means of escaping these demands, and confronts the way in which media and external pressures can have damaging effects on teens' mental health and how that can shape teens today.