

The influence of social media and fashion magazines on body image of culturally and racially diverse young women

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Keywords: Body Image, social media, fashion magazines, diversity

Research shows that younger people spent more time on social media than any other media such as magazines (Bell & Dittmar, 2011; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). In effect, about 93% of the younger population in the U. S. has mobile access to the internet through a tablet, a phone, or any other device and 56% of them claim to connect to internet several times a day and 24% are constantly connected to the internet (Statista, 2017). Mass media is considered to be the most pervasive cause of body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann, 2011). An increasing body of literature suggests that increased social networking sites usage is related to body dissatisfaction in young females (De Vries & Kuhne, 2015; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013, 2014), which can lead to health risk factors such as dieting (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014) eating disorders (Mabe, Forney, & Keel, 2014) and drive for cosmetic surgery (De Vries et al., 2014). Thus, exposure to social media, such as Facebook (Manago et al., 2015), and to fashion magazines (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008) has been found to have negative effects on body image, but the effects of different social media outlets, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest have not been well understood. Body image and physical attractiveness are typically determined by weight and body type and the ideals for an attractive physique vary from culture to culture. Sussman, Truong, and Lim (2007) found that Euro-American and Asian-American consumers idealize a thin body, whereas Hispanic and African Americans prefer a larger body. African American women were also found to have higher self-esteem and consider themselves to be more attractive than any other ethnic group.

Framework and Method. Cultivation theory was applied in this study. Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) posits that long-term exposure to mass media messages and images impact people's views of social reality. Being exposed to media may reinforce attitudes toward thin body ideals (Park, 2005; Shrum, 2009). For example, individuals are exposed to, and thus create negative image for themselves (Yu, Damhorst, & Russell, 2011), which can turn them away from purchasing an item being presented by a fashion model. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to focus on female individuals and the effects that media exposure (in fashion magazines and a variety of social media) has on their body image. The secondary purpose was to examine differences in body image perceptions based on ethnic background (African-American, Asian-American, Arab-American, Euro-American, Hispanic-American, and mixed race). The sample consisted of 742 females between the ages of 19 and 25 years old. Respondents varied in ethnic background. The BAT instrument, which was developed and validated by Probst et al. (1995), was used in this study. This measured body dissatisfaction of female respondents ($\alpha=.87$). Statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS using correlation, and chi-square testing.

Results and Implications. Findings did not fully align with the *cultivation theory*. The body dissatisfaction findings present a convincing argument that the increase in body dissatisfaction in females is mostly prevalent when exposed to certain media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and fashion magazines, and not when exposed to YouTube and Pinterest.

The strength of the relationship was very similar for both Facebook ($r=.119$, $p=.00$) and Instagram ($r=.116$, $p=.00$). However, exposure to fashion magazines had a weaker relationship with negative body image ($r=.08$, $p=.02$), and no significant relationship was found between negative body image and YouTube and Pinterest. Results of chi-square analysis showed that African-American and Arab-American young females were found to have significantly more positive body image than Euro-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic-American females. For example, only 30% of African-American women agreed that when they compare themselves with their peers' bodies, they are dissatisfied with their own. Whereas, 75% of Euro-American women, 70% Asian-American, and 65% of Hispanic-American women agreed with this question ($\chi^2=33.1$, $p=.00$). Staggering 80% Euro-American women agreed that they have a strong desire to be thinner, followed by 73% Asian-American, and 65% Hispanic-American women. Only 55% African-American and 56% Arab-American admitted they have a strong desire to be thinner ($\chi^2=21.1$, $p=.02$). Similarly, 80% of Euro-American followed by 70% Asian-American, and 67% Hispanic-American women agreed that they envy others for their physical appearance. However, only 50% of African-American and 56% Arab-American women agreed with that question ($\chi^2=28.3$, $p=.00$). Interestingly, a large majority of the female respondents (regardless of ethnic background) said that they would purchase a fashion item if the fashion model advertising it was of their body type, but only the majority of African-American females said they would purchase the fashion item if the fashion model advertising it was of their ethnicity ($\chi^2=17.9$, $p=.05$). Study implications are further discussed.

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