Internalization of the Thin Ideal, Media Images and Body Image Dissatisfaction in African American College Women: Implications for Black Female Sexuality

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Internalization of the Thin Ideal, Media Images and Body Image Dissatisfaction in African American College Women

Implications for Black Female Sexuality

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ABSTRACT—There is a need to understand how body image dissatisfaction influences African American women's perception of self and sexuality. Using social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), the current study investigated whether internalization of media images moderated the relationship between exposure to media images and body image. One hundred thirty-five African American college women were recruited. Pearson product moment correlations, standard and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. Results indicate that internalization influences the relationship between media imagery and body image. More research is needed to investigate the correlation between media imagery and body image of African American women as well as levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Implications for this research are discussed.

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Introduction

PREVIOUS LITERATURE HAS OFTEN EXAMINED BODY DISSATISFAC-
tion, specifically the implication of eating disorders, among Europe-
an American women (Cash & Smolak, 2011; Gilbert, Crump & Mad-
here, 2009; Rajagopalan & Shejwal, 2014). However, in current literature,
little attention has been given to body image issues in African American
women due to acceptance of larger body types within the black community
(James, Phelps & Bross, 2001; Warren, 2014). Early data suggested that Afri-
can American women did not idolize European American models, suggest-
ing that Caucasian women suffered more from body dissatisfaction (James
et al., 2001). However, White ideals of beauty, specifically that of light skin
tone and Caucasoid hair texture and facial features have been historically
accepted by African Americans (Hill, 2002; Jefferson & Stake, 2009).

In Western society, mainstream media often reflects aesthetic images
that idolize the thin ideal, from slender magazine models to cosmetic tele-
vision ads (Blowers, Loxton, Grady-Flesser, Occhipinti & Dawe, 2003) The
average American woman stands 5'4" tall and weighs approximately 140
pounds, whereas the average American model stands 5'11" tall and weighs
approximately 117 pounds (NEDA, 2005). This difference in physique has
led to an increase in body dissatisfaction, thus resulting in an increase in
unhealthy behaviors like cosmetic surgery. According to the American
Society of Plastic Surgeons (2013), there has been a 79% change in the
amount of tummy tucks between the year 2000 and the year 2013. The top
five cosmetic procedures in 2013 included breast augmentation (290,000),
nose reshaping (221,000), eyelid surgery (216,000), liposuction (200,000)
and face lifts (133, 000), with 44% of patients having more than one cos-
metic procedure done at the same time (American Society of Plastic Sur-
geons, 2013). Simultaneously with the thin ideal as the standard of beauty,
imagery in the media, particularly print advertisements, often depict wom-
en as sexualized objects (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008).

Exposure to sexually objectifying media has been found to be problem-
atic in regards to the development of body image dissatisfaction (Harrison
& Hefner, 2006). Internalization of the thin ideal and an inability to obtain
a slender figure has implications of body dissatisfaction in young white
women (Blowers et al., 2003). Literature addressing the effects of thin ide-
al internalization among Black women is limited. More recently, literature

has begun to examine other factors that influence body dissatisfaction, such as skin tone dissatisfaction, body appreciation and racial identity as a protective factors (Buchanan, Fischer, Tokar & Yoder, 2008; Cotter, Kelly, Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2015; Watson, Ancis, White & Nazari, 2013) and body shapes that do not perpetuate the thin ideal (Overstreet, Qunn & Agocha, 2010). In a study by Overstreet et. al., (2010) Black women reported the desire to have a more curvaceous body shape.

According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), people do not engage in making self-comparisons to those who are thought to be different from them. Using this theory and the previous lack of Black women in media may explain past speculations that Black women were more satisfied with their bodies. However, with the increase in the portrayal of Black women in the media that emulate white standards of beauty (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011) there is a need for further investigation. Moreover, current literature suggests that black women are not immune to developing body dissatisfaction (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014) and that exposure to western ideals of beauty negatively impact Black women's body image (Shearon-Richardson, 2011).

Researchers have found that if a woman identifies with Western cultural paradigms of aesthetics, then concepts of body image may be problematic if the woman does not achieve these standards (Fitzsimmons-Craft, Harney, Koehler, Danzi, Riddell & Bardone-Cone, 2012). According to the National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) (2014), people who are farther away from the dominant ideal of beauty, (e.g., some women of color) may suffer from eating disorders, poor self-esteem and body image. It has also been found that African American women who are more accepting or acculturated towards dominant ideals of beauty have the tendency to develop significantly more symptoms of bulimia and anorexia nervosa than those who are less acculturated to that view (NEDA, 2014).

Body Image Dissatisfaction
Body image dissatisfaction or having a negative self-perception of oneself (body dissatisfaction) can lead to eating disorders, feelings of depression, low self-esteem, increased cosmetic procedures and an obsession with losing weight (NEDA, 2005). The prevalence of eating disorders among college women has been found to within 4% and 9% (Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2012). In a study that used self-report measures, prevalence rates of

eating disorders among African American women were found to be within the same range as Caucasian American women (Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2004). Similarly, another study contends that Black women are just as prone to develop Binge Eating Disorder as White women (Pike, Dohm, Streigel-Moore, Wilfley and Fairburn, 2001). These findings are significant because it challenges prior research suggestive of the absence of prevalence of eating disorders within the African American community (Gilbert et al., 2009). Carrion, Rabin, Weingberger-Litman and Fogel, (2011) suggest that support of cosmetic surgery and disordered eating are not separate constructs from each other but instead they represent underlying psychopathological body dissatisfaction. Because of the information available about eating disorders and its implications (Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2012), more research on this topic is needed because many adolescents and women struggle with body image dissatisfaction.

Media Influence

In the past, some media images have portrayed the thin ideal as a beauty standard in predominately White females and suggested that African American women were more satisfied with their body shape and had higher body image ideals (Botta, 2000). Like their White counterparts, there have been more portrayals of thin images of women of color in the media (Botta, 2000). In a study by Frisby (2004), 110 Black college-aged women viewed print ads of either physically attractive Black models or physically attractive White models and completed a body esteem measure at pre and posttest. Black women reported lower body esteem when exposed to and engaged in comparing themselves to Black models, suggesting that images of Black models negatively affect Black women (Frisby, 2004). However, in a similar study where Black women were exposed to both black and white thin and plus-sized models (Bruns & Carter, 2015) Black women reported lower levels of body dissatisfaction than White women when exposed to thin Black models and instead reported higher body dissatisfaction when exposed to the plus-sized models. The differences between these two studies highlight the diverging perspectives on body image in Black women. With the increased availability of the numerous mediums of mass media (e.g., television, magazines, internet), the recent portrayal of the thin ideal among women of color, and conflicting literature in the body image field pertaining to black women, this suggests the need for further study as it relates to internalization.

Internalization of Media Images

In Western media, women are often sexually objectified which is depicted as having a strong emphasis on physical appearance rather than personality (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). When sexualized images are internalized women may engage in increasingly more body surveillance (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Internalization can be defined as the extent to which a person embraces and exhibits socially acceptable ideals of attractiveness and thus participates in behaviors intended to produce these ideals (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Mere exposure to media images does not solely account for body dissatisfaction and eating disorders; the extent to whether such images are internalized is a better predictor (Gilbert et al., 2009). Gilbert et al., (2009) conducted a study that assessed 146 African American, Africans and Afro-Caribbean women for drive for thinness, body dissatisfaction, and bulimia. Results revealed internalization to be a mediator between drive for thinness and bulimia in only African American undergraduate women. The researchers speculated that African American women seem to be just as affected by body dissatisfaction stemming from the pervasiveness of the thin ideal as other ethnic groups in the United States (Gilbert et al., 2009).

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), posits that people tend to compare themselves to images that seem realistic and attainable. Botta (2000) extends this theory by suggesting that since the majority of the thin ideal has been portrayed by White females in the literature, then it is understandable that White females tend to compare themselves more to this ideal than Black females. However, with the increase of the portrayal of thin images of women of color, Black females will have these same thin ideals to compare themselves with, which can lead to an increase in disordered eating and/or skewed perception about how a woman's body should be (Botta, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

It seems critical to investigate the relationship between exposure to media, and internalization of media images among African American females. The urgency of exploring this relationship emerges from possible internalized beauty ideals that may be incongruent to culture's standards of beauty and the increased likelihood of body dissatisfaction. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of exposure to media images and internalization of media images in relation to body image dissatisfac-

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for African American Females Sample ($n = 135$)

Variable	n	%
Age		
18–19	90	66.7
20–21	39	28.9
22–30	5	3.7
Missing	1	.7
Ethnicity		
A. American	128	94.8
Biracial	7	5.2
Height		
4'9–5'0.5	10	7.4
5'1–5'2.5	28	20.8
5'3–5'4.5	43	31.9
5'5–5'6.5	25	18.5
5'7–5'8.5	21	15.5
5'9–6'0.5	5	3.7
6'1–6'3.5	1	.7
Missing	2	1.5
Weight		
100–120	19	13.8
121–141	40	29.5
142–162	24	17.6
163–183	15	10.9
184–204	11	8
205–225	5	3.5
226–246	9	6.5
247–267	4	2.8
268–288	1	.7
289–309	2	1.4
310–330	1	.7
Missing	4	3.0
High School		
Predom. Black	75	55.6
Predom. White	54	40
Both	6	4.4
Racial Composition of High School		
75% A. American	60	44.4
50% A. American	38	28.1
25% A. American	33	24.4
Missing	4	3
Participant Body Composition		
Too Thin	1	.7
Thin	18	13.3
Average	65	48.1
Slightly Overweight	43	31.9
Obese	8	5.9

Variable	n	%
Average Dress Size		
2	1	.7
4	3	2.2
6	21	15.6
8	39	28.9
10	30	22.2
12	28	20.7
14	8	5.9
16	3	2.2
18	2	1.5
Participant Dress Size		
0	1	.7
1–2	10	7.4
3–4	12	8.9
5–6	28	20.7
7–8	17	12.6
9–10	9	6.7
11–12	16	11.8
13–14	9	6.7
15–16	12	8.8
17–18	9	6.7
19–20	4	3.0
21–22	2	1.5
Plastic Surgery		
Yes	1	.7
No	134	99.3
Diet		
Daily	7	5.2
Weekly	26	19.3
Monthly	28	20.7
Never	63	46.7
Other	11	8.1
Internet Use		
Daily	131	97.0
Weekly	3	2.2
Other	1	.7
Internet Time (day/week/month)		
1–3 hrs.	46	36.3
3–5 hrs.	37	27.4
5+ hrs.	48	35.6

Note. A. American = African American. Predom. = Predominately. Average Dress Size refers to what is thought to be the average women's dress size. Participant Dress Size refers to the actual dress size of participants.

tion among African American college aged females. The following two research questions are explored: Is there a relationship between media exposure and body image dissatisfaction? Does internalization of media images influence the relationship between exposure to media images and body image dissatisfaction?

Methods

Research Design

This study implemented a cross-sectional design utilizing survey research by means of quantitative methods to establish correlational relationships and differences between the independent variables under investigation. To assess the degree to which internalization of media images influenced the relationship between exposure of media images and body image among African American women, standard and hierarchal regressions were completed.

Participants

This study recruited a total of 135 participants. Participants were recruited from undergraduate General Psychology courses. This study recruited African American females ages 18 to 30 from a historically black college or university in a midsized city in the Southeast. The participants had to self-identify themselves as African American females in order to participate in the study. Participants' ages were categorized as follows: 18–19 (66.7%), 20–21 (28.9%), and 22–30 (3.7%). Additional demographic information on the sample is outlined in the Descriptive Statistics table (See Table 1).

Those who were younger than 18, older than 30, and not a female of African American descent were excluded from this study. There were minimal risks to individuals participating in the study. However, due to the emphasis on body image dissatisfaction participants were given referral information regarding counseling services on campus and within the local community.

Procedures

Once the Institutional Review Board granted approval, the researcher performed a classroom recruitment presentation during the students regularly scheduled class time. The participants were notified that the study would consist of filling out four (4) short surveys within the context of the classroom and would take approximately 40 minutes to complete. Once the par-

ticipants agreed to participate in the study, they signed a consent form and were explained that participation was voluntary and they could leave at any time. Participants were instructed how to complete the surveys.

Debriefing consisted of allowing participants the opportunity to comment and/or ask the researcher any questions regarding the study. A list of community mental health resources was distributed to ensure that each participant would have adequate resources for any troubling personal or psychological issues that might arise during or after completing the survey.

Measures

Demographics
The researcher constructed this questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions and collected basic demographic information including age, gender, ethnic identity, dress size, body image, height, weight, dieting, plastic surgery, amount and type of Internet use and whether the participants attended predominately white, black or mixed high schools. There was also one open-ended question that asked the participants to list specific Internet websites they visited on a regular basis.

Media Usage Survey
To gather information regarding amount and type of media consumption the researcher utilized the Media Usage Survey (Wilson-Delarosa, 2012). The researcher modified this survey and for this study included 10 items addressing the amount and type of media usage. It measured the amount of media usage by having participants endorse whether they exhibit behaviors pertaining to media usage daily, weekly, or monthly. In order to fully capture the amount of time spent viewing media, this survey was modified and participants were asked to specifically state the number of hours they view media. There were two open-ended questions that asked the participants the type of magazines they read and television shows they watched frequently. The alpha level for this measure was $\alpha = .54$. For the current study, the alpha level was $\alpha = .91$.

Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-Revised: Female Version (SATAQ)
Internalization of media models was assessed using the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-Revised: Female Version

(SATAQ), which was developed by Heinberg, Thompson, and Stormer (1995). It assesses acknowledgement and acceptance of societal standards of appearance and is composed of 21 items and has two subscales: awareness and internalization. The reliability coefficient is .71 for the awareness subscale and .88 for the internalization subscale. The scale was normed on 344 female college students. This scale is based on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from (1) completely disagree and (5) completely agree. Sample items include statements such as: "I wish I looked like the women pictured in magazines that model underwear" and "I tend to compare my body to TV and movie stars". Participants were instructed to circle the answer choice that best corresponded with their agreement with the statements. Scores were found by summing up all answers to the 21 questions. Higher scores indicate higher levels of internalization. Items four, seventeen, and twenty-one on this scale were removed due to low correlation with the summed score across all items. For the current study, the alpha level was $\alpha = .88$ for the internalization scale.

The Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BESAA)

The Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adult (BESAA) (Mendelson, White & Mendelson, 1997) was used to assess body image. This scale assesses "general feelings about appearance, weight satisfaction, and other's evaluations about one's body and appearance" and is comprised of 23 items assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (0) Never to (4) Always. It involves 3 subscales: Body Esteem (BE)-Appearance (10-items) which assesses general feelings towards looks, BE-Weight (8-items) which assesses weight satisfaction and BE-Attribution (5-items) which assesses other's opinions about one's appearance and body. Sample question items include, "I am satisfied with my weight" and "I like what I look like in pictures". The scale was normed on 761 females and 571 males who spoke English and were between ages 12–25 in elementary schools, high schools, and colleges and universities in Quebec, Canada. The Cronbach's alpha was .92 for the BE-Appearance subscale, .94 for the BE-Weight subscale and .81 for the BE-Attribution subscale. Items five and twenty on this scale were removed due to low correlation with the summed score across all items. For the current study, the alpha levels for the BE-Appearance, BE-Weight, and BE-Attribution subscales were $\alpha = .92$, $\alpha = .85$, and $\alpha = .84$ respectively. Items on each subscale were summed. The scoring for the BESAA is as fol-

lows: Higher scores on a subtest indicate more positive body-esteem and negative items (indicated by asterisk) are scored in reverse. It should be noted that there is no global score for body-esteem.

Results

In an effort to assess the relationship between exposure to media images and internalization of media images in college aged women's body image dissatisfaction spss 20 was utilized. Twenty percent of the data was randomly re-entered to ensure accuracy. Frequencies were used to ensure data was normally distributed to assess the relationship between the variables of exposure to media images and internalization of media images in relation to body image dissatisfaction. Pearson product moment correlation and standard regression analyses were also used to assess relationships between the primary variables.

Preliminary Analysis

To investigate the relationship between the primary variables, Pearson product moment correlations were run. Using Pearson product moment correlation, results revealed that there was no significant relationship between media usage and Body-Esteem Appearance $r(134) = -.09$, $p = ns$, nor was there a statistically significant relationship between media usage and Body-Esteem Weight $r(134) = .03$, $p = ns$. There was no significant relationship between media usage and Body-Esteem Attribution $r(134) = -.03$, $p = ns$. There was also no significant relationship between media usage and age $r(134) = -.11$, $p = ns$. However, there was a statically significant positive relationship between media usage and internalization as measured by the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale $r(134) = .18$, $p \leq = .05$. (See table 2).

Using Pearson product moment correlation, results revealed that there was no significant relationship between internalization and age $r(134) = -.03$, $p = ns$. However, there was a statistically significant negative relationship between internalization and Body-Esteem Appearance $r(134) = .70$, $p \leq = .01$. There was a statistically significant negative relationship between internalization and Body-Esteem Weight $r(134) = .51$, $p \leq = .01$. There was also a statistically significant negative relationship between internalization and Body-Esteem Attribution $r(134) = .51$, $p \leq = .01$. (See table 2).

Using Pearson product moment correlation, results revealed that there was no significant relationship between age and Body-Esteem Appearance r (134) = .04, p = ns, nor was there a statistically significant relationship between age and Body-Esteem Weight r (134) = .03, p = ns. There was also no significant relationship between age and Body-Esteem Attribution r (134) = .06, p = ns. (See table 2).

However, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between Body-Esteem Appearance and Body Esteem-Weight r (134) = .77, p ≤ = .01. There was a statistically significant positive relationship between Body-Esteem Appearance and Body-Esteem Attribution r (134) = .80, p ≤ = .01. There was also a statistically significant positive relationship between Body-Esteem Attribution and Body-Esteem Weight r (134) = .53, p ≤ = .01. (See table 2).

Internalization as a moderator between
Exposure and Body-Esteem Appearance
Standard and hierarchical regressions were run with a multiplicative variable as a predictor (Exposure X Internalization) to assess the moderating role of internalization. Results of the analysis indicated that there was evidence for interaction, the model accounted for 21% of the variance (R^2 = .21, $F_{(1, 134)}$ = 36.2, p < .001). Thus, indicating that internalization acted as a moderator between exposure to media images and body-esteem appearance (b = -.46; p < .001). Initial analysis indicated that there may be evidence of a masking relationship. Subsequent analysis revealed that young women who reported high levels of internalization also reported low levels of body esteem appearance thus indicating more concerns with body image. (See table 3).

Internalization as a moderator between
Exposure and Body-Esteem Weight
To assess the moderating role of internalization, standard and hierarchical regressions were run with a multiplicative variable as a predictor (Exposure X Internalization). Results of the analysis indicated that there was evidence for interaction, the model accounted for 7% of the variance (R^2 = .07, $F_{(1, 132)}$ = 10.67, p < .001). Thus, indicating that internalization acted as a moderator between exposure to media images and body-esteem weight (b = -.27 < .001). Initial analysis indicated that there may be evidence of a masking relationship. Subsequent analysis revealed that young women who reported

Table 2. Correlation table for primary variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Media Usage	1.00					
Internalization	.18*	1.00				
Body-Esteem Appearance	-.90	-.70**	1.00			
Body-Esteem Weight	.03	-.51**	.77**	1.00		
Body-Esteem Attribution	-.03	-.51**	.80**	.53**	1.00	
Age	-.11	-.03	.04	.03	.06	1.00
Mean	13.11	16.48	28.72	11.47	18.34	19.20
Standard Deviation	4.91	7.07	8.62	5.24	4.10	1.55

*$p \le .05$, **$p \le .01$

Table 3. Internalization as a moderator between Exposure and Body-Esteem Appearance

	b (se)
Constant	34.00
Exposure	-.10(.22)
Internalization	-.70(.08)
Exposure X Internalization	-.46(.01)**
$F_{(1,134)}$	36.2
R^2	.21

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 4. Internalization as a moderator between
            Exposure and Body-Esteem Weight

	b (se)
Constant	13.45
Exposure	.03(.13)
Internalization	-.51(.06)
Exposure X Internalization	-.27(.01)**
$F_{(1,134)}$	10.67
R^2	.07

*p < .05; **p < .01

high levels of internalization also reported low levels of body esteem weight thus indicating more concerns with body image. (See table 4).

Internalization as a moderator between
Exposure and Body-Esteem Attribution
To address the moderating role of internalization, standard and hierarchical regressions were run with a multiplicative variable as a predictor (Exposure X Internalization). Results of the analysis indicated that there was evidence for interaction the model accounted for 11% of the variance ($R^2 = .11$, $F_{(1, 132)}$ = 16.77, $p < .001$). Thus, indicating that internalization acted as a moderator between exposure to media images and body-esteem attribution ($b = -.34 <$

Table 5. Internalization as a moderator between
            Exposure and Body-Esteem Attribution

	b (se)
Constant	20.11
Exposure	-.03(.11)
Internalization	-.51(.04)
Exposure X Internalization	-.34(.01)**
$F_{(1,134)}$	16.77
R^2	.11

*p < .05; **p < .01

.001). Initial analysis indicated that there may be evidence of a masking relationship. Subsequent analysis revealed that young women who reported high levels of internalization also reported low levels of body esteem attribution thus indicating more concerns with body image. (See table 5).

Discussion

Given the increase in eating disorders, rise in cosmetic surgery consumption and increase in media consumption, there is a need to assess media influences on body image dissatisfaction in African American college females (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2013; Gilbert et al., 2009). The current study examined the moderating role of internalization of media images between exposure of media images and differences in body image dissatisfaction among African American women from a historically Black university in the Southern region of the United States. The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether internalization of media images moderated the relationship between exposure to media images and body image. In this study, the three subscales of body image (e.g., Body-Esteem Appearance, Body-Esteem Weight, and Body-Esteem Attribution) were assessed independently.

Hypothesis 1a predicted that internalization, would moderate the relationship between exposure to media images and Body-Esteem Appearance. This hypothesis was supported. Thus participants who internalized more media images reported lower levels of Body-Esteem Appearance. Hypothesis 1b predicted that internalization, would moderate the relationship between exposure to media images and Body-Esteem Weight. This hypothesis was supported. Thus participants who internalized more media images reported lower levels of Body-Esteem Weight. Hypothesis 1c predicted that internalization, would moderate the relationship between exposure to media images and Body-Esteem Attribution. This hypothesis was supported. Thus participants who internalized more media images reported lower levels of Body-Esteem Attribution.

These findings are consistent with previous literature on the relationship between exposure to media images, internalization of media images and body image dissatisfaction. Sands and Wardle (2003) found that higher body dissatisfaction and higher internalization were reported in girls who were regularly exposed to magazines that portray the thin ideal. The extent to which media images are internalized is a better predictor of body dissatisfac-

tion rather than mere exposure to such images (Gilbert et al., 2009). Thus, when females engage in idealizing such images and make self-comparisons towards these images it may lead to body image dissatisfaction.

Limitations

This study utilized a cross-sectional design by means of self-report surveys and employed quantitative methods to establish relationships among exposure to media images, internalization of media images, and body image dissatisfaction. Findings from this study may have limited generalizability because majority of the sample consisted of African American college females ages eighteen to nineteen. Current findings may not be reflective of African American females who are non-college students, who are upperclassmen, or from predominantly White institutions. Also, due to the dearth of empirically validated body esteem measures normed on the African American population, the body esteem measure selected in this study does not reflect norms that are representative of the African American community.

Implications

The results of this study suggest that the relationship between exposure to media images and body image dissatisfaction is moderated by internalization among African American college women. This indicates that when media images are internalized at high levels, there is greater likelihood that body dissatisfaction occurs. The findings of this study suggest that African American women report an increase in media consumption and internalization of thin images at a tenuous and impressionable age which may lead to more body dissatisfaction. This is inconsistent with previous research, which indicates that African American women are able to safeguard against body dissatisfaction (James et al., 2001).

The current study adds to a limited amount of research that has focused on predictors of body dissatisfaction among African American women. Being unsatisfied with one's body could lead to negative health consequences for African American women such as eating disorders and plastic surgery, which have been found to be increasing for African American women (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2013). Having increased awareness of body dissatisfaction as it occurs in African American women allows for the needed discussion among the psychology community regarding body image concerns. Open forum discussions in which a dialogue about body image can be started amongst psychologists and further training for clini-

cians in this area and the development of racially normed screening tools may be beneficial in buffering body dissatisfaction. With this in mind, the construction of racially validated assessments for measuring body image dissatisfaction in African American women would be beneficial in regards to prevention, particularly because most measures have been normed on predominately Caucasian populations.

With the growing amount of media platforms that are easily available to all (e.g., online magazines, video content streaming, and social media sites etc.), it is important to take measures to safeguard against the ramifications of constant media consumption. Media literacy programs and interventions are aimed at critically analyzing media content rather than passively accepting media messages (Irving & Berel, 2001). It has been found that media literacy interventions serve as a protective barrier in the development of body image dissatisfaction (Irving & Berel, 2001). Implementing this type of intervention on college campuses could be beneficial in deconstructing problematic media messages that impact body image and the desire to live up to the sexualized nature of media images.

Implications for providing clinical or counseling services to females battling with body dissatisfaction include that of acknowledging the media's significant influence on a young woman's concept of beauty. Literature supports that negative body perception affects not only body esteem but also feelings about oneself (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2011). Therefore, the strengthening of self-esteem and self-confidence should be of importance within the therapeutic relationship. It also seems necessary to engage in reframing negative thought processes, which include that of body comparisons, by replacing such negative self-comparisons with that of positive self-affirmations and empowerment. With the sexual undertones represented within the media in mind, it will also be beneficial for health care providers working with women battling poor body image to incorporate feminist therapy perspectives and techniques with other modalities of therapy. Feminist therapy, within the context of body image dissatisfaction, aims to take the focus off of one's appearance, bolster body acceptance, and deconstruct the notion of patriarchal oppression on women's bodies by challenging gender roles and behaviors (Srebnik & Saltzberg, 2008).

Future Directions
There is a great need to further examine the factors that influence body image dissatisfaction among African American women. Future studies could

employ a longitudinal design to examine the long term effects of the influence of media on body image among African American college women. Future research is needed to better understand the prevalence of body image and negative health consequences for African American women. There is still a great need to assess for body image in regards to media consumption. Since mere exposure to media does not influence the development of body image dissatisfaction (Gilbert et al., 2009), future studies may target specific program content and intent as well as consider passive and/or active viewing. This would help detect for the specific types of media content that could be more problematic in regards to body image dissatisfaction. Alternatively, it has been found that mere exposure to sexualized images lends itself to the development of body image dissatisfaction (Harrison & Hefner, 2006). This even further highlights the need to continue the study of media's impact on body image.

Media is influential in regards to body esteem and is always changing. Results of this study are suggestive that African American women do not consume as much print media as they do media via the Internet. This may be indicative of the times in which we live where Internet sources are now preferred over print media (Bell& Dittmar, 2011). With this in mind it may be beneficial for future studies to take into account the vast array of media images that are available through the Internet such as through personal websites (blogs), video blogs (vlogs) and the various social media outlets in regards to body image. This is consistent with findings in a study by Bardone-Cone & Cass, (2007) which found that participants exposed to pro-anorexia websites displayed greater negative effect, engaged in more image comparison, had lower self-esteem socially and confidence in their appearance than those who were not exposed to a pro-anorexia website. This suggests that there is a need to further research the influence of media, specifically those transmitted through the Internet, on body image dissatisfaction.

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