

BOOK REVIEW

Lee Ann Paradise
Managing Editor
Texas Journal of Rural Health
Texas Tech University
Health Sciences Center
Lubbock, Texas

REVIEW

Mirror, Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection. Mark Pendergrast. Basic Books, New York, 2003. Hard cover, 404 pages including index. ISBN 0-465-05470-6. Price \$27.50 U.S./\$39.95 Canada.

Although the common mirror may initially appear unrelated to the matters of health, few worldly fixtures are more interrelated with the state of our mental well being. Self-perception and body image are inherently defined by how we perceive ourselves. Some mental illnesses, such as body dysmorphic disorder, are directly linked to a distorted self-perception. As previous authors have discussed in the *Texas Journal of Rural Health*, mental health problems related to body image are on the rise, not only in urban populations but in rural settings as well.

That is why it is so important to examine, from many different points of view, our close social connection with mirrors. Indeed, many researchers have focused on various aspects of self-perception by using mirrors as a tool. However, it is rare for the tool itself, a mirror, to be discussed in scientific detail from a cultural historian's point of view.

In "Mirror, Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection," Mark Pendergrast addresses the intimate connection between man and mirror with both

REVIEW

precision and wit. Beginning with the dawn of man, Pendergrast leads the reader through the ages, discussing how our relationship with reflection has shaped the society we live in today. This detailed look at mirrors makes for a surprisingly enjoyable read, relaying numerous facts with a light-hearted approach. Students of science are likely to appreciate Pendergrast's ability to explain complex material in understandable language; the book is exceptionally well referenced. The final chapter, which discusses the psychological conditions associated with self-perception, may be of particular interest to mental health specialists.