

Ethnic Differences in Use of Media, Perceived Media Pressure and Body Perception

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As advertisements in the media often promote and sell thinness, digital images of models in the advertisements are, on most occasions manipulated and are unrealistic. However, women often feel unhappy with their bodies after watching thin-models on the mass media (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004). Body dissatisfaction is a psychological consequence that results from exposure to thin-body images combined with the inability to attain the thin-body ideal (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004). Such body dissatisfaction peaks during adolescence (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). As adolescents' perceptions about their bodies follow them into adulthood, adolescence is a critical period in developing positive body image. Researchers noted that body perception varies by different ethnic groups (Cachelin, Rebeck, Chung, & Pelayo, 2002). Thus, the present study aims to examine the ethnic differences in the use of media as information sources, perceived pressure from media and body perception among adolescent girls.

A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to two high schools in a metro area in a Southeastern state of the United States. A convenience sample of 320 teenage girls was used in the data analysis. The self-identified ethnic background of the participants was African, Asian, Caucasian, or Hispanic American. Descriptive statistics on the use of media and perceived pressure from media showed that Asian American girls showed the highest level of media use to seek information, while Caucasians showed the lowest. Asian American girls reported the highest level of pressure from media, whereas African Americans reported the lowest. The MANOVA test revealed that Asian Americans showed significantly higher use of media as information sources than White Caucasians, and they had significantly higher pressure from media than African Americans. Descriptive statistics on body perception showed that the African American girls had the highest mean score, followed by Hispanic adolescents and Caucasian adolescents, whereas the Asian girls had the lowest. The higher mean ratings indicate higher satisfaction with one's body. The ANOVA test results indicated that the African American adolescents showed significantly higher body satisfaction than the other three ethnic groups, while no significant differences were found among the Hispanic, White, and Asian adolescent girls. The results of the study suggest important implications.

Reference

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