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IMPACT OF MEDIA EXPOSURE, ETHNICITY AND BODY MASS INDEX ON THE
BODY IMAGE OF COLLEGE WOMEN

BY

SHANNON WONG

Bachelor of Arts, University of Connecticut, 2007

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

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the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Counseling

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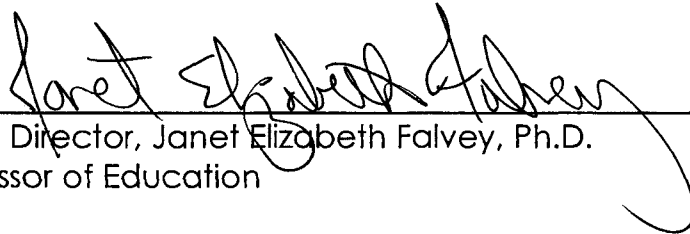
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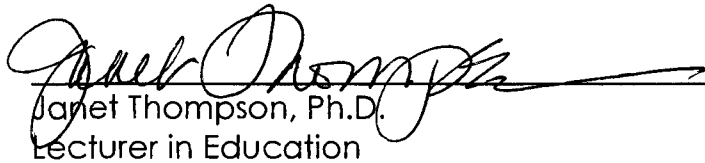
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ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF MEDIA EXPOSURE, ETHNICITY AND BODY MASS INDEX ON THE BODY IMAGE OF COLLEGE WOMEN

By

Shannon Wong

University of New Hampshire, May, 2009

The current thesis project sought to analyze the following three problems: (1) the relationship between media exposure and body image, (2) the relationship between body image and media exposure to determine if there are racial group differences, and (3) the relationship between body image, Body Mass Index and media exposure.

Eighty-one females participated in this study, recruited from two large public northeastern universities. The results of the study show a significant negative correlation between media exposure and measures of body image. There were no significant differences found between Caucasian and non-Caucasian women for media exposure. Based on the results, magazines and television are related to the way women feel about their bodies.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This researcher proposes to investigate the relationship between body image and media exposure, and to determine if there are ethnic differences in the way women respond to the media in terms of body satisfaction. The researcher further proposes to investigate if there is an association between body mass index (BMI) and body image.

Rationale for Study

Body image is a construct that has been studied for the past 50 years (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Women are faced with societal pressures to achieve a level of thinness that is often unattainable (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004). The typical image of a woman portrayed in the media is often 15% below the weight of the average woman (Johnson, Tobin, & Steinberg, 1989). Exposure to this thin-ideal media image can have an influence on how women feel about their own bodies (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004).

Two theories that attempt to explain the influence of these societal pressures disorders is the sociocultural perspective and social learning theory. The sociocultural perspective (Jackson, 2002) asserts that cultural values are reflected in the ways that individuals perceive themselves and

perceive others. One particular value might be attractiveness. If a culture values attractiveness, then the individuals of that culture will also value attractiveness. In the same vein, a culture also determines what is an attractive body. Body self-perceptions of the individuals within that culture will, in turn, adopt the cultural definition as their own. Accordingly, if a culture values a thin female figure, then the individuals of that culture will also value a thin female figure (Jackson, 2002).

Another theory that attempts to explain the prevalence of body dissatisfaction is social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). This theory explains how women may learn how to achieve an ideal body type from the media. According to this theory, modeling is at the core of learning (Feist & Feist, 2006). Three factors are important in determining whether a person will learn from a model. The first is that individuals are more likely to model others who are of a higher status. Secondly, the individual most likely to engage in the modeling behavior lacks status, skill or power. Thirdly, the greater the value an individual places on a behavior, the more likely the individual will model that behavior (Feist & Feist, 2006). The messages that the media sends give women the motivation to engage in extreme dieting behavior as well as efforts to acquire the ideal body type (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Women view other women in the media, who are often interpreted as representing the ideal standard of beauty.

Television presents women who are constantly invested in their appearance, underweight, and beautiful according to Western definitions. Magazine advertisements also show women who are underweight and conventionally beautiful. A review of four top-selling magazine covers from 1959-1999 revealed that models were becoming increasingly thin and magazine covers were increasing full-body portrayals (Sypeck, Gray, & Ahrens, 2004). Constant exposure to these images can lead women to engage in unhealthy behaviors in an attempt to acquire similar body types, as purported by social learning theory (Bandura, 1977).

While contemporary Western culture values thinness in women, there is also variability within cultures. Caucasian women have generally been found to be more dissatisfied with their bodies than non-Caucasian women. Specifically, African-American women have been found to be more satisfied with their bodies than Caucasian women (Celio, Zabinski & Wilfley, 2002). Research on Latina-American women and Asian- American women is less clear as to their levels of body satisfaction compared to Caucasian women. However, some research shows that Latina women may have a less narrow definition of beauty than the physical ideal presented in the media (Altabe & O'Garro, 2002). One study has shown that Asian-Americans desire to be thinner but engage in less dieting behaviors than Caucasians (Mintz & Kashubeck, 1999).

Cultures within the United States thus differ in their standards of beauty. However, within those cultures there are also differences. Individuals within a culture that values a healthy, full-figured body may have the desire to be thinner if they are exposed to the dominant culture that idealizes thinness. The dominant culture is constantly sending messages to members as to what an attractive body looks like. To the extent that these cultural values are internalized, this may have an adverse effect on individuals' evaluation of their own body.

While research generally supports the idea that constant exposure to the thin ideal portrayed in the media can lead to body dissatisfaction, the reverse could also be an explanation for the association. In other words, women who are most dissatisfied with their bodies could seek out particular media content (Tiggemann, 2002). Women with low body image may be seeking media that will help them identify with the body they believe will make them most happy. The media, in particular women's magazines, not only portray the ideal female body, but also instruct women to diet and exercise to change one's body and find happiness in getting closer to achieving the unachievable.

This study will contribute to the existing literature on body image by adding further understanding to the ways in which women of different ethnicities respond to a mass media that is predominantly Caucasian and that overwhelmingly sends messages of thinness as attractiveness. The

researcher also hopes to contribute by providing practically significant results that will aid in the education and prevention of negative body image. Educating individuals about the messages that the media sends them about unattainable standards of beauty may help them become critical consumers as well as gain and maintain a positive body image. This could be accomplished in schools through education about proper nutrition and early detection of eating disorder symptoms by the school nurse. In the classroom, students could be taught how to be active consumers of television and magazines. In a clinical setting, counselors can support children and adolescents as they develop healthy body images that are less focused on physical appearances and more so on internal factors.

Proposed Research

Subproblems and Hypotheses

- The first subproblem is to determine the relationship between media exposure and body image.
 - H₁: Greater amounts of magazine and television exposure will be positively correlated with body dissatisfaction as measured by the appearance evaluation and appearance orientation subscales of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), and the sexual attractiveness subscale of the Body Esteem Scale (BES).

- The second subproblem is to study the relationship between body image and media exposure to determine if there are racial group differences.
 - H₁: Caucasian, Asian American and Latina-American women will report greater body dissatisfaction as a result of greater media exposure than will African-American women.
- The third subproblem is to determine if there is a relationship between body image, BMI and media exposure.
 - H₁: Women with greater BMI will report greater body dissatisfaction as a result of greater media exposure.

Definition of Terms

Body Image. Body image has been defined in many ways. One definition is that it is the perceptions and attitudes held by an individual in relation to his or her own physical characteristics (Cash & Fleming, 2002). The term body image has been used in research interchangeably with terms such as body satisfaction, body esteem, body perception, weight satisfaction, and appearance satisfaction. For this study, body image will be used interchangeably with body satisfaction. It will be assessed by two subscales of the MBSRQ: appearance evaluation and appearance orientation, and by one subscale of the BES: sexual attractiveness. Scores for each subscale will be analyzed separately. A negative body image is

considered synonymous with body dissatisfaction, while a positive body image is synonymous with body satisfaction.

Body Mass Index (BMI). Body mass index is a way of measuring body fat based on an individual's height and weight. BMI is calculated by dividing an individual's weight in kilograms by height in meters squared. BMI scores are generally divided into four groups: under-weight (BMI < 18.5), normal weight (18.5 < BMI < 24.9), over-weight (25 < BMI < 29.9), and obese (BMI > 30) (National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, 2008).

Media Exposure. For this study, the term media exposure is an umbrella term referring to the total amount of hours spent reading magazines and viewing television. For each media category, the amount of hours is further separated by each genre of magazine and television program. Given that magazines generally run monthly publications and television shows generally run weekly episodes, the researcher will add total hours per month reading magazines and total hours per week watching television to create a "total media exposure" score in addition to a "total magazine exposure" and "total television exposure" score.

Delimitations

- This study will not attempt to investigate the diversity of the models used by fashion magazines or portrayed in television shows.

- This study will be limited to females older than 18 and younger than 30 years of age.
- This study will not attempt to infer causation.
- This study will be limited in generalizability to college student populations.

Assumptions

- The first assumption is that mass media continues to be a primary source of communication in U.S. culture.
- The second assumption is that women from all cultures within the U.S. are exposed to mass media on a daily basis.
- The third assumption is that responses to the demographic questionnaire, MBSRQ and BES will be accurate.

Summary

This study will investigate the relationship between body image and media exposure. The study will also investigate the association between ethnicity, media exposure and body image. Finally, the study will gather information about body mass index and media exposure and analyze those factors in relation to body image.

Using correlation statistics, the researcher will test the hypotheses that greater amounts of media exposure will be positively correlated with body dissatisfaction as measured by the appearance evaluation and appearance orientation subscales of the *Multidimensional Body-Self*

Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), and the sexual attractiveness subscale of the *Body Esteem Scale (BES)*; that Caucasian, Asian-American and Latina-American women will report greater body dissatisfaction as a result of greater media exposure than will African-American women; and finally, that women with greater BMI will report greater body dissatisfaction as a result of greater media exposure.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review will focus on three areas based on the three subproblems identified in Chapter 1: (a) the relationship between media exposure and body image among women, (b) the role ethnicity plays in the relationship between media exposure and body image, and (c) the role body mass index (BMI) and selective exposure play in the relationship between the media and body image.

The Media and Body Image

There exists a range of media outlets including television, magazines, Internet, music, movies, and books. Two particular media outlets are television and magazines. In his study, Roberts (2000), found that among a sample of 2,065 U.S. 3rd through 12th grade students (aged 8 through 18 years), television and print media were among the top four media outlets consumed on a daily basis. These two forms of media are powerful conveyors of sociocultural norms and ideals (Tiggemann, 2002). Television and magazines, while successful at providing entertainment, can also be damaging to viewers (Hawkins, Richards, Granley & Stein, 2004). The images presented in these media outlets may be especially harmful to adolescent and adult females, as Western ideals of female

beauty are generally narrower than those for males. It is estimated that 83% of women and girls read fashion magazines (Tiggemann, 2002). Such fashion magazines portray the largely unattainable standards of beauty that are current in the United States.

General Media

Television programs and women's magazines depict women who are generally thin, tall, and White. Indeed, there has been an increase of thin models on covers of popular magazines. A review of four top-selling magazine covers from 1959-1999 revealed that models were becoming increasingly thin and magazine covers were increasing full-body portrayals (Sypeck et al., 2004). The focus on women's bodies sends an implicit message to females. The message is that in order to be successful, beautiful and happy, one must look like the models and actors on television. From a young age, many girls may understand that they must be thin in order to be beautiful (Sypeck et al., 2004).

In a documentary titled, "The Strength to Resist: The Media's Impact on Women and Girls," Gail Dines, Professor of Sociology at Wheelock College and author of numerous articles on pornography, the media and violence, tells a group of college students that media images encode messages (Lazarus & Wunderlich, 2005). When girls and women constantly see thin images of women in the media, they lose sight of what they might reasonably look like. They begin to compare themselves to the

women they see on television or on magazine covers and inevitably come up short. The image of beauty portrayed in such media is largely unattainable by healthy means. Young girls think that what they weigh determines their worth. This is a cultural norm that may be related to poor body image and unhealthy eating attitudes (Lazarus & Wunderlich, 2005).

In a study conducted by Aubrey (2006), it was found that amount of media exposure cannot only predict body dissatisfaction in the short-term, but also in the long-term. In this longitudinal study that measured exposure to sexually objectifying media, college-aged women were surveyed over a one-year time period. The results suggest that exposure to sexually objectifying media at Time 1 predicted a significant increase in self-objectification at Time 2. In this study, sexually objectifying media were defined as media that broadly focus on the body without necessarily promoting a thin ideal. While the images may not entirely send a message of thinness as beauty, they do send a message that a woman's body defines her worth.

Television versus Magazines

There have been differences found between television and magazines in the way the messages are processed by viewers. It has been argued that the two media outlets require different levels of involvement by the viewer (Tiggemann, 2003). In her study conducted with 104 undergraduate females, Tiggemann (2003) found that magazines

and television operate in different ways. Participants were presented with a list of popular magazines and television shows and were asked to indicate which they had read or viewed. Participants also completed scales assessing body dissatisfaction, disordered eating symptoms, awareness and internalization of body shape ideals, self-esteem, and BMI (Tiggemann, 2003). Results of the study revealed that greater magazine exposure was related to significantly greater internalization of the thin ideal, while greater exposure to television programs was related to significantly lower awareness of sociocultural ideals regarding body size and shape. Further examination of these results revealed that magazines work through internalization, while television links to body dissatisfaction directly. In other words, magazine reading was related to internalization of the thin ideal, which served as a mediator between magazine exposure and body dissatisfaction. It seems that magazine reading may entail a more active level of involvement, which leads one to internalize the images that are found in magazines. Television viewing, on the other hand, was concluded to be a more passive activity that allows the viewer to be less involved and therefore more unaware of the sociocultural body ideals being portrayed on screen (Tiggemann, 2003). Thus, the author concluded that higher doses of thin idealized female figures on television may possibly normalize such figures (Tiggemann, 2003).

Harrison and Cantor (1997) also investigated the differences between magazines and television. Their study examined the relationship between college students media use and disordered-eating symptomatology, body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness. Level of exposure to popular television programs was assessed through self-reports as well as the number of magazine issues read in each of five categories: health and fitness, beauty and fashion, entertainment and gossip, news and current events, and men's entertainment magazines (men only). Results from the study showed that magazine consumption was significantly and positively related to eating disorder symptomatology and drive for thinness. There was no such relationship found for television consumption. However, in a later study (Tiggemann, 2003), television viewing was found to be a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction.

Media Content

In a study examining television viewing as a predictor of body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness, Tiggemann and Pickering (1996) found that total television-viewing time was not related to perceived weight, body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness among adolescent females. However, they did find that the content of specific television programs was a factor. Television programs were grouped into nine categories: situation comedies/comedy, action/adventure, prime time soap operas/serials, daytime soap operas/serials, information (e.g., news

and documentaries), movies on television, sports, cartoons, and music videos. Analysis of the results revealed a significantly positive correlation between body dissatisfaction and watching soap operas, while a negative correlation was found between body dissatisfaction and watching sports.

In a similar way, specific magazine content has been found to better predict body dissatisfaction (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Scores from the *Eating Attitudes Test* were most highly correlated with reading fitness magazines, followed by fashion magazines, news magazines, and gossip magazines. The results of this study suggest that fitness magazines, with a focus on exercise and dieting, reinforce the thin ideal to a greater extent than fashion magazines, which focus more on clothing and accessories.

While fashion magazines may focus more on clothing, the women modeling the merchandise are generally thin. Exposure to these models has been found to be associated with body image. Adolescent and adult females have been found to respond in different ways to fashion magazines (Shaw, 1995). In a study conducted on non-eating-disordered adolescent and adult females, Shaw found that fashion magazine images targeted for adults better predicted body dissatisfaction for both groups than images targeted for adolescents. Furthermore, results from the study revealed that, as a group, adolescents responded to fashion magazine images with greater body dissatisfaction than the adult group.

Summary

The research in the area of body image and the media show a general agreement that increased magazine and television exposure is related to lower body image. It seems that the particular content of the magazines and television shows that individuals are being exposed to is an important factor in understanding the relationship between media and body image.

Ethnicity and Body Image

There are various subcultures within the United States. Each culture has its own set of norms, values, and traditions. These subcultural norms and values may serve to protect the individuals of that group from the dominant cultural norms and values. On the other hand, many factors may operate that transcend the barriers of protection. This section will introduce the differences and similarities of three cultures: African-American women, Latina-American women, and Asian American women.

African-American Women

The African-American population in the U.S. has increased since 1980 (Sue & Sue, 2008). In 2005, African-Americans were 12.2 percent of the U.S. population (Sue & Sue, 2008). Bakara Kitwana (2002) wrote about the new crises in African-American culture. Since the Civil Rights Movement, African-American culture has seen high rates of suicide and

imprisonment, police brutality, a war of the sexes, and "Blacks selling Black self-hatred as entertainment" (Kitwana, 2002, p. xi), among other issues.

There are still great disparities in education, housing, health care, employment and pay between African-Americans and Whites.

Kitwana attributes the "hip-hop phenomenon" as a way that young blacks have further strengthened the associations between Blackness and poverty and highlighting "anti-intellectualism, ignorance, irresponsible parenthood, and criminal lifestyles (Kitwana, 2002, p.xxi)". The images also depict African-American women as highly sexualized (Kitwana, 2002). Despite these images of Black culture, there has been a general finding of a more flexible standard of beauty and weight than in White culture (Celio et al., 2002). The less narrow view of what constitutes beauty and attractiveness in women may increase body satisfaction among African-American women (Celio et al., 2002). Indeed, there is empirical evidence that supports this notion.

Schooler, Ward, Merriwether and Caruthers (2004) found that when African-American women were compared to White women, African-American women report greater degrees of body satisfaction. When the television viewing habits of White women and African-American women were compared, it was found that African-American women watch more television, but also watch more television programs with Black casts. Regardless of watching more hours of television, Black women reported a

significantly lower drive for thinness, significantly fewer bulimic tendencies, and significantly less body dissatisfaction. For White women, viewing larger amounts of television programs with White casts predicted poorer body image, specifically body dissatisfaction and negative thoughts about their bodies (Schooler et al., 2004). There was no relationship found between any outcome measure of body image and viewing programs with Black casts among White women.

The findings from this study suggest that Black women may reject the standard of beauty that is presented in White mainstream media. Instead, African-American women may be comparing themselves to Black characters whose body types cover a broader range than White characters (Schooler et al., 2004).

Latina-American Women

Similar to Sue & Sue's (2008) use of the term *Latina-American*, in this study, *Latina-American* encompass individuals living in the United States with ancestry from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and other Latin American countries. It is important to remember, and Sue & Sue note, that this term is not accepted by all groups. There are many differences within and between the different groups that fall under the term *Latina-American*. One difference is the physical appearance of Latina-Americans, which "varies greatly and may

include resemblance to North American Indians, Blacks, Asians, or fair-skinned Europeans" (Sue & Sue, 2008, p. 376).

In the literature on Latina-American women's body image, there has been a great deal of attention paid to the process of acculturation. Acculturation is "the modification and incorporation of the traditional (ethnic) and the alternative (dominant) cultures' encompassing customs, language, lifestyle, and value orientations" (Altabe & O'Garro, 2002, p. 251). The level of acculturation has been found to be associated with Latina-American women's body image. As Latina-American women become more acculturated, they accept the dominant culture's value of thinness and begin to experience body dissatisfaction (Altabe & O'Garro, 2002). Regardless of ethnicity, the dominant culture's standard of beauty is largely unattainable.

Schooler (2008) investigated the role of television in Latina girls' body image development. Schooler also investigated levels of acculturation and the role it plays in Latina body image development. The sample included 449 eighth, ninth, and tenth grade girls. Eighty-one of the girls identified themselves as Latina. This was a longitudinal study that was conducted over a 2-year time frame. The study found that viewing mainstream television predicted increases in body dissatisfaction. Also, as part of this longitudinal study, focus group discussions were held that revealed that Latina girls may be turning to African-American

females as sources of comparison. The study found that frequent viewing of Black-oriented television was associated with greater body satisfaction. It seems that for Latina girls, the comparison to African-American females may be less damaging, as the standard of beauty is less narrow than the dominant culture's standard of beauty.

Schooler also found a relationship between acculturation and Latina girl's body image. Level of acculturation was assessed in this study through five questions that elicited the extent to which participants spoke English. Results from this longitudinal study showed that Latina girls who were more acculturated, showed a decline in body image across adolescence. Schooler concluded that acculturation may lead to body dissatisfaction by encouraging greater endorsement of the thin ideal presented in mainstream television.

The results from this study reveal a stark contrast between the body image development of Latina-American women and African-American women. While African-American women have been found to make comparisons predominantly to same-race media images (Schooler et al., 2004), Latina-American women are more likely to compare themselves to White images found in mainstream media as their level of acculturation increases (Schooler, 2008).

Asian-American Women

There are over 30 different ethnic subgroups that make up the Asian-American population: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, Thai, and Samoan are among the subgroups (Kawamura, 2002). The subgroups differ in cultural traditions, languages, and values. There are also similarities between the subgroups. Many share the same traditional cultural values, physical appearance, and minority group status in the United States (Kawamura, 2002). The traditional cultural values that link most of these subgroups together are collectivism, modesty, and restraint of strong emotion (Kawamura, 2002). These values may influence results from studies that report that Asian Americans are generally more dissatisfied with their bodies. The tendency for Asian Americans to be reluctant about outwardly acknowledging pride in their bodies may account for the discrepancies. However, studies report that Asian American women are indeed less satisfied with their bodies than White women (Mintz & Kashubeck, 1999) and African-American women (Evans & McConnell, 2003).

Mintz and Kashubeck (1999) examined the differences between Asian-American women and Caucasian women in regards to dieting behaviors and satisfaction with specific body parts, as opposed to global body satisfaction. The researchers believed that there are specific body parts that are racially defined, and others that can be altered through

weight loss behaviors. The results from their study showed that Asian-American women reported less dieting behavior than Caucasian women, but greater body dissatisfaction on five body image variables: height, eyes, overall face, breasts/chest, and arms. The results also revealed that both Asian-American women and Caucasian women thought about their weight and appearance a great deal. Both groups also reported that their appearance strongly affected their feelings about themselves. The most notable of results is the greater dissatisfaction of specific body parts by Asian-American women. In some Asian cultures, there is an idealization of a double eyelid, or eye fold, which can be interpreted as an idealization of Western beauty standards (Kawamura, 2002). In Korea, plastic surgery to create a double eyelid is not uncommon. This idealization of Western physical features is a factor, along with traditional values of Asian cultures, in Asian American women's body image development.

In another study that investigated Asian-American women's body image, comparisons were with African-American and Caucasian women. Evans and McConnell (2003) conducted a study that examined the self-evaluations of Asian American and Black women whose physical appearance may be very different from the Western standard of beauty. In this study participants rated the attractiveness of three models representing the mainstream standard of beauty (tall, thin, blonde). They

were then asked to complete the *Body Esteem Scale* as well as rate their own attractiveness. Analysis of the results revealed that Black women did not find the mainstream standard of beauty as desirable as did the White and Asian women. The results also showed that Asian- American women were more likely to rate themselves as less attractive than did the White and Black women. Furthermore, Asian- American women showed a stronger desire to conform to societal norms. The participants of this study were also presented with yearbook photographs of an attractive Asian woman, Black woman, and White woman. The researchers found that Black women viewed out-group targets (Asian and White) as less attractive than did Asian-American and White participants, suggesting that Black women predominantly look to other Black women as comparisons. Asian-American women were found to rate both in-group and out-group targets as attractive. The overall findings from this study suggest that Asian-American women lack the self-protective strategies employed by African-Americans, such as making comparisons to women of similar ethnicity.

Summary

The research in the area of body image and ethnicity has shown that there is a more flexible standard of beauty in African-American culture (Celio et al., 2002). When African-American women are compared with White women, they show a lower drive for thinness, fewer

bulimic tendencies, and less body dissatisfaction (Schooler et al., 2004). In regards to Latina-American women, a lot of attention has been paid to the process of acculturation in the body image literature (Altabe & O'Garro, 2002). The level of acculturation may contribute to Latina-American women's acceptance of the dominant culture's values. One study found that for Latina-American adolescent girls, watching mainstream television predicted an increase in body dissatisfaction (Schooler, 2008). Finally, for Asian-American women, studies have shown that they are less satisfied with their body than White women (Mintz & Kashubeck, 1999) and African-American women (Evans & McConnell, 2003). Asian-American women have been found to view the mainstream standard of beauty as desirable and display a strong desire to conform to societal norms (Evans & McConnell, 2003).

Individual Characteristics and Body Image

The following section will examine the role BMI plays in body image development. In a subsequent section, the concept of selective exposure will be introduced as a theory concerning the complex relationship between ethnicity, media, and body image.

BMI

Several studies have found an individual's body mass index to predict body dissatisfaction (Schooler et al., 2004; Shaw, 1995; Tiggemann, 2003). BMI is calculated by dividing an individual's weight in kilograms by

height in meters squared. Shaw (1995) conducted a study that examined the differences between adolescents and adults in responses to fashion magazine images. The BMI of the adult group was greater than the adolescents, yet the results of the study revealed an association between body dissatisfaction and BMI for adolescents only. Adolescents with greater BMI reported greater body dissatisfaction after being exposed to fashion magazine images. However, there was no such association found for the adult group (Shaw, 1995).

In another study that examined the differences between television and magazines (Tiggemann, 2003), BMI was found to be a moderator in the relationship between internalization of thin ideals and body dissatisfaction. In this study, participants were grouped together based on BMI. "Under-weight" individuals had a BMI of less than 20, "normal weight" individuals had a BMI between 20 and 25, "over-weight" individuals had a BMI between 25 and 30, and "obese" individuals had a BMI greater than 30. The correlations between internalization of the thin ideal and body dissatisfaction increased across "under-weight," "normal weight," and "over-weight" groups. It seems that heavier individuals are more likely to internalize the thin ideal presented in media images. This study is limited in that 87.5 % of the sample were at (n = 71) or below normal weight (n = 20). Only 7.7% of participants were "over-weight"

n = 8) and only 4.8% were "obese" (n = 5). The small sample sizes in the "over-weight" and "obese" groups led to a lack of statistical power for these two groups. Significant correlations for obese women might be found in studies with more diverse weight samples.

The finding that higher BMI is associated with greater body dissatisfaction was further supported in a study conducted by Schooler et al. (2004). In this study, the relationship between television viewing and body image among Black and White women was examined. The authors found that for White women, those with higher BMI reported poorer body image on six of seven body image outcomes: drive for thinness, bulimic tendencies, body dissatisfaction, negative thoughts about the body, weight concern, and physical condition (Schooler et al., 2004). For Black women, BMI predicted poorer body image on four of the seven body image outcomes: drive for thinness, body dissatisfaction, negative thoughts about the body, and weight concern (Schooler et al., 2004). In this study, BMI was shown to predict poor body image for both Black and White women, but to a lesser degree for Black women.

A note should be made regarding the accuracy of BMI as a measure of body composition. Mary Yoke (2002) describes body composition as the percentage of body weight that is fat. It is based on the assumption that body mass can be divided into fat mass and lean body mass. Lean body mass includes muscles, bones, organs and

internal fluids. There are many ways to measure body composition. One method is hydrostatic weighing, which is regarded as the most accurate technique for estimating body fat percentage. With this technique, the individual is submerged into a tank of water while an examiner records the individual's weight on a scale. A less formal method is to calculate body mass index. This is a quick and easy way to assess weight relative to height. However, this method does not take into account percent body fat, so it may not be as accurate at assessing obesity for active muscular individuals. For this study, BMI will be used as a measure of body composition. While it may not be the most accurate, it is the most practical method for the purposes of this study.

Selective Exposure Theory

It is clear that there is much empirical support for the association between media exposure and body dissatisfaction. However, there are many variables that are involved in this relationship. In general, humans are able to control the types of media to which they are exposed. It may be safe to assume that humans select media. Selective exposure theory (Festinger, 1957) posits that humans are motivated to seek information that supports their beliefs and avoid messages that cause cognitive dissonance. Selective exposure theory has two basic hypotheses: (a) when dissonance arises, the person will be motivated to reduce the psychological discomfort and achieve consonance, and (b) when

dissonance is present, the person will not only attempt to reduce it, but avoid situations and information that might increase the dissonance (Festinger, 1957). So, for many women, the images they see on television and in magazines may either support or disconfirm their body self-perceptions.

Aubrey (2006) found that women who are low in thin-ideal internalization and high in global self-esteem avoid exposing themselves to sexually-objectifying media. This finding supports the tenets of selective exposure theory. The women in this study might be employing the self-protective practice of avoiding sexually-objectifying media to prevent feeling self-conscious, anxious or shameful about their bodies.

Selective exposure theory may explain the findings that Black women are generally more satisfied with their bodies. Black women watch more television with Black casts that promote a fuller woman's figure (Schooler et al., 2004). Their tendency to selectively avoid exposure to mainstream media promoting a thin ideal protects them from body dissatisfaction. The findings that White, Latina-American, and Asian American women are more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies might also be explained by selective exposure theory. Constant exposure to mainstream media ideals may lead to a belief that thinness is beauty. In this case, continued exposure to mainstream media may occur, because it supports already held beliefs.

Summary

The existing literature on body image and the media have consistently found associations between the two. In general, greater amounts of media exposure are related to greater body dissatisfaction. Television and magazines seem to work in different ways in terms of how they relate to body image. Also, ethnicity and specific media content has been found to be related to body dissatisfaction. In general, African-American women tend to make fewer comparisons with mainstream media ideals than do their Caucasian, Asian American and Latina-American counterparts. The tendency for African-American women to make comparisons with models of similar ethnicity has been associated with lower body dissatisfaction. Finally, body dissatisfaction has been found to increase as BMI scores increase. Selective Exposure Theory is one theory that may explain the tendency for some women to choose to expose themselves to media content that agree with their beliefs about their body and avoid messages that cause dissonance.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between body image and media exposure and to determine if there are ethnic differences in the way women respond to the media in terms of body image. This chapter will discuss the methodology of this correlational study.

Sample

The sample for this study includes only female participants. There were 81 females that participated in this study. Participants were recruited from two large northeastern public universities. The first university is located in rural New England and has an undergraduate population of approximately 12,000. The ethnic composition of this university is 82.8% White, Non-Hispanic, 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.3% Black, Non-Hispanic, and 1.9% Hispanic. The second university is also located in rural New England and has an undergraduate population of approximately 21,000 of which 20% are identified as a member of a minority group. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 26 years. Efforts to recruit a diverse sample were made. Multicultural groups on campus and undergraduate psychology classes were solicited for participation.

A representative sample of ethnicities and a reasonable sample size is necessary to increase statistical power and to better represent the population parameters (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In order to achieve an ethnically diverse sample, participation from more than one university was deemed necessary. Participation was based on cooperation from professors and various multicultural group directors. Those solicited to participate were informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Instrumentation

Four instruments were employed for data collection in this research. They include a Demographic Data Sheet, a survey eliciting media exposure behaviors, the *Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ)* and the *Body Esteem Scale (BES)*. A description of the four instruments follows.

Demographic Data Sheet

This instrument elicited basic demographic data on participants (see Appendix A). Items from the data sheet included: age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, height and weight. Based on the participant's report of height and weight, the researcher calculated body mass index (weight in kilograms/ height in meters squared) for each individual. Respondents were grouped into one of the three BMI groups:

underweight (BMI < 20), normal weight (20 > BMI < 25), and overweight/obese (BMI > 25).

Media Exposure

Following the procedure of Tiggemann (2003), participants were presented with a list of the top 20 women's magazine titles currently in circulation (see Appendix B). A few sample magazine titles were: *Shape*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, *Prevention* and *Glamour*. Participants reported the titles they subscribe to, have purchased off the shelf or have read second-hand (for example, sitting in a waiting area or borrowing from a friend) during a typical month. They also estimated how many hours they spent reading each magazine.

Also included in the survey was an approximation of how much time was spent watching television a week. A list of the different genres of television shows were presented and participants indicated how many hours a week they spent watching each genre (see Appendix B).

The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire

The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ; Cash, 2000) is a 69-item self-report inventory assessing self-attitudinal aspects of body image constructs (see Appendix C). The MBSRQ is intended for use with adults and adolescents. It has been extensively used in body image research and has been demonstrated to have high internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Cash, 2000). There are

seven factor subscales of the MBSRQ: appearance evaluation (alpha = .88), appearance orientation (alpha = .85), fitness evaluation (alpha = .77), fitness orientation (alpha = .90), health evaluation (alpha=.83), health orientation (alpha = .78), and illness orientation (alpha = .75). In addition, there are three special multi-item subscales: the body areas satisfaction scale (BASS) (alpha = .73), the overweight preoccupation scale (alpha = .76), and the self-classified weight scale (alpha = .89). All alpha scores pertain to females (Cash, 2000).

For this study, two subscales of the MBSRQ were utilized to assess body image: appearance evaluation and appearance orientation. The appearance evaluation subscale measures feelings of physical attractiveness or unattractiveness and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's looks. High scores represent mostly positive feelings and satisfactions with appearance. Low scores represent a general unhappiness with physical appearance. The appearance orientation subscales measure the extent of one's investment in appearance. High scorers place more importance on looks, pay attention to appearance, and engage in extensive grooming behaviors. Low scorers are not invested in their appearance. These subscales were chosen based on descriptions provided by the creator of the MBSRQ to measure body image based on how attractive one perceives their self to be, and how much that matters to them.

The Body Esteem Scale

The Body Esteem Scale (BES; Franzoi & Shields, 1984) is a 35-item scale used with young adult populations to measure attitudes toward different dimensions of male and female body esteem (see Appendix D). Designed for both male and female respondents, participants are asked to respond to body-related items on a 5-point scale that ranges from 1 (have strong negative feelings) to 5 (have strong positive feelings). The overall body esteem score can range from 35-175, with higher scores indicating more positive body esteem. The three subscales of the BES include dimensions that differ slightly for males and females. The first subscale addresses attractiveness. The two dimensions are Male Physical Attractiveness (alpha = .81) and Female Sexual Attractiveness (alpha = .78). The dimensions of the second subscale are male upper body strength (alpha = .85) and female weight concern (alpha = .87). The third subscale addresses general physical condition for both males (alpha = .86) and females (alpha = .82). Test-retest reliability scores for the female subscales were high: sexual attractiveness $r = 0.81$; weight concern $r = 0.87$; and physical condition $r = 0.75$ (Franzoi, 1994). In the current student, only the female sexual attractiveness subscale was used.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through classes and campus organizations. The researcher contacted psychology instructors and

organization directors who agreed to use their class time or organization time to conduct this research. At the first university, data was collected from four undergraduate psychology courses and one cultural group. Data was collected on different dates, depending on class meeting time and organization meeting time. At the second university, data was collected from four multicultural groups over a period of two days.

The researcher was present for all data collection. The researcher informed participants that the purpose of the research was to gain a better understanding of college students' media exposure and beliefs about themselves. They were not told the specific focus of the study- investigating the relationship between body image, ethnicity and media exposure-to avoid socially desirable responses. An informed consent letter was distributed to every student (see Appendix E), explaining that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse participation without consequence. Surveys were then distributed to each participant. Prior to opening the survey, the researcher directed each participant to read the instructions on the first page (see Appendix F). To ensure anonymity, participants were instructed not to write their name or any other identifying data on their surveys.

Participants returned completed questionnaires to the researcher, who was seated at a known table at each venue. Participants were given a debriefing statement describing the purpose of the study in further

detail, as well as whom to contact if they had questions or where to go if they experienced any form of disturbance after having participated in this study (see Appendix G).

Data Analysis

For each participant, scores were calculated for two subscales of the MBSRQ and one subscale of the BES. Based on reports from participants regarding media exposure, the researcher categorized magazine titles into genres and calculated magazine exposure scores within each genre as well as a total magazine exposure score. Television exposure was also calculated for each genre of television and total television exposure. Finally, a total media exposure score was calculated by combining total magazine exposure and total television exposure scores. BMI was also calculated, based on participants report of height and weight, using the following formula:

$$\text{BMI} = (\text{weight in lbs.} \times 703) / \text{height in inches}^2$$

Participants were then grouped into BMI categories based on their scores.

To test the relationship between media exposure and body image, a Pearson correlation was calculated between the three scores of media exposure and the three subscales of the two instruments.

Participants were placed into one of five ethnicity groups based on self-report: Caucasian, Asian-American, Latina-American, African-American, and Multi-racial. To test the relationship between ethnicity,

media exposure and body image, a Pearson correlation was run between the three scores of media exposure and the three subscales of the two instruments for the five ethnicity groups.

Finally, due to the small sample size, participants calculated to be “overweight” or “obese” were collapsed into one category: overweight/obese. To test the relationship between BMI, media exposure and body image, a Pearson correlation was run between the three scores of media exposure and the three subscales of the two instruments for the three BMI groups.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Between the two universities, 81 females participated in this study. Of the 81 females, 51.9% identified as Caucasian (n = 42), 25.9% identified as Asian-American (n = 21), 14.8% identified as Latina-American (n = 12), 4.9% identified as African-American (n=4), and 2.5% identified as Multi-racial (n = 2). Participants ranged in age from 17 to 26, years with a mean age of 20.28 years. Educational levels ranged from less than one year of college to graduate level, with an average educational level of two years completed.

Participants provided their height and weight, and BMI was computed by the researcher. Three participants did not provide their height and weight for calculation. Of the 78 participants who reported height and weight, 16 (19.8%) were underweight (BMI < 20), 41 (50.6%) were normal weight (BMI between 20 and 25), and 21 (25.9%) were overweight/obese. Table 1 presents a cross-tabulation of each BMI category and ethnicity.

Table 1

Cross-tabulation of BMI and Ethnicity

	Caucasian	Asian-American	Latina-American	African-American	Multi-Racial	Total
Underweight	8	7	0	1	0	16
Normal Weight	20	9	10	0	2	41
Overweight/Obese	11	5	2	3	0	21
Total	39	21	12	4	2	78

Magazine titles were grouped into categories based on content of magazine. Based on the list of top 20 magazines provided by the researcher and titles provided by participants, five categories emerged: Fashion/Beauty, Fitness/Health, Entertainment, Feminist/Ethnic, and News/Informational. Fashion/Beauty magazines included the following titles: *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, *Jane*, *InStyle*, *Allure*, *Marie Claire*, *Vanity Fair*, *Glamour*, *Elle*, *CosmoGirl*, *W*, *Nylon*, and *Redbook*. Fitness/Health magazines included the following titles: *Shape*, *Fitness*, *Health*, *Prevention*, *Cooking Light*, *Taste of Home*, *Women's Health*, *A Woman's View*, and *Real Simple*. Entertainment magazines included the following titles: *People*, *OK*, *Rolling Stone*, *National Enquirer*, and *US Weekly*. Feminist/Ethnic magazines included: *Bitch*, *Bust*, and *Audrey*. Finally,

News/Informational magazines included: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*, *National Geographic*, and *Knitty*.

Participants reported spending an average of 3.6 hours (SD=3.4) a month reading magazines, with the most time being devoted to reading Fashion/Beauty magazines (m = 2.0 hours, SD = 2.5), Entertainment magazines (m = 0.6 hours, SD = 1.0), and Fitness/Health magazines (m = 0.5 hours, SD = 1.3). Participants reported spending 9.2 hours (SD = 11.7) a week watching television, with the most time devoted to watching Comedy programs (m = 2.4 hours, SD = 2.9), Drama programs (m = 1.8 hours, SD = 2.0), and Reality programs (m = 1.4 hours, SD = 2.8).

Total hours spent reading magazines and total hours spent watching televisions were combined to create a total media exposure score for each participant. Category of magazine and genre of television were not considered for this score. Due to the wide range of hours spent reading magazines and watching television, scores were grouped into three categories based on the mean and standard deviation of the sample: Low exposure (less than one standard deviation below the mean), average exposure (one standard deviation above and below the mean), and high exposure (greater than one standard deviation above the mean). For magazine exposure, low exposure included scores less than 0.17 hours, average exposure included scores between 0.17 and 7.00 hours, and high exposure included scores greater than 7.00 hours. For

television exposure, low exposure was scores at zero, average exposure was scores between 0.10 and 21.00 hours, and high exposure was scores greater than 21.00 hours. Finally, for total media exposure, low exposure included scores less than 0.60 hours, average exposure included scores between 0.60 and 25.00 hours, and high exposure included scores greater than 25.00 hours.

Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 present a cross-tabulation of results when looking at the amount of magazine, television and total media exposure in conjunction with the demographic variables of BMI and ethnicity.

Table 2
Cross-tabulation of Magazine Exposure and BMI

	Underweight	Normal Weight	Overweight/ Obese	Total
Low Magazine Exposure	2	3	4	9
Average Magazine Exposure	13	33	13	59
High Magazine Exposure	1	5	4	10
Total	16	41	21	78

Table 3

Cross-tabulation of Television Exposure and BMI

	Underweight	Normal Weight	Overweight/ Obese	Total
Low Television Exposure	0	1	0	1
Average Television Exposure	14	40	19	73
High Television Exposure	2	0	2	4
Total	16	41	21	78

Table 4

Cross-tabulation of Total Media Exposure and BMI

	Underweight	Normal Weight	Overweight/Obese	Total
Low Media Exposure	0	2	0	2
Average Media Exposure	13	39	19	71
High Media Exposure	3	0	2	5
Total	16	41	21	78

Table 5

Cross-tabulation of Magazine Exposure and Ethnicity

	Caucasian	Asian-American	Latina-American	African-American	Multi-Racial	Total
Low Magazine Exposure	3	2	1	3	0	9
Average Magazine Exposure	34	16	10	1	1	62
High Magazine Exposure	5	3	1	0	1	10
Total	42	21	12	4	2	81

Table 6

Cross-tabulation of Television Exposure and Ethnicity

	Caucasian	Asian-American	Latina-American	African-American	Multi-Racial	Total
Low Television Exposure	0	1	0	0	0	1
Average Television Exposure	42	18	12	2	2	76
High Television Exposure	0	2	0	2	0	4
Total	42	21	12	4	2	81

Table 7

Cross-tabulation of Total Media Exposure and Ethnicity

	Caucasian	Asian-American	Latina-American	African-American	Multi-Racial	Total
Low Media Exposure	1	0	1	0	0	2
Average Media Exposure	41	18	11	2	2	74
High Media Exposure	0	3	0	2	0	5
Total	42	21	12	4	2	81

Analyses

The first subproblem of this study determined the relationship between media exposure and body image. To investigate this relationship, a Pearson correlation was computed. The research hypothesis stated that greater amounts of magazine and television exposure will be positively correlated with body dissatisfaction as measured by the appearance evaluation and appearance orientation subscales of the MBSRQ, and the sexual attractiveness subscale of the BES. For the sample (N = 81) in this study, the Pearson correlation revealed a significant negative relationship between total media exposure and sexual attractiveness (see Table 8).

Table 8

Pearson Correlation for Subproblem One

	Appearance Evaluation	Appearance Orientation	Sexual Attractiveness
Total Magazine Exposure	-.193	.124	.010
Total TV Exposure	.082	.187	-.253
Total Media Exposure (magazine + tv)	-.120	.239	-.400**

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level

The second subproblem of this study examined the relationship between body image and media exposure and determined if there are racial group differences. The research hypothesis stated that Caucasian, Asian-American and Latina-American women will report greater body dissatisfaction as a result of greater magazine and television exposure than will African-American women. Due to the small sample size, there is not a sufficient representation of the four studied ethnicities. Correlations could not be run between each ethnicity. Instead, a Pearson correlation was conducted to compare Caucasians (N = 42) and non-Caucasians (N=39). Non-Caucasians included African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latina-Americans, and those identified as Multi-racial.

Caucasian women, on average, were exposed to less media (m = 1.9, SD = 0.1) when compared to non-Caucasian women (m = 2.1,

SD = 0.4). Caucasian women also watched less television, on average (m = 2.0, SD = 0.0), when compared to non-Caucasian women (m = 2.1, SD = 0.3). However, Caucasian women reported spending more time reading magazines, on average (m = 2.0, SD = 0.4), when compared to non-Caucasian women (m = 1.9, SD = 0.5). T-test for the three media variables were not significant.

For Caucasian women, total hours spent reading magazines was found to be significantly negatively correlated with appearance evaluation ($r = -.294$, $n = 42$, $p < .001$). Total media exposure was found to be significantly negatively correlated with sexual attractiveness for Caucasian women ($r = -.273$, $n = 42$, $p < .05$).

For women who identified as non-Caucasian, total media exposure was found to be significant negatively correlated with sexual attractiveness ($r = -.400$, $n = 39$, $p < .05$) (see Table 9)

Table 9
Pearson Correlation for Subproblem Two

	Total Magazine Exposure		Total TV Exposure		Total Media Exposure	
	Caucasian	Non-Caucasian	Caucasian	Non-Caucasian	Caucasian	Non-Caucasian
Appearance Evaluation	-.294**	-.193	.061	.082	-.091	-.120
Appearance Orientation	.091	.124	.132	.187	.206	-.239
Sexual Attractiveness	-.081	.010	-.187	-.253	-.273*	-.400*

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level

The final subproblem of this study determined if there is a relationship between body mass index (BMI), body image and media exposure. The research hypothesis stated that women with greater BMI will report greater body dissatisfaction as a result of greater magazine and television exposure. BMI was broken down into three categories: underweight, normal weight, and overweight/obese. Pearson correlations were run to analyze the relationship between media exposure and body image for each BMI category. For the underweight group, a significant negative correlation was found between total media exposure and appearance evaluation ($r = -.599$, $n = 16$, $p < .05$). For participants in the normal weight group, appearance evaluation was found to be significantly negatively correlated with total media exposure ($r = -.310$, $n = 41$, $p < .05$). Also for the normal weight group, appearance orientation was found to be significantly positively related with total media exposure ($r = .394$, $n = 41$, $p < .05$). For the overweight/obese group, total magazine exposure ($r = .599$, $n = 21$, $p < .01$), total television exposure ($r = .561$, $n = 21$, $p < .01$) and total media exposure ($r = .561$, $n = 21$, $p < .01$) were all found to be significantly positively correlated with appearance evaluation (see Table 10).

Table 10

Pearson Correlation for Subproblem Three

	Total Magazine Exposure			Total TV Exposure			Total Media Exposure		
	Under Weight	Normal Weight	Over/ Obese	Under Weight	Normal Weight	Over/ Obese	Under Weight	Normal Weight	Over/ Obese
Appearance Evaluation	-.046	-.185	.599**	-.442	-.024	.561**	-.599*	-.310*	.561**
Appearance Orientation	.145	.133	-.050	.271	.292	.072	.463	.394*	.072
Sexual Attractiveness	.304	-.097	-.321	-.476	.061	-.149	-.328	-.259	-.149

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between body image and media exposure and to determine if there are ethnic differences in the way women respond to the media in terms of body satisfaction. The researcher further proposed to investigate if there is an association between body mass index (BMI) and body image.

Body Image and Media Exposure

The results of the current study indicate that greater amounts of total media exposure are related to more negative feelings about one's rating of sexual attractiveness. The data suggest that when individuals spend an increased amount of time reading magazine and television, they are more likely to negatively evaluate their sexual attractiveness more so than reading magazines only or viewing television only. As previous studies have shown (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Aubrey, 2006), increased media exposure seems related to negative body image.

The results suggest there may be a differential relationship between the images of women shown in magazines and television and the way viewers, particularly female viewers, are feeling about their sexual

attractiveness. While the findings were not significant, the trend of the data show a positive relationship between magazine reading and sexual attractiveness and a negative relationship between television viewing and sexual attractiveness. As found in the study conducted by Tiggemann (2003), television and magazines seem to be working in different ways. Tiggemann (2003) found that viewing thin models on television may normalize such figures. Thus, women who view these figures may accept this as the ideal and consequently rate their own sexual attractiveness negatively. In working with female clients in the age range of this sample, it is important to consider the amount of time the individual spends reading magazines and watching television and explore the degree of acceptance that individual has regarding the mainstream standards of beauty.

Body Image, Media Exposure, and Ethnicity

The results of the current study indicate that there is a difference between Caucasians and non-Caucasians when comparing magazine exposure and appearance evaluation. The data suggest that Caucasian women significantly negatively evaluate their physical attractiveness as they spend more time reading magazines. While the relationship is not as strong for non-Caucasians, there is a similar trend. Previous research has shown that African-American women may be making fewer self-comparisons to mainstream beauty ideals (Schooler et al., 2004) than

Latina-American (Schooler, 2008) and Asian-American women (Evans & McConnell, 2003). Given that the current research grouped these three ethnicities together due to small sample size, the findings may be limited in making between-group comparisons.

The results of the current study also indicate that, when total media exposure is considered, non-Caucasians are more likely to have negative feelings regarding their sexual attractiveness as their media exposure increases. There was a significant relationship found for Caucasians as well, however the relationship was not as strong. Given that the sample of this study included more Asian-American and Latina-American women, this finding could account for Latina-American and Asian American women's greater acceptance of mainstream beauty ideals and its subsequent relationship with feelings of sexual attractiveness.

The trend of the data implies that there is a difference between Caucasians and non-Caucasians in the way they respond to images in magazines and on television in terms of body image. A more representative sample of ethnicities is needed to determine if there is a difference between groups. In working with women of different ethnicities, it is important to consider the level of acceptance of the mainstream standards of beauty. Regardless of ethnicity, it is important to explore how realistic the images are in the media and help the client gain a less narrow view of beauty and happiness.

Body Image, Media Exposure and BMI

Due to the small sample size, a representative sample of each BMI category was not achieved. The results of the current study indicate that for women who are overweight/obese, the more magazines read and television viewed the more likely they were to have positive feelings about their looks. For women who were underweight and normal weight, the relationship was in the opposite direction. The more media these women exposed themselves to, the more likely they were to have negative feelings about their looks. A noteworthy finding is that for the overweight/obese group, appearance evaluation scores were in the opposite direction than appearance orientation and sexual attractiveness scores. This finding may suggest that for women who are overweight/obese in this study, there is a general feeling of satisfaction with appearance despite a lack of concern with how they appear and whether or not they consider themselves as sexually attractive.

This finding could be supported by the tenets of selective exposure theory (Festinger, 1957). According to selective exposure theory, overweight/obese women could be doing one of two things when exposing themselves to media: ignoring the standards of mainstream beauty, because they do not match their beliefs, or seeking media that does not promote the mainstream standard of beauty. The findings of this study do not support the findings of previous studies (Schooler et al., 2004;

Shaw, 1995; Tiggemann, 2003), that higher BMI is associated with a more negative body image. A more representative sample of body weights is needed to determine the direction of the relationship.

Based upon the trends of this research, women may benefit from learning about the messages mainstream media is sending about beauty. If women can learn how to protect themselves from the messages and employ strategies to ignore or counter the messages, they may be able to enjoy mainstream media without it taking a toll on their own perceptions of beauty.

Limitations

The small sample size (N = 81) is a limitation of this study. Due to the small sample size, there was a lack of adequate representation of the four studied ethnicities. Comparisons between all ethnic groups could not be made. The results are more generalizable to Caucasians as opposed to Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Latina-Americans. This is a reflection of the demographics of the Northeastern region in which the data was collected. Therefore, results of this study may not be generalizable to other regions of the country. This sample was also, on average, of relatively normal weight according to the Body Mass Index. This limits generalizability to underweight and overweight women.

The participants recruited for this sample could also be considered a limitation of this study. Participants were recruited from undergraduate

psychology courses and multi-cultural groups on each campus. Given the theories taught in psychology courses, these participants may be sensitized to social influences. Also, multi-cultural groups often have a mission of equity, advocacy and education. The members of these groups are self-selected, and may have developed strategies to avoid being influenced by the body-related messages portrayed in magazines and television. Also, participants completed the survey in public spaces and in groups, which may have contributed to socially-desirable responses.

Finally, this survey was long. Although it took about 15-20 minutes for most participants to complete, the researcher observed many participants visibly bothered by the length. This could have resulted in hastiness and a lack of thoughtful and honest responses.

Recommendations of the Study

A larger sample size would be recommended for this study. A larger sample size would allow for the possibility of greater representation of ethnicities. Sampling from a wider array of college students outside of courses and interest groups that could bias responses would also be beneficial in yielding statistically significant and generalizable results. In doing so, future research may have the ability to determine if there are ethnic differences in the ways women develop their body image in a media-driven culture. Also, a larger sample size might produce a wider

range of body weights. This will allow future research to have the ability to determine if there are differences between women of different shapes and sizes.

A replication of this study might benefit from using the shorter version of the MBSRQ. The creator of the MBSRQ (Cash, 2000) recommends that for researchers interested primarily in the appearance-related subscales of the MBSRQ, there is a 34-item version of this instrument called the MBSRQ-AS. This scale includes the following subscales: Appearance Evaluation, Appearance Orientation, Overweight Preoccupation, Self-Classified Weight, and the BASS. This shorter survey may aid in preventing hasty responses.

Practice Implications

The findings of this study suggest that total media exposure is associated with body image. With the high value placed on unattainable standards of beauty in this culture, it seems that women are susceptible to being influenced by this standard and feeling as though they do not measure up. This can lead to negative feelings about their body and, as one study has shown, the development of eating disorder symptomatology (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004).

In practice, it is important for counselors to educate clients about the beauty ideals that mainstream media is sending to viewers and help them develop strategies to avoid adopting those ideals as their own. By

doing so, counselors could be preventing the development of eating disorder symptoms in their client and fostering a more positive body image that is based on personal beliefs and not cultural beliefs. Doing this may also aid in the relinquishment of other mental disorder symptoms, such as eating disorders, that have been found to be related to the adoption of the unattainable standards of beauty found in the media (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004).

In schools, teaching children and adolescents about healthy nutrition and exercise would be vital to preventing a negative body image. Educating children and adolescents about the messages the media is implicitly sending them through the images on the television screen or on the covers of magazines will allow them to view those image as unrealistic. By doing so, they may avoid adopting these images as ideals and thus, avoid attempts at achieving those ideals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Gender: _____

Age: _____ years

Educational Level (check one):

- High school graduate
- Less than one year of college
- One year of college
- Two years of college
- Three years of college
- 4 + years of college
- College graduate
- Non-degree student
- Graduate student

Ethnicity (check all that apply):

- Caucasian
- Asian-American/Pacific Islander
- Latino-American/Hispanic
- African-American
- Multi-racial
- I predominantly identify as: _____ (optional)
- Other, please specify: _____

Height: _____ ft. _____ in.

Present weight: _____ lbs.

APPENDIX B

MEDIA EXPOSURE SURVEYS

Directions:

1. Please check all magazine titles in which you subscribe to, have purchased off the shelf, or have read second-hand (i.e., read in a waiting lounge or borrowed from a friend) **during a typical month.**
2. Estimate the amount of time you spent reading each magazine **during a typical month**

Magazine Title	I subscribe to, have purchased off the shelf, or have read second-hand during a typical month	Estimated amount of hours spent reading this title during a typical month
Cosmopolitan		
Seventeen		
Tear Sheet		
Shape		
Bitch		
Jane		
Fitness		
In Style		
Allure		
Marie Claire		
Health		
Vanity Fair		
Glamour		
Honey		
Prevention		
People		
A Woman's View		
Redbook		
Cooking Light		
National Enquirer		
Other: (please specify) _____		

APPENDIX B (continued)

Directions:

1. Please indicate which genre of television you have watched **in the past week**
2. Indicate approximately how many hours you spent watching each genre **in the past week**

Genre	I have watched this genre in the past week	Number of hours I spent watching this genre in the past week
Animation		
Classic		
Comedy		
Drama		
Kids		
Nonfiction		
Reality TV		
Sci-Fi & Fantasy		
Sports		
Teens		
Other: (please specify genre and program)		

APPENDIX C

THE MBSRQ

THE MBSRQ

INSTRUCTIONS—PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The following pages contain a series of statements about how people might think, feel, or behave. You are asked to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to you personally.

Your answers to the items in the questionnaire are anonymous, so please do not write your name on any of the materials. In order to complete the questionnaire, read each statement carefully and decide how much it pertains to you personally. Using a scale like the one below, indicate your answer by entering it to the left of the number of the statement.

EXAMPLE:

_____ I am usually in a good mood.

In the blank space, enter a 1 if you definitely disagree with the statement,

enter a 2 if you mostly disagree;

enter a 3 if you neither agree nor disagree;

enter a 4 if you mostly agree;

or enter a 5 if you definitely agree with the statement.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just give the answer that is most accurate for you. Remember, your responses are confidential, so please be completely honest and answer all items.

*(Duplication and use of the MBSRQ only by permission of
Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D., Department of Psychology,
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529)*

APPENDIX C (continued)

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree

continued on the next page

APPENDIX C (continued)

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree

- _____ 20. I am very conscious of even small changes in my weight.
- _____ 21. Most people would consider me good-looking.
- _____ 22. It is important that I always look good.
- _____ 23. I use very few grooming products.
- _____ 24. I easily learn physical skills.
- _____ 25. Being physically fit is not a strong priority in my life.
- _____ 26. I do things to increase my physical strength.
- _____ 27. I am seldom physically ill.
- _____ 28. I take my health for granted.
- _____ 29. I often read books and magazines that pertain to health.
- _____ 30. I like the way I look without my clothes on.
- _____ 31. I am self-conscious if my grooming isn't right.
- _____ 32. I usually wear whatever is handy without caring how it looks.
- _____ 33. I do poorly in physical sports or games.
- _____ 34. I seldom think about my athletic skills.
- _____ 35. I work to improve my physical stamina.
- _____ 36. From day to day, I never know how my body will feel.
- _____ 37. If I am sick, I don't pay much attention to my symptoms.
- _____ 38. I make no special effort to eat a balanced and nutritious diet.

continued on the next page

APPENDIX C (continued)

For the remainder of the items use the response scale given with the item,
and enter your answer in the space beside the item.

_____ 58. I have tried to lose weight by fasting or going on crash diets.

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very Often

_____ 59. I think I am:

1. Very Underweight
2. Somewhat Underweight
3. Normal Weight
4. Somewhat Overweight
5. Very Overweight

_____ 60. From looking at me, most other people would think I am:

1. Very Underweight
2. Somewhat Underweight
3. Normal Weight
4. Somewhat Overweight
5. Very Overweight

continued on the next page

APPENDIX D

THE BODY SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

The Body-Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:

- 1 = Have strong negative feelings
- 2 = Have moderate negative feelings
- 3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
- 4 = Have moderate positive feelings
- 5 = Have strong positive feelings

-
- 1. body scent _____
 - 2. appetite _____
 - 3. nose _____
 - 4. physical stamina _____
 - 5. reflexes _____
 - 6. lips _____
 - 7. muscular strength _____
 - 8. waist _____
 - 9. energy level _____
 - 10. thighs _____
 - 11. ears _____
 - 12. biceps _____
 - 13. chin _____
 - 14. body build _____
 - 15. physical coordination _____
 - 16. buttocks _____
 - 17. agility _____
 - 18. width of shoulders _____
 - 19. arms _____
 - 20. chest or breasts _____
 - 21. appearance of eyes _____
 - 22. cheeks/cheekbones _____
 - 23. hips _____
 - 24. legs _____
 - 25. figure or physique _____

APPENDIX D (continued)

- 26. sex drive _____
- 27. feet _____
- 28. sex organs _____
- 29. appearance of stomach _____
- 30. health _____
- 31. sex activities _____
- 32. body hair _____
- 33. physical condition _____
- 34. face _____
- 35. weight _____

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

MY NAME IS SHANNON WONG. I AM A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE PURSUING MY MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COUNSELING.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY IS TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE STUDENT'S MEDIA EXPOSURE AND BELIEFS ABOUT THEMSELVES.

WHAT DOES YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY INVOLVE?

- YOU WILL BE GIVEN A PACKET CONSISTING OF VARIOUS QUESTIONS AND SURVEY ITEMS FOR YOU TO COMPLETE. IT IS EXPECTED THAT YOU WILL ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS HONESTLY AND TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY.
- IT WILL TAKE YOU APPROXIMATELY 15-20 MINUTES FOR YOU TO COMPLETE THE STUDY.
- PLEASE FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS ON THE COVER SHEET OF YOUR SURVEY.
- WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED YOU MAY RETURN THE COMPLETED SURVEY TO ME.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

WHILE THERE IS A DEGREE OF RISK TO EVERY STUDY, THE POTENTIAL FOR THIS STUDY IS QUITE MINIMAL. SOME QUESTIONS MAY MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. IF THIS IS THE CASE, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPATION.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

WHILE THERE ARE NO BENEFITS THAT YOU WILL ACCRUE THROUGH YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION IS AIDING IN FURTHERING THE RESEARCH AND AWARENESS OF THIS TOPIC.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY, WILL IT COST YOU ANYTHING?

No.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

No.

WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY, AND THAT YOUR REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE WILL INVOLVE NO PREJUDICE, PENALTY OR LOSS OF BENEFITS TO WHICH YOU WOULD OTHERWISE BE ENTITLED. THIS STUDY IS NOT PART OF COURSEWORK AND REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE WILL NOT IMPACT GRADE OR COURSE STANDING.

CAN YOU WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

IF YOU CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY, YOU ARE FREE TO STOP YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PREJUDICE, PENALTY, OR LOSS OF BENEFITS TO WHICH YOU WOULD OTHERWISE BE ENTITLED.

HOW WILL THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF YOUR RECORDS BE PROTECTED?

THE RESEARCHER SEEKS TO MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF ALL DATA AND RECORDS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH.

TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THE SURVEY SO THAT YOUR RESPONSES CAN NOT BE IDENTIFIED. THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY WILL BE REPORTED ANONYMOUSLY WITH NO WAY TO IDENTIFY THE PARTICIPANTS.

WHOM TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE RESEARCH YOU CAN CONTACT SHANNON WONG AT 603-682-3063 OR SHANNON4685@YAHOO.COM TO DISCUSS THEM.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT YOU CAN CONTACT JULIE SIMPSON IN THE UNH OFFICE OF SPONSORED RESEARCH, 603-862-2003 OR JULIE.SIMPSON@UNH.EDU TO DISCUSS THEM.

APPENDIX F
SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

Survey instructions:

- Please complete survey in order that it is presented
- Do not write your name anywhere on the survey
- Please refrain from talking to your peers and other participants until you have finished the study
- Your participation is valued, so please take the time to read the item and respond honestly and to the best of your ability

APPENDIX G

DEBRIEFING FORMS



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my study. The purpose of my study is to investigate the relationship between body image and media consumption and to determine if there are ethnic differences in the way women respond to the media in terms of body satisfaction. I further wish to investigate if there is an association between body mass index (BMI) and body image.

The media often portrays images of women as unrealistically thin and beautiful. This can possibly influence how women feel about their bodies as they compare themselves to what they see in magazines or on television. I wish to examine the extent of these influential images and to see if ethnicity plays a role in women's feelings about their body.

I understand that some of the questions that you responded to may have made you uncomfortable or brought up some concerns you may have about your own body. These questions are necessary to ask in order to gain a full picture of your media consumption habits and your feelings about your body. If you desire to talk to someone further about your concerns, please contact the counseling center on your campus:

UNCONN Counseling and Mental Health Services
234 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2011
Storrs, CT 06269
860-486-4705

Please do not hesitate to contact myself or thesis advisor if you have further questions,

Sincerely,

Shannon Wong
(603)682-3063
shannon4685@yahoo.com

Liz Falvey
Professor of Education
je.falvey@unh.edu



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my study. The purpose of my study is to investigate the relationship between body image and media consumption and to determine if there are ethnic differences in the way women respond to the media in terms of body satisfaction. I further wish to investigate if there is an association between body mass index (BMI) and body image.

The media often portrays images of women as unrealistically thin and beautiful. This can possibly influence how women feel about their bodies as they compare themselves to what they see in magazines or on television. I wish to examine the extent of these influential images and to see if ethnicity plays a role in women's feelings about their body.

I understand that some of the questions that you responded to may have made you uncomfortable or brought up some concerns you may have about your own body. These questions are necessary to ask in order to gain a full picture of your media consumption habits and your feelings about your body. If you desire to talk to someone further about your concerns, please contact the counseling center on your campus:

UNH Health Services
Office of Health Education and Promotion
Room 249
12 Ballard St.
Durham, NH 03824
603-862-3823

Please do not hesitate to contact myself or thesis advisor if you have further questions,

Sincerely,

Shannon Wong
(603)682-3063
shannon4685@yahoo.com

Liz Falvey
Professor of Education
je.falvey@unh.edu

APPENDIX H
IRB APPROVAL LETTERS

University of New Hampshire

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

10-Nov-2008

Wong, Shannon
Education, Morrill Hall
12 Beacon Hill Road
Hooksett, NH 03106

IRB #: 4412

Study: Media exposure and the role of ethnicity in the body image of college women

Approval Date: 06-Nov-2008

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 110.

Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period, you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,


Julie F. Simpson
Manager


cc: File
Falvey, Janet



University of Connecticut
Office of Research Compliance

DATE: November 25, 2008

TO: Shannon Wong
University of New Hampshire
Graduate Program in Counseling

FROM: Jaci L. VanHeest, Ph.D. 
Institutional Review Board Member
FWA# 00007125

RE: **Research Project Title:** Media Exposure and the Role of Ethnicity in the Body Image of College Women

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Connecticut reviewed the above referenced protocol and determined that it does not require an independent review by this IRB. The University of New Hampshire IRB has approved the study. Therefore, you may recruit participants on the Storrs and regional campuses (including the School of Law and School of Social Work). Please note that this approval does not extend to the University of Connecticut Health Center (UCHC). If you wish to recruit participants at UCHC, contact the UCHC IRB at (860) 679-1019.

You must use a copy of the consent document with the UConn IRB validation stamp when recruiting on this campus. The original validated consent document is attached.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (860) 486-8802.

Thank you for your inquiry.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

438 Whitney Road Extension Unit 1246
Storrs, Connecticut 06269-1246
Telephone: (860) 486-8802
Facsimile: (860) 486-1044
web: <http://www.compliance.uconn.edu>