

Public Abstract

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Title: The Ideal Body Shape of African American College Women

Previous research has examined Black women's body image from a traditional Eurocentric perspective. This has resulted in Black women reporting more positive body image because the research methodology and focus is solely on whether or not these women want to be thin. Rather than focusing on the actual weight on the scales, the overarching goal of this study was to change the focus of body image research with Black women to that of shape and size satisfaction, rather than weight and thinness. Specifically, this study is one of the firsts to examine the ideal body shape of African American women, focusing on level of satisfaction with areas of the body (i.e. the mid and lower torso). Seventy-nine African American women enrolled at the University of Missouri completed an online survey with several instruments designed to measure concerns about body shape and experiences of feeling fat, body image and weight-related concerns, and shape satisfaction. Several regression analyses demonstrated that satisfaction with mid and lower torso significantly influenced body shape satisfaction and overall appearance evaluation. Implications for future research, prevention and counseling are discussed.